

CONSERVATION ADVISORY GROUP

At a meeting of the Committee
held on 25th March 2003 at 2.00pm

PRESENT: Councillor SJ Agnew - Chairman
Councillor NN Cathcart – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Councillor RF Collinson Councillor RGR Smith
Councillor Dr JA Heap Councillor AW Wyatt
Councillor Dr JPR Orme

Co-opted Member Councillor Mrs MP Course

Councillors RF Bryant, Mrs JM Healey and Mrs DSK Spink (Portfolio Holder for Conservation) attended the meeting by invitation.

Councillor JH Stewart sent his apologies for absence.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In connection with Minute no. 3 (Archaeological Initiatives and the Monument Management Project), Councillor SJ Agnew declared a personal interest as Chairman of The Friends of Roman Road and Fleam Dyke.

In connection with Minute no. 10 (Eversden and Wimpole Woods), Councillor SJ Agnew declared a personal interest as a member of the Cambridge Bat Group.

2. MINUTES

The Group authorised the Chairman to sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2003.

In response to a query from Councillor Dr JPR Orme, Councillor RF Collinson confirmed that the third bullet point (seeking the avoidance of possible duplication) of Minute no. 7 (Proposed Historic Resource and Cultural Centre) had been accurately recorded.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL INITIATIVES AND THE MONUMENT MANAGEMENT PROJECT IN SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE – 2002-2003 AND 2003-2004

Stephen Macauley (Project Manager with the Archaeological Field Unit at Cambridgeshire County Council) and Aileen Connor (Archaeological Project Officer with the County Council) made a slide presentation to the Advisory Group, summarising the basis upon which the Monument Management Project (“MMP”) operates.

Members then considered a report highlighting progress being made with the MMP, and seeking ongoing and enhanced financial support for the Project.

Noting the significance, to the MMP as a whole, of archaeology in South Cambridgeshire, Councillor AW Wyatt proposed, and was seconded by Councillor Mrs MP Course, that the initiatives being addressed be identified in the form of a book, which could then be made available to members of the public. During the course of the debate, alternative methods of publicising the

Project's aims were identified as being production of a CD-ROM, and publication of a series of articles in the *South Cambs Magazine*. The Chairman acknowledged these suggestions, and asked that the Group be consulted further before any decision was made to issue specific leaflets which, he noted, tended to have a smaller readership than the magazine.

The Vice-Chairman endorsed the initiatives in principle, but urged caution in guarding against over-management, which might have a detrimental effect on the "atmospheric presence" of particular sites. In response, Mr Macauley explained that management schemes had first to be endorsed by English Heritage.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** to the Portfolio Holder for Conservation:

- (1) that Option (a) contained in paragraph 7 of the Conservation Manager's report be endorsed, and that the allocation be made of £5,000 from the Conservation Portfolio budget to contribute to the Monument Management Programme in 2003/04 and the work programme set out in paragraph 5 of the report;
- (2) that the County Archaeologists be invited to present a progress report on the development of the Monument Management Programme and developing archaeological initiatives early in 2003-04 for consideration and prioritisation by the Conservation Advisory Group;
- (3) that officers explore the possibility of producing a booklet setting out the principle objectives and achievements of the Monument Management Project, in consultation with the Conservation Advisory Group, where appropriate; and
- (4) that officers consider preparing a series of relevant articles for inclusion in future issues of the *South Cambs Magazine*, and explore the feasibility of designing such articles so they can eventually be grouped together by interested readers as a stand-alone guide.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAINING EXCAVATION AT FULBOURN

Aileen Connor, Archaeological Projects Officer with Cambridgeshire County Council, made a short presentation to Members, highlighting local public interest in archaeology. The excavation in Fulbourn would be carried out during the last two weeks in August 2003 and the first two weeks in September. Members of the public would be able to participate in the excavation for either one, two, three or all four weeks. The County Council expected between 12 and 15 people each week, with a total of about 50 people over the four week period. The public would also be able to visit the site to view progress.

Members then considered a report on the scheme.

It was confirmed that the cost of the initiative would be £150 per person per week. While acknowledging the educational value, Members discussed, at some length, the financial implications. In particular, it was noted that the contribution being sought from South Cambridgeshire District Council amounted to one third of the total cost. Councillor AW Wyatt proposed that a more proportionate figure would be appropriate, and suggested that the District Council contribute no more than £4,000. This was seconded by Councillor NN Cathcart and supported by the Group.

The Portfolio Holder said that any financial contribution from South Cambridgeshire District Council should be used to benefit as many residents as possible from within the District. She undertook to reassess the relative financial contributions being made by all of the partners involved in the project.

Councillor RGR Smith observed that that such an initiative might act as a way of recruiting archaeological staff, whom the County Council had difficulty in attracting by conventional means. Aileen Connor indicated that the use of metal detectors on private land should not necessarily be discouraged, so long as their operators shared information gleaned from their use with the County Council.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** to the Portfolio Holder that this short-term archaeological educational programme be supported as a partnership initiative with the County Council archaeologists, and that the sum equivalent to one third of the total or £4,000 (whichever is less) be allocated from the Heritage Initiative Fund for 2003-04 to support the project.

The Conservation Advisory Group **AGREED** that the County Archaeologists should present a report on the results of the initiative and its implications to the Conservation Advisory Group at its meeting scheduled to take place on 10th September 2003.

5. HORNINGSEA JUBILEE GARDEN

The Advisory Group considered a report seeking the financial support of an initiative by Horningsea Parish Council to create a public park. The Conservation Manager highlighted the financial aspects outlined in paragraph 6 of the report.

Councillor SJ Kime (local Member) had sent apologies for not being able to attend this meeting. It was reported that he fully supported the initiative.

The Portfolio Holder endorsed the initiative in principle, but argued that, as an ongoing recreational project, discussion should take place between the Conservation and Community Development departments to determine from which budgets funding should be taken, and in what proportions. It was noted that, in some instances, District Council support was a pre-requisite to funding becoming available from other sources. Nevertheless, Councillor RF Collinson stated that the overall contribution from the Council should not exceed £5,000.

Future maintenance of the garden was a significant issue, and the Conservation Manager assured Members that this would be addressed by means of a Maintenance Plan to be prepared by Horningsea Parish Council.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder support Horningsea Parish Council's Jubilee Garden initiative in principle, and liaise with the Portfolio Holder for Community Development to determine a corporate capital grant not exceeding £5,000, such grant sum to be allocated proportionately from the Heritage Initiative Fund for 2003-04 and from the appropriate budget within the Community Services section.

6. WATTS' WOOD, COMBERTON

The Advisory Group considered a request from Comberton Parish Council to buy Watts' Wood from the District Council, subject to independent valuation.

Members noted that the Cabinet could agree to sell at less than market value in certain circumstances. The Portfolio Holder pointed out that the Parish Council had maintained the wood for twenty years, and the Council should cite this as justification for disposing of the land for a nominal consideration.

Comberton Parish Council would be liable to meet its own legal fees.

Councillor RF Collinson supported sale for a nominal sum, observing that this would save the Parish Council money, which could then be used to maintain the wood. He reminded the Group that the late Bill Watts had submitted a series of detailed reports to the Council and, should it be possible to retrieve these reports from the Council's archives, they would form interesting reading.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that Watts' Wood, Comberton be transferred to Comberton Parish Council for a nominal sum, subject to the Portfolio Holder receiving appropriate advice from the Head of Legal Services and to the Parish Council meeting its own legal expenses and entering into an approved scheme securing its future management of the wood and safeguarding public access to the wood..

(Malcolm Wright, Chairman of Comberton Parish Council, addressed the meeting. Councillor SA Harangozo (local Member) was unable to attend the meeting, but had expressed support for transfer at a nominal value)

7. CONSERVATION AWARD SCHEME

The Advisory Group considered a report on a proposed Conservation Awards Scheme for 2003 encompassing both the natural and built environments, for which Members expressed a strong preference for distinct schemes, rather than an all-embracing joint one.

The Advisory Group discussed the establishment of a sub-Group of Members that could assist the Conservation Manager in formulating details of the scheme.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** to the Portfolio Holder that the Conservation Awards Scheme be held in 2003.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RESOLVED** that a sub-Group be established to determine the classification of entries into the competition and the criteria against which those entries should be considered. such sub-Group to consist of the Conservation Manager and Councillors Mrs MP Course, Dr JA Heap, Dr JPR Orme and AW Wyatt.

8. S/0003/03/O – BABRAHAM JALL MASTERPLAN

The Conservation Manager summarised progress to date in determining a Masterplan relating to development proposals for Babraham Hall.

Councillor RF Collinson regretted the fact that no formal presentation was being given. However, it was noted that members of the Development and Conservation Control Committee would be visiting the site on 31st March

2003, and suggested that those members of the Advisory Group who were not members of the Development and Conservation Control Committee might like to join that visit.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED**

- (1) that the Portfolio Holder inform the Development and Conservation Control Committee that the Advisory Group recognises the efforts made to accommodate previously raised concerns and that it welcomes the principles on which the Master Plan (dated 21 February 2003) is based; and
- (2) that the Portfolio Holder agrees a form of words to be included in the reports presented to the Development and Conservation Control Committee in respect of this matter.

9. DESIGN GUIDE

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on the progress being made with the Design Guide Project.

The Conservation Manager circulated a work plan.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RESOLVED**

- (1) to support the Design Guide project on the basis of the revised programme and to appoint Councillor SJ Agnew (with Councillor NN Cathcart as his substitute) to work with the Conservation Portfolio Holder on the Officer Steering Group leading the project; and
- (2) to agree, with the Portfolio Holder, a press release to be issued in April 2003 to promote the Design Guide project as the first stage of the consultation process.

10. DESIGNATION OF EVERSDEN AND WIMPOLE WOODS AS A SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSI) AND PROPOSAL TO REDESIGNATE THE WOODS AS A SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)

The Advisory Group considered a report on the redesignation of Eversden and Wimpole woods as an amended and extended Site of Special Scientific Interest and proposal to place an additional designation on the woods, that of a Special Area of Conservation. A major issue was the consequences for the barbestelle bat – a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the EC Habitats Directive.

In response to a question from Councillor Dr JA Heap, the Ecology Officer said that the management of SSSIs and SACs was a responsibility of English Nature and the National Trust (the believed landowner), while South Cambridgeshire District Council would simply abide by the designations in terms of their impacts upon the planning systems for the designated sites.

Councillor RF Bryant (local Member) welcomed the proposal in principle, adding that the Parish Council was also supportive. His only reservation was the possibility that designation as an SAC might further restrict public access to the woods. The Ecology Officer admitted that public access might be restricted if, for example, such access were seen to have an adverse impact on the bat population.

Councillor Dr JA Heap argued that Members were unable to make a judgement on this matter until they had been given an opportunity to consider a Management Plan for the woods. The Portfolio Holder added that footpaths through the woods must remain accessible by members of the public.

The Conservation Advisory Group **NOTED** the report and was minded to recommend to the Portfolio Holder Options 2 and 3 contained therein. However, Members took the view that they needed more information, and instructed the Ecology Officer to invite a representative of English Nature to attend the next meeting of the Conservation Advisory Group, at which time a formal recommendation could be made to the Portfolio Holder.

11. PRESERVING AND ENHANCING OUR HERITAGE RESOURCES: A CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The Conservation Advisory Group received a report on, and the proposed contents page of, the Council's Conservation Strategy.

The Chairman announced that the strategy document would be circulated to all members of the Advisory Group prior to the next meeting, when the matter would be discussed fully, and appropriate recommendations would be made.

12. CHURCH OF ST. DENIS, EAST HATLEY

The Conservation Manager gave a verbal update, and undertook to present a formal report to the next meeting of the Conservation Advisory Group.

13. DATES OF MEETINGS

Members received a list of dates for meetings of the Conservation Advisory Group up to, and including, 21st April 2004.

The meeting closed at 5.00pm
