

Committee Minutes

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum

Swanston Golf Club, Edinburgh 22 October 2010

Present:-

The City of Edinburgh Council – Councillors C Keir (Convener) and Paisley.

West Lothian Council – Councillor Carl John.

Farming – Robert Barr (NFU).

Scottish Wildlife Trust – Ken Knowles.

Landowning – Scott Patterson

Friends of the Pentlands – John Stirling.

Ministry of Defence Estates – Maj. K Torp-Petersen

Balerno Village Trust – Alan Laing.

In Attendance:- Alan McGregor, (Regional Park Manager); Garry Cormack (Midlothian Council), C Alcorn (West Lothian Council); Keith Logie and D Emerson (City of Edinburgh Council).

1 Order of Business

The Clerk reported on a request by the chair of Balerno Community Council to speak to the Consultative Forum this day, in regard to possibilities for community council representation on the Forum and in particular a rotation of the Edinburgh community councils representation.

On this, the Convener ruled the matter out of order on grounds that the matter had been discussed and decided by the Joint Committee at its last meeting and he was not persuaded of any material change in circumstances since then to allow the matter to be considered afresh.

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum
22 October 2010

2 Minutes

2.1 Pentland Hill Regional Park Consultative Forum of 11 June 2010

The minutes of the meeting of the Consultative Forum were approved as a correct record.

2.2 Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee of 22 June and 24 September 2010

The minutes of the meetings of the Joint Committee were noted.

3 Woodland Action Plan – Lothians and Fife Green Network Partnership

The Joint Committee received a presentation from Mr I Whitehead, of the Lothians and Fife Green Network Partnership, on the proposals to develop a woodland action plan, and the involvement of the Regional Park in the process. The Network project had received a grant of £32,000 with which to proceed to examine the feasibility of sites and effectively bring the studies to such a stage that landowners would be able to apply for grant aid for the work to commence on the ground.

There were five 'core areas' being looked at within the Pentlands area, he having explained the rationale for the areas being looked at, with development of existing tree belts and potential for expansion of strategic woodland habitat networks being two of the key criteria. Stage one of the project would involve further scoping, site investigation, landowner consultations and identification of opportunities. Stage two would involve the development of up to ten projects on the ground.

The Regional Park Manager said that the authority would have a key role in the identification of potential projects and in facilitating consultation with land managers.

Bob Barr (Farming) said that previous experience with making application for grants for tree planting was that there was excessive bureaucracy involved, so much so that farmers were inclined not to bother; however, he noted the intention here to have most of the paperwork, studies, etc. already in place to allow the process to be simplified. He welcomed the intention of the project to meet with farmers and landowners, particularly as local knowledge was essential, if the planting schemes were to be a long term success.

Decision

To welcome the work being done on this project.

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum
22 October 2010

(Reference – report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager, together with Draft Woodland Action Plan Proposal, circulated)

4 Requests For Memorials in the Regional Park

The Regional Park Manager had prepared a draft policy in regard to requests for memorials being placed in the Regional Park. The report had been considered by the Joint Committee who had continued it for further consultations. The principles had been developed after earlier discussion with the Consultative Forum.

He reported that a number of helpful responses had been received to date. The Head of Planning (CEC) was concerned about plaques or any installations that could lead to a gradual urbanisation of the countryside; he had also identified the need for clarity about future maintenance. Also, the relevant local planning authority should always retain a right of veto for any proposal within their area. Another point, raised generally, was that of encouragement of 'living memorials' for example tree planting schemes where this was clearly of benefit to the area.

John Stirling added that memorials should always be discreet i.e if tree planting for example, there should be no name plaques of dedication etc. Ken Knowles referred to previous experience of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, for example at Bawsinch, where a number of memorial projects had gone ahead without any 'memorial' indicators but the families having been happy with the results.

The policy, as it had been put out to consultation had suggested -

- presumption against installation of items which served solely as a memorial function (stones, plaques, panels or other purely memorial structures);
- constructions that required planning permission would not normally be supported unless they met an operational need;
- items of access infrastructure or countryside furniture for which there was an existing requirement, and which would enhance public enjoyment of the hills, would be considered. This included but might not be exclusively limited to seats, benches, gates, stiles, paths and dry stone walls;
- dedications on such items were to be discreet;
- neither the Regional Park service nor the Councils guaranteed to maintain or replace the item if damaged or destroyed, and

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum
22 October 2010

- the generous donations scheme for the Regional Park would be promoted as an alternative to a memorial item. Donations could be attributed to a specific project within the Pentland Hills.

Further comments on the draft were invited and the Regional Park Manager would report further.

Decision

To note the points made in regard to the future development of guidelines on dealing with requests for memorials in the Regional Park.

(Reference – report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager 24 September 2010, submitted.)

5 Wind Farm Proposals

The Parks and Greenspace Manager reported on wind farm proposals in areas that could affect the Regional Park, as were either under consideration or due to be submitted to the relevant planning authorities in the next year. There were three proposals at the present time -

Fauchill – a proposed development of 43 of 100-metre high turbines at Fauchill, to the south-west of Harperrigg reservoir, in West Lothian, with a capacity of 50 MW. A full planning application had yet to be submitted. If so, it could raise issues in terms of the landscape setting of the Regional Park.

Harburnhead – a proposal to develop a 28 turbine wind farm of over 50 MW capacity, east of Cobbinshaw reservoir, in West Lothian. An application had yet to be submitted.

Harrow's Law – a proposal for a 37 turbine development, subsequently revised to 17 turbines, to the south of Tarbrax, in South Lanarkshire. An application had been submitted to South Lanarkshire Council. The site was outside of the Regional Park.

The first two sites would fall to be determined by the Scottish Government, in view of the capacities at over 50 MW each, whilst the site in South Lanarkshire would be determined by the local planning authority.

Decision

To note the three proposals and that the Regional Park authority would be consulted in due course, as the developments could possibly impact on the landscape setting of the Regional Park and the wider Pentland Hills Area of Great Landscape Value.

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum
22 October 2010

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

6 Future Governance and Consultative Mechanisms

Consideration of this matter was deferred to a future meeting.

7 Members Updates

Members raised the following points during updates –

7.1 Friends of the Pentlands –

John Stirling gave an update on work being done by the group, including the planting of 450 trees at Eastside Farm in conjunction with AGON; a survey of footpaths in the south-west Pentlands; gates, and also an application made to the Big Lottery Community Wildlife Fund for an 'outdoor classroom' at Flotterstone". Noted.

7.2 Farming –

Bob Barr gave an update, and also referred to continuing problems of footpath damage and other damage caused by mountain bikers going through the Pentland after dark, and which appeared to be a recent development with the sport. He hoped that the Cycling and Horse-riding representatives would be able to attend an early meeting of this group to discuss the issues. Noted, and with Clerk asked to write to the Cycling and Horse-riding representatives.

7.3 Convener –

Councillor Keir gave a summary of matters he had taken up with officers in the Council; he was particularly concerned that planning advice and policy for landowners and those seeking permission for economic development should be consistent across the area and therefore had asked the Head of Planning (CEC) to write to his colleagues in Midlothian and West Lothian to see what issues were involved. He had also met with the Pentland Produce representatives to see what assistance the Council or Regional Park could offer. Noted.

7.4 Balerno Village Trust –

Alan Lang indicated that he would wish to give a presentation on the micro-renewable electricity scheme being developed by the Village Trust, to a future meeting. Agreed to receive a presentation to a future meeting.

8 Date of Next Meeting

Friday 11 February 2010 at 2.00 pm.