

# EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2008

## AYRSHIRE BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

### Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with an update on the Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan which has been prepared to assist the Council meet its statutory obligations under the terms of the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) 2004 which has the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The first Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Plan was published in 2001. The Plan, produced by a steering group of the three Ayrshire local authorities and key partners, highlighted the species and habitats of local and national importance within Ayrshire. The Plan also listed aims and objectives for the conservation and enhancement of Ayrshire's natural heritage.
- 2.2 The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 places a responsibility for securing and demonstrating best value practices, whilst striving towards sustainable development on local authorities. Biodiversity has been identified as a key indicator to determine whether sustainability is being achieved. The Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) 2004 places further obligations on local authorities to conserve and enhance the natural environment through the requirement of a strategy for the conservation of biodiversity.

#### 3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 In order for the legislative requirements for the conservation of biodiversity to be met, the Council and its steering group partners commissioned external consultants, Biodiversity Solutions, to undertake a review of the existing Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan with the purpose of prioritising objectives and ensuring they were appropriate, specific, measurable and achievable.
- 3.2 The review of the Action Plan was completed in September 2007 and is currently undergoing Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as required under statutory obligation. The steering group would wish to launch the revised Plan upon adoption of the document by each of the local authorities, and successful progress through SEA, and this is likely to take place in early Autumn 2008.

- 3.3 The Plan, which will be used as a working advisory document, highlights key flora and fauna located throughout Ayrshire and identifies those sites and species requiring conservation measures, this incorporates specific actions relating to the protection and enhancement of the local ecology.
- 3.4 In order for the aims of the Plan to be more achievable and focused, the number of key habitats have been reduced from 26 to 2: coastal habitats and lowland raised bog which is of particular ecological importance within East Ayrshire.
- 3.5 There have been 39 lowland raised bog sites identified throughout Ayrshire, 22 of which are located within East Ayrshire. The Barlosh Moss and Dalmellington Moss sites have been accredited with Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status. This means, both sites have been identified as areas of significant ecological significance and have therefore been designated as protected habitats under UK law.
- 3.6 The success of the actions identified within the Plan is dependant on the continued joint working between local authorities, the voluntary sector, statutory bodies and the private sector as well as individual landowners.
- 3.7 The document will be of direct benefit across Council Services, acting as a reference resource to services such as Planning and Roads whereby the Council is obliged to take the environmental impact of new construction and development into account through the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment processes.
- 3.8 The updated Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan can be viewed through the Members Information Portal and will be published on the Council's website.

#### **4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The aims and objectives within the Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan are consistent with the Improving the Environment Section of the Community Plan, the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Nil

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Nil

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 Local authorities are obliged to conserve and enhance the natural environment through the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) 2004.
- 7.2 In order to ensure that these obligations are met, the Council and its biodiversity steering group partners commissioned consultants, Biodiversity Solutions, to revise the original Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan which was published in 2001, with the aim of making the actions within the plan more specific, measurable and achievable.
- 7.3 Upon completion of the Strategic Environmental Assessment process, it is the intention of the Steering Group to launch the revised Plan in early Autumn 2008.
- 7.4 The document will benefit Council Services, as a reference resource, particularly in relation to proposed developments whereby a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Assessment is obligatory.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 Cabinet is invited to:
- i) adopt the revised Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan, subject to the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessment, and;
  - ii) otherwise note the report.

William Stafford  
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

WS/MT/DG 11<sup>th</sup> April 2008

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Draft Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan (2008)
2. Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2001)

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01563 554878

Implementation Officer: [chris.mcaleavey@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:chris.mcaleavey@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)