

# Minutes

## Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee

2.00 pm, Thursday 27 January 2022 – Held by Microsoft Teams

**Present:**

**Voting Members:**

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

The Pentland Land Managers Association - Graham Barr

The Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust - Charlie Cumming

The Friends of the Pentland Hills - Hamish Clark

**Non-Voting Members:**

National Farmers Union – Bob Barr

Scottish Land and Estates – Stephen Young

Scottish Water – Gillian Hay

Scottish Natural Heritage - Janice Winning.

East Lothian Council (to be nominated).

Nature Scott - Ian Bray

**In attendance:**

Justin Venton (Midlothian Council), David Jamieson, Jessica Morgado, and Blair Ritchie (City of Edinburgh Council), Chris Alcorn (West Lothian Council) and Kieth Forrester from Police Scotland.

### 1. Welcome

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Councillor Gardiner welcomed all the new members and new voting members to the Joint Committee.

## 2. Minutes

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### Decision

To approve the minute of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee of 23 August 2021 as a correct record.

## 3. Operational Update

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Jessica Morgado (The Senior Natural Heritage Officer) provided a verbal operational update. She outlined the following issues:

### A VISITOR DESTINATION

- 11 reservoirs, around 10,000 hectares of countryside and 100km of waymarked paths. Located next to Edinburgh and other large urban settlement areas. Estimated 600,000 visitors in 2006.
- The Pentland Hills Had Become Very Busy All Year Round
- 4 Hot Spot Areas
- Focus on Reservoirs
- Impact on Land/Fishery Managers

### Public Engagement

- November 2020: 1,872 new respondents
- Questions on 4 Main Themes: parking, path access facilities, camping facilities, provision of toilet facilities and charging for car parking
- 64% in support of the introduction of car parking charges with 90% feeling that the money raised should be retained by the Regional Park for infrastructure improvements 66% said they would pay a fee or sop for more to access public toilets.

### Funding

- Party IF run three car parks infrastructure improvement 34K
- Are TIF round three permanent toilet provision £75 K
- Nature Scott bbgr fund round two: seasonal Rangers £64 K
- Nature Rd BP GR fund round two corn porta loos £32K RTIF strategic tourism. Infrastructure development applying fund: strategic plans for new access route 32K. Niche escort be pgr fund round two: seasonal estate workers £26K.
- Need to Scott be pgr fund round one: visitor management plan £16K.

### Summarising 2021

- Cold winter weather/Sunny days
- Increase in visitor numbers impacting farming activities/ fishing season

- Increase in dog ownership(new owners)
- Outdoor exerciseduringpandemic (new visitors not familiar with hills environment or understanding SOAC)
- Travel restrictions
- A fatality in a reservoir

### **Getting to the Hills**

- Existinginfrastructuresnot able to cope
- Car parkingdisplacement
- Limited links with public transport
- Limited Safe Routes for non-car users
- Existing limited toilet facilities shut

### **Harlaw car park car counter data**

- **2020:** average 370 vehicular visits every day between 07 July and 13 August
- **2021:** average of 281 vehicular visits every day between 01 June and 21 September 2021

### **Hot Spot Problems**

### **Hot Spot Solutions**

### **Reservoirs**

- Scottish Water is investigating ways to support responsible access through its enabling responsible access pilot over the next two years
- Improve signage como consider ways to improve user unity, promote water safety and responsible access
- Some of these initiatives may also be adopted by the city of Edinburgh Council and their phrp reservoirs if they prove effective

### **Reconnect with everyone**

### **Website: New look, new contact for our visitors**

### **Facebook Cologne promote SOA see, safety campaigns, oil life Wednesdays**

### **Penguin beacon: e newsletter sent to our key partners members**

- Sustainable income generation to invest in infrastructures
- Cultivate partnership working and improve communication a bleak visitor education
- Return of Pentland Hills Park Ranger service to engage with visitors
- Better understanding our visitors and how to make the hills a place for all to enjoy

- PHRP service funding 2020-22
- The City of Edinburgh Council revenue budget £165K
- Midlothian Council revenue budget £51K
- West Lothian Council revenue budget £19K
- Scottish Water £12.5K
- NatureScot funding (for months) £122K
- City of Edinburgh Council Extra Revenue Budget (2 months park Ranger posts in three months state worker post) £62K

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- That the number of annual users compared with 16 years ago, had greatly increased, but funding for the Regional Park had not matched it.
- Accurate measuring of usage might help with funding.
- People counters, linked to the internet would be available later in the year.

The Convener thanked the Scottish Government for the rural infrastructure fund bid and the Senior Natural Heritage Officer for organising the bid. It would be helpful to get new investment for the park. He was looking forward to the sustainable route to the hills, which would take pressure off car parks. Also, safety in the hills and the need to protect livestock was important.

### **Decision**

- 1) To thank the Senior Natural Heritage Officer for the verbal update and to note the update.
- 2) The Senior Natural Heritage Officer confirmed that there could potentially be penalties of £40 k or a 6 months jail sentence imposed for harming livestock.

## **4. Operation Boxy**

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Keith Forrest (Lothian and Borders Police) reported on Operation Boxy. He explained that in his new role as Officer for Southwest Edinburgh, he had recently taken over from Patricia Clark, who was unable to attend this meeting. It was intended to run Operation Boxy once more, which would be a targeted campaign over the busiest time of year. The local beat officer for the area could be contacted, if any issues arose. Police resources would be allocated and it was intended to work with partners to address anti-social behaviour in the Pentlands. This included irresponsible parking, wild camping, littering and damage to the hills or wildlife. There was also a focus on water safety and they intended to work with the Fire Service. It was necessary to circulate the message and the main thrust of the campaign was prevention, education and enforcement. The message would be sent out via social media, to indicate what

was responsible behaviour. Enforcement measures, fixed penalties, or warnings could be used, if people were breaking the law.

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- The need to avoid the imposition of fines or custodial sentences for harming livestock through education.
- Whether the Seasonal Park Rangers should be re-introduced.
- The need for a good working relationship between Police Scotland and the Park Rangers.
- To need to access more funding.
- The possible acquisition of a quad bike by Police Scotland.
- Quad bikes had been used in Midlothian and the Natural Heritage Service could help progress the police bid for funding for this.
- Funding was often more readily available in rural areas than urban areas for such items.
- Possible cooperation across the three divisions to utilise quad bikes.
- The increased usage of drones.
- The effectiveness of partnership working.

### **Decision**

- 1) To note the verbal report.
- 2) Police Scotland to check out the possibility of the police using off road motorcycles for the Pentlands. However, there would be a training element and health and safety element when considering the most appropriate vehicles for use on the Pentlands.

### **Declaration of interests**

Councillor Bruce declared a financial interest in the above item as he was as a paid employee of Police Scotland and took no further part in the proceedings for this item.

## **5. Car Park Improvements and Traffic management**

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Darren Ryan (Project Centre) provided a verbal report on car park improvements and traffic management.

### **Introduction**

The Council had identified a big increase in visitor numbers, which peaked over the Pandemic.

- There was an increase across the park, but a bigger increase across the popular sites.
- They had to look at a possible procurement exercise and construction, and to consider traffic management issues, and get possible solutions.

- He would refer to the existing environment in each car park and proposed measures to improve the situation.

### **Flotterston – Existing Car Park Arrangement**

- Lack of capacity
- Combination of bound and unbound surfaces
- Damage to pavements
- Illegal parking restricting access

### **Proposed Car Parking Arrangement – Option A**

- Create 23 new bays in the car park with 3 blue badge holders bays
- Create 5 larger parking spaces for caravans and minivans
- 2 Natsol Toilets
- 2 Electric car charging points serving 4 bays
- Proposed bike rack to accommodate 14 bikes
- Proposed resurfacing while keeping pavement type
- Impermeable area not increased
- Several trees and 332m<sup>2</sup> of grassed area to be removed

### **Proposed Car Parking Arrangement – Option B**

- 7 new bays and 3 new blue badge holder bays
- Area of tree felling limited to 105m<sup>2</sup>

### **Threipmuire - Existing Car Park Arrangement**

- Limited vehicle manoeuvrability
- Insufficient capacity with only one blue badge holder bay
- Flooding issues
- Illegal parking
- Generally, the surface was good apart for some pot holes

### **Threipmuire - Proposed Car Park Arrangement**

- Proposed bays delineation and car park extension to west providing turning opportunity
- 81 bays and 4 blue badge holder bays,
- 2 electric charging points serving 4 bays
- Bike rack for 10 bikes
- 2 natsol toilets
- 104m<sup>2</sup> of wooded area to be removed
- Proposed pot hole repairs
- Proposed material for extension of car park is same bituminous material, same as existing pavement
- Construction costs could be reduced by using unbound material
- Proposed combination of filter drain and soakway for attenuation

- Across all these car park, we will be looking at sustainable urban drainage system

### **Harlaw - Existing Car Park Arrangement**

- Car park capacity issues
- Parking on access road blocking access
- No bay demarcation
- Existing pavement generally in good condition

### **Harlaw – Proposed Car Park Arrangement**

- Proposed car park extension to south and bays delineation
- 56 bays and 4 blue badge holder bays
- 2 charging points serving 4 bays
- Proposed bike racks to accommodate 16 bikes
- Unbound pavement to reduce cost and reduce visual impact and provide drainage
- Assumed the filtration rate of unbound pavement on the extended area to be sufficient for adequate drainage.
- Verification through filtration test and drainage modelling on detailed design

### **Bonaly - Existing Car Park Arrangement**

- Narrow access and exit
- Unpaved car park with no bay delineation
- Ground becoming waterlogged after heavy rain reduced functionality of the car park
- Insufficient car park capacity
- No blue badge provision
- Illegal parking along the access obstructing access

### **Bonaly - Proposed Car Park Arrangement**

- Car park reconfigured and slight widening to north
- 56 bays and 3 blue badge holder bays
- 2 natsoil toilet and 2 electric charging points serving 4 bays
- Bike racks to accommodate about 10 bikes
- Unbound pavement for the car park extensions to reduce cost, visual impact and provide drainage
- Assumed filtration rate of unbound pavement and extended area to be sufficient for adequate drainage. Verification through filtration test and modelling as detailed design
- Across all the car parks, they were trying to minimise impact on the environment and remove as few trees as possible, to ensure that they did not provide hard surfaces so as to maintain trees. They were looking at traffic management measures, on the approaches to car parks, with the measures being fairly similar across all the car parks.

## Traffic Management

- Project Centre had considered the introduction of one or more of the following traffic management features at each location:
- Traffic calming measures
- Road markings
- Signage

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- To maximise pedestrian safety, consideration was being given to access routes maximising space, working with the Natural Heritage Service and land managers.
- Consideration would be given to the appropriate use of bollards, ensuring there was no impact on maintenance.
- It was not possible to use of the old toilet blocks, due to distance factors. Additionally, these were not the finalised designs.
- The need for consultations with land managers before measures were implemented.
- There were ongoing discussions regarding power for car park charges, which would be factored in.
- Two options were presented for Flotterston Car Park as there were still some decisions to be made, and for delivery of the proposal cost effectively.
- Charging visitors for parking had been identified as a good source of revenue, but there was not much reference to it.
- Consideration for infrastructure had been done as sympathetically as possible, considering options such as solar power ticket machines.

## Decision

- 1) Project Centre to ensure the best use of bollards, the location of toilet blocks and to check the locations and connections for car charging points, taking into account the views of the land managers.
- 2) To note that there was a problem with the A702 at Flotterston and that the Midlothian division of the Police had been removing cars this month from this location.

## 6. Visitor Management Plan for the Pentland Hills Regional Park

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Charlie Cumming (The Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust) reported that the Pentland Hills Regional Park (PHRP) popularity has increased over the years, with more visitors seeking to exercise in the hills and traffic management pressures on the PHRP have been exacerbated during the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

A strategic plan was required to ensure that the visitors choosing to exercise and come to the Regional Park had a good experience and did not have a negative impact on this fragile ecosystem and also on those whose lives and livelihoods were linked to the hills.



Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- That the allocation of funding did not reflect land managers' concerns about growing pressures caused by the increasing number of visitors.
- The plan was a dynamic document and would be updated annually after consultation with land managers. At the time it was primarily a response to Covid and was a mechanism for getting funding.
- This was essentially the first attempt at the plan and there should be a working group to progress the document.
- It was necessary to align the plan with the stated aims of the minute of agreement.
- The plan should address issues such as the path network, repairs, health and safety, crop damage and visitor management.
- A path audit was undertaken in 2016 which identified problems, but there was insufficient funding to deliver the recommendations in the report.
- Consideration should also be given to the management of operations.
- Funding from the charges would remain in the park and feed into infrastructure.
- The timescales of a three month turnaround were excessively tight to have a fully encompassing plan. It was carried out very quickly to access funding.
- Much of the funding was focused on Edinburgh, rather than West Lothian, who would like to contribute to the draft.
- For this plan, there was a focus on hotspots, but for the next version, the plan would be more holistic and would be more inclusive of West Lothian.
- What were timelines the for the construction and completion of car parks at hot spot locations?
- Regarding the timelines the for the construction and completion of car parks, discussions were taking place for the funding for the toilets and car park at the end of March. Construction would take place in 2022 of car parks.
- That the officers should continue to work on the draft, but the general direction of the plan was satisfactory.

### **Decision**

- 1) To note the contents of the draft Visitor Management Plan and success in realising a number of its actions during 2021.
- 2) To provide officers with feedback so that a finalised Plan could be completed, and its actions initiated in advance of summer 2022.
- 3) To note that the Plan had focussed on hot spots, but for the next draft a more holistic approach would be adopted, including all sections of the Pentlands.
- 4) To thank the officers and all parties for their work on the draft and continue to make improvements, however, the general direction of progress was satisfactory and the Committee would consider this on an annual basis and make any necessary amendments.

(Reference- report by the Executive Director of Place, circulated)

## 7. Budget Update

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David Jamieson (Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries Manager) provided a verbal update on the budget. He had received feedback from the three local authorities and Scottish Water. The position seemed to be as follows. Midlothian had contributed to a 3% increase in budget contribution for the next financial year. West Lothian were able to contribute 5% a year for three successive years. Scottish Water had not yet determined what their contribution would be and would look for further feedback regarding the nature of the benefits that they received from the activities in the Pentland Hills and the Pentland Hills team. The City of Edinburgh Council could not yet confirm their budget, but there were no reductions to the budget presently forecast and there would be an increase associated with the usual uplift. It would be approximately 5%, although there were significant budget savings required across all City Council budgets from the financial year 2023/2024 onwards.

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- Regarding the contribution from West Lothian, there were financial constraints in West Lothian with cut across services. West Lothian Council had contributed to car parking charges and had helped to pay for the consultant and hoped that car parking charges would help for the future.
- That there had been big developments in Penicuik, with a probable increase of people using the hills in Midlothian and whether the contribution from Midlothian would cover that.
- The Convener would liaise with Midlothian Council regarding funding. The value of the Regional Park to their residents was clear.
- Place-making was part of Scottish Government policy and Scottish Water were committed to that.

### Decision

- 1) To note the Budget Update.
- 2) To note that the value of the Pentlands to all residents and the Convener to contact Midlothian Council regarding funding issues.
- 3) To note that Scottish Water was having discussions regarding Scottish Government guidelines on place making and funding issues and they would update the Committee at the next meeting.

## 8. Revised Minute of Agreement

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David Jamieson (Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries Manager) provided details of the extension of the membership of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee to include voting representation from The Pentland Land Managers Association, the Friends of the Pentland Hills and the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust. This required that the existing Minute of Agreement between the three local authorities be updated to reflect these changes. It also provided an opportunity to refresh the wording of the Minute of

Agreement given that operational circumstances, organisational nomenclature and relevant legislation had changed since the existing agreement was determined in 2004.

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- If there were no questions, the report could be delegated to officers and could be signed off. But if changes were required, they would be made.
- The draft minute had been checked by Legal Services in West Lothian Council, but they needed more time and would like to see the original minute. Only minor changes were anticipated.
- This was welcomed as it would present the opportunity to see the original minute and make the updated minute more relevant.
- Decisions relating to funding were decided by elected members. However, some grants were only available to community initiatives and land managers who were unable to vote on funding.
- Only Councillors could vote on public money allocation, but the scenario described above had not been considered and would have to be checked with Legal Services and/or Corporate Governance in Edinburgh Council.

### **Decision**

- 1) To consider the proposed amendments to the Pentland Hills Regional Park Minute of Agreement.
- 2) To approve an amended Pentland Hills Regional Park Minute of Agreement for confirmatory signature by relevant parties **in principle**.
- 3) To note that the Minute of Agreement defined the purpose, membership and arrangement of the Consultative Forum, as well as its governance relationship with the Joint Committee.
- 4) To note that there should be liaison between the legal teams of the three councils to agree the wording of the revised MOA and any major amendments would be brought back to committee.
- 5) To note that it would be advantageous to have access to the original minute of agreement of 1986.
- 6) To note that only elected members could vote on public moneys, but to acknowledge that some funding was only available to land managers and that they could not at present vote on the allocation of these. Consequently, to check out with Gavin King and/or Legal Services if it was appropriate to amend paragraph 6.1 of the MOA to reflect this.

(Reference- report by the Executive Director of Place, circulated)

## **9. Any Other Urgent Committee Business**

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**The Convener ruled the following items urgent in terms of standing order 4.5 in order that they be dealt with timeously.**

### **(a) Friends of the Pentlands - re-naming the Pentland Way**

Hamish Gray (the representative of the Friends of the Pentlands (FOP)) indicated that they had asked Ordnance Survey (OS) to name the Pentland Way as a long distance path in the next revision of the relevant maps. (The Pentland Way was the long distance path along the Pentlands from Dunsyre to Swanston.) OS first needed the support of relevant Local Authorities for this. The Senior Natural Heritage Officer's predecessor thought approval of the section of the Pentland Way through the Regional Park should best come from the Joint Committee. Due to a combination of circumstances the Joint Committee's approval has not been sought so far.

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- Naming and advertising attracted more traffic, more wear and would require more funding for maintenance.
- This might go in conjunction with routes being upgraded with consultation with land managers.
- At present there were no arrangements for the additional funding being invested in maintenance.
- If there were outstanding questions, further information could be provided.
- The proposed route was a linear route which ran from Dunsyre, to the Nine Mile Burn, the Tops Route with the Kips, Scald Law then Turn House. It then dropped down into Glencorse, went round Castlelaw and terminated at Swanson.
- Discussions between the FOP and NatureScot might be beneficial.
- NatureScot maintained a list of long-distance routes.
- The issuing of plans of paths sometimes had a negative impact as, if there was no obvious route, walkers sometimes caused damage fields.
- Perhaps the FOP should liaise with land managers to resolve this.
- The FOP carried out a considerable amount of work in the Pentland Hills. If having paths named in the Pentland might be useful to attract funding, their proposals should be supported.

### **Decision**

- 1) The Senior Natural Heritage Officer to work with the Friends of the Pentlands and the stakeholders, on the possible re-naming of the Pentlands Way, to look at the funding possibilities and report to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 2) Consultation to take place between the Friends of the Pentlands, land managers and the Senior Natural Heritage Officer, address the points that have been raised and to report back to the Committee.

### **(b) Climate Change Action Plan**

The Convener raised the issue of sustainability and asked if the Natural Heritage Service could put together a climate change action plan, looking how it would be possible to deliver each of the three Local Authorities' (LA's) climate change agendas across the park. The 3 LA's had slightly different climate action plans so he wanted to

see if it was possible to support that and look at potential funding for private land owners and land managers. It was really looking at the climate change net zero which the LA's were committed to and seeing if there were funding opportunities.

Discussion took place and the following points were made:

- Producing an action plan for climate change was a welcome development and joint working with all parties should be encouraged.
- There should be discussions to look at funding options.
- The possible marketing of Pentland produce could be explored.
- There could be consultation with officers, land managers and all relevant parties to determine what could be achieved.
- A report could be brought back to the next Joint Committee and this issue could be also be addressed also at the Consultative Forum.
- There were funding options available such as the Restoration Fund and Nature Recovery Fund from the Scottish Government.

### **Decision**

- 1) The Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries Manager and the Senior Natural Heritage Officer to check out potential funding for this to support the climate change reduction agenda.
- 2) The Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries Manager to consult all relevant parties to get their input and to bring back a report/discussion paper to the next meeting of the Committee to address climate change.

## **10. Valedictory**

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The Convener thanked David Jamison for his contribution to the work of the Joint Committee and wished him well.

The Convener indicated but this was his last meeting as Convener of the Joint Committee for this administration. It was good to see progress, especially extending the voting membership and he thanked all the officers and members for the contribution.

## **11. Dates for Future Meetings**

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Committee Services to liaise with the Natural Heritage Service to arrange dates for the next meetings of the Consultative Forum and the Joint Committee.

### **Decision**

PHRP Consultation Forum – To be confirmed.

PHRP Joint Committee – To be confirmed.