

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 19TH SEPTEMBER 2001

OUTDOOR ACCESS UNIT – PROGRESS REPORT

Report by the Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In February this Committee approved the establishment of an Access Unit with financial support from Scottish Natural Heritage. Two Access Officers commenced work on 11th June 2001.
- 2.2 It was remitted to the Director of Community Services to provide regular progress reports on this innovative project.

3. PROGRESS REPORT

- 3.1 To establish an Access Forum, a meeting has been arranged on the 27th September to be held at East Ayrshire Council headquarters in London Road, Kilmarnock. The purpose of the meeting is to invite representatives from organisations who have involvement in the outdoors through recreation, are landowners, or manage land, as well as all local authority elected Members. The main objective of the group will be to provide a forum to share ideas and experience and to discuss countryside access projects, principles and issues.
- 3.2 The Access Officers have attended regular Steering Group meetings. The group comprises Head of Leisure Services, Country Park Manager, Senior Countryside Ranger and Development Services from East Ayrshire Council and representatives from Scottish Natural Heritage Paths For All Partnership, The Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board, Ayrshire Arran Health Board and the Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire.
- 3.3 The appointment of consultants for the Access Strategy was confirmed at the end of August. The initial interest expressed was from thirteen companies. From those submissions seven companies were asked to submit a Tender. Following detailed analysis of the tenders Land Use Consultants were appointed. Funding of £17,500 for the Access Strategy has been secured through Scottish National Heritage, Paths For All Partnership and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire.
- 3.4 A public community consultation at Muirkirk to discuss the proposed routes in the area that will be considered for inclusion in the Core Path Network, took place on 22nd August. Other possible projects include the Irvine Valley Trails, River Ayr Walk, East Ayrshire Coal Routes and Mauchline Trails.
- 3.5 Funding partnership opportunities have been discussed with Scottish Coal, Scottish Enterprise National, Paths for All and Scottish Natural Heritage. Grant applications

have been submitted to Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Enterprise for project development and implementation.

- 3.6 An annual work programme has been submitted to Scottish Natural Heritage and has been approved. A press release on the appointment of the two Access Officers has been submitted to Paths for All for the newsletter, Right Track.

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.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The post holders will be responsible for the implementation of the new access legislation.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The Access Officers will work with the consultants in drawing up an Access Strategy for the Council. As well as taking forward the setting up and running of an Access Forum. Once the Access Strategy is completed, the Access Officers will be responsible for the implementation of the proposed Core Path Networks.
- 7.2 The initial phase of this project has gone accordingly to schedule and all targets have been met.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The committee is asked to note this report.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

WS/ASM/CM
13 August 2001

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Countryside Access Unit Report to Community Services Committee 7th Feb 01

Anyone wishing to inspect the background papers should telephone Andrew Scott-Martin, Country Park Manager on ext. 4733

Implementation Officer: John Griffiths (john.griffiths@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

AGENDA