

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 20th June, 2007.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell (Chairman), Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Kevin Faulks (Vice-Councillor Dixon), Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Mick Womphrey.

Officers: P K Bell, M Jones, P J Mennear, (LD) N Schneider, I Robinson (DNS).

Also in attendance: A Slater (British Waterways).

Apologies: Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson.

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

2 Time of Future Meetings

Members discussed the commencement time of the future scheduled Select Committee meetings.

CONCLUDED that all the scheduled meetings of the Select Committee commence at 1.00pm.

3 Scrutiny Review of River Based Leisure Facilities

The Scrutiny Officer presented Members with the Scope and Project Plan for the review of river based leisure facilities. Members then discussed and asked questions on the various aspects of the Scope and Project Plan.

A. Slater (British Waterways), gave a brief review of the redevelopment of the River Tees. He informed members that within six months of the Tees Barrage being created the water quality issues of the river upstream disappeared. The fishing on the upstream water improved to the extent that the Environmental Agency graded the River Tees A* fishery. It was capable of being used on world standard status and attracted national and international events such as World Canoeing Championships, Euro Dragon, and Jet Ski events. It was hoped that the 2009 Angling Championship would be held at the Barrage, and events would be held to coincide with the championship. A. Slater also informed that more children had been trained to water ski on the river than anywhere else in the country.

A. Slater discussed the London 2012 Olympic aspirations for the canoe course. The course was currently classed as having Regional Importance, due to its reliance on the tide. To become a training camp for the Olympics as hoped, it needed to be classed as having National and International Importance. To gain such importance the course would need to be modified to become a 'pumped' course. To ensure that a pumped course was viable a renewable electricity source was needed, and it was planned to gain funding from the Arts Council by the renewable energy pump being made into an attraction within itself. N. Schneider (Director of Development and Neighbourhood Service) informed that the regeneration needed for the Olympics was already planned as part of the

Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative and Green Blue Heart project, and other uses of the Olympic area would be explored.

Other initiatives involving the River Tees included the 'Hooked on Fishing' scheme. This highly successful scheme was initially implemented in Durham and involved coaching young people in fishing to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour. It had just been confirmed that the scheme would be brought to Stockton-on-Tees.

However, there were several problems which faced the River Tees, including funding for local clubs, which covered differing discipline that did not necessarily gel well together, and therefore needed carefully managing. The biggest problem for the River was issues surrounding access. The Crown owned the River beds, so Riparian rights did not apply to the 13 mile stretch of river being reviewed, however access rights to the Thornaby river banks from Preston Park to Surtees Bridge had been purchased. Mooring was limited, there were 13 boats moored on the river and more spaces available but a redevelopment of the area to offer restaurants, pubs and other leisure facilities was needed to attract and benefit more moorings. Motor Boats had rights to travel on the river if they had insurance and were registered. Specific by-laws relating to speed on the river were handed out to those most likely to offend. There were unmanned slipways on the river, such as the slipway at Aislaby, which could lead to the river being misused by boats speeding. This could be stopped by cutting the slipways off, however this would also cut access for other users and therefore not seen as a desirable course of action.

The problems of anti-social behaviour near Newport Bridge was discussed, and A. Slater noted that this area is owned by Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. It was hoped that the problems in this area would be resolved following the Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative and Green Blue Heart Project. Once these regeneration projects had been completed it was believed that wardens would patrol the area.

The documents noted in the Scope and Project Plan would be available to Members of the Committee. I. Robinson was also available to give members a one-to-one briefing on any of the documentation.

CONCLUDED that the Scope and Project Plan be agreed.