
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

14 September 2021

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Title: Economic Development and Regeneration Services
Update: Proactive approach to derelict sites

Purpose: To provide an update on the June 2021 Committee request for:
a) The production of a register of derelict sites across North Ayrshire; and
b) A report on proposals to tackle such sites on a proactive basis.

Recommendation: That the Committee notes the update and progress to date.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The June 2021 meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee requested the production of a register of derelict sites across North Ayrshire and a report on proposals to tackle such sites on a proactive basis. This report provides an update on progress to date.

2. Background

- 2.1 Vacant land and buildings are currently recorded nationally through the Vacant and Derelict Land Register and Buildings at Risk Register. The development of the Regeneration Delivery Plan and Local Development Plan also identified several sites which are not in positive use and are viewed as a blight on our communities. It is recognised that there is overlap between these records. Combined the records identify over 250 sites in need of redevelopment, most of which are in private ownership.

Vacant and Derelict Land

- 2.2 Vacant land is defined by the Scottish Government as “Vacant land within a settlement that has been previously developed, without physical constraint, and which the planning authority has indicated is available for redevelopment”. Derelict land is defined as land “damaged by development, so that it is incapable of development for beneficial use without some remedial works”. Both are sometimes referred to as ‘brownfield’ sites.
- 2.3 The Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey (SVDLS) provides a national data source for vacant and derelict land. In 2019, there were 10,962 hectares of vacant and derelict land in Scotland. North Ayrshire contains the fourth highest level of vacant and derelict land in Scotland with 1,187 ha of land, 12% of the Scottish total, across 210

sites. This includes large sites such as at Ardeer (407ha), Riverside at Irvine Enterprise Area (111ha), Hunterston (67ha) and Lochshore (40ha).

Buildings at Risk Register

- 2.4 The Buildings at Risk Register has been in operation since 1990. It was developed in response to a concern at the growing number of listed buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas that were vacant and had fallen into a state of disrepair.
- 2.5 The Register is maintained by Historic Environment Scotland. It provides information on properties of architectural or historic merit considered to be at risk. As of June 2021, there are 46 North Ayrshire properties listed on the Buildings at Risk Register.

Local Development Plan

- 2.6 The Local Development Plan for North Ayrshire sets out how the Council aim to guide development and investment in the area over the next 20 years. Development proposals are assessed against the principles set out in the spatial strategy. All development proposals must also comply with Policy 2: Placemaking and other relevant policies as applicable. The Plan identifies eight Strategic Development areas including: Hunterston; Ardrossan Harbour and North Shore; and i3, Irvine.

Regeneration Delivery Plan

- 2.7 The Regeneration Delivery Plan (RDP) sets out the Council's priorities for delivering on the ambitions of the Council Plan and Community Wealth Building Strategy. It aims to redevelop strategic regeneration sites and places, working in partnership with communities. It focuses on the delivery of physical regeneration between 2021 and 2026 with a rolling action plan reported to Cabinet on an annual basis.
- 2.8 Over 40 sites were identified through the development of the RDP. In several cases, these require regular input from the Council and other Community Planning Partners to tackle issues such as vandalism and anti-social use. The RDP recognises that landowners are not always able to address the site and seeks to work with landowners and communities to tackle these. It provides a proactive approach to identifying potential uses and delivery mechanisms to tackle these sites. The actions provide clarity on priorities for intervention and/or investment on the sites and include:
- Review priority vacant and derelict sites and buildings with Locality Partnerships to assess the potential for development, redevelopment or promotion through planning;
 - Review the identified sites including the case for the purchase of third-party land to address a recognised problem or facilitate positive development – including sites identified through the RDP; and
 - Commence a programme of place-based frameworks to direct future investment through the Investment Fund and external funding.
- 2.9 The RDP has informed applications to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund to advance the delivery of the regeneration of the Lochshore and North Shore sites. It has also informed applications to the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund for a pilot project to develop Place Frameworks for Largs and Saltcoats.

- 2.10 The RDP has also informed the proposals for the expenditure of the Council's 2021/22 allocations under the Scottish Government's Place Based Investment Programme and Vacant and Derelict Land Fund. The allocations aim to contribute to the RDP's proactive approach by providing support to landowners and community organisations to deliver on local priorities and bring buildings and land back into positive use.
- 2.11 The Scottish Government has established a £325m Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP) for the next five years. Underpinned by the Place Principle, this aims to support community-led regeneration, town centres and the 20-minute neighbourhood ambitions. The Council has received a £1.26m allocation under the programme to support place based investment. This aims to build on the investment made through the Town Centre Fund in 2019/20 in building repair and shopfront improvement schemes and bringing sites and buildings back into positive use.
- 2.12 The Vacant and Derelict Land Fund (VDLF) forms part of this Programme and aims to tackle long term vacant and derelict land. It provides funding to authorities where the issue and its impact on communities is greatest. Funding is limited to sites that have been vacant for at least 15 years and are between 0.1ha and 99ha in size, with a preference of Council ownership or a landowner agreement in place.
- 2.13 North Ayrshire has benefitted from access to the fund since 2016/17 and received a total of £9.672M between 2016/17 and 2021/22. Allocations have been informed by the Council's Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy (2014) and by Cabinet agreement in May 2017 to prioritise investment in four sites: Irvine Enterprise Area, Ardrossan North Shore, Lochshore and Irvine Harbourside. Funding to date has helped to inform our knowledge of the condition of the sites, develop proposals and lever in other sources of funding to deliver physical improvements.
- 2.14 The allocations under the PBIP and VDLF are summarised as follows. Officers are developing arrangements for delivery:

Source	Allocation	Activity
PBIP	£60,000	Development of a Place Framework for Kilwinning to identify physical improvements and CWB opportunities to support recovery and development within the town centre.
	£40,000	Delivery of capital actions identified through the CRF Place Frameworks pilot project for Largs and Saltcoats.
	£75,000	Communities' Project Fund to support community led place-based project development and implementation across North Ayrshire.
	£60,000	Development of proposals and detailed designs for PBIP implementation in future years.
	£830,000	A pilot town centre living project at 36 Bank Street, Irvine and Howgate, Kilwinning.
VDLF	£50,000	Minor Improvements Fund to support minor greening or site improvements to sites within a 20-minute town boundary.
	£120,000	Development work including minor investigation works and design studies to identify the potential of privately-owned sites and inform long-term strategies.
	£50,000	Refresh of the Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy to align with the priorities of the Community Wealth Building strategy, RDP and Economic Recovery and Renewal Approach.

	£50,000	Tree planting works on vacant and derelict site(s) to regenerate the site(s) and support the Tree Planting Strategy.
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- 2.15 These activities will inform the actions and priorities for the RDP in the coming years. This will include the expenditure of future any allocations of the PBIP and VDLF and funding applications to external partners to support delivery.

Powers and Legislation

- 2.16 The Council has a range of existing powers and legislation which it can utilise in relation to derelict sites. This includes interventions under Planning, Building Standards and Housing legislation. Enforcement action will only be taken as a last resort, where advice and assistance has been ineffective, where the problem has not been addressed in a reasonable period of time; and after taking account of all circumstances. The need for such intervention will continue to be monitored by the relevant services.
- 2.17 Officers continue to promote to Scottish Government and others the need for additional policy, legislation, guidance, and investment to strengthen the Council's ability to do more locally to address dereliction and problem sites. This is most recently reflected in our response to the Scottish Government Town Centre Action Plan review and engagement with the Scottish Land Commission.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 That the Committee notes the update and the progress to date.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 The cost of the outlined approach will be met from the Council's current allocations under the PBIP and VDLF.

Human Resources

- 4.2 A dedicated temporary resource is currently being recruited for the PBIP. The delivery of the VDLF funded activities will be undertaken by the Regeneration Team.

Legal

- 4.3 The legal implications of all projects delivered through this approach will be considered through their development. Legal agreements will be developed on a project by project basis as required with support from Legal Services. Where negotiation is required in relation to land and building acquisitions this will be carried out with support from the Council's Legal Services and PMI. Mechanisms such as Compulsory Purchase Orders will be considered on a case by case basis, where considered appropriate.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 The outlined approach will assist in meeting our socio-economic duty as set out in the Fairer Scotland Duty. It seeks to reverse economic, social and physical decline and reduce socio-economic disadvantage. It will tackle long-term vacant and derelict land and buildings thereby reducing their levels and impact on communities. It aims to build community wealth and tackle local deprivation through the regeneration of our communities by maximising the potential of our land and assets and those of anchor institutions.

Environmental and Sustainability

- 4.5 The outlined approach aligns with the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The outlined approach will contribute to achieving the Council Plan priority outcomes and will contribute to the ambitions for: an inclusive, growing and enterprising economy; North Ayrshire to be well-connected with effective infrastructure; and for a sustainable, vibrant, welcoming and attractive environment.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 The outlined approach will support equitable land development and the development of underutilised assets for community use.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Regeneration Delivery Plan was informed by workshops with Council Officers; workshops with Elected Members; reports to and feedback from North Ayrshire Ventures Trust and the Community Wealth Building Expert Panel; and public engagement via Consul. It was also informed by the Locality Partnerships' priorities and previous public consultation exercises including Charettes. The review of the Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy will be informed by extensive consultation.

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON
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For further information please contact **Louise Kirk, Senior Manager, Regeneration**, on **07919 298217**.

Background Papers

North Ayrshire Regeneration Delivery Plan (2021)

North Ayrshire Local Plan (2020)

North Ayrshire Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy (2014)