

Minutes

Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee

10.00 am, Friday, 25 January 2013 in the Hermitage of Braid, Edinburgh

Present

Members:-

City of Edinburgh Council – Councillors Henderson (Chair), Heslop and Walker.

Midlothian Council – Councillor Bryant.

In Attendance:-

A McGregor (Regional Park Manager); D Jamieson (City of Edinburgh Council), G Cormack (Midlothian Council), C Alcorn (West Lothian Council) and D Emerson (City of Edinburgh Council).

1. Minutes

1.1 Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee of 26 July 2012

The minutes were approved as correct record, subject to a correction to record Gary Cormack (Midlothian Council).

1.2 Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum of 24 August 2012

The minutes were noted.

2. Fauch Hill – Proposals for Wind Farm – Public Inquiry

As previously reported to the Joint Committee, an application had been submitted to Scottish Ministers for the development of a wind farm consisting of 23 turbines with a generating capacity of 69MW at Fauch Hill, lying 8km. south-west of East Calder. The Joint Committee on 16th March 2012, had agreed a consultation response stating that the Regional Park was not in favour of the proposed development on grounds of being contrary to the aims of the Regional Park.

The Parks and Greenspace Manager now reported that the Regional Park had received confirmation from the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals confirming that a public inquiry would be held and that there was an opportunity to give evidence to the Inquiry Reporter. He recommended that the Regional Park be represented and give evidence during the inquiry process.

(A report was submitted with background information on the planning application and copies of other consultation responses from member authorities, as planning authorities, to the Scottish Government.)

Decision

To agree that Regional Park be represented at the Inquiry by the Regional Park Manager to give evidence on behalf of the authority.

(Reference – report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager, submitted.)

3. Regional Park – Manager’s Operational Report

The Regional Park Manager gave an operational report on activities over the past six months. As of 10 October 2012, the Park headquarters had been relocated from Boghall Farm to the Hermitage of Braid, with all staff and administrative functions transferred. Operational equipment was now stored at the Hermitage of Braid with supplementary storage at the City of Edinburgh Council’s Inverleith depot. This had freed the former storage facility at Hillend for use by the Friends of the Pentlands.

Since 1 April 2012, visitor management services in the Regional Park had been provided by the City of Edinburgh Council’s Natural Heritage Service on behalf of the three partner local authorities. This measure had provided flexible access to a wider pool of staff to operate in the Regional Park. The Park would continue to be managed as an integrated unit and in a consistent manner across all three local authorities.

He reported in further detail on ongoing activities, including:

- staffing
- visit by Members of the Scottish Parliament
- twenty-five years of the Regional Park celebration
- Voluntary Ranger Service
- Green Flag award
- Pentland Inspirations
- community engagement and participation
- Friends of the Pentlands – fly tipping initiative at Dreghorn
- access infrastructure
- Harperrigg Reservoir - proposed Local Nature Reserve

Decision

1. To ask the Regional Park Manager to look into question of a promotional or similar event (to be sponsored with the assistance of a MSP), at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh: the authority could possibly combine with the Central Scotland woodland project for the event.
3. On access infrastructure, to note that the Regional Park Manager would ask Transport officers in the City of Edinburgh Council whether, in principle, there might be funding from the off-road cycling budget and technical officer support to progress the Balerno footpath project.

(Reference – report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager, submitted)

4. Membership of Joint Committee and Consultative Forum

At its meeting of 26th July 2012, the Joint Committee had considered proposals for amending the governance and consultative mechanisms for the Regional Park.

The Parks and Greenspace Manager now referred to the long-standing concerns of farmers and landowners in having a stronger voice within the decision making process for the park - as was most recently reiterated at the Consultative Forum on 24 August 2012 – and he recommended that the membership of the Joint Committee and Consultative Forum be reviewed in light of recent representations.

Joint Committee

The Joint Committee currently consisted of elected members from the three local authority funding partners, plus three non-voting members of Scottish Water; Scottish Natural Heritage and East Lothian Council. It was considered important for good governance and effective decision making that the Joint Committee did not become too large and that there continued to be a clear distinction between it and the Consultative Forum. Given the core interest in land and visitor management by the farmers and landowners, however, there was a case for representation on the Joint Committee.

It was recommended therefore that the National Farmers Union and Scottish Land and Estates each be represented on the Joint Committee in a non-voting capacity.

Consultative Forum

As was discussed by the Consultative Forum at its meeting of 24th August 2012, the following amendments to membership were recommended:

- all Community Councils on the periphery of the Park expressing an interest be invited to join the Consultative Forum;
- representation from the following interests and organisations be reviewed and the Regional Park Manager authorised to amend membership accordingly: Cycling (membership to better represent mountain biking interests); Angling (secure representation of angling interests); Farmers and land managers (identify opportunities to strengthen representation); Dog walking (currently un-represented) and recreational visitors with Disability (currently un-represented), and
- where possible, user group representation should be secured locally, to better reflect the actual activities and interests in the Park.

Decision

1. To agree that any community council adjoining the Regional Park boundary expressing an interest in doing so should be invited to join the Consultative Forum.
2. To request that the Regional Park Manager review and implement amendments to the Consultative Forum membership as described above.

3. To agree to invite the National Farmers Union Scotland, and Scottish Land and Estates, to represent farming and land managing interests as non-voting members of the Joint Committee.

(Reference – report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager, submitted)

5. Sustainable Management of Recreational Events

The Parks and Greenspace Manager had carried out a review of arrangements for managing recreational events in the Pentland Hills Regional Park. In addition to informal recreation, the Regional Park was a popular location for recreational 'events'. In 2011, a total of 26 events were held with 1880 participants which had risen in 2012 to 36 events with 3,356 participants.

An analysis of the events indicated that :

- the majority involved walking, hill running or orienteering (68%);
- the proportion of cycling events was relatively low (5%);
- there was a significant demand for water based events (18%);
- a significant proportion of events were run for charitable purposes (42%);
- few event organisers currently made a financial contribution towards the maintenance of the Park (3%); and
- hill running and orienteering events took place all year round, while other events were primarily staged between spring and autumn.

The Parks and Greenspace Manager suggested that a review of existing procedures was needed in order to:

- regulate events such that the annual programme was measured and sustainable;
- provide a clear and robust framework to help event organisers hold successful, high quality and well supported events;
- mitigate the impact on paths, land management activities, and informal recreation;
- encourage event organisers to contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the facilities they use; and
- develop a co-operative partnership between the Regional Park and land managers regarding recreational events.

It was proposed to develop a concordat between the Regional Park and the land managers which would serve to better regulate recreational events in the Pentland Hills Regional Park. The Concordat would support the provision of clear and consistent advice to event managers, provide an agreed basis on which to grant or withhold permission, and establish a clear protocol for agreeing a contribution towards the provision and maintenance of facilities.

(It was proposed that the Concordat be developed by a sub-group of the Consultative Forum working with land managers and event organisers.)

Decision

To request the Consultative Forum to form a sub-group to develop a draft concordat on events between the Regional Park and land managers and that, subject to consensus being reached, the draft concordat be presented to the Joint Committee for approval.

(Reference – report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager, submitted)

6. Dates for Future Meetings

Dates for future meetings were as follows –

22 February 2013	Consultative Forum
30 August 2013	Consultative Forum
27 September 2013	Joint Committee
28 February 2014	Consultative Forum
28 March 2014	Joint Committee

(All meetings to commence at 10.00 am, venues to be agreed.)