

**Proposed Bute and Cowal Landscape Capacity Study**

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**1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 External landscape architect consultants have been engaged by the Council to produce a series of Landscape Capacity Studies for all Rural Opportunity Areas located within National Scenic Areas and Areas of Panoramic Quality as defined by the Argyll and Bute Local Plan. This report concerns the proposed Landscape Capacity Study for Bute and Cowal (which is attached as Appendix A).

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Council amends as appropriate and approves the Landscape Capacity Study for Bute and Cowal attached in Appendix A of this report.

**3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 As Members are aware the principal objective of this study is to provide a robust set of documents that will clearly identify the opportunities and constraints, in landscape terms, for development within the Rural Opportunity Areas (ROAs) identified in the Local Plan.
- 3.2 The Argyll and Bute Local Plan contains development control zones which are mapped planning policy designations. One of these development control zones is the ROA designation which carries a particular policy stance towards development in the Plan. This policy stance is positive towards many small scale development types, and in particular, positive towards small scale housing development, with a general presumption in favour of up to 5 new houses (subject to design, siting, development pattern etc.).
- 3.3 A significant area of Argyll and Bute is covered by National Scenic Areas (NSA) and Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQ - former Regional Scenic Area) designations, which are detailed within the Plan. Many of the ROAs are located within these NSAs and APQs.
- 3.4 The Plan was subject to Public Local Inquiry and one of the issues identified was that of potential conflict between ROA designation and NSA or APQ designation. The Council has taken the view that this potential conflict should be addressed through the production of landscape capacity studies that look closely at how new developments could be assimilated into such valued landscapes. Until these studies were completed and approved by the respective Area Committee, a moratorium

has been placed on development in the open countryside within affected ROAs. The only other acceptable alternative to this action would have been to delete ROAs from NSAs and APQs.

- 3.5 These landscape capacity studies are being undertaken by appropriately qualified consultants and cover all of the ROAs located within NSAs and APQs located in Argyll and Bute (with the exception of Jura and part of the Mull NSA as studies in these areas have already been completed).
- 3.6 The landscape studies are consistent with all current national and local planning policy and will help support, and be consistent with, the Corporate Strategy and the Development Plan for Argyll and Bute (ie. both Structure and Local Plan) in meeting their aims of strengthening the economy; creating sustainable and vibrant communities in the area; and protecting and enhancing the environment.
- 3.7 The Bute and Cowal landscape capacity study is one in a series of documents which will provide the Council and the public with a clearly defined set of guidelines for development within ROAs located within NSAs and APQs.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Bute and Cowal landscape capacity study is one in a series of documents which will provide the Council and the public with a clearly defined set of guidelines for development within ROAs located within NSAs and APQs. They will be used as technical guidance by planning officers assessing planning applications located within such ROAs and will also be useful in the production of the Local Development Plan.

#### **5 IMPLICATIONS**

**Policy:** The Bute and Cowal landscape capacity study will be primarily used in conjunction with the current Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan) to assess planning applications.

**Financial:** The costs for this work have been met through an established budget held by Development Services.

**Personnel:** None.

**Community:** None.

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# Appendix A