



Consultation on possible expansion of the Pentland Hills Regional Park

Introduction

Christine Graham MSP has launched a consultation on a possible expansion of the Pentland Hills Regional Park. The consultation papers can be found on the Scottish Parliament website at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/gettinginvolved/73694.aspx>.

An outcome of the consultation could be the tabling of a Members Bill before the Scottish Parliament.

The consultation asks for responses to a number of specific questions, and BCC is keen to know the views of Balerno residents on the proposals, and is publishing this paper therefore on its website with the request that any views be made known to the Council by not later than 10 May to enable the Council to respond by not later than the deadline of 23rd May.

Background

The Pentland Hills Regional Park as currently designated was created and governed by a statutory order made under section 48(A) of the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 as supported by the Pentland Hills Regional Parks (Scotland) Regulations 1981.

Initially the Regional Park was operated by Lothian Regional Council which made a Structure Plan to guide the Pentland Hills Regional Park policies and management. Following local government re-organisation in 1997, Lothian Regional Council was disbanded and its functions superseded by the three unitary local authorities comprising the City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian Council and West Lothian Council. The policies relevant to the Pentland Hills Regional Park contained within the former Lothian Regional Council's Subject Local Plan were then incorporated into the local plans of the respective three new unitary authorities. This remains the position with the Pentland Hills Regional Park currently covered by the City of Edinburgh Council's Finalised Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan (2003); Midlothian Council's Adopted Local Plan (2003) and the West Lothian Local Plan Finalised (2005). It is anticipated that the upcoming Local development Plan

The majority of the land is in private ownership, with the City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian Council and West Lothian Council all having statutory duties to their constituent parts of the Park. The City of Edinburgh Council is the leading authority of the Regional Park, with the City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service providing the Park services.

The Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee meets twice a year to make decisions regarding the running of the Regional Park. The Committee comprises of Councillors from the three partner local authorities; City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian Council and West Lothian Council. The Committee is supported by senior officers from the three partner local authorities, Scottish Water and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The aims of the Regional Park are

- 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;



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

The Consultation

The proposal which is most relevant to Balerno is set out at para 25 and would 'incorporate the area of Balerno also marked on the map annexed. Currently Balerno provides a main gateway into the Regional Park and therefore it makes practical sense for it to be included within any plan to extend the boundary of the Regional Park'.

Questions

The questions asked in the consultation are as follows: -

1. Do you support the aim of the proposed Bill to extend the boundary to include the entire Pentland Hills range? Please indicate "yes/no/undecided" and explain the reasons for your response.
2. Where should the southernmost boundary be located? Please explain the reasons for your response.
3. Should the western boundary be expanded to include the area around Balerno? Please explain the reasons for your answer?
4. Do you agree that legislation is a necessary and appropriate means of addressing the issues identified?
5. What (if any) would be the main practical advantages of the legislation proposed? What (if any) would be the disadvantages?
6. What is your assessment of the likely financial/resource implications (if any) of the proposed Bill to you or your organisation? What (if any) other significant financial implications are likely to arise?
7. Is the proposed Bill likely to have any substantial positive or negative implications for equality? If it is likely to have a substantial negative implication, how might this be minimised or avoided?
8. Do you have any other comments on or suggestions relevant to the proposal?

Responding to BCC's consultation

BCC would be very grateful for any comments which you might wish to make on the proposal to allow us to make an informed response before 23 May.

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