
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	20 January 2015
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/06/15/MM
Contact Officer:	Martin McNab	Contact No:	4246
Subject:	Rankin Park – Developing Potential as a Mountain Bike Hub		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Committee approval to progress with the potential development of Rankin Park as a Mountain Bike Hub.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 In September 2014 discussions were held with **sportscotland** on ways to complement the Rankin Park pitch development and potentially make use of the facilities and infrastructure developed in the Park. At that time **sportscotland** suggested the possibility of Active Places funding for some kind of outdoor sport, for example mountain biking. Bids to the last round of the Active Places fund are required by February 2015.
- 2.2 Following further consultation a concept design was commissioned on which to base a funding bid. The outline plan is available at Appendix 1 together with further information on some of the features in Appendix 1A. We have also carried out further research into what would be required firstly to make a meaningful funding bid and secondly to create a sustainable facility which will allow both development of cycling in local schools and draw in visitors to the area in concert with wider developments in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.
- 2.3 In order to progress with the development of mountain biking in the area Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park with some support from Inverclyde Council has commissioned a feasibility study into the development of a wider route network in Inverclyde.
- 2.4 If Committee approval is forthcoming a detailed funding bid will be made to the Active Places Fund at the beginning of February.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Committee agrees match funding of up to £150K for an Active Places funding bid funded from Free Reserves subject to approval through the budget process.

Patricia Cassidy
Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Meetings with internal and external partners and an examination of the Rankin Park site suggest that it would be ideally suited for a combination of a mountain bike skills trail, short cross country trail and pump track. Such a development would allow:

- Development of after school cycling by Active Schools. The site has very good potential access from Notre Dame and Lady Alice Primary and reasonable access from Inverclyde Academy. This would at least partially address the reduction in scope for outdoor activities following recent budget decisions.
- The after school cycling could develop further with the ultimate aim being the development of a community cycle club.
- Development of Inverclyde as a destination for mountain biking. The site is half a mile from Drumfrochar Station which provides level access and also has a car park. Roads are currently looking at options for access to Clyde Muirshiel Park. The site is ideally situated for this. Clyde Muirshiel Park is also interested in developing mountain biking.

4.2 Consultation with interested parties including **sportscotland**, Cycling Scotland, Scottish Cycling and Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park has confirmed the feasibility of the proposed Rankin Park Development and the development of a wider route network. **sportscotland** has indicated that they are likely to look favourably at a funding bid from Inverclyde.

4.3 The existing physical infrastructure at Rankin Park makes it an ideal centre for the development of school and community cycling. This will contribute to the strength of the bid.

5.0 THE PROPOSED RANKIN PARK DEVELOPMENT

5.1 A high level concept design was commissioned from Architrail, a trail design company which has designed several projects in the West of Scotland. These range in scale from the UCI Commonwealth Games course at Cathkin Braes right through to smaller community and school based projects such as the Mill Run in Barrhead.

5.2 The purpose of the concept design was to give a better idea of the potential of the site and a “menu” of optional development features. The results of this can be seen at Appendix 1 and 1A. The company was given a clear brief regarding target users, primarily school age but still to include enough interest to attract adult users as a starting point for wider outings in the Regional Park. A main concern was the limitation of liability. This will be achieved by a combination of a clear signage strategy and care taken to ensure that, where harder options exist, the clear natural route is on the easier path. This will ensure that users consciously “opt in” to clearly signed harder options.

5.3 The design gives options for the following features:

- Link Track
- Pump Track
- Balance Bike Track
- Skills Area
- Blue Grade Trail
- Red Grade Trail
- Dual Slalom Trail

Costings for the entire suite of options come in at approximately £240K. Whilst this would provide a first class facility for the area the maximum grant available from **sportscotland** is £100K. The option recommended as a final scheme will be dependent on both the internal funding available and the level of any grant awarded by **sportscotland**.

5.4 If approval is given to match fund a bid the final scheme will obviously also be dependent on

planning considerations. The majority of the optional features are relatively non-intrusive however installation of features such as a pump track might have an effect on flood planning for the Hole Burn and therefore might not be practical. Initial advice from the Council's flooding officer is that there should not be an issue but we will have more detailed discussions if funding is confirmed.

- 5.5 Care will also have to be taken to ensure that there are no adverse effects on the pitch and its surrounds either as a result of construction works or as a result of use of the facility. The current layout does not feature any fencing around the pitch for example. It would be prudent to address this as part of the scheme to avoid any risk of damage to the pitch.
- 5.6 One of the areas where projects such as this can fall down is in the maintenance of any trails created. There are however very successful models for community involvement in trail maintenance, for example the [Bespoke](#) group working with Callendar Estate in Falkirk. If this project were to be successful we would seek to work with Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park in building volunteer capacity for Rankin Park and the possible wider Regional Park Network. This would be a long term aim but it is prudent to factor in maintenance costs initially. Advice from **sportscotland** in consultation with Forestry Commission Scotland is that maintenance at 5% of capital protects the operator from the risk of liability as a result of poorly maintained trails.

6.0 WIDER AREA ROUTE NETWORK

- 6.1 As well as providing a first class facility for schools in the area the development can provide a focal point for visitors to the area. Realistically a scheme on the level proposed will not in itself form a major attraction for visitors, in order to form a regional attraction such facilities need to be as a minimum on the scale of Cathkin Braes or one of the major Seven Stanes trail centres in the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway. The intention will therefore be to make Rankin Park a jumping off point for exploration of the wider regional park.
- 6.2 Discussions have been held with Roads on the feasibility of linking signed routes from Notre Dame High School and Whinhill Station to Rankin Park and from Rankin Park to Overton. The latter will obviously create a route from Whinhill Primary as a bi-product. These developments are in line with Roads' objectives for cycling in the area and, if the Rankin Park development goes ahead, they will be looking at funding options for these aspects.
- 6.3 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park has produced an outline plan for off road cycle routes in the Park which is attached as Appendix 2. This has been developed in consultation with local cycling group Ride 63. The park is currently undertaking a more detailed feasibility study, with support from Inverclyde Council, which can be used as the basis for funding bids to complete gaps identified in the route network and to address other issues such as signage and gates. Although this is a Regional Park initiative the timing is serendipitous as it fits extremely well with potential marketing of Rankin Park as a starting point for off road cycling in the Park. As Inverclyde is now part of the Renfrewshire LEADER area this would be an ideal source of funding for the developments proposed.
- 6.4 The route network identified by Clyde Muirshiel includes routes across the Inverclyde section of the Park from Overton to Wemyss Bay. This would fit extremely well with the development of the extension of NCR 753 from Lunderston Bay to Wemyss Bay allowing the marketing of circular routes from Whinhill Station to Wemyss Bay, Inverkip, Gourrock or Greenock Central. This would maximise the opportunities for the local economy in the scheme.

7.0 DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN BIKING IN SCHOOLS

- 7.1 One of the aims of the project would be the development of a sustainable community cycling club as there are at present no clubs in the area which cater for young people. As a first step in this process Active Schools would work with the local schools, in the main Notre Dame High School, but possibly also Lady Alice Primary School and Whinhill Primary School to develop an after school programme. This would operate weekly in term time for 4-5 months between April and September. Over time the intention would be to build on this and expand it by the use of volunteers. In time this could develop into a sustainable community cycling club

which might have the capacity to take on roles like trail maintenance provided the council was satisfied its potential legal liabilities were suitably covered.

- 7.2 The other development which might be possible is the introduction of a curricular primary schools programme. A programme for 6-7 schools for four sessions per school together with instructor costs and bike hire would be likely to cost something of the order of £15K per annum. A key aspect before this was developed would be to gauge likely buy in from schools and their willingness to contribute to the programme. Experience in the past has shown that schools are far less likely to cancel sessions and events where they are actually contributing. It is likely that the bulk of the costs might have to be found from the remnant of the outdoor education budget however.
- 7.3 Discussions on the initial proposals have been held with both Cycling Scotland, who are keen to see Inverclyde progress beyond the provision of Bikeability and with the regional development officer for Scottish Cycling. The latter has been very helpful in identifying some of the problems that can arise in this type of scenario. Commonly the major issues that can make youth cycling sessions impractical are poor transport links and an absence of toilet facilities at the venue. In both these respects Rankin Park would be an ideal venue.
- 7.4 The main costs involved in setting up a schools programme including an after school club and potentially a primary school programme would be:
- One off costs in staff development to ensure staff supervising after school activity are trained to an appropriate level
 - Recurring costs around the provision of suitable bikes
 - Recurring costs of external coaches for a curriculum programme

To train 3-4 staff to a level where they can lead and supervise activities would cost approximately £3K and the cost of bike hire for an after school programme would be around £5K for a 16 week programme. The option of bike hire rather than purchase removes one key area of liability.

Costs of a curriculum primary school programme would be of the order of £10-15K including bike hire and instruction.

- 7.5 Further work is required on the development of both after school and curricular programmes and a further report will be brought back to Committee on funding options, including a review of the remnant outdoor education budget, if the initial funding of the physical infrastructure goes ahead.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

- 8.1 The final development of the Rankin Park project will require one off funding from the Council of up to £150K if all options for the development were taken forward, assuming full £100K funding from **sportscotland**.
- 8.2 Options are currently being looked at to cover the costs of a schools mountain bike programme at Rankin Park. A detailed report will be taken to Committee on options if a funding bid for the physical development is successful but costs would be contained within existing resources. Some indicative initial estimates of the likely cost level of a two tier approach involving curriculum sessions for primary schools and an after school club for a secondary school are contained below.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
Reserves	General Fund Reserves	2015-17	£250		Maximum amount contingent on a successful funding bid to Active Places Fund
	Active Places Grant Funding	2015-17	(£100)		Maximum available
Outdoor Education (TBC)	Training	2015-16	£3		Training 2 Active Schools Coordinators & 2 Teachers as Mountain Bike Leaders Fund

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
TBC	Trail Maintenance	2016-17	£12.5		Maintenance at 5% of capital as per sportscotland guidance
TBC	Curriculum Sessions	2016-17	£15		4 sessions for 7 Primary Schools including instruction, bike hire & bus hire
TBC	After School Club	2016/17	£5		Bike Hire costs for 16 week programme supported by Active Schools

Legal

- 8.3 There are no legal implications at this stage although comfort will be sought that there are no legal impediments prior to any final decision.

Human Resources

- 8.4 There are no implications for human resources.

Equalities

- 8.5 The proposed development should have a positive effect on gender equalities in sport in Inverclyde.

Repopulation

- 8.6 If seen through this development could have a positive effect on the areas image, highlighting as it will the excellent links from Greenock to the regional park and the leisure opportunities available. It will also enable routes to be developed which could maximise the direct economic impact on Inverclyde.

9.0 CONSULTATIONS

9.1 In preparing this report the following have been consulted:

Legal and Property Services

Environmental & Commercial Services (Roads)

Finance

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

Sportscotland

Cycling Scotland

Scottish Cycling

Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland

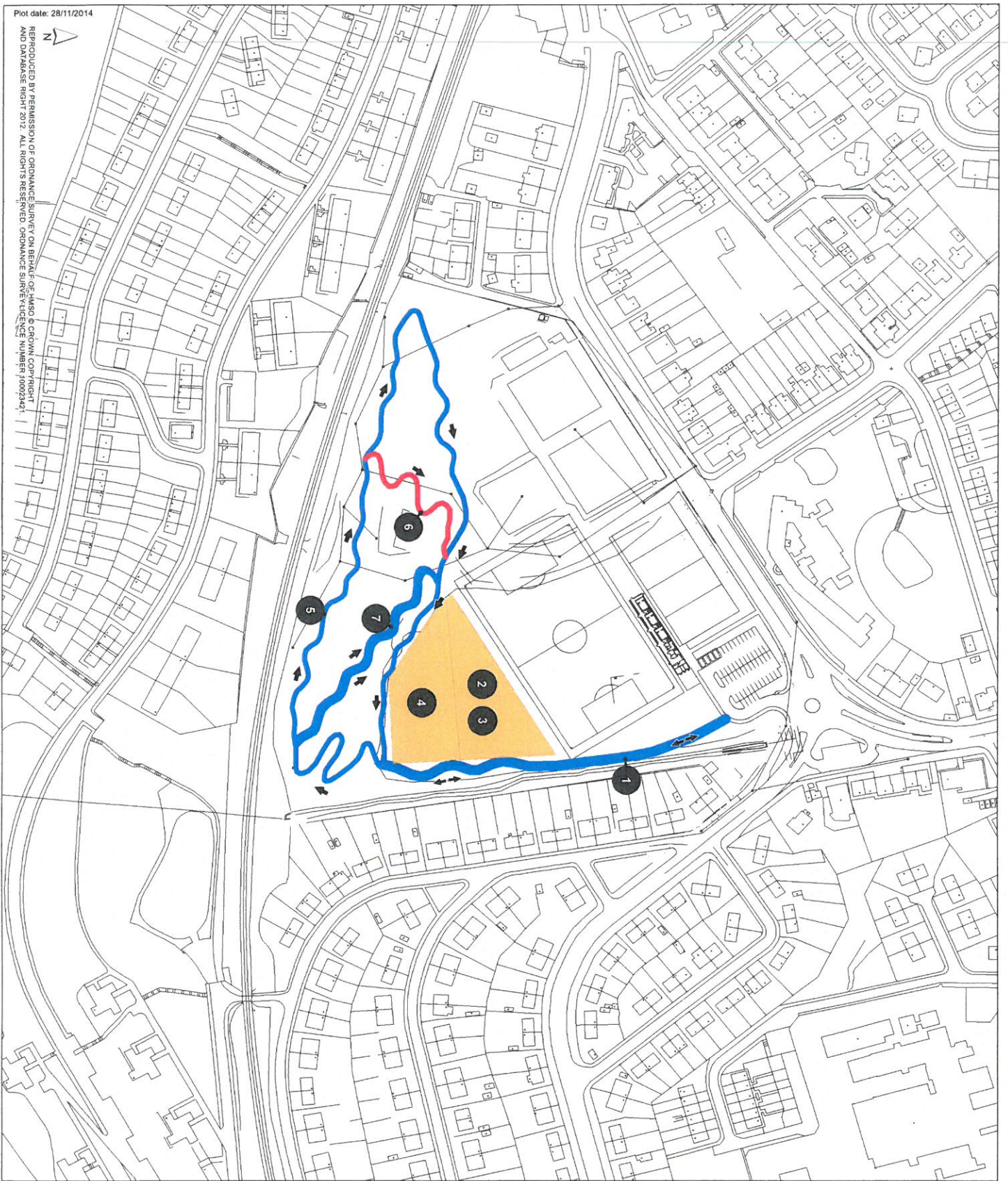
9.2 Further more detailed consultations with potential users are ongoing.

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

Plot date: 28/11/2014

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KEY

- 2 3 Pump Track and Bike Balance Track
- 4 Skills Area
- 1 Link Track
- 5 Blue Grade MTB Trail
- 6 Red Grade MTB Trail
- 7 Dual Station Trail

Client
Inverclyde Council

Project
RANKIN PARK

Drawing
MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL FACILITY
CONCEPT MACRO LAYOUT DESIGN

Scale @ A3
1:2,000

Appendix 1 A – Examples of Features Possible at Rankin Park



Pump Track (2)

This type of trail consists of a loop of berms, rollers and other trail features that are used to generate speed without pedaling (by a technique known as pumping). This type of track is not only fun to ride, but can also teach riders skills that can be applied to all mountain bike disciplines. Pump tracks are extremely versatile and can fit into relatively small areas.

The Balance Bike Track (3) is a scaled down version of a pump track designed to be used by balance bikes, young children on smaller bikes and absolute beginners. The track is to have smaller scale and less abrupt features, typically rollers up to 0.4m in height.



Cross Country Trail (5 & 6)

Cross Country (also known as XC, singletrack or trail riding) is the traditional form of mountain Biking where riders ride up, down and along, typically on singletrack trails (wide enough for a single rider) often tackling technical features in their path. The design concept for Rankin Park features sections of both blue grade suitable for beginner and improving riders and red grade suitable for more advanced riders.



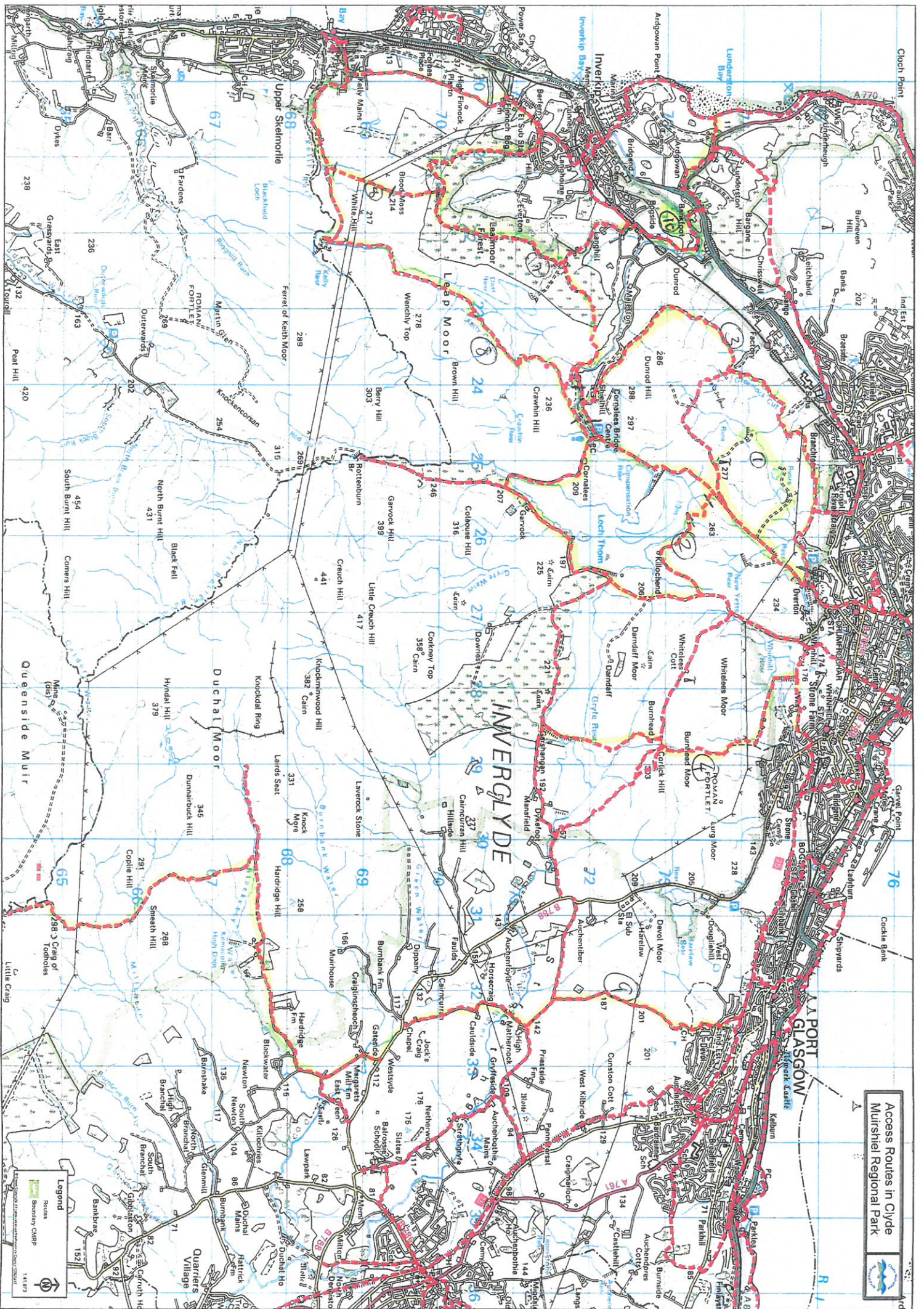
Skills Area (4)

Skills areas contain all the technical features that are likely to be encountered on a mountain bike track, such as rollers, jumps, berms, drop-offs, rock sections and boardwalk. Typically located adjacent to existing mountain bike trails, they are an ideal place to learn fundamental mountain bike skills.



Dual Slalom Trail (7)

Dual slalom is a form of head to head racing, with two riders descending on identical parallel tracks. These gravity based tracks typically feature berms, rollers and doubles. Whilst this track layout is derived from racing it is becoming an increasingly popular feature of permanent trail centre facilities.



Access Routes in Clyde
Murshiel Regional Park



Legend
Routes
Boundary Camp

1:4,873