

8 November 2016

Mr Bryan Scott
Countryside Development Officer
Countryside Services
Dumfries & Galloway Council
Militia House
English Street
Dumfries DG1 2HR

Dear Bryan

Proposed Rhins of Galloway coastal path

Ramblers Scotland welcomes the proposal for a continuous coastal path around the Rhins of Galloway, and is very pleased to offer our support to Dumfries & Galloway Council for this initiative.

Ramblers Scotland is a membership organisation and the representative body for walkers in Scotland. We are recognised by **sportscotland** as a governing body of sport and are part of the Ramblers, which has been campaigning across Great Britain for over 80 years to secure and facilitate access, promote walking and protect the natural beauty of the countryside. We have over 6,500 members and 55 walking groups across Scotland all run by volunteers, including a group based in Wigtownshire who are also enthusiastic supporters of this initiative.

Many of our members enjoy walking on long distance routes, whether for day trips or as part of longer holidays. Our group in Inverclyde has been involved in a previous Coastal Communities Fund project as partners in the development of the Inverclyde Coastal Path, and as an organisation we were members of the Scotland's Great Trails long distance routes project steering group. We continue to engage in the long distance routes managers' forum, hosted by Scottish Natural Heritage.

Most of Scotland's Great Trails – and other long distance routes in Scotland – were originally developed through local initiatives and now provide an important source of revenue for communities across rural Scotland. As one example, a study¹ in 2007 estimated that the Fife Coastal Path supported 800-900 FTE jobs in Fife with an annual net expenditure of between £24-29 million. While a Rhins of Galloway coastal path would provide a different, more remote and wilder experience compared to the path in Fife, it has the potential to act as a significant draw for increased walking tourism in the south west of Scotland as well as supporting opportunities for local residents to be more active in their daily lives and improve their health and wellbeing.

Outdoor recreation is a significant sector of Scotland's tourist industry and therefore makes a major contribution to the national economy. Overall, a report by Scottish Natural Heritage estimated that total visitor spending attributable to nature-based tourism per year is £1.4 billion with 39,000 associated full-

¹ <http://fifecoastandcountrysidetrust.co.uk/userfiles/Fife%20Coastal%20Path%20Study%20-%20Final%20Report%20-%20FV%2018%2005%2009.pdf>

time (or equivalent) jobs. Within this, walking tourism in Scotland alone brings in £533 million per year and provides 15,231 jobs, which equates to 40% of all nature-based tourism spending in Scotland².

In terms of domestic outdoor recreation, in 2012 79% of Scottish adults had made at least one visit to the outdoors for leisure or recreation in the previous twelve months, and the total value of expenditure during these visits was estimated at around £2.6 billion³. Amongst those visiting the outdoors, walking has consistently been recorded as the main activity undertaken on the majority of visits, rising from 69% of visits in 2004 to 73% in 2012.

For UK visitors to Scotland, walking is by far the most popular nature-based activity. VisitScotland has estimated⁴ that 55% of visitors undertook a short walk or stroll in 2015, while 39% enjoyed a longer walk or stroll and 43% came for a centre-based walking holiday. Scottish coastal environments have been shown to be a significant draw. The Scottish Marine Recreation and Tourism Survey⁵ was designed to gather information for 23 different recreation and tourism activities undertaken at sea or around the Scottish coastline. Overall, the value of coastal of marine recreation and tourism activities is estimated to be worth up to £3.7 billion to the Scottish economy. Of this, around £2.4 billion is associated with general marine recreation and tourism including coastal walks, while £1.3 billion relates to more specialist activities including wildlife watching, sailing, kayaking, surfing and angling.

The above figures show clearly how important and valuable tourism relating to outdoor recreation is for the Scottish economy, and the significant impact it makes. We are confident that the Rhins of Galloway coastal path would become a popular visitor attraction for south-west Scotland. It would also play an important strategic role in the long distance routes network, linking to the Southern Upland Way and the Loch Ryan Coastal Path/Ayrshire Coastal Path. We believe the proposed coastal path would provide an attractive waymarked route for people to experience the natural and cultural heritage of this area and bring many benefits to the Rhins of Galloway and beyond.

We trust these comments are helpful but would be very happy to discuss this matter further at any time.

Yours sincerely

Helen Todd
Campaigns & Policy Manager

² <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B720765.pdf>

³ <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A1020956.pdf>

⁴ [http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/Final%20\(external%20use\)%20Scotland%20Visitor%20Survey%202015%20updated%208%20March%202016.pdf](http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/Final%20(external%20use)%20Scotland%20Visitor%20Survey%202015%20updated%208%20March%202016.pdf)

⁵ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/seamanagement/national/RecandTourism>