



North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

# LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 7 February – 6 March  
2022

The attached report gives a summary and brief details to Council, of meetings and events attended by the Leader of North Ayrshire Council, Councillor Joe Cullinane.

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## ***GREAT HARBOUR PROJECT VISIT, 8 February***

On 8 February, I was delighted to have a look at and discuss proposals for the Great Harbour Project which will see much-needed investment in the Harbourside area. Supported by £14 million of funding through the Ayrshire Growth Deal, proposals for Irvine's Maritime Mile include:

- Coastal Hub with a major new play facility at the Beach Park and improved outdoor facilities with longer-term plans for the landmark Pilot House and a café/restaurant facility
- Marina/Arts/Events/Food Hub which will feature a new waterfront plaza to help support events and give better access to marina and additional food offerings to increase the food options for the area
- The redevelopment of the Harbourmaster's House
- Maritime Hub which aims to create expanded facilities for the National Maritime Museum

North Ayrshire residents and stakeholders can have their say on proposals as part of the Council's consultation, launched on 15 February. This is the first in the series of engagements with the local community.

## ***ELM TREE PLANTING PROJECT, 10 February***

I was invited along to Elm Park in Ardrossan on 10 February to see plans by the Three Town's Growers and FRIENDS Conservation group for improving biodiversity and combatting climate change with their tree planting project.

Partly funded by North Ayrshire Council, who are investing £500,00 in tree planting initiatives, and East Ayrshire Woodland Trust, the plans will see the planting of 500 native broadleaved trees. The trees will help to mitigate some of the effects of climate change and create a natural woodland to increase biodiversity of local wildlife.

I would like to thank Dr Frank Clark and the Three Town Growers and FRIENDS for facilitating the visit and wish them well with their plans. I look forward to revisiting the park in the future to see how plans have progressed.

## ***HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING, 14 February***

On 14 February I attended a second meeting of the recently established Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership. Discussion focused primarily on the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) and what are anticipated to be the next steps in the process. The NSET is the Scottish Government's refreshed 10-year strategy which will aim to transform the Scottish economy by prioritising investment in the industries of the future to deliver new, green jobs.

There was also discussion on the national planning framework for Scotland up until 2045.

## ***SPRINGVALE OPENING CEREMONY, 21 February***

On 21 February I was pleased to attend the opening ceremony of the latest housing development in Saltcoats, located at Springvale Gardens. The development is part of an ambitious wider Council commitment to build 1,625 new homes across North Ayrshire. The Springvale site includes six general needs houses, six homes suitable for wheelchair uses and two amenity bungalows.

I am hugely proud of the investment this Council has made into housing, the largest in decades and one which will benefit many of our North Ayrshire residents.

## ***SOLAR FARMS AND i3 SITE VISITS, 21 February***

Also, on 21 February, I had the pleasure of visiting the sites for our Council-owned solar farms which will be based at Nethermain and at the former Shewalton landfill site. I also had the opportunity to visit the i3 industrial site in Irvine to hear more about plans to create renewable energy with the construction of three wind turbines.

Now approved by my Cabinet I am hugely excited about these groundbreaking projects which will see the solar farms being able to generate approximately 62% of the Council's future energy demand. Upon completion the i3 project will generate a staggering 214% of the Council's future energy demand.

The i3 renewable energy plan will make North Ayrshire Council a net-exporter of renewable energy. It is truly groundbreaking and is a demonstration of what can be achieved with the political ambition to deliver change.

Although there is further work to be done on the finances of the i3 project, we know that the financial return on our first two council-owned solar farms is around £25million. And the i3 project is 3.4 times the size in terms of energy generation. Even without the final financial details, it's safe to say the financial return on the i3 plan will be significant.

Of course, it is worth highlighting that the benefit of council ownership means that the income comes to the Council. That means tens of millions of pounds in income that will be reinvested in North Ayrshire, with 15% of the income directly available to community groups through our Community Benefit policy.

My thanks to North Ayrshire Council's Director of PLACE, Russell McCutcheon and to North Ayrshire Council's Head of Service for Sustainability, Transport and Corporate Property, David Hammond for their work on these projects and for facilitating the visit.

### ***VISIT TO AYRSHIRE COLLEGE, KILWINNING CAMPUS, 22 February***

On 22 February I was delighted to visit Ayrshire College campus in Kilwinning to meet some of the team there and hear plans for the new North Ayrshire Future Skills Hub which will deliver a flexible and dynamic space for future training in a variety of areas including engineering and renewable energies.

This is true partnership working with North Ayrshire having been involved in the asset transfer of land for the new building.

My thanks to Michael Breen and his team at Ayrshire College, including Cameron Bell, Head of Construction and Trades at the College for discussing the plans with me.

### ***ARDROSSAN TASK FORCE MEETING, 23 February***

I attended a meeting of the Ardrossan Task Force on 23 February which was chaired by the new Scottish Government Minister for Transport, Jenny Gilruth MSP. Attendees received an update on the vessel and on legal and commercial arrangements. There was also an update on the Troon Infrastructure Project.

### ***COSLA CONFERENCE AND CONVENTION, 24 & 25 February***

I attended the COSLA Conference on 24 February and COSLA Convention meeting on 25 February.

### ***TRADE UNION AND MEDIA BUDGET BRIEFINGS, 25 February***

On 25 February I attended two separate budget briefings with the Trade Unions and with local media. These were to outline some of the budget proposals in advance of the Council's budget meeting scheduled for 2 March.

### ***COSLA SPECIAL LEADERS MEETING, 25 February***

On 25 February I attended a COSLA Special Leaders meeting to discuss the following items:

- Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill Consultation
- Levelling Up White Paper and UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Local Government Pre-Election Period and COSLA Planning
- Local Government Finance
- Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies

### ***ST MICHAEL'S WYND & FRIAR'S LAWN SITE VISITS, 28 February***

Also on 28 February, I visited a further two housing developments this time in Kilwinning. The first was at St Michael's Wynd which will see the construction of 79 new properties scheduled to be finished by the autumn of this year. The other site was Friar's Lawn which will have a further 22 new properties.

As previously stated, North Ayrshire Council is delivering one of the most ambitious housing programmes in Scotland for decades.

### ***AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING, 28 February***

Later on 28 February, I attended a meeting of the Ayrshire Economic Joint Committee. Attendees received updates on the following:

- Ayrshire Growth Deal
- Ayrshire Growth Deal Draft Annual Report
- Ayrshire Growth Deal Draft Benefits Realisation Plan
- Ayrshire Growth Deal Digital Update

### ***VISIT TO LARGS PROMENADE (INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT), 1 March***

On 1 March, I visited Largs Promenade to see some of investment that has been made in physical infrastructure and open spaces. This follows approval of £4.034 million investment made by my Cabinet in June of last year. This investment recognises the importance of the physical environment and outdoors as part of the recovery from the pandemic and to ensure the Council has sustainable infrastructure for communities to enjoy and to help promote tourism. This amount will include investment in coastal playparks (£0.500m), development of a programme of parks improvement works including drainage and furniture upgrades (£0.150m) and street furniture improvement works targeted at tourist and coastal areas including new litter bins, benches and signage (up to £0.250m).

### ***MEETING WITH LORD OFFORD (STEP PROJECT), 2 March***

On 2 March, together with North Ayrshire Council Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, North Ayrshire Council Head of Service for Economic Development and Regeneration, Caitriona McAuley and Professor Declan Diver from Glasgow University, I attended a meeting with Lord Offord, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State to the Scotland Office to discuss the STEP Fusion Project.

### ***MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING, 3 March***

On 3 March I was delighted to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between North Ayrshire Council and the University of Stirling which is a key milestone in North Ayrshire's programme to capitalise on the blue economy opportunity. This is an exciting opportunity to work in partnership with a sector-leading academic expert providing a platform to develop our blue economy and Ayrshire Growth Deal plans. Throughout the partnership, we will identify our project development methodology for delivering an International Marine Science and Environment Centre at Ardrossan and a Firth of Clyde Living Laboratory, including identifying a network of public and private sector partners and resources that can support and lead delivery.

### ***VISIT TO BOOTH WELSH, 3 March***

On 3 March, together with North Ayrshire Council's Director of Growth and Investment, Karen Yeomans and North Ayrshire Council's Regeneration Manager, Marnie Ritchie, I visited Booth Welsh in Irvine to find out how plans have been progressing for the Digital Processing Manufacturing Centre (DPMC). Since the partners signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in August 2021 and Cabinet agreement of 30 November 2021, partners have been progressing the development of Phase 1, providing online training courses and preparing a related Collaboration Agreement that will be signed in March 2022.

Community Wealth Building opportunities for the project can be summarised as:

- Attracting an anchor institution to North Ayrshire;
- Procurement opportunities for local companies;
- Development of community benefits into contract clauses e.g. apprenticeships;
- Involvement of local schools and colleges in accessing the DPMC facility and creating a skills programme;
- Improving digital skills and capabilities within the local area; and
- Transformation of the manufacturing base and skills base through targeted investment by providing digital services and training, accessible to local people and businesses.

### ***COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING, 3 March***

Also on 3 March, I chaired a meeting of the Community Planning Partnership Board. The Board received reports and updates on the following items:

- Fall Fighters Receive report delivered by Ian McMeekin, Scottish Fire and Rescue Board
- Community Learning and Development Plan
- Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2022-2030
- Locality Partnership Overview Report

### ***HEADS OF TERMS SIGNING, 3 March***

Also on 3 March, I was delighted to sign the Heads of Terms between North Ayrshire Council and Clyde Marina Ltd which is an exciting project which will look to develop an extension to the existing and successful Ardrossan Marina. The project is an important part of the wider £170M Ardrossan regeneration programme which will look to bring increased tourism, jobs and spend to central Ardrossan in the next 5-10 years.

Plans include the redevelopment of Ardrossan Harbour, the development of the new education campus, housing and commercial uses at North Shore, and the marina extension. This is a nationally significant regeneration programme which will help to establish Ardrossan as a centre for lifelong learning and academic achievement, a tourism destination of choice, a multi-modal transport hub, the gateway to Arran and the Clyde islands and through the marine sciences centre an exemplar in marine innovation and the blue economy.

## LEADER'S REPORT



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joe Cullinane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Joe Cullinane  
**Leader North Ayrshire Council**