

Transfer of Scottish Natural Heritage Funding for the Pentland Hills Regional Park to Local Authorities

Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee

13th March 2009

Purpose of report

- 1 To report arrangements for the transfer of Scottish Natural Heritage funding for the Regional Park to City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), Midlothian Council (MC) and West Lothian Council (WLC).

Main report

- 2 As reported to the Joint Committee on the 17th October 2008, as from 1st April 2009, Scottish Natural Heritage will no longer provide grant to local authorities. Instead, £3.7M will be transferred to local authorities directly as part of the local government finance settlement and distributed approximately on the basis of the levels of funding received over the previous four years from Scottish Natural Heritage.
- 3 This will be an interim arrangement for 2009-10 and 2010-11 only. In the next local government spending review expected in 2010 for 2011-14 the funding will be incorporated with the core settlement and not be specifically identified as former SNH funding.
- 4 On the 19th December 2008, Scottish Natural Heritage wrote to Midlothian, West Lothian and the City of Edinburgh Councils confirming the detail of the transfer amounts specific to each local authority. This included all funding previously and currently received from SNH within the local authority. The letters stated that the settlement figures included a proportional amount for the Pentland Hills Regional Park, split evenly between MC, WLC and CEC. This amount was not initially quantified.
- 5 Further clarification was sought by CEC on how the allocation for the Regional Park was derived. In response (see Appendix 1), SNH has confirmed that:
 - the method used for the calculation arose from discussions between COSLA, SNH and the Scottish Government;
 - the four year average for the Regional Park was assessed to be £44,037 pa;

- this figure comprised two components: 1) previous core / administration grant of £30,000 pa; 2) project grant of £14,037 pa; and
- the £44,037 allocation for the Regional Park has been split equally between CEC, MC and WLC, each receiving £14,697.

Financial Implications

- 6 As the Managing Authority, City of Edinburgh Council has previously acted as the applicant and recipient for all SNH grant in relation to Regional Park business. The agreed financial contributions from MC and WLC to the Regional Park budget (held by CEC) have therefore always been in addition to (and not part of) the income from SNH funding. Over the previous four years, MC and WLC have not directly received SNH funding for the Regional Park.
- 7 By distributing the £44,037 allocated for the Regional Park equally across all three local authorities, this effectively leaves the City of Edinburgh Council as the Managing Authority with a budget shortfall of almost £29,394 for 2009/2010 unless this amount can be reallocated to the Regional Park Budget.
- 8 While recognising these concerns, SNH has confirmed that these allocations are final, and having been approved by the Minister, there is no scope for review.

Environmental Impact

- 9 NA

Recommendations

- 10 It is recommended that the Joint Committee:
- a) notes the detailed arrangements for transfer of SNH funding to local authorities from the 1st April 2009;
 - b) requests that for the two years of transition (2009/10 and 2010/11), on the receipt of an invoice from the City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian Council and West Lothian Council each contribute £14,697 in addition to the contributions set out in the Minute of Agreement or as otherwise agreed; and
 - c) notes that this does not prejudice the right of any party to withdraw from the Minute of Agreement upon 12 months notice.



David Jamieson
Parks & Greenspace Manager

Appendices	Appendix 1: Letter from SNH Confirming Funding Arrangements for the Pentland Hills Regional Park.
Contact/tel/Email	David Jamieson (Parks and Greenspace Manager, 0131 529 7055) Keith Logie (Parks Development Manager, 0131 529 7916) Alan McGregor (Acting Regional Park Manager, 0131 445 3383)
Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	Supports National Outcome 12 – We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect and enhance it for future generations.
Background Papers	N.A



Alan McGregor,
Pentland Hills Regional Park Manager,
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Boghall Farm
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Edinburgh
EH10 7DX

- 2 JAN 2009

30 January 2009

Dear Alan

**ARRANGMENTS FOR THE TRANSFER OF SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE (SNH)
FUNDING TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES & THE PENTLAND HILLS REGIONAL PARK**

I'm writing in response to your recent e-mail to our Area Access Officer, John O'Keefe, in which you raise a number of concerns in relation to the transfer of SNH funding for the Regional Park.

As you know, we wrote to Midlothian, West Lothian and The City of Edinburgh Councils on 19 December 2009 advising that Scottish Ministers had agreed to the transfer of £3.7m from SNH to local authorities, and explaining that this was to be distributed roughly on the basis of the levels of funding historically received from SNH. Paragraph 3 of these letters advises that the proposed distribution figure includes an amount for Pentland Hills Regional Park (PHRP), split between the three councils. Where previous grant applications were received from a local authority - e.g. for the joint PHRP and City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) ranger service grant - future funding was attributed to that local authority (CEC). Where the previous grant applications came from PHRP - i.e. core and administration costs, and project costs - these funds were attributed equally between the three local authorities managing the park through the Concordat.

The four year average of core, administration and projects costs was assessed to be £44,037 (made up of £30,000 core and administration grant and £14,037 project grants). This was then shared out equally between the three local authorities (i.e. £14,697 each). The method used for this distribution figure arose from meetings between, COSLA, SNH and Scottish Government and was signed off by the Minister. While we appreciate the concerns which you have raised, there is no scope to revisit this.

Sufficient money to maintain funding to the Park at recent levels has been allocated to the three Councils who manage the park through the Concordat. Discussions on how that funding is allocated and administered in the future will be for the Councils to determine, and I suggest that you raise your concerns in that forum.

I am copying this letter to the relevant Council staff for information.

Yours sincerely,

Iain Rennick
Area Manager, Forth and Borders



Ricky Moffat, Frontline Services Manager, Midlothian Council
Iain Young, Director of Strategic Services, Midlothian Council
Ian Jackson, Director of Corporate Services, Midlothian Council
James Kinch, Head of Land Resources, Midlothian Council
Geoff Mather, Senior Projects Officer, Midlothian Council

Jim Dickson, Director of Development and Environmental Services, West Lothian Council
Alan Logan, Head of Finance, West Lothian Council
Chris Alcorn, Planning Department, West Lothian Council

Mark Turley, Director of Services for Communities, City of Edinburgh Council
Donald McGougan, Director of Finance, City of Edinburgh Council
David Jamieson, Services for Communities, City of Edinburgh Council