

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 9 JANUARY 2007

POTENTIAL GALLOWAY AND SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Report by Acting Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on progress regarding consideration of a potential Biosphere Reserve within Galloway and the southern parts of Ayrshire and to report on the likely contribution to the scheme that might be required from the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 11 January 2006 the Development Services Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Development and Property Services which advised on proposals for a potential Biosphere Reserve within Galloway and the southern parts of Ayrshire and which sought authority from the Committee to further investigate the viability of the proposal.

- 2.2 The Committee agreed specifically:

- (i) That further detailed consideration be given by officers of the Council to the potential designation of a Biosphere Reserve within the Galloway Forest and southern areas of Ayrshire in conjunction with South Ayrshire Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scottish National Heritage, Forestry Commission and other partners;
- (ii) That the Council be represented at the March 2006 Man and Biosphere UK Committee meeting in the Dumfries area;
- (iii) That a further report be submitted once the assessment has been concluded.

3. UPDATED POSITION

- 3.1 The last meeting of the Biosphere Reserve Steering Group (BRSG) was held on 06 September 2006. This working group, consisting of officers from Dumfries and Galloway, South Ayrshire and East Ayrshire Councils, the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Committee, SNH and Forestry Commission Scotland have been discussing the concept of an enlarged Biosphere Reserve in South West Scotland.

- 3.2 The BRSG reported that, at a meeting of the UK Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Committee, at New Cumnock in March 2006, it was considered that the Biosphere project had the potential to benefit East Ayrshire because it could assist existing or future projects within the designated area to attract possible additional funding/resources.

- 3.3 The BRSG agreed that, owing to the need for clear community support if there was to be success in obtaining a Biosphere designation, there should be community involvement to test the level of such support. BRSG were also of the view that, should community support be forthcoming, it would then take a year to prepare a formal funding application to UNESCO.
- 3.4 SNH accordingly tendered for community agents to run the above community engagement project on behalf of the BRSG. The engagement project will involve appointment of a Community Liaison Officer to assess community support for a Biosphere Reserve and to examine the potential for using the reserve as a driver for the regeneration of outlying communities in the southern part of Ayrshire.
- 3.5 The BRSG agreed that the Manager, Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan would discuss the Biosphere Reserve with the Chief Executive of Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, and also with SEERAD to assess their support for the above community engagement project.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Policy ECON 13: Tourism Opportunities (D) of the Finalised Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan 2006 relates to development of a Biosphere Reserve and would be a material policy consideration in assessing such a proposal.

5. FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As referred to in Section 3 above, in order to expedite the above community engagement exercise SNH confirmed at the last BRSG meeting that they had allocated funding to enable appointment of the Community Liaison Officer and they had applied to the Dumfries and Galloway LEADER Plus European funding programme, and that LEADER subsequently approved a sum of £20,000 to fund a community engagement exercise for the Dumfries and Galloway part of the proposed Biosphere Reserve area for an 18 month period from November 2006 to May 2008.
- 5.2 Given that the Biosphere concept is for a designation extending into both South and East Ayrshire, it is considered essential to match fund the SNH contribution. SNH is therefore seeking funding contributions from South and East Ayrshire Councils to enable the project to operate to the same degree within Ayrshire. SNH stress that without such contributions it would not be possible for communities within South and East Ayrshire to become involved in the process to the same extent as in Dumfries and Galloway.
- 5.3 An initial figure of £5,000 was suggested as being an appropriate contribution from both East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils. A formal request from SNH for the above sum of £5,000 for the current financial year, 2006/2007 has been made. Sufficient funding is available between the Planning, Development and Building Standards Division and the Economic Development and Property Divisions of the Department.

5.4 SNH have supplied notional costings for the total Biosphere Reserve programme by calendar years to 2008 as shown in the table below which would enable an application for further funding for the project to be made. The table is divided into two sections showing required initial funding commitments from partners for the above engagement process for calendar years 2006 and 2007 and potential subsequent funding for development of the Biosphere project from 2008, should the above engagement process indicate community support for the project.

Phase 1
Community Engagement Exercise

	2006	2007
Cost	17621	59071
Income		
SNH	6802	25384
Leader+	5819	13687
SAC	2500	7500
EAC	2500	7500
DGC		5000
	(17621)	(59071)

Phase 2
Potential Development of Biosphere Project

	2008	Total
	42814	118142
	12814	45000
		19506
	10000	20000
	10000	20000
	10000	15000
	(45000)	(119506)

On the basis of the committed funding to date Phase 1 of the programme began in November 2006 and will be completed in the autumn of 2007. SNH has confirmed that the Southern Uplands Partnership and East Ayrshire woodlands had been chosen to carry out the project. SNH has committed £15,000 this financial year and for the following two financial years on the expectation that the two calendar year project would span three financial years other than LEADER and SNH contributions.

Phase 2 of the programme to prepare a submission to UNESCO would proceed only if Phase 1 had indicated community support to proceed with development of the project. SNH has however suggested that partner bodies with an interest in the development of the project as referred to in Para 5.4 plan Phase 2 on the above basis.

Subject to consideration of a future report on the conclusions of the community engagement project by this Committee it is recommended that an in principle allocation of £10,000 should be agreed for financial year 2008/09.

6. LEGAL/PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Agrees that the Council initially make funding contributions of £5,000 during financial years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 towards the cost of the community engagement project referred to in Sections 3 and 5 of this report, this contribution to consist of equal proportions of funding from Economic Development and Planning, Development and Building Standards Division; and
- (ii) Agree in principle, a financial contribution of £10,000 in 2008/2009, to enable an application to UNESCO to be made subject to receipt of the report on the Community Engagement project and consideration of a subsequent report on its conclusions by this Committee.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services to Development Services Committee: 11 January 2006.

James T Kane

Acting Executive Director of Development and Property Services

18 December 2006

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