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**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2001**

**REPORT ON: RIVER HABITATS SURVEY OF DIGHTY BURN AND ITS TRIBUTARIES**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION**

**REPORT NO: 330-2001**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise on funding arrangements for the river habitats survey of the Dighty Burn and the open sections of its tributaries. This survey will compliment habitats and species information assembled earlier this year as part of the Appraisal and Evaluation of the Urban Nature Conservation Subject Local Plan 1995.
- 1.2 To highlight the scope of the survey and preferred choice of Consultants to carry out the survey work on behalf of the Council.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That “NAIAD” Environmental Consultancy is appointed to carry out the survey to ensure consistency with the Habitats and Species Survey as far as possible.
- 2.2 That the survey is carried out over the course of the summer and the findings reported back to the Committee in October 2001.
- 2.3 That the Review of the Dundee Local Plan 1998 and the Council’s Public Open Space Strategy Implementation Group have regard to the survey findings.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Provision has been made for £3,000 within the Planning and Transportation Department’s 2001/2002 Revenue Budget. The Director of Arts and Heritage is also contributing £1,000 from the Department’s 2001/2002 Revenue Budget.
- 3.2 Communities will be encouraged to access external funding to assist delivery of localised projects that improve access, educational facilities or habitats, as appropriate, in accordance with the survey findings.

## **4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Dighty survey exercise will complete the resurvey of non-statutory wildlife sites designated in the Urban Nature Conservation Subject Local Plan 1995, representing a second phase to the Habitats and Species Survey undertaken last year. It will allow the assembly of detailed state of the environment information including habitats/species diversity and rarity, ecological communities and habitat continuity to assist the future design, management and protection of greenspace along the Dighty Burn and its tributaries.

- 4.2 The key survey outcome will be to assess the future status of the wider Dighty watercourse within the context of the Local Plan, to ensure that it is afforded appropriate protection via the development planning and development control processes.
- 4.3 A secondary consideration will be to determine ways in which the community value of the Dighty and its tributaries can be enhanced, having regard to policy initiatives and strategies in which the Council is already involved. The survey will therefore contribute towards more effective promotion and enhancement of Dundee's nature conservation resources for existing communities and future generations alike.
- 4.4 The following key themes of Local Agenda 21 are of direct relevance to the survey:
- The diversity of nature is valued and protected;
  - Diversity and local distinctiveness are valued and protected;
  - Places, spaces and objects combine meaning and beauty with utility;
  - Opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation are readily accessible to all; and
  - Health is protected by creating safe, clean, pleasant environments and health services which emphasise prevention of illness as well as care for the sick.

## **5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Local voluntary groups that are already active along the course of the Dighty will be contacted during the survey to accommodate local knowledge and seek their views on the future protection and management of the Burn and its tributaries. Wider public consultation will occur during the Dundee Local Plan Review process.

## **6 BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 A Report on the appraisal and evaluation of the Urban Nature Conservation Subject Local Plan 1995 was approved by the Committee in February of this year. The Report drew attention to the fact that the Dighty was not surveyed as part of the previous Habitats and Species Survey due to budgetary constraints, survey timescale limitations and the different survey methodology required for river corridors.
- 6.2 The cost of this second phase survey is estimated at £4000. Provision has been made for £3000 within Planning and Transportation Department's Revenue Budget for this current financial year. Arts and Heritage Department has contributed an additional £1000 towards the survey costs.
- 6.3 The Survey will focus on the stretch of Dighty watercourse (within the confines of the Council's administrative boundary). Margins of at least 15 metres either side will be included as appropriate, according to the extent of favourable habitats present. Open stretches of the Gelly, Fithie and Murroes Burns will also be surveyed, providing this falls within budget.

- 6.4 The Survey will record the ecological and community value of the Dighty and its open tributaries, as appropriate, based on a standardised river corridor survey methodology. Particular emphasis will be placed on:
- ecological communities;
  - vascular plant species present, their relative abundance and rarity;
  - evidence of physical barriers to habitat continuity;
  - existing habitat management practices;
  - extent of existing public access;
  - existing community education facilities; and
  - any other issues identified in the course of fieldwork, such as the extent and impact of community-based habitat enhancement or clean-up activities.
- 6.5 The information gathered will be used to assess the conservation status of the Dighty and its tributaries, and to define the physical parameters of any revised non-statutory designation as currently applies. This will ensure that the Dighty and its tributaries are afforded appropriate protection through development planning and development control processes.
- 6.6 The survey will also help inform the future management of the Dighty and its tributaries, in the context of Dundee's Open Space Strategy, by highlighting opportunities for improved access, environmental education and habitat enhancement where appropriate.
- 6.7 Given previous experience in conducting the Habitats and Species Survey on behalf of the Council earlier this year, the Directors of Planning & Transportation and Arts & Heritage Departments wish to appoint "NAIAD" Environmental Consultancy to carry out this survey over the summer for a period of eight weeks.
- 6.8 The results of the survey will be reported back to the Committee in October 2001. Thereafter, the survey findings and recommendations will be taken into account in the Review of the Dundee Local Plan 1998 and ongoing implementation of the Public Open Space Strategy in respect of the Dighty linear park.

## **7 CONSULTATIONS**

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Support Services, Director of Corporate Planning, Director of Education, Director of Housing, Director of Economic Development, Director of Environment and Consumer Protection (Dundee 21), Director of Leisure and Parks, Director of Neighbourhood Resources, Director of Arts and Heritage, and the Legal Manager have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this Report.

**8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 Planning and Transportation Committee Report 66-2001 provides the background to the Dighty river habitats survey.

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