

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 28th November, 2007.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell (Chair), Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley

Officers: G. Clingan, R. Kench, I. Robinson (DNS), G. Birtle, M. Jones (LD)

Also in attendance: Cllr Mrs Womphrey, Cllr John Fletcher, Doug Nicholson

Apologies: Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson, Cllr Mick Womphrey, P. Mennear (LD)

1 Declarations of Interest

Councillor John Fletcher declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item no.6 – Review of Festivals, as he was a member of Friends of Billingham International Folklore Festival.

Councillor John Fletcher declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item no.7 – Review of River Based Leisure Facilities, as he was a member of Friends of Tees Heritage Park.

2 Minutes of the Meetings held on 20th June 2007, 14th August 2007, 29th August 2007

The minutes of the meetings held on 20th June 2007, 14th August 2007, and 29th August 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3 Minutes of the Meeting Held 10th October 2007

Consideration was given to the content of the draft minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2007

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2007 be forwarded to Council for consideration.

4 Review of Preston Hall and Park - Progress Report

Members reviewed the Review of Preston Hall and Park Progress Report. It was queried how strongly point five of recommendation one, 'Improvement of the layout of collections' was being pursued. R. Kench informed that focus on local history and stories of Stockton were to be carried out in planned way, where and when there were the collections to do so. The redevelopment of the building would allow for better space to show collections for limited time periods.

Point 15 of recommendation one was discussed. A member noted that on a visit to Preston Hall and Park they were unable to locate the original railway track bed, and it was believed that this had been hidden by overgrowth. The Committee stressed the need to protect and promote the railway heritage.

Point 17 of recommendation one was raised. R. Kench noted that although the menagerie and animal displays were important to the site, there was no scope to

pursue this issue in the first phase of redevelopment. However, there was a plan to build upon the current animal projects and create nature reserve attractions for native and endangered animals in the future.

A member noted that they were, as a ward councillor, a member of the Park Management Group, but had observed that there were no Parish Council representatives on the group. R. Kench stated that the Parish Council had been sent an invitation to join this group.

CONCLUDED that progress so far be agreed and that further updates be received as appropriate

5 Review of Festivals

The Review of Festivals progress report was noted. Members discussed recommendation one which stated that Billingham International Folklore Festival management team and Stockton Council's arts management team should develop mutual working arrangements and, where possible, linked and complementary programming to advance both international festivals. R. Kench informed that several groups that had performed at BIFF 2007 had also taken part in the SIRF 2007 Carnival. However it was noted that as BIFF was an independent festival, supported by SBC, it was the organiser's responsibility to ensure that their groups were fully aware of all the arrangements for this. R. Kench added that it was intended to coincide the final day of BIFF with the day of Stockton International Riverside Festival Carnival, to create a handover event between the two festivals. It was hoped that by doing this BIFF would have the opportunity to establish a bigger audience for their festival as the carnival attracts more members of the public, have an opportunity to share publicity with SIRF, and raise further awareness of BIFF. He assured the committee that it was not intended to replace BIFF with SIRF.

Recommendation five, that SBC engineers and bus operators would work together providing clear advance publicity and site notices, was discussed. R. Kench stated that although bus operator representatives were invited to relevant SIRF planning meetings, they decline to attend. Therefore the information was shared with the bus companies once agreed.

CONCLUDED that progress so far be agreed and that further updates be received as appropriate

6 Review of River Based Leisure Facilities -

As part of the review of River Based Leisure Facilities Members received evidence from Graham Clingan (Strategy and Development Manager, Countryside and Green Space) and Mr Doug Nicholson (Chair of Friends of River Tees Heritage Park).

G. Clingan discussed his report regarding the development of a River Tees Park. The report set out broad project objectives which included:

*Conserve and enhance the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the

area.

Improving access to and within the river corridor – for walking, cycling and on the river itself.

*Provide a wide range of sporting, recreational and leisure opportunities, making full use of the river and surrounding areas, and

*Contribute to the Borough's tourism 'offer'.

The report also identified links to other projects and initiatives, such as the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy and Green Blue Heart, and highlighted a number of key issues which needed to be addressed before a detailed project plan could be developed. G. Clingan discussed the issue of limited public access alongside the river between Preston Park and Yarm, and posed the question of how the two areas could be connected if better public access could not be secured.

The issue of tourism was raised, and G. Clingan noted that there were large sections of the river that were not being utilised. He suggested that amenities such as cafes and bars were needed along the river to attract people to the area. I. Robinson noted that the Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative viewed the river as being a critical mass of tourism attractions, and there would be important links between SMI and River Tees Park projects. R. Kench added that the types of tourists attracted to the area were those visiting friends and family and others who came to conduct business. He believed the challenge was to attract these tourists to stay in the area, and the River Tees Park project would play an important part in the creation of the attraction.

D. Nicholson gave members an overview of the issues that Friends of River Tees Heritage Park were looking into. The group developed as a protectionist organisation and originally identified an area of the river from Stockton to Yarm which they wished to be preserved. It was believed that this area was of both historical and environmental importance. D. Nicholson stated that now the area had been identified and a River Tees Park discussed by SBC and partnership organisations, how the project progressed was dependent upon SBC and Councillors. The area identified by Friends of River Tees Heritage Park had been extended to Tees Barrage and members were to be sought from the proposed Green Blue Heart area.

The possibility of different 'business' areas was noted. D. Nicholson suggested there needed to be busy areas with cafes and bars etc, but also quieter areas that walkers could use to appreciate the countryside.

The Chair thanked G. Clingan and D. Nicholson for their attendance at the meeting, and requested the progress of the project be fed back to the committee.

It was noted that the Ward Councillor, Cllr John Fletcher, had forwarded comments on River Tees Park which would be considered with all other evidence received when drawing up the conclusions and recommendations of the review. It was also noted that Egglecliffe and Eaglescliffe Parish Council had forwarded comments which would be considered with other evidence received.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The Officer would report back to the Committee on the project's progress.
2. The information be noted.

7 Work Programme

Members were presented with an updated Work Programme

CONCLUDED that the updated Work Programme be noted.