

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL  
REPORT

To: COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: STRATHCLYDE COUNTRY PARK DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
From: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES		
Date: 5 June 2000	Ref: PJ/MMcM/PB	

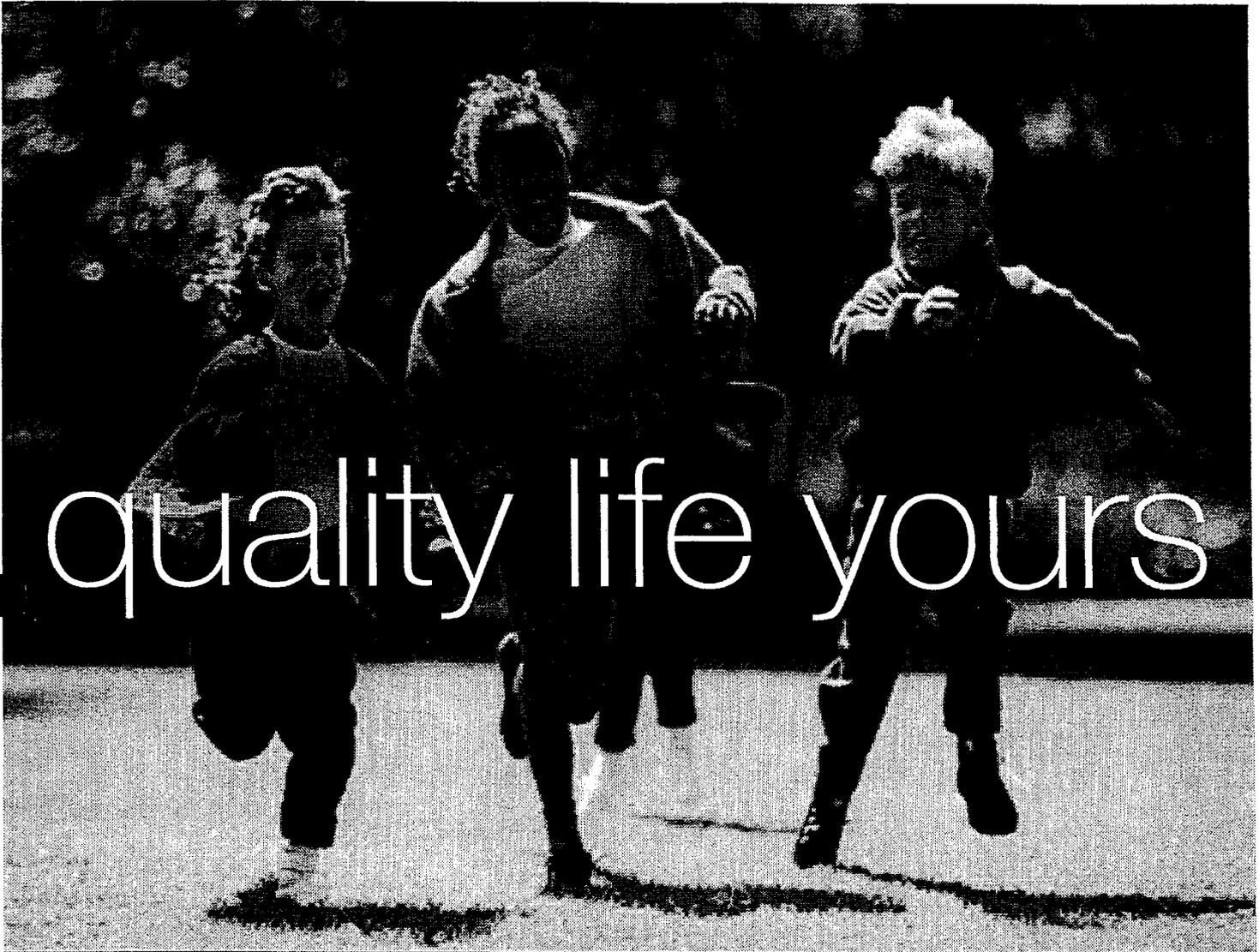
1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Report seeks to obtain Committee's approval to establish a strategy for the continuing development of permanent leisure-related facilities within Strathclyde Country Park. The thrust of the report is to progress development in partnership with the private/commercial sector.
- 1.2 The report reviews progress on developments within the Park to date, outlines a series of desirable developments still to be achieved, and thereafter sets out a strategy which details essential criteria to be met by future development projects
- 1.3 The strategy outlined has been discussed with the Director of Planning & Environment and the Director of Housing and Property Services

2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee agree to the pro-active pursuit of revenue-generating permanent developments and outdoor events, appropriate in scale and nature to the environment of Strathclyde Country Park.
- 2.2 That the Committee agree to endorse the strategies for development noted at section 4.
- 2.3 That the Committee agree to adopt the application of the criteria for development noted at section 5.
- 2.4 That the Committee note the opportunities for development listed at section 6, 7, and 8, as sound examples of the type of development projects appropriate within the Park.
- 2.5 That this report be remitted to the Planning & Environment Committee and the Housing and Property Services Committee for their interest.

*Paul Guter*



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department of community services

strathclyde country park  
development strategy

2000



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Members may recall that Strathclyde Regional Council, the predecessor authority for Strathclyde Country Park, published the "Strathclyde Country Park Action Plan" in May 1989. This document was based in part on a previous report, "Strathclyde Park - A Development Plan", published in March 1986. Both documents set down that Council's aspirations for the future development of facilities within the Park area. They included reference to major commercial and leisure development on the western side of the M74 at Hamilton Palace Grounds, now the new Hamilton Town Square, Retail Park, Asda Superstore and Esporta Complex. The provision of Hotel and Pub facilities within the Country Park, now Express by Holiday Inn and the Innkeeper's Fayre Pub and Restaurant at Bothwellhaugh, which have been established for several years. The development of the Park Main Events Site, and the relocation of M & D's, Scotland's Theme Park, has also been achieved.

2.2 Since 1989, 4no. developments have been established within the North Lanarkshire Park boundaries, leased to commercial or voluntary organisations as follows: -

Express by Holiday Inn, Strathclyde Country Park	Holiday Inn	1.4 hectares
Strathclyde Park Inn	Innkeepers Fayre	1.0 hectares
M & D's, Scotland's Theme Park	M&D Leisure	8.5 hectares
National Rowing Training Centre	Scottish Amateur Rowing Association	0.15 hectares.

Set in the context of the overall size of the Country Park, in excess of 450 hectares, the sites currently leased to commercially operated leisure-related developments amount to less than 2.5% of the total park area.

2.3 Extensive landscape and infrastructure improvements to the paths, roads, event sites, and parking areas have also taken place. Upgrading works include resurfacing approximately 12 kilometres of footpaths, the provision of hard surfacing to more than 4 hectares of car parking and event sites, and the installation of basic mains services to the major event area. Further improvements to the infrastructure include renovation to the Caravan and Camping Site, the overhaul of a number of the sports pitches, and the installation of street lighting at various locations to improve visitor security. The 2no. pre-war Sewage Treatment Works located within the park boundaries have been by-passed and demolished, and the land incorporated into the public open space.

2.4 Throughout the 1990's the Park served as the venue for a series of major events, including "T-in-the-Park", Scotland's National Gardening Show, and the World, British and Home International Rowing Championships, some attracting up to 50,000 visitors per day. The range of equipment, traffic management systems, staff skills and experience developed through dealing with the organisation of such major events sets the Park in a leading position as a prime outdoor event venue.

2.5 It should be noted that the Park enjoys formal "Country Park" designation under the terms of the Scottish Executive's "Scottish Parks System" administered by Scottish Natural Heritage. Much of the original investment in the infrastructure of the Park came through central government grant aid, for the specific purpose of developing a Country Park within the criteria laid down under this national designation system. The Council is obliged to maintain the natural environment of the site suitably in balance with appropriate recreational developments to ensure that the original conditions of offer of grant are not compromised.

### 3. PRESENT POSITION

- 3.1 The land within the Country Park forms some of the most attractive landscape settings within the Council area. The Council receives regular enquiries from private individuals and commercial developers seeking to purchase and/or lease land within the Country Park for development purposes, or in recognition of its attractiveness as a major outdoor events venue.
- 3.2 Much has been achieved over the years, and it is appropriate that the Council should now confirm its views in respect of the future strategic development of the facilities to be provided within the Park. It is also important to recognise the intrinsic value of the environmental character of the site, and the social and recreational value of the open space held within the Park's boundaries. Such land, in its undeveloped "natural" form, offers much needed recreational opportunities, freely available to all members of the community.
- 3.3 It is equally important to recognise that there remain a number of relatively small sites within the Park that lend themselves to appropriate commercial leisure and sports-related development. The ground rent from such sites is recognised as an important potential source of revenue income in support of the Park's budget, and the need to optimise such income streams is appreciated.
- 3.4 The existing commercial developments within the Park, as noted at 2.2 above, occupy less than 2.5% of the total land area and, for the most part, are now well established and accepted as a valuable and integral contribution to the range of the Park's operations. Each development can demonstrate significant benefit in terms of the leisure-related provision within North Lanarkshire, building on the initial investment of the Council and Central Government in the infrastructure of the Park for leisure purposes.
- 3.5 Whilst there is a need to acknowledge and maintain the balance of development strongly in favour of informal recreation, sport and wildlife conservation interests, there remain significant opportunities for the provision of further additional facilities within the Park, without adversely affecting the essential character and environment of the site.

#### 4. STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 It is recognised that, in respect of any development within the Park boundaries, the Council must retain a high degree of control over the nature and extent of the initial construction works. The Council must also be comfortable that the long-term operations within that development remain relevant to the overall Park environment. To this end:-

Sites for development within the Park will be retained in Council ownership and offered on long-lease agreements. Appropriate controls will be exercised through suitable lease conditions, as is the case with the current leaseholders agreements.

- 4.2 It is recognised that the leisure industry is subject to rapid change in market trends. In response :-

It is not proposed to establish a rigid, phased programme of development works without scope for innovation or response to unforeseeable demands. Rather it is intended to provide and maintain a comprehensive framework of infrastructure, facilities and equipment, flexible in nature, and readily adaptable to future needs.

- 4.3 Of prime importance is the principle of developing the Park in partnership with other agencies. The social and financial benefits and long-term stability to be obtained by pursuing this route are essential if the full potential of the Park is to be realised :-

All appropriate development proposals from the commercial sector, private organisations and other public agencies are therefore welcomed. However, any proposal submitted must in the first instance meet the Criteria for Development set out within this document. On meeting the terms of the criteria, the proposal will then be thoroughly appraised.

- 4.4 Revenue consequences of infrastructure improvement works falling to the Council may be largely offset against income generated by franchises and commercial leisure-based leases attracted by the improvements proposed. Therefore :-

Following the Council's agreement in principle to the nature and scale of any development proposed, sites within the Park appropriate for such development will be marketed and offered for lease, through an open and competitive tendering exercise. This to be based on an outline brief of the Council's specific requirements prepared by appropriate council officials or professional advisors.

5. CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 In considering any development proposal received it is suggested that the following essential criteria be applied, to ensure a fair and equitable assessment process, and to facilitate a prompt and professional response to all such enquiries: -
- 5.1.1 That the proposal be promoted by a properly constituted voluntary or commercial organisation.
  - 5.1.2 That the proposal be related to the development of sustainable leisure provision, sporting facilities or countryside conservation schemes. The proposal must wholly be available for the benefit and enjoyment of general public visitors to the Park, and specifically not restricted to private individuals or private club members.
  - 5.1.3 That the proposal is compatible with the Park environment in nature and quality, and complimentary to the existing facilities available on site.
  - 5.1.4 That, in all respects, development projects will comply with the Council's approved Corporate Plan and the stated aims and objectives of the Service Plan of the Department of Community Services.
  - 5.1.5 All potential developments will be expected to conform to Structure and Local Plan requirements.
  - 5.1.6 All development opportunities will require to be pursued within the Council's policies on disposal of property interests, the guiding principle being that if there is a market for a development, then the opportunity is advertised.

## 6. DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIVATE SECTOR PROJECTS

### 6.1 Existing Commercial Sector Projects

It is important to recognise the interests of the Council in the valuable contribution that the existing commercial partners operating within the Park make to the range of leisure provision available and to the net revenue costs of the Park. Proposals that may, in future, be promoted for the expansion of their current successful operations, will receive appropriate consideration.

### 6.2 New Commercial Projects

It is felt inappropriate to define a detailed list of possible development opportunities. Over the years, the commercial developments successfully realised on the site have resulted from professionally prepared, well-conceived proposals from potential developers, based on sound principles. Those principles recognise market influences and the prime functions of the Park as a major site for public recreation and nature conservation. It is suggested that there is little to be gained from suggesting a restrictive list of potential developments. Any development within the boundaries of the Park should be demonstrably linked to the main functions of the site, namely provision for community participation in leisure and sporting activities, in balance with the needs of environmental and wildlife conservation. In short, it would be the Departments intention to encourage innovation.

Consequently, each approach regarding potential development opportunities should be dealt with on its own merits, using the criteria detailed at 5 above. In turn, proposals would be submitted to Committee for their consideration as appropriate.

## 7. COUNCIL-LED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The following section presents a series of possible core infrastructure developments, currently seen as valid and relevant to the future improvement of leisure provision within the Park. They are not set in priority order and are intended to represent the type of project that could be seen as appropriate within the Park environment. In the current financial climate, it is recognised that many of these are likely to require a substantial element of direct public sector funding, and will necessitate the detailed investigation of fund-raising opportunities external to the Council's main-line resources. It is not the purpose of this document to present analyses and reasons for each project envisaged. It is only intended to draw together the best of the current proposals. The justification for individual projects will need to be presented in detail as each comes forward for consideration in its own right

### 7.1 **Visitor Centre**

The construction of a purpose built Visitor Centre Complex accommodating visitor reception, exhibition area, auditorium, tea room, craft shops, etc. and the conversion of the existing small Visitor Centre building to a Field Studies base.

### 7.2 **Sports Courts**

The floodlighting and conversion of the existing hard porous football/hockey pitches to synthetic surfaces, allowing multiple use for tennis, 5-a-side, netball, basketball, etc. during summer months.

### 7.3 **Camp Site**

The comprehensive regrading and landscaping of the existing camping field to a standard similar to the caravan site, with appropriate service blocks, roads, footpaths, etc.

### 7.4 **Land Acquisition**

The purchase of the remaining land bounded by the A725 road and the Glasgow - London railway line to consolidate the Park boundaries in this area and to compensate for open space elsewhere in the Park which may be lost to more intensive commercial uses. Possible development opportunities for the land could be: -

Cycling and Athletics Cross Country Courses  
Equestrian Cross Country Event Course  
Indoor Riding School and Pony Trekking Base  
Dry Ski Slope

### 7.5 **Canoe Slalom Course**

The construction of a 'white-water' canoe slalom course to encourage maximum use of the existing facilities for this sport.

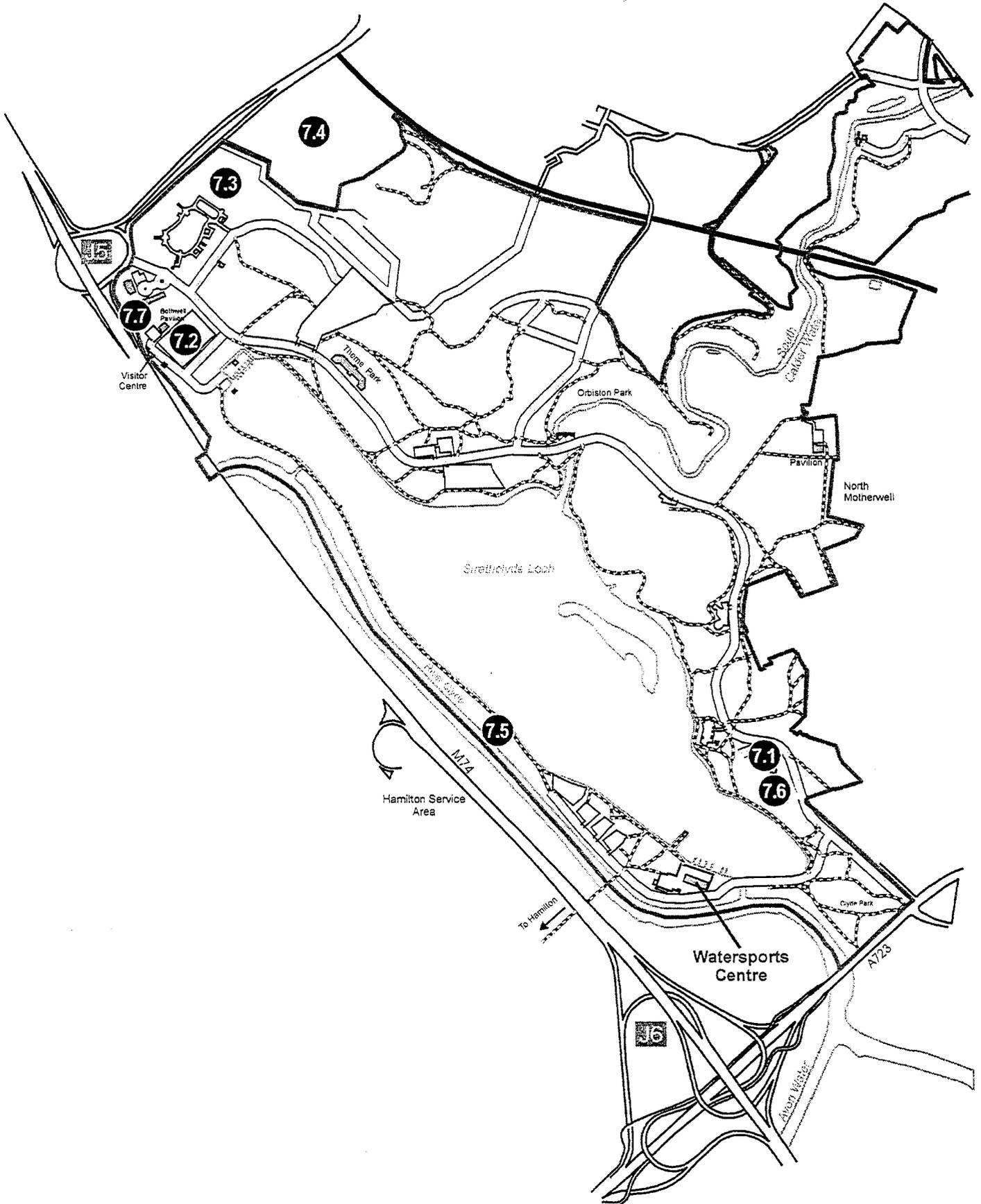
### 7.6 **Offices**

The construction of a permanent office block and stores to replace existing accommodation at present housed in temporary "portacabin" structures now more than 25 years old.

### 7.7 **Grounds Maintenance Depot**

The reconstruction of the existing dilapidated grounds maintenance depot.

### Council Led Development Projects 7.1 to 7.7



## COUNCIL-LED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (Contd.)

### 7.8 Cafeteria Facilities

The replacement of existing 1st floor accommodation with the construction of cafeteria facilities at ground level in the vicinity of the Watersports Centre to maximise potential custom from casual public visitors.

### 7.9 Events Hall

The construction of a basic, general purpose hall to improve provision for water-based events, and to provide simple covered accommodation for school groups, Sunday school outings, fun-runs, sponsored walks, etc. in the event of inclement weather.

### 7.10 Hostel

The construction of a residential block providing hostel-type accommodation for competitors attending regattas, etc. and allowing the development of activity holidays and residential watersports instruction courses.

### 7.11 Field Studies/Outdoor Pursuits Centre

The provision of a small classroom block for educational visits in conjunction with other facilities.

### 7.12 Access Road

The construction of a new access road linking North Motherwell Sports Pavilion directly to the main Park road.

### 7.13 Grass Pitches

Major redesign and upgrading of the existing grass football pitches to provide Grass A playing fields.

### 7.14 Car Parks

The construction of new car parks required at Clyde Park and Roman Bathhouse.



## **8. INFRASTRUCTURE & VENUE DEVELOPMENT**

### **8.1 Woodlands**

The continuation of the Woodland Management Plan in respect of existing plantations and the provision of additional tree and shrub planting to ensure the long-term survival of the natural character of the Park. Major planting schemes include the lands at Lawmuir and Bogs Brae and the urban fringes of the Park.

### **8.2 Nature Conservation**

The development of the existing management approach to the Site of Special Scientific Interest and Wildlife Refuges and the implementation of a series of wildlife habitat improvements to ensure the continued success of the nature conservation programme in line with the aims of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

### **8.3 Historical Sites**

The implementation of a series of renovation and rehabilitation works to ensure the long-term retention of the various sites of historical interest, (e.g. The Dovecot, Orbiston Ice House and Walled Garden, The Roman Bathhouse and Fort, etc.)

### **8.4 Venue Promotion**

The implementation of a campaign to promote the Park as a venue for privately organised exhibitions, competitions, trade fairs, etc. aimed at increasing the range and number of major events of national and regional significance, held within the Park.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

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- 9.5 That this report be remitted to the Planning & Environment Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee for their interest.

Individuals or Organisations with an interest in discussing an appropriate potential development or arranging a major outdoor event in **Strathclyde Country Park** should, in the first instance, write to  
**The Director of Community Services, North Lanarkshire Council.**  
For an informal discussion please telephone  
**The Countryside & Landscape Manager at (01698) 266155**