

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	31 January 2012
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	The Pictish Way
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/12/030

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is in response to Councillor Ian Yuill's Motion to this Committee on 13th September 2011 about the creation of a new long distance path route, the Pictish Way, between Aberdeen and Perthshire.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Note the content of this report
2. Instruct officers to monitor developments on the Pictish Way by partners and attend Steering Group meetings (so far held in Forfar) where resources allow.
3. Instruct officers to report back to this Committee after the summer recess on the findings of a report that Angus Council intend to commission into the development of the route.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Within Aberdeen City development of the route would largely relate to promotion and/or signage, as the majority of the route is in place. However further information on who the route will be for, how and when it will be used and therefore the facilities and standards that will be required is necessary before a full picture of the likely costs can be obtained. There are several sources of funding for route development, improvement and promotion, however as the Pictish Way within Aberdeen would follow an already developed and promoted route, it may be unlikely that these bodies would be willing to fund additional branding. However other funding sources, such as private sector sponsorship or Scottish Enterprise may be willing to invest in the route. The project will have revenue budget implications in terms of staff time and there may be an expectation of some contribution in the future towards joint promotion of the route such as website development and maintenance. No further information on this is available at present.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 At its meeting of 13th September 2011 this Committee approved Councillor Ian Yuill's Motion *"amongst other things, to request officers to participate in the Royal Deeside, Angus and Perthshire Way Steering Group which was already discussing the establishment of the "Pictish Way", and that officers report back to the next meeting of the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee regarding the terms of the motion, and in particular detailing the outstanding aspects required to establish and signpost the proposed "Pictish Way", as well as the financial cost of achieving this"*.
- 5.2 The proposal for a new long distance route from Aberdeen to Perth was initiated by Councillor Ian Yuill and Councillor Bob Ellis of Perth and Kinross Council. This was later amended to Pitlochry rather than Perth as a start/finish point by a wider working group. The intention is for the Way to be promoted primarily as a walking route. It is envisaged that the walk would take approximately five days to complete with a total length of 107 miles.
- 5.3 In August 2011 a Royal Deeside, Angus & Perthshire Way Steering Group was initiated, which has since been renamed The Pictish Way Steering Group and widened to involve all of the access authorities affected by the project: Perth and Kinross Council, Angus Council, Cairngorm National Park Authority, Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council.
- 5.4 Initial identification of a route was undertaken by Councillor Bob Ellis of Perth and Kinross Council, who concluded that useable paths already exist for most of the route except for a stretch near Pitlochry, and that there may be landowner issues on the section through the Balmoral Estate. Upgrading or path repairs will be necessary on some sections within Angus Council's area. Over and above this, signing or waymarking is required for some sections not already signed, and for the whole route if specific Pictish Way branded signage is necessary. Web-based promotion will also need to be developed.
- 5.5 Although Aberdeen's section of the route is relatively straightforward, in that it is envisaged that most of it would follow the existing Deeside Way, no specific route has been identified between Footdee and the start of the Deeside Way at Duthie Park. The main action for Aberdeen's section would be the installation and maintenance of signage, unless the use of virtual waymarking is intended, with an internet-based format.

- 5.6 In route development terms it is important that paths are fit for purpose. In establishing what a route's purpose is, it is necessary to take into consideration the likely and target users; their expectations, skills, experience, mode of travel, as well as factors such as likely length of stages, and therefore accommodation and facilities available, and expected level of use.
- 5.7 In order to identify demand for the route, a questionnaire was developed for gathering views on the proposal at the Outdoors Show held in Glasgow in October 2011. This showed a positive response to the concept. However given that the route varies greatly in type – from urban, through lowland to mountain terrain, it is necessary to carry out more specific and targeted research in order to ensure that the route is successful. Potential or target users will need to be prepared, or aware of which stages of the route they intend to attempt, and equipped for these, and appropriate support facilities will need to be in place. Such facilities could include accommodation availability and access / transport, baggage transfer (which needs to offer a service between Ballater and Glen Clova) transport to and from the start/end points or key stages.
- 5.8 As a concept, the development of a new long distance route starting or ending in Aberdeen would appear to offer economic development benefits to the city, through generating visitors. It is important however that the development of the route is well thought out, provides a good quality visitor experience and that all route issues, such as land ownership, maintenance, facilities and promotion are addressed at the outset for the entire route. This is necessary in order to avoid piecemeal implementation and weakening the brand by promoting an incomplete product.
- 5.9 A feasibility study that Angus Council intend to commission (with funding that they have access to from an EU project) will consider whether the route in its entirety is possible, whether there is demand for it and will detail the works required to bring it up to a fit for purpose standard. This will include identifying land ownership, any likely access issues, waymarking / promotional requirements, necessary path improvements, costs, responsibilities for ongoing maintenance and accommodation and baggage handling issues. It is Angus Council's intention that this study be completed by 31st March 2012.

6. IMPACT

The Single Outcome Agreement's Wealthier and Fairer outcome is most directly relevant to this report, as the Pictish Way could attract leisure tourists to the city, although none of the actions listed in the SOA relate to such a project. This also relates to the Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking objective of Aberdeen being an even more attractive place in which to do business. This could support the EP&I

service priority within the 5 Year Business Plan of encouraging future economic and business development in the city. The project is not specified as a priority within the Service Plan.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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