

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 2 MAY 2006

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLANS AND PROJECTS OVERVIEW 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 provide Committee with an overview of progress with the Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans and Projects implemented in 2005/2006 through the Planning, Development and Building Standards Division in conjunction with the East Ayrshire Community Planning & Partnership Unit.
- 1.2 The report also outlines targets for the production of Action Plans and implementation of projects in 2006/2007 in conjunction with the successful bid recently approved by the Community Planning Partnership Board from the Community Regeneration Fund (CRF).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Planning, Development and Building Standards Division has responsibility for a budget of £294,500 in 2005/2006 from the Community Regeneration Fund for the production of Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans and implementation of associated environmental improvement projects. As part of this process, under the Restoring Communities Programme, associated environmental improvement projects are implemented. External funding is levered in for individual projects. The original approved CRF budget for 2005/06 was £230,000 with an additional £53,000 subsequently approved for the Property Improvement Scheme, £10,000 for the independent evaluation of CEIAP activity and £1,500 from the 'quick spend' budget for the Auchinleck Community Newsroom.
- 2.2 Two Restoring Communities Programme Project Officers are employed on fixed term contracts through the Policy & Projects Section to assist with the development of the Action Plans and implementation of projects. These posts are funded by the approved CRF budget. The second RCP Officer was appointed in December 2005 to enable progress to be made on projects within the Northern Area. There was a delay in recruiting this officer as a direct result of the delay in signing off the Community Plan Regeneration Outcome Agreement (ROA) by the Scottish Executive.

3. COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLANS - 2005/2006

- 3.1 To date 13 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, Bellsbank, Cumnock (excluding the town centre), Cumnock Town Centre and Netherthird/Craigens/Skerrington.

In addition to these, Draft Action Plans have been produced for North West Kilmarnock, Riccarton, Shortlees and Galston. The community consultation process for these settlements (which is being carried out by a consultant) is nearing completion. On completion, the plans will be circulated to community bodies and through further consultation, priority projects identified and the plans finalised. Projects will be implemented depending on available resources.

4. PROJECTS 2005/2006

All projects developed and implemented through the Action Plans are implemented in partnership with a local community group through the Policy and Projects Section. The projects developed during in 2005/06 are as follows:

4.1 BARONY 'A' FRAME RESTORATION PROJECT

The project is being implemented by the Barony 'A' Frame Trust. The aim of the project is to restore and floodlight the grade B listed headframe structure, create a heritage garden, car parking facilities and an educational and heritage resource. The Trust is also developing an oral history project entitled 'Pitheid Patter'.

To date, the Trust has been successful in securing a funding package in excess of £900,000 from a variety of sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund, East Ayrshire Council, the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership, Historic Scotland, Forward Scotland, Scottish Coal Industry Special Welfare Fund, Cumnock & Doon Valley Minerals Trust and SCORE Environment. The two largest successful funding applications recently approved are from the Heritage Lottery Fund of £484,500 and from Historic Scotland of £236,699. The work will begin on site later this year. 2006 is an important year for the colliery, being the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Barony Colliery.

The Trust is in the process of appointing a Project Coordinator to co-ordinate the successful implementation of the project. Funding for the provision of administration and financial support services has recently been secured through the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership from the Challenge Fund 2006/07.

4.2 AUCHINLECK "ONE STOP SHOP" PROJECT

The development of a One Stop Shop (OSS) in Auchinleck which will serve the communities within the former East Ayrshire Coalfield Area is being progressed by the community in partnership with the Council and the Community Planning Partnership. The One Stop Shop will be developed within the existing Community Centre in Well Road. An OSS Management Group has been formed and a number of funding applications submitted. The group has been successful to date in securing almost 50% of the required funding package. Funding has been approved totaling £830,000 from a variety of sources including the Community Regeneration Fund, East Ayrshire Council, the Big Lottery and the Minerals Trust. A further £745,000 of funding applications is currently under consideration and the final £200,000 of applications will be submitted on the opening of the next funding rounds.

It is anticipated that the project will start on site in September/October 2006 and will be completed in April/May 2007. The One Stop Shop will incorporate community meeting rooms, a community café, a general purpose activity hall, fitness suite, IT suite, a creche and a cinema/conference hall/theatre. In addition the Council's Local Office and Library will be incorporated into the new facility.

4.3 AUCHINLECK “PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME”

The Property Improvement Scheme aims to implement environmental improvements to properties in Main Street Auchinleck in partnership with property owners. A total of 20 applications were submitted in 2005/06 with 15 properties benefiting from the scheme in this financial year. The improvements carried out include complete refurbishment of one shop unit, new shop frontages, restoration of original stonework, replacement of rainwater goods, external painting and rebuilding perimeter walls.

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

The Property Improvement Scheme has been very successful this year with the total value of improvement works carried out in 2005/06 nearing £358,000. The original CRF funding allocated for the scheme was £5,000. This was increased to £58,000 following the approval of an additional allocation of £53,000 by the Community Planning Partnership Board due to the high level of interest expressed by property owners. This total CRF budget of £58,000 attracted an additional contribution by property owners of almost £300,000.

4.4 AUCHINLECK COMMUNITY NEWSROOM

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 Due to the demise of Ayrshire Electronic Community, a consultant has been appointed by the Newsroom Group to upgrade the website and provide training for the volunteers to allow the community group to maintain the site in the future.

The production quality of the monthly newsletter has improved this year. The publication 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 CRF. 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 AUCHINLECK COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

This successful community garden project is being developed through the Auchinleck Community Development Initiative (ACDI) and consists of the provision of accommodation for horticultural training and growing plants at Aird Ave. The facility also provides an educational resource for use by the local schools and community groups. Utilising the plants and equipment provided at the Aird Ave

project, local untidy corners throughout the town will be improved and maintained by local people. The development of the garden project is aimed at encouraging local people to become involved in improving the environment as well as providing the structure to set up and run a community business. A further objective of the project is to form an organic vegetable growing community cooperative.

The day to day management of the facility is being coordinated through the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) through a service level agreement between ACDI and BTCV. A Community Horticulturalist has been appointed by BTCV for an initial period of one year to develop a further 8 local community gardens within Auchinleck.

The Community Garden was officially opened in October 2005 by the Provost. A Volunteer Day was held in November involving local school children and a tree planting ceremony was carried out by Cathy Jamieson MSP.

To date, funding has been secured for this project from the CRF, EAC, Forward Scotland, Cumnock & Doon Valley Minerals Trust, Barr Construction and the Ayrshire Key Fund.

The project has proved to be a great success with ACDI receiving a Merit Award in the 2005 Royal Horticultural Society 'Britain in Bloom Neighbourhood Awards' competition. The project was also shortlisted in the Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum 'Best Practice in Regeneration' Awards 2005. Members of ACDI and local volunteers attended an award ceremony in Glasgow.

4.6 NETHERTHIRD COMMUNITY NEWSROOM

As a result of the community consultation process for the Netherthird/Skerrington/Craigens Environmental Improvement Action Plan, a community newsroom has been set up in the former library building in Netherthird by Four Connections, the local youth group. This project will address the issue of circulation of information throughout the community whilst involving the local youth group.

The Newsroom Group intend to produce a regular newsletter and set up a community website, similar to the Auchinleck Community Newsroom project. Funding has been secured through the CRF budget for the purchase of computer and office equipment and 'in kind' support has been offered by Shire Housing Association for the production and distribution of the newsletter.

4.7 CATRINE ENVIRONMENTAL HERITAGE PROJECT

Substantial progress has been made with the development of the Catrine Environmental Heritage Project including the completion of the geotechnical investigation of the weir and voes system, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Constructive engagement continues between the newly formed Catrine Community Trust and statutory bodies including Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage regarding the restoration project and the production of the Conservation Management Plan.

A separate Committee Report entitled 'CEHP Update' includes more detailed information on this project.

4.8 NETHERTHIRD ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Following the consultation process for the production of the Netherthird/Skerrington/Criagens Action Plan, the removal of the redundant planters at the shops was identified by the community as a priority project. The planters were removed in December 2005 and have resulted in a significantly improved hard landscaped area in front of the local shopping area. The area will continue to be maintained by the Neighbourhood Services Department.

4.9 PATNA FOOTPATH IMPROVEMENTS

Due to the delay in signing off the ROA, the implementation of projects identified in the northern RCP area was delayed in 2005. In order to ensure a full spend, a small scale 'quick spend' priority project was implemented in Patna. Improvements were carried out to the existing access footpath adjacent to the river. This priority project was identified by the community to improve access to the riverside walkway which is a popular and well used link through the centre of Patna. The project was implemented through the Roads Department and completed on site in December 2005.

4.10 NORTH WEST KILMARNOCK ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The North West Kilmarnock Environmental Improvements Group identified the provision of entrance signs/features and improved lighting as priority projects.

The entrance signs/features were erected at key locations throughout North West Kilmarnock to improve the sense of identity within the area. Since the completion of the construction of the signs, positive feedback has been received from the community.

As a result of consultation with the Community Wardens and householders in the area, the need for improved lighting at the lane leading to Knockinlaw Mount was identified as a priority project. The resultant lighting scheme has decreased the fear of crime and increased community safety at this location.

The project was jointly funded by the CRF and through the Improvements Group's own funds. The entrance signs are being maintained by the Group and the lighting is being maintained by the Development Services Department.

4.11 SHORTLEES ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The project implemented in Shortlees involved environmental improvements at Central Avenue and at Burn Park. These were subject to consultation with the Provost as local member, the Community Wardens, Strathclyde Police and the Shortlees Community Association. The projects involved upgrading the lighting within Central Avenue to improve safety and visibility for the CCTV cameras and also to provide a Teenage Sports Wall at Burn Park with associated lighting to provide a play facility for the children within the area. The provision of the Sports Wall was subject to community consultation with the adjacent residents at Burn Park.

The improved lighting is being maintained by the Development Services Department and the Sports Wall is being maintained by Neighbourhood Services Department.

4.12 DEMOLITION OF VACANT/DERELICT BUILDINGS

Within the Revolving Fund for Demolitions programme the following was carried out in 2005/06:

- 2 buildings demolished: 117/119 Main Street, Auchinleck and 23A/23B Pagan Walk, Muirkirk
- Acquisition of Amlaird Road shops, Kilmarnock completed and contract let for demolition.

Vacant and derelict properties are identified within the Action Plans prepared to date for each settlement. A comprehensive database of vacant and derelict properties is currently being prepared for each settlement in the Council area. This database will be updated on a regular basis.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.1 A Community Feedback survey was carried out by the Policy & Projects Section in October 2005. Questionnaires were sent to all community groups involved in project implementation. 26 forms were sent out and the response rate was 100%. The responses included very positive feedback on both the outputs of individual projects and the involvement of the Projects Section in the development process.

5.2 Following the Annual Review meeting held in November 2005 with the Community Planning Manager, the CPP Board agreed to commission an independent evaluation of the CEIAP activity to inform future project development. The consultant, Linked Work Training Trust, was appointed early in January 2006 and has produced a very positive report which outlines the impact of the Action Plans and projects. The report concludes that the programme represents very good value for money and through successful community engagement has had a positive effect on the target communities. In particular, it is worth highlighting that for every £1 spent an additional £7 has been attracted into the area. In 2005/06, the total amount of funding levered by the CRF budget of £294,500 is an additional £2.1million.

Copies of the Linked Work Training Trust evaluation report are available in the Members Information Point.

6. TARGETS AND PRIORITIES FOR 2006/2007

6.1 The approved CRF budget for 2006/07 for the progression and implementation of the Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans & Projects is **£230,000**.

It is intended to continue the good practice of community engagement and partnership working through the development of the Action Plans and projects in order to improve the quality of the environment for those who live and work in East Ayrshire. In succeeding with this task, the vision of the Community Plan ROA will be met. In particular, it is intended that the Action Plans and Projects target those communities identified as priorities within the ROA.

To date, Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans have been or are currently being prepared for the priority communities in the most deprived data zones (0-15%), data zones contiguous to the most deprived data zones and 'Hub Communities', as identified in the ROA.

- 6.2 In order to achieve Action Plan coverage for each settlement identified as a priority in the ROA, it is proposed that the target for the production of the Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans for the next financial year is to **produce 3 new finalised Action Plans** and to **update 2 existing Action Plans**. The following Action Plans will be produced or updated:

In **2006/07** for the Drongan 'Hub' Community:

- Drongan: update the existing Action Plan
- Rankinston: update the existing Action Plan
- Sinclairston: produce new Action Plan

In **2006/07** within the 0-15% data zone communities:

- Lugar: produce new Action Plan

In **2006/07** within the 16-20% data zone communities:

- Hurlford: produce new Action Plan

- 6.3 Through the production of the Action Plans, it is proposed to identify new environmental improvement projects to be implemented in 2006/07 in the following communities:

- Kilmarnock (south)
- Kilmarnock (north)
- Galston

It is also proposed to further develop existing successful priority projects as follows:

- Further implementation of the **Barony 'A' Frame** project
- Additional development of **Auchinleck One Stop Shop** in conjunction with Auchinleck Community Management Group
- Development of a **Catrine Property Improvement Scheme / Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)** as part of the Catrine Environmental Heritage Project
- The further development of the **Auchinleck & Netherthird Community Newsrooms** including the community website and newsletters
- Further phases of the **Auchinleck Community Garden Project**
- Continuation of the **Derelict Property Revolving Fund** (in conjunction with EAC Economic Development Section)
- Continuation of the **Revolving Maintenance Fund**

- 6.4 The emphasis for the RCP Officers and Planning staff for the next year will be to continue to attract a high level of external funding from a wide variety of sources in order to maximise the support provided by the Community Regeneration Fund. The employment of the two RCP Officers and additional Planning staff costs will continue to be funded through the CRF budget.

7. ADDITIONAL CRF FUNDING BID 2006/07 FOR CARS SCHEMES

- 7.1 EAC has submitted bids to Historic Scotland for grant assistance to establish Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS) for John Finnie Street & Bank Street, Kilmarnock and Catrine Outstanding Conservation Areas. The submission of the bids to Historic Scotland is identified as a specific target under the Community Plan's "Improving the Environment Action Plan".

The CARS Schemes will promote the conservation and regeneration of the historic areas of Catrine and Kilmarnock by providing funding to help meet the cost of a programme of building repair work. The schemes will also provide educational and training opportunities in traditional building and craft skills.

- 7.2 The bids were for a total of £1,388,000, from Historic Scotland's Historic Environment Regeneration Fund and comprises:-
- £711,000 – for a CARS in Kilmarnock
 - £254,000 – for a THI in Kilmarnock, and
 - £423,000 – for a CARS for Catrine

This is towards a total project cost for the CARS Schemes of £3million. The bids to Historic Scotland include an indicative allocation from the CRF of £271,000 over the next 3 years. To date, £50,000 has been confirmed from the CRF in 2006/07.

- 7.3 Historic Scotland has approved a grant award of £711,170 for the Kilmarnock CARS. No indication has been given as to the outcome of the bid for a Catrine CARS at the time of writing this report.

8. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The production of Action Plans and implementation of projects will be funded by various funders including the Community Regeneration Fund (CRF), following the recent approval of CRF funding of £230,000 for 2006/07. 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.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Due to the continuation of the Restoring Communities Programme covering the whole of East Ayrshire, the existing posts of RCP Project Officer (Southern area) and RCP Project Officer (Northern area) will be continued. These posts will continue to be funded through the Community Regeneration Fund and the Action Plans and Projects will be coordinated by Planning Staff within the Policy and Projects Section of the Planning, Development & Building Standards Division.

10. COMMUNITY PLAN / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 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.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i) note the progress made in 2005/2006 on both the production of Action Plans and implementation of projects as outlined in this report ; and
- ii) agree the proposed programme of Environmental Improvement Action Plans and Projects for 2006/2007 as outlined in Section 6 above.

James Lavery

Executive Director of Development and Property Services

21 April 2006

SJ/SA - FV

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Report to Development and Property Services Committee “Restoring Communities Programme – Property Improvement Scheme, Main Street & Well Road, Auchinleck” – 3 May 2005
- Report to Development and Property Services Committee “Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans and Projects 2004/2005 and 2005/2006” – 14 December 2004
- 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 “Restoring Communities Programme” – 13 March 2002.

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

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