

SECOND OPINION

Irvine Bay

Name of scheme Irvine Bay Masterplan

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Commissioned by Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company
Produced by Multi-disciplinary team including consultants
Urbed and King Sturge, and Glasgow University

Scope/purpose A draft report setting out a masterplan for Irvine Bay, drawing together old and new research into a single strategy. The conclusions offer a series of development projects to be brought forward by the URC.



Jonathan Aubrey comments: The Irvine Bay Strategy and Masterplan attempts to strategically plan the future development of Saltcoats, Stevenston, Kilwinning, Ardrossan and Irvine. The settlements all suffer problems common to coastal settlements in the UK:

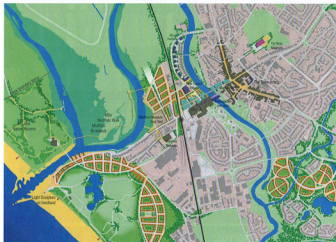
peripheral locations, stagnating economies and population decline. They do, however, have the advantages of fine settings and unexploited potential.

The overall strategy is based on a logical dual approach of both attracting outsiders to live in Irvine, and attempting to tap into the economic potential of the Glasgow region to secure long-term change. The plan proposes achieving these aims by increasing the area's population and skills base; bringing benefits to the existing community through the renewal of existing neighbourhoods; and expanding the area's economic base. It adopts a strategy based around five objectives: attracting spend from the Glasgow city region; exploiting the high-quality coastal setting; increasing jobs and wealth; enhancing the environment; and changing perceptions of the area. Each objective is presented with development concepts, including provision for potential business sector growth, increasing retail space, residential expansion, environmental projects and leisure provision.

The approach to tackling such large-scale planning is to bring a new focus to Irvine Bay by the use of three unifying concepts: a coastal park, modern industry in a forest setting, and residential development within walking distance of town centres. This is masterplanning as a strategic investment framework based on strong vision and project identification. It positions itself as economic regeneration with sustainable credentials. Each settlement is tackled in a coherent manner, identifying its economic role, rationalising existing land use and drawing out identifiable projects based on the settlement's needs and potential new role. Successful projects from across the UK are used to demonstrate the potential benefits of the proposed approaches.

The strategy appears to provide a strong basis for regenerating the five settlements with a local project focus. However, the approach would have been strengthened if more attention was given to how the individual settlements interact with each other and whether these links can be exploited to create a strong sub-regional hub, producing mutually supporting settlements together with stronger connections to the wider city region. There is also a long wishlist of local projects, the viability of which is less clear – but, after all, this is an aspirational document. The key to success now lies in project detailing, implementation costing and delivery, which will test the masterplan's conceptual robustness.

● Jonathan Aubrey is an associate at planning and economic consultancy Roger Tym & Partners.



Coastal concepts (clockwise from top): proposed residential development includes an eco-village at Stevenston; the plan suggests that the five settlements could tap into the economic potential of the Glasgow region; the strategy includes environmental and leisure provision; Saltcoats Quay; the Ardeer Peninsula near the mouth of the River Irvine; the key changes to Irvine proposed as part of the masterplan include a new nature reserve, new council offices, and retail

