

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

PERSONNEL AND PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE –13 FEBRUARY 2001

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT – COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS UNIT (Reference from Community Services Committee of 7 February 2001)

Joint Report by Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources, Directors of Community Services and Development Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To seek approval for the establishment of a Countryside Access Unit comprising two Countryside Access Officers and an additional Countryside Ranger post, subject to approval of the Community Services Committee meeting of 7 February 2001 and confirmation of financial support from Scottish Natural Heritage.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Community Services Committee at its meeting on 7 February 2001 will have considered a report from the Director of Community Services recommending the establishment of the Countryside Access Unit to ensure effective local implementation of the pending Land Reform Bill.
- 2.2** Scottish Natural Heritage will receive additional funding to implement the new legislation. Their budget will increase from £42 million to £55.6 million by 2003/04. Local Authorities will also receive an additional £50 million over the next 3 years to carry out environmental works which will include the development of improved access arrangements.
- 2.3** Scottish Natural Heritage envisage local authorities creating additional posts to implement the legislation. At the present time there are 17 Access Officers in Scotland with a further 9 in the pipeline. Early estimates include a further 76 posts will be required over the next 3 years. This equates to approximately 2 posts per authority.
- 2.4** Additional Countryside Rangers will also be required to resolve issues on a practical level and estimates indicate a further 64 of these posts will be created in local authorities.
- 2.5** The role of the Access Officers has been discussed in some detail with Scottish Natural Heritage and the Paths for All Partnership. The main role of the posts can be summarised as follows:
- (i) Co-ordinate the development of an Access Strategy for East Ayrshire.
 - (ii) To support the work of an Access Steering Group whose membership would include representatives of the main funding bodies – Scottish Natural Heritage, Enterprise Ayrshire, Health Board and Ayrshire Tourist Board.

- (iii) To develop a Local Access Forum which would report back to the Access Steering Group. This would comprise of Local Authority Staff, National Farmers Union, Scottish Landowners Federation, Path for all Partnership, Ramblers Association, etc.
- (iv) The Development of Core Path Networks through consultation with local communities, land managers and the access forum.
- (v) Provide access opportunities for specialist users such as cyclists and horse riders.
- (vi) To establish funding partnerships that ensures the implementation of proposals.
- (vii) To prioritise work programmes for the maintenance and management of the Core Path Networks.
- (viii) To promote access through various media to members of the public and to East Ayrshire Staff.

3. STAFFING PROPOSAL

- 3.1** It is recommended that two Countryside Access Officers be employed on salary scale AP5 (£21,036 - £22,959). The additional Countryside Ranger would be graded AP1/2 (£13,164 - £15,717). These salaries are consistent with SNH recommendations.
- 3.2** These posts would initially be filled for a three year period and continually reviewed. The Director of Community Services has reported that as the SNH grant reduces, additional external funding will be sought to meet any shortfall that cannot be met by the Council.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** The annual costs of the project are £81,212 per annum.
- 4.2** SNH will provide financial support for three years with 75% funding in one year, 65% in year two and 53% in year 3. Initial funding can be broken down as follows:

Grant from SNH	£60,909
Other External Funding	£10,000
Existing budget (in kind)	£10,303

5. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** These proposals will assist the Council in meeting the new requirements of the Land Reform Bill.

6. TRADE UNIONS

- 6.1** The Trade Unions have been consulted and support the proposal. They will also be kept fully informed as the funding process progresses.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that the Sub-Committee

- (i) approve in principle the establishment of a Countryside Access Unit as detailed in paragraph 3 above, subject to the Director of Community Services recommendations being approved by the Community Services Committee at its meeting of 7 February 2001 and confirmation of financial support from Scottish Natural Heritage.

Fiona Lees
Depute Chief Executive/
Director of Corporate Resources
30 January 2001

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

Stephen Chorley
Director of
Development Services

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Report by Director of Community Services to the Community Services Committee meeting of 7 February 2001.

Anyone wishing further information should contact Graham Haugh, Head of Personnel (01563 576092) or John Griffiths, Head of Leisure (01563 576264).

AGENDA