

Portaneevy, Ballintoy and Clare Park, Ballycastle Trailhead and Scenic Viewpoint	12th March 2019
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets Promote our tourism offer locally and internationally Prosperity, Health and Wellbeing and Cohesive Community
Outcome	Improved access to our natural environment. Development of visitor economy and health and well-being opportunities.
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism & Recreation
Cost: (If applicable)	£482,000 maximum estimated project costs including professional fees. £72,300 potential cost to Council based on 15% cash contribution No grant aid has been identified. The purpose of these figures is to give indicative potential scenarios should funding becomes available.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Elected Members to proceed to, and complete on, Stage 2 of the Council's Capital Investment process for works at Portaneevy Ballintoy and Clare Park Ballycastle. (Economic appraisal, design to tender and procurement for Contractor).

Background

In December 2018 Council Officers presented a report asking for approval to complete on Stage 1 of the Capital Works process for these projects. The outline feasibility for the proposal is captured under the Causeway Coast Way blueprint, approved by Council in April 2018 which sets out strategic direction and proposed interventions to develop an international way-marked walking trail along the coastal perimeter of the Council area. In addition to this, a project is being developed on a cross-border basis to advance the International Appalachian Trail which transverses the North Sperrins Way, the Causeway Coast Way and the Moyle Way. An Economic Appraisal for this work is being worked up in conjunction with the DAERA Rural Development Programme under Co-operation Projects. At a Members consultation workshop in October 2018, the outline proposals for Portaneevy and Clare Road were presented.

Project Proposal

Since December, the Council's Tourism and Recreation team have been working with the Infrastructure team on the development of the Causeway Coast Way experience at Portaneevy Ballintoy and Clare Park Ballycastle, and have developed outline concepts for Elected Members consideration. These will be presented at the Leisure and Development Committee meeting.

Outline Proposals

Portaneevy

- Improve the infrastructure for the Causeway Coast Way trail and the Causeway Coastal Route at the site. Works will include a walking path around the perimeter of the site, sensitive upgrading of the viewpoint and car/coach parking facilities.
- An improved viewing deck will provide scenic vistas overlooking Carrick-a-Rede.
- A new off-road coastal section of the Causeway Coast Way trail (approx. 800m in length) connecting the above-mentioned roadside footway with the existing coastal path serving the Rope Bridge is being planned.

In the longer term it is hoped to create a safe roadside footway to facilitate the Causeway Coast Way (CCW) walking trail at a dangerous 'pinch-point' on Whitepark Road just west of Portaneevy car park/viewpoint. This is not scoped within any potential project for the near future.

Clare Park

- Link the two existing PROWs through the holiday park to provide coastal access subject to detailed design being presented for consideration.
- Works will require construction of a path and cliff edge stabilisation works along with fencing.
- Land owner agreement for the transfer of land will also be required.

Funding opportunity

Officers are seeking financial support for this project and are hopeful that monies may become available through the Rural Development Programme's Co-operation Projects scheme. Officers will be requesting that consideration be given to extending one of the current programmes managed by the LAG which is currently being implemented in partnership with the Council. An opportunity exists to integrate the proposals within this report with an application through DAERA for the International Appalachian Trail project. It should be noted that consideration and approval is required from the LAG board and will be subject to the monies being available and not allocated to another prioritised scheme. The conditions of the Rural Development Programme funding require that many of the necessary statutory approvals are in place and that the procurement for a contractor is also in place. Officers are therefore keen to progress on Stage 2; to enable meeting the DAERA conditions of 'Offer' should monies become available. This requires that planning applications, feasibility studies and procurement is in place by the mid 2019. It is hoped that the Economic Appraisal will be covered as part of the DAERA Co-operation Project preparatory work for the International Appalachian Trail.

Next Steps

Subject to Members approval, Officers would propose to advance the design and appraisals for the project and complete the procurement process for a contractor, subject to funding being confirmed. Officers will report back to the Leisure and Development Committee with an update on funding before seeking approval for a Stage 3 decision. Any works will be subject to planning and statutory consents. The earliest possible start date for capital works will be September 2019.

Recommendation

The Leisure and Development Committee is asked to approve the advancement of the Portaneevy and Clare Road elements of the Causeway Coast Way project to Stage 2 of the Council's Capital Investment process.