

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Conservation Advisory Group held on
Wednesday, 27 April 2005 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors: Mrs A Elsby Mrs CA Hunt
RJ Turner Dr JR Williamson

and Councillors Mrs JM Healey (Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder) and Dr JPR Orme (Chairman, Development and Conservation Control Committee).

Councillor Mrs DSK Spink MBE (Leader of the Council) was in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor RF Bryant (Chairman of the Council), Councillor JH Stewart and Councillor NIC Wright (Vice-Chairman, Development and Conservation Control Committee).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor SJ Agnew declared a personal interest by virtue of his working relationship with the Green Belt Project.

Councillor Dr. J Williamson declared a personal interest as a Member of the Wildlife Trust.

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 9th March 2005.

In connection with Minute no. 8 (Confirmation of English Heritage support to arrest deterioration of the redundant church of St. Denis, East Hatley and proposed action), the Conservation Manager said that the Council would be inviting tenders imminently, and that he envisaged presenting a report to Cabinet in June. It was not yet clear to what extent the grant would meet the costs involved, but the report would focus on the benefits to the District Council of relieving it of an ongoing maintenance requirement, and to the district as a whole of enhancing a local wildlife site. The Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder said that the Council had already identified a budget for this purpose, and the Conservation Manager added that Hatley Parish Council had agreed to contribute financially as well. The only question still outstanding was that of a future use for the building.

3. CAMBRIDGE GREEN BELT PROJECT - 2005/06

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on the work of the Cambridge Green Belt Project (GBP) and South Cambridgeshire District Council's future commitment and support for the project at a level equivalent to the current level of funding.

Naomi Brookes (GBP Manager) made a presentation to Members.

The Ecology Officer reported that the Council had varied the way in which it maintains

awarded watercourses as a direct result of work carried out by the GBP in connection with water voles.

In response to a question from the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder, the GBP Manager explained that Cambridgeshire County Council had recently re-evaluated the way in which it wanted to continue funding the Project. This amounted to payment for work done as opposed to a flat-rate grant, and much of this work would be in connection with the County Council's own Grounds Maintenance needs. A Member expressed disappointment that the County Council and Cambridge City Council made such small grants compared to that from this Council, but the GBP Manager pointed out that the City Council did fund an equivalent Project in Cambridge.

Members acknowledged the major contribution that the GBP was able to make to the District, and the Chairman remarked that continued financial support from the Council would assist the GBP in securing additional funding from elsewhere, and in raising further funds privately.

Members would welcome the opportunity to visit sites benefiting from work by the GBP, in due course.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder confirms support for the current work of the Cambridge Green Belt Project, the level of grant funding of £11,000 for 2005/06 and, subject to resource availability, the equivalent level of current funding in 2006-07.

4. CONSERVATION AREAS - BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on the implications for South Cambridgeshire District Council of the new Best Value Performance Indicators for Conservation Areas (BV PIs) set by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the appropriate level of resource commitment to achieve the new targets.

The Conservation Area and Design Officer referred to the programme for producing Conservation Area Appraisals, which had commenced with villages most affected by Northstowe and would then focus on those villages impacted upon by Cambridge East and the Cambridge Southern Fringe. Later on, the programme would concentrate on Rural Growth Villages, followed by Group Villages, before concluding with Infill Only villages. Appraisals had been published recently for Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick, as had the proposal for Rampton. The next set of appraisals would cover Fen Ditton, Horningsea, Teversham, and Swavesey, the latter likely to be affected by the proposed Guided Bus scheme. South Cambridgeshire currently had 83 Conservation Areas, and to prepare Appraisals for all of them within a five year time frame would require 16 new appraisals to be prepared each year. The Conservation Area and Design Officer commented that there was a balance to be struck between increasing the total number of Appraisals, and updating existing ones. Given available resources, it was considered most sensible for the District Council to concentrate on achieving a year on year improvement in the overall percentage of Conservation Areas with up-to-date appraisals.

The Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder congratulated the Conservation Area and Design Officer for the quality of work achieved in relation to Conservation Area Appraisals, and stressed that quality was far more important than the actual number of appraisals.

The Conservation Area and Design Officer said that, should the Council succeed in obtaining an enhanced Planning Delivery Grant, there might be an opportunity to appoint

consultants with a view to carrying out more Appraisals.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder sets a modest target for year on year improvements in the percentage of Conservation Areas with both up-to-date character appraisals and management proposals, such that the work can be carried out by the existing staff within the Conservation Section, supplemented by additional resources allocated from Planning Delivery Grant in 2006/07, if appropriate and available.

5. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

The Conservation Advisory Group noted a report on progress being made in preparing the South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Strategy.

The Ecology Officer circulated copies of the Internal Draft Consultation document dated 25th April 2005.

A Member commented that the Strategy would play an essential part in the Council's negotiations with developers.

Members discussed the draft generally, and agreed that the inclusion of cross-references in paragraph 1 (Biodiversity Statements) would enhance the document's ease of use. They congratulated the Ecology Officer for his efforts to date in developing the Council's Biodiversity Strategy.

The Ecology Officer outlined the process to be followed in order to secure adoption of the Strategy as a Supplementary Planning Document under the Local Development Framework.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder support adoption of the presented draft "policy statements" as the fundamental basis for the Biodiversity Strategy to enable the strategy to be progressed towards the consultation stage.

6. SOUTH CAMBS. NATURAL HERITAGE AWARDS 2004/05

The Conservation Manager made a PowerPoint presentation of the schemes submitted under the South Cambridgeshire Natural Heritage Awards scheme 2004-05 for consideration and confirmation of awards by Members. He highlighted paragraph 6 of the report included with the agenda, [setting out the various criteria for assessment, which were as follows](#) :

1. Projects that contribute to sustainability by enhancing & protecting biodiversity & landscape quality.
2. Projects that recognise, celebrate and enhance village life.
3. Projects that encourage best practice in the delivery of countryside access and enhancement.
4. Projects that facilitate further partnership initiatives.
5. Projects that help the integration of development into rural landscapes.

Members had undertaken site inspections of the submitted schemes on 13th April 2005 and confirmed the following:

Hinxton Wetland Project.

Entrant : Dr. P. Towlson, Welcome Trust.

Natural Heritage Award - Large scheme - for the achievement of excellence in biodiversity enhancement and conservation of natural heritage.

White Ponds, Steeple Morden.

Entrant : Steeple Morden Parish Council

Natural Heritage Award - Small scheme - for the achievement of excellence in biodiversity enhancement and conservation of natural heritage.

Harston Mill.

Entrant : The Generics Group

Highly Commended - Large scheme - for a high standard of achievement in biodiversity enhancement and conservation of natural heritage.

Lolworth Meadow.

Entrant : Mr Horsford.

Highly Commended - Small scheme - for a high standard of achievement in biodiversity enhancement and conservation of natural heritage.

Little Shelford Riverside Walk.

Entrant : Little Shelford Parish Council

Commended - for achievement in biodiversity and conservation of natural heritage.

Ruddery Pit, Guilden Morden.

Entrant : Mr J. Dellar.

Commended - for achievement in biodiversity and conservation of natural heritage

Tween Towns Woods.

Entrant : Guilden Morden and Steeple Morden Parish Councils.

Commended - for achievement in biodiversity and conservation of natural heritage

Members discussed arrangements for a formal Awards evening on either 28th June or 12th July 2005.

7. SOUTH CAMBS. BUILT HERITAGE AWARD SCHEME - 2005/06

The Conservation Manager presented a report on the proposed launch of the 2005-06 conservation award scheme, which would focus on achievements in the preservation and enhancement of the built heritage.

He informed Members that the deadline for entries was 19th August 2005, and suggested a timetable leading to an awards ceremony.

The Vice-Chairman, referring to paragraph 5 of the report, highlighted the danger of sending out the wrong message. Accordingly, point (c) should mention the importance of preservation as well.

The Conservation Advisory Group supported the launch of the South Cambridgeshire.Built Heritage Awards 2005-06, as described in the report, and **RECOMMENDED** that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder authorise the allocation of appropriate funding to facilitate the promotion, consideration and presentation of the various awards.

8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting of the Conservation Advisory Group would be held

on Wednesday 8th June 2005, starting at 10.00am.

The Meeting ended at 1.05 p.m.
