

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2008

WORLD 'JOHN LAPRAIK' SPEAKING COMPETITION

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services/ Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval from Cabinet for support for the proposed support for the World 'John Lapraik' Speaking Competition to be held in Muirkirk in June 2008.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 John Lapraik was an amateur poet who lived near Muirkirk, during the 18th Century. He was a friend of Robert Burns, Scotland's most famous poet. Robert Burns wrote a total of three "Epistles" to John Lapraik ("an old Scottish bard") which are well known, having been published by Burns.

John Lapraik had a long and eventful life. He started as a relatively wealthy farmer, then lost his money in a bank crash and endured a spell in a debtor's prison.

- 2.2 He attempted to copy Burns by publishing a book of his poems, two years after Burns' first edition of poetry had been published to great acclaim.

John Lapraik's book of poems are interesting for their content – casting light on what it was like to live in Ayrshire in the 18th Century – but his venture into publishing never enjoyed any commercial success.

- 2.3 Following his death in 1807 he was buried in the churchyard at Kirkgreen, Muirkirk and his grave is marked by a tabular stone which has the inscription:

"In Memory of John Lapraik late of Dalfram who died at Muirkirk on 7 May 1807 in the 80th year of his age".

John Lapraik's memory was subsequently kept alive by the Lapraik Burns Club which arranged for the erection of a Memorial in his memory. The Memorial Cairn was built from stone from Lapraik's house, Dalfram, in a field between the Sorn and Cumnock roads.

3. WORLD 'JOHN LAPRAIK' SPEAKING COMPETITION

- 3.1 It is proposed to host, for the first time, a speaking competition in the Ayrshire village of Muirkirk as part of the John Lapraik Festival weekend. Competitors will be required to recite Robert Burns' 'Epistle to J Lapraik' in front of a panel of judges to win an exclusive trophy and the honour of being dubbed 'World Champion' Epistle of Lapraik speaker.

3.2 The competition will take place in the Coach House Hotel, Muirkirk on Saturday 7 June 2008 and will comprise an extensive programme, involving:

- Young People's Competition
- World John Lapraik Speaking Competition
- Lapraik/Burns Themed Church Service
- Inaugural Walk of the Poet's Trail

3.3 The organisers are seeking the Council's support by permission to use the East Ayrshire logo on publicity materials. They are also seeking support in the distribution of publicity materials through Council offices, libraries, schools and community centres. The involvement of Muirkirk Primary School will be a central element of the celebration.

3.4 Clearly, also this links to the Homecoming 2009 and the emerging concept of "Local Heroes".

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Nil.

5. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Nil.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This competition and festival contribute significantly towards promoting community learning.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that members:

- (i) endorse East Ayrshire Council's support for the World Lapraik Speaking Competition;
- (ii) otherwise, note the contents of the report

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

William Stafford
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

KMcK/EO'N
06/02/08

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members requiring further information should contact Kenneth McKinlay, Acting Head of Service: Schools Tel: (01563) 576126.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Kenneth McKinlay, Acting Head of Service: Schools