

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Conservation Advisory Group held on
Wednesday, 21 April 2004

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

Councillors: Mrs MP Course Dr JA Heap
Dr JPR Orme RGR Smith
RJ Turner AW Wyatt MBE

and Councillor Mrs DSK Spink MBE (Conservation Portfolio Holder).

Councillors Mrs JM Healey (Chairman, Development and Conservation Control Committee) and JH Stewart (Vice-Chairman, Development and Conservation Control Committee) sent apologies for absence.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor SJ Agnew declared a personal interest in those various parts of the agenda referring to Fleam Dyke, Devil's Dyke and the Roman Road.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Conservation Advisory Group authorised the Chairman to sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2004.

In relation to Minute no. 4 (St Denis Church, East Hatley), the Conservation Manager reported on the more positive outlook developing locally, and on the opportunities presented by the new round of grant allocations being made by English Heritage. In parallel with a new application by the Council, officers would be seeking local support for using the building as a "Community Information Hub."

3. MONUMENT MANAGEMENT PROJECT 2004/05

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on progress being made with the Monument Management Project ("MMP"), and received a PowerPoint presentation from Stephen Macaulay (Project Manager) and Adrian Scruby (Countryside Archaeological Officer) both with the Archaeological Section of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Members established that public access to individual monuments depended, ultimately, on the willingness of landowners to participate in the MMP. They made the following comments:

- Given the sensitive nature of some sites, the sensible approach should be that of management rather than excavation
- Publicity through publications such as the South Cambs Magazine was probably more cost effective than producing specific leaflets or brochures

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation

- (1) support the allocation of £3,000 from the Archaeology Grants budget, as a

contribution to the Monument Management Programme in 2004-05 identified in paragraph 8 of the Conservation Manager's report;

- (2) authorise an allocation of up to £1,500 from the Conservation Budget to support the further interpretation of the MMP sites via the South Cambs Magazine and guided walk leaflets as identified in paragraph 9(f) of the report; and
- (3) Invite the County Archaeologists to present a six-monthly progress report to the Conservation Advisory Group and Portfolio Holder on the on-going Monument Management Programme during 2004-05 (to include developing archaeological initiatives) for consideration and prioritisation for the future development of the project.

4. PROPOSED PILOT SCHEME: COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS - 2004/05

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on a pilot scheme intended to encourage community-based archaeological projects within the District, and received a PowerPoint presentation from Stephen Macaulay (Project Manager with the Archaeological Section of Cambridgeshire County Council). Mr Macaulay explained that, whereas last year the County Council had promoted a training excavation at Fulbourn, its emphasis this year was on smaller-scale schemes within local communities.

The Conservation Manager expressed a hope that the initiative would enable local interest groups to engage the services of professional archaeologists.

Members established that any site might have archaeological interest, even if it were only 30-40 years old. They agreed that, in order to preserve important sites, unnecessary excavation should be avoided.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation

- (1) support a pilot scheme to develop Community Archaeology Projects in 2004-05, and allocate a sum of £5,000 from the Heritage Initiatives Fund to support the development of individual projects during the financial year, subject to approval of individual project design (to include evidence of partnership funding); and
- (2) invite the County Archaeologists to present a six-monthly progress report to the Portfolio Holder for Conservation and Conservation Advisory Group on the development of Community Archaeology Projects to enable consideration of effectiveness and future direction.

5. LINEAR SITES: ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECTS - IMPROVING ACCESS AND INTERPRETATION ON FLEAM DYKE 2004/05

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on proposed new initiatives for improving access to, and the interpretation of, Fleam Dyke, and received a PowerPoint presentation from Stephen Macaulay (Project Manager with the Archaeological Section of Cambridgeshire County Council).

Members raised concerns at over-interpretation of the site, and the scourge of vandalism. Mr Macaulay explained that the County Council supported the use of interpretation boards because of the tendency of visitors to enter at various points along the linear site.

The Chairman expressed a hope that an appropriate framework would be put in place to ensure the continuation of the project. The Group deemed it important that new Councillors be encouraged to visit the site so they could see the conservation measures that had been achieved there.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation

- (1) continue to support the Linear Sites Project in 2004-05, and allocates a sum of up to £11,960 from the existing budget for Linear Sites in the Heritage Initiatives Fund, specifically to support the interpretation and access improvements on the Fleam Dyke to secure the preservation and enhancement of this key archaeological site in South Cambridgeshire, as described in the Conservation Manager's report;
- (2) continue to support the development of wider conservation and enhancement works on the Fleam Dyke by authorising complementary projects with partnership agencies; and
- (3) request the County Archaeologists to present a progress report, before the end of 2004-05, to the Conservation Advisory Group and Conservation Portfolio Holder on the development of the Linear Sites Project to facilitate consideration of future support.

6. **CONSERVATION AWARDS 2004/05 - NATURAL HERITAGE**

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report seeking Members' guidance on the establishment of a Conservation Award scheme for 2004-05, based on the Natural Heritage. In particular, Members focused on paragraphs 2 and 7 in the report, reflecting the Council's four corporate objectives and possible criteria for making the awards.

The Group took the view that it might be counter-productive were the Council to identify examples of suitable schemes as such a list might be interpreted as being exclusive. Instead, individuals and groups should be invited to come up with their own original initiatives.

This awards scheme could also prove useful in promoting the use of landscaping and biodiversity features in and around future developments, such as at Northstowe and the Cambridge Northern Fringe.

The provisional plan was to arrange site visits in September 2004 and then to make the awards later in the Autumn.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation

- (1) support the launch of the Natural Heritage Conservation Award scheme in 2004-05, specifying criteria for consideration and classification of entries; and
- (2) support appropriate funding from the Conservation Portfolio budget for the production of commemorative plaques and for the staging of the award ceremony.

7. **UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF THE RURAL URBAN FRINGE**

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on the consultation document entitled *Unlocking the Potential of the Rural Urban Fringe*, issued jointly by the Countryside Agency and Groundwork. It received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Landscape Design Officer on the document's relevance to South Cambridgeshire.

Members welcomed the opportunities presented by the initiative to include measures in the emerging Local Development Framework that would enable the Council to require developers to incorporate biodiversity breaks and elements of edge-of-settlement landscaping into future developments.

The Portfolio Holder for Conservation said that the consultation document should also be presented to the Local Strategic Partnership.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation

- (1) support the preparation by the Countryside Agency and Groundwork of a Rural Urban Fringe vision and 'toolkit';
- (2) support the drafting of a 'stand alone' Rural Fringe Area Action Plan for South Cambridgeshire, to be developed as an integral part of the Local Development Framework;
- (3) authorise a response to the consultation exercise supporting the draft proposals as set out in paragraph 11 of the Conservation Manager's report; and
- (4) authorise development of enhanced Rural Urban Fringe proposals in partnership with the Countryside Agency and Groundwork, and other appropriate agencies, for the benefit of the District, reporting back to the Conservation Advisory Group as projects are developed.

8. TREES AND HEDGEROW PARTNERSHIP SCHEME 2004/05 AND 2005/2006

The Conservation Manager informed Members that Cambridgeshire County Council had withdrawn its support for the Trees and Hedgerow partnership.

He explained that the District Council's budget for 2004-05 had already been spent as the practice was to meet the costs of participation in arrears.

The Conservation Advisory Group supported the Trees and Hedgerow Partnership in principle, but **RESOLVED** that detailed consideration of this item be deferred until the next meeting, by which time officers would have had an opportunity to prepare a report exploring available options for continuation of the scheme.

9. CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED HIGH HEDGES PROCEDURE (PART 8 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003)

The Trees and Landscape Officer gave a verbal summary of the main aspects of Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Members expressed concern about the practicalities and financial implications of this new responsibility placed on local planning authorities.

10. BUILDINGS AT RISK REPORT 2004-05

The Conservation Manager distributed a report on Historic Buildings at Risk, and highlighted Section 7 relating to the total of buildings at risk during the period from 1998 to 2003.

The Vice-Chairman said that every effort should be made to retain diversity and preserve the original use of buildings, where practicable, through using available resources in a sensible manner.

The Meeting ended at 4.45 p.m.
