



WARD 5: EAST LIVINGSTON & EAST CALDER LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

PENTLAND HILLS REGIONAL PARK STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017 - 2027

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update Ward 5 elected members about the proposed revision to the Strategic Management Plan for the Pentland Hills Regional Park (PHRP) and the council's proposed response to this.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Local Area Committee notes and considers the following recommendations which are intended to be submitted to Council Executive for approval:

1. notes the report and the content of Appendix 1 which outlines some key questions for the revision of the PHRP Strategic Management Plan;
2. notes the proposed West Lothian Council response to the proposed revision to the PHRP Strategic Management Plan; and
3. offers any other comments to be forward to the PHRP managing authority, the City of Edinburgh Council.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• focusing on our customers' needs;• being honest, open and accountable;• making best use of our resources; and• working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	<p>The West Lothian Local Development Plan (WLLDP) was adopted in September 2018. Policies ENV 13 & 14 support and protect the Pentland Hills Regional Park.</p> <p>There are no SEA, Equality, Health or Risk Assessment issues.</p>
III Implications for scheme of delegation	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance indicators	None.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 8 - We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.

VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	The council contributes c£17k per annum to the operation of the Regional Park.
VII Consideration at PDSP	Reported to Environment PDSP on 30 October 2018 and indicated potential car park charging, although not to be pursued at West Lothian's two small rural car parks, should be kept to minimum and any funds clearly directed for Regional Park use only. Approved at Council Executive on 13 November 2018
VIII Other consultations	None.
D. TERMS OF REPORT	

D1 Background

West Lothian Council co-operates with the City of Edinburgh Council and Midlothian Council in the management of the Pentland Hills Regional Park (PHRP). The area of the park in West Lothian is only around 10% of the designated park area.

The PHRP Ranger Services is managed by the lead authority, the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC). The regional park was established in 1986 and was initially managed by the former Lothian Regional Council with structural funding from the former Countryside Commission for Scotland. Since then the park has adapted to local government re-organisation in 1996 and significant changes in external funding, including the withdrawal of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) funding in 2006/7.

Over 600,000 people are estimated to use the regional park annually. The proposal by Christine Grahame MSP in 2014/15 to extend the regional park further across the whole southern hill range in West Lothian, South Lanarkshire and Scottish Borders was abandoned in early 2016 after failing to gain support from the Scottish Government and all five local authorities involved due to potential additional costs for staffing and revenue.

D2 Revision of the Strategic Management Plan (SMP)

The current Strategic Management Plan which covers the operation of the PHRP runs from 2007 to 2017. It is now due for updating and renewal. Initially CEC approached the constituent authorities for some funding to employ consultants to undertake the review. However, due to other budget commitments WLC was unable to provide any funding. No funding was available from Midlothian Council.

As Scottish Natural Heritage had funded consultants to undertake a series of workshops related to the ecosystems services produced by the Regional Park in 2016/17, it was felt the findings of this work would be a good basis for the new Strategic Management Plan that should be progressed by officers.

The original aims of the Regional Park were set out in the designation order when it was established in 1986. These were:

- *To retain the essential character of the hills as a place for the peaceful enjoyment of the countryside;*
- *Caring for the hills so that the landscape and the habitat is protected and enhanced;*
- *Within this caring framework to encourage responsible public enjoyment of the hills;*
- and*

- *Co-ordination of these aims so that they co-exist with farming and other land uses within the Pentland Hills Regional Park.*

These aims were reflected in the previous Strategic Management Plan, but the current PHRP Manager has proposed a series of questions of the last Consultative Forum in early Summer to help inform the new Strategic Management Plan (See Appendix 1).

Two key aspects related to whether there are any new issues that should be considered and whether there should be a priority set for income generation to support increased use of the PHRP and its required maintenance e.g. car parking, footpaths.

It would be worth introducing to the revised Strategic Management Plan the future effect of climate change on the landscape and wildlife of the Regional Park as well as rural businesses within the Park. Due to changes and reductions in local authority budgets, all avenues of revenue generation should now be considered such as charging for rural car parks associated with the Pentland Hills, with the explicit caveat that any revenue raised should be “ring-fenced” and used for maintenance purposes within the Regional Park and that this message is communicated to the general public about any such forthcoming proposals.

Other Regional Park related issues to West Lothian

Two large woodland creation schemes have been submitted to the Forestry Commission Scotland for grant aid. Both straddle the A70 at West Cairns Plantation and on the boundary of the Park at Whitelea. These should be supported as they contribute to the Central Scotland Green Network concept.

A new timber footbridge has been constructed across the Water of Leith on the boundary between West Lothian and the City of Edinburgh Council areas at Leithhead. The bridge is on a right of way and was originally replaced around 25 years ago, but was showing signs of deterioration. Publicity is to be organised around investment in this feature.

The council continues to explore with Education Services and Countryside Services the ability to increase the number of school groups that can experience the Pentland Hills. Friends of the Pentlands are in contact with Beattie School, Craigshill as part of their “Access for All” programme.

E. CONCLUSION

West Lothian Council continues to support the Pentland Hills Regional Park. The Park offers rural access opportunities to West Lothian residents and beyond. To continue to operate the Regional Park the Strategic Management Plan needs revised. This will allow for external grants to be sought for various projects across the Park.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

PHRP Strategic Management Plan (2007-2017)

http://www.pentlandhills.org/downloads/file/46/pentland_hills_regional_park_plan_2007_-_2017

Appendices / Attachments - one

Appendix One: PHRP Strategic Management Plan (2017-2027): questions and responses

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