

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Conservation Advisory Group held on
Wednesday, 10 March 2004

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

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

Councillors Mrs JM Healey (Chairman, Development and Conservation Control Committee) and Mrs DSK Spink (Portfolio Holder for Conservation) attended the meeting by invitation.

Councillors RGR Smith and JH Stewart (Vice-Chairman, Development and Conservation Control Committee) sent apologies for absence.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors NN Cathcart, Mrs MP Course and AW Wyatt declared personal interests in Minute no. 7 (Heritage Initiative Fund support for the Farmland Museum Development Fund) as Trustees of the Museum. Councillor SJ Agnew declared a personal interest in Minute no. 6 (Review of Operational Plan for Conservation) in view of his involvement with the Green Belt Project.

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 21st January 2004.

Members noted that in Recommendation (2) of Minute 4 (Wildlife Enhancement Scheme), the words "...and schools about..." had been struck through. This had been an error, and no deletion had been intended. The Recommendation was reaffirmed as stating, "... (2) subsequently to inform local conservation groups and schools about the potential availability of the WES grants...".

3. PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH THE WOODLAND TRUST

Liz McLelland, Regional Development Officer) and Tom Curtis (Woodland Manager) with the Woodland Trust, attended the meeting and gave a Powerpoint presentation to Members on a range of project initiatives.

Accepting that land in South Cambridgeshire had a high commercial value, the Regional Development Officer clarified the Trust's aim of developing a 150-acre woodland by saying that it was exploring a number of options other than outright purchase, including a variety of partnership arrangements with local landowners, and contact with schools, possibly through local authorities.

Members raised the following issues:

- schools should be approached individually with a view to encouraging children to engage with the natural environment, whether or not in possession of a tree pack issued by the Woodland Trust
- a larger number of smaller community woods, which were clearly appreciated by

local people, might be more appropriate so long as the ecological benefits, cohesiveness and sustainability of a single larger woodland area could be replicated

- the implications of set-aside land in establishing woodland and wildlife corridors connecting different woods, and the benefits of developing working relationships with organisations such as the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- there might be scope, in due course, for the Woodland Trust to become involved in establishing wooded buffer zones in areas such as Northstowe and the Cambridge Southern Fringe
- the appropriate management of woodlands
- financial implications and the potential, in the future, to seek individual sponsorship of small parts of woodland to help defray the cost of maintenance

The Chairman thanked Liz McLelland and Tom Curtis for attending the meeting.

The Conservation Advisory Group endorsed the Woodland Trust's range of new initiatives, set out in the report from the Conservation Manager, and

RECOMMENDED that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation authorise development of the full range of projects to secure enhancement of tree coverage in South Cambridgeshire, reporting progress back to the Advisory Group as projects were developed.

4. ST DENIS CHURCH, EAST HATLEY - PUBLIC QUESTIONS ADDRESSED TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A series of public questions had been submitted for presentation to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 11th March 2004. These questions all related to the future use of St. Denis Church, East Hatley and, in view of the matter's importance and urgency, the Chairman agreed to accept this item onto the agenda as a late item.

Members received copies of the questions, and the Chairman highlighted the amount of work undertaken by the Conservation Manager in addressing this particular issue. The Conservation Manager summarised the questions, referring in particular to numbers 5 and 15. Members commended his responses to the questions as being very fair and unbiased, and stressed that any realistic solution would rely on there being serious involvement by the local community.

The Chairman of Development and Conservation Control Committee reminded Members that the future of St. Denis Church was the ultimate responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Conservation and the Cabinet. The role of Scrutiny Committee should simply be to satisfy itself that the District Council was using its best endeavours to secure the most appropriate future use for St. Denis Church, East Hatley.

5. FARDELL'S LANE RESERVE - VILLAGE GREENSPACE ELSWORTH - PILOT SCHEME

The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer and Ecology Officer gave a joint presentation to Members, who also had before them a report from the Conservation Manager.

Copies of Elsworth Parish Council's document entitled Fardell's Lane Reserve: Draft Management Plan – December 2003 were circulated at the meeting.

The Vice-Chairman said that caution was needed to ensure that this important site did not

become over-managed.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED**

- (1) that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation authorise adoption of the Fardell's Lane Reserve Draft Management Plan - December 2003 as the basis for development of the Elsworth Village Greenspace; and
- (2) that, subsequent to final completion of the legal transfer of the site to Elsworth Parish Council, funding of up to £5,000 from the Heritage Initiative Fund be made available to the Parish Council to support the implementation of the Management Plan.

6. REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR CONSERVATION

The Conservation Manager presented a report to which was appended a document entitled *Conservation Service: Draft Operational Plan – Revised February 2004*, which reflected the Council's Corporate Objectives and Priorities.

The Portfolio Holder for Conservation commended the draft, especially in relation to its demonstration of the breadth of work undertaken by the Conservation Section and the clarity with which it highlighted the ways in which that Section sought to further the Corporate Objectives in partnership with outside organisations.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation endorse the Operational Plan for the Conservation Section and authorise its publication as the Council's programme for preservation and enhancement of the historic and natural environments for the period up to April 2005, in accordance with the Council's Objectives and Priorities.

7. HERITAGE INITIATIVE FUND SUPPORT FOR THE FARMLAND MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT PLAN - 2004-2005

The Conservation Manager presented a report that summarised applications for continued financial support for local museums and the proposed funding for Museum Grants in 2004-05, presented to Cabinet on 4th March 2004. Members also considered whether or not to recommend continued financial support for the development programme at the Farmland Museum in 2004-05.

At the request of the Chairman, the Conservation Manager undertook to explore the possibility of arranging a site visit for Members.

The Conservation Advisory Group accepted the option, set out in paragraph 23(a) of the report from the Conservation Manager, to continue support for the Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey's development programme and **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation agree to allocate a sum of up to £10,000 from the Heritage Initiative Fund, to enable the implementation of the next phase of the Farmland Museum's development programme in 2004-05, subject to Conditions set out in the report.

8. GREAT SHELFORD VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT - ADOPTION OF SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

The Conservation Advisory Group **NOTED** the results of consultation and the decision by Cabinet to adopt the Great Shelford Village Design Statement – February 2004 as

Supplementary Planning Guidance, supporting policies HG15, EM7, EM12, TP7, TP9, RT2, RT8 RT9, EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

9. CAM CATCHMENT SUSTAINABLE FARMING PILOT PROJECT - PROGRESS REPORT

The Council's Ecology Officer gave a Powerpoint presentation to Members about progress made during the first four months of the one-year pilot Cam Catchment Sustainable Farming Project. The Conservation Advisory Group **NOTED** the position, and asked that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation invite the Project Coordinator to a future meeting in order to highlight the pilot scheme's conclusions and achievements, which could then form the basis of consideration of this Council's further support for the Scheme.

Members felt that it would also be useful to receive a presentation at a future meeting from someone well versed in the details of the Common Agricultural Policy.

10. ITEMS FOR THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY GROUP MEETING ON 21ST APRIL 2004

The Conservation Advisory Group **NOTED** a provisional list of items for the next meeting. This related to

- Community Archaeological Schemes
- Monument Management Project in South Cambridgeshire 2004-05
- Trees and Hedge Partnership
- Regional Woodland Strategy
- Ecclesiastical Exemption
- Conservation Awards 2004-2005 – Criteria for natural heritage awards
- Linear sites project
- Local biodiversity Project Guide

The Meeting ended at 4.35 p.m.
