

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL  
REPORT**

To: POLICY & RESOURCES (REGENERATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: <b>Town Centre WIFI Project</b>
From: HEAD OF PLANNING & REGENERATION		
Date: 9 September 2013	Ref. 1737/CMcA	

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To inform members of the development and delivery of a town centre WIFI network to be piloted in Motherwell with further installations in Airdrie, Bellshill, Coatbridge, Kilsyth, Wishaw and Cumbernauld town centres, and to secure approval for funding towards the project.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 A Working Group was established and chaired by the Convener of Regeneration and Infrastructure to assess the feasibility of installing WIFI networks within North Lanarkshire town centres. It has been agreed by the group that free access WIFI has the potential to support the sustainability and growth of local business by driving footfall and encouraging visitors to stay longer in our towns.
- 2.2 Wireless Internet access is now commonplace and the use of public WIFI hotspots are growing. Town Centres retailers are facing increasing challenges from out of town shopping centres, supermarkets and online sales. This means there is an even greater need to compete and increase the draw of North Lanarkshire town centres.
- 2.3 Strategic Planning are currently leading on the development of a set of Frameworks for each of the town centre. These Frameworks will set out the vision, priority outcomes and guiding principles for the renewal, development and management of change in town centres over the next ten years. As part of the development process a number of public and business surveys have been conducted. The initial results indicate that the introduction of WIFI access would be supported by both local business and the public.
- 2.4 The Working Group has also met with the Motherwell town centre owners who are currently in the process of implementing a similar project of free WIFI access targeting Brandon Parade South. There is an opportunity to work in partnership with the private owners in order to extend the coverage of the WIFI network providing the benefits to the wider town centre. Initial discussions have been positive indicating that Chester Properties would fund 50% of the project costs for Motherwell.
- 2.5 Currently within Cumbernauld Town Centre there is already a provision of free public WIFI service within one of the shopping centres. It is the intention of the working group to engage with the owners of Cumbernauld in order to extend the current coverage to the wider town centre. The expansion of the current network will depend on discussions with the private owners of the town centre.

### **3. Town Centre WIFI Project**

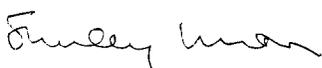
- 3.1 The proposal is to install a fully managed secure WIFI network which covers the main shopping areas within the town centres of Motherwell, Airdrie, Coatbridge, Wishaw, Kilsyth, Bellshill and Cumbernauld. The project will place WIFI transmitters on CCTV columns and lamp posts across the town centre to provide a free limited WIFI service to anyone within the covered area. Bandwidth control will be provided along with filtering of unacceptable content.
- 3.2 Access to the WIFI network requires an individual to register and agree to standard terms and conditions and it will allow people to browse the Internet, access social networks and search for the best deal among local business via their smart phone or tablet.
- 3.3 The fully customisable login to access the WIFI network can be used to engage with users of the town centre, tell them about news, provide mobile marketing/promotions at different times of the week and offer advertising space for local business.
- 3.4 The managed WIFI network will allow full reporting on who is using the service and how it is performing. For example network reports can detail the number of users, devices, session times, and flow of footfall within the town centre. The WIFI network can also be easily expanded to cover a greater area, provide greater bandwidth and manage additional users if required.

### **4. Delivery and Funding**

- 4.1 Motherwell town centre owners are in the final stages off signing a contract for the installation of a WIFI network for Brandon Parade. This will be the first network to be installed and will allow a full assessment of the capability of a WIFI network. It is anticipated that the works will commence in Motherwell town centre in September 2013.
- 4.2 Once the pilot project in Motherwell has been fully assessed, this will direct the approach to the WIFI project including capability, technology and specification for the remaining installations. It is anticipated that procurement and installation for the remaining town centres will be complete by the end of March 2014.
- 4.3 Funding of £140k towards the project is being sought from the Regeneration Investment fund which was approved at the council meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2013.
- 4.4 There is an opportunity for TCA to generate revenue from the WIFI network through third party advertising and business promotions and it is anticipated that any running costs of the network will be funded by this source after the third year of operation.

### **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the allocation of £140,000 towards the project from the Regeneration Investment Fund.



**Shirley Linton**  
**Head of Planning and Regeneration**

For further information on this report contact Emma Walker, Town Centre Activities Ltd, Tel: 01236 638919.