

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Council: 29 April 2009

Subject: Strathleven Corridor

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report sets out a new ambitious vision for regeneration within West Dunbartonshire and seeks Members' support for submission of a proposal to the Scottish Government aimed at realising this ambition. The Strathleven Corridor (see Appendix 1) provides an innovative approach to large scale regeneration by adopting an investment framework model as a means of delivering the Initiative.

2. Background

- 2.1** The River Leven has historically been a challenge and an opportunity for the Council and British Waterways (Scotland). Both parties have spent some five years assessing the River either for flood mitigation (WDC) or from a navigational perspective (BWS). A new concept has emerged that combines these efforts and provides a single solution. This solution brings with it the potential for very significant regeneration benefits which have been enjoyed by other waterway communities across the UK. This project has a very real prospect of harnessing the available water supply as a valuable resource which brings with it a financial sustainability as well as environmental and tourism benefits.
- 2.2** West Dunbartonshire Council and British Waterways (Scotland) have developed the concept of the "Corridor" from the initial discussions around flooding and British Waterways' Canal solution.
- 2.3** Early in 2008, John Swinney, Scottish Finance Minister and Jim McKinnon, Chief Planner, visited West Dunbartonshire. The Minister was taken on a tour of the Corridor area to see its potential and the challenges the area faces. A presentation was given by British Waterways (Scotland) supported by Scottish Enterprise, Strathleven Regeneration Company with WDC Members and Officers in attendance.
- 2.4** The Minister intimated his interest in what he had seen and heard and invited the Council to develop proposals and submit them to the Scottish Government once a clearly outlined strategic case for action had been established. It is believed that through work undertaken over the past 12 months, proposals are now sufficiently developed to allow this strategic case to be articulated.

- 2.5** The Strategic Case as outlined in Appendix 1, follows the UK Government's Treasury Project Appraisal Framework. The Scottish Government has adopted this process as the means of assessing major new projects.
- 2.6** The Project Appraisal Framework consists of Five Gate Reviews, namely:
- Gate 1: Determining the Strategic Context and Preparing the Strategic Outline Case;
- Gate 2: Preparing the Outline Business Case;
- Gate 3: Preparing the Full Business Case - see Appendix 2 - Summary of Gate Process;
- Gate 4: Implementation: Readiness to deliver and
- Gate 5: Evaluation and benefits realisation.
- 2.7** Appendix 1 contains the information that will allow the Scottish Government to assess the Strathleven Corridor Initiative and our approach, in terms of satisfying Gate 1 of the Project Appraisal Framework.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** West Dunbartonshire Council was along with all Local Authorities, given the lead responsibility for local regeneration last year by the Scottish Government. This is a major opportunity for West Dunbartonshire Council to act as an enabler and a leader for action, demonstrating that it has a clear vision for the future regeneration and wellbeing of this area.
- 3.2** The scale and ambition contained within the approach for the Strathleven Corridor Initiative should not be understated. The Initiative is not and should not be seen as a new strategy - it is about taking the existing strategic and policy environment and translating it into a framework for delivering progress and success.
- 3.3** The principal focus of the Initiative will be physical and economic regeneration and of making better use of the many aspects of the area. The initiative will seek to form strategic relationships with other organisations who have similar aims and objectives. It will clearly seek to be additional and not duplicate what others are already doing.
- 3.4** This approach will only be delivered successfully if the public and private sectors work together pulling on their expertise and resources over a prolonged period.
- 3.5** The approach outlined could be mobilised within the next two years, delivering significant impacts over a five, ten and fifteen year period to the area.

3.6 The Strathleven Corridor Initiative and specifically the critical projects which sets it apart from all the others around the country, namely, the sites at Bowling and the proposed Canal Route, require significant further work to be carried out in terms of development, design, deliverability, affordability and impact.

3.7 Stakeholder consultations have taken place, seeking views and support for the basic idea of the Strathleven Corridor and the projects contained therein. In addition, a workshop was held on 18 March 2009, at which representatives from Scottish Government, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, Scottish Water, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Glasgow Clyde Valley Structural Planning, the Green Network, Strathleven Regeneration Company, West Dunbartonshire's Community Planning Partnership and Dunbartonshire's Chamber of Commerce attended. All attendees received a presentation outlining the need for the Strathleven Corridor Initiative and all supported the concept of the Initiative and committed to working with WDC and British Waterways (Scotland) on the detail of the Initiative and its various projects in order for it to move from a bold idea and potential major opportunity, to a stage where the Strathleven Corridor Initiative can be assessed for deliverability and value for money at the Gate 2 stage of the Project Appraisal Framework.

3.8 This approach will not be easy to deliver, projects of this scale and ambition never are. The key challenges are likely to be:

- (i) the difficulties of funding;
- (ii) the many technical and infrastructure challenges including land ownership issues;
- (iii) the Environmental concerns;
- (iv) capacity to deliver;
- (v) the willingness of the private sector to engage; and
- (vi) gaining the support from the community.

All of these issues will have to be answered in full as we go through the Gate 2 appraisal process.

3.9 Public consultation will be a major part of the next phase of the process. Each of the projects contained within the Initiative have in their own right consulted already with the wider community. Once Scottish Government support in the overall Strathleven Corridor Initiative approach is forthcoming, a planned consultation programme will be a priority in preparing subsequent submissions to the Scottish Government.

3.10 During this development phase, a number of pieces of work have been carried out. These include the feasibility of the proposed Canal carried out by British

Waterways at a cost of over £300,000. In addition, WDC have led on elements of work required during this phase, these include:

- (i) Land ownership along the proposed Canal route;
- (ii) updating of previous Hydrological models and more detailed flood mapping;
- (iii) Study to produce Green Network Strategy and Plan for the Corridor; and
- (iv) Commissioning of EKOS Consultants to assist and advise on the Gateway Project Appraisal Framework process.

3.11 Each element has informed our Gate 1 submission, however if the Scottish Government does not support our proposals, the work carried out will still be of value to the Council in tackling issues such as flood mitigation, the Green Agenda and the management of the River Leven.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 A capital budget of £250,000 was set by West Dunbartonshire Council during 2008/09, to fund the development costs involved in exploring the approach to the Strathleven Corridor Initiative. To date, £111,000 has been spent on the work highlighted at 3.8 above (i-iv). A budget has been set aside for continuing development activity of £139,000 for 2009/10. If the approach is supported by the Scottish Government it is likely that the Council would be expected to make provision for some capital expenditure to be set aside in future years.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 The major risk to West Dunbartonshire Council is that the Council does not receive support from the Scottish Government. Realising the vision for the area would become much more difficult to achieve without the support of the Scottish Government.

6.2 If there was no support from the Scottish Government, West Dunbartonshire Council would need to explore separate strategies to flood mitigation, commercial development, including town centres and tackling the issues of rising unemployment and lack of economic development within the area.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The Strathleven Corridor Initiative is an exciting new approach in delivering a sustainable regeneration model that will create a viable future for the area and remove the economic vulnerability which has blighted its recent past.

7.2 The initiative is therefore about mitigating the risk of flooding, retaining and growing the population, creating more businesses and jobs, attracting and retaining investment and spend in the local area, attracting more visitors more often and for longer and becoming a focus for new development.

7.3 The Initiative presents West Dunbartonshire Council with an opportunity of presenting this approach to the Scottish Government and to seek support and commitment to enable the initiative to successfully complete Gate 2 of the project appraisal framework process.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Members are asked to:

- (a) endorse the approach adopted for the Strathleven Corridor Initiative (see Appendix 1);**
- (b) agree that the submission be sent to the Scottish Government for consideration and further discussion with West Dunbartonshire Council;**
- (c) discuss and agree the possibility of setting up an Officer/Partner/Member Working Group to take this Initiative forward and monitor its progress in order to inform full Council at regular intervals.**

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Date: 14 April 2009

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Appendix: 1 - Strathleven Corridor Initiative Outline Business Case and Executive Summary
2 - Overview of Public Sector Business Cases using the Five Case Model

Background Papers: JESSICA Brief

Wards Affected: Wards 1, 2, 3 & 4

