

**Committee Minutes**

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**Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee**

**Regional Park Headquarters, Biggar Road, Edinburgh  
16 March 2012**

**Present:-**

**Members –**

**City of Edinburgh Council** – Councillors Keir (Convener), Hart and Paisley.

**Midlothian Council** – Councillors Imrie and Thacker.

**West Lothian Council** – Councillor Carl John.

**Scottish Water** – A Fail.

**Scottish Natural Heritage** – J Winning.

**In Attendance:-**

A McGregor (Regional Park Manager), K Logie, (City of Edinburgh Council), C Alcorn (West Lothian Council), J Kinch (Midlothian Council) and B Ritchie (City of Edinburgh Council).

Apologies

Councillor Thompson.

**1 Minutes**

**Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee of 16 December 2011**

The minute of meeting of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee of 16 December 2011 was approved as a correct record.

## **2 Local Authority Funding Contributions and Revised Operating Arrangements – 2012/2013**

The Regional Park Manager gave an update on the revenue funding contributions and revised operating arrangements for the Regional Park in 2012/2013. The effect of this would be to provide a balanced budget and give the Regional Park service a more sustainable foundation. From 2012/2013, the service provided in each local authority area would relate more closely to the respective funding contributions made.

With regard to the budgetary position, the contributions were as follows:

- Scottish Water (formally East of Scotland Water) was not party to the Minute of Agreement but had made a fixed annual financial contribution of £10,000 since the previous local government re-organisation 1996.
- In 2009/2010 after suspending its notice to withdraw from the Regional Park, Midlothian Council reduced its annual contribution to £52,600 (index linked).
- For 2012/2013, Midlothian Council's contribution would be £58,102.
- For 2012/2013, West Lothian Council had agreed to increase its financial contribution to £15,140 and to index link contributions for subsequent years.
- For 2012/2013, Scottish Water's contributions would remain at £10,000.

The City of Edinburgh Council, as the Managing Authority for the Regional Park would therefore receive a total funding contribution of £94,342 towards the Regional Park Budget for 2012/2013.

### **Decision**

- 1) To note the revised budgetary and operating arrangements for 2012/2013.
- 2) To request that the governance and committee arrangements for the Regional Park be reviewed in 2012/2013 and that proposals were presented to the Joint Committee for further consideration.)

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

### **3 Parks and Reserves – Places Managed for People and Nature: Scottish Natural Heritage Policy Statement**

The Joint Committee had previously considered a draft Scottish Natural Heritage Policy on Places Managed for People and Nature and noted the consultation response provided by the Regional Park Manager.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) had prepared a finalised policy statement on parks, reserves and other places managed jointly for people and nature and about the implications for the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

Mrs J Winning (SNH) provided details of the statement and of possible implications for the Regional Park.

Key outcomes sought by the policy were as follows:

- Provision of places managed for people and nature that met local and national needs.
- Regular usage from all walks of life to boost the economy and support local skills and jobs.
- Good maintenance and management of the landscape, wildlife and visitor facilities.
- These places to be part of a strategic approach to increase participation and to promote health and sustainable tourism.
- Sufficient and targeted funding to support this.

#### **Decision**

- 1) To note the finalised Scottish Natural Heritage Policy Statement on Parks and Reserves – Places Managed for People and Nature.
- 2) To note the contribution that the Regional Park could make to meeting the Policy objectives.

(Reference – Pentlands Regional Park Joint Committee 14 January 2011 (item 5); report by Parks and Greenspace Manager, submitted.)

### **4 Regional Park Manager's Report**

The Regional Park Manager gave an update on operational matters. He referred in particular to the January storm event, a firearms incident, a successful ice rescue (whereby a dog was rescued) and activities and events in

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2012. Other items included commercial dog walking, Hillend Country Park, sheep lambing in 2012, staff changes and service re-organisation and the proposed micro-renewable energy scheme at Harlaw.

Councillor Keir indicated that he thought that the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Regional Park should be in some way commemorated.

### **Decision**

- 1) To note the contents of the Regional Park Manager's report.
- 2) The Regional Park Manager to consider an appropriate way to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Pentlands Hills Regional Park.

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

## **5 Car Park Charges Update**

The Joint Committee had previously agreed in principle to the introduction of car parking charges at the four sites of Threipmuir, Harlaw, Bonaly and Flotterstone, following consideration of the results of an informal consultation exercise. The Joint Committee had requested that papers be presented to appropriate Committees of City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and Midlothian Council recommending that the required Traffic Regulation Order process be initiated. Officers of the City of Edinburgh Council reported this to the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee. The matter was then referred to full Council.

On 22 December 2011, the City of Edinburgh Council approved the initiation of the a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process for Threipmuir, Harlaw and Bonaly (CEC owned sites) and noted that Midlothian Council had not yet made a decision regarding Flotterstone.

Midlothian Council's Transportation Policy Officers had since considered the proposal in detail and had raised a number of fundamental concerns about its application to the Flotterstone Site. These were principally:

- Displacement of parking onto the A702 trunk road and associated road safety issues (confirmed by Bear Scotland).
- Displacement onto adjacent private parking.
- Increased congestion on the Lower Glen Road leading to reduced pedestrian safety and blockage for residential access and emergency vehicles.

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- Difficulty with providing effective enforcement measures.

For technical reasons, therefore, Midlothian Transportation Officers would not be recommending that a TRO was moved for Flotterstone. Estimated charges from Flotterstone represented 39% of the total estimated income from the scheme.

The Regional Park Manager concluded that it would not now be viable to proceed with the whole scheme in view of Midlothian's concerns and recommended that the Joint Committee reported this to the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee that TRO's for the Edinburgh site should not be pursued.

### **Decision**

- 1) To note that Midlothian Council would not be moving a TRO for Flotterstone.
- 2) To note that VAT would apply to the off street parking charges proposed.
- 3) To note that the scheme as proposed was no longer viable and recommend that a further report be made to City of Edinburgh Council's Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee, recommending that TRO's for the Edinburgh sites were not pursued.
- 4) The Regional Park Manger to investigate the use of donation boxes as part of the review the existing donation scheme for the Regional Park.
- 5) The Regional Park Manager to update the consultees for the proposed parking charges on the Joint Committee's decision.

(References – Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee 16 December 2011 (item 5): report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager, submitted.)

## **6 Fauch Hill Wind Farm - Presentation**

A planning application had been submitted by Fauch Hill Sustainable Energy (FHSE) to the Scottish Government for permission to construct and operate a proposed wind farm at Fauch Hill. The Regional Park Authority had been consulted on the matter by the Scottish Government and invited to submit a response.

The Regional Park Manger reported on the implications for the Regional Park, having regard to local planning policy and the stated aims of the Regional Park. Copies of the Environmental Statement (non technical summary), provided by the applicant were attached to the report.

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He indicated that the application for Fauch Hill was different from local planning matters in five distinct ways:

- The application to be determined by the Scottish Ministers.
- The Regional Park had been invited by the Scottish Government to make a representation.
- It was a large scale proposal immediately on the Regional Park boundary with significant landscape impacts.
- The proposed scheme clearly conflicted with local planning policy which sought to protect the landscape quality of the Regional Park and the wider Pentland Hills range.
- The scheme conflicted with the aims of the Regional Park.

The nature of wind farm developments meant that significant adverse effects could be anticipated, even if it was the case with this proposal, design and mitigation measures were incorporated. The proposal therefore fundamentally conflicted with the principal aims of the Regional Park and the local planning policy intended to protect its surrounding landscape.

The proposed scheme would however contribute to national targets for renewable energy, generate employment and provide a benefits package for investment in the local community. Other benefits included new amenity woodland and new access opportunities within the site and linking to the locality, including the Regional Park. Access proposals were described in a recreational development plan produced in December 2011 by Oatridge College on behalf of FHSE Ltd

Public enjoyment of the Regional Park was based on its essential character; one largely defined by its high quality landscape and opportunities for its enjoyment.

The Regional Park Manager proposed a draft response from the Park Manager concluding that that the Regional Park was not favour of the proposed wind farm at Fauch Hill.

Members discussed the proposals and the draft response from the Regional Park Manager.

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### **Decision**

To endorse the draft consultation response from the Regional Park Manager that the Joint Committee was not in favour of the proposed wind farm at Fauch Hill and to submit these views to the Scottish Executive.

(References – Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee 16 December 2011 (item 2); report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager, submitted.)

### **Declaration of Interest**

Councillor Carl John (West Lothian Council) declared a non-financial interest in the above item, as a member of the Planning Committee for West Lothian and a local ward member, and he took no part in the proceedings.

## **7 Valedictory**

The Convener thanked the members and officers for their contribution to the work of the Joint Committee.

## **8 Date of Next Meeting**

To be arranged following local government elections on 3 May 2012.