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The Friends of the Pentlands is a registered Scottish Charity, No: SC035514

ACTION PLAN FOR 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

The Society's first Action Plan was issued in 2004. This, the Society's ninth Action Plan, was approved by the Society's Executive Council on 1 February 2012. It seeks to set out the Executive Council's *modus operandi*, its short and medium-term objectives and its aspirations for the future.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The inaugural meeting of the Society was held on 29 March 2003. The *raison d'être* for that meeting was a willingness to take forward two specific objectives stated in the Pentland Hills Regional Park Integrated Management Strategy; viz, the wish to establish "an independent friends group" and the wish "to encourage wider participation by the public".

2.2 A Constitution was adopted on 19 November 2003; the Society's first Annual General Meeting was held on 11 May 2004 and the Society became a registered Scottish charity on the same date.

2.3 The Society supports SNH's contention that natural heritage contributes to people's quality of life and health via an awareness and enjoyment of their surroundings. An understanding and appreciation of natural heritage fosters local cultural identity and a sense of place. The Pentland Hills are the 'green lungs' of Edinburgh and have the capacity to contribute to improving people's physical and mental health by providing a place for informal recreation – walking, running, cycling, horse riding, sitting, socialising and 'breathing space' to take time out from the stress of modern life. The Pentlands provide a home for wildlife and enable people to appreciate biodiversity and natural and cultural heritage.

3. MISSION STATEMENT

The Society seeks to act as a catalyst to promote the conservation, protection and enhancement of the Pentland Hills, with particular emphasis on recreational quality, public access, cultural heritage, landscape and biodiversity.

4. AREA OF INTEREST

4.1 The Society has defined its area of interest as being the area delineated by:

- The Regional Park in the north;
- The A702 in the east;
- The A70 in the west and
- The minor road from Dolphinton, via Dunsyre to Newbigging, and then the A721 to Carnwath in the south.

4.2 While the Society's practical activities will be conducted within the area defined at paragraph 4.1 above the Society also has an interest in developments which impact on the visual landscape of the Pentland Hills, either when seen from the Pentlands or from the surroundings of the Pentlands.

5. MODUS OPERANDI

5.1 The Executive Council seeks to ensure that, as far as is practical, the Society's work demonstrates its all-embracing aspirations; its wish to be a catalyst for integrated action; its enthusiasm for advocacy; its wish to avoid being overtly political, yet retaining its right to lobby when necessary, especially with regard to perceived threats; and its hope that its work will, in the long term, lead to an inspirational approach to the environmental protection and enhancement of the Pentland Hills.

5.2 Furthermore the Executive Council will:

- Operate within the terms of the Society's Constitution.
- Comply with relevant guidance from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and, in accordance with that guidance, a 'Code of Conduct' was approved in 2006.
- Provide a Report to members at the Annual General Meeting.
- Submit Accounts annually to members for approval.
- Ensure that the Society's policies and actions conform to Government guidelines in relation to equal opportunities and other non-discriminatory policies.
- Use its membership of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum to co-operate with the Regional Park, bearing in mind, however, that the Society's interests may not always coincide with those of the Park, and that the Society's area of interest extends well beyond the boundaries of the Regional Park.

6. STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 The Society recognises that, as an all-volunteer body, its capabilities and influence are limited. In recognition of that reality the Society will seek, whenever appropriate, to obtain advice from and/or work with bodies that have greater expertise in the field of natural and cultural heritage and conservation and biodiversity.
- 6.2 Notwithstanding the above the Society's aspirations and activities will be guided by the following strategic principles.
- (a) The conservation, protection and enhancement of the Pentland Hills are for the benefit of present and future generations. The Society will, therefore, seek to protect existing opportunities and develop new opportunities.
 - (b) Activities in relation to conservation, protection and enhancement will be guided by those with specialist knowledge.
 - (c) Access to natural and cultural heritage is for the benefit of present and future generations. The Society will seek to promote existing opportunities and develop new ones.
 - (d) The heritage of the Pentland Hills should be accessible to the widest possible range of people. The Society will seek to promote access, especially in those areas that are least visited.
 - (e) Enjoyment of the natural and cultural heritage of the Pentland Hills should be encouraged in a variety of different ways. The Society will seek to provide a varied programme of activities and publications and, where practical, will open its activities to non-members.
 - (f) Providing a variety of educational opportunities is an investment in the future heritage of the Pentland Hills. The Society will provide educational opportunities for its members and, where practical, to non-members.

7. CONTINUING OBJECTIVES

The Society has a number of objectives which are essentially of an ongoing nature, although they are reviewed annually. These are listed below.

- (a) To maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with the Regional Park and the organisations represented on the Regional Park Consultative Forum.
- (b) To maintain mutually beneficial relationships with those organisations which share the Society's aspirations, eg Scottish Natural Heritage, the Paths for All Partnership and the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society.
- (c) To maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Local Authorities, landowners, and other organisations with an interest in the Pentlands.
- (d) To continue to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
- (e) To support, and where appropriate assist with, specific Regional Park tasks which are compatible with the terms of the Society's mission statement and to support and assist local authorities with similar tasks outwith the Regional Park.

- (f) To pursue biodiversity projects to enhance the landscape and improve habitats.
- (g) To pursue projects to maintain and, where necessary, improve access.
- (h) To maintain a programme of inspections of structures – stiles, bridges, boardwalks etc – which the Society has installed to ensure that they remain serviceable and, where necessary, make provision for their repair or improvement.
- (i) To monitor planning applications lodged with Local Authorities or the Scottish Government to ascertain their potential impact on the Society's area of interest and, when necessary, to submit an appropriate response.
- (j) To maintain a 'Friends of the Pentlands' web site.
- (k) To continue to develop a wildflower meadow at Bavelaw.
- (l) To undertake the routine maintenance of the Harlaw wildlife garden and make improvements to the garden with guidance from the Ranger Service.
- (m) To continue to carry out litter picking on a regular basis.
- (n) To issue an Annual Review to report on progress over the past year.

8. SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES

The Society's short-term objectives are defined as those its Executive Council aspires to achieve by 31 December 2012.

8.1. Educational, Environmental and Promotional Objectives.

- (a) To offer a programme of educational walks for Members, and at times for non-members, on themes such as biodiversity and social and cultural history.
- (b) To offer two winter talks, open to both Members and the general public, on topics consistent with the Society's mission statement.
- (c) To offer a programme of walks to foster the enjoyment of healthy walking, appreciation of the environment, and the enjoyment of the company of fellow walkers.
- (d) To support Midlothian Council's Walking Festival.
- (e) To offer walks for persons with disabilities.
- (f) To promote a 'Walk of the Season' to encourage Members to explore and appreciate the Pentland landscape.
- (g) To publish an information leaflet about the former Woodhouselee mansion and the Fraser-Tytler memorial.
- (h) To develop a mutually beneficial with the Balerno Ramblers and the local BTCV group.
- (i) To undertake some remedial work on dry-stane dyke at the North Esk Reservoir.
- (j) To develop a mini native arboretum at Swanston.
- (k) To improve the management of the small strip of wood at Boghall.
- (l) To develop, in conjunction with others, a short, circular path at Silverburn.
- (m) To make improvements to the drainage at the path to the Bavelaw bird hide and the surface of the board walk.
- (n) To continue to make improvements to the path in Phantom's Cleugh.

- (o) To produce a Volunteer Handbook to provide guidance on what is on offer and the relative responsibilities of the Society and the individual volunteer.

8.2. Administrative Objectives

- (a) To achieve 400 members by 31 December 2012.
- (b) To recommend to the AGM subscription rates for the various categories of membership for 2013.
- (c) To ensure that the Society's running costs can continue to be met from membership income.
- (d) To hold events, such as 'Tea & Cakes' days and the sale of publications, to raise funds for environmental projects while simultaneously providing an opportunity to promote the Society's objectives and membership.
- (e) To issue *Pentland Post* three times per year.
- (f) To develop a marketing and publicity plan.
- (g) To consider the possibility of becoming a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

9. MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES

The Society's medium term objectives relate to areas of improvement that have been identified as worthwhile but are either not of immediate priority, or depend upon substantial grant funding, or need to be addressed with other partners. These objectives may well take more than a year to achieve fruition. They are listed below.

- (a) To develop a 'Walk to the Seven Trig Points.
- (b) To assist with developments at Harperrig.
- (c) To develop additional Pentland wildlife leaflets.
- (d) To develop a 'Pentland Way' and an accompanying booklet.
- (e) To assist with the management of a major woodland project at Bonaly

10. LONG TERM OBJECTIVES/ASPIRATIONS

The Society's long term objectives relate to improvements that will need substantial grant funding and need to be addressed in partnership with other organisations. They are listed below.

- (a) To explore the possibility, with other interested parties, of improving the black grouse habitat within the Pentlands.
- (b) To consider the possibility of establishing a path ranger survey service for that area of the Pentland Hills which lies outwith the boundaries of the Regional Park.
- (c) To promote the extension of the Regional Park in order that it may cover the whole area of the Society's interest.

11. FINANCE

- (a) The Society aims to continue to meet its administrative running costs from income from membership fees, including gift aid. During 2011 funds from those sources amounted to £2,730.59 while expenditure on administration was £2,330.57.¹
- (b) The Society aims to fund minor projects through a mixture of donations, internal fundraising initiatives and minor grants. During 2011 the Society raised over £2,500 from fundraising activities and received £3,437.99 in donations.
- (c) Major projects which the Society undertakes will continue to be funded from grants, while the Society's contribution will be met in kind by time, managerial or labour, or both.
- (d) During 2011 the Society obtained grants amounting to £3593.30.
- (e) The Society aims to maintain reserve funds of not less than £7,500 and not more than £10,000.
- (f) As at 31 December 2011 the Society's accounts showed a surplus for the year of £718.81 and current assets of £12,247.20 compared with £11,528.39 at the end of 2010.

¹ This figure is the sum of postage (£522.80), printing (£970.05), stationery (£248.69), phone (£60), subs to other organisations (£60), insurance (£445.03) and room hire (£84.00).