

Portaneevey and Clare Park Trailhead and Scenic Viewpoint	11th December 2018
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets 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)	£300k maximum project costs £45k potential cost to Council based on 15% cash contribution

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members to proceed to, and complete on, Stage 1 of the Council's Capital Investment process for works at Portaneevey and Clare Park. (Economic appraisal, design to tender and procurement for Contractor).

Background

In April 2018 Council Officers presented a blueprint document on the Causeway Coast Way which received Members' approval to pursue the strategic direction and where possible deliver on the proposed interventions detailed. These included the development of suitable sites for walking trailheads and the creation of new off road sections on coastal lands.

At the Members' Consultation Workshop on Thursday 4 October, Council Officers presented on how these possible infrastructure schemes at Portaneevey, Ballintoy and Clare Road Coastal Path could advance the project set out in the Blueprint.

Project Proposal

The Council's Tourism and Recreation team have been working on a number of possible locations for development of the Causeway Coast Way in conjunction with the Infrastructure team and have developed outline concepts, details of which will be presented at the Leisure and Development Committee meeting.

Portaneevey Trailhead and Causeway Coast Way Coastal Path proposal

The ultimate plan is 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 Portaneevey car park/viewpoint, including the continuation of the CCW trail around the perimeter of the site, to include sensitive upgrading of the viewpoint and parking facilities overlooking Carrick-a-Rede. Additionally the creation of a new off-road coastal section of the CCW trail (approx. 800m in length) connecting the above-mentioned roadside footway with the existing coastal path serving the Rope Bridge is being planned.

Clare Park, Ballycastle

This site is located at a holiday park adjacent to Clare Road on the western side of the town and was once part of the Hugh McGildowny's Estate. Public Rights Of Way (PROW) exist at both the western end and eastern end and there is an opportunity to link both PROWs and create a stunning section of coastal walking for the Causeway Coast Way. The site enjoys panoramic views of Rathlin Island, east to Fairhead and the Mull of Kintyre and North to Islay. The proposal is to 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. Two possible projects are the Coastal Access and Dunes Project and 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 requires that many of the necessary statutory approvals are in place and that the procurement for contractor is also in place. Officers are therefore keen to progress on Stage 1 and secure advanced approval to complete to Stage 2 of the Capital works process, to enable meeting DAERA conditions of 'Offer' should monies become available. This requires that planning applications, feasibility studies and procurement is in place by the end of the first quarter of 2019.

Next Steps

Subject to Elected Members approval, Officers would propose to advance the design and appraisals for the project and complete the procurement process for a contractor. In the meantime a request will be made in writing to the LAG Board seeking consideration for infrastructure works at these sites, should monies become available under the Cooperation Projects, being delivered in partnership with the Council. Officers will report back to the Leisure and Development Committee in the New Year and subject to a successful indication of securing funding, direction will be sought from Elected Members' on whether or not to proceed with appointment and completion of the works. 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 Portaneevey and Clare Road elements of the Causeway Coast Way project to Stage 1 of the Council's Capital Investment process.