

HISTORIC MONUMENTS COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE 136th MEETING HELD IN THE BURRENDALE HOTEL, CASTLEWELLAN ROAD, NEWCASTLE ON FRIDAY, 8TH DECEMBER 2006 AT 1.30PM

PRESENT:

Mr Richard Black – Chairman
Mr T Canavan
Mrs R Evans
Mrs H Lanigan Wood
Dr F McCormick
Mr J Moore
Dr K Muhr
Dr E McShane
Mr P Walsh

IN ATTENDANCE:

M M Coulter, EHS (Item 1 only)
Ms C Foley, EHS
Mr C McDaid, EHS
Lt.Col. Harvey Bicker, MNPWP and
4 other representatives.
Mr C Francey, Secretariat

1. TOUR OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF INTEREST IN THE MOURNES AREA

Members took part in a field visit organised by Ms Foley. They visited the scheduled Harbour of Newcastle and noted some of the management issues including access. They also noted that the watch house on the west side was included in the scheduling and will not be damaged by the adjoining proposed development.

Members visited the site of the Maghera Church and round tower and noted some of the conservation repairs carried out to the ruins and discussed some of the general management issues relating to the upkeep of this type of monument.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr C Mallon, Ms A Moreno, Mr B Black and Mr I Hill.

3. PRESENTATION ON THE PROPOSED MOURNE NATIONAL PARK

The Chairman welcomed Mr Harvey Bicker, Chairman of the Mourne National Park Working Party (MNPWP) and other representatives of the Working Party.

Mr Bicker explained that the consultation process for the MNP has been extended to the 31st January 2007. On completion of this phase the MNPWP will collate and assess the various responses and prepare a report for submission to the Minister.

Mr C McDaid, EHS, gave a presentation on the proposal for a National Park in the Mournes. He outlined the background to the initiative by the then Minister of the Environment, Mr D Nesbitt. In order to progress this commitment the Government set up the MNPWP to consider a way forward. He highlighted the remit of the Working Party which was to consider a boundary, a management structure, consultation process and recommendations for a report to the Minister.

Mr McDaid outlined some of the other issues and features to be addressed by the process such as, what is a National Park; aims of National Park in Northern Ireland; criteria for selecting National Parks; legislation; funding; benefits and disadvantages of NPs.

The Chairman thanked Mr McDaid for his presentation.

In discussion, a number of points and issues emerged as follows:

- The Chairman of the MNPWP highlighted the reason for selecting the Mourne area as the first NP in Northern Ireland. He commented that there were few areas within NI which were suitable for developing as a NP. The proposed Mourne NP had the potential for an increase in size. Members agreed that this was the case and felt that the juxtaposition of the Ring of Gullion AONB lent itself to a natural extension.
- Members raised the question of how local farmers viewed the introduction of a NP. It was noted that farmers had a substantial representation on the MNPWP. The farmer's union representative believed that there was a need to consider the overarching facets of the socio-economic factors and the impact on the local community. Individual farmers had their own views on the proposed NP but the National Farmers Union would be responding to the consultation in due course. This is likely to highlight the advantages and concerns; if farmers are to embrace the new NP they will need a clear steer on how it will affect them. At a recent meeting of local farmers in Newcastle to discuss the proposal the feeling was that at this moment in time there is no advantage to the farmers with the substantial problem of access and public liability being a major stumbling block. However, if these issues of access can be resolved more farmers could be in favour of a NP.
- The problems of public liability were recently raised with the Office of the Law Reform and this body took the view that the issue was one of trespass and expressed the view that the current legislation on Occupier's Liability was adequate and did not warrant change.
- Members were concerned that the consultation process had no specific reference to the conservation and preservation of historic monuments or archaeological sites. The farmer's representative felt there could be a problem for the preservation of monuments if the public was able to tramp about the area of monuments. Ms Foley pointed out that the EHS took the view that it was important for the public to have access to raise the awareness of their cultural heritage and currently there was no concern

about trampling by visitors. In any case it is expected that EHS can control this through advised management regimes.

- It was unlikely there will be a high demand for visiting all monuments in the Mournes and it might be more practicable to identify specific areas within the proposed National Park which could be easily accessed and sensitively managed.
- Members were concerned that the current view of farmers would impact on the final outcome of the consultation process. However, all shades of opinion had to be considered and the designation of a National Park was not just for the benefit of urban dwellers. It had to be recognised that landowners had more at stake. There was also a major concern for farmers of the effect of PPS 14 which will impose restrictions on single dwellings in the countryside. It is doubtful that this policy will change even if it is revisited by the devolved administration.
- Local communities within the Mournes tend to consider themselves in cultural terms and therefore the communities of Annalong and Kilkeel, which are outside the proposed National Park boundary, feel that they have as much right as other communities in the Mournes area to be included in the new designation.
- It was noted that the consultation paper had a number of core questions to be addressed. A subsidiary consultation on management structures will follow.
- The reporting process was clarified. The MNPWP report will be submitted to the Minister who will then consult with CNCC, the Department's statutory advisor on National Parks. Any associated primary legislation will also be subject to consultation with CNCC.
- Members noted that in England and Scotland the legislation under the Right to Roam and CRoW Acts meant that insurance is no longer the responsibility of the landowner.
- In considering the whole of the island of Ireland and its indigenous population there was every possibility that tourism will increase. This will have an effect on visitor numbers to Northern Ireland and therefore the designation of a NP will offer better control. However, it was important that any measures used in the management of the NP do not cause any increase in bureaucracy for landowners.
- Some members took the view that with the exclusion of some areas of the Mournes from the proposed NP it might be more difficult to sell it to the people of Northern Ireland. The Chairman of the MNPWP pointed out that, although the boundary line was based on landscape terms only, it did not take account of the cultural community of Mourne. It had to be recognised that the people of the coastal strip omitted from the proposed NP were also people of the Mournes and indeed had contributed to the making of the landscape. In addition the coastal strip also offered potential for coastal recreation.

- Members felt that if many of the monuments outside the boundary were to be included that this could also offer them increased protection.

The Chairman thanked the Chairman of the MNPWP and the other representatives of the Group for attending and participating in the discussion. He appreciated the opportunity to have an exchange of views and undertook to respond to the consultation paper.

ACTION: Respond to consultation paper Chairman

4. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

4.1 SACs

The Chairman reported that he and the other SAC Chairs recently met with the Permanent Secretary to discuss a number of issues relating to the role of the Councils. He also met with Mr Rogers, Chief Executive of EHS to discuss some of the outcomes of this meeting. During the course of these discussions, Mr Rogers indicated that he would wish to attend the next meeting of the HMC to seek Councils support on the strategic debate on the built heritage. It was agreed therefore that there should be a meeting of an HMC sub-group in January to discuss the agenda for the next meeting in February 2007.

**ACTION: Arrange meeting of sub-group
Secretariat**

5. MINUTES OF 135th MEETING of 20th SEPTEMBER 2006

The minutes of the meeting of the 20th September 2006 were agreed.

6. MATTERS ARISING REPORT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 135th MEETING.

6.1 HMC Report

It was agreed that there should be an Appendix to the Report which lists the scheduled monuments endorsed by Council over the term of the last Council.

ACTION: Prepare list of monuments Secretariat

6.2 Tour of EHS:HM Facilities

The Chairman thanked Ms Foley for organising the tour of the facilities in Hill Street. Members were impressed by the improvements in technology and methodology since the last visit by Council and felt that the tour had been really worthwhile in terms of updating them of progress in the work of historic monuments.

6.3 Research Needs in the Field of Irish Archaeology

The Chairman informed members that arising from the meeting of the Archaeological Research Group on the 10TH November, Mr J O'Neill is to prepare a draft summary paper for consideration by Council.

6.4 EHS Conservation Work

Members were concerned that no progress had been made in relation to the protection of the fabric of carved stones and high crosses.

Council took the view that the work on the Boa Island carved stone offered a realistic method of protecting the fabric of these stones and the involvement of local communities in addressing the problem was a welcome development. This seemed to offer a good way forward for the protection of other carved stones. However, in the view of members little has been achieved so far, the main reasons given for this have been a lack of resources within EHS. Ms Foley informed members that the Director would want members to know that job descriptions for new staff were now drawn up and that recruitment was progressing towards the filling of existing vacant posts and appointment of additional staff as soon as possible.

Council proposed that in the meantime, EHS should pursue the scanning of all exposed and portable carved stonework to be used at a later date for placing copies in the open and securing originals indoors. Ms Foley undertook to investigate methods of capturing replicable details noting that the in-house optical scanner was not of sufficient resolution for the detail required.

The Chairman undertook to write to Mr Coulter confirming Council's suggestion.

ACTION: Write to Mr Coulter Chairman

7. ANY OTHER MATTERS ARISING NOT ON MAIN AGENDA

There were no other matters arising not on the main agenda.

8. PROPOSALS FOR SCHEDULING - HM 438

In accordance with the requirement for EHS to consult with Council under Article 3(6) of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995, Ms Foley presented a list of 7 sites proposed for Scheduling in counties Antrim, Down and Fermanagh. Dr K Muhr gave members information on the place-names relating to the various sites.

Council approved the scheduling of the following sites:

CO. ANTRIM

MRA 1:20 Feigh Mountain, Ice House

MRA 2:13 Knocksoghey, Carrickarde Ice House

MRA 8:23 Cregganboy, Salmon Fishery

MRA 8:24 Cregganboy, Ice House

CO. DOWN

DOW 31:3 Raholp, Church and Graveyard, ' St Tassaghs' .

CO. FERMANAGH

FER 211:42 Rossory, Church and Graveyard

FER 244:6 Aghatirourke, Standing Stone

Some points were addressed as follows:

MRA 1:20 Feigh Mountain, Ice House

It was agreed that the scheduling should include the winch and cast -iron bath.

MRA 8:23 Cregganboy, Salmon Fishery

Ms Foley undertook to contact the Centre for Maritime Archaeology for information on the salmon fishery.

DOW 31:3 Raholp, Church and Graveyard,' St Tassaghs'

It was agreed that the line of the scheduling should be extended to the road to protect a zone not yet built on.

FER 244:6 Aghatirourke, Standing Stone

It was agreed that the line of the scheduling should be amended.

9. PRESENTATION ON THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

Ms Foley updated Council on the Council of Europe European Landscape Convention known as the Florence Convention and informed members that the UK Government had signed and now ratified the Convention on 16th November 2006. The Convention will not involve any changes to current legislation in Northern Ireland but may be used to influence the treatment of the Historic Environment in planning and agricultural policy. Details of the Convention are available on the Council of Europe and DEFRA websites.

A list of international Charters, Conventions, Regulations and NI legislation and policy relating to the Historic Environment was circulated to members by Ms Foley.

10. JOINT COMMITTEE FOR INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

Members noted the draft minutes of the JCIH meeting of the 17TH October. 2006.

11. LOWER BANN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Item deferred to next meeting.

12. MEDIA/PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT – (September –November 2006) (HM 437)

Members noted the media report and thanked Mr Justin Boyle for his work in the preparation of the press cuttings.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 Meeting Papers

A number of members expressed dissatisfaction with the way the papers for the meeting are being circulated. Although it was commendable for the Department to have paper saving measures it was not a practicable proposition for members to download papers from their own computers, particularly where this involves substantial use of their own paper. It had to be remembered that members undertook the work of the Council on a voluntary basis and it was unfair to expect them to bear the cost of printing papers. There was also the problem of printing off photographs of scheduled sites.

It was agreed therefore that Council's papers should be posted out in hardcopy but having regard to such paper saving measures as practicable. Powerpoint presentations will continue to be used to supplement papers and enable group discussion.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held on Friday, 9 FEBRUARY 2007.

(the meeting finished at 4.45pm)