

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the Conservation Advisory Group held on  
Wednesday, 27 October 2004 at 10.20am

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

Councillors: Mrs CA Hunt Dr JPR Orme  
RJ Turner NIC Wright

and Councillor Mrs JM Healey (Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder).

Councillors RF Bryant and Mrs DSK Spink MBE were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dr JA Heap.

### **1. FORMER COUNCILLOR RGR SMITH**

The Chairman of the Conservation Advisory Group paid tribute to former Councillor RGR Smith, who had been a member of the Advisory Group and who had resigned from the Council for personal reasons relating to conflicts of interest.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor SJ Agnew declared a personal interest in Minute no. 7 (Linear Sites Project) as Chairman of the Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Conservation Advisory Group authorised the Chairman to sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2004.

In relation to Minute no. 7 (Chapel Orchard, Orwell Village Green Space – consideration of Management Plan), the Conservation Manager stated that a site visit to enable Members to see the position prior to development would be finalised as soon as outstanding legal work had been concluded. The intention was to make a photographic record of both this site and one at Elsworth as part of the Council's overall Community Strategy.

In relation to Minute no. 8 (English Heritage support – redundant Church of St. Denis, East Hatley), a recent inspection carried out by an architect instructed by English Heritage had revealed that the roof timbers were not in as poor condition as originally feared. A formal offer of grant aid would be subject to the decision of a committee of English Heritage, due to meet on 15 November 2004. If grant aid (up to 50% of the anticipated cost of repairs) was forthcoming, the Council would invite tenders in early 2005 for repairs based on both a corrugated iron roof and tiles.

In relation to Minute no. 11 (National Heritage Awards Scheme), the Conservation Manager stated that entries were still being received. The Chairman of the Advisory Group suggested extending the deadline, and inviting local Members to identify potential entrants in their wards.

#### **4. DEVELOPMENT OF NEW WOODLAND TRUST PROJECTS IN SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE - "THE FOREST OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE"**

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report outlining proposals to develop major new countryside access projects in South Cambridgeshire, and received a PowerPoint presentation from Liz McLelland, Regional Development Officer with the Woodland Trust.

Members established that:

- Mechanisms were in place to ensure that the Trust's aspirations for a large wooded area did not override the continued importance of identifying, supporting and developing smaller, community-based woods
- The Trust was eager to include local people and organisations, such as parish councils, in the planning of local woods, highlighting such things as landscape changes and future public access
- The principal aim of the proposal was to promote the ecological aspects and public enjoyment of woodland, using native species of trees where possible. Formal management, as a way of renewing the woodland, was not a priority.
- It was anticipated that tree planting would commence in late 2006 with substantial school involvement
- The rationale behind the Trust's choice of site for the proposed woodland was the offer of land and the chance of linking a number of areas of ancient woodland
- It was hoped that funding would be in place by the end of 2005

The Portfolio Holder welcomed the proposal and, in particular, its involvement of schoolchildren and focus on "planting trees instead of houses."

The Chairman of the Advisory Group reminded those present that funding could be helped by the appropriate drafting of Section 106 Legal Agreements.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder:

- (1) Supports, in principle, the development of the Woodland Trust's ambitions to create substantial new woodlands in South Cambridgeshire, and invites the Trust to present more detailed plans (as and when developed) for examination and consideration by the Conservation Advisory Group; and
- (2) identifies appropriate funding sources, across portfolios, which might contribute to the implementation of the scheme, and develops a strategy supporting the initiatives, initially over a three year period.

#### **5. THE MONUMENT MANAGEMENT PROJECT IN SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE: APRIL - OCTOBER 2004 AND 2005/06.**

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on progress being made with the Monument Management Project (MMP) in 2004/05, and received a PowerPoint presentation from Adrian Scruby of the Archaeology Department of Cambridgeshire County Council.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED**

- (1) that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder endorse Option 5(b) set out in the report from the Conservation Manager, and supports the allocation of £3,000 from the Archaeology Grants budget as a contribution to the Monument Management Programme in 2005/06 and the following two financial years, with a review of the allocation each year; and
- (2) that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder Invite the County Archaeologists to continue to present a six month progress report to the Conservation Advisory Group and Portfolio Holder on the on-going Monument Management Programme during 2005/06 and possible initiatives for the year for consideration and prioritisation for the future development of the project.

## 6. COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on progress being made with the Community Archaeological Projects initiative, which it established in April 2004, and received a PowerPoint presentation from Adrian Scruby of the Archaeology Department of Cambridgeshire County Council.

As part of a general discussion, it was agreed that local Members and communities should be proactive in identifying potential projects worthy of receiving a small grant intended to assist in procuring, for example, some professional advice. The scheme could also be promoted in the *South Cambs' Magazine*.

The Conservation Advisory Group reaffirmed its support for the work of the Community Archaeology Project during the remainder of 2004/05, and **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder invites the County Archaeologists to present a full progress report and Review to the Conservation Advisory Group in April 2005, prior to commitment to further initiatives in 2005/06.

## 7. LINEAR SITES PROJECT - FLEAM DYKE

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on the Linear Sites' Project, and received a PowerPoint presentation from Adrian Scruby of the Archaeology Department of Cambridgeshire County Council.

In response to a question about a maintenance regime for the site, it was stated that Cambridgeshire County Council had a statutory duty to keep Rights of Way accessible and was also engaged in scrub clearance.

Members felt that, while it was appropriate to have some interpretation boards on site, numbers should be restricted, they should be in keeping with the character of the area and, so far as possible, should be vandal-proof.

The Conservation Advisory Group reaffirmed its support for the work of the Linear Sites Project – Fleam Dyke during the remainder of 2004/05 and **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder invites Cambridgeshire Archaeology to present a progress report to the Conservation Advisory Group on the project and any future initiatives related to the Dyke early in April 2005, to enable further consideration and prioritisation.

## 8. **CONSULTATION ON PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 9: BIODIVERSITY AND GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION**

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report outlining the contents of the draft Planning Policy Statement no.9 (PPS9), and introducing some key elements of the draft Government Circular entitled *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system*.

Distributing copies of PPS9, the Ecology Officer expressed his wish to get some national recognition for the work being carried out at Cambourne.

Members acknowledged the need for a carefully balanced approach, given the potential for conflicts between a number of different pressures within the same area. Clarification was needed and, at this stage, the most useful role Members could play would be to monitor the situation as it unfolded. The Leader of the Council also urged officers to approach neighbouring local authorities and Cambridgeshire Horizons in order to agree a joint approach to PPS9.

The Chairman of the Advisory Group and the Portfolio Holder thanked the Ecology Officer for his précis of Planning Policy Statement no. 9.

The Conservation Advisory Group endorsed option iv set out in the report from the Conservation Manager, and **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder submits a formal response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in consultation with the Ecology Officer.

## 9. **PROPOSED PARISH TREE INITIATIVE - 2005-2006**

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report outlining proposals by South Cambridgeshire District Council for a Parish Tree Initiative whereby, in consultation with Parish Councils, selected sites would be enhanced by tree planting and, if appropriate, quality trees in need of remedial attention would be considered for tree surgery works to ensure their longevity.

It was anticipated that appropriate Parish Councils might be identified through liaison with the Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils (CALC), and publicity in the *South Cambs' Magazine*. Officers would monitor progress on a year-on-year basis.

Members were keen to preserve some flexibility in the selection of trees, principally in connection with cost, and asked officers to explore options for securing guarantees from suppliers as to tree quality, and acknowledging the District Council's promotion of the scheme, perhaps on plaques located nearby.

Members asked officers to reconsider the nature of land qualifying for the scheme, both in terms of profile and ownership, arguing that the principal factor to be taken into account should be that of public accessibility.

The Conservation Advisory Group endorsed the report, subject to minor amendment as referred to in this Minute, and **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder authorises the adoption of the Parish Tree Initiative, and that a pilot scheme be implemented in 2005-2006.

## 10. **TREE AND HEDGEROW PARTNERSHIP - 2005-06**

The Trees and Landscape Officer summarised the background to the partnership, highlighting progress in seeking its continuation, following the withdrawal of support from Cambridgeshire County Council. He outlined a proposal from the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group to oversee a scheme, based on the previous one but focussed on farmland.

Precise costing had yet to be finalised.

The Conservation Advisory Group supported the principle of a pilot scheme being implemented in 2005-2006, and **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder identifies an appropriate budget and level of financial support.

#### 11. **HISTORIC BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREA ENHANCEMENT GRANTS POLICY PROPOSED REVISIONS - 2005/06.**

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report reviewing the criteria for assessing grant applications for the repair or restoration of historic buildings.

The Group noted a Member's plea to subsidise traditional rural crafts, such as thatching, and received an explanation of the processes involved in harvesting and working with both long straw and combed long straw.

The Vice-Chairman welcomed the initiative as a way of preserving traditional roofing methods, and urged the Council to encourage the sourcing of materials locally, where possible. Ways of promoting the scheme included the *South Cambs' Magazine* and specialist insurance companies.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED**

- (1) that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder authorise the amendment of the Historic Building Grant policy to accommodate an increase in potential grant contributions for the repair of thatch, as outlined in the report from the Conservation Manager, from April 2005, in accordance with the adopted thatch repair policy and subject to the availability of resources; and
- (2) that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder instruct the Conservation Manager to update the guidance leaflet on the grant programme to include the adopted thatching policy and promoting the changes to the grant programme; and
- (3) that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder authorise the Conservation Manager to write to all local interested parties, including thatching companies, to remind them about the policy and advise them about the forthcoming changes in relation to available grants

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**The Meeting ended at 12.55 p.m.**

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