

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 2 APRIL 2003

OUTDOOR ACCESS PROJECT

Report by Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Committee approval to begin implementation of the East Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy including the creation of path networks and developing a community based walking programme aimed at reducing chronic heart disease in East Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The East Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy (Approved by Community Services Committee on 29 May 2002) aims to develop "A series of well planned, co-ordinated and used path networks which will provide connections between communities, meet the social and health needs of communities, realise the area's tourism potential, promote more sustainable transport choices and support economic and environmental regeneration."

- 2.2 In 2001, an analysis of the demand for outdoor access in East Ayrshire was carried out as part of the development of East Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy. The following findings were recorded as part of the analysis:

- (i) The Scottish Natural Heritage survey report 11 'Walking in the Countryside in Scotland' produced in 1996 provides national information relating to the demand for paths. 50% of respondents walked on a regular basis.
- (ii) In 1999, public consultation on the draft East Ayrshire Local Transport Strategy was undertaken. Of those asked, 67% indicated that if more resources were available they should be used for walking and cycling.
- (iii) In 2000, approximately 1 million trips were made to Ayrshire and Arran. Of this, 21% of visitors undertook a walking activity.
- (iv) Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board are already involved in a project entitled "First Aid for the Soul" catering for the growing number of visitors interested in walking activities.
- (v) In 2001, a study investigating the feasibility of developing a long distance route with community links between Dalmellington and Coalburn was carried out.
- (vi) In 2002, a study was undertaken to evaluate the potential benefits of the proposed River Ayr Valley Network of Paths.

- 2.3 The Outdoor Access Project will contribute to a number of policy agendas including competitive locations, environmental improvements, economic benefits through a healthy working population, environmental education, interpretation of heritage, improved perception of EA Coalfield area and regeneration of derelict land by opencast operators, RSPB and SNH.
- 2.4 In East Ayrshire, the effects of social exclusion are particularly concentrated and compounded by the rural nature and remoteness. Studies have shown that for those people under the age of 65 living in areas of high deprivation, the pattern of mortality greatly exceeds those living in more affluent areas.
- 2.5 Scotland has a disproportionately high incidence and prevalence of CHD (Chronic Heart Disease). Ayrshire and Arran has one of the highest mortality rates in Scotland, approximately 9% higher than the national average.
- 2.6 Common contributory causes of CHD are smoking, poor diet and inactivity. Inactivity has been recognised as the highest of these risk factors and these projects are targeted at reducing the levels of inactivity in East Ayrshire.
- 2.7 The European Regional Development Fund has awarded the project a total of £522,375 in capital and £210,650 in revenue funding over the next three years.
- 2.8 A parallel bid was made by the Paths For All Partnership to the Minerals Trust for the Dalmellington to Coalburn multi use route. This has been successful and the Trust has awarded £184,000
- 2.9 The East Ayrshire Coalfield Area Social Inclusion Partnership has approved a grant of £50,000 towards the overall project.

3. THE OUTDOOR ACCESS PROJECT

- 3.1 There will be four high profile projects within the East Ayrshire Coalfield area. They have been chosen in consultation with the Outdoor Access Forum and were at a suitably advanced stage for development. The River Ayr Network of paths, Dalmellington to Coalburn multi use route, Ochiltree trails and the Doon Valley Core Path Network.
- 3.2 The Project is the implementation of a high quality, sustainable path network, linking Coalfield communities internally and regional and national networks externally. The network will be devised by local people through community planning and used by locals and tourists. This £2.65million project will be completed by 2006.
- 3.3 A network of paths of 358km will be created for people of all ages and abilities. 66km of these paths will contribute to the restoration of opencast sites. A range of funding partners will ensure the network is developed and promoted in line with local, regional and national policies.
- 3.4 Environmental improvements will include the enhancement of corridor habitats and the management of existing habitats, such as semi natural

woodland, acid/neutral grassland, hedgerows and watercourse margins. The network will contribute significantly to landscape improvement and increased bio-diversity.

- 3.5 Innovative path construction techniques will be adopted, including the possibility of using recycled waste material.
- 3.6 Twelve training placements will be created with local contractors to increase the skill base and hence employment prospects of residents within the East Ayrshire Coalfield area. These skills will be primarily in footpath creation but will also include fencing, woodland planting and habitat management. This work placement will be fully integrated into the training and work experience programme provided by East Ayrshire Woodlands.
- 3.7 It is also anticipated that a further thirty two jobs will be created in industries such as construction, tourism, interpretation and visitor infrastructure enhancements.
- 3.8 The enthusiasm for walking, cycling and riding in the area is repeatedly demonstrated at the local level by way of significant community input. Several community consultation exercises have been carried out in Muirkirk, Sorn, Catrine and Mauchline to inform the development of the project. Over 200 local people have contributed to the development of this project through these consultation exercises.
- 3.9 The Community health project is a Paths to Health Initiative called the C.H.E.A.P. Network (Community Health East Ayrshire Paths) community based walking programme aimed at reducing chronic heart disease in East Ayrshire. It will build on the work being carried out on exercise referral by the C.H.I.P. project. It will encourage walking as a lifetime habit by promoting and utilising core path networks in identified priority areas.
- 3.10 It will be a 3 level programme from doorstep walks to longer distance and will be free to participants. Referrals will be from GPs, hospitals, nursing staff or self referral.
- 3.11 In order to effectively staff the Outdoor Access Project, a Project Manager, 3 Access Assistants and a Clerical Assistant will be employed. They will be responsible to the Countryside Services Manager. A Walking Development Manager will be appointed for the C.H.E.A.P. Project and will be responsible to the Leisure Development Manager.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The funding profile for the project is as follows:-

CAPITAL (INDICATIVE BUDGET)

Funding Body	Value	Expected Date of Approval
European Regional Development Fund	£522,375	Confirmed
Scottish Natural Heritage	£141,367	April 2003
Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire	£249,000	April 2003
Heritage Lottery Fund	£500,000	April 2003
South Ayrshire Council	£60,000	April 2003
Minerals Trust	£184,000	Confirmed
Social Inclusion Partnership	£50,000	Confirmed
Scottish Coal	£97,500	Confirmed
UK Coal	£96,855	Confirmed
Minerals Trust (additional application)	£166,000	April 2003
East Ayrshire Council (3 year contribution from existing budget)	£22,406	Confirmed
Total	£2,089,503	

Revenue (Indicative Budget)

European Regional Development Fund	£210,650	Confirmed
Scottish Natural Heritage	£68,633	April 2003
Paths to Health	£30,000	April 2003
East Ayrshire Council (3 year revenue contribution from existing budgets)	£112,018	Confirmed
New Opportunities Fund	£139,396	May 2003
Total	£560,697	

4.2 If any of the outstanding funding bodies decline additional funding will be sought from alternative sources. If that fails the project will be adjusted to suit the funds available.

5. LEGAL AUTHORITY/IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Nil

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The project is informed by the East Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy and local/national strategies relating to health promotion, health inequalities and social inclusion.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This Outdoor Access Project is the first phase in the creation of core path networks around local communities in East Ayrshire.
- 7.2 The CHEAP Network is an innovative project that will make a real difference to the health and well being of local people living in East Ayrshire.
- 7.3 The project will provide full time employment for 6 staff over a three year period.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-
- (i) approve the project or revised project subject to external funding approval;
 - (ii) remit the Director of Community Services to provide progress reports relating to project performance;
 - (iii) refer this report to the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee in relation to the staffing implications; and
 - (iv) otherwise note the contents of this report.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

WS/ASM

9th March 2002

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. East Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy
2. Evaluation of the Benefits of the River Ayr Way
1. Application to the European Regional Development Fund
2. Application to the New Opportunities Fund
3. Strategy for Physical Activity
4. Scottish Executive Walking Strategy (Consultation Document)

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone (01563) 576264 and ask for John Griffiths, Head of Leisure Services.

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