

**Minutes
Environment Scrutiny Panel**

**12 December 2006
5.30 p.m.
Town Hall**

Present: Councillors Wolstenhome (in the Chair), Carr, Colledge, Graham, Kinghorn, Leake, McDonnell, Marsden, Pitts, Simpson and Turnbull.

Also in Attendance: Councillors Cowper, Hepplewhite, Kellett, Robinson and Stoddart.

Street Scene Technical Manager – Peter Lee.

Apologies

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Walton.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November 2006

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record.

Briefing Note from Environment & Leisure Services – Riverbanks

The City of Durham's Street Scene Technical Manager, Peter Lee was in attendance and gave a brief resume of the briefing note as circulated with the papers for the meeting. This briefing note gave details of the City of Durham's activities on and around the Riverbanks, more specifically in the City Centre and Peninsula (Appendix A).

The main points being:-

- The City of Durham actually owns very little land along the Riverbanks within the City Centre.
- The City maintains grass at a few locations out of the City Centre.
- Litter picking takes place three times a week between Framwelgate Bridge and Prebends Bridge; this is done in coordination with the University of Durham and the Dean & Chapter.
- The City inspects and maintains the 7 lifebuoy stations from The Racecourse down to The Sands.
- The river edges had been cleaned approximately 2 years ago with help from the Kayaking Club.
- The Durham Riverbanks Management Group has recently been reformed and has representatives from the various stakeholders e.g. City of Durham, University of Durham, Dean & Chapter, Durham County Council, the various Colleges and various interest groups.

Members noted that the public perception is that the City of Durham, "The Council" has responsibility for all the riverbanks.

The Environment Agency is the body responsible for rivers, and they state that the adjacent landowner is responsible for the maintenance of riverbanks. The Agency now only maintains where there is flooding or the potential for flooding.

Some Members noted that anti-social behaviour along the riverbanks had increased, and wished to know what the City of Durham do or can do as regards this. Also Members wished to know the Police position as regards this issue, and whether Community Support Officers could be utilised in these instances.

The Panel agreed that information as regards the City of Durham's ownership and the work it undertakes along the riverbanks should be made available to the public in some form. It may be useful therefore to feed back the views of the Panel to the Durham Riverbanks Management Group in due course so that a statement from the Group could then be used, if agreed, as an article within Durham City News.

Some Members also wondered whether it would be useful to have a perspective as regards biodiversity and sustainability and if the City of Durham's Sustainable Development Manager, Jonathan Elmer would have useful comments to make as regards the riverbanks.

Also Members wished to know whether the Durham County Council had any plans as regards footpaths and rights of way along the riverbanks, i.e. improvements, maintenance and accessibility.

Scrutiny Planning Sheets – Riverbanks

The Chairman informed the Panel that Claire Lancaster, Manager of the Necklace Park Project, would be in attendance at the January meeting of the Panel and would speak as regards the aims of the project.

Also, the Rights of Way Section of the Durham County Council would be asked whether they would wish to attend the meeting to speak as regards their responsibilities, if any, relating to the footpaths that are adjacent to the river.

At the March meeting of the Panel two guests, one from the University of Durham and one from the Dean & Chapter of Durham Cathedral, should be in attendance to inform Members of their organisations' stance as regards the riverbanks.

Actions for the next meeting:-

- Witness from the Necklace Park Project and Durham County Council Rights of Way Section to speak as regards their work relating to the riverbanks.

The Meeting terminated at 5.55 p.m.

Information relating to Wildlife Meadow Sites (previous known as Biodiversity Sites)

Please find set out below the information requested by the Scrutiny Committee, to be reported back to the Environment Scrutiny Panel, namely relating to the location and timescales involved.

Wildlife Meadow Site	No. of Signs
Witton Dene	1
Holliday Park	1
Ponderosa	2
Bearpark Park	1
Aykley Vale	2
Bek Road	2
Kelloe Park	2
Addison Park	1

The signs have now been fabricated and have just been delivered to the Council (11-01-07). They will be installed during the coming month.

Jonathan Elmer
Sustainable Development Manager
City of Durham
11-01-07

SCRUTINY TOPIC – RIVERBANKS

The Witnesses to be in attendance at the meeting held **23 January 2007** are:

Claire Lancaster – Manager, Necklace Park Project

Tourism expert Claire Lancaster is the person tasked with delivering a new, special 12-mile long “Necklace Park”, which extends from Sunderland Bridge, south of the Durham City, to Finchale Abbey in the north.

As the newly appointed manager of the project, Claire’s job is to work with the community, landowners and special interest groups to create new and important cultural attractions in the area, based on the River Wear as it runs through the City. The aim is to join locations using public pathways and bridleways and, by agreement with private landowners, to create spaces for public events, walks, sports, and other activities.

The “necklace park” responds to calls made during the 2005 public consultation on the ideas needed to deliver 2020 Visioning. This project and others have been proposed to develop the Visioning Masterplan.

A graduate in international business from the University of Lincoln, Claire also spent time studying Strategic Management at University in New Zealand, before completing her Master’s Degree in Tourism at Sunderland University. In 2001 she joined One NorthEast’s Tourism Team, where she managed a range of regional tourism projects, before moving within One NorthEast to lead the regional tourism skills agenda.

Nick Hall – Public Rights of Way Officer (North Area), Durham County Council

The County Council has 7 Area Officers who deal with all aspects of the Practical and Legal demands of the Public Rights of Way network, although much of the practical works are achieved by working in partnership with and relying upon support from the County Council’s Ranger Service, Volunteers and various Parish Groups. Most public rights of way cross private land. The County Council as highway authority is generally responsible for maintaining them in good condition and signing and waymarking them.

Durham County Council is responsible for:

- The accurate and continuous recording of public rights of way on the Definitive Map.
- Processing Public Path Orders and Definitive Map Modification Orders, that may change the route or status of public rights of way on the definitive map.

As regards the Public Footpaths alongside the River Wear in Durham, the County Council is responsible for the following:

- Signage and waymarking of routes.
- Maintenance of the surfaces, including steps and some revetment issues.
- Cutting back of upgrowing vegetation (nettles, grass, weeds etc.) immediately alongside the path.
- Enforcing the removal of obstructions.
- The County Council is normally responsible for a bridge or water course crossing but not all structures.
- Furthermore the County Council can, in some circumstances, be responsible for the drainage on a path, however not every drain on every path.