

ANGUS COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE – 14 APRIL 2015

VISITSCOTLAND – PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT FOR 2015-16

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval of a funding package for VisitScotland (VS) services to Angus Council for 2015-2016.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee authorises the Service Manager – Economic Development to:

- (i) Conclude a Minute of Agreement (MOA) in consultation with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services between Angus Council and VisitScotland for a period of one year (from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 inclusive) for the management of the Visitor Information Centre in Arbroath (by VisitScotland) at a cost to Angus Council of £27,500 and
- (ii) Agree a contribution for seasonal national marketing activity for Angus of £15,000

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/CORPORATE PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- We have a sustainable economy with good employment opportunities
- Angus is a good place to live in, work and visit

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Until October 2014, VisitScotland managed and staffed two Visitor Information Centres (VICs) in Angus – one at Arbroath Harbour Visitor Centre and one at Pictavia, Brechin. As part of a formal Minute of Agreement (MOA), Angus Council has made a financial contribution of £39,000 annually to VisitScotland towards the operating costs of these two VICs.

3.2 This contribution has represented approximately 48% of the running costs of both VICs. The Brechin VIC closed on the 31 October 2014, along with Pictavia. £27,500 of the £39,000 Angus Council contribution was attributed to the larger Arbroath VIC located within the Harbour Visitor Centre.

3.3 VisitScotland is currently reviewing VIC provision across the whole of Scotland in order to reflect the changing communication patterns and deliver a more effective service to tourists during their visit. There has been a shift in the past few years in the way that visitors access information. An increasing number are finding out about the area they are visiting using digital methods, and thus footfall to VICs is falling.

4. EVALUATION OF THE 2014-2015 MINUTE OF AGREEMENT

4.1 The 2014-2015 Minute of Agreement with VisitScotland committed the council to a contribution of £39,000 towards the running of the VICs, as well a £15,000 contribution towards key national media and direct mail campaigns – a total funding package of £54,000 (Report 237/14 refers). The benefits gained are reported below:

4.2 The VICs operated in Angus were open as follows:

Location	Days Open	Public Opening Date from	Public Opening Date to	Time open	Time closed
Arbroath	Monday – Saturday	07/04/14	29/06/14	10.00	17.00
Arbroath	Sunday	07/04/14	29/06/14	12.00	16.00
Arbroath	Monday – Saturday	30/06/14	31/08/14	10.00	17.30
Arbroath	Sunday	30/06/14	01/08/14	12.00	16.00
Arbroath	Monday – Saturday	01/09/14	26/10/14	10.00	17.00
Arbroath	Sunday	01/09/14	26/10/14	12.00	16.00
Arbroath	Monday – Friday	27/10/14	31/03/15	10.00	16.00
Arbroath	Saturday	27/10/14	31/03/15	11.00	16.00
Brechin	Monday – Saturday	02/04/14	31/10/14	09.00	17.00
Brechin	Sunday	02/04/14	31/10/14	10.00	17.00

4.3 The following table shows the pattern of footfall for both locations for financial years 2012/13 onward:

	April – Jun	Jul – Sept	Oct – Dec	Jan - Mar	Total
Arbroath					
2012/13	7992	13,160	3489	2920	27,561
2013/14	8001	12,017	3072	2636	25,726
2014/15	8522	11,597	1655	2914 (to 18 th Feb)	
Brechin					
2012/13	3234	3504	1350	756	8844
2013/14	2924	3477	1177	740	8318
2014/15	2923	3244	* closed		

This table shows that footfall is declining year on year.

4.4 The main purpose of the Arbroath VIC is to assist visitors in finding their way around the area and providing them with information about attractions once they arrive. The VIC staff can put visitors in contact with local accommodation providers, and the VIC can handle ticketing for local venues and attractions, charging a small commission fee.

4.5 Angus Council contributes £15,000 per annum through the MOA towards specific national marketing activity. In 2014/15 this was boosted by a European Regional Development Fund funded project, leveraging in grant funding equivalent to circa £6,000 and so gave Angus £21,000 of campaign activity (this project has now ended so there will be no extra funds in 2015/16). In 2014/15 promotion was via the 'Brilliant Moments' national campaign and focussed on events, heritage and the Tartan Day celebration. This was achieved through direct mail, media press ads and radio campaigns as follows:

4.6 Spring/Summer 2014

- Direct Mail – partnered with Dundee, the joint pack was sent to 25,250 addresses within a 2-4 hour journey time
- Press Activity – A2 press advertorials in The Herald (22 March – opportunities to see (OTS) 123k) and Scotland on Sunday (23 March – OTS 125k), 2 pages of a 4 page

pullout shared with Dundee. Full page advert in the Sunday Herald (30 March – OTS 123k)

- Online activity – online banner adverts (135k impressions). Solus email to 39k through 'Who Do You Think You Are' contacts, and magazine editorial (total readership of 66k)
- A prize draw generated a total of 1,840 responses. 1,487 of these were happy to be contacted.

4.7 **Autumn/Winter 2014**

- Press Activity – Full page advert in Daily Mail (23 August – OTS 188k), Shared A2 pullout with Highlands in The Herald (28 August – OTS 123k), Double page spread in Glasgow Evening Times (29 August – OTS 80)k.
- Online activity – 72,000 emails sent to warm contacts in a 2-4 hour journey time. Online banner adverts (800k impressions).

In addition to the above, Angus featured in a number of VisitScotland blog posts, web articles, tweets and Flickr albums.

The Daily Mail 'It's Friday' feature has included the following:

11 July – Glamis Extravaganza
1 August – Walk of the Week, Angus Glens
8 August – Arbroath Seafest
5 September – Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre
Each of these achieved an OTS in full of 84k.

5. **VISITOR INFORMATION PROVISION**

- 5.1 It is acknowledged that the visitor numbers to Arbroath VIC have dropped over the last two years and that this trend is likely to continue as visitors increasingly use digital channels to get information on Angus tourism attractions and products – both pre arrival and during their visit.
- 5.2 Angus Council has taken account of these changes by upgrading www.angusahead.com to offer a clear tourism focus – with a what to do, where to eat, where to stay message. This provides visitors with up to date information both prior to and during their stay. The domain name of the website is changing to www.visitangus.com to reflect this strong tourism focus, and as part of a whole Visit Angus campaign.
- 5.3 To supplement the sole VisitScotland VIC in Arbroath, Angus Council also provides tourism information from 6 museums or libraries across Angus. To ensure Council front line staff have the knowledge of tourism attractions and facilities across the county additional training is being undertaken from March 2015. This will take the form of World Host Customer Service training, followed by work shadowing at the Arbroath VIC. The artefacts and learning resources from Pictavia are being relocated across Angus Museums, and Brechin Library has become a new visitor information point to counteract the loss of the Brechin VIC at Pictavia.
- 5.4 A pilot project on the provision of touch screen digital visitor information kiosks is also being undertaken in three venues across Angus – the locations of these are currently being negotiated, where potential visitor footfall is high. These will be branded Visit Angus and will include listings for all tourism businesses across Angus. The Visit Angus brand is already used on tourism brochures and at exhibitions and is being rolled out as a dedicated tourism brand with a specific communications plan associated with it.
- 5.5 These mobile units offer an on site extension of the information contained on www.visitangus.com and are aimed at visitors during their stay in the area. Monthly analytics on customer usage will allow evaluation to determine viability, suitability of pilot locations and usage by visitors. If successful this project will be rolled out to other high visitor footfall locations across Angus.
- 5.6 VisitScotland have committed to continue the operation of the VIC in Arbroath at its current level in 2015/16 if Angus Council's annual contribution meets the previous contribution of £27,500.

6. PROPOSALS

6.1 It is therefore proposed that a new Minute of Agreement (MOA) to cover **one year only (1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016)** be concluded with VisitScotland to allow both analysis of the Arbroath VIC visitor numbers and an evaluation of the additional Angus Council visitor focussed initiatives to determine the most effective mix of information services for Angus to meet customer needs.

6.2 On Arrival

It is proposed that VisitScotland continue to operate the visitor information centre at Arbroath Harbour Visitor Centre for a further year, with no changes to opening dates or times. The proposed agreement is based on a funding contribution from the Council of £27,500

6.3 Pre-arrival

The Angus Economic Development Strategy recognises VisitScotland as a key partner in developing tourism in Angus. As the national tourism marketing body, VisitScotland has access to key communications databases and increased marketing channels across our target domestic markets. It is therefore proposed that we capitalise on this opportunity and continue to contribute £15,000 for national partnership marketing in 2015/16.

6.4 Evaluation

The agreement will require a year end report to be provided by VisitScotland to Angus Council outlining the full year's activity in both the VICs and marketing campaign. This will enable the Council to monitor return on investment and success against performance indicators.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The cost of £42,500 will be met from the Economic Development Revenue Budget in 2015/16. This amounts to £27,500 towards the running costs of the Arbroath VIC, and £15,000 for specific partnership marketing activity.

7.2 It is proposed that the contribution figure be paid in two instalments over the year as follows:

Instalment 1	July 2015	£21,250
Instalment 2	January 2015	£21,250

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

REPORT AUTHOR: Hilary Tasker – Marketing Officer

EMAIL DETAILS: taskerh@angus.gov.uk