

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 13th February, 2008.

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

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

Also in attendance: A. Slater (British Waterways), G. Coulson (Tees Valley Rivers and Fisheries Association), L. Smith (Four Seasons White Water Course/Cleveland Canoe Club), A. Clark (Castlegate Marine Club)

Apologies: Cllr Jackie Earl

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests declared at the meeting.

2 Minutes of the Meetings Held 10th October 2007, 28th November 2007, and 5th December 2007

The minutes of the meetings held on 10th October 2007, 28th November 2007, and 5th December 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 9th January 2008

Consideration was given to the content of the draft minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2008.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2008 be forwarded to Council for consideration.

4 Review of River Based Leisure Facilities

N. Schneider (Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services), updated members on the situation of HMS Kellington. Following a meeting with ministers in late 2007, it appeared that the issue of the Kellington had received a favourable response at the Ministry of Defence. However, a letter has since been received by Frank Cook MP which retracts any legal responsibility on the part of the MoD for the Kellington, following their original decision to sell the vessel to the Sea Cadets.

N. Schneider stated that this was not a positive outcome and that Frank Cook MP, for Stockton North, and Cllr Ken Lupton, Leader of the Council, were planning to write to the MOD expressing their disappointment with the latest developments. A recent survey has been undertaken on the condition of the vessel which has only served to highlight the necessity of a swift resolution, with Brown asbestos having been found on board.

As part of the review of River Based Leisure Facilities Members received evidence from Jack Goodfellow (Sports Development Service Manager), Len Smith (Four Seasons White Water Course/Cleveland Canoe Club Secretary/Representative on British Canoe Union Regional Development Committee), George Coulson (Chairman of the Tees Valley Rivers and Fisheries Association), and Ainsley Clark (Castlegate Marine Club).

J. Goodfellow discussed the use of sport facilities in Stockton-on-Tees Local Authority Schools. He stated that there were two Sport Colleges, Blakeston and Northfield, and that these Sport Colleges co-ordinate the Borough's PE strategy. Within this network there were 60 Primary School link teachers and 16 Secondary school links. The LA Schools were set a national target of providing pupils with two hours of sport activity per week, and this was due to rise to five hours by 2010. 95% of primary schools and 85% of secondary schools had achieved this target. He added that most of the sport facilities that the schools used were on site.

J. Goodfellow stated that the school sports network had been asked for their comments on the facilities available on the river. The feedback had indicated that although the facilities and activities that were on offer on the River Tees were of excellent quality, there were several issues which prevented the use of these facilities by schools. There were access problems with the facilities due to limited numbers, as class sizes were often larger than the maximum numbers for many of the activities on the river (10-15 pupils). There were time limitations, as the average time allocated to a PE lesson was one hour. Within this hour the school would have to transport a class to and from the river, which would not leave much time to spend on the activities. Due to the pressure of other timetabled subjects that the school must provide, it was not possible to table in PE for a full afternoon or morning session, which would give the class more time to spend on the activity. There was also the cost of transporting the class to the river. J. Goodfellow explained that overall it was cheaper and more convenient for schools to employ a coach for a class on site, rather than use the facilities on the River Tees.

It was noted that previously a £10,000 subsidy from the Children's Fund had been available to help with the cost to schools in NRF areas. However, this funding was no longer available. It was noted that increased funding may not in itself solve the issue as there are other pressures such as the time allocated to other items on the curriculum, and that there had been a general decline on outward bound-type activity.

L. Smith informed members that the British Canoe Union had employed a Schools Liaison Officer for the North of England. He also informed that there was a trained full time coach employed that had been given the task of introducing 100 children to the canoe club per year, and ensuring that these children visit the centre at least 12 times in a year. L. Smith believed that the biggest problem for the Local Authority Schools using the white water course and canoeing facilities was the cost of transporting classes to the centres. It was noted that there were other schemes available such as the BCU's Paddle Power scheme, if children could be introduced to them.

G. Coulson discussed previous instances of conflict caused by different types of river user. He discussed how fishing groups police their own members, banning those members who do not clean up after themselves or cause problems for other users. A. Slater informed that British Waterways were an enforcement authority and could take actions against those who were disruptive on the river. It was noted that different groups worked together to use the water effectively without affecting other users on the Barrage Reach, between the barrage and Princess Diana Bridge. This could be replicated on other stretches of the river, which anglers used. G. Coulson agreed that angling and other disciplines, such as canoeing, could take place concurrent, if each user was respectful of the area that was being used by others. It was agreed that communication was key.

The need for a hub of information and a code of conduct was discussed. It was noted that British Waterways had a set of rules for river users. It was also noted that differing groups had their own code of conduct and took action against those that did not adhere to these codes. A. Clark informed that the Marine Club invoked a three month suspension of use of the river for those in the club that did not follow their rules. A member queried how those that littered the river in Thornaby were policed. It was noted that as Thornaby remained a free fishing area, there was not a club with local rights to the area to oversee the conduct of fishing in the vicinity.

The effect of the Barrage on fishing was raised. In the light of recent discussion regarding the effect of the Barrage on the migration and level of fish stocks within the Tees, Mr Coulson stated that the Barrage had nothing but a positive effect on the river and that the coarse fishing was very good. Mr Smith also praised the water quality.

It was stated that the Tees area had recently been brought under the remit of the Environment Agency's Northumbria Region. It was hoped that the previous good relationship which had been enjoyed with the Dales Region would continue under the new arrangements.

G. Coulson and A Slater discussed the creation of a Tees River Trust. A group of five members were working to form the Trust as a charitable organisation, and had secured accommodation and facilities. The team were currently trying to secure funding from a variety of sources, including local authorities, businesses and organisations such as the Environment Agency. A Trust would work in a similar way to those on other rivers around the country and would aim to attract funding to address environmental improvements to the benefit of all parties interested in the river. Additional benefits could be the creation of a central source of information for a range of river users.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

5 Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer tabled an updated Work Programme and noted that Carol Straughan, Head of Planning, and Graham Clingan, Parks and Countryside

Manager, would be attending the next meeting to give evidence.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted