

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 8 June 2011

Subject: Milton Visitor Information Centre

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the current position in relation to the declining visitor numbers at Milton Visitor Information Centre and to seek the Committee's agreement to explore alternative cost effective delivery mechanisms for 2012/13.

2. Background

- 2.1 West Dunbartonshire Council provides VisitScotland with annual funding of £47,180 as a contribution towards the delivery of tourism services in and for the benefit of the local area. This includes the delivery of visitor information services at both Milton and Balloch. The Visitor Information Centres are staffed by VisitScotland and provide national and local tourism information to members of the public.
- 2.2 Over the last five years Milton Visitor Information Centre has experienced a significant decrease in visitor numbers. This has been highlighted by VisitScotland which has led to discussions regarding the achievement of a more cost-effective alternative to Milton Visitor Information Centre.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 Recent information provided by VisitScotland for 2009/10 highlighted a greater reduction in visitor numbers (59%) and bookings value (24%) for Milton compared with a smaller reduction in visitor numbers (14%) and bookings value (14%) for Balloch. Overall, Milton Visitor Information Centre has performed poorly at approximately 10% below the regional average. The table below illustrates comparisons with visitor numbers for Balloch and Milton Visitor Information Centres over the last 5 years.

	Balloch	Milton
06/07	41596	22419
07/08	39218	23639
08/09	55150	17342
09/10	64482	15962
10/11 at 28/02	53909	6589

3.2 The main reasons attributed to Milton Visitor Information Centre's poor performance include the following:

- Poor location with access to the Centre only available from one side of the A82.
- Poor visibility of signage
- Seasonal opening from May to October compared with Balloch Visitor Information Centre which is open all year round.

3.3 It is proposed that the Council and VisitScotland operate Milton Visitor Information Centre as normal from May to October 2011. During this period both parties will conduct a feasibility review to explore alternative delivery mechanisms for 2012/13. Options already identified that will be investigated further include:

- Dumbarton town centre location Information Point
- Out-of-town location Information Point (e.g. Lomondgate)
- Partnership with like-minded business (e.g. retail, food and drink, visitor attraction)
- Co-location with Council services (e.g. Council service point, library)
- Enhanced operations at Balloch Visitor Information Centre.

4. People Implications

4.1 Visit Scotland annually recruits two temporary members of staff to provide a visitor information service at Milton Visitor Centre for the seasonal period from May to October. If the Centre were to close VisitScotland would not instigate a recruitment process for the 2012/13 season.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications for the feasibility review. Any future financial implications to the service will be identified within the feasibility review and if necessary funding approval will be obtained for any proposed changes prior to activity taking place.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 The feasibility review will be developed in partnership with VisitScotland and will include consultation with any other relevant partners which will ensure that any potential recommendation is reached at minimum risk to service delivery.

7. Equalities, Health & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EIA)

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as necessary for any proposed changes to existing service delivery recommended within the feasibility review.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Over the last five years, Milton Visitor Information Centre has experienced a steady decline in visitor numbers. It is proposed to continue current service delivery for 2011/12 to allow VisitScotland and the Council to undertake a feasibility review to explore alternative delivery mechanisms.

8.2 The Committee is asked to agree that:

- (i) an alternative cost-effective service replacement is researched for Milton Visitor Information Centre;
- (ii) the Council staff work in partnership with VisitScotland to investigate alternative delivery mechanisms to provide a cost effective visitor information service; and
- (iii) a further report on the proposal and recommendations of the feasibility review be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for approval.

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Date: 9 May 2011

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All