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**AYRSHIRE JOINT PLANNING STEERING GROUP**  
**26 MAY 2011**

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**Ayrshire Green Network**

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**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1 To inform the Steering Group of the completion of the Ayrshire Green Network Study and to recommend the formation of an Ayrshire Green Network Officer Steering Group to develop proposals for an Ayrshire Green Network Partnership and to take forward initial strategic work items.

**BACKGROUND**

- 2 The Scottish Government National Planning Framework 2 seeks to deliver a better environment in Central Scotland to ensure that it can compete at a European and Global scale. The Central Scotland Green Network concept was proposed as a means to deliver improvement in the Central Belt stretching from Ayrshire to Fife. To achieve this, the National Planning Framework envisages the expansion of woodland cover, creation of new strategic routes for active travel and recreation, improvements to habitats for wildlife and restoration of vacant and derelict land to create a step change in the quality of the environment.
- 3 The Central Scotland Green Network Partnership Board, supported by the Central Scotland Green Network Support Unit, was formed to stimulate and coordinate action. The Partnership Board is comprised of representatives of the three lead agencies (Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Enterprise) and four local authority representatives. The remaining board members are drawn from other sectors, including health, development and the private sector. A vacancy currently exists on the board for an Ayrshire representative.
- 4 A Central Scotland Green Network Development Fund was launched in 2010 which provided £0.5 million funding for projects to help deliver the CSGN aims. A number of awards were made to projects in Ayrshire, including the Joint Planning Unit's "Ayrshire Green Network Study" and "Future Forestry & Woodland Strategy Guidance" (see below). A second round of the Development Fund worth £0.7million is currently open until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011.

**Ayrshire Green Network Study**

- 5 The Joint Planning Unit was awarded grant funding in December 2010 to appoint consultants to undertake an initial piece of work to identify the existing features of Ayrshire which contribute

to the “Green Network”, a method for identifying opportunities to create new green network assets and potential organisational arrangements for taking the CSGN concept forward in Ayrshire.

### Existing Features

- 6 The “Green Network” in Ayrshire is comprised of natural and manmade features including historic gardens & designed landscapes, individual trees & woodlands, hedgerows, areas of natural and semi-natural habitat, ancient monuments, archaeology sites & listed buildings and footpaths and cycles paths. These features were mapped in a GIS and used in the later analysis.

### Functionality of Existing Green Network Features

- 7 The “Green Network Features” are often referred to as “green Infrastructure” as they provide vital services to people including removal of air pollutants, storage of atmospheric carbon, clean water, flood alleviation, pollination of food crops, production of timber and opportunities for active travel and leisure pursuits which benefit physical and mental well-being. The consultants applied a GIS computer modelling process to map the functions provided by the green infrastructure in Ayrshire. A total of 28 functions were modelled which seek to capture the full range of green infrastructure services (also known as Eco-System Services) including recreation, green travel, trapping air pollutants, water storage, habitat for wildlife and carbon sequestration.

### Needs Mapping

- 8 The GIS modelling process is able to identify areas where green infrastructure is performing well and other areas where there are gaps in provision at a strategic level or local level. These “gaps” represent opportunities for the creation of new Green Network Assets and opportunities to enhance existing features for particular functions (eco-system services). The GIS coverages for each individual function can be layered together to provide a single map showing where there are multiple needs and therefore where there is potentially the greatest requirement for renewed effort.
- 9 Whilst all models are a simplification of reality and the assumptions built into the model will require careful consideration to ensure that they properly reflect the Ayrshire context, the GIS mapping process does provide a systematic means of examining the need for enhancement of the Green Network across Ayrshire. This piece of work comes at the same time as the Scottish Government are encouraging planning authorities to adopt an “eco-system services” approach<sup>1</sup> to planning as a way of achieving sustainable land use. The GIS mapping and analysis exercise will therefore be of wider benefit to local development planning.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/345453/0114927.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/345453/0114927.pdf)

### Taking The CSGN Forward In Ayrshire

- 10 The Ayrshire Green Network study examined options for taking the CSGN forward in Ayrshire over the long term. As noted in the introduction to this report, the Central Scotland Green Network is a national development under NPF2 and requires to be reflected in local development plans. Development Plans and Development Management will have a key role in protecting features of the Green Network through the conservation of existing woodlands and other habitats for wildlife and protection of the Core Path networks. Careful planning of new developments will present opportunities to provide additional green network assets without necessarily adding to development costs.
- 11 However, many of the decisions about land management which affect the green network are taken outwith the statutory land use planning system. For example, decisions about where to plant new areas of woodland or about improvements to agricultural land are primarily made by private individuals, businesses and non governmental institutions. These decisions are, however, often influenced by financial incentives offered by Government, chiefly through the Scottish Rural Development Program.
- 12 The influence of these other decision making processes is particularly relevant in Ayrshire which is largely rural in character. This underlines the key recommendations in the Study that any process to deliver the CSGN in Ayrshire has to be strategic and based on a partnership approach which encompasses a sufficient range of key decision makers to ensure that actions are coordinated. Figure 1 at the end of this report illustrates the six CSGN elements covered by the national designation and indicates the links that will need to be made to key organisations through a partnership approach.

### Developing An Ayrshire Green Network Partnership

- 13 There are numerous partnerships in place already within Ayrshire, with many of the organisations that are relevant to the Green Network already being represented on multiple partnerships. It is vital that the Green Network is not seen as an additional burden on officer time and that real benefits, in terms of delivering the organisations' core objectives, can be delivered through the partnership. This will take time to develop.
- 14 Initially, a core officer working group, facilitated through the AJPU and including the Councils, East Ayrshire Woodlands, FCS, SNH, and SEPA should be formed to undertake initial work including further consideration of the membership and constitution for an Ayrshire Green Network Partnership, to advise on the need for resources to facilitate the work of the partnership and the development of key initial areas of work including further development of the GIS analysis with a view to establishing initial priorities, a revised woodland strategy (see separate item) and promoting Integrated Habitat Networks within the local development plans and RPAC regional priorities.

## RECOMMENDATION

15 It is recommended that:

- Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit continues to co-ordinate green network activity within Ayrshire;
- that an officer working group be formed with representatives of the Councils, EAW, AJPU, FCS, SNH and SEPA to advise on the development of a partnership within Ayrshire;
- that an action programme be developed confirming green network strategic priorities. This will include in addition to other matters a revision of woodland and forestry strategy and the development of Integrated Habitat Networks.

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Figure 1: Ayrshire Green Network Partnership, Objectives And Related Key Partnerships, Primary Delivery Bodies and Local Delivery Partners

