

Report

Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	6 February 2024
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Lanark Racecourse Masterplan and Wider Racecourse Update
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to:-

- ◆ inform the Committee of the work undertaken to prepare the Lanark Racecourse Masterplan
- ◆ seek Committee approval to publicise the Masterplan document
- ◆ inform the Committee of the next steps in implementing the Masterplan
- ◆ inform on progress to deliver the Lanark Community Workshop

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the Lanark Racecourse Masterplan be endorsed as the guiding document for future management and investment at the racecourse site;
- (2) that the Lanark Racecourse Masterplan be reported to the Finance and Corporate Resources Committee and Clydesdale Area Committee for noting and that it be approved to be published thereafter and made available to parties with an interest in the site; and
- (3) that the progress being made to deliver Lanark Community Workshop be noted.

3. Background

3.1. Lanark Racecourse and surrounding woodland, part of Lanark's Common Good, sits on the edge of the market town and adjacent to Lanark Loch. Formerly a racecourse the area now performs an important role as open space for the town. As well as there being formal uses such as an equestrian centre, grass and artificial sports pitches, the area is popular for walking, trail cycling and other outdoor leisure activities. The extensive nature and flexibility of the site also lends itself to one off events, such as horse and dog shows, caravan conventions, sports competitions, and the occasional concert.

3.2. Lanark's Common Good is 'heritable and moveable property' which is owned by the Council which has been passed down through local government reorganisations from the former Burgh. Common Good assets are owned by the Council and managed for the benefit of the citizens of the former Burgh. The Common Good funds are held separately from other local authority funds for accounting purposes. New rules in relation to Common Good were introduced by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and although the Masterplan will form the foundation for future external funding applications and the delivery of investment on the racecourse, the

relevant legislation will require the community to be formally consulted prior to the delivery of any project where a property transaction will take place.

- 3.3. The Lanark Common Good Fund, supported by revenues attracted from Common Good Estate, will continue to support activities related to the upkeep of Common Good assets. The Common Good Estate for Lanark's annual net financial position can vary depending on the maintenance and repairs required every year. At the time of writing this report, the account has a balance of £250,000, however, it should be noted that many of the assets that sit in the Common Good Fund are old, and require regular maintenance, which can be expensive. Depleting the Common Good Fund balance would mean that no funding would be available for these other existing assets. The use of the Fund, to support new investment will, therefore, need to be considered in the context of the overall Common Good estate and its investment requirements. It is the intention, therefore, that external funding will lead to the delivery of investment at the racecourse and not Common Good Funds.
- 3.4. South Lanarkshire Council manages the area on behalf of Lanark Community, and it is important that its management and any future investment reflects the wishes and aspirations of the community. The Masterplan will form the foundation for future external funding applications and the delivery of investment on the racecourse will be led by the success of such applications and not Common Good or central Council funding.
- 3.5. The informal nature of the space along with the historic uses of large sections means that the racecourse is not used to its full potential. The preparation of a Masterplan to explore opportunities while recognising the importance of maintaining and supporting these community uses will seek to maximise its potential.
- 3.6. With outdoor recreation and open spaces coming to the fore during the COVID-19 crisis, of primary importance was engagement with the local community, users and partners to understand their aspirations for the area which in turn will identify a list of short, medium and longer-term projects that could be delivered, funding permitting by suitable organisations.

4. Lanark Racecourse Masterplan

- 4.1. Through a competitive procurement process, Ironside Farrar was commissioned to develop the Lanark Racecourse Masterplan and Priority Project Report. This considers existing uses within the site and identifies areas of strength and weakness in terms of the physical environment and other constraints.
- 4.2. The Masterplan has been prepared under the guidance of officers within Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services, Property Services and South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC), in consultation with the community of Lanark. The process has also had input from Historic Environment Scotland and NatureScot.
- 4.3. In developing the Masterplan, it was key to engage with the local community, as the asset forms part of the Common Good and is predominantly used by local people. The Masterplan sets out the process which was undertaken in its preparation and outlines the results of the community and stakeholder engagement that took the form of 3 in person engagement events held at the Tolbooth, High Street Lanark, 3 online visitor surveys and 3 stakeholder workshops involving Council departments and associated organisations.

- 4.4. The initial consultation exercise identified Lanark Racecourse's key strengths and weaknesses which allowed the team to focus on how these could be enhanced/improved.

Core Strengths:-

- ◆ informal activities (play/walking/cycling)
- ◆ natural environment assets
- ◆ woodland assets and wildlife
- ◆ sports (football/rugby)
- ◆ proximity to Lanark Loch and its associated facilities
- ◆ scenic value
- ◆ equestrian recreation
- ◆ events

Core Weaknesses:-

- ◆ lack of investment
- ◆ level of activity/facility
- ◆ public transport connectivity
- ◆ path network
- ◆ site orientation and lack of directional signage
- ◆ restricted appeal
- ◆ accessibility
- ◆ conflict of users with equestrian use

- 4.5. The Masterplan sets out a range of recommendations as guided by the community and partner engagement exercise. The main recommended actions/investments focus on building the sites quality, distinctiveness and appeal including:-

- ◆ Visitor Welcome and Orientation - defining and clearly identifying the entrance and providing clarity in directional information to improve quality of visitor experience.
- ◆ Heritage Focus - investing in restoration of the Tote building and providing increased interpretation and improved directional signage to increase visitor awareness of the site history.
- ◆ Protection of Ancient Woodland - combining education with protection through better visitor information and emphasis on importance of its national status.
- ◆ Biodiversity - extending the biodiversity offer through increased planting and careful proactive management of the site.
- ◆ Trails, Routes and Signage - developing clear accessible routes for improved public access linked with a supporting Interpretive Strategy.
- ◆ Connectivity - providing enhanced connections to the wider areas long distance routes.
- ◆ Promoting private sector investment and potential franchise operations for café/sports development of existing and new partnerships with charities, sports clubs, voluntary groups and environmental bodies.

- 4.6. The Action Plan summary, that forms part of the Masterplan, sets out 26 actions with associated timescales and potential partners/lead organisations (as set out in Appendix 1). The Action Plan will remain a live document with projects and priorities evolving over time. The Masterplan is intended to support the development and delivery of projects moving forward and assist in securing funding to deliver projects led by a range of partners.

- 4.7. The Council will have a role to play in the delivery of all proposals within in the Action Plan. In most cases the role will be that of facility managers and not direct involvement in delivery. To be clear, however, this report is seeking approval to adopt the Masterplan as a basis to move forward and approvals relating to specific projects including funding, delivery, individual business plans and lead partners will be taken to the appropriate committee for approval at a future date.

5. Next Steps and Timescale

- 5.1. Subject to Committee approval, it is intended that the Lanark Racecourse Masterplan be reported to Finance and Corporate Resources Committee and Clydesdale Area Committee for noting. Thereafter, it is intended that the document be published and made available to all parties with an interest in the site to guide future investment and management.
- 5.2. Some smaller projects have been identified that, subject to funding, could be taken forward in the short to medium term. As set out in paragraph 3.3, it is not anticipated that any of these projects would be funded through existing Council or Common Good Fund as all the projects have the potential to attract external funding. With appropriate liaison and agreement these could be taken forward by local organisations, to maximise any financial opportunities. In many cases this will be led by specific interest community groups and organisations who may be able to access external funding.
- 5.3. When the Masterplan was commissioned the site of the equestrian centre buildings (Scottish Equestrian Centre and Hotel) was explicitly omitted due to ongoing lease negotiations. As a result of these negotiations, the current tenant has been given notice to quit and the Council will have vacant possession of the equestrian centre building and associated grazings as of July 2024. It is proposed that the window of opportunity to July 2024 is taken to test the market and seek a new tenant for the buildings, as a continuity of occupier will minimise any burden on the Council and the Common Good Fund. The first stage will be the appointment of an appropriate property consultant to market test the viability of the facility as an equestrian centre or for an alternate use releasing the grazing land to support the delivery of the Masterplan.

6. Wider Lanark Racecourse Related Projects

- 6.1. Funding of £807,000 from the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund was secured by the Council in 2016 to develop a Clydesdale Rural Development Centre. The award would have seen the development of new community and business space together with a community workshop, however, the project could not be delivered due to difficulties secure a site within the town.
- 6.2. Work has been progressing since Autumn 2022 to take forward the dual building project, on the racecourse site. During the design process it became clear that the funding available would not allow the project to be delivered in its original form. Despite detailed enquiries it was not possible to secure sufficient additional funding streams, either by the Council or the identified occupiers of the business space, Healthy Valleys. The project has, therefore, been reduced in scope, in agreement with the Scottish Government, to develop the community workshop only at this time.
- 6.3. It is clearly disappointing that the whole project cannot be delivered, however, officers will continue to work with the community to achieve wider outcomes set out in plans, as part of the Lanark Vision and Racecourse Masterplan, including exploring options to develop and enhance business and enterprise resources and capacity in Lanark. The Council has also offered to work with Healthy Valleys to assist them identify premises or a site where they can take forward a building project to meet their needs.

- 6.4. The development of the Lanark Community Workshop has secured planning permission for a location close to the existing car park and the contract has been awarded with works due to commence in spring 2024. Tenants for the workshop are the Lanimer Committee.

7. Employee Implications

- 7.1. There are no employee implications through the endorsement of the Masterplan.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. The costs for the Council in preparing the Masterplan have been funded through external sources with support from the Place Based Investment Programme approved at the 9 August 2022 meeting of the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee.
- 8.2. As noted, the Masterplan identifies a number of actions and projects which will require funding. Each will be considered on an individual basis and will be subject to separate approvals. The Lanark Common Good Fund supported by revenues attracted from Common Good Estate will continue to support activities related to the upkeep of Common Good assets. The use of such Funds to support new investment will only be considered where revenues allow, and approvals will be sought in the usual manner. It is the intention that external funding will lead the delivery of investment on the Racecourse and not Common Good.
- 8.3. Implementation of the Masterplan will focus on the co-ordination of activity and events that will largely be funded through external funding. The financial resources required to deliver the objectives of the Action Plan will be considered on a project-by-project basis. In addition, the Masterplan provides a basis to support external funding bids from a range of sources, however, it is important to note that much of the success of the plan will relate to support and investment from the private sector and the buy in from the community.
- 8.4. Council management of the site will continue from within existing identified budgets.

9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 9.1. The Masterplan was prepared having regard to the existing and emerging challenges around climate change and sustainability. It is intended to complement and comply with the Council's and wider communities' aspirations in the area.

10. Other Implications

- 10.1. The risks associated with not supporting the proposal is that Lanark Racecourse will not have a co-ordinated approach to its response to the many challenges it faces. The support and partnership working within Lanark could be lost, leading to a loss of activity/interest in the racecourse asset and increased calls for the Council's intervention and investment. The Council's reputation could also be damaged if it is not seen to actively support and encourage community initiatives and investments in Lanark Racecourse.

11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 11.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no Impact Assessment is required.
- 11.2. Consultations have been co-ordinated by the Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services with a range of other Council Services who have an ongoing role in delivering services and initiatives at Lanark Racecourse. This consultation and co-operation will continue throughout the duration of the initiative.

David Booth
Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

22 December 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ Accountable, Effective, Efficient and Transparent
- ◆ Ambitious, self-aware and improving
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ We will work to recover, progress and improve
- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live.

Previous References

- ◆ Community and Enterprise Resources Committee – 9 August 2022

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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Appendix 1
Action Plan Summary

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT AND BIODIVERSITY									
REF	ACTION PLAN	TASK	PARTNERS (Suggested lead BOLD). In all cases SLC involvement will be through existing staff resource as capacity allows	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM	Nature of cost	Source of Funding	Return on Investment
				1-3yrs	3-5yrs	5-10yrs +			
WMB1	Tackle issues with fallen trees in maturing plantation woodland to facilitate access.	Physical works	SLC	Y			Revenue	Common Good/ Existing SLC budgets/ External Funding	Obligation to keep area safe
WMB2	Undertake a Woodland Management Plan to identify opportunities to add diversity of species within all areas and through a sympathetic phased clearance of plantation areas and for the expansion of woodland and tree cover.	Strategy	SLC/NatureScot/Wildlife Trust		Y		One off	Existing SLC budgets/ External Funding	Management obligation - supports climate change agenda

WMB3	Review opportunity to add/enhance bird and bat habitat throughout the woodland areas.	Physical works	SLC/NatureScot/Wildlife Trust/ Community	Y			One off	External Funding	Improved biodiversity and wildlife habitat
WMB4	Reinforce the importance of the line of historic Beech trees through their management protection and enhancement	Strategy/Planning	SLC	Y			Revenue	Existing SLC budgets/ Common Good/ External Funding	Management obligation
WMB5	Enhance the existing wetland area to improve species diversity and increase potential educational use and activity.	Design	SLC/NatureScot/Wildlife Trust/ Community/Schools/CSGN			Y	One off	External Funding	Improved biodiversity and wildlife habitat

FACILITIES									
REF	ACTION PLAN	TASK	PARTNERS (Suggested lead BOLD). In all cases SLC involvement will be through existing staff resource as capacity allows	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM	Nature of cost	Source of Funding	Return on Investment
				1-3yrs	3-5yrs	5-10yrs +			
F1	Improved sport changing facilities, toilets and shelter should become available. Proposals should consider increased variety of sports on offer.	Evaluation and Business case	SLC Leisure Trust/ local user groups and clubs		Y		One off and ongoing	External Funding and income revenues	Facilities would be run by the delivery organisation/club who would use revenues to support the activity
F2	Undertake a feasibility study to identify viable options for long term uses for the Tote building.	Evaluation and Business case	SLC/ HES/ private partners		Y		One off	External Funding	Currently a financial burden due to maintenance costs of an A listed building. Study an opportunity to unlock building potential
F3	Introduce picnic areas around the site to increase	Design	SLC/NatureScot/CSGN/ Community groups	Y			One off	External Funding	Enhanced visitor experience

	amenity for local people and encourage use.								
F4	Increased informal recreation opportunities through introduction of outdoor gym facilities.	Design	SLC/NatureScot/CSGN/ Community groups	Y			One off	External Funding	Enhanced visitor experience
F5	Introduce power provision on southern area of the course to encourage increased use for events.	Design	SLC	Y			One off and on going	External Funding	Improved facilities improve attractiveness of site and increase revenues from site hire for events
F6	Introduce allotments and community orchard within a small area of the east of the site to establish site viability.	Design	SLC/Community groups	Y			SLC	External Funding	Obligation on Council to supply allotment opportunities. Rental income from users to support ongoing costs
F7	Introduce camper van overnight parking, EV charging and disabled parking in the primary car park.	Design	SLC/ Community groups	Y			One off and ongoing	External Funding	Facilities would be run by the delivery organisation/club who would use revenues to support the activity. Ground rent to Common Good

F8	Create opportunities for the introduction of a Pump track bicycle facility within the site.	Design	SLC/ Community groups	Y			One off and ongoing	External Funding	Improved facilities and support of move to sustainable transport. Facility would be developed and managed by appropriate local organisation
F9	Further explore caninecross or dog agility facilities within the site.	Design	SLC/ Community groups	Y			One off	External Funding	Enhanced visitor experience
F10	Undertake detailed review of opportunities for a Uniformed campsite with local Scout/ Guide and Boys Brigade associations.	Evaluation and Business case	SLC/ Community, Scout, Guide BB associations	Y			One off	External Funding	Facilities would be run by the delivery organisation/club who would use revenues to support the activity

ACCESS AND ACCESSIBILITY

REF	ACTION PLAN	TASK	PARTNERS (Suggested lead BOLD). In all cases SLC involvement will be through existing staff resource as capacity allows	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM	Nature of cost	Source of Funding	Return on Investment
				1-3yrs	3-5yrs	5-10yrs +			
AA1	Address pot holes and poor drainage in car parks	Physical works	SLC	Y			Revenue	Common Good/Existing SLC budgets/ External Funding	Obligation to provide safe access
AA2	Access routes for less able users with appropriately spaced resting and seating points should be introduced to enable use by all.	Design	SLC/Community groups		Y		One off	External Funding	Enhanced visitor experience
AA3	Improved area wide active travel routes will be reinforced and a connection to Springbank Cemetery established.	Design	SLC/Community groups		Y		one off	External Funding	Enhanced visitor experience
AA4	Clear orientation and waymarker signage to reduce conflict on paths	Strategy	SLC/SL Access Forum/Community	Y			One off	External Funding	Enhanced visitor experience

	between pedestrians, cyclists and equestrian use.								
AA5	Improvements to site wide signage	Strategy	SLC/SL Access Forum/Community	Y			One off	External Funding	Enhanced visitor experience

SITE PERCEPTION									
REF	ACTION PLAN	TASK	PARTNERS (Suggested lead BOLD). In all cases SLC involvement will be through existing staff resource as capacity allows	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM	Nature of cost	Source of Funding	Return on Investment
				1-3yrs	3-5yrs	5-10yrs +			
SP1	Protect and enhance views to the Tote Tower and seek to reintroduce building signage and graphics.	Design	SLC/HES/Community groups		Y		One off	External Funding	Enhance gateway to town and improve visitor experience
SP2	A73 road boundary improvements.	Design	SLC/NatureScot/Wildlife Trust		Y		One off	External Funding	Enhance gateway to town and improve visitor experience
SP3	Establish clear entrance signage and remove clutter on arrival from the A73 to the main car park.	Strategy and Design	SLC	Y			One off	External Funding	Enhance gateway to town and improve visitor experience
SP4	Undertake enhanced area maintenance to acknowledge site importance and protect the historic	Physical works	SLC	Y			On going	External Funding /Common Good and existing SLC budgets	Enhanced visitor experience

	racecourse route.								
SP5	Use materials and interpretive signage to strengthen links to and awareness of the site heritage.	Strategy and Design	SLC/ HES/NatureSCot/CSGN/ Community groups	Y			One off	External Funding /Common Good	Enhanced visitor experience
SP6	Increase quantities and/or size of bins throughout the Racecourse to ensure adequate capacity.	Physical works	SLC	Y			One off and ongoing	External Funding	Existing obligation to manage litter collection