

Ardrossan and Arran, Saltcoats and Stevenston Area Committee
8 March 2012

ARRAN, 8 March 2012 - At a Special Meeting of the Ardrossan and Arran, Saltcoats and Stevenston Area Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 11.00 a.m.

Present

Margie Currie, William Gibson, John Hunter, Peter McNamara, Ronnie McNicol, Jim Montgomerie and Alan Munro.

In Attendance

A. Bodie, Head of Infrastructure and Design and F. Brown, Bereavement & Burials Officer (Finance and Infrastructure); J. McHarg, Assistant Manager (Community Services) and B. Anderson, Performance/Grants Information Officer (Education and Skills); Nigel Marshall, Resource Co-ordinator (Arran Outdoor Education Centre) (Education and Skills); A. Anderson, Economic Development Manager and K. Don, Economic Development Officer, Tourism (Economic Development) and M. Anderson, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Also In Attendance

D. Devenay, Station Commander (Strathclyde Fire and Rescue); Sergeant R. Mackay (Strathclyde Police); G. Johnston, J. McCarthy and R. Small (Arran Youth Foundations); and J. Stewart (Saving St. Bride's Chapel Arran).

Chair

Councillor Currie in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Anthony Gurney.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations by Elected Members in terms of Standing Order 16.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 2 February 2012 were signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. Presentation: Arran Youth Foundations

The Committee received a presentation by the Youth Work Project Manager for Arran Youth Foundations (AYF) on the work of the charity, which was formed in 2008 to engage young people on the island in youth work activities.

The organisation aims to:-

- provide a safe, warm environment in which young people can meet;
- build the capacity of young people by involving them in management and decision making; and
- develop educational, physical and social skills and foundations of friendship through a variety of activities and events.

AYF currently provides weekly drop-in sessions on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as a range of other events and activities. The organisation, which employs a trained youth worker, fundraises to support its activities and, in the longer term, is seeking to construct a purpose-built facility to house its activities.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the involvement of young people in the decision-making process and the running of the organisation;
- the financial position of AYF beyond the next financial year;
- the anticipated cost of a purpose-built facility; and
- the organisation's funding priorities.

Members expressed their appreciation for the work of AYF in supporting and engaging with young people on Arran.

Noted.

4. Strathclyde Police

Sergeant Mackay provided information on the following:-

- the significant reduction in reported crimes on the island over the last 3 years;
- the success of measures to tackle road traffic issues on the island;
- the positive impact of high visibility policing on roads matters in terms of a reduction in other crime such as housing breaking and petty theft; and
- good partnership working between the Police on the island and other agencies, including Health, Education and Skills and Arran Youth Foundations.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the operation of partnership working between the Police and other agencies; and
- the circumstances surrounding a number of road traffic fatalities a number of years ago.

Noted.

5. Strathclyde Fire and Rescue

Submitted tactical assessment report by Strathclyde Fire and Rescue detailing information from 1 January to 21 February 2012.

Station Commander Devenay provided information on the following:-

- the operation of the volunteer fire service on Arran and the resources at its disposal;
- further incidents which had occurred on the island since the conclusion of the last reporting period;
- unwanted fire signals incidents in relation to sheltered housing accommodation; and
- plans for a major exercise on the island involving all emergency services.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the structure of the fire service on the island.

Noted.

6. Roads and Related Issues on Arran

The Committee received a verbal update by the Head of Service (Infrastructure and Design) (Finance and Infrastructure) on a number of roads and related issues on Arran, including:-

- the difficulties associated with programming roads maintenance work on the island and how that work is prioritised;
- the higher percentage spend on roads on Arran when compared with the island's population and overall road length;
- work in conjunction with SPT to upgrade the bus terminals at Blackwaterfoot and Brodick;
- measures to stabilise the edge of the coast at Brodick beach;
- ongoing cycle path improvements on the island;
- the production of the Council's roads asset management plan and approval of the related action plan;
- plans to provide Members with a full list of works to be undertaken in the coming year;
- efforts to lobby the Scottish Government for additional resources to support the roads asset; and
- a number of strategic issues, including maximising external funding, the impact of Disability Discrimination Act on the island's bus services, the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET), works to Brodick Pier in the context of the overall transport network, and the Ferry Services Review.

The Head of Infrastructure and Design undertook to provide a further report to the Area Committee as key milestones are reached and indicated an intention to continue to develop a positive dialogue with Arran Community Council.

Noted.

7. The Arran Maritime Festival

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the support available to develop the Arran Maritime festival as a tourist event in North Ayrshire.

The development of events plays an important role in growing North Ayrshire's tourism economy. The North Ayrshire Local Tourism Action Plan 2012 - 2017 and the Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Strategy 2012 – 2017 propose that events are developed to support the economic growth of the wider area as well as benefit local communities. Development support can be provided through applications for additional resources from agencies such as EventScotland, VisitScotland Growth Fund and LEADER.

Whilst the inaugural Arran Maritime Festival in July 2011 did not generate sufficient additional bed-nights on the island to be considered an economic growth driver, it did bring a high quality event to the local area and the future development of the event could unlock its potential to be a valuable tourism driver. There is potential to develop a Maritime Festival in various locations in North and South Ayrshire and enquires have already come from Largs, Portencross, Millport and Irvine and support may be provided to develop a pan-Ayrshire Maritime Festival. Initially, a feasibility study could be undertaken to scope the nature of an area-wide Maritime Festival and to identify its economic benefits and costs. An approach could be made to the new Pan Ayrshire Tourism Leadership Group to consider such a study.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the availability of accommodation in the area, including the potential availability of a hotel facility at Ardrossan Harbour and the development of accommodation at the Waterside Inn on the North Shore, as well as a growing self-catering sector;
- the number of full-time employees working in the tourism sector and the value of that industry to the local area; and
- difficulties associated with developing the tourism sector in the current economic climate

The Committee agreed (a) to note the contents of the report; and (b) that any future development of a Maritime Festival is undertaken by the Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Team at a pan-Ayrshire level.

8. Tourism on the Isle of Arran

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the performance of tourism as a key sector in the Isle of Arran economy.

The Isle of Arran makes a substantial contribution to the area's tourism economy and is supported by the area strategy and local action plan. Visit Arran is the island's destination management organisation and works in partnership with the community and stakeholders to grow the island's tourism economy and improve tourism products and services.

The tourism sector has grown slowly and declined in the last few years. Working in partnership with Visit Arran, the Council supports the destination management organisation to address the downfall in tourist numbers and expenditure. Visit Arran has made applications for additional resources to the European LEADER programme, VisitScotland's Growth Fund and to EventScotland in order to address the downturn in tourism on the island. This will benefit the mainland of North Ayrshire also by attracting more visitors into and through the area.

In order to support Visit Arran's efforts, the Council will provide a funding contribution to Visit Arran's application to the European LEADER fund for £180,000. This will be an organisational, events development and marketing project, with Visit Arran aiming to grow the value of tourism on the island by 22% by 2015 to £36 million.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the importance of the Council's involvement in pan-Ayrshire work on tourism, whilst also retaining a local focus;
- the criteria for LEADER funding and arrangements for accessing it;
- financial support offered by the Council to support tourism.

The Arran Outdoor Education Centre Resource Co-ordinator reported verbally on work to market the centre for private use, to help off-set the cost to North Ayrshire pupils making use of the facility.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the contents of the report; and (b) support a joint working approach with Visit Arran in order to address the downturn in the area's tourism market.

9. Preservation of St Bride's Chapel, Lamlash, Isle of Arran

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services & Health) on the current position regarding the condition of St Bride's Chapel, Lamlash, Isle of Arran.

St. Bride's Chapel, also known as Kilbride Chapel, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument which lies within the grounds of Lamlash Cemetery and dates from the 13th-14th century. When the use of the building as a place of worship ceased in the late 18th century, the structure gradually fell into disrepair and is currently a ruin. Ownership of the chapel passed to the Council of the day along with the surrounding graveyard under the terms of the Church of Scotland (Property and Endowments) Act 1925.

The "Saving St. Bride's Chapel, Arran" (SSBCA) group has been working with Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust (SBPT) and the Council's Bereavement Services with a view to preserving the chapel ruin. The Chapel ruin has continued to deteriorate naturally and is currently fenced off along with the surrounding burial area to protect the area and ensure public safety. A recent survey has now identified the project costs as being close to £160,000. Specialist advice is currently being commissioned to access funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Leader, Entrust and Historic Scotland. Costs to compile the funding applications are expected to be in the region of £7,000.

Jim Stewart of Saving St. Bride's Chapel, Arran addressed the meeting on the background to the group and the historical significance of the chapel. Mr Stewart clarified that the overall cost of the conservation project as a whole was likely to amount to some £243,000.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, of the following:-

- the sum of £7,000 which, it is anticipated, will be required to meet the cost of compiling detailed funding applications;
- the approximate date of the last burial to take place in the older part of the cemetery; and
- the difference between the estimated project costs cited in the report and those referred to by Mr Stewart.

Members expressed their support in principle for the project.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the current position; and (b) endorse the work of the Saving St. Bride's Chapel, Arran group.

10. Community Development Grants Scheme and Local Youth Action Fund 2011/12: Applications for Financial Assistance

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on applications for financial assistance under the Council's Community Development Grants Scheme and Local Youth Action Fund.

The Assistant Manager (Community Services) advised of the receipt of a letter from Arran Youth Foundations requesting that the group be permitted to vary the purpose of awards of £2,000 and £1,906 made from the Community Development Grants Scheme and Local Youth Action Fund, respectively, to allow the monies in question to be used for salary costs associated with their Youth Work Project Manager.

The Committee agreed (a) to make an award of £1,450 to Corrie Primary School Parent Council from the Community Development Grants Scheme; and (b) that Arran Youth Foundations be permitted to use previously awarded sums of £2,000 and £1,906 from the Community Development Grants Scheme and Local Youth Action Fund, respectively, for salary costs associated with their Youth Work Project Manager.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next Ordinary meeting of the Area Committee will be held on Thursday 15 March 2012 at 2.00 p.m. in the Ardeer Neighbourhood Centre.

12. Future Agenda Items

The Committee noted that any items for the next ordinary meeting of the Area Committee should be submitted to M. Anderson or D. McCaw.

The Meeting ended at 12.40 p.m.