

## **Draft Local Place Plan Policy Section: Pentlands Access, Landscape and Recreation**

### **Theme Area: Pentlands Hills Regional Park**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

To deliver a safe, well-connected and low-impact active access corridor between Balerno and the Pentlands, while safeguarding the landscape, biodiversity and rural character that make the area distinctive.

#### **Local Context**

The Pentland Hills Regional Park is a scenic 10,000-hectare landscape southwest of Edinburgh, offering 100km of maintained trails for hiking, biking, and riding across 35 square miles of hills. Three local authorities cover the Park, which is a mixture of publicly-owned land (such as Hillend, Bonaly, and Harlaw), and private land used for farming and sport shooting. Reservoirs dot the landscape, providing homes for many birds and mammals.

The **Pentland Hills** form one of Balerno's defining landscape assets and are highly valued by residents for walking, cycling, informal recreation, wildlife, scenery and wellbeing. The **Harlaw Reservoir** and **Threipmuir Reservoir** area functions as an important gateway between Balerno and the wider Pentlands.

Consultation responses show strong support for improving access to the Pentlands, particularly through safer off-road walking and cycling links, better path quality, clearer wayfinding and modest visitor facilities. At the same time, respondents consistently emphasised that the Pentlands' open landscape, rural character, biodiversity and tranquillity should be protected from overdevelopment.

#### **Policy Objective**

**To deliver a safe, well-connected and low-impact active access corridor between Balerno and the Pentlands, while safeguarding the landscape, biodiversity and rural character that make the area distinctive.**

#### **The Local Place Plan proposal supports:**

- safer and more attractive walking, wheeling and cycling routes between Balerno and the **Pentland Hills**, particularly towards **Harlaw Reservoir** and **Threipmuir Reservoir**;

This should include:

- safer off-road links wherever feasible;
  - improved crossings where roads interrupt routes;
  - better connections from residential areas, schools and village facilities;
  - path design that is inclusive for a wide range of users, including families, older people and less confident walkers or cyclists.
- ongoing improvement and maintenance of paths, including drainage, erosion repair and clearer wayfinding;

Measures should include:

- low-key signage, route marking and walking-time information;
  - interpretation that promotes understanding of landscape, heritage, ecology and responsible access.
- low-impact visitor facilities at established gateway locations, at Harlaw Visitor Centre and Threipmuir car park such as toilets, seating and cycle parking;
  - protection of open views, biodiversity, tranquillity and the overall rural character of the **Pentland Hills**;

Proposals should protect and enhance the special qualities of the **Pentland Hills**, including:

- open views and skyline character; habitats, woodland and biodiversity;
- the sense of tranquillity and escape from the urban area; the overall rural and natural setting.

Development that would urbanise, visually intrude upon or cumulatively erode these qualities should be resisted.

- better management of visitor pressure, litter, fires and camping in sensitive areas.

### **Community Benefit**

The **Pentland Hills** are one of Balerno's most valued local assets. Residents use the hills and the **Harlaw Reservoir / Threipmuir Reservoir** area for walking, cycling, informal recreation and access to nature.

This proposal will benefit Balerno residents, visitors to the Pentland Hills Regional Park and owners of the area. It will:

- Promote healthier lifestyles through active travel
- Reduce traffic congestion at car parks and environmental impact
- Enhance and improve physical and mental well-being through better access to outdoor facilities and nature

- Through greater environmental awareness it should protect nature and farming land by encouraging people to use appropriate paths
- encourage people to think positively and act responsibly toward the Pentland Hills
- help people understand and enjoy the hills in safety.
- Through improved visitor access it could provide an economic boosts for local, nature-based tourism and businesses

## Balerno Local Place Plan – Pentlands

### Draft Proposals

Pent 1	Create a formal proposal for a <b>safe off-road walking and cycling route</b> linking Balerno with <b>Harlaw Reservoir</b> and <b>Threipmuir Reservoir</b> .
Pent 2	Support a programme of <b>incremental path upgrades</b> rather than major new infrastructure
Pent 3	Install a coordinated network of: route markers from Balerno to the hills; walking-time signage; low-key interpretation on ecology, heritage and responsible access
Pent 4	Low-impact visitor facilities at gateway locations, facilities such as toilets; bike parking; seating; modest seasonal refreshment provision
Pent 5	Development that would urbanise, visually intrude upon or cumulatively erode the Landscape, biodiversity and rural character qualities should be resisted.
Pent 6	Recreational use of the Pentlands should be managed to minimise damage to landscape and habitats.
Pent 7	Parking management measures at <b>Harlaw Reservoir</b> and <b>Threipmuir Reservoir</b> should prioritise managing congestion and protecting local access rather than maximising revenue.
Pent 8 – Manage camping	Support a local management approach for the Pentlands based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● designated camping areas only (if any)</li> <li>● no fires / no disposable barbecues</li> <li>● seasonal ranger enforcement</li> <li>● clearer visitor information</li> </ul>
Pent 9 – Ban camping	Camping to be restricted in the Pentland Regional Park