

Social Return on Investment Study - Pentland Hills Regional Park

Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee

26th July 2012

Purpose of report

- 1 To inform the Joint Committee of a study, recently commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council which aims to demonstrate the social return on local authority investment in the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

Main report

- 2 Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis is a tool which accounts for the value of a service, project or activity. It enables social environmental and economic benefits of a service to be calculated. SROI demonstrates the overall impact of the service and compares its value to the amount invested. The study will provide a detailed report highlighting the ratio between the value of benefits generated and every pound invested.
- 3 The Pentland Hills Regional Park caters for over 600,000 visitors per annum. To date, performance measures have largely been based on outputs such as: paths maintained; signage installed; information produced; and number of visitors engaged with. There has been a reasonable assumption based on feedback that visitors, land managers and others value the service provided. This sense of value has not however, been previously tested or quantified. The Regional Park alongside all other local authority services is facing challenging budget pressures. It is important therefore that local authority partners are better able to quantify the return on funding contributions. An SROI analysis is one way of achieving this.
- 4 Greenspace Scotland has been commissioned to carry out an SROI analysis for the Regional Park. Greenspace Scotland has developed specialist expertise in this type of analysis and has recently completed SROI exercises for a number of projects including: Hailes Quarry Park improvements; 'Bums off Seats' (a walking initiative in Fife); and the Craigshill Greenspace Group working at Almond Park, West Lothian.

- 5 The study will be carried out between July and September 2012. The initial phase will involve identifying and consulting with the key stakeholders. The consultation will be used to identify what changes (outcomes) are experienced by stakeholders as a result of the Regional Park Service and to identify reliable indicators to measure this. Secondly, it will be determined what these outcomes are worth in financial terms. This will then allow the social return on investment ratio to be calculated.
- 6 The analysis will seek to identify those outcomes that are purely down to the service provided, rather than those that would have taken place without the provision of service. This will mean that that the benefit calculated relates directly to local authority funding for the Regional Park.
- 7 Greenspace Scotland will additionally provide a framework for future evaluation of services using an outcome based approach. This will allow the social return on investment to be monitored in the future.

Financial Implications

- 8 The study will cost £6,000 and will be funded from within existing budgets by the managing authority as a pilot study which may be applied to other parks and green spaces within the City of Edinburgh. The study will not impact on the Regional Park's operational budget for 2012/2013.
- 9 The study is likely to inform future consideration of local authority funding contributions to visitor management services in the Regional Park.

Equalities Impact

- 10 The study will be based on engagement with a cross section of stakeholders including visitors and recreational users. Stakeholder engagement will seek to include a representative sample of the full range of interests interacting with Regional Park Service. Specifically, the study will provide the opportunity to identify and engage with currently under-represented interests and support the local authority partners in meeting obligations under the Equalities Act 2010.

Environmental Impact

- 11 The Regional Park has four principal aims. These aims guide the services provided and are primarily concerned with responsible recreational enjoyment and environmental stewardship:
 - To retain the essential character of the hills as a place for the peaceful enjoyment of the countryside.
 - To care for the hills, so that the landscape and habitat is protected and enhanced.
 - Within this caring framework to encourage responsible public enjoyment of the hills.
 - Co-ordination of these aims so that they can co-exist with farming and other land uses within the Park.

- 12 The SROI study will provide an objective assessment of the value of services provided in the Regional Park. It will therefore play a part in protecting the environment of the hills while providing a valued recreational resource.

Recommendations

- 13 It is recommended that the Joint Committee:
- a) notes that a Social Return on Investment study has been commissioned as detailed in this report;
 - b) requests that the Consultative Forum be engaged as part of the exercise;
 - c) receives a further report on the findings following completion of the study.

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Appendices None

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Wards affected All

Single Outcome Agreement

1. Edinburgh's economy delivers increased investment, jobs, and opportunities for all
2. Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health
3. Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential
4. Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric

Background Papers None