

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Thursday, 28th February, 2008.

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

Officers: G. Clingan, C. Straughan, R. Poundford (DNS), P. Mennear, M. Jones (LD)

Also in attendance: A. Elliott (Durham University), A. Slater (British Waterways), A. Clark (Castlegate Marine Club), D. Nicholson (Friends of Tees Heritage Park)

Apologies:

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declaration of interests declared at the meeting.

2 Review of River Based Leisure Facilities

As part of the review of River Based Leisure Facilities Members received evidence from G. Clingan, Countryside and Greenspace Manager, and Carol Straughan, Head of Planning.

G. Clingan updated members on the progress of the River Tees Park project. Meetings had been held with key partners, and the overall strategic objectives had been suggested. These included the development of a continuous green corridor, the encouragement of the use of the river corridor for sport, recreation and leisure, and engagement with local communities. It was recognised that there were existing strategies to work with, and it was a case of translating these into action. The next steps of the project were outlined, which included to formalise a partnership working group, development of a coordinated approach to marketing and the provision of information within the section of the river corridor, and identification of strategic green infrastructure projects. G. Clingan tabled the Draft Implementation Plan of the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy and explained that the Tees Park was one of the projects within this. The final Plan would be submitted to ONE in order to secure funding.

The potential purchase of land in order to secure the objectives of the Park was discussed. Other development near the river was discussed and G. Clingan explained that the River Tees Park project did not aim to stop the development of buildings, but those developments should be right for the area, and allow a route to the river.

As part of the recent developments in relation to the project it was intended to introduce a temporary post to take forward the project. This post would be responsible for the River Corridor in the area, and therefore would have a major focus on the Tees. However, the post would also have responsibilities for the other rivers, e.g. Lustrum Beck. The post holder would be employed by Groundwork South Tees, but with other funding SBC and the Environment Agency.

R Poundford noted the potential to increase the tourism offer, both for visitor

and business tourism, through enhancing and promoting the use of the Tees. It represents a major opportunity to increase the profile for the Borough outside of the immediate area. An opportunity to increase traffic on the river should also be explored to increase its access and use along with a range of stopping points along the river for a variety of leisure uses.

C. Straughan presented members with the planning department's involvement with the development of the River Tees. She noted the planning policies that related to development of the river, which included two National Planning Policy Guidance:

PPG17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation
PPS25: Development and Flood Risk

There were several emerging Regional Spatial Strategy policies which related to the river:

Policy 2 - Sustainable Development
Policy 5b - Protecting and Enhancing the Environment
Policy 13 - Brownfield Mixed-Use Locations
Policy 16 - Culture and Tourism
Policy 37 - Flood Risk

The emerging Core Strategy preferred options policies which would impact on the river were outlined:

Policy 4 - Economic Regeneration sought to
*Protect and enhance the role of the River Tees corridor as a key economic driver
*Support growth in sustainable tourism through improvements and enhancements to the environment in key areas where this contributed towards the tourism offer
Policy 5 - Town Centres included a reference to other initiatives to support Stockton Town Centre, including promoting a balanced and socially inclusive cultural sector... along with the River Tees.
Policy 6 - Community Facilities referred to ensuring the provision of additional facilities to meet the needs of the Borough which took advantage of opportunities within the river corridor.
Policy 10 - Environment Protection included reference to enhancing the openness of green wedges, including the River Tees Valley from Surtees Bridge, Stockton to Yarm.

C. Straughan also noted the following issues from the emerging Regeneration Development Plan Document:

The Green Blue Heart
North Shore
New River Crossings
Linking Stockton Town Centre with the Riverside

It was explained that in 2007 the Planning Department had to identify policies from the Local Plan which they wished to keep in place until the Core Strategy was implemented. Several Environmental and Recreational policies had been saved to ensure that development and protection of areas could continue to

take place.

The Boathouse Lane Development was discussed. There had been two planning applications approved for this area, and both included a footpath along the river bank. Section 106 implications were also discussed. It was queried whether the student accommodation that was being built next to Victoria Bridge was part of the Boathouse Lane Development. C. Straughan confirmed this, and explained that planning permission was granted as the building met the design brief for the area that included an 'Iconic Building'. She further explained that access to the site would be via the existing access to the site, which would undergo improvements.

The Old Vinegar site issue was raised, and disappointment was expressed that schemes which had proposed use of the site for leisure facilities had not progressed due to planning issues. C. Straughan explained that there were several policies which restricted the scope for building on this site. These policies included the site being classified as a green wedge, being within a conservation area, and being next to Yarm Bridge which was a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the viaduct which was Listed Building. The Traffic Section had concerns for the site due to access at the bridge, which they viewed as being a very busy bridge in terms of traffic.

In 1994, a developer had applied for a Certificate of Appropriate Alternative Development including proposals for a riverside marina boating facility and riverside recreation centre. The Council refused these proposals on the basis of the site's location within a Green Wedge, the impact upon the surrounding structures and the setting of the Conservation Areas of Eaglescliffe and Yarm, and the unsuitability of the access to the site. Upon appeal, the Planning Inspector ruled in favour of the Council.

G. Clingan further explained that there were further issues with access to the site, as although there was an opportunity to allow access from Aisalby Road, it would have entailed requesting access over private land. A. Slater commented that it would have been useful for the full implications of development at this (and other) locations to have been fully explored prior to their being included within the Tees Navigation Strategy.

The flood risk for the River Tees was queried. C. Straughan informed that in some areas there was a high risk of flooding. However there were defences that could be put in place to mitigate the risk, and when planning permission was sought for sites in flood risks areas, the Environment Agency was consulted. A. Slater discussed the Barrage as a flood defence, and noted that, due to climate change, the level of risk was shifting.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

3 Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer noted the Supplementary Planning Documents, results of the Committee's Adult and Youth Viewpoint consultation, and the results of previous consultation contained within the Tees Navigation Strategy (2002) that was distributed prior to the meeting. He also tabled comments from Steve

Wright, Queen's Campus Sport, University of Durham.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.