

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum

10.00am Friday 26 September 2014 in Bonaly Scout Centre, Bonaly Road, Edinburgh

Present:

Councillors Bill Henderson (Convener) and Dominic Heslop (The City of Edinburgh Council); Bob Barr and Kerry Barr (NFU Scotland); Ken Knowles (Scottish Wildlife Trust); Mike White (Friends of the Pentlands); Teresa Dougall (Scottish Land and Estates); Alan Holbrook (Malleny Angling Association).

Community Councils – Hugh Watt and Ken Shade (Balerno CC), Constance Newbound (Damhead CC), Tony Anderson (Carlops CC), Peter Gray (Colinton Amenity Association), Nicola Brisley (Currie Community Council), Alison Elfick (Fairmilehead CC), Neil Ingram (Juniper Green CC)

In Attendance:

Christine Grahame MSP; Tim Baynes and S Thompson (Scottish Moorland Group); Inspector L Duthie and PC J Dee (Police Scotland); K Logie, A McGregor, S Dixon, M Duncan, P Newton, P Saunders, J Fox and Gwen Stewart (The City of Edinburgh Council); Chris Alcorn (West Lothian Council); and B Ritchie (City of Edinburgh Council).

1. Minutes

Decision

The minutes of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum of 28 February 2014 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

2. Proposal to Extend the Regional Park Boundary - Update

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 and members of the Forum were requested to respond to the proposed boundary consultation.

The Convener invited Mrs Grahame to address the Forum about her proposals. She explained that she intended to lodge her proposal on 1 October with the Scottish Parliament. Before introducing a Member's Bill, the MSP was required to first lodge a draft proposal and then a final proposal. If, by the end of one month it had been supported by at least 18 other MSPs and the Scottish Government had not exercised its right to block the proposal, the MSP secured a right to introduce a Bill to give effect

to the proposal. Local authorities had also to consider the proposals. If the Bill passed stage one, it then progressed to stage two, then stage three. At any stage in the process, the Bill could be rejected.

On 28 February 2014, Mrs Grahame had formally launched a proposal to extend the boundary of the Pentland Hills Regional Park. Following this, various concerns had been expressed on issues, such as the western boundary and the exclusion of Balerno, as well as funding. It was therefore necessary to widen the debate in respect of funding and governance. The concerns of residents and land managers should also be addressed. Additionally, a feasibility study would be beneficial. However, the issues would be resolved in due course and the advantages of the extension would outweigh any disadvantages. This was an opportunity to let people know about the Bill. It was necessary to create a positive environment, as the City would expand over the following decades. Additionally, the public needed to know their responsibilities in the countryside.

Discussion took place and it was explained that the village of Balerno would not be included, but the surrounding land would be included in the extended Regional Park. Regarding the timescales for the progress of the Bill, it was necessary to get the assent of 18 MSP's within 30 days.

Decision

To thank Christine Grahame, MSP and to note the update.

(Reference – Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum 28 February 2014 (item 3)).

3. 2013/14 Annual Report

The Annual Report for 2013-14 had been published and made available to members of the public.

Decision

To note the Annual Report.

(Reference – Annual Report 2013-14).

4. Regional Park Operational Update

Alan McGregor provided an update on the Regional Park operations. He explained that his role had changed and that he would now be dealing mainly with the Consultation Forum and the Joint Committee. Jenny Hargreaves was now operational manager. Two members of staff had left and the posts remained vacant.

Details were provided of various operational matters at the Regional Park. This included funding from the cycling budget and a paths conditions survey to improve paths, a pilot project for a catering kiosk at Harlaw, and measures to prevent dog fouling. Further details were provided of the proposed hydro-electric scheme near the

reservoir, the continuing success and expansion of art and photographic competition, Pentlands Inspirations, and the work of a sub-group of the Consultative Forum that had been working on a draft Concordat for recreational events. Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- Consultation on the draft Events Concordat would take place in October.
- The Regional Park needed to respond to the changing nature of demands for recreational events.
- The proposed Local Nature Reserve designation for Harperrig remained pending.
- A new woodland planting scheme was underway at Bonaly which would help enhance the landscape and habitat for future years. The work was fully funded by the Scottish Rural Development Programme.
- Management proposals for existing woodland at Bonaly would be progressed subject to future funding.

A programme of essential safety work on damaged trees had been carried out and since Bonaly Country Park was owned by the City of Edinburgh Council, it's Forestry Service would be able to assess the risk and undertake tree safety work.

Decision

Bob Barr to contact Paula Newton regarding any concerns arising about tree safety at Bonaly Country Park with a view to arranging an assessment by CEC's Forestry Service

5. Moorland Signage Boards – Presentation

Tim Baynes gave a presentation on Moorland Signage Boards – Welcome to the Moor. He explained that visitors should be educated on the correct way to behave in the countryside, however, they should also be made welcome. There were three types of proposed boards entitled: "Moorlands are full of Wildlife", "Moorlands Managed for Grazing, Wildlife and Shooting" and "Observe the Scottish Outdoor Access Code". To progress the signage boards, there had to be collaboration with the various bodies involved. Details were then provided of the materials used, the cost and the proposed location of the boards.

It was necessary to make the boards more suited to individual needs. Some of the landowners had problems with vandalism in relation to traps and sheep worrying, and providing information on boards might help resolve this. It was advantageous to have the logo of the organisation on the board, as it gave it an official stamp. The Forum was invited to consider if the boards would be beneficial and if the Regional Park would consider providing funding.

In response to questions from members of the forum, the following points were made:

- There was general support for the positive and proactive information that boards such as these could provide.
- The best location for the boards and the detailed content would need careful consideration
- The optimum number of boards and the size of the boards should be determined.
- Further detailed discussion would be needed before any form of Regional Park accreditation could be used. This might, or might not be appropriate.
- The principles of positive land management should be displayed.
- There had been significant interest shown in the boards by the bigger estates.
- The requirements of landowners and their willingness to fund the boards should be determined.
- Some form of discreet wording should be found to discourage sheep worrying and to stop interference with traps.

Decision

- 1) To thank Tim Baynes for the presentation.
- 2) To acknowledge that appropriately located and presented moorland signage boards could be beneficial in a Regional park setting.
- 3) To note that the Regional Park Service would liaise with Tim Baynes regarding the proposals.

6. Fauch Hill and Harburnhead Windfarm Applications

Details were provided of the windfarm applications at Fauch Hill and Harburnhead, to be located near West Calder in West Lothian. The application for Fauch Hill was refused in July 2014 on the grounds of unacceptable adverse visual and landscape impacts and that it was contrary to the aims of the development plan. The application for the Harburnhead scheme was granted. This was largely because it would have less of a landscape and visual impact.

There were ongoing discussions with the stakeholders in respect of the development. It was explained that the Regional Park might be able to apply for funding for environmental projects from the Community Development Fund associated with the Harburnhead Scheme. Further details would be announced in due course.

Decision

To thank the presenter and to note the proposals.

7. Prior Notice for Hilltrack Construction

The Pentland Regional Park Joint Committee had previously considered the issue of prior notice for hilltrack construction.

A new system of prior notification for hill-track construction was being considered. Previously, tracks built for agricultural or forestry purposes had permitted development rights. However, under the new system, hilltrack construction required that local authorities should be notified in advance, who would then decide if permission was required and or if conditions should be applied. This was different from requiring full planning permission, as if the proposals came under permitted development, they would not require a public consultation. Further details of the new regulations would be provided to planning authorities later in the year.

It was noted that in the Pentlands Hills, hill tracks provide an important role for estate management purposes.

Decision

- 1) To note the position.
- 2) Alan McGregor to provide an update when the detailed guidance for planning authorities was available.

(Reference – Pentland Hills Regional Joint Committee 28 March 2014 (item 2)).

8. Friends of Pentlands – Update on Recent Activities - Presentation

Mike White explained that John Stirling was stepping down as Chairman of the Friends of Pentlands, however, he would still be Vice-Chairman.

He gave an update on the recent activities of the Friends, which included the Tea and Cakes event at Harlaw Visitor Centre in April and the Access for All Event in May, for people with disabilities. Other activities included progress on a path from Selm Muir Wood to Little Vantage, the repair of the hole in the fence near the Little Vantage Car park, the reconstruction of a bridge in the West of the Pentlands, and the completion of marking for the Pentlands Way. Further action included the planting of four Arboretums, and the planting of a continuous hedge, dedicated to people from the Pentlands who had been killed in the Great War. A monument would also be completed and dedicated in October to a former board member, who had died suddenly.

Discussion took place about hedge-laying, litter on road near Harper Rigg, and fly-tipping

Decision

- 1) To note the presentation and to thank the Friends of Pentlands for their assistance.
- 2) Kerry Barr to provide details of the hedge laying course, which took place in the Borders, to members interested in the course.

9. Anti-Social Behaviour in the North Pentlands

Paula Newton provided an update on anti-social behaviour in the North Pentlands. There had been “Wild Camping” in the Pentlands, which involved drinking by youths, sheep worrying, damage to buildings and damage to vehicles. The Regional Park recorded the activities in the incident book and notify Police Scotland as appropriate. The Service was keen for members of the public to report all incidents. To resolve the situation, measures were being considered such as visiting the local high schools and further partnership working with other bodies including the police and the local Community Safety Team.

This type of activity had been taking place over a number of years. Mallyn Angling Association suggested, however, that there has been a significant increase in the frequency of large groups of young people using Harlaw, in particular for parties including drinking alcohol. There was concern for the teenagers, as there already had been one fatality.

PC Dee indicated that the police intended to contact fourth and fifth high school pupils, and use partner agencies to try to resolve the situation. However, it was important to communicate effectively with the pupils, using the correct information tools.

Discussion took place and members made the following suggestions to address the situation:

- Having an exhibition displaying the results of anti-social behaviour, having consulted Children and Families.
- People affected by anti-social behaviour visiting high schools, with permission from the school.
- Arranging visits by pupils to the countryside to demonstrate responsible behaviour.
- Inviting the police in Midlothian to discuss the situation.
- Using CCTV cameras, taking into account the necessary legislation.
- Identifying if the teenagers involved were local or from the wider area.
- Visiting parents of teenagers engaged in anti-social behaviour.
- Encouraging people to notify the police.
- Using the Concordat for Events to stop anti-social events from taking place.
- Staff asking people to leave, without putting themselves at risk and moving the anti-social parties, without causing problems elsewhere.
- Using the existing anti-social behaviour legislation.
- Working in partnership with the relevant bodies, such as the police and the fire brigade.

Decision

- 1) To thank Inspector Duthie and PC Dee for attending the Forum.
- 2) Paula Newton to liaise with the local police to discuss ways to address the situation.

8. Consultative Forum Members' Updates

Members gave updates as follows-

- 8.1 NFU Scotland - Bob Barr indicated that Torphin Golf Club was now closed and the former course had become a major gathering point for teenagers and dog walkers. Inspector Liz Duthie confirmed that she would notify the local police officers. Noted.

9. Dates for Future Meetings

Dates for future meetings were as follows

24 October 2014 Joint Committee