



NORTH AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL

outdoor
access
**north
ayrshire**

north ayrshire outdoor access strategy



www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess

foreword

Welcome to the second Outdoor Access Strategy for North Ayrshire. There have been a number of substantial developments since the adoption of the original Strategy in 2004. At a national level these include the enactment of the Land Reform legislation and the production of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and at a local level, the formation of the North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum and the adoption of the North Ayrshire Core Paths Plan.

The Strategy has informed directed outdoor access development and acted as a valuable tool for attracting resources and funding for outdoor access for the Council, Forum and partners. Its implementation has also resulted in a wide range of improvements on the ground including the upgrade of substantial sections of the National Cycle Network and improvements to signage and other path infrastructure.

Whilst we celebrate the strengths and successes of the first Strategy, we also realise that there is a need for further activity and improvement. Our strategy aims to build on our successes by focusing on the key issues for North Ayrshire and identifying the ways in which outdoor access can assist in addressing these. We envisage that North Ayrshire will be a healthier, safer and more attractive place to live, work and visit through the opportunities that the Strategy will provide for more physical activity and improved quality of life.

The Council and Outdoor Access Forum would like to take this opportunity to thank all who contributed throughout the implementation of the previous Strategy and the development of this Strategy. Partnership working has and continues to be central to the success of our Strategy. We hope that the partnerships we have formed continue from strength to strength and that new alliances are formed in the coming years.

Luke Borwick

Chair of the North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum

Contents

Page Number

Introduction	1
The Strategy	2
What is outdoor access?	2
Why do we need an Outdoor Access Strategy?	2
What did the original Strategy achieve?	2
How will the Strategy benefit the communities of and visitors to North Ayrshire?	3
Core Paths Plan	5
Strategic Environmental Assessment	5
What are the key issues and themes for North Ayrshire?	5
Tackling Worklessness	7
Tackling Health Inequalities	9
Tackling Community Safety	12
Working Together	13
A Vision for Outdoor Access	13
Action Plan	14
Appendices	
Appendix One – Audit Overview	23
Appendix Two – Supply Audit	25
Appendix Three – Demand Audit	32
Appendix Four – Policy Audit	44
Appendix Five – Resource Audit	57



introduction

The first North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy was adopted in September 2004. It has informed and directed outdoor access development in North Ayrshire in the intervening period and acted as a valuable tool for attracting resources and funding for outdoor access for North Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum and partners. The first Strategy has been reviewed to examine the progress made to date and identify and agree priorities for the future. As part of this review this draft Strategy has been prepared by the Council and Outdoor Access Forum for public consultation. It takes account of the wealth of changes that have occurred in the intervening period including changes to policies and plans, the enactment of the Land Reform legislation and the adoption of the North Ayrshire Core Paths Plan. It aims to provide strategic direction for outdoor access development and act as a valuable tool for attracting resources and funding in the coming years.



the strategy

What is outdoor access?

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides the residents of and visitors to Scotland with some of the best access rights in the world. We all have the right to be on most land and inland water for recreation, education, some commercial activities and going from place to place, provided we act responsibly. This covers a wide range of activities including, but not limited to, walking, cycling, horse riding and canoeing. It also places a reciprocal obligation on landowners to manage their land responsibly for outdoor access.

As the legislation provides responsible access rights for education and going from place to place, these activities are not just limited to recreation, but for everyday journeys such as walking or cycling to work, school, local facilities or neighbouring communities or for educational purposes such as field studies. Outdoor access forms an essential part of our daily lives and can offer benefits in terms of health and well-being by providing opportunities for physical activity, economic development and tourism by encouraging more people to visit our towns and countryside.

Why do we need an Outdoor Access Strategy?

The Strategy provides a framework for reviewing the existing situation in terms of provision, use, policy and resources and a means for agreeing and co-ordinating priorities for future access. It is very much a partnership document that brings together a wide range of organisations with an involvement in access planning and implementation.

It will provide the strategic vision for outdoor access and demonstrate how real benefits can be delivered for local people through the agreed priorities and targets. Strategies demonstrate that well planned, managed and promoted access can contribute to a wide range of agendas such as social inclusion, health improvement and sustainable transport as well as improving people's overall quality of life. They also act as a valuable funding tool for Local Authorities and partner organisations.

What did the original Strategy achieve?

The original Strategy achieved a number of successes including:

- The formation of a successful and productive Outdoor Access Forum
- The upgrade of substantial sections of the National Cycle Network to an all abilities standard
- Improving the signage and infrastructure on our path networks
- The development of the Community Outdoor Access Grant Scheme



the strategy



- The development of the Go On Get Out There Scheme in partnership with the Council's Infrastructure and Design and Educational Services
- The development of the Paws for Thought and From the Horse's Mouth initiatives to promote responsible dog walking and horse riding, thereby tackling key issues for local communities and users
- Achieving two national awards for Ayrshire Outdoor Access Toolkit in partnership with East Ayrshire Council and Outdoor Access Forum
- The development and adoption of the North Ayrshire Core Paths Plan
- The development of the Outdoor Access North Ayrshire Project in partnership with, and funded by, a wide range of organisations
- Working in partnership with other organisations on initiatives such as the Green Gym with NHS Ayrshire and Arran, the development of the Brodick Seafront Path with Brodick Improvements Committee and the Council's Infrastructure and Design Services
- Securing the funding for and developing Feasibility Studies to look at the potential to take some of our key routes off road for example the National Cycle Network Route 7 between Kilwinning and Kilbirnie
- The provision of conferences, training and networking events for stakeholders in partnership with neighbouring Authorities
- Having our work identified as good practice in a number of national publications

Whilst we celebrate the successes that have been made, we also realise that there is a need for further activity and improvement. Our strategy aims to build on our successes.

How will the Strategy benefit the communities of and visitors to North Ayrshire?

Our Strategy will focus on the key issues for North Ayrshire and identify the ways in which outdoor access can assist in addressing these. It is envisaged that North Ayrshire will be a healthier, safer and more attractive place to live, work and visit through the opportunities that the Strategy will provide for more physical activity and improved quality of life. The Strategy will make a significant difference to the way in which people enjoy the outdoors and to how they are managed for recreation and access.

North Ayrshire is already a popular destination for outdoor access with areas such as Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Eglinton Country Park, the Isle of Arran and the Isle of Cumbrae being key destinations for people visiting the area to enjoy the benefits of the outdoors. The Strategy will ensure that North Ayrshire is an attractive, quality destination for outdoor access which will offer benefits not only for visitors, but for the communities living and working in the area. This will in turn assist in achieving the objectives of a wide range of local, regional and national strategies and policies in relation to the natural environment, land use, regeneration and transport as outlined in Figure 1.



Core Paths Plan

The first North Ayrshire Core Paths Plan was formally adopted in January 2009. This was the culmination of three and a half years of partnership working between the Council and Outdoor Access Forum. The routes identified as Core paths have been selected through extensive public consultation and aim to meet the needs of communities and visitors for everyday journeys and recreation. The Core Paths network acts as a core to the broader spectrum of paths, access provision and activity in North Ayrshire. The Core Paths Plan has informed the review of the Outdoor Access Strategy and the development of the Action Plan. The Action Plan identifies the objectives and actions necessary to implement the Core Paths Plan and its subsequent review in 2014.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which is a requirement of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, provides a systematic process for identifying, predicting, reporting and mitigating the environmental impacts of proposed plans and programmes. The first stage of the SEA process is screening, which determines the potential for significant effects on the environment. Screening was undertaken and responses were received from the three Consultation Authorities namely, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland. The Screening Report, Consultation Authorities' Responses and the Council's Determination are available from:

www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess

As a result of this, the Council has determined that the Outdoor Access Strategy is not likely to have significant environmental effects within the context of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. SEA is therefore not required. A Public Notice was issued to confirm the Council's determination that SEA was not required.

What are the key issues and themes for North Ayrshire?

From the analysis of the Audit Section, the key issues for North Ayrshire are identified as being:

Working and Training
Learning and Taking Part
Healthy and Active
Clean and Green
Caring and Supporting
Safe and Secure
For You and Everyone
Working Together



The Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) is an agreement between the Community Planning Partnership and the Scottish Government on the Outcomes to be achieved for North Ayrshire and informs the Council's priorities and activities. It includes an Action Plan to demonstrate how these Outcomes will be achieved on the ground, and a set of Performance Indicators to measure progress over time. The SOA identifies the three following strategic priorities for North Ayrshire which will form the main themes for the Strategy under which each of the key issues will be addressed:

- Tackling Worklessness**
- Tackling Health Inequalities**
- Tackling Community Safety**

These are linked by the **Working Together** theme.

The SOA Action Plan outlines the ways in which these three strategic priorities will be delivered. Outdoor Access has a significant role to play in achieving a number of the outcomes including:

Outcome Number	Outcome
1	We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe
1a	Transport links and services to and from North Ayrshire have improved
1b	North Ayrshire is a more attractive tourist destination
6	We live longer, healthier lives
6e	People are more active more often
10	We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need
10c	The condition of roads, footways, path networks and lighting has improved
11	We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
11a	Levels of voluntary action and community involvement have increased
11b	Partnership working between the public, community and voluntary sector has improved
12	We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations
12a	Our environment is protected and enhanced

Tackling Worklessness

Worklessness is a substantial issue for North Ayrshire. North Ayrshire is ranked fifth highest in Scotland in terms of community inequalities and is at a disadvantage in terms of income and employment opportunities, compared with the rest of Scotland. It has experienced high levels of unemployment for many years which are substantially higher than the national average. Worsening levels of deprivation come despite significant efforts by the Council and its Community Planning Partners to tackle unemployment and poverty.

Working and Training

Unemployment is recognised as the most significant and persistent challenge for North Ayrshire and has been further exacerbated by the economic downturn. Whilst outdoor access cannot directly create sufficient jobs to resolve the area's unemployment levels, it can offer indirect benefits in terms of improving the accessibility of the area. The transport infrastructure is vital to the economy of the area, especially in our more rural locations. Walking and cycling are integral components of transport policy and systems, and have an invaluable role to play in providing a sustainable and integrated approach to transport opportunities.

Outdoor access development and improvements provide valuable opportunities to make sure North Ayrshire is an attractive and accessible place for new and existing businesses to grow, for people to live, and to attract tourists and boost tourism development. By ensuring that our business environments are well connected to path networks and local housing developments, local people will be able to access employment opportunities as levels of car ownership in North Ayrshire are lower than the national average.

Tourism continues to be a very important part of North Ayrshire's economy with our islands, coastline and hills providing popular destinations for day trips, longer stays and outdoor activities. This is particularly the case on the Isle of Arran where tourism is the key economic driver and relies heavily on good quality outdoor access provision both in terms of the number and standard of paths and recreational opportunities. Local path networks that meet local needs and aspirations can also be attractive to visitors and integrating path networks with tourist attractions will provide a higher quality and more accessible visitor experience. With more people holidaying at home in the UK, having a good quality integrated transport and path network will ensure that North Ayrshire is equipped to attract a larger share of tourists and visitors.

There is a general lack of provision for camping and caravanning in North Ayrshire particularly on the Islands. The increase in interest in camping and related activities could be capitalised on by making provision for these types of users. This could generate valuable income for the area and encourage increased visits. It may also offer other potential benefits to sites such as the Country and Regional Parks as it is recognised that having responsible users on a site over night results in the site being self policed by these users and discourages anti-social use and behaviour.

Education is at the heart of promoting and encouraging responsible outdoor access. This includes formal education through Schools, informal education through community based activities and further education through further education establishments or training schemes. Promoting the responsible outdoor access through all of these will ensure that future generations are aware of both their responsibilities and rights when accessing the outdoors. Actively involving communities in developing outdoor access opportunities will also ensure they feel a sense of pride and ownership of their local networks thereby reducing the potential for vandalism and anti-social use.

Learning and Taking Part

It is important that everyone in North Ayrshire has the opportunity to be involved in the planning, development and management of access to ensure that it meets our communities' needs and aspirations. Being actively involved in outdoor access offers opportunities for communities to learn new skills, build capacity and confidence and strengthen links between communities. The outdoor access agenda provides a range of opportunities for communities and visitors to North Ayrshire to learn and take part.

Path networks and the outdoors provide a rich and diverse environment for learning not only for schools and other educational establishments, but for individuals and communities. The learning opportunities can be informal such as through interpretation and signage or formal through taught lessons in the outdoors. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides a valuable educational resource in terms of promoting responsible and active citizenship.

North Ayrshire has an active community and voluntary sector with a large number of groups being actively involved in the outdoor access agenda. It provides opportunities for people to take part on a variety of levels from taking part in the development of path networks and learning new skills such as path construction techniques, to taking part in walks, cycles or other activities and learning about the local environment and history and to being actively involved in the promotion of their local area and the opportunities it offers through the production of promotional materials.

Our outcomes for **Tackling Worklessness** are that:

- Outdoor access opportunities are integrated into the wider environmental, economic regeneration, land management and development programmes.
- North Ayrshire has a co-ordinated, high quality outdoor access information, education and interpretation programme.



Tackling Health Inequalities

Health improvement and tackling health inequalities are significant priorities for North Ayrshire. Overall the area continues to experience persistently poor health, health inequalities between and within local communities and disadvantage compared to Scotland as a whole. An active lifestyle is a key component in improving and maintaining health, however, not enough people in North Ayrshire are sufficiently active to gain any health benefit. Outdoor access has a key role to play in improving the health and well-being of our communities.

Healthy and Active

Many of our residents experience chronic poor health and are disadvantaged compared to other areas in Scotland. There are also significant differences in health between our most disadvantaged and least advantaged communities. Consequently the health of our communities is persistently poorer than that experienced in Scotland as a whole.

Health and wellbeing are affected by a wide range of influences such as our environment, social and economic factors, personal and family circumstances and lifestyle. Outdoor access improvement and development offers an opportunity to improve our local environments and provide inclusive, low cost, opportunities for our communities to adopt a more active and healthy lifestyle. Walking and cycling offer two low cost options to become more active with walking in particular being recognised as the most effective form of exercise for sedentary people to become more active.

Physical activity and access to good quality open space also has an important role to play in shaping individual's mental health. It is well recognised that good quality physical environments such as parks and woodlands can have a positive impact and that people who live an active lifestyle have a reduced risk of suffering symptoms such as clinical depression.

Path networks and open spaces provide easy opportunities for physical activity close to people's homes, without cost or the need for specialist equipment or training. Access to open space is also recognised as having beneficial effects on mental health and wellbeing as well as physical health. However many individuals are unable, unwilling or uncertain about how to become more active and further promotion of the benefits and opportunities available is essential to tackling this problem. The promotion of outdoor access opportunities through the production of promotional materials for example web based information or leaflets, is essential to raise awareness of the existence of path networks and the opportunities they provide for physical activity.

Clean and Green

North Ayrshire has a varied and attractive landscape with rolling open hills, extensive coastline, woodlands, river valleys and glens. Our environment is recognised as our biggest asset and is highly valued by our local communities. Local communities have identified our coast and beaches, open space and green space and parks as the three most valued aspects of our natural environment through the People's Panel Survey undertaken by the Community Planning Partnership.

There are also significant correlations between attractive healthy environments and good health and wellbeing for communities. Outdoor access development provides a valuable opportunity to work with landowners and managers to improve our local environment and promote responsible access to our communities and visitors. By creating and improving local path networks and promoting outdoor access for everyday journeys to work, shops and local facilities, we can help our communities to reduce their dependence on cars for short journeys and their carbon footprint. This will in turn benefit their health and wellbeing as well.

The management and maintenance of our local path networks is paramount to the success of outdoor access. Attractive and well maintained paths will be more welcoming to local users for health, recreation and social benefits and encourage more visitors to the area. In the current financial climate, the constraints placed on budgets and the resources available for maintenance are high, therefore, it is essential that innovative approaches to path maintenance are identified. The maintenance and upgrade of existing path networks to bring them up to an all abilities access standard will be a key focus of our activities in the coming years.

In our more fragile environments, careful management of outdoor access can also ensure that public use does not have negative impacts. In our working countryside environment such as farmland and estates, careful management and promotion of responsible access can also ensure that public use does not negatively impact on the working lives and interests of those who depend on it. It is essential that access is developed and managed in a sympathetic manner to ensure that the interests of landowners and land managers are not adversely impacted on. The development of appropriate and responsible outdoor access opportunities can afford benefits to all parties in terms of managing problems on the ground or creating opportunities for diversification or the expansion of rural businesses.

Initiatives such as the Scottish Rural Development Programme and the Central Scotland Green Network provide valuable opportunities for outdoor access development combined with environmental enhancements and initiatives. These can provide funding for the creation of new or improved path networks alongside improving habitats and increasing biodiversity.

Whilst a number of successful initiatives were developed from the original strategy to address some of the issues that have, and in some case continue to, blight our local environment such as dog fouling there is scope to expand on these. By promoting responsibility from an early age we can ensure that our environment is cared for and treated with respect to the benefit of local communities and visitors.

Caring and Supporting

Whilst North Ayrshire's population is likely to decrease slightly, the age structure is projected to change significantly resulting in an increasingly ageing population. Accessible path networks can provide a vital lifeline for our older residents enabling them to access community facilities, opportunities for health improvement and meet with others. Ensuring that our paths are constructed to all abilities standard wherever practicable and that they are safe and welcoming will make our path networks available and attractive to older people and other vulnerable users.

The accessibility of path networks for young families and early years is also important to ensure that physical activity becomes part of lifestyles from an early age. Barriers to outdoor access are not always physical barriers such as stiles or other structures. There may be psychological barriers to accessing the outdoors such as fear of crime or lack of knowledge and as such it is essential to tackle these alongside the physical barriers by ensuring that outdoor access is well designed to encourage use and the feeling of safety on path networks.

Our outcomes for Tackling Health Inequalities are that:

Housing and homelessness are key issues for North Ayrshire and ensuring that new housing and social housing is integrated into the path and transport networks will assist in meeting our communities' needs. North Ayrshire also has a large rural community with a number of satellite villages not fully integrated into the public transport network. These communities can often experience isolation, and path networks between communities can provide a vital link for everyday journeys, recreation and social interaction.

Initiatives such as the Green Gym have proved beneficial by providing opportunities for some of our most vulnerable groups to participate in outdoor activities and have provided demonstrable benefits in terms of mental and physical health and well-being. Initiatives such as this also provide valuable opportunities for shared benefit between communities and the Private and Public Sector in the current financial climate.

- Outdoor Access is improved and promoted for everyday journeys, health improvement and recreation. This will be carried out through equitable provision, local initiatives, improved infrastructure, increased awareness and community participation.
- The condition and maintenance of North Ayrshire's path networks, infrastructure and signage has improved.



Tackling Community Safety

Community safety issues are major concerns for many local communities and because of this the promotion of Community Safety is a major priority for both local and national Government. Community Safety applies to a broad range of issues that can affect quality of life in North Ayrshire. Feeling safe at home, in the street and within the wider community is essential to everyone's quality of life. Outdoor access, therefore, has a key role to play in ensuring that our communities and visitors feel safe in the outdoors and have a good quality of life.

Safe and Secure

Properly managed outdoor access increases the perception of personal safety. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment recognises that well designed public spaces that encourage increased use have a self-policing effect. By improving our local path networks and providing better information and education, we can encourage people to use local path networks, countryside and open space responsibly. Increased use has been recognised as a valuable method of tackling anti-social behaviour and vandalism. This in turn can improve people's perception of their local area and improve their confidence to walk or cycle in preference to journeys by car.

Paths are often thought of as a cause of anti-social behaviour in urban areas, however, the issues generally relate to the design or layout of the route creating opportunities for anti-social usage rather than the fact that there is a path. It is commonly acknowledged that these issues can be addressed by ensuring paths are designed following the principle of secured by design, are open and welcoming, encourage use and are overlooked by neighbouring properties. This is recognised in initiatives such as Secured by Design and in national documents such as Designing Streets and Designing Places. Within rural areas, criminal activity is of great concern alongside anti-social behaviour, therefore, it is imperative improved access is designed to prevent unauthorised vehicular use and at the same time to be attractive and welcoming to legitimate users.

The development and promotion of outdoor access opportunities in partnership with local communities also offers a valuable opportunity for people to work together to improve their local environment. This can also tackle anti-social behaviour and vandalism by bringing communities together and creating an increased sense of pride and ownership for the local environment.

For You and Everyone

Paths are available to everyone irrespective of their age, ability, gender, race, religious belief or sexual orientation. They provide easy opportunities for recreation and everyday journeys close to people's homes, free of charge and without the need for specialist equipment or training. They create opportunities for social interaction.

We want to make sure that our area is welcoming and open to everyone. Our path networks are being improved wherever possible to ensure that they are fully accessible to all users and the information produced to promote the networks is produced in accessible and alternative formats.

Our outcome for Tackling Community Safety is that:

- North Ayrshire is an attractive, safe, accessible and quality destination for outdoor access activities for both residents and visitors

Working Together

The key to successes made to date in relation to outdoor access has clearly been partnership working. Continuing to actively engage communities and local organisations in the planning, development and management is essential to future success. Working together can build capacity within communities and increase voluntary action on the ground, and our Outdoor Access Forum itself is a key example of partnership working in practice.

We can all play a small role in improving outdoor access, whether it is by reporting problems with local path networks, taking part in volunteering schemes such as Sustrans Volunteer Ranger Scheme or developing local projects, every little bit helps. This in turn can create an increased sense of pride and ownership for the local environment and a sense of community spirit for local communities.

Securing funding and partnership support for projects was a key challenge for the original Strategy and in the current economic climate this will be a more difficult task to achieve. As all organisations are focussing on core activities and tightening their belts we will have to work together and be more innovative in the way that we deliver our services and to identify areas we can work together to mutual benefit.

Our outcomes for **Working Together** are that:

- North Ayrshire's access users, agencies, communities and land managers are actively engaged in the management, planning and development of responsible and sustainable outdoor access
- North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum is a well known, independent, trusted and expert local institution.

A Vision for Outdoor Access

Our vision for the Strategy is:

There is an integrated network of access opportunities by tracks, land or water, thereby promoting economic prosperity, regenerating communities and improving the quality of life and diversity of the environment.



audit overview

From the audit we have identified that the main issues for North Ayrshire are as follows. These will form the main themes for our Strategy:

Working and Training
Healthy and Active
Caring and Supporting
Safe and Secure
Learning and Taking Part
Clean and Green
For You and Everyone
Working Together

The findings of the audit sections are also summarised in the form of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The purpose of this is to take account of the resources in relation to outdoor access (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors that may have an influence on this (opportunities and threats) based on the information examined within the Audit Section. It allows us to identify any strategic gaps or barriers that may affect our ability to achieve the Strategy's overall vision.

Strengths

- Accessibility to the Central Belt and Glasgow by public and private transport
- An established and effective Outdoor Access Forum
- Diverse landscapes and magnificent scenery including coastline, hills and islands
- Existing networks of routes around the main settlements and on the Isle of Arran
- Legislation, national and local policies in support of the outdoor access agenda.
- Long Distance Routes such as the National Cycle Network, Ayrshire Coastal Path and Arran Coastal Way
- Over 50% of the land coverage of Scotland's largest Regional Park, Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.
- Publicly and privately owned estates managed for recreation e.g. National Trust for Scotland and Forestry Commission land.
- Publicly owned open space including Country Parks, Beach Parks and urban parks
- Rich natural and cultural heritage
- Wide range of national and local partnership organisations to support outdoor access development.

Weaknesses

- Lack of availability of route information on the ground and route promotion in some areas
- Lack of clearly identified provision for maintenance and resources.
- Lack of facilities within the Regional Park area
- Lack of support
- Low levels of community participation in some areas
- Perennial issues of dog fouling, fly tipping and litter
- Pressure on limited resources for maintenance and route management
- Relatively high incidences of vandalism or other anti-social issues in some areas
- Smaller path network which does not fully meet the demand within the Garnock Valley

Opportunities

- Building capacity and participation within our communities
- Contribute to the development of the Central Scotland Green Network
- Developing facilities in the Regional Park.
- Encouraging more visitors to North Ayrshire for outdoor access
- Environment based employability programmes
- Improving access for specific user groups e.g. disabled users and horse riders.
- Improving the health and well-being of our communities
- Increasing the use of local wildlife sites e.g. Local Nature Reserves and Scottish Wildlife Trust sites
- Influencing developers/planning authority to safeguard and incorporate access in new development linked to the supplementary guidance
- Linking outdoor access opportunities to our social, industrial and environmental heritage
- Partnership working to bring together organisations, deliver mutual benefits and maximise the benefits of resources.
- Promoting the economic benefits of outdoor access e.g. through increased tourism, new business and investment ventures.
- Rural diversification and development programmes
- Upgrading and linking existing routes wherever possible to all abilities standards
- Promoting the links between good quality outdoor access and greenspace provision and positive health and wellbeing.

Threats

- Lack of community involvement.
- Lack of continuity in approach to maintenance of opportunities
- Loss of access opportunity due to development
- Loss of commitment from Council and/or partner organisations.
- Perceptions of public in relation to personal safety or condition of routes
- Reduction and reprioritisation of resources within both public and private sector partner organisations
- Reduction in support from partner organisations e.g. through grant support or in-kind support



supply audit

This section describes the pattern of existing and potential access opportunities in North Ayrshire. It is intended to inform the development of the Strategy rather than to provide an exhaustive audit of the opportunities available. These are illustrated in the maps provided as Appendices 6 and 7. This section will be updated on an annual basis to reflect any changes to the level or quality of the outdoor access provision.

The provision for outdoor access has changed since the original Strategy was developed in 2004. In part this is due to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 coming into force and in part due to the progress made through the implementation of the original Strategy. New additions to the opportunities available for outdoor access include Core Paths and responsible access rights. Existing opportunities include Country Parks and open space which have benefited from a number of improvements through the implementation of the original Strategy.

Coast

North Ayrshire has an extensive coastline which is actively used for a wide range of outdoor activities. The main areas utilised include Irvine Beach Park, Stevenston Beach Park and Local Nature Reserve, Ardrossan South Beach and North Shore and the coast around our islands, Largs and Seamill. There are also a number of coastal paths and promenades which are also well used for example along the Hunterston Peninsula between Seamill and Fairlie, at Largs Seafront and at Fairlie. A number of these areas are used not only by local residents but by visitors from neighbouring Authorities and further afield.

Improvements undertaken at the coast include the creation of new paths and improvement of the existing provision for all abilities access. Key examples of these are the creation of the Brodick Seafront Path and all abilities access improvements and bridge at Stevenston Beach Local Nature Reserve.

Core Paths

The North Ayrshire Core Paths Plan was adopted in January 2009 and formally launched in April 2009. It provides the basic framework of paths to provide reasonable access throughout the area for recreation and everyday journeys. The plan is the end result of three and a half years of partnership working between the Council and the Outdoor Access Forum. The Core Paths were identified through extensive public consultation and aim to meet the needs of communities and visitors for recreation and everyday journeys.

Improvements to Core Paths include improved signage and waymarking, upgrading of paths to all abilities standards and the removal of barriers such as stiles or inaccessible chicanes. Key examples of these include the upgrade of the Core Paths through Ardeer Quarry at Stevenston and at Sandy Road in Irvine to an all abilities standard.

Country Parks

There are two Country Parks, Eglinton Country Park at Kilwinning and Brodick Country Park on the Isle of Arran and one Country Centre at Kelburn Country Centre near Largs. Eglinton Country Park is the largest of the three parks, situated between Irvine and Kilwinning. It is open to the public free of charge and offers a wide range of opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding. Kelburn Country Centre is between Largs and Fairlie centred on the steep Kelburn Glen. There is a charge for entry to the Centre and it offers a range of walking routes. Brodick Country Park also charges for entry and offers a range of walking opportunities within the park including the main tourist path to the summit of Goatfell, which is free of charge.

Improvements to Country Parks include improved signage and interpretation, path creation and improved infrastructure. Key examples of these include the restoration of the Tournament Bridge in Eglinton Country Park and the creation of new paths to link in with the bridge.

Inland Water and Sea

North Ayrshire's main rivers, coast and inland waters offer a range of opportunities for non-motorised water based activities such as canoeing and kayaking. The River Garnock, River Irvine and Kilbirnie Loch are the key locations for this alongside the coastal waters of both the mainland and Arran. Largs in particular is a key location for numerous water-based activities including sailing and windsurfing.

Improvements to water facilities include the upgrade of paths providing access to the water, upgraded slipways and improved signage and infrastructure. Key examples of these include improved paths at Kilbirnie Loch and a new public slipway in Brodick both of which were community based projects.

Long Distance Routes

The National Cycle Network (NCN) provides a network of over 12,000 miles of safe and attractive routes to walk, cycle and ride throughout the UK. This includes traffic-free paths, quiet roads and lanes and traffic calmed roads. The Network has been developed by Sustrans in partnership with hundreds of local authorities and many other organisations and funders.

In North Ayrshire, NCN Route 7 runs roughly north to south through North Ayrshire passing through Irvine and Kilwinning and close to Dalry and Kilbirnie. NCN Route 73 runs roughly east to west from Kilmarnock in East Ayrshire to Ardrossan, connecting Irvine, Kilwinning and the Three Towns. Both routes provide opportunities to link further afield for example to Glasgow and Ayr on NCN Route 7 and Brodick and Lochranza on the Isle of Arran on NCN Route 73.

Improvements to the NCN include the removal of barriers, improvement of signage and upgrade of sections of the route to an all abilities standard. Key examples of these include the upgrade of the sections of NCN Route 73 between the boundary with East Ayrshire and Springside and a further section beside Stevenston Beach Local Nature Reserve to an all abilities access standard.

Two new long distance routes have also been created in partnership with local organisations namely the Ayrshire Coastal Path and Arran Coastal Way. The Ayrshire Coastal Path runs for 100 miles between Glenapp in South Ayrshire and Skelmorlie in North Ayrshire along the panoramic coastline and uses a mixture of paths and tracks along the way. The Arran Coastal Way is a continuous 100 km route around the island and includes stretches of forest track, rugged and gentle coastlines plus more mountainous terrain. These routes have linked together existing paths, stretches of minor roads and new paths to form a valuable resource for tourism and to the local area.

Minor Roads

Unclassified minor roads are often used for outdoor access, particularly where they link existing paths or settlements. A number of minor roads have also been adopted as Core Paths. These are attractive to a wide range of users including horse riders and cyclists. Two frequently used routes are the Brisbane Glen and Fairlie Moor roads which provide a range of opportunities including access from the coast to the open hills. There are however large areas of land without roads particularly in the upland areas and problems associated with vehicle speeds associated with a number of minor roads.

Improvements to routes on minor roads include the improvement of signage. A key example of this is the erection of signage on all on-road Core Paths and a few strategic quiet roads to raise awareness between motorised and non-motorised users of the varied use of the roads. This signage has been identified as good practice and used as a template for other Local Authority areas' on-road signage.

Open space

North Ayrshire's towns benefit from a wide range of open space including urban parks and green spaces within housing developments. These offer opportunities for a wide range of activities including walking, cycling, informal recreation and dog walking. A number also benefit from play areas or offer opportunities for more formal recreation such as football pitches. Routes such as the New Town Trail link a number of these areas together providing valuable networks for local people and visitors to the area.

Improvements to the open space network include the upgrade of existing paths, creation of new paths, improved signage and improved infrastructure such as seating and cycle parking. Key examples of this include the upgrade of paths within Dalry Public Park and improvement of signage on the New Town Trail.

Regional Park

The Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park covers a large area of land in the northeast of North Ayrshire which equates to over 50% of the Park's land coverage. The Park is managed by the Park Authority on behalf of Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and North Ayrshire Councils and in co-operation with local landowners.

The Regional Park provides an area of land managed for public enjoyment of the natural heritage and provision of informal recreation opportunities. Within the North Ayrshire sector of the Park access opportunities are reasonably good however they are more directed towards the experienced access user, with hill walking opportunities in particular being fairly extensive. The Parks' Castle Semple Centre, whilst located just outside the boundary of North Ayrshire, does offer extensive water sports facilities including sailing, rowing and canoeing.

Improvements to the Regional Park include fencing, drainage and signage at the informal recreation sites managed by the Park Authority. Regional Park staff are also actively involved in liaising with landowners, patrolling and organising events within the area. The improvements in the Regional Park are more limited than in the Country Parks due to the lack of a formal park facility within the North Ayrshire area.

Responsible Access Rights

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides everyone with a right of responsible access to most of North Ayrshire's land and inland water for recreation, education and going from place to place. This includes hills, woods and forests, mountains and moorland, urban parks, rivers and land in which crops have not been sown. There are some places where access rights do not apply including houses and gardens, land in which crops are growing, sports and playing fields when in use and places which charge for entry. This has provided improved access for North Ayrshire's communities and visitors. Recent agri-environment schemes such as the Rural Stewardship Scheme and its successor Rural Development Contracts have also resulted in the creation of community woodlands and the creation of paths on agricultural land.

Rights of Way

A right of way is a route along which the public have a right of passage. These routes occasionally pass through areas that are outwith the rights of responsible access such as farmyards or privacy zones for houses. To be classified as a right of way the route must meet certain criteria. It must:

- a. Join two public places (e.g. public roads or other rights of way)
- b. Follow a more or less defined route; and
- c. Have been used, openly and peaceably, by the general public, as a matter of right, i.e. not just with the permission of the landowner;
- d. Have been used without substantial interruption for at least 20 years.

Rights of Way are divided into three categories. These are defined by Scotways, the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society, as follows:

- Vindicated:** This relates to all routes that have been declared to be Rights of Way by the courts, and which have evidence of continued usage.
- Asserted:** All routes where either the landowner accepts the route as a right of way, or the local authority has indicated that it would be willing to take court action to defend it if necessary.
- Claimed:** This relates to all other routes that are alleged to meet the legal criteria for rights of way.

There are very few Rights of Way in the mainland area of North Ayrshire. On the Isle of Arran there is a network of asserted and claimed Rights of Way, many of them of considerable length. A number of these provide access to the coast and others are more inland providing access to upland and lowland areas. It is important to note that Rights of Way are often historic routes and may not reflect the full extent of current access needs. Some of the Rights of Way on the islands are also contested by landowners. So, while such routes have often been defended in the past, their designation alone should not be taken as an indication of their potential importance in the future.

There is a total of 332km of Rights of Way in North Ayrshire. Approximately 22km of these are asserted, 11km are vindicated and the remaining 299km are claimed. However, under the criteria used to define Rights of Way, many more may exist than are currently recorded. Improvements to Rights of Way include the improvement of signage and the upgrade of paths. Key examples of this are the Arran Access Trust project which upgraded a number of rights of way across the island and the West Kilbride Signage Project developed by West Kilbride Civic Society in partnership with the Council and local landowners.

Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserves

The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) manages nine sites in the Irvine and Kilwinning area as Wildlife Reserves. These are Coreshillmuir Woods, Gales Marsh, Garnock Floods, Lawthorn Wood, Oldhall Ponds, Perceton Woods, Shewalton Sandpits, Shewalton Woods and Sourlie Wood. These provide a valuable resource for both local residents and visitors and offer the opportunity to experience wildlife and the natural environment on their doorstep.

Improvements to these Reserves include the upgrade of paths, improvement of car parks, installation of seats and installation of new information boards. All nine sites have been improved through forestry funding schemes such as the Forestry Commission Scotland's Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme, Woods In and Around Towns Challenge Fund and also through the Landfill Communities Fund.

Wider Path Network Routes

The term wider path network routes covers all of the paths that are not Core Paths. These provide an extensive network throughout North Ayrshire in excess of 760km. There is a wide range of types of paths in the wider path network including grass tracks, aggregate paths, tarmac paths and informal desire lines. These routes encompass a wide range of opportunities for outdoor access and are utilised by a broad spectrum of users including walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Improvements to the wider path network include the upgrade of paths to all abilities access standards, improvement of signage, waymarking and interpretation and the removal of barriers. A lot of voluntary projects are undertaken on these routes including projects funded through the Community Outdoor Access Grant Scheme. Key examples of this are the improvement of the signage within the West Kilbride path network and drainage improvements on the bridleways network within Eglinton Country Park.

Transport

North Ayrshire has good rail links with Glasgow and the Central belt making it an accessible location for living, working and visiting. Kilwinning provides a hub for rail travel with good links to Irvine and onwards south to Ayr, good links north to Largs through the Three Towns and good links to Glengarnock and onwards to Glasgow and the Central Belt. There is however no direct rail link up the coast from Irvine to Largs with travellers being required to change at Kilwinning.

There are 5 ferry terminals in the area providing travel opportunities between mainland North Ayrshire and the Islands of Arran and Cumbrae and onwards from the Isle of Arran to Claonaig in Argyll and Bute. The mainland ferry terminals are closely linked to railway, bus, walking and cycling provision. These not only provide opportunities for travel for work and other essential activities but also valuable opportunities for tourism making our islands some of the most accessible in Scotland.

North Ayrshire benefits from three Quality Bus Corridors between Ardrossan and Kilmarnock in East Ayrshire, within the Garnock Valley and from Ardrossan to Skelmorlie. These include upgraded infrastructure which provides improved shelter provision, raised boarders and improved access and egress from buses. This improves overall accessibility of the bus network. The Council is currently improving provision on the Isle of Arran and developing proposals for the remaining areas in mainland North Ayrshire and the Isle of Cumbrae.

There is an extensive road network in the area and despite the fact that car ownership is lower in North Ayrshire than the Scottish average, car or van trips account for the majority of journeys to work. The trunk road network passes through or close to the main settlements in North Ayrshire which provides road access to Glasgow and the central belt and beyond. The Local Transport Strategy highlighted that North Ayrshire's local roads are becoming busier with traffic volumes having increased by almost 20 per cent since 1995. Whilst some roads have not experienced much increase in traffic volume, others are experiencing significant increases in traffic volume. The Outdoor Access Strategy therefore has a significant role to play in redressing this balance.

Sources of Information

In considering the supply of routes and opportunities it is useful to examine the availability of information on these as this is what enables users to make informed choices about where they go. Information is available to residents and visitors in a variety of formats including electronically on websites such as Ayrshire Paths and Walk Highlands, in paper format through leaflets produced by the Council, Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Eglinton Country Park and National Trust for Scotland and on maps and information boards produced by local communities and public organisations. The leaflets are available at a wide range of venues such as Tourist Information Centres, visitor facilities, libraries and community centres for local residents and tourists to access and utilise free of charge in the majority of cases. There is no specific information available regarding the numbers of people accessing this information other than through monthly reports generated by the Ayrshire Paths website. This means that we know very little about who is accessing the information, for what purpose and whether what is available is meeting their needs and aspirations.

What does this tell us about the supply?

North Ayrshire has a wide variety of outdoor access opportunities both for local residents and visitors to the area. Its coastal, hill and island resources provide attractive opportunities for visitors as day trippers and for longer stay breaks. There are higher concentrations of path networks around our main towns such as Irvine, Stevenston, Saltcoats and Ardrossan. The networks in the more rural areas such as the Garnock Valley are much smaller and currently do not fully meet the demand in these areas.

There have been a large number of improvements to the network since the development of the original strategy including the creation of new routes or upgrade of existing routes to an all abilities standard. Overall by combining the outdoor access network and public transport network there are valuable opportunities for integrated transport for both residents and visitors to the area. It is however recognised that this could be improved on and the Strategy will assist in achieving this.



demand audit

This section of the audit provides an assessment of the demand for outdoor access in North Ayrshire. This is considered in two parts:

- Existing demand as defined by existing patterns of use, surveys and information on user behaviour
- Unrealised demand based on the analysis of information on population, health and deprivation and social inclusion

Existing Demand

There are limited sources of information to show demand for outdoor access activities in North Ayrshire, however, the information obtained from local surveys and visitor information for key sites can be used to estimate the level of demand from present use.

Local Trends

The People's Panel was established in 2000 and provides a useful method of consulting with residents. It is used to gather information on the attitudes and perceptions of local people on areas such as the local area, employment, community safety and community involvement, and track changes over time. The panel consists of 2,000 members randomly selected from the electoral roll. This is divided into 1,000 from the regeneration areas and 1,000 from the rest of North Ayrshire. This allows users of the survey to compare findings between the regeneration areas and the rest of North Ayrshire.

North Ayrshire's 'Regeneration Areas' were first identified by North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership in 2004/5, as part of the Regeneration Outcome Agreement (ROA). Whilst the ROA ended in March 2008, the Regeneration Areas have continued to influence the targeting of activity and resources by the Community Planning Partnership. This includes the work of the Fairer North Ayrshire programme, which started in April 2008. The Regeneration Areas are made up of the most deprived 15% of data zones, as identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is explained further in the latent demand section of this Audit.

In the Summer 2010 survey, a quarter (25%) of respondents said that they currently take part in outdoor activities as a leisure pastime on a daily basis. This is broken down to 29% within the Regeneration Areas and 22% in the rest of North Ayrshire. This includes walking, cycling, horse riding, dog walking and other outdoor activities. The table below provides a summary of the frequency that respondents said they took part:

Percentage of respondents	Regeneration Areas	Rest of North Ayrshire	Total
Taking part daily	29%	22%	25%
Taking part several times per week	27%	29%	29%
Taking part once a week	15%	20%	18%
Taking part once or twice a month	8%	8%	8%
Taking part less than once a month	20%	21%	20%

This demonstrates an interesting trend in that there is a higher percentage of the population taking part on a daily basis in the regeneration areas of North Ayrshire than in the rest of the area, however, the trend reverts to being higher in the rest of the area for all other frequencies.

What do we know about where people go?

The Summer 2009 People's Panel Survey posed specific questions in relation to outdoor access including one on where respondents go to take part in outdoor activities such as walking and cycling. The table provided below provides a summary of the responses received:

Location	Percentage using location for outdoor activities		
	Regeneration Areas	Rest of North Ayrshire	Total
Coast and Beaches	55%	61%	59%
Greenspace/openspace	41%	43%	42%
In villages/towns	36%	37%	37%
Country Parks	32%	34%	34%
Woodlands	17%	20%	18%
Open countryside/farmland	16%	15%	16%
Regional Parks	17%	15%	16%
Lochs/rivers/seas	14%	15%	15%
Wildlife/nature Reserves	7%	9%	8%

Visitor Numbers

Visitors play a key part in the demand for outdoor access and contribute significantly to the local economy. The following overview of visitor numbers for key sites and locations in North Ayrshire provides an indication of the demand from this sector. There are a limited number of people or cycle counters in the area therefore the information is at best in some cases anecdotal.

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

Visitor numbers for the Regional Park in North Ayrshire are based on sample counts over some representative short periods, extrapolated up to annual estimates. These are concentrated around the facilities actively managed by the Park. There are no physical counters within the North Ayrshire element of the park due to the lack of a physical base. The Knockendon Car Park between Dalry and Hunterston has approximately 2,000 visitors per annum. The Outerwards Community Woodland, north of Largs has approximately 3,000 visitors per annum and the Haylie Brae near Kelburn at Largs has approximately 20,000 visitors per annum. Due to the lack of a physical presence in North Ayrshire it is difficult to identify if there have been any changes to visitor numbers.

Eglinton Country Park

Visitor numbers for Eglinton are based on visitors to the Centre, School Groups, Ranger Led Groups, participants in Guided Walks and Events and Independent Groups. This obviously discounts the large number of visitors who access the park but not necessarily the services provided within the Park. There are currently no electronic counters within the park so it is not possible to identify how many people are using the path network. The visitor figures for 2010/11 total 28,749 which is considerably reduced from the 2009/10 figure of 52,058. This is attributed to lower levels of large scale events and poor weather during the year.

Brodick Castle and Country Park and Goatfell

The total number of visitors to Brodick Country Park in 2010 was 42,965. A total of 23,541 people visited the Goatfell property. In addition to this just over 12,000 people utilised the Country Park Trails. This is lower in comparison to 2009 during which visitor numbers were 47,807 to the Country Park and 25,961 to the Goatfell property. This is largely attributed to poor weather during the year. The Country Park Trails however saw a rise in visitor numbers from just over 9,000 in 2009 to 12,000 in 2010.

Kelburn Castle and Country Centre

The total number of visitors for Kelburn Country Centre in 2009 and 2010 is yet unknown. This section will be addressed when the figures become available in the final Strategy.

Isle of Arran

The Scottish Transport Statistics No 29 identifies that there were 715,700 passengers on the Ardrossan to Brodick Ferry in 2010 and 54,400 passengers on the Lochranza to Claonaig Ferry. It also identifies that 136,000 cars made the crossing therefore it is likely that a large number of passengers made the crossing as foot passengers. Scottish Transport Statistics No 28 highlights that there were 707,400 passengers in 2009 on the Ardrossan to Brodick crossing and 50,200 on the Lochranza to Claonaig crossing which highlights an increase in passengers between the two years.

The Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitoring (STEAM) Report 2010 identifies that there are 1,187 Full Time Equivalent jobs on the island relating to tourism and that the overall visitor spend was £28,590,000. In 2009 there were 1,183 Full Time Equivalent jobs on the island and the annual visitor spend was £29,300,000. This highlights that although visitor numbers have increased in terms of ferry crossings, the overall visitor spend has reduced.

Isle of Cumbrae

The Scottish Transport Statistics No 29 identifies that there were 720,400 passengers on the Largs to Cumbrae Ferry in 2009. It also identifies that 139,800 cars also made the crossing therefore it is likely that a large number of passengers made the crossing as foot passengers. Scottish Transport Statistics No 28 highlights there were 710,800 passengers on this crossing in 2008, which highlights an increase in passengers between the two years. The STEAM Report covering the Island does not differentiate Cumbrae from mainland North Ayrshire making it difficult to identify the level of jobs relating to tourism on the island and the overall visitor spend.

National Trends

The Scottish Recreation Survey (ScRS) is a continuous monitoring study commissioned jointly by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). It provides an opportunity to measure and track over time the participation in walking and other outdoor recreational activities by Scottish adults and awareness and understanding of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

The 2009 survey highlighted that the proportion of Scottish adults visiting the outdoors for recreation at least once in the previous 12 months remained steady at 79%. The proportion visiting at least once a week of 46% was similar to 2008 and higher than in 2006 and 2007. Visits to the countryside remained most popular at 49% of all visits however the proportion of visits being made to towns and cities including visits to parks and other urban open spaces was higher than in previous years at 37%.

The proportion of visits being made on foot at 65% continued to grow while the proportion being made by car of 30% was similar to 2008 and remained lower than in any previous survey year. Walking was named as the main activity on 75% of visits to the outdoors and was easily identified as the most popular outdoor pastime enjoyed by Scottish adults.

The Statistical Bulletin Household Transport in 2009 identified that in terms of travel to work 67% of respondents used the car, of which only six per cent travelled as a passenger. Walking and cycling accounted for 15% and public transport 16% of all journeys to work. Females were more likely to walk to work than men, while men were more likely to drive to work than women. The majority of respondents continued to choose the same method of travel to work from the previous year.

In relation to journeys to School, 51% were made by walking or cycling in 2009 which was down from 55% in 1999. Children in Primary School were more likely to walk or be driven to school than children in Secondary School. Over 50% of children in towns and urban areas walked to school whereas children in rural areas were much less likely to walk to school and tended instead to travel by school bus.

The informal nature of cycling does not lend itself to the collection of detailed statistics. Scottish Government statistics show that 35% of households had access to a bicycle that could be used by an adult in 2009. The Scottish Household Survey in 2008 identified that 3.2% of adults had made a trip of more than a quarter of a mile by bike to go somewhere such as work, shopping or to see friends in the previous week. There was a distinct gender split in answers to this question, with 7% of men answering yes but only 2% of women.

The Survey identified that there was no clearly discernable pattern of cycling by age, except for people aged 80 years and over in which there were no cyclists. Participation in cycling varied between 8% of the population for ages 16-19 and 2% for those aged 70-79. The incidence of cycling also varied slightly based on an individual's current personal situation, with 8% of people in higher education saying that they had cycled in the previous seven days compared with 2% of people permanently retired from work. Given the very small proportion of cycling respondents in the Survey, these figures should be treated with some caution as they may not be representative of the wider population.

The most common reasons cited for not cycling to work were lack of access to a bike at 37%, too far to cycle at 30%, weather at 16%, too many cars at 14% and fast traffic at 11%. The most commonly provided reasons for not owning a bike were the inability to ride a bike and too many cars on the road.

What does this tell us about the demand?

The local trends for North Ayrshire reflect the national trends in terms of the proportion of people visiting the outdoors at least once a week. There is no substantial difference between the Regeneration Areas and the rest of North Ayrshire in terms of participation. There is an interesting trend in that there is a higher percentage of the population taking part on a daily basis in the regeneration areas of North Ayrshire than in the rest of the area however the trend reverts to being higher in the rest of the area for all other frequencies. Looking at the reasons that would encourage increased participation in the latent demand section may identify opportunities to increase the frequency of participation in those that are already taking part alongside encouraging sedentary or less active people to take part.

The People's Panel Survey identifies areas such as our coasts and beaches, greenspace and paths within towns and villages as being the most popular locations for outdoor activities. Areas such as our Regional Park and other wildlife or nature reserves are identified as having relatively low levels of usage despite in the case of Irvine in particular being very close to the centre of population. Improved promotion of areas such as these may result in increased demand or encourage increased participation.

Latent Demand

A key element of an effective access strategy is a proper understanding of the location and nature of the population to be served by the access opportunities and routes. This section considers the physical location of North Ayrshire's population alongside the main issues for the population in terms of the economic, health and behavioural characteristics of the area. These factors have a direct influence on the potential demand for outdoor access as they influence people's behaviour and the likelihood of them taking part in outdoor activities in the future alongside the potential for outdoor access to tackle some of the key issues.

Population

The Health and Wellbeing Profile 2010 for the North Ayrshire Community Health Partnership published by the Scottish Public Health Observatory identifies an estimated total population of 135,510. The population profile identifies that the percentage of population of working age is lower than the Scottish average however the percentage aged 0 to 15 years and 65 to 74 years is above average.

Settlement	Population
Garnock Valley	20,309
Irvine and Kilwinning	54,579
Isle of Arran	5,205
North Coast and Cumbraes	24,329
Three Towns	31,088
Totals	135,510

The largest concentration of population is around the main settlements of Irvine and Kilwinning, with the Three Towns a second key centre. The rest of the population are distributed into numerous small 'pockets' in the rural areas, together with some linear settlements along the A737 and the A78. Brodick and Millport are the principal population centres on the Isle of Arran and Cumbrae respectively. Much of the remainder of the area is rural land.

Whilst most people live within the principal urban areas, there are many small settlements and communities in other areas of the countryside that amount to a significant proportion of the population and which provides more local sources of demand. The dispersed nature of the rural population creates opportunities for access, but also challenges in that many different and distinct communities must be consulted and brought together to plan and deliver coherent networks of paths connecting all communities.

It is also recognised that the population in the more established tourist destinations, principally Arran, the North Coast and Cumbraes can fluctuate significantly during the year and will generally be higher during the tourist season than the population figures provided. Demand for access is considerably higher in these locations during the tourist season.

Deprivation

North Ayrshire is ranked fifth highest in Scotland in terms of community inequalities and is at a disadvantage in terms of income and employment opportunities, compared with the rest of Scotland. Worsening levels of deprivation come despite significant efforts by the Council and its Community Planning Partners to tackle unemployment and poverty.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland in a consistent way. It allows effective targeting of policies and funding where the aim is to wholly or partly tackle or take account of area concentrations of multiple deprivation. It should be noted that the SIMD is a relative measure of deprivation rather than an absolute measure.

The SIMD can be used to identify Scotland's most deprived small areas on the overall index and each individual domain. The SIMD is presented at data zone level, enabling small pockets of deprivation to be identified. The data zones, which have a median population size of 769, are ranked from most deprived (1) to least deprived (6,505) on the overall SIMD and on each of the individual domains. The result is a comprehensive picture of relative area deprivation across Scotland.

The 2009 SIMD report identifies North Ayrshire as one of five Local Authorities with the largest proportion of their datazones in the 15% most deprived. The other four Local Authorities are Glasgow, Inverclyde, Dundee and West Dunbartonshire. Roughly one in four or 23.1% of North Ayrshire's population lives in the 15% most deprived datazones.

North Ayrshire has 179 datazones of which 43 are within the 15% most deprived in Scotland. The most deprived datazone is in Ardrossan whilst the least deprived datazone is in Largs. The table below provides a summary of the changes between 2006 and 2009.

Town	Datazones in worst 15%	
	2006	2009
Irvine	10	14
Stevenston	6	8
Kilwinning	4	6
Ardrossan	6	6
Saltcoats	4	5
Kilbirnie	3	2
Beith	0	1
Dalry	0	1
Total	33	43

Health

The Health and Wellbeing Profile identifies that in terms of life expectancy the all-cause mortality and mortality rates from coronary heart disease (under-75s) are all significantly worse in North Ayrshire than in Scotland as a whole however the levels of early deaths from cancer and cerebrovascular disease are not significantly different. The incidence of cancer is not significantly different to Scotland as a whole. The proportion of the population hospitalised for psychiatric conditions is higher than Scotland as a whole and the prescribing rates for anxiety and depression are also higher.

The percentage of adult smokers in North Ayrshire is significantly higher than in Scotland as a whole. The percentage of mothers smoking during pregnancy is also significantly worse than the Scottish average. The level of alcohol related deaths in the last five years is not significantly different to the Scottish average, however, the proportion of the population hospitalised for alcohol conditions is significantly worse than average. The proportion of the population hospitalised for drug related conditions is also significantly worse than average. There are significant improvements that could be made to physical and mental health and well-being.

Recent trends including the SIMD information indicate that the health inequalities gap is widening between North Ayrshire and other areas. The SIMD data refers to a whole range of indicators that affect people's health and includes among others income, education, employment, housing and health. Poor health is an outcome that results from living and working in challenging circumstances. A key example of the health inequalities is that a baby boy born in Fullarton in Irvine has an average life expectancy of 67 years old whereas a boy born in Whitehirst Park in Kilwinning has an average life expectancy of 82 years old.

Employment

North Ayrshire has experienced high levels of unemployment for many years. North Ayrshire also has 12 percent of its economically active population out of work, compared to 7.7 percent across Scotland as a whole. In December 2009 it held the highest level of Job Seeker Allowance claimants (as a proportion of the working age population) out of the 32 Scottish local authorities and has done so for most of the last 3 years. Youth unemployment is also a significant problem, with almost a third of those unemployed being aged between 18 and 24.

The Council wards with consistently high unemployment rates are concentrated around Irvine and the Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston areas, with some of these areas having rates that are more than double the Scottish average. This has had a severely detrimental impact on our people and our communities and has resulted in high levels of deprivation within many of our towns.

Physical Activity Levels

The People's Panel Survey identifies that 25% of the population take part in outdoor activities once a week and a further 29% taking part several times a week. It is however unclear from this information as to whether or not they are meeting the recommended minimum level of physical activity. Recent guidelines from the UK's four Chief Medical Officers state that all adults should participate in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 150 minutes a week and aim to be active every day. Muscle strengthening activity should also be included twice a week in order to reduce the risk of falling. Children and young people up to the age of 18 years should participate in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day. Three days a week should include vigorous intensity activities that strengthen the muscles and bones. Finally, for the early years (under 5s), children who are able to walk should be active for at least three hours every day. The People's Panel Survey poses the question why do you take part in outdoor activities and a summary of the Summer 2010 responses is provided below:

Reason	Percentage taking part for reason		Total
	Regeneration areas	Rest of North Ayrshire	
Leisure/recreation	52%	58%	56%
Health improvement	50%	53%	52%
Social benefits	24%	24%	24%
Walk the Dog	21%	24%	23%
To get to local facilities	21%	19%	19%
To travel to work	15%	10%	12%

Leisure, recreation and health improvement are the main reasons cited, therefore, the promotion of outdoor access for these purposes may significantly increase the demand for opportunities. There is also capacity to build on the levels currently using outdoor access for everyday journeys. Another key factor to consider is what would motivate people to increase their physical activity levels. The People’s Panel Survey poses the question what would encourage you to participate in outdoor activities more often and a summary of the Summer 2010 responses is provided below:

Reason	Regeneration areas	Rest of North Ayrshire	Total
Better weather	57%	65%	62%
Better health or fitness	33%	29%	31%
More paths	24%	26%	25%
Cheaper activities	26%	24%	25%
Someone to go with	24%	23%	23%
Small organised groups	17%	12%	14%
More information	13%	12%	12%
Improved public transport	8%	8%	8%
Instruction in activities	6%	8%	7%
Buddy	8%	7%	7%
Improved skills or confidence	5%	6%	6%
Coaching	8%	4%	6%

From this it is apparent that the main limiting factor is the weather, over which there is a very limited level of control. The other issues identified such as more paths and more information could be improved by this Strategy. The fact that cheaper activities are identified as a reason for 29% of respondents identifies the need to promote free activities such as walking and cycling as opportunities for health improvement and physical activity.

The current financial climate is placing further pressure on employment and finances. This may result in increased demand for outdoor access as families look for free or low cost activities for weekends and holidays and for physical activity and exercise in preference to costly gym memberships or other charged activities.

Car Ownership

The 2001 Census identified that 36.06% of North Ayrshire's households do not own a car or van in comparison to 34.23% across Scotland as a whole. This shows that there is a higher level of car ownership in North Ayrshire yet the use of sustainable transport options such as walking and cycling is still less than the Scottish average.

The Statistical Bulletin Household Transport in 2009 identified that 26% of Scottish households had access to two or more cars in 2009, whilst 31% had no access to a car. Men were more likely to hold a full driving license than females however female license possession has increased. Car access increased as annual net household income increased. Over three quarters of those living in rural areas drove at least once a week, with over half driving every day. 55% of respondents were concerned about increased traffic on the roads. 44% of drivers experienced road rage directed at them in 2007- 2009. Household spend on fuel increased.

Tourism

Whilst significant developments have been made in relation to tourism in North Ayrshire, the further development of tourism and current trends towards holidaying at home in the UK is likely to generate unrealised demand for outdoor access. North Ayrshire's islands, coastline and extensive countryside provides a valuable draw for tourists to the area. The scenery and existing natural and cultural heritage attractions of the area could be further complemented by improving the provision for outdoor access and infrastructure such as signage and furniture. This could result in more visitors to the area and more expenditure in the local area either as day visitors or longer stays.

Latent demand at a national level

The Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report on Assessing Future Recreation Demand identifies the following factors in relation to latent demand:

- Latent demand for participation by user groups such as women may be unlocked by providing a more secure environment in which to recreate
- Access to 'valued environments' has the potential to unlock latent demand
- Not all latent demand from under-represented social groups can be unlocked as deprivation is often experienced on a number of levels e.g. health and unemployment

The Report recognises that converting latent demand to actual participation is a complex process and identifies that with better understanding, more should be done to encourage new users through novel means. At a national level, it recommends developing a self-image of Scotland, domestically and internationally, as a country that is in touch with the outdoors, feels a sense of 'ownership' of it, and is at ease recreating in it, would be desirable for encouraging a generally more positive attitude towards outdoor recreation.

What does this tell us about the latent demand?

North Ayrshire has high levels of deprivation, unemployment and low levels of car ownership. This can result in a cycle of unemployment and poor health. Dependence on the car for travel to work and everyday journeys is still high in the area and tackling this is therefore a key challenge for the Strategy. By promoting walking and cycling as viable options for travel to work and ensuring that any new employment facilities are accessible, increased demand could be generated and more people could access working opportunities.

The health and wellbeing of North Ayrshire's communities is also generally poor and could substantially be improved by increased participation in outdoor activities. This could be realised through participation for recreation or health improvement or by incorporating outdoor access into everyday journeys.

The People's Panel Survey identifies that the weather, availability of paths and the cost of activities are key issues in encouraging increased participation. Whilst it is not possible to directly influence the weather it is possible to improve local path networks and raise awareness of free activities such as walking, cycling and visiting parks. This should result in increased participation and demand. Leisure, recreation and health improvement are the key reasons for taking part in outdoor activities and increased demand could be realised through the further promotion of sustainable transport opportunities to access shops, local facilities and work.

Large numbers of people are already visiting our islands on foot and to enjoy the outdoor access opportunities that they offer. The current economic climate is also likely to result in an increase in demand as more people holiday in Scotland, recreate closer to home or try to find free or inexpensive activities to undertake for health improvement. The Strategy therefore has a key role to play in delivering for this future demand.



policy audit

This section takes account of the main international, national, regional and local policies, plans and strategies. Outdoor access relates to and has an important role to play in the achievement of the policy objectives of a wide range of national, regional and local organisations. To ensure that the Strategy takes into account all interests, it is essential to review the policies of the organisations that have an influence on access provision alongside the main international and national policies that relate to the outdoors and natural environment.

Due to the changing nature of policy, it is not possible for this section to be exhaustive, however, it aims to cover the key areas relevant to outdoor access. This section will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated as required and to reflect when new policies come into effect.

International plans, programmes, strategies and guidance

Title	
EU Birds Directive	This Directive protects all wild birds, their nests, eggs and habitats within the EC. It also provides the basis to classify Special Protection Areas (SPA) to protect areas and vulnerable birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The OAS will comply with the Directive by not adversely affecting SPAs, SACs or the protection of all wild, rare and vulnerable birds and their nests, eggs and habitats.
EU Habitats Directive	Aims to protect biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats, wild flora and fauna. It provides the basis to classify SPAs and SACs and nationally through Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Scottish Government has extended this legislation to include Ramsar sites. The OAS will comply with the Directive by not adversely affecting SPAs, SACs, SSSIs, Ramsar sites or the maintenance and restoration of natural habitats to ensure biodiversity.
EU Water Framework Directive	Safeguards the sustainable use of surface water, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater. It supports the status of aquatic ecosystems and environments. It also addresses issues such as groundwater pollution, flooding, droughts and river basin management planning. The OAS will comply with the Directive by not adversely affecting the sustainable use of surface water, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater.

National legislation, plans, programmes, strategies and guidance

Title	Summary
Choosing our Future: Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy	This sets out the Government's vision for a Sustainable Scotland. The OAS will assist in achieving the Strategy's objectives of: Living within environmental limits; Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; Achieving a sustainable economy; Promoting good governance; and Using sound science responsibly.
Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009	The Act aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make the transition to a low carbon economy in Scotland which will help create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. It places duties on public bodies to act sustainably and reduce carbon emissions whilst exercising their functions. The OAS will assist in meeting the aims and objectives of the Act and the Council's commitments under the Act by encouraging the use of sustainable transport for everyday journeys.
Cycling Action Plan for Scotland	<p>The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland sets out how the Government aims to get 10% of all journeys by bike by 2020, through expanding cycle routes across the country and enhancing delivery of cycle training in schools. The vision sets a challenge for central and local governments, businesses, employers and stakeholders, therefore the OAS has a key role to play in implementing CAPS at a local level. CAPS envisages the target will be achieved through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Investing in the strategic national cycle network (NCN) and its links to key destinations;– Working in partnership to ensure the national network links with local cycling and pedestrian access networks provided by local authorities;– Working in partnership to make our roads safe for all, including cyclists, for example through lower speed limits, good design of roads and cycle infrastructure and segregated paths where appropriate;– Facilitating the coordination of action by different partners, such as on cycle training;– Seeking opportunities to ensure cycling (both on and off-road) is an integral part of decisions on planning, travel by other modes, training of professionals and travel planning by employers;– Developing the National Planning Framework for Scotland 2 (NPF2)– Investing in community cycling, particularly focussed on those where the health benefits would be greatest, or those without access to a car or other convenient motorised transport, and in supporting good on-line local information.

Title	Summary
Designing Streets	Designing Streets is the first policy statement in Scotland for street design and marks a change in the emphasis of guidance on street design towards place-making and away from a system focused upon the dominance of motor vehicles. It supports a design-led approach to street design and marks the Government's commitment to raise the quality and design in the rural and urban environment. The OAS will take account of and complement the policy.
Designing Places	This is the first policy statement in Scotland on designing places and marks the Government's commitment to raising the standards of urban and rural development. It identifies six qualities for successful places namely: identity, safe and pleasant spaces, ease of movement, a sense of welcome, adaptability and good use of resources. The OAS will take account of and complement the policy.
Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005	This ensures that discrimination law covers all the activities of the public sector and requires public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. This includes ensuring that disabled people have equal access to facilities and services. The OAS will meet the provisions of the Act by providing equitably for all abilities and building the needs of disabled people into its aims and objectives.
Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003	This establishes statutory rights of responsible access to land including inland water and places a reciprocal obligation on landowners/managers to manage their land responsibly for outdoor access. The Act also places a number of Statutory duties and responsibilities on Local Authorities including the production of a Core Paths Plan and formation of an Outdoor Access Forum. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code details the rights and responsibilities under the Act for both access users and landowners. The OAS will translate the Act into a local perspective and ensure that the Council and the Outdoor Access Forum are in a position to meet their statutory obligations under the Act.
Let's Make Scotland More Active	Let's Make Scotland More Active is the national Strategy for physical activity. It aims to support long term change from high levels of physical inactivity to high levels of physical activity. The vision of the strategy is that people in Scotland will enjoy the benefits of having a physically active life and the key goal is to increase and maintain the proportion of physically active people in Scotland. It sets the target of 50% of adults over 16 years old and 80% of children aged 16 and under meeting the minimum levels of recommended physical activity by 2022. The OAS has a key role to play in achieving the vision and goals of the Strategy particularly in relation to sedentary and less active people and children by encouraging outdoor access for everyday journeys, health improvement and recreation.

Title	Summary
National Planning Framework 2	The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a strategy for the long-term development of Scotland's towns, cities and countryside. In particular it seeks to promote development which helps to improve health, regenerate communities and enable disadvantaged communities to access opportunities. It identifies a number of national priority projects including the creation of a Central Scotland Green Network and formation of facilities for the 2014 Commonwealth Games. In relation to North Ayrshire it identifies the potential to integrate green infrastructure initiatives and the restoration of vacant and derelict land with the wider Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) and that the area's good international links provide opportunities for the further development of cultural, business and activity-based tourism. The OAS therefore has a key role in delivering the objectives of the CSGN in North Ayrshire and NPF2 as a whole.
National Trust for Scotland Wild Land Policy	This outlines the Trust's stance on the management of wild land areas. The Policy outlines that wild land in Scotland is relatively remote and inaccessible but noticeably affected by human activity. It outlines the mechanisms by which the Trust aims to protect it and still enable the land to offer the high quality opportunities to escape from the pressure of everyday living and to find the physical and spiritual refreshment that defines it. The OAS will take account of the Policy and assist in meeting its aims and objectives in relation to the protection and management of such land in Ayrshire.
Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004	This sets out a series of measures, which are designed to conserve biodiversity and to protect and enhance the biological and geological natural heritage of Scotland. It imposes a wide-ranging duty on public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity. The OAS will assist in achieving the Council's biodiversity duty by protecting and enhancing, where deemed appropriate, North Ayrshire's natural heritage.
Right Tree In The Right Place	This policy produced by Forestry Commission Scotland provides the Scottish Government's advice to Planning Authorities on planning for forestry and woodland cover. It recognises the role of well managed woodlands in Scotland to ensure that it is wealthier and fairer through supporting the rural economy, healthier as a result of the informal recreational opportunities, smarter by providing a focal point for outdoor education, safer and stronger by improving the quality of the environment and greener by conserving biodiversity and habitats. There are close links between both documents particularly due to the Scottish Government's commitment to the Central Scotland Green Network.

Title	Summary
Scottish Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands – A Strategy for the Conservation and Enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland	<p>This provides a 25-year strategy to conserve and enhance biodiversity throughout Scotland. The overall aim of which is “to conserve biodiversity for the health, enjoyment and wellbeing of the people of Scotland now and in the future”</p> <p>The OAS will assist in achieving the Plan’s objectives to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Halt the loss of biodiversity and continue to reverse previous losses through targeted action for species and habitats. – Increase awareness, understanding and enjoyment of biodiversity, and engage many more people in conservation and enhancement. – Restore and enhance biodiversity in all our urban, rural and marine environments through better planning, design and practice. – Develop an effective management framework that ensures biodiversity is taken into account in all decision making.
Scottish Forestry Strategy	<p>This provides the Scottish Government’s framework for taking forestry forward through the first half of this century and beyond. It sets out a vision of a forestry sector that is: Diverse and strong; In tune with the environment; Employing many people in a wide range of enterprises and Providing the many other services and benefits that people need, now and for the future. The OAS will assist in achieving the outcomes proposed by the Strategy of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improved health and well-being of people and their communities – Competitive and innovative businesses contributing to the growth of the Scottish economy – High quality, robust and adaptable environment
Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP)1: Scotland’s Historic Environment	<p>This provides Historic Scotland’s policy for the sustainable management of the historic environment. The OAS will ensure that the characteristics of the historic environment are understood and taken into account so that its overall quality is enhanced rather than diminished.</p>
Scottish Outdoor Access Code	<p>This provides guidance on responsible behaviour for recreational users, and on responsible land management in relation to the statutory access rights. The OAS will be based on the three key principles of the Code which apply equally to access users and landowners/managers of: Respect the interests of other people; Care for the Environment and Take responsibility for your own actions.</p>

Title	Summary
Scottish Planning Policy	<p>The Scottish Planning Policy supersedes the previous Scottish Planning Policies and a number of the National Planning Policies. It provides a statement of the Scottish Government’s policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It covers a wide range of topics including: Housing, Rural Development, Coastal Planning, Historic Environment, Landscape and Natural Heritage, Open Space and Physical Activity, Green Belts and Transport. It states that Planning authorities should consider access issues and should protect core and other important routes and access rights when preparing development plans and making decisions on planning applications. Authorities should ensure that there is consistency between the development plan, open space strategy, core paths plan, local transport strategy and outdoor access strategy. It also makes a number of recommendations in relation to provision for outdoor access in new development thereby demonstrating the links between the OAS and the planning process.</p>
Scottish Rural Property Business Association (SRPBA)	<p>The SRPBA is one of the main landowners/managers organisations in Scotland. Its strategic objectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bringing together those whose homes, interests and businesses are within our countryside and rural settlements – Demonstrating the wider benefits of our members’ activities to the community and to the Scottish rural economy – Contributing to the formulation of rural policy and to demonstrating a new approach in enhancing the political, social and economical climate within our sphere of influence – Promoting rural enterprise and rural development in Scotland
SHEP Dec 2011	<p>This provides Historic Scotland’s policy for scheduling and protecting Scotland’s nationally important monuments. The OAS will not adversely impact on and will assist in protecting, where possible, scheduled monuments.</p>
UK Biodiversity Action Plan	<p>This aims to conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK and to contribute to the conservation of global diversity through all appropriate measures. The OAS will assist in achieving the Plan’s objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To conserve and where practicable to enhance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The overall populations and natural ranges of native species and the quality and range of wildlife habitats and ecosystems (b) Internationally important and threatened species, habitats and ecosystems (c) Species, habitats and natural and managed ecosystems that are characteristic of local areas (d) The biodiversity of natural or semi-natural habitats where this has been diminished over recent past decades – To increase public awareness of, and involvement in, conserving biodiversity

Title

Summary

Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003

This Act makes provision for the protection of the water environment including ground water, surface water and wetlands, for or in connection with implementing the Water Framework Directive (WFD) including the requirement to establish River Basin Management. The OAS will assist in achieving the Act's objectives to:

- Prevent the deterioration and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems, including groundwater
- Promote sustainable water use
- Reduce pollution; contribute to the mitigation of floods and droughts

Wild Land Policy

Provides advice from Scottish Government to Planning Authorities on identifying wild land as an aspect of landscape character to be protected through land-use planning. It also advises Councils to identify and protect wild land in their development plans, as part of their policies for the conservation and enhancement of their areas. The OAS will take account of the Policy and will not adversely affect wild land in North Ayrshire.



Regional plans, programmes, strategies and guidance

Title	Summary
Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Strategy	This is still in development by the Ayrshire Economic Partnership and will provide a pan Ayrshire approach to tourism development. Given the nature of Ayrshire it is likely that green tourism and outdoor access will play a significant role in the Strategy. The OAS Action Plan will take account of the aims and objectives of the Strategy as it develops.
Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy	This strategy seeks to guide the development and management of woodland to support the local economy, contribute to community well-being and promote environmental excellence. The OAS will assist in achieving the Strategy's aims to: Safeguard and enhance areas of native and semi-natural woodland and promote development of wildlife corridors; safeguard and enhance policy woodlands; Landscape renewal and enhancement and Promotion of community woodlands.
Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan – Growing a Sustainable Ayrshire	The approved AJSP is the strategic land use-planning document for Ayrshire and provides the strategic planning context for the Local Plan. The OAS will assist in achieving the Plan's vision that: Ayrshire will be a competitive place contributing to a thriving Scotland, that is receptive to change, open and welcoming to new people, new ideas, new activities and new ways of living: with strong vibrant communities: a well-connected, growing, diversified and sustainable economy: an excellent quality of life and healthy environment: with all people enjoying the highest levels of prosperity, choice and accessibility in partnership with the wider West of Scotland.
Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan	This identifies proposals and actions to assist in the protection and conservation of biodiversity, which translate the Scottish and UK Biodiversity Strategies and action plans into effective action at a local level. The OAS will assist in achieving the Plan's objectives to: Safeguard against reduction of priority species populations and Safeguard against net loss of area or quality of key habitats in Ayrshire.
Central Scotland Green Network Strategy and Action Plan	<p>The Vision for the Central Scotland Green Network is of a place transformed by the creation of a high quality green network, which will enrich people's lives, promote economic prosperity, allow nature to flourish and help Scotland respond to the challenge of climate change. The prospectus identifies that green network will be a visible, attractive and accessible network of green and open spaces and countryside within and around our towns and cities, and interconnected across the whole of Central Scotland. It will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create well-designed, high quality settings for residential and business development – Tackle the problem of vacant and derelict land – Increase the quantity and improve the quality of green spaces in urban areas.

Title	Summary
Central Scotland Green Network Prospectus continued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Extend the area of woodland cover and restore peatlands, wetlands and other key natural storage, and flood risk management – Develop strategic walking and cycling networks for active travel and leisure – Enhance and create managed places for people to enjoy the outdoors – Enable greater community participation in the planning, improvement and management of greenspace and green networks – Integrate existing habitat networks and develop new habitat networks
Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park – Park Strategy	This provides the basis for the development of the Park’s work plans and is the central planning document for the Park. The OAS will assist in achieving the Strategy’s objective to provide a well managed quality landscape offering tourists, day visitors, locals and education groups access to a wide range of countryside recreational opportunities.
Regional Transport Strategy	<p>This sets out the actions and projects required until 2021 to make sure the region’s transport networks can help achieve a better quality of life for people in the west of Scotland. The OAS will assist in achieving the objectives to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase the proportion of trips undertaken by walking, cycling and public transport – Enhance the attractiveness, reliability and integration of the transport network – Ensure the provision of effective and efficient transport infrastructure and services to improve connectivity for people and freight – Promote and facilitate access that recognises the transport requirements of all – Improve health and protect the environment by minimising emissions and consumption of resources and energy by the transport system
NHS Ayrshire and Arran Towards a Mentally Flourishing Ayrshire and Arran	<p>The vision for the Strategy is the healthiest life for the people of Ayrshire and Arran through health promotion and prevention of mental illness. The OAS will assist in achieving its aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve mental health and well-being of the population - Support and maintain good mental health in the local population by addressing the range of issues that affect mental well-being - Improve the quality of life for people living in Ayrshire and Arran who already experience mental health problems - Prevent mental illness by reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors especially for people who are already vulnerable
NHS Ayrshire and Arran Obesity Strategy	NHS Ayrshire and Arran are in the process of producing an Obesity Strategy and it is envisaged that this will recognise the importance of physical activity in preventing and tackling obesity. The OAS will take account of the aims and objectives of the Strategy as it develops.

North Ayrshire Council plans, programmes, strategies and guidance

Title	Summary
Everybody In North Ayrshire	<p>Everybody in North Ayrshire is the Council and partners' Strategy to encourage interest and inspiration from the Commonwealth Games in 2014. Its vision is about providing opportunities for everybody to be Active Involved and Inspired. It is for 'Everybody' in North Ayrshire, building on the interest and excitement of the 2014 Commonwealth Games and other local events - we want your help to motivate and enthuse our communities. It identifies that everyone can contribute to this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Encouraging those who are already active, to be active more often: and those who are not to consider becoming so– Inspiring people to become involved and support them in achieving their goals– Enabling opportunities for increased participation in physical activity and sport– Assisting local businesses to take advantage of the opportunities which will arise from the Commonwealth Games– Utilising opportunities to promote social and cultural activities
Fit for the Future	<p>Fit for the Future outlines North Ayrshire Council and partners' strategy for physical activity and sports. It sets out the challenges faced in North Ayrshire for the future and the actions required to encourage people to be more active more often. Its vision is inspiring more people in North Ayrshire to be more active more often. It has four main themes: Places and Spaces, Strengthening and Developing Communities, Promotion and Profile and Opportunities. The OAS has a key role in achieving the outcomes identified under each of these themes including to increase the use of outdoor spaces and resources such as Country Parks and path networks.</p>
Isle of Arran Local Plan	<p>This sets out detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land on the Isle of Arran. Through the policies of the Plan, the Council seeks to work in partnership with the development industry and local people to manage, promote and control change for the economic, social and environmental benefit of the whole community. The OAS will inform the development of the new Local Development Plan and assist in meeting the existing Plan's objectives:</p> <p>To Protect the Environment: by securing a balance between the competing interests of nature conservation, farming, forestry, infrastructure provision, mineral extraction, tourism, leisure pursuits and development and ensuring that the historic heritage is conserved</p> <p>To Identify and Promote Opportunities: by encouraging investment to improve tourist and visitor facilities, supporting improved community facility provision and by seeking to secure necessary infrastructure developments</p> <p>To Control and Direct Development: by setting out criteria for development and providing guidance for the siting and design of new development</p>

Title	Summary
North Ayrshire (Excluding Arran) Local Plan	<p>This sets out detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land on mainland North Ayrshire and the Cumbraes. Through the policies of the Plan, the Council seeks to work in partnership with the development industry and local people to manage, promote and control change for the economic, social and environmental benefit of the whole community. The OAS will inform the development of the new Local Development Plan and assist in the objectives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Integrating land use with effective transport links – Supporting the development of tourism – Promoting development within the town centres – Protecting and enhancing the natural environment – Conserving the built heritage
North Ayrshire Core Paths Plan	<p>The Core Paths Plan identifies the basic framework of paths to provide reasonable access throughout North Ayrshire as required by Section 17 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. This was produced in partnership with the Outdoor Access Forum and through extensive consultation with the communities and organisations within North Ayrshire. This provides every town and village with a basic framework of paths for everyday journeys and recreation by local people and visitors. The Council has a duty to ensure that Core Paths are accessible, sign posted and promoted and the OAS will assist to implement and promote the Plan.</p>
North Ayrshire Council Disability Equality Scheme 2007-2010 Action Plan	<p>Outlines the Council's commitment to comply with the new duty to promote disability equality and ensures that Council services, buildings and facilities are accessible and meet everyone's needs. The OAS will reflect the provisions of the scheme and provide equitably for all sectors of the community</p>
North Ayrshire Council Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy	<p>The OAS will assist in meeting the Vision of the Strategy that by 2020 North Ayrshire will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Vibrant - with more businesses and jobs located in the area and have revitalised town centres. – Diverse - a wide range of businesses and industries attracting a range of people to live and work in the area. – Connected - the area will have a wider role in relation to the Glasgow City region through improved connectivity. – Ambitious - individuals and businesses will be more ambitious with the public sector providing support – Visible - individuals, businesses, policy makers and funders will have a clear sense of what North Ayrshire can offer

Title	Summary
North Ayrshire Council Local Transport Strategy	<p>This sets out the Transport Vision and Objectives of the Council and provides a five-year Action Plan for meeting local challenges and needs. The OAS will assist in achieving the vision to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Integrate all forms of transport, land use planning, and other strategic policies of the Council relating to economic regeneration, development and the environment; – Maintain and enhance the choice of mode of transport to ensure that all sections of the community have safe, secure and equal opportunity of access to all local facilities, and good transport links to other parts of the country.
North Ayrshire Council Plan	<p>The purpose of the Council Plan is to set out the vision, core objectives and key actions of the Council so that they are clear to the general public, to Council employees, to community planning partners, and to outside scrutiny bodies. The vision of the Council Plan is that North Ayrshire offers a better life, better services and better opportunities than ever before. The OAS will assist in achieving the key objectives to Regenerate our Communities and Increase Employment.</p>
North Ayrshire Joint Health Improvement Plan	<p>The North Ayrshire Joint Health Improvement Plan is a partnership document between the Community Planning Partners. It aims to improve the health of the people in North Ayrshire and to improve the health of the most disadvantaged at a faster rate, thereby reducing the growing health inequalities. The focus of the plan is on joint approaches to improving health which involve more than one service, agency and the community. It identifies a number of outcomes including increased physical activity in adults for which the OAS has a significant role to play in achieving.</p>
North Ayrshire Single Outcome Agreement	<p>The Single Outcome Agreement is an agreement between the Community Planning Partnership and the Scottish Government on the Outcomes to be achieved for North Ayrshire. It includes an Action Plan to demonstrate how these Outcomes will be achieved on the ground, and a set of Performance Indicators to measure progress over time. The OAS will assist in achieving a number of the outcomes set for the SOA including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Transport links to and from North Ayrshire have improved – North Ayrshire is a more attractive tourist destination – People are more active more often – The condition of roads, footways, path networks and lighting has improved – Our environment is protected and enhanced.
North Ayrshire Urban Woodlands Management Plan	<p>Provides aims, objectives and prescriptions for the management of woodlands in and around Irvine and Kilwinning for recreation, conservation and biodiversity. The OAS will assist in achieving and take the provisions of the Management Plan into account when addressing paths within the woodland sites.</p>

Title	Summary
North Ayrshire Integrated Children's Services Plan	<p>The vision and ambition for the Plan is for children in North Ayrshire to have A Better Childhood. The OAS will assist in achieving its outcomes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children and young people are safe - Children and young people are nurtured - Children and young people are healthy - Children and young people are active - Children and young people are respected and responsible - Children and young people are achieving - Children and young people are included.
North Ayrshire Play Strategy	<p>The Strategy focuses on the needs of children from 0 to 14 years old and aims to ensure that networks are established to support the development of play and that play services are sustainable. The OAS will assist in achieving the objectives of the Strategy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the importance of play for children's health and well-being - Ensure parks, housing estates, public spaces are as conducive to children's play as possible - Develop and maintain a variety of local and accessible dedicated play spaces - Make play provision fully inclusive and accessible - Enable play provision to reach the needs of those in "hard to reach" communities and those at risk from social exclusion.
North Ayrshire Sports and Pitches Strategy	<p>The Strategy provides direction for the ongoing development of sports and pitches in North Ayrshire.</p>
North Ayrshire Outdoor Education Strategy	<p>North Ayrshire Council is in the process of producing an Outdoor Education Strategy. The OAS will take account of the aims and objectives of the Strategy as it develops.</p>

Other local plans, programmes or strategies

Title	Summary
Arran Paths and Tracks Strategy	<p>Provides the strategic vision for outdoor access development on the Island of Arran and the direction for the development of the South Island and Arran Access Projects. The OAS will reflect and assist in achieving the aims and objectives of the Strategy.</p>

resource audit

The following provides a summary of the potential sources of funding and key resources available for outdoor access development in North Ayrshire. This is by no means exhaustive as the opportunities available constantly alter, but provides an overview of the resources. Local Council for Voluntary Service or volunteering services will also be able to provide advice and assistance in relation to potential funding sources.

Fund	Priorities and Eligibility	Contact
Big Lottery Fund – 2014 Communities	This is a micro-grant programme focused on building a legacy of well-being before and beyond the Commonwealth Games. The aims of the scheme are to encourage more people to take part in sport or physical activity, to increase the numbers of those volunteering in sport or physical activity and to bring communities together through sport and volunteering. The scheme is open to grass roots sports and community organisations.	Big Lottery Fund www.biglotteryfund.org.uk 0870 240 2391
Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) Development Fund	The Fund is intended to support the development of proposals for early projects that will deliver the Green Network on the ground. It is managed by Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage. Projects must demonstrate that they will assist in delivering the CSGN goals and priority actions, change on the ground and demonstrate how the funding will add value to the proposals. It is open to all organisations and individuals that can demonstrate they are delivering CSGN priorities within the proposed CSGN activity area. This scheme only covers mainland North Ayrshire.	Forestry Commission Scotland – Central Scotland Conservancy www.forestry.gov.uk 01698 368530
Climate Challenge Fund	The Climate Challenge Fund forms part of the Scottish Government’s Sustainable Action Fund. The Climate Challenge Fund is administered by Keep Scotland Beautiful and made funding of £27.4million available to communities across the three financial years 2008-11. Applicants must be Scottish based and by the time a grant is approved they must also be legally constituted, not-for-profit community groups. This may also include communities of interest, with a defined geography and where they form a legally constituted group. The grant scheme specifically requires that the community must be responsible for all of the decision making processes.	Keep Scotland Beautiful www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org 01786 468779

Fund	Priorities and Eligibility	Contact
Community Outdoor Access Grant Scheme	This scheme is operated by North Ayrshire Council to provide small grants to local community and voluntary organisations to develop outdoor access projects. The scheme is currently under review for the year 2011/12 onwards. Please contact the Access Officer if more information is required.	North Ayrshire Council www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/coags 01294 324766
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	The Main Fund has a broad range of interests including education and learning, the environment and helping disadvantaged people to integrate into society. Projects should: address a significant gap in provision, develop or strengthen good practice, challenge convention in order to address a difficult issue, test out new ideas or practices, take an enterprising approach to achieving its aims or set out to influence policy or change behaviour more widely	Esmee Fairbairn Foundation www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk 020 7812 3700
Events Scotland – National Events Programme	The Programme aims to develop domestic tourism across Scotland by supporting sporting and cultural events which take place outside the main cities. It supports the strategic development and assists in growing the media profile and audiences. It is open to all event organisers whose event meets the aims, objectives and criteria of the programme.	Events Scotland www.eventscotland.org 0131 472 2313
Forestry for People Challenge Fund	The Forestry for People Challenge Fund is intended to help groups realise the potential contribution of local woodlands to the health, learning and strengthening of communities. Eligible work could include guidance, contribution towards staff time, feasibility studies and health education projects. The scheme is open to community and voluntary groups.	Forestry Commission Scotland – Central Scotland Conservancy www.scotland.gov.uk/srdp 01698 368560
Heritage Lottery – Your Heritage Grants	The Your Heritage Programme offers grants between £3000 and £50,000 inclusive for projects that relate to the local, regional or national heritage of the UK (except the Channel Islands and Isle of Man). Heritage Lottery Fund welcome applications that help people to learn about, look after and celebrate heritage in a fun and enjoyable way. The project must conserve the UK’s diverse heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy or help more people, a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage.	Heritage Lottery Fund www.hlf.org.uk 0131 225 9450

Fund	Priorities and Eligibility	Contact
Heritage Lottery Fund – Landscape Partnerships	Landscape Partnerships are normally delivered by a partnership made up of regional, national and local organisations with an interest in the area, community groups and members of the community. The Programme is based round a portfolio of smaller projects, which together provide long-term social, economic and environmental benefits for rural areas. To be eligible for a grant the overall project must identify an area of countryside that has a distinctive landscape character and is recognised and valued by local people.	Heritage Lottery Fund www.hlf.org.uk 0131 225 9450
Heritage Lottery Fund – Parks for People	Local Authorities as well as not-for-profit organisations that own public parks and gardens can apply for grants of between £250,000 and £5 million for the regeneration of parks and public gardens. To be considered for funding, applicants need to show that the community values the park as part of their heritage; the parks meets local social, economic and environmental needs; and the park management actively involves local people. The scheme is open to the owners of public parks and gardens.	Heritage Lottery Fund www.hlf.org.uk 0131 225 9450
Interreg IVA	The Interreg IVA Programme for Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland is a European Union supported Structural Funds Programme which seeks to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders. It supports strategic cross-border co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable region. It is open to national and local authorities; public agencies and non-profit organisations.	http://www.seupb.eu
LEADER Programme	LEADER is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme, a part-European funded programme aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. There are two Programmes covering North Ayrshire – Ayrshire LEADER covering the mainland rural areas and Argyll and the Islands LEADER covering the islands. The main aims of the Programme are to support community based projects that will assist in Revitalising Rural Communities and Building Rural Community Capacity. The Programme is open to business partnerships, community organisations, individuals and public agencies and collaborations between these sectors.	Ayrshire LEADER Programme www.ayrshire-leader.com Argyll and the Islands LEADER Programme www.argyllandtheislandsleader.org.uk

Fund	Priorities and Eligibility	Contact
LIFE +	The Life+ Programme is the European Union's main fund for supporting nature conservation and environmental projects. Offering support to both public and private bodies, it has two main themes: Nature and Biodiversity and the Environment. Its supports large scale projects in Scotland that contribute to the implementation of the European Union's Birds and Habitats Directives and halting biodiversity loss.	Scottish Natural Heritage www.snh.org.uk/funding LIFE@snh.gov.uk
North Ayrshire Landfill Communities Fund	This is a national scheme which enables landfill operators to contribute 6% of their landfill tax towards environmental improvements. In terms of outdoor access it can fund projects that provide or maintain public amenities or parks within ten miles of a landfill site, involve reclaiming land and deliver biodiversity conservation. Applications are invited on an annual basis and must meet the ENTRUST objectives and regulations. A full description of the Landfill Communities Fund is available on www.entrust.org.uk	North Ayrshire Council www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk 01294 324777
Paths for All Partnership	Paths for All promote walking for health and multi-use paths and can provide grant funding to support initiatives which aim to encourage people to walk more and that assist path development. For community based work there are small (up to £2,000) and large grants (up to £40,000) available. For workplaces, grants are available up to £2,000. Applications for small and workplace grants are welcomed all year round.	Paths for All www.pathsforall.org.uk 01259 218888
People's Postcode Trust	The People's Postcode Trust funds projects that meet one or more of its priorities of: poverty prevention, advancement of health, community development, public sports, human rights and environmental protection. All projects must have a clear charitable purpose with visible results, and last no longer than 3 months. It is open to community groups, charities, not-for-profit organisations and community interest companies.	People's Postcode Trust www.postcodetrust.org.uk 0131 555 7287
Rural Development Contracts	Rural Development Contracts - Rural Priorities is an integrated funding mechanism which will deliver targeted environmental, social and economic benefits. It is a competitive mechanism to ensure that contracts are awarded for the proposals which are best able to deliver the agreed regional priorities. Individuals, businesses and properly constituted groups can apply. Additional eligibility criteria may also apply for specific individual options. The priorities relating to outdoor access development for Ayrshire include biodiversity, landscape, built and cultural heritage and public access.	Scottish Government www.scotland.gov.uk/srdp

Fund	Priorities and Eligibility	Contact
Scottish Natural Heritage Grant Scheme	The scheme offers grant support for a wide range of urban and rural projects not covered by the Scottish Rural Development Programme. Funding is available for a range of projects that assist to deliver their priorities of: supporting opportunities for people to appreciate and enjoy the outdoors, encouraging volunteering, supporting opportunities to learn about Scotland's nature and landscapes and supporting community development. It is mostly aimed at community groups and voluntary organisations but applications by public bodies and individuals will be considered.	Scottish Natural Heritage www.snh.org.uk/funding 01292 261392
Sustrans Scotland Funding	Sustrans Scotland offers three main grant schemes to Local Authorities to develop cycling, cycle paths and associated infrastructure. These are the National Cycle Network and Associated Projects fund, Short Links fund and Tackling The School Run Fund. The schemes are open annually on a competitive basis and require match funding using internal Council resources or other external funding.	Sustrans Scotland www.sustrans.org.uk 0131 539 8122
Woods In and Around Town (WIAT)	The Woods In and Around Towns Challenge Fund is targeted at improving existing areas of woodland, bringing them into sustainable management by carrying out an agreed programme of work. The aim is to regenerate the woodland environment close to centres of population and improve the quality of life for people living and working there. Owners or occupiers of woodland, users of woodland, businesses and Local Authorities can all apply for funding under the scheme.	Forestry Commission Scotland – Central Scotland Conservancy www.scotland.gov.uk/srdp 01698 368530



Other sources of funding or resources for outdoor access development include:

Community Benefit Fund – The Community Benefit Fund welcomes applications from constituted community groups located within the towns of Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston and from the island of Arran. Local groups will be given a priority, national organisations will only be considered if their application demonstrates a direct benefit to the communities of Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Stevenston and Arran. Applications for environmental projects will have a priority in grant funding, but the Fund will support applications which do not have an environmental perspective. There is no minimum or maximum limit of grant funding from the Fund (although grants will not normally exceed £4,000 and any award above this figure will be the exception). Grant awards will be treated as one off contributions except in exceptional circumstances.

Commuted Payments Schemes – These schemes ensure the longer term management of land, without significant costs being imposed on the landowner(s) by a managing body utilising funding from a development or other external source. In the case of new developments this may be undertaken by the land being transferred to a managing body combined with a one-off payment to enable them to carry out the management.

In Kind Contributions – Community led and small scale projects can greatly benefit from in kind contributions such as the donation of materials, the use of equipment or the provision of unpaid labour. This can have a profound effect on the ability of groups to deliver projects and can be used in some cases to match fund grant aid from funding organisations.

Development Management Process – The Council as Planning Authority is required to take account of access rights and Core Paths in determining planning applications. In addition to this there are a number of supporting Policies within the Local Plan which require developers to ensure that developments such as new industrial, commercial or housing developments are accessible by foot and by bike and the development of these will result in improvements to the overall network without expense to communities or the Local Authority.

