

# FROM THE HILL TO THE SEA

## TRANSFORMING THE CULTURAL LIFE OF PORTSMOUTH

**On the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005, in response to an invitation from the Cultural Consortium Executive Group, interested groups and individuals attended the City Museum for an open forum on Portsmouth's Natural Environment.**

The following points were debated and the participants' responses are noted below.

**Do you feel that objective 3 of the Cultural Strategy is relevant to the needs of Portsmouth's natural environment?**

Portsmouth needs to protect, enhance and conserve its natural environment, so Objective 3 is relevant – but it needs to be done in partnership with Portsmouth City Council (PCC), Ministry Of Defence (MOD), and all major bodies within the city – as well as links to education (so future generations understand what they are conserving) and major bodies such as Greenpeace and English Heritage. Need to develop a political voice.

Yes – however to be of any use the group must be able to hold some weight with PCC/planning committee. A working group could be the way forward if relevant people are part of the group.

Yes – It needs to be made clear that this includes parks and all green spaces e.g. roundabouts.

The debate also highlighted the need to:

Make sure PCC is aware of all open spaces.

Protect St James' hospital grounds.

Be sensitive in addressing the need for more housing and the demands that puts on our green spaces.

Consultation should mean a commitment to meeting with specialist groups.

Meet with other groups including those perceived as being against the natural environment.

Undertake a green and open spaces character assessment.

### **Are there additional aims that you would like to see?**

Promotion to residents of the value of Portsmouth's mudflats etc. People cannot understand the value of Portsmouth's Natural Environment unless they are educated about it. Perhaps it would be good to tie up conservation with the National Curriculum's Key Stage 3 'Local Action – Global Effect'

There should be better publicity about environmental areas. Many residents of Portsmouth are unaware of all environmental areas/open spaces.

Encourage more gathering/ usage of open spaces through better provision of seating. Look for ways in which the natural environment might be a means of creating closer communities.

### **The debate also highlighted the need for:**

Ensuring protection of the natural environment is built into all new planning.

Commissioning of a natural environment audit should include other groups i.e. WI.

Awareness of the dangers in opening up spaces, which can endanger wildlife. Pompey Study Centre was mentioned as an example.

A definition of Green Space- is it man-made or natural?

Essential to take an holistic approach.

Recognise pressure for local parking.

Hilsea Lido and Eastney Peninsula left out of city plan- why?

### **What would you like to see the Natural Environment Working Group (NEWG) achieve?**

Credibility as a lobbying group. A "do-able" future strategy. Education on natural environments for residents. Awareness through National Curriculum for future understanding.

The 3 bullet point aims in Objective 3.

Provide a mixture of advice (expert) and new ideas into the planning process.  
Need to focus on small short-term goals.

Controlled planning and building on green/brown sites, and raise awareness of areas in question.

**The debate also highlighted the need for:**

Raising awareness. Letters have been received by Councillor Hall about Eastney Beach being scruffy, whereas, in fact it is an area of scientific interest/importance – something Portsmouth should be proud of. She informed the group that notice boards are coming soon.

All the relevant smaller groups should have a collective voice.

There is a need for an audit of groups. The situation is confusing; it could be that it is possibly already being done. A database would also be useful.

Research into other councils- do they have a NEWG?

Collective understanding of what the NEWG could offer the council and what the council would want the NEWG to do.

Involving schools in an audit.

**How would you like to see PCC working in partnership with interested parties?**

To be involved in early stages of any project proposals and liaise with the NEWG. Produce an environmental footprint of open spaces in Portsmouth with the aim of protecting areas of natural beauty the city currently has, before they are lost forever.

The ensuing debate did not progress very far because it was felt that PCC must sign up to its own cultural strategy and support the working group.

## **What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing Portsmouth's natural environment?**

Without determination by all parties to preserve what remains it will disappear by default or development creep.

Pressure from Government with building more housing. Builders looking to invest in future rebuilding, both housing and business. Lack of resources, funding etc.

Preservation for the present. Future conservation. Education to produce informed change and understanding.

## **What solutions would you offer to these challenges?**

To become a leading city in providing both environmental and planning strategies. Indeed, having a council that puts the environment first before any other scheme/project.

Education via schools and nurseries/ city museums/ university/ MOD/ PCC.

Improve the quality of buildings e.g. cafes situated in the middle of natural environments by:

- Encouraging design competitions for these and for landscaped areas
- Greater involvement with residents in determining what kind of natural environment we want

Identifying the importance of the city's areas of natural environment, then categorising them as to levels of protection needed.

## **Feedback/Suggestions**

All planning applications of whatever size should include a natural environment statement.

Focus on a future development such as Frasier Gunnery range so that even if development cannot be prevented, the natural environment is considered in its development.

Encouraging developers to state their plans/ proposals will encourage bio-diversity (not just producing a grassy area). Use Centros Miller (Tricorn site) as a test case.