

# Minutes

## Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee

10.00am, Friday 30 November 2018 in the Regional Park Headquarters, Hermitage of Braid, Edinburgh

Present:

### Voting Members:

**City of Edinburgh Council** – Councillors Gardiner (Convener), and Bruce.

**West Lothian Council** – Councillor Timson

### Non-Voting Members:

**National Farmers Union** – Bob Barr

**Scottish Land and Estates** – Clare Stula

**Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust** – Charlie Cumming

### **In attendance:**

David Jamieson, Jenny Hargreaves and Victor Partridge (City of Edinburgh Council), Justin Venton, Douglas Harvey, Susan Arbuckle, Garry Sheret, (Midlothian Council), Chris Alcorn (West Lothian Council (Planning)) and Blair Ritchie (City of Edinburgh Council).

Scott Fraser (Scottish Water), David Logan (Caledonian Water Alliance), Andrew Munnis (Montague Evans).

## 1. Minute

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The minute of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum of 4 May 2018 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

The minute of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee of 25 May 2018 were submitted and approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment of Page 2, paragraph 1, line 1 to: “The Convener indicated that Health and Social Care could help to get funding.”

## 2. Destination Hillend

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Garry Sheret (Midlothian Council) reported on the proposals for “Destination Hillend” and outlined the following issues:

## **Background and Introduction**

- Hillend was over 50 years old
- It was underachieving

## **Current Issues**

- It was an aging facility
- The freestyle surface was now closed

## **Overview**

- Increased number of schools were visiting

## **Our vision**

- To create something that was not affected by the seasons
- Year round destination
- Bring people from all age groups
- Bring people from all over Scotland
- Ensure future of Hillend
- Infrastructure upgrade required

## **Bring Reception to 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

- Bring digital elements
- Bus transfer links
- Foodcourts and cafes
- Retail units required
- Take pressure off Midlothian Council for ski hire
- Wigwams – camping element
- Attractive views
- Attracting tourism

## **Alpine Coaster**

- Boost tourism
- At 800 metres, it was the longest in UK

## **Jump Slope**

- Flexible Jump Slope extensions
- Fun slope

## **Hilo Activity Dome**

- First in Scotland

## **Hotel Site**

- There had been discussions with hotel operators

## Summary

- Aimed to create year round family oriented attraction
- Safeguard the future of the site
- Income stream required
- Opportunity to create something of national importance
- Would attract people both locally and further afield

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- There was no café on top as there was only a chairlift for access at present, which would be exposed for users.
- The Dome gave off a “glare”, but would be possible to change the colour to make it blend in with the surroundings.
- The contours of the site meant the buildings were not visible as they fitted into the contours of the hills. Even the Dome was in a “hollow” area and it should not be too visible.
- When the Natural Heritage staff was relocated, it might be possible for there to be accommodation at Hillend.
- There could be a visitor facility to provide information on the routes.
- There were various planning stages to go through and the developers should be on site next year but had phased this to 2022. But it was necessary to first carry out work on infrastructure to cope with the increased visitor number and on structures such as the Coaster.
- There would be a two-lane road for access. The Junction on to the Biggar Road was currently being designed. A filter lane was a possibility, but the possibility of more free flowing traffic should be explored. It would also be necessary to carry out a transport assessment for the planning application.
- It might be necessary to introduce charges for the car park at Hillend and consider other revenue streams.
- Regarding car parking, to cope with additional cars up the slope, it was necessary to consider the contours of the hill. If there was sufficient demand to justify a second tier, this could be considered in future.
- The resurfacing of the slope would be undertaken as ongoing maintenance.
- All the land was zoned for leisure activity, it complemented what already existed and was in keeping with adventure sports. There was nothing contrary to the Local Plan.
- There had been positive discussions with a leading hotel brand regarding the Hotel. The proposed footprint was merely an expansion of the existing footprint.
- The Convener thought that this was a welcome development and that encouraging some of the tourists to visit attractions outside of the city would be beneficial.
- There should be adequate parking and good public transport to provide choice.
- The transport assessment report would address active travel.

- It was necessary to establish the routes and destinations for buses.
- It was hoped that there would be very little “down time” for skiing caused by the proposed development, as the Snowsports Centre would remain open throughout the works, apart from normal closure of slopes for maintenance.
- It might be advantageous to contact the Transport Convener regarding proposed travel arrangements.
- The proposed road would not affect that building at bottom of Hillend which was leased to the Friends of Pentlands.

The Convener thanked the officer for the presentation.

## **Decision**

To note the update.

### **3. Wondering What Scottish Water was doing in the Pentland Hills – South Edinburgh Resilience**

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David Logan (Customer Liaison Officer, Caledonia Water Alliance) and Scott Fraser, (Regional Communities Manager) reported on the South Edinburgh Service Resilience Project and outlined the following:

#### **Project Overview**

Caledonia Water Alliance (CWA) had been tasked with improving the water network within Edinburgh and the Lothians, in partnership with Scottish Water.

- Over 12km of pipeline
- New temporary Pumping Station
- Increasing Resilience

#### **Working within the Pentland Hills Regional Park**

Working within the Regional Park did not come without its challenges. Some of the key challenges faced were:

- Keeping access for the public across the Pentland paths.
- WW1 practice trenches
- Unexploded Ordnance
- Environmental

#### **Engineering Challenges**

Working on Projects of this scale did not come without its challenges. Some of the key challenges faced were

- Auger Bore under A702
- Harlaw Burn
- Road Crossings
- Existing Utilities

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- The WW1 practice trenches would be marked out by the Archaeological Team. Reports had been sent to the Council.
- The possible re-instatement of the trenches could be considered, but it would be necessary to consult with MOD in the Park.
- The iron pipes were well over 100 years old, as plastic did not last as long as iron, the pipe would be wrapped to increase the lifetime of the pipe
- All pressure on the pipe connections were tested as the work progressed.
- There would be no replacement pipes to the reservoir at Hillend, the pipes would connect the junction where the pipes went to the reservoir.
- It was expected that the project would be completed in 2020.
- If the Augore Bore did not work, the developers would bring in a different, perhaps larger machine.

The Convener indicated that this was an interesting project and thanked the presenters.

### **Decision**

To note the update.

## **4. Pentland Hills Regional Park Operational Update**

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The Senior Natural Heritage Officer provided a verbal update on operations carried out in the Park for the period October 2017 to May 2018, outlining current staffing levels and adjustments to boundaries. This included the following:

### Biodiversity

- 10 surveys took place, 34 members of public attended (most ever)
- Bavelaw Marsh – wildflower meadow surveyed, cut and raked
- Wildflower meadow at Hillend was enlarged by cutting a bigger area 1700m<sup>2</sup> to 2440m<sup>2</sup>

### Interpretation

- Pentland Inspiration
- Website
- Facebook posts via Edinburgh Outdoors
- Guided Walk and activities
- Seasonal signage
- Doors Open Day 2108
- 50<sup>th</sup> Pentland Beacon in production, bigger edition due to it being the 50<sup>th</sup>

### Community Groups and Education

- Friends of the Pentlands
- Dean Park Primary involved in wildflower planting
- Fop and Melleny Anglers planted trees around the reservoir
- Woodlands School involved in general conservation jobs
- Duke of Edinburgh Award: (No Data for 2018 Yet)

## Harlaw Area

- In addition to the annual Livestock Worrying campaign event at Harlaw PHRP held a 'Responsible Access' event.
- Wildlife Garden Management
- Camping litter and fires
- Hooked on Harlaw ran again in July, very successful at engaging people with angling and access.
- Pond dipping for public held at the wildlife garden pond.
- FoP Tea and Cakes – successful fundraising at Harlaw in June, September, and October.
- Drystone dyking association continue to use Harlaw dykes for training and had repaired several fallen sections.

## Harlaw Water Levels

- Water level in Harlaw reservoir drastically low due to lack of rain all summer. Notices erected to warn of risk of slipping on steep muddy banks and getting stuck in mud.

## Bonaly Area

- Tree Management
- Car Park Ownership
- Fires
- Vandalism
- Storm damage
- Deer Rescue

## Harperrig, Threipmuir, Swanston, Hillend and Boghall

- Boghall Farm - bridge and set of steps had been replaced
- Hillend Country Park – a stile replaced with a self-closing gate at the top of the Ski slope.
- Leithhead - steps and a stile repaired
- Little Vantage Car Park - pot-holes filled in and grass cut
- Harperrig Reservoir
  - field gate replaced and fence and drystone wall repairs.
  - tree planting
  - completed a grant application for a defibrillator to be installed on the outside of Anglers Hut and available for all to use.
- Tree planting Green Cleugh

## Dreghorn, Castlelaw and Flotterstone to Carlops

- Picnicking and barbecues by the river
- Car parking
- Filming requests
- Eastside logging

Discussion too place and the following points were made:

- Regarding media, West Lothian Council would circulate material for Pentlands Regional Park.
- Woodland Schools in Currie was involved in general conservation work as one of the community groups.

- The Heritage Service had been approached by other organisations to carry out a branching out programmes.
- The Service tried to discourage people from having fires in the Harlaw Area, although it only had authority over Council land.
- Farmers appreciated the efforts of the staff to put out fires.
- The staff had taken measures such as putting up “no fires” posters, taken water to douse the fires and had asked landowners if they could take up 4x4 landrover. They were considering buying a special sprayer.
- One of the problems regarding the fires was that the fires appeared to be extinguished, but were continuing to burn underground.
- The water level at Harlaw Reservoir was set by SEPA. The lack of rain was responsible for the low water level, not the Hydro Scheme. Threipmuir reservoir now had water in it, therefore, hopefully Harlaw would recover.
- There had been a deluge of water on one section of the Water of Leith, however, this was not the responsibility of SEPA, as the burns feeding in to it were not controlled. It was only the reservoirs that were controlled by SEPA.
- There had been a constructive meeting about sustainable access for Harlaw House. There was no resolution yet and further meetings could take place. It was the responsibility of Balerno Village Trust (BVT) to compile the report.
- BVT wanted to lease Harlaw House not to own it.
- The transfer of the lease was the responsibility of the Council, who owned the property. The issue of access had to be resolved and a decision had to be made on the transfer of the lease.
- It was necessary to create a safe path from Balerno.
- It was necessary to take action regarding the Heritage Lottery Funding Bid.
- There had to be focus on replacing the Pentlands Regional Park Management Plan, which had to be in place to receive lottery funding.
- It was necessary to get funding and it might be possible to get contributions from the three local authorities
- It might be possible for Edinburgh and Lothian Greenbelt Trust to become involved.
- Hopefully an Environmental Impact Assessment would not be required.

The Convener thanked the Senior Natural Heritage Officer for her presentation.

### **Decision**

- 1) The Senior Natural Heritage Officer to send media information to West Lothian Council.
- 2) The Senior Natural Heritage Officer to contact SEPA in respect of the need to raise the water levels at the reservoir at Harlaw.
- 3) The Senior Natural Heritage Officer to circulate the presentation.
- 4) Committee Services to check out possible dates for the next meeting of the PHRP Consultative Forum in February 2019.

- 5) Chris Alcorn (West Lothian Council) to liaise with Charlie Cummings in ELGBT regarding possible funding.
- 6) David Jamieson (Greenspace and Cemeteries Manager) to arrange for officers to meet and discuss ways to progress the Heritage Lottery funding and this group to report back to the Vice-Convenor.
- 7) Each authority to confirm their position by 7 December on their ability to contribute to the Heritage Lottery Funding process and report to David Jamieson.
- 8) The Convenor to communicate to elected members in the three councils that they should attend the meeting of the Joint Committee if possible.

## 5 Any Other Business

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### 5.1 Meeting with Farmers and Landowners

The representative of the NFU reported that farmers and landowners used to hold meetings once a year and it might be useful to have these again.

It was confirmed that there had been a meeting in February 2018 and it was hoped to have another one.

#### **Decision**

The Convenor to discuss with the Senior Natural Heritage Officer, the possibility of holding a meeting of the farmers and landowners in January 2019.

## 6. Dates for Future Meetings

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Consultation Forum – To be confirmed.

Joint Committee – 31 May 2019.