

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: 26 SEPTEMBER 2000**

### **NATURAL HERITAGE ZONES**

#### **Report by Director of Development Services**

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 Natural Heritage Zones are being developed by Scottish Natural Heritage as a way of helping people and the environment benefit from Scotland's natural diversity. The purpose of this report is to explain what Natural Heritage Zones are and set out any implications they might have for the Council in its promotion of nature conservation in East Ayrshire.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 The main aim of Natural Heritage Zones is to develop long-term goals for the Natural Heritage, for use by SNH and others, which take into consideration local, social and economic aspirations. The new system proposes that future decisions about the natural heritage are taken collectively by a range of organisations which will set the vision for the future and agree how this is to be achieved.

2.2 SNH has identified 21 Natural Heritage Zones which cover the whole of the Scottish mainland and the islands. It is intended that these zones will:

- provide a framework within which local needs and opportunities relating to the natural heritage can be clarified
- identify opportunities for partnership working with local authorities, other relevant bodies and landowners and
- develop an integrated approach to management and the sustainable use of the natural heritage. The framework will enable individual actions with implications for our wildlife and landscapes to be evaluated. The vision to be agreed for each zone is intended to remain valid for 25 years.

2.3 To inform this process environmental, social and economic information from these Zones will be collated and made available as Local Prospectuses, National Prospectuses and National Assessments. Details of the likely content of these proposed prospectuses and assessments is contained within the Annex to this report. The National and Local Prospectuses will provide the context for SNH's advice to and consultation with local authorities on a range of natural heritage matters including the understanding and enjoyment of the natural heritage and access programmes.

### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

3.1 The proposed establishment of Natural Heritage Zones accords with the Government's objectives for the conservation of Scotland's natural heritage to enhance,

- the overall populations and natural ranges of native species and the quality and ranges of wildlife habitats and ecosystems;
- geological and physiographical features;
- the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside and the natural heritage interest of urban areas; and
- opportunities for enjoying and learning about the natural environment.

It is the Government's view that the above objectives can best be realised through close co-operation and partnership between public agencies, local communities and the private and voluntary sectors. The formation of Natural Heritage Zones is considered to be a valid method of assisting achievement of the above objectives.

3.2 The contents of any of the above mentioned prospectuses or assessments prepared as part of the development of Natural Heritage Zones should take account of the provisions of Policies E1-9 (inclusive) of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and Policy ENV 10 of the East Ayrshire Finalised Local Plan.

### **4. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 East Ayrshire is included within proposed Natural Heritage Zone No 17 – West Central Belt. As this Zone straddles three Structure Plan areas ie: Ayrshire, Glasgow and Clyde Valley, and part of Argyll and Bute, there are likely to be strategic cross boundary implications regarding the provision of planning information for any Local Prospectus. It is likely that the Planning Division will be required to contribute to provision of some of this information, possibly in collaboration with the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and Transportation Committee. SNH has indicated that it is to consult all relevant partners including local authorities and COSLA about the process for preparing the above prospectuses.

### **5. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None.

### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report.

**Stephen Chorley**  
**Director of Development Services**  
8 September 2000 (JT/SA)

## LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. **Natural Heritage Zones – SNH August 2000)**
2. **Letter from SNH to Chief Executive – Natural Heritage Zones dated 15 August 2000.**

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should contact Julian Thorp on 01563 576789

***Implementation Officer: Alan Neish***

## **NATURAL HERITAGE ZONES**

### **PROVISIONS FOR LOCAL PROSPECTUSES NATIONAL PROSPECTUSES AND NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS**

#### **1. Local Prospectuses**

For each of the 21 Zones SNH shall prepare a Prospectus which will:

- contain a vision statement for all natural heritage
- describe the special characteristics of the Zone, including the processes that have led to its current situation
- discuss the changes taking place in the Zone and the likely impact of current human activities on the natural heritage; this is partly a test of how sustainable existing activities are; and
- present a series of goals for the Zone which aim to close any gap between the vision and current trends over a 25 year period.

#### **2. National Prospectuses**

Many of the activities that drive changes within each Zone are the result of decisions taken at a national or international level. Also many Zones share common themes. A series of National Prospectuses will be produced, covering a range of natural heritage settings: Mountain and Moorland, Coast and Shore, Farmland, Forest and Woodland, Freshwater and Settlements. National Prospectuses will have a similar structure to that of the Local Prospectuses, but will be pitched to address nationally or internationally relevant issues.

#### **3. National Assessments**

National Assessments will be the most comprehensive information available on: Earth Heritage, Landscape, Freshwater, Recreation and Access, Biodiversity and Environmental Change.

**AGENDA**