

# Minutes

## Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum

**10.00am Friday 11 March 2016 in the Flotterstone Inn, Milton Bridge, Penicuik**

### Present:

Councillors Bill Henderson (Convener) (The City of Edinburgh Council) and Peter de Vink (Midlothian Council), Ken Knowles (Scottish Wildlife Trust); Major (Retired) K. Torp-Peterson (Ministry of Defence Estates), Alistair Salveson (Logon House Estate), Niall Corbet and Neville Makan, (Scottish Natural Heritage), Alistair Cowan (Eastside Farm), Robert Barr (SNFU), Graham Hamilton (Harperrig Local Management Group) and Mike White and John Stirling (Friends of the Pentlands).

Community Councils – Hugh Watt and Jack Kerr (Balerno CC), Libby Campbell (Colinton Amenity Association) and Norman Tinlin (Fairmilehead CC).

### In Attendance:

Bob MacFarlane (Cycling Scotland), Mark Metzger (University of Edinburgh), Ariane Walz (University of Potsdam), Peter Philips (Collingwood Environmental Planning), Charlie Cumming (Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust), Margaret Granger and Euan Scroggie (Balerno Ramblers); Jenny Hargreaves, Martin Duncan, Victor Partridge and Blair Ritchie (City of Edinburgh Council).

## 1. Minutes

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### Decision

The minutes of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum of 20 March 2015 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

## 2. Pentland Hills Regional Park Boundary Bill – Progress Update

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The Consultative Forum had previously considered Christine Grahame's (MSP) proposal to extend the boundaries of the Regional Park to cover the entire range of the Pentland Hills.

Jenny Hargreaves (Senior Natural Heritage Officer) provided an update on the proposal, which had been introduced by Christine Grahame MSP. The Pentland Hills Regional Park Boundary Bill sought to extend the existing Regional Park to encompass nearly all of the Pentland hills range. However, the Committee found there was little demand for the extension of the Park and doing so would lead to further financial burdens being placed on those local authorities involved in maintaining an enlarged park.

The Committee also noted that a full feasibility study would be needed in order to ascertain properly demand for any extension and to give detailed consideration to governance and funding arrangements of any extended park.

### **Decision**

To note the update and to thank Christine Grahame (MSP) for her efforts in raising the profile of the park.

(Reference – Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum 20 March 2015 (item 2)).

### **3. Pentland Path Project**

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Charlie Cumming (Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust) gave a presentation on the Pentland Path Project.

He indicated that the Council had asked for a Path Feasibility Study for the Pentland Path network and it had been agreed to work with Cairngorm Outdoor Access Trust. The purpose of the project was to improve the path network, create employment opportunities and provide health benefits.

There was funding of £27,000 available for the project. The Access Trust was carrying out a survey, however, the work had been delayed because of heavy snow on the upper routes. There was a considerable amount of path to cover in a short timescale. After the survey, they would liaise with other organisations to establish where people preferred walking and possible health benefits. It was hoped that the draft report would be completed by mid April.

The Access Trust was quite experienced in this type of work and were regarded as experts for paths in Scotland. This piece of work would be used for the funding bid.

29 km had been completed to date, however, there had been erosion on the higher routes which would have to be hand built. Some of the routes in the western reaches had started to break down and these should be repaired. These were easier to access for repair work by machine and took pressure off the higher routes.

Alistair Salvesen commented on the project:

- The neighbouring landowners were keen to encourage public access to the countryside, however, they were also responsible for looking after countryside.
- There were concerns about path suitability, especially at the top of the hills and changes to the environment and ecology.
- There were a number of organised walks and other activities and it was hoped to limit the number of people at the worst time of year when muddy conditions prevailed, required forward planning and the need for better management.
- There were already a large number of cyclists using the hills and the Regional Park was trying to encourage cycling, however, even the lower paths were unsuitable. There was a considerable amount of animals and especially during lambing times and this was a major concern.

- It was unlikely that there would be significant amounts of funding soon. The Greenspace Trust had to take into account events management.
- There was a danger with cyclists and walkers using the same paths and this should be organised in a sensible way.

Discussion took place and members raised the following points:

- It was difficult to keep track all of the organised groups. However, the offer of the cycling community to repair paths should be welcomed.
- When applying for grants, it was necessary to factor in maintenance and not just paths.
- Maintenance could be factored in to a certain extent, but this depended on the individual funder and other factors. It was difficult to get funding in advance, however, once the project was underway, mechanisms to raise revenue could be considered. This would be considered in the feasibility report.
- Funding might be raised from events to repair the damage to paths.
- It might be possible to lever extra funding from the European Union and other sources. Once the assets had been checked out, then an application could be made for funding.
- Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust was not responsible for the condition of the paths.

Charlie Cumming confirmed that the comments from the landowners was useful to the Trust and would be considered.

## **Decision**

To thank both presenters.

## **4. Competitive Cycling Events**

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Bob MacFarlane (Scottish Cycling), explained that Scottish Cycling was the National Governing Body for cycling in Scotland. He then gave a presentation on competitive cycling events, which covered the following themes:

- An Overview
- “To succeed on the world stage to inspire more people enjoying riding their bikes more often, be it for sport, recreation or transport”.
- What Scottish Cycling Did
- Organiser Training
- Calender Compilation
- The Plan
- Event Team Roles
- Registering the Event
- Landowners and Venues
- Resources
- Pre-Event Paperwork

- When Permission was Required
- Forestry Event Agreement
- Meeting the Organiser

After the presentation, the following points were made:

- The safety of people working on estate had been covered in the risk assessment, but it should be emphasised that event users had to take care with other users.
- The organisers needed to be aware of which users were using the land on a normal basis.
- If there was bad weather predicted, there should be discussions, a pre-meeting and an assessment of the situation, which might lead to a deviation from the proposed route.
- If damage had been caused in the past, repair should be carried out on footpaths. In the Forestry Event Management guide, there was section in re-instatement that covered this.
- Scottish Cycling did not contact a land management company to carry out repairs, however, they did have some contacts for path construction work.
- If there was significant damage then this would lead to cumulative damage, Scottish Cycling should have an agreement where they paid for the damage. As part of the Forestry Event Agreement, there was a charging structure, depending on the size of the event and also a post event inspection.
- Landowners would like to be certain that if there would be cumulative damage, then they could state that they did not want the event on their land.
- There had been recent discussions on how Scottish Cycling was going to manage cumulative damage with the Forestry Commission.
- The event organiser should pay a contribution for ongoing path maintenance. This was a fairly well established practice in the Forestry Commission.
- The number of regulated and non-regulated events in the Regional Park needed to be established.
- Event organisers were encouraged to contribute financially. Between April and December 2015, there were only six official events, but there were a number of smaller unorganised events, where the organisers communicated directly with landowners.
- Care had to be taken of cycling becoming too much of a regular occurrence, which might destroy the biodiversity of the Pentlands Hills. The purpose of the guide was to ensure responsible access. It was necessary to ensure that the countryside was available for future generations.
- If an event was taking place where the paths were busy with users, there were safety issues. To address this, the organisers had to follow the process, gather the pre-event information and engage with the community.

- A number of cyclists who were not part of organised events were cycling in the dark, which caused damage. Therefore, cyclists should always be responsible and be aware of the animals in the Pentlands.
- If landowners had details of an event, this should be given Cycling Scotland and this information would be passed on to regional event officers to liaise with clubs within the area.

The Convener agreed that this was a difficult issue and it was necessary to educate people in responsible access.

### **Decision**

1. To note the presentation.
2. Bob MacFarlane to forward the presentation to Committee Services for circulation.

## **5. Local Working Group Review (Bonaly, Harlaw, Threipmuir)**

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Victor Partridge (Natural Heritage Officer) gave a presentation on the Local Working Group Review, which incorporated Bonaly, Threipmuir and Harlaw.

A problem solving partnership had been set up in 2011 to try to tackle anti-social behaviour in the Bonaly Country Park area. Discussions took place each year with the various parties to address the problems. The police had increased their patrols, which had helped reduce anti-social activity. It was hoped to extend the partnership to Harlaw and Threipmuir, where there was similar anti-social behaviour. The views of the Forum on this were welcomed.

Discussion took place and it was suggested that the arrangements had been made a positive difference to Bonaly, where the partnership was working well and raising awareness in the area. Therefore, it was sensible to extend the arrangements to Harlaw and Threipmuir. It was necessary to inform the police of incidents for them to take remedial action.

The Convener indicated that the police were talking to the schools to educate people about responsible access to the countryside

### **Decision**

To thank the presenter and to note work which had been undertaken.

## **6. Visitor Survey 2014**

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The Consultative Forum had previously considered Ecosystem Services in Edinburgh and the Lothians and on proposals for a visitor survey by Potstam University on Pentlands Regional Park.

Ariane Walz of Potstam University gave a presentation on the results of the visitor survey on benefits provided by the Regional Park and the steps toward this, which included the following:

- Getting in Touch and Setting up the Survey
  - First scoping in Edinburgh, Dec 2013
  - Presentation and alignment at Consultative Forum, Feb 2014
  - Questionnaire and selection of Ecosystem Services
- Results of Survey
  - Land management preferences based on trade-offs
  - Information about:
    - The Origin of visitors
    - The Visitors Compared to 1998 and 2006 surveys
    - The visitors Company, Motivation to visit the PHRP, Important areas
    - The visitors used routes by interview location
  - Visitor hotspots in the Pentland Hills Locations of highest personal appreciation
  - Appreciation of benefits
  - Preferences for development in next 10-15 years
  - Analysis in Progress – How could Valuation of ESS explain preferences in landscape management
  - Comparison between Pentland Hills and urban parks of Edinburgh
- Conclusions
  - Survey reflected visitors' perception and priorities – but not the priorities of all stakeholders
  - In general, relatively homogenous visitor profiles
  - Majority of users were “nature lovers“ who actively recreated in the Hills, enjoyed experiencing nature and were aware of biodiversity and habitats.
  - Some open to more intense use of the park, either for climate change mitigation or recreation.
  - Pentland Hills as a great “playground“ with much appreciation for experiencing nature and high potential for nature conservation

Some discussion took place and information was provided on the origin of the visitors

### **Decision**

1. To thank the presenter and to note the survey.
2. Ariane Walz to send the presentation to Committee Services, to be forwarded to the members of the Consultation Forum.

(Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum 28 February 2014 (item 5).

## **7. Ecosystems Approach Study**

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Neville Makan (Scottish Natural Heritage) and Dr Peter Phillips (Collingwood Environmental Planning) gave a presentation on collaborative land use and management in the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

Neville Makam provided an outline on the proposals, which included aims, timescales and the potential for collaborative working. This project would build on existing work

and would sustain the benefits that were derived from the park. Some funding was available to help deliver the project.

Dr Peter Phillips gave a presentation on the proposals which included the following themes:

- The Context for This Project
  - Scotland's Land Use Strategy (LUS)
  - LUS 10 principles for sustainable land use
  - The LUS principles could help to balance land use/management objectives in PHRP and get the best from the land
- "What Have We Been Asked to do?"
  - Applying the ecosystem approach and explore with the Consultative Forum opportunities to work with nature and sustain the benefits in the Regional Park.
  - Utilise and build upon the work carried out by the EU Operas Project: the Social values of the Pentland Hills.
- "What will Happen and When Would We Like Your Input?"
  - Review papers for CF Workshop – April 2016
  - Main CF Workshop – May 2016
  - Review draft project report – June/July 2016
  - Validation CF Workshop – October 2016
  - Review final project report – November 2016
- "Our Approach 1"
  - Draft objectives for the May CF Workshop
- "Our Approach 2"
  - Workshop objectives were only a starting point
  - Developing process and methods/techniques
  - A deliberative approach
  - We wouldn't just be talking at you

## **Decision**

To thank the presenters and to note the proposals.

## **8. Regional Park Operational Update**

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Jenny Hargreaves provided a verbal report which included the following:

- Natural Heritage Service
- Operational Update
- Path Improvements
  - Harlaw Reservoir, Harlaw Woodland path, Green Cleugh and Bonaly and Waymaker replacements.
- Harlaw Reservoir

- Approximately 1290 metres of path containing about 160 potholes were in filled making this Core Path (CEC19) more pleasant for visitors.
- Harlaw Woodland Path
  - Improvements were made to the ramp, the bridge and the path.
- Green Cleugh
  - Funding had been secured to significantly improve a section of a poor conditioned path.
  - In early March 2016, the bridge has been completed, some stepping stones placed and additional path and drainage work was undertaken.
- Bonaly
  - Bonaly Country Park – improvements to the surface of a cycle path on the lower slope of White Hill, Waymarker Replacements and approximately 60 replacements fingers and some posts at 30 locations.
- South Pentlands
  - Fly tipping and path maintenance- Kirk Road, Scald Law & Carnethy.
- Flotterstone Improvements
  - Mini orchard planted.
  - Installation of two demonstrator planters.
  - Corporate Group carried out some car park improvements.
  - New interpretation had been installed.
- Hillend, Harperrig and Thriepmuir
  - Annual meadow management was carried out.
  - Maintenance work was completed.
  - Fencing extended at Harperrig Reservoir in a further bid to keep the sheep out.
  - Bird Hide Repairs – Harperrig.
- Harlaw, Bonaly, Dreghorn & Castlelaw
  - Harlaw Path improvements, fencing replacements- Bonaly and Winter storm.
- Network Path Inventory
  - 486 Railway sleepers, 19 sets of steps, 135 gates, 155 signs and 16 bridges.

Some discussion took place about new staffing arrangements for the Service. It was also reported that there had been discussions with the police, covering issues such as lambing and quad-bikes.

## **Decision**

To thank Jenny Hargreaves and to note the verbal report.

## **9. Any Other Business**

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The Convener indicated that Keith Logie (Parks and Greenspace Development Manager), Alan McGregor (Regional Park Manager) and Gwen Stewart (Senior Support Assistant) had retired from the Council. He thanked them for their long service and considerable contribution to the work of the Pentlands Regional Park and wished them well.

## **10. Dates for Future Meetings**

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Dates for future meetings were as follows:

15 April 2016          Joint Committee