

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 6 FEBRUARY 2002

OUTDOOR ACCESS UNIT

Report by Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform and update the committee on the progress of the Outdoor Access Unit.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 East Ayrshire Council has employed two Outdoor Access Officers, with financial support from Scottish Natural Heritage, since June 2001.
- 2.2 In September 2001 an Outdoor Access Forum was established to guide access projects within East Ayrshire and to discuss access issues. The Forum comprises representatives from public agencies, private and voluntary organisations, land managers and local communities.
- 2.3 Land Use Consultants were appointed in September 2001 to prepare an Outdoor Access Strategy for East Ayrshire.

3. PROGRESS REPORT

- 3.1 Two meetings of the Outdoor Access Forum have been held: one in Kilmarnock and one in Cumnock. The Access Forum has been involved in the development of the Outdoor Access Strategy. A proposed structure has been developed for the Forum, comprising one Core Group and six Local Action Groups.
- 3.2 Land Use Consultants completed the final draft of the Outdoor Access Strategy in December 2001. This is now available on the East Ayrshire Council Intranet and has also been circulated to forum members for consultation and comments by 31st January 2002.
- 3.3 The draft Land Reform Bill was published in November 2001. COSLA has responded on behalf of Local Authorities.
- 3.3 The draft Outdoor Access Strategy divides East Ayrshire into eight action zones. The Access Steering Group selected the northern zone for a pilot

study. This includes Dunlop, Lugton and Stewarton. Consultation with local communities, interest groups and land managers has begun.

- 3.4 A steering group has been set up to guide the development of a network of paths through the River Ayr Valley. The group includes representatives from East Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board, Scottish Agricultural College, Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Paths for All Partnership. The project will include a long distance linear route along the river and a network of multi use paths around each town along the route. Land Use Consultants have been appointed to contact an economic appraisal of the project. Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council have offered grant for this study.
- 3.5 A horse-riding route through the Dean Castle Country Park has been designed and costed. The proposal has been publicised for public consultation. Applications for funding have been made to Scottish Natural Heritage, Landfill Tax and Fresh Futures Lottery Fund.
- 3.6 A multi use circular path between Galston and Newmilns, linking in the spinal route for the entire Irvine Valley is being developed in conjunction with the Irvine Valley Regeneration Partnership. It is anticipated that a sub-group of the Irvine Valley Regeneration partnership will form the first Local Action group of the Access Forum.
- 3.7 Scottish Coal has commissioned a feasibility study for a cycle route between Dalmellington and Coalburn. The Access Unit will be on the management group for the development and implementation of this project.
- 3.8 Scottish Power has commissioned a study entitled 'Eaglesham and Whitelees Forest Path Network Zone - Best Practice for Planning Outdoor Access'. This study will be included in a Section 75 Agreement as part of the application for a Windfarm at Whitelees Forest. A working group made up of Scottish Power, Forest Enterprise and the Access Officers from East Ayrshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council and South Lanarkshire Council will be set up to develop this project. Scottish Power have also made a commitment to implement access proposals where land is within their control and to contribute a financial sum to facilitate works on land outwith their control. They have also agreed to commit financially to any future maintenance.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Nil

5. LEGAL AUTHORITY/IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The appointment of the Access Officers will assist the Council in fulfilling its duties and responsibilities outlined in the draft Land Reform Bill. Once the Access Strategy is completed, the Access Officers will be responsible for the implementation of the proposed Core Path Networks, a key requirement of the Bill.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Access Unit will be responsible for the implementation of the new access legislation.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The Outdoor Access Unit has made significant progress towards the introduction of an Access Strategy and other requirements of the draft Land Reform Bill.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The committee is asked to note this report.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

WS/ASM/CM

10 January 2002

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

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AGENDA