

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: 25 JUNE 2003

TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND'S BIODIVERSITY – CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

Report by the Director of Development Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Scottish Executive has forwarded the following three documents produced by the Scottish Biodiversity Forum, under the general title 'Towards a Strategy for Scotland's Biodiversity':
- Biodiversity Matters! – strategy proposals
 - Scotland's Biodiversity Resource and Trends
 - Developing Candidate Indicators of the State of Scotland's Biodiversity
- 1.2 The Scottish Executive requested a response on these consultation documents by 06 June 2003. The Head of Planning and Building Control has therefore submitted a provisional response to the Scottish executive based on the conclusions set out in Section 4 of this report.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the contents of the above papers and their implications for the Council and seek the Committee's views on the above provisional response by the Head of Planning and Building Control.
- 1.4 The Department of Community Services has been consulted during the preparation of this report and the views of the Dean Castle Country Park Manager and the Environment Officer have been assimilated within the Report's conclusions.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In the paper 'Biodiversity Matters!' reference was made to the UK Action Plan for Biodiversity (1994). In recognition of the Government commitment to biodiversity made in that document, the Scottish Biodiversity Group was established to agree and co-ordinate action to promote biodiversity in Scotland.
- 2.2 The Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan produced in 2001 by the Ayrshire Councils, in consultation with the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Committee presently forms the principal basis for action to promote biodiversity in Ayrshire.

3. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS OF PAPERS

Biodiversity Matters!

- 3.1 This document explains the reasoning behind the wish of the Scottish Executive to produce a Biodiversity Strategy for Scotland. It describes in general terms the richness of biodiversity throughout Scotland and the beneficial effect its protection and enhancement could have on national sustainability, not only in terms of general quality of life but in promoting development of the business sector.
- 3.2 The overall purpose of the paper would appear to be to give a Scottish dimension to the strategic thinking on biodiversity already put forward in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Scotland's Biodiversity Resource & Trends

- 3.3 This paper is essentially a technical memorandum setting out in some detail the national Scottish situation regarding biodiversity trends, and incorporating data and information provided by the Action Plan and Science Group (APSG) of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum. The paper is therefore a useful guide to the present key influences on biodiversity in Scotland.
- 3.4 The paper reaches the following conclusions regarding biodiversity in Scotland,
- there was a need to develop agreed candidate indicators of the state of national biodiversity to allow its more effective monitoring and surveillance;
 - a requirement to adopt the research strategy of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum
 - a need to resolve any differences of approach between UK level and local level Habitat Action Plans (HAPs), Species Action Plans (SAPs) and Local Biodiversity Action Plans produced respectively, by the Scottish Biodiversity Forum and the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group.
 - the need for an initiative in Scotland to develop greater understanding of the distribution and genetic make-up of species within Scotland and its coastal waters.

Developing Candidate Indicators of the State of Scotland's Biodiversity

- 3.5 As with the above paper on Scotland's Biodiversity Resource and Trends, this paper is essentially a technical memorandum. Its objective is to identify a set of candidate indicators of the state of biodiversity in Scotland. The paper suggests indicators are selected according to the following criteria:

- they should reflect the state of the wider ecosystems of which they are a part;
- they should have the potential to be responsive to the implementation of governmental policy;
- they should be measured reliably on a regular (but not necessarily annual) basis, and be comparable with similar measures at larger geographical scales, eg UK and Europe; and
- they should have, or have the potential for, strong public resonance.

The paper identifies 15 such indicators and concludes that, together with other indicators that would reflect the social and economic aspects of biodiversity, these would enable trends in Scottish wildlife to be monitored and an assessment made of whether or not development is becoming more sustainable.

4. PLANNING AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is considered that the contents of the above documents have the following planning implications:

Biodiversity Matters!

- 4.2 It is felt that the paper provides a very general national strategic overview of biodiversity issues and context for operation of the Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan. It is not considered that the paper raises any additional issues relating to biodiversity that would require any amendment of the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (ALBAP). The Action Plan will therefore continue to be the prime reference document for Council involvement in promotion of biodiversity in East Ayrshire.

Scotland's Biodiversity Resource and Trends

- 4.3 The conclusions of this paper may have implications for the future workings of the Ayrshire Biological Record Centre in its provision of background data for the ALBAP. It is suggested that the Ayrshire Biological Record Centre run by the Scottish Wildlife Trust will have to take account of the research strategy of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum as referred to in Section 3.4 above.
- 4.4 The Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan takes full account of the need for local Action Plans to reflect the provisions of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and there are therefore no significant differences of approach to tackling biodiversity issues at the UK and local Ayrshire level. However, there may be a need to ensure that those existing and emerging BAPs for areas adjacent to Ayrshire similarly reflect the approach at national level so that consistency can be applied to development of biodiversity across local BAP boundaries. It is considered that SNH should be the prime agent in ensuring such consistencies of approach.

Developing Candidate Indicators of the State of Scotland's Biodiversity

- 4.5 It is considered that the agreement of candidate indicators for biodiversity and the development of a research initiative into the genetics of species in Scotland and its coastal waters, as referred to in Section 3.5 above, is a matter for SNH to pursue in the context of the research strategy of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum.

Policy Issues

- 4.6 The provisions of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan, East Ayrshire Local Plan and the Council's Community Plan, in promoting local biodiversity can be summarised as follows:

Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan

The Structure Plan identifies the need for development of a rolling programme of individual action plans to be developed under the Ayrshire LBAP.

East Ayrshire Local Plan

Under Proposal PROP 12 of the Local Plan the Council, in partnership with South Ayrshire and North Ayrshire Councils, SNH and other appropriate organisations, and local communities will implement the Ayrshire LBAP.

East Ayrshire Community Plan

Under the 'Improving the Environment Action Plan 2003-2007' of the East Ayrshire Community Plan the Council aspires to promote sustainability by protecting, conserving and enhancing the character of the natural environment for future generations.

- 4.7 It is considered that the above Scottish Executive papers provide a good legal, financial and technical framework through which the objectives proposals and aspirations of the above plans can be achieved and fulfilled and are therefore to be welcomed.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL, PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The agenda for action proposed in the above Strategy Proposals document refers to the need for the Local Biodiversity Action Plan network to ensure it has adequate resources and information to support the delivery of national biodiversity objectives and to facilitate action by local people. In view of this it is suggested that the financial implications of implementation of the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (ALBAP) be reviewed by the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Steering Group to assess any potential future funding requirements for implementation of the ALBAP. This may also require the Ayrshire authorities to consider further additional resources for the Ayrshire Biological Record Centre.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended the Committee agree that the Head of Planning and Building Control,
- (i) send a copy of this Report to the Scottish Executive as the Council's formal response to the above documents,
 - (ii) make SNH, and North Ayrshire Council as host of the meetings of the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Steering Group, aware of the Council's response, and
 - (iii) suggest to North Ayrshire Council that discussion of the implications of the above documents be tabled as an Agenda item for the next meeting of the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Steering Group.

Stephen Chorley
Director of Development Services
12 June 2003
(JT/MMM/SA)

FV/AN

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. **Towards a Strategy for Scotland's Biodiversity:**
 - a) **Biodiversity Matters! – Strategy Proposals.**
 - b) **Scotland's Biodiversity Resource & Trends.**
 - c) **Developing Candidate Indicators of the State of Scotland's Biodiversity.**
2. **Scottish Biodiversity Forum: Research Strategy (Paper 2002/3) Scottish Executive.**

For further information on the contents of this report contact Alan Neish, Head of Planning and Building Control. Telephone 01563 576782.

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