

Note of meeting

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

15 December 2010 at Renfrewshire House, Paisley

In attendance:

Cllr David Arthur, Renfrewshire Council and Chair of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Joint Committee

Cllr Stephen McCabe, Leader of Inverclyde Council

John Arthur, Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities, Inverclyde Council

Cllr David O'Neil, Leader of North Ayrshire Council

Jim Leckie, Head of Service Community and Culture, North Ayrshire Council

Cllr Derek Mackay, Leader of Renfrewshire Council

Fraser Carlin, Head of Planning and Development, Renfrewshire Council

Ruth Cooper, External Funding Manager, Renfrewshire Council

Stuart McMillan, Policy and Regeneration Manager, Renfrewshire Council

Cllr Arthur welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. He explained the purpose of the meeting was to seek assurance from the three local authorities in the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Authority that they recognise the value of the Park, are keen to commit to its ongoing management and development and would wish to pursue further opportunities to enhance its role as a strategic recreational asset.

This is being asked against the background of the ongoing need to modernise Council Services and achieve value for money in everything that Council's deliver. As such there may be a need to direct Officers to work together over the next few months with a view to reviewing the administrative structure for the Park and consider opportunities that might exist for increasing the revenue that the Park generates.

Cllr Arthur explained that to this end he has asked three Renfrewshire Council officers to brief the meeting –

- Fraser Carlin, Head of Planning and Development on some issues and options that might be worth considering in terms of governance.
- Ruth Cooper, External Funding Manager, on potential options to increase the income that the Park generates.
- Stuart McMillan, Policy and Regeneration Manager, to speak about a recent issue that has been subject to consideration by Renfrewshire Council's Scrutiny & Petitions Board regarding consideration of planning applications and other development proposals that emerge within the Park.

Fraser Carlin set out the current governance structure for the Park, as well as its funding, expenditure and income. The Council Leaders were keen to examine whether the present model, established in the 1990's is still appropriate. Therefore subject to Board/Committee approvals in the New Year it was agreed that an assessment be undertaken to consider management and funding options and thereafter a report be submitted to the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Authority for consideration.

Ruth Cooper focused on 2 issues – the opportunity and restrictions for external funding and the potential for greater commercial development and income generation from the park. Ruth indicated that Clyde Muirshiel do currently develop externally funded projects and applications but are restricted in terms of:

- Current structure; which often relies on one of the local authorities acting as applicant for a range of funds or restricts applications to other funds;
- Fundable activity; council applications are more onerously examined in terms of activity as funders are unlikely to fund anything which is seen as an existing remit of a council;
- Support to Clyde Muirshiel tenants; again being seen as a council service restricts the opportunity for wider developments, for example nominal / peppercorn rents can't be commercialised and matched.

There are opportunities for wider commercial opportunity and again Clyde Muirshiel are currently restricted and are unable to “sweat the asset” in terms of borrowing against capital assets or in terms of increasing revenue from leasing or selling parts of the asset as this is recouped by the local authority owner. It was agreed that ownership and title issues require to be examined by each Council.

The Council Leaders were keen to see the consideration of the Park's governance/ management to include options for future business planning. This may strongly influence that governance/management model.

Stuart McMillan briefed the Leaders on a petition made to Renfrewshire Council by the Save Your Regional Park Campaign. This sought that Renfrewshire Council –

1. Seek the agreement of their partner Councils and the Park Authority that Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (CMRP) should have strong legal representation equivalent to the appellant, for Public Local Inquiries concerning the refusal of any inappropriate industrial development by any of the three Councils or applications made direct to the Scottish Government and that CMRP's extra legal costs be shared between the three Councils and not covered from CMRP's budget.
2. Undertake to coordinate the policies of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire and Inverclyde Councils regarding the development of wind farms and other inappropriate industrial developments in the Park.

The petition has been considered by Renfrewshire Council's Scrutiny and Petitions Board who were of the opinion that the first point be refused but to refer the second point to the Park Authority and subsequently to this meeting, to establish a collective view from the three local authorities as to how best to deal with planning issues and policy in the Park area.

The Council Leaders confirmed that they do not support the co-funding of legal costs in excess of the Park budget. Furthermore they agreed that each Council should develop their own Local Development Plans, which will collectively cover all of the Park area, and do not support any further layering of planning policy to cover the Park. The view was also expressed that the authorities should not be commenting on planning applications within other authorities' areas of the park unless there were particular impacts on their authority area.

The Council Leaders concluded with a request to Officers to prepare an options report for the governance, management and funding of the Park, to include a communications and engagement plan. This request to be formalised by reports to the relevant Councils' Board/Committee in the New Year seeking authorisation of this course of action.

Report To:	Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee	Date:	18 January 2011
Report By:	Corporate Director Education & Communities	Report No:	SCS/11/50/MMcN
Contact Officer:	Martin McNab	Contact No:	714246
Subject:	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Governance		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of preliminary discussions which have been held with Renfrewshire Council and North Ayrshire Council over possible changes to the governance arrangements for Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and to seek the Committee's approval for delegated authority for the Convenor of the Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee to enter in to formal discussions with Renfrewshire Council regarding their proposals.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park covers 281 square kilometres of countryside in Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire. The Park is currently run by a joint committee comprising eight councillors, four from Renfrewshire Council and two each from Inverclyde and North Ayrshire. Inverclyde's representatives on the Park Authority are currently Councillor David Wilson, the depute convenor of the Park Authority, and Councillor Innes Nelson.
- 2.2 On 15 December 2010 a meeting was held at the request of Renfrewshire Council between the leaders of Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and North Ayrshire Councils and the Convenor of the Park Authority on the subject of a review of the governance arrangements for the Park. Renfrewshire Council had concerns that the current governance arrangements were unduly restrictive in terms of limiting the Park's ability to apply for external funding and in limiting the Park's discretion to fund projects. Issues over the Park's ability to comment on developments within the Park were also raised, the current structure severely limiting this, particularly as many members of the Park Authority are also members of Planning Committees.
- 2.3 A range of options were discussed at the meeting including the possibility of the formation of a trust or of the running of the Park being taken over in its entirety by Renfrewshire Council with no officer involvement from either Inverclyde or North Ayrshire.
- 2.4 It was agreed that further discussions would be held on the substance and detail of these proposals and this report seeks the Committee's approval for delegated authority for the Convenor of the Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee to carry out those discussions. Any firm proposals would be brought back to the committee for consideration.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee

- a. Note the contents of this report.
- b. Approve the granting of delegated authority for the Convenor to enter formal

- c. Note that any proposals agreed would be brought back to the Committee for consideration.

Albert Henderson
Corporate Director Education & Communities

4.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park covers 281 square kilometres of countryside in Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire. The Park is currently run by a joint committee comprising eight councillors, four from Renfrewshire Council and two each from Inverclyde and North Ayrshire. Inverclyde's representatives on the Park Authority are currently Councillor David Wilson, the depute convenor of the Park Authority, and Councillor Innes Nelson.
- 4.2 Renfrewshire Council acts as the host Authority for the Park, Park staff being employees of Renfrewshire Council. Renfrewshire also provides the secretariat and committee support for the Park Authority. The Park Authority meets four times per annum and there are additional officers' meetings to deal with technical matters.
- 4.3 In Inverclyde the main areas of activity for the park are around the Greenock Cut Centre and Lunderston Bay, which the Park manages on Inverclyde's behalf. The latter arrangement has advantages for the Council as an operator of a designated bathing beach.
- 4.4 The annual budget of the Regional Park is £1,323,000 of which Inverclyde's contribution is £272,100 in 2010/11.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Finance:

Implications for finance are unknown at this stage.

6.2 Personnel:

None currently

6.3 Legal:

None