Abstract: This report asks the Committee to note the commencement of an EcoTeams Project in Angus.

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report in regard to the setting up of EcoTeams in Angus in continuance of Local Agenda 21 initiatives and the promotion of environmental awareness and good practice.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 In March 2004, Planning and Transport was approached by an environmental charity called Global Action Plan who were seeking five local authorities to participate in a pilot project regarding their unique EcoTeams programme. Planning and Transport responded positively to the invitation and subsequently were one of two local authorities in Scotland chosen to take part in the project – the other one being East Renfrewshire.

2.2 EcoTeams has been running in Nottingham for three years, although the programme originated in Holland, where more than 10,000 households have taken part. EcoTeams enables local people to take practical environmental action by changing their shopping, transport, and energy and water consumption habits by participating in a structured, in-depth process. UK participants reduce their waste by 43% and energy consumption by 12%, on average. Many are inspired to go on and take further action; some groups have set up community composting or local food schemes for example.

2.3 As well as delivering real environmental improvements, EcoTeams offers the potential for Local Authorities to interact with stakeholders in an in-depth and structured way. In all areas where EcoTeams has been run successfully, a dedicated Programme Manager has been employed to recruit and support the teams and this made EcoTeams relatively expensive to implement. However, to reduce costs, Global Action Plan produced a range of new EcoTeam materials including a workbook and video. It is hoped that these materials will make it easier for groups of households to participate in the programme without the support of a dedicated Programme Manager.
2.4 Participating local authorities are required to:

- Recruit approximately 8 EcoTeams consisting of 50 households. A crucial element in the success of EcoTeams is that households work together in groups of 6-8 households and this must be reflected in the recruitment process.
- Collect the data from the participating households.
- Participate in a verbal assessment interview to assess the lessons gathered through the process.
- Possibly provide specific local information on e.g. recycling schemes or area-specific offers.
- Cover the charity’s costs for running the pilot. For each local authority, these costs total £2,600 plus VAT consisting of:
  
  | Provision of EcoTeam materials   | £1,050.00 |
  | Data collection and interpretation | £800.00   |
  | Assessment and evaluation report | £750.00   |

2.5 In return, Global Action Plan will:

- Provide all the materials for the households. These include 50 copies of the EcoTeam workbook (one copy is available in the Members Lounge), data collection forms and one video per EcoTeam.
- Input and analyse all the data collected.
- Undertake the assessment interviews.
- Produce a full evaluation report and distribute this to all the participating local authorities.

Benefits to the Local Authority

2.6 Participating local authorities will:

- Be able to help 50 households in their area to achieve measurable savings in waste, energy and water. The households can be chosen from areas that are strategically important to the local authority and can be used to reinforce existing initiatives such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Strategies.
- Demonstrate a commitment to working in partnership with their local communities using a proven community-based initiative.
- Obtain first-hand experience of running EcoTeams and learn from the experiences of other test local authorities.
- Be involved in a pioneering initiative that will provide opportunities for positive local and national coverage.

2.7 Planning and Transport have “signed up” to the EcoTeams initiative and seek support from elected members in recruiting participants. A leaflet explaining the process has been printed and it is planned to circulate this via a number of different avenues, e.g. community councils, community groups, tenants and residents associations, village hall committees etc.

2.8 A team has been put together to support households in the project and includes staff from Planning and Transport (Project Co-ordinator), Environment and Consumer Protection (Recycling Officer), Housing (HECA Officer), as well as some further
support from SCARF (Energy-Efficiency). This team will provide advice to householders on energy-efficiency, recycling, local food and green transport issues by way of presentations to groups of households, and providing leaflets and other information on grants, etc.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The cost for joining the programme of £2,600 plus some additional print costs will be met from the Planning and Transport Revenue Budget.

4 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATONS

4.1 There are no human rights implications in connection with this report.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Law & Administration, Director of Finance, Director of Housing, and the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection have all been consulted in the drafting of this report.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 The EcoTeams programme is a simple and effective way of engaging the community in reducing their impacts on the environment. The project will contribute towards Local Agenda 21 objectives as well as delivering actions under the environmental theme of Community Planning. Not only will the project achieve some environmental benefits, but it will also help householders to save some money and be of benefit to those on low income and suffering fuel poverty.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/RM/IAL
23 August 2004

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