

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 14 DECEMBER 2004

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLANS AND PROJECTS 2004/2005 AND 2005/2006

Report by the Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Committee of progress with the Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans and Projects being implemented in 2004/2005 through the Planning, Development and Building Standards Division in conjunction with the East Ayrshire Coalfield Area Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP).
- 1.2 The report also outlines the targets for the production of Action Plans and implementation of projects in 2005/2006 in conjunction with the recently submitted bid to the Community Regeneration Fund.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Planning, Development and Building Standards Division has responsibility for a budget of £170,000 in 2004/2005 from the SIP for the production of Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans and implementation of associated environmental improvement projects. As part of this process the Restoring Communities Programme and associated environmental improvement projects are being implemented. External funding is levered in for individual projects.

3. COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLANS - 2004/2005

- 3.1 To date 10 Finalised Action Plans have been prepared for individual settlements as part of the ongoing programme. Plans are now finalised for Auchinleck, Drongan, Dalmellington, New Cumnock, Patna, Rankinston, Muirkirk, Catrine, Logan and Bellsbank. In addition to this, 3 draft Action Plans are being produced for Cumnock (excluding the town centre), Cumnock Town Centre and Netherthird/Craigens/Skerrington. The community consultation process for these settlements is nearing completion. On completion, the latest 3 finalised plans will be circulated to community bodies and through consultation, priority projects identified. Projects will be implemented depending on available resources.

4. PROJECTS 2004/2005

For the purposes of this report, implementation of environmental improvement projects is split between projects within Auchinleck and Ochiltree under the Restoring Communities Programme and projects within other communities in the Coalfield Area. All projects are implemented in partnership with a local community group through the Policy and Projects Section. The projects are as follows:

Projects under the Restoring Communities Programme

4.1 AUCHINLECK, AIRD AVENUE PROJECT

The project is being implemented by the Auchinleck Community Development Initiative in conjunction with the Policy and Projects Section. The aim of the project is to develop an existing vacant site into a community garden.

The community garden project consists of the provision of accommodation for horticultural training and growing plants. The facility will also provide an educational resource for use by the local schools. Utilising the plants and equipment provided at the Aird Ave project, local untidy corners throughout the town would be improved and maintained by local people. It is intended that this model, based on the Alness Initiative (Ross and Cromarty), will spread throughout the town over time resulting in an enhanced environment and widespread community involvement. The development of the garden is aimed at encouraging local people to become involved in the production of plants for use within the village, providing the structure to set up and run a community business as well as improve the image of the area.

It is intended that the community group will take on the responsibility for the maintenance of the site, possibly through a leasing agreement with the Council.

To date, funding has been secured for this project from the SIP and EAC, with match funding currently being sought from Lottery funding.

4.2 AUCHINLECK “ONE STOP SHOP” PROJECT

The development of a One Stop Shop in Auchinleck which will serve the East Ayrshire Coalfield Area is being progressed by the community in partnership with Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, the Council and the SIP. A constituted Management Group has been formed. Following the production of a site options appraisal, the Management Group has identified the preferred location as within the existing Community Centre, Well Road. A draft layout for the One Stop Shop is being prepared by Technical Services Division, based on the desired facilities and services.

4.3 AUCHINLECK MAIN STREET “PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME”

The Property Improvement Scheme aims to implement environmental improvements to properties in the Main Street in partnership with property owners. It is expected that up to eight properties in the Main Street will benefit from the scheme in this financial year. The proposed improvements include replacement of rainwater goods, roughcast repairs, external painting and new railings.

Applications have been processed by EAC Technical Services Division and grants have been approved under delegated authority by the Head of Planning, Development and Building Standards. Offers of grant, subject to various conditions, have been issued by the Solicitor to the Council to the successful applicants.

4.4 AUCHINLECK COMMUNITY WEBSITE AND NEWSLETTER

The Auchinleck Newsroom Steering Group co-ordinates the production and circulation of the monthly newsletter as well as continuing the development of the community website (www.auchinleck.org.uk). The website was launched in April 2004 and is being continually developed by the community group in conjunction with Ayrshire Electronic Community.

The monthly newsletter is proving to be a great success and is circulated widely throughout Auchinleck. The Steering Group has been successful in securing income through both sponsorship and local advertising as well as funding from the SIP. A number of items of equipment have been purchased by the Newsroom to assist with the production of both the website and newsletter.

4.5 OCHILTREE GARDEN PROJECT

The community of Ochiltree identified a project consisting of the improvement of a footpath area, planting a wild flower meadow and provision of seating at the Poole Path area. The detailed design and planting proposals were approved at a public meeting held in June 2004.

The garden area has been landscaped and prepared for sowing the wild flower meadow in the spring of 2005. The footpath has been upgraded in conjunction with the East Ayrshire Outdoor Access Unit and the remainder of the site works will be completed before March 2005. EAC Neighbourhood Services Department has agreed to maintain the footpath and to coordinate the maintenance of the wild flower meadow through the Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Community Services by Offender organisation.

Projects In Other Communities

4.6 CATRINE ENVIRONMENTAL HERITAGE PROJECT

This is a major project being developed by the Policy and Projects Section with the support of the Catrine Voes Trust, Catrine Environment Group, Catrine Angling Club, Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, River Ayr Salmon Fishery Board, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Daldorch House Autistic Society.

The CEHP project aims to establish and implement a range of proposals that conserve, enhance and promote the historic and environmental importance of Catrine, maximising the potential for related educational and recreational uses. The weir and voes system is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, which is in need of improvement and development to preserve this historic structure.

Following confirmation of grant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the consultant Halcrow Group has been appointed to progress this major project. Funding has also been secured through EA Coalfield SIP, East Ayrshire Council, and Historic Scotland. A detailed structural report of the weir and voes system has been prepared by the consultant which includes recommendations and costs for full restoration and the creation of the associated interpretation and visitor attractions.

It is proposed that the project is ultimately progressed through a new community group which involves all interested parties. Initial urgent works to the weir structure identified in the consultant's report are currently being implemented. A further project is being developed to evaluate the feasibility of utilising the existing hydro-electric system to provide future income for the CEHP.

4.7 DALMELLINGTON 'GATEWAY ART PROJECT'

In association with the Dalmellington Partnership a public art project is being developed at the entrance to Dalmellington. The project includes the erection of a 'book' sculpture with associated landscaping and footpath access. The land is in the ownership of the Council under the Development and Property Services account and will be the subject of a lease agreement with the Dalmellington Partnership. EAC Neighbourhood Services Department will continue to maintain the landscaped area and the sculpture and footpaths will be maintained by the Partnership.

4.8 BELLSBANK COMMUNITY WING ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

A project, which involves improvement to the public access to the Bellsbank Community Wing, is currently being progressed in conjunction with Bellsbank IFE Users Group and EAC Educational and Social Services Department. The project includes the demolition of the existing wall and stairs, the realignment of the entrance gate and roadway, new railings and improved pedestrian access. In addition to the access improvements, this project is linked to improvements to the IFE wing which are being separately funded by EA Coalfield Area SIP.

The works are due to be completed by March 2005. EAC Educational and Social Services Department will maintain the improved pedestrian access area on completion.

4.9 LOGAN RESIDENTS' PARKING AREA AND 'TEEN SHELTER'

Following a community consultation exercise in conjunction with the production of the Action Plan for Logan, a number of projects were identified as priorities. A public meeting was held in June 2004 and it was agreed to progress 3 projects. These include provision of an outdoor meeting area for teenagers in the form of a 'teen shelter' with associated lighting, footpath and litter bins, the improvement of the residents parking area at Glenmuir Road to reduce congestion and increase pedestrian safety and the development of a heritage garden at Logan Ave.

Due to availability of funding, the 'teen shelter' project and residents parking improvements will be implemented in this financial year and the heritage garden will be developed in 2005/06. In addition to the SIP and East Ayrshire Local Action Fund funding, applications have been submitted to Shire Housing Association and the Cumnock and Doon Valley Minerals Trust. The outcome of these applications will be known in December 2004.

5. TARGETS AND PRIORITIES FOR 2005/2006

- 5.1 In 2005/06 it is intended that the Restoring Communities Programme is developed in line with priorities set through the East Ayrshire Community Planning Regeneration Outcome Agreement. It is proposed that a total of 5 Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans be prepared subject to available funding. A total of 14 projects will be developed and implemented within the East Ayrshire Community Plan area, located in a variety of settlements subject to available funding.
- 5.2 It is intended that the Action Plans and projects will be developed within two Restoring Communities Programme areas (Northern and Southern) covering the East Ayrshire Community Plan area. These details form part of the recent bid to the Community Regeneration Fund, the outcome of which will be known in January 2005.

This significant expansion of the Restoring Communities Programme will require additional staffing resources, as outlined in Section 7.1 below.

- 5.3 A bid has been submitted to the Community Regeneration Fund for the progression and implementation of the Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans and Projects, including the Restoring Communities Programme. The 3 year bid is as follows:
- £438,000 in 2005/06
 - £400,000 in 2006/07
 - £400,000 in 2007/08

Incorporated within the bid is the requirement for staff resources to implement the RCP. This is outlined in Section 7.1 below.

The outcome of the bid will be known in December 2004/January 2005. Support funding will continue to be sought from various alternative funding bodies, external to the Council.

6. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The production of Action Plans and implementation of projects within the RCP will be funded by various funders including the Community Regeneration Fund (CRF), should the recent bid be successful. Staff resources will be funded through the CRF. Priority will be given to maximising the amount of funding that can be levered in from external agencies. Any additional maintenance obligations on the Council will be met from the Quality of Life funding which was approved for the maintenance of prominent amenity areas by the Development Services Committee on the 20th May 2003.

Should the bid to the CRF be unsuccessful, a more limited programme of Action Plans and environmental improvement projects will be carried out utilising available resources within the Policy and Projects Section.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Due to the proposed expansion of the RCP to cover the whole of East Ayrshire, it is proposed to continue the existing post of RCP Project Officer (Southern area) and increase the staffing to include an RCP Officer (Northern area) and a Senior RCP Project Officer. It is proposed that these posts are funded through the Community Regeneration Fund and appointments will only be made if funding is secured.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The production of the Action Plans and implementation of environmental improvement projects contributes to the "Improving the Environment" and "Improving Opportunities" Action Plans within the East Ayrshire Community Plan.
- 8.2 The following local and national priorities will be targeted through the RCP Action Plans and projects:
- 4 local Community Planning priorities
 - 3 national priorities for community regeneration
 - 3 'Closing the Opportunity Gap' Objectives
 - 8 Data Zones within the worst 15% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004
 - 3 Data Zones within the worst 15%-30% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004
 - 7 outcomes identified within the East Ayrshire Community Plan

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-
- i) note the progress made in 2004/2005 on both the production of Action Plans and implementation of projects as outlined in this report ; and
 - ii) note the proposed programme of Environmental Improvement Action Plans and projects for 2005/2006 as outlined in Section 5 above; and
 - iii) agree to remit to the Corporate Governance Committee, subject to approval of the Community Regeneration Fund bid, the retention of the RCP Project Officer to cover the Southern area and the appointment of an additional RCP Project Officer and Senior RCP Project Officer to be funded by the Community Regeneration Fund.

James Lavery
Executive Director of Development and Property Services
26 November 2004
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Report to Development and Property Services Committee “Restoring Communities Programme (RCP), Property Improvement Scheme, Main St and Well Road, Auchinleck” – 04 May 2004
- Report to Development and Property Services Committee “Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans and Projects 2003/2004 and 2004/2005” - 10 March 2004
- Catrine Environmental Heritage Project – project planning paper – October 2003
- Report to Development Services Committee “Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans and Projects 2003/2004” – 26 August 2003
- Report to Development Services Committee “Quality of Life Funding 2003/2004 to 2005/2006” - 20 May 2003.
- Report to Development Services Committee “Restoring Communities Programme” – 13 March 2002.

Anyone wishing to inspect the above papers please contact Susan Jones on (01563) 576755.

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