

DRAFT GREEN NETWORK STRATEGY CONSULTATION

COMMENTS BY MILNGAVIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Milngavie Community Council (MCC) commends the Council on the production of the Green Network Strategy - a really worthwhile initiative with many potential benefits. We are pleased that the relationship between greenspace and health and well being is now being recognised in planning.

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

Some people would benefit from slightly larger, blacker text - the photographs could perhaps take up less space. Others would like to know where a particular view is taken from and would appreciate (unobtrusive) labels.

It is a difficult task to condense all the relevant material into a document of reasonable length, but residents might relate to it better if more detail were included for their local areas.

Obviously there are overlaps with the Active Travel Strategy and Open Space Strategy. Responses to those consultations were submitted previously and would be good to have very occasional updates on progress in implementing those strategies.

A Reference section would be useful.

2. COMMENTS ON MAPS

On many maps the background map is unclear (fuzzy on the on-line version) and it is difficult to work out where a place is. The coloured lines are too thick, obscuring more than they need to, and highlighted areas are filled in with opaque colour, obscuring relevant information underneath.

Map 1.

The orange line denoting green network links could be narrower and sharper because in some places it spreads out to obscure the green network nodes - e.g. at Lennox Park, Allander Park and Craigton Woods in Milngavie. Cloberfield, which adjoins Allander Park and part of the same Centenary Field, does not appear as a node.

It is confusing that the map does not show the paths within Mugdock Country Park.

The map includes a core path that does NOT EXIST, connecting Dougalston to Craigmaddie Reservoir. This appears also on Maps 3, 4, 16 and Figures 16, 17. Please see our comments under "Access links to Milngavie Reservoirs".

Map 2.

The Clyde Coastal Path (CCP) should also be included. This is the newest part of the Firth o' Clyde Rotary Trail, which links the Mull of Galloway to Milngavie and the West

Highland Way (WHW). Like the WHW, it is part of the International Appalachian Trail (Scotland) and therefore has international significance.

The routes making up the John Muir Trail, and its extension to the west, should also be indicated.

The strategic route along the Allander through Milngavie is labelled Allander Way (AW) at a point north of the town centre, where it is in fact part of the WHW/CCP. The AW is the part running south from Milngavie Town Centre.

The last 2km of the AW is obscured by the black line of the ED/Glasgow City boundary.

Where it crosses a promontory of Glasgow City, the Kelvin Way is shown but not the habitat corridor of the River Kelvin.

MCC suggests that, for clarity, it would be helpful to indicate strategic access corridors and strategic habitat corridors on separate maps. The strategic access corridors map should indicate which regional routes are parts of long distance trails. Their extensions through adjoining authorities could be indicated by dotted lines of the appropriate colour.

Map 3.

There is also potential to link the east of the authority to Mugdock Country Park via Baldernock, Dougalston and the Reservoirs - please see comment under "Access links to Milngavie Reservoirs".

Readers may wish to know why certain components are considered to be of poor quality, but there is no accompanying text to explain this, or reference to another document.

Map 5.

It would be helpful if the routes of the River Kelvin and Forth & Clyde Canal were continued as coloured dotted lines where they run through neighbouring authorities. This applies also to Maps 10 and 12.

Map 6.

The blue line of the Glazert Water habitat corridor is largely obscured by the red line of the core path, at least in the hard copy.

Map 14.

Again the Clyde Coastal Path should be indicated on this map. It is a long distance route providing access to Mugdock Country Park from West Dunbartonshire and beyond.

This map omits the Barloch Moor LNCS

Map 16.

Milngavie has a large number of important green network features but the scale of this

map is too small to show them. The map should include the Milngavie Reservoirs and Drumclog Muir, which are part of Milngavie. Due to the density of population and features, our submission to the Local Development Plan included a request for the towns of Bearsden and Milngavie to be considered as separate communities areas in the next LDP. We suggest that focusing on each of these areas separately would make this document easier for local communities to follow. Please see our comments under "Green Network Opportunities in and around Milngavie".

Again the important new link, the Clyde Coastal Path, is not shown

It is unclear why Dougalston is not coloured yellow, as with other privately owned open spaces.

3. COMMENTS ON GREEN NETWORK OPPORTUNITIES IN AND AROUND MILNGAVIE

Apart from their importance for local people, the green places within and surrounding Milngavie have been a popular destination for city dwellers since Victorian times, facilitated by the railway line opened in 1863. Some spaces have deteriorated and access is poor in places, but recently sections of the community have seized opportunities for improvements, with help and advice from the Council, particularly advice on funding. We consider that community initiatives should be recognised within the Strategy, with encouragement to groups to identify further opportunities, pointing out that funds may be available to them that the Council cannot access.

Some details of community projects are included in the sections below.

The town is now also a place where long distance routes meet, and this could present economic opportunities. We strongly support the aspiration to improve the connection between the Allander and Kelvin Ways to allow easier off-road access to Glasgow, and to extend the Kelvin Way to North Lanarkshire.

Mugdock and Craigmaddie Reservoirs lie within the town of Milngavie - the people who live in the cottages on the reservoirs site are very much Milngavie residents. Therefore the reservoirs should be included within the section on green network opportunities for Milngavie unless considered separately as strategic opportunity. (Drumclog Muir also lies within Milngavie, though it is now managed by Mugdock Country Park (MCP)

Milngavie Reservoirs - a Strategic Asset - why not a Strategic Opportunity?

For over a century the Mugdock and Craigmaddie Reservoirs were an important green asset for the whole Greater Glasgow area. The designed landscape and recreational paths within the site were once maintained to a very high standard by Glasgow Corporation, in celebration of the city's outstanding engineering achievement. In 2001 a survey of 3000+ visitors by Friends of Milngavie Reservoirs (FoMR) showed that every postcode in the Glasgow area, and places beyond, were represented.

Around this time Scottish Water (SW) lodged a planning application for a new water

treatment works within the site. Since this would diminish the recreational asset, EDC included within the planning conditions and legal agreement proposals to mitigate the effects and to provide further opportunities. Not all of these have been realised, including the Ranger Service. Condition 55 required that SW produce, in consultation with the local community, a conservation and recreation management plan for the reservoirs. It was to include access opportunities for all abilities, both within the site and with the wider area. After three years of meetings, Milngavie Reservoirs Conservation and Recreation Plan (MRCaRP) was published in 2006, however since then it has largely been gathering dust. This was partly because it recommended the formation of a Trust to take matters forward, which never happened. However the opportunities are still there. East Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2 states:

Milngavie Reservoirs – The Council will continue to work in partnership with Scottish Water and the local community to deliver appropriate tourism and leisure related facilities identified in the Milngavie Reservoir Conservation & Recreation Management Plan.

The MRCaRP is available on MCC's website: <http://milngavie.org/mrcarp.pdf>

Two years ago the community group FoMR took the initiative and approached the Council's greenspace officers regarding wildflower planting projects, and SW about tree planting to restore the designed landscape. For all of these funding was obtained. Last year SW stated that, whilst in its first decade it had concentrated on increasing its efficiency, it now wished to widen its remit. It has been working with FoMR to produce an action plan, which will include restoring the built heritage and providing better signage and interpretation.

It is important that the Council supports and builds on this work, including through the Green Network Strategy.

Access Links to Milngavie Reservoirs, and its role as a Stepping Stone to Mugdock Country Park

The section on 'Mugdock Country Park Strategic Opportunities' highlights a desire for all ability off-road access to the south of the park. However the easiest and most direct off-road access to Mugdock Castle and Visitor Centre for residents from the east of the authority, for many residents of Milngavie and for people arriving by train is likely to be via the reservoirs. For this reason, and because the reservoirs form an important destination in their own right, links to it should be highlighted within the Strategy, and any issues with them resolved. However the maps omit two links that are currently heavily used, but include one that does not exist:

1. Link between the north west gates of Mugdock Reservoir and MCP.

Currently there is an easy link which uses about 200m of footway on Mugdock Road and about 100m of an unofficial path just inside an unused, steeply sloping field within the Stirling boundary. This path leads to a similar one within MCP. Problems may arise in future because the field is privately owned.

2. Link between West Highland Way and the south west gates of Mugdock Reservoir

This link gives very easy access to the reservoirs and thence to MCP. Currently it is probably the most popular route from the west side of Milngavie and for walkers from further west on the Clyde Coastal Path.

The part of the WHW running through Mugdock Wood uses most of an old driveway from Mugdock Road to Craigallian House, 3km to the west. The access on Mugdock Road is close to the gates into Mugdock Reservoir. Whilst the part of the driveway which is designated WHW is well maintained, the easternmost 400m leading to Mugdock Road, also a core path, has become narrower year on year. It is now only 30cm wide as opposed to more than 4m some 20 years ago. This means it can be used by cyclists and able people in single file, but those less steady on their feet or pushing prams are excluded.

It also means that less able residents from the north of the town cannot so easily access the Allander Park/ Drumclog Muir greenspace. Comments regarding this issue were submitted at the time of the OS Strategy consultation.

Perhaps the strategy should focus on maintaining existing popular routes rather than creating a challenging and expensive new route.

3. Link between Craigmaddie Reservoir and Dougalston

At the time of the water treatment works application, EDC's aspiration was to make walking and cycling links to the reservoirs and thence to MCP from the east of the authority via Baldernock and Dougalston.

To fulfil the planning condition requiring a link from Dougalston to Craigmaddie Reservoir, SW agreed to provide a path through their new Bankell Reservoir site. This appears on maps as a core path on various maps in the Strategy, but in fact it DOES NOT EXIST.

This was pointed out at the time of the Core Path consultation, but the line on the maps has persisted. If SW is unwilling to provide this link then alternative links should be explored.

The Allander Water Green Corridor

Except at the bridge in the town centre, Milngavie is cut in two by the Allander Water and the parks and green spaces along its course. All these green areas have potential for significant improvement and should be considered as under performing greenspace. There are many opportunities for improvement where access is poor, for visual enhancement and for interpretation of the wildlife and the industrial heritage connected with the river. Recently local community groups have started to seize the opportunities presented, and we feel this should be recognised within the Green Network Strategy. Some brief notes on the projects that have been initiated are provided below:

A group of volunteers from MCC and other local organisations is recovering a derelict overgrown area on the north side of the Library/Community Education Centre, between the river and the West Highland Way. It used to be a forest play park and the intention now is to provide a green play area and outdoor classroom. This project has been guided by EDC Greenspace and is funded by a Stalled Spaces grant. The group would like to extend their efforts to the adjacent pond area, which is in a poor state.

At the end of last year, a subgroup of MCC, Making the Most of Milngavie (MMM), produced a Community Action Plan for Milngavie following extensive consultation with the local community. This recognised the importance of the Allander green corridor, and a number of action points in the plan relate to this. MMM has since evolved to a separate organisation, the Milngavie Community Development Trust (MCDT), with subgroups working on specific projects along this corridor. The Community Action Plan may be downloaded at www.milngaviedt.co.uk

The action point that received the highest score was for developing a masterplan for Lennox Park, a central and potentially very attractive park with the river running through. It is currently little used and subject to vandalism, partly because it contains a football pitch surfaced with red blaes and so is no longer useable. Consultation with the public on ideas for this open space is currently underway. Since there are deprived areas adjacent to the park, bringing it back into use will be particularly beneficial,

There is an action point to improve access along the entire length of the Allander, from the Staney Brig to the River Kelvin. The northernmost section of this stretch is part of the Clyde Coastal Path, which is then joined by the West Highland Way as far as the town centre. The section from the town centre to the River Kelvin is the Allander Way. To avoid confusion, MCDT use "Allander Water Core Path" to refer to the total stretch.

Another sub-group is paying special attention to the start of the WHW as far as the Iron Bridge on Clober Road: signage (currently WHW walkers get lost), wildlife and heritage interpretation (currently totally lacking) and visual enhancements. Moreover the aim is to make this section totally accessible by wheelchair, with a circular route returning through a wooded area, Milngavie in Bloom, aided by the local Ramblers and Scouts, are also making a difference to this area with clearing and attractive planting.

Improving the first part of the Allander Way as far as the fish ladder would also have many benefits. It passes the children's play area and better signage and interpretation could lead them down to learn about the wildlife and former industries connected with the river. The fish ladder, constructed in 1999 to allow salmon to bypass the weir and return to the upper reaches of the once-polluted Clyde, symbolises an improvement in one aspect of biodiversity. To have a fish ladder within a town centre may be unique; it is a dramatic feature and more could be made of it as a tourist attraction. However access is poor because the path drops steeply to the underpass, excluding disabled people. Upgrading would of course also benefit access to Lennox Park.

(Regarding community projects, although not within this green corridor, mention should also be made of Milngavie Primary School's splendid project creating a community orchard with beehives, funded by Tesco.)

Other Green Network opportunities within Milngavie

Milngavie was once surrounded by large estates, now largely built on or converted to golf courses, but the remnants continue have high biodiversity value and are important for the local community. To ensure continued protection and hopefully improvement, MCC would like to see the local nature conservation sites at Dougalston in the east and Craigton Woods in the west considered for designation as local nature reserves. Significantly, Milngavie's secondary school lies adjacent to Craigton Woods and the core path is used by the students. MCC supports the comments by Mains Estate Residents Association regarding the green network on the west side of Milngavie.

The biodiversity value of Dougalston has diminished in recent years but it is possible that upgrading the designation could partially reverse this. The Strategy could perhaps highlight the achievements of Friends of Lenzie Moss or Kilmardinny PALS, encouraging other residents groups to follow suit, although the above green spaces are publicly owned.

Appendix 1. which lists Local Nature Conservation Sites, omits Tannoch Loch and Barloch Moor. These sites were designated shortly before the publication of Local Plan 2, and are related to each other but not to the long-standing LNCS of Mugdock and Craigmaddie Reservoirs which take water from Loch Katrine.

September 2016