

ANGUS COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE – 26 MAY 2015

OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS SUPPORT AND INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

ABSTRACT

This report provides an overview of business support and investment activities supported by economic development officers since the last information report presented 14 April 2015 and includes a number of year end performance statistics.

1. PROPERTY

- 1.1 Economic Development has a total of 106 commercial properties available to let and 95 of the properties were occupied at the end of March. Over the 12 months from 1 April 2014 to the end of March 2015 the average occupancy level was 90.6%. Although this is marginally down from last year, when average occupancy was 91.8%, it remains above the performance achieved in each of the preceding 3 years (when average occupancy was 84.9%).
- 1.2 In financial year 2014/15 there were 3 employment land sales concluded – 2 at Brechin Business Park (BBP) and 1 at Orchardbank, Forfar. As a result, Hydrus Group is nearing completion of its 'engineering technology park' (BBP) while both Carnegie Fuels (BBP) and Oilfast (Orchardbank) have commenced construction of their fuel distribution centres.

2. INWARD INVESTMENT

- 2.1 In financial year 2014/15 there were 32 inward investment projects identified and responded to (up from 27 in 2013/14). These were from existing inward investors looking to expand or companies looking to invest in the Angus for the first time. During the year there were 9 investment projects confirmed which were supported in some way by economic development officers: Certex (Montrose), Hydrus Group (Brechin), Journeycall (Arbroath), Origin Fertilisers (Montrose) and Safety Kleen (Montrose) all expanded their operations in Angus. Cairndene (Brechin), Carnegie Fuels (Brechin), Eco Genics (Montrose) and Oilfast (Forfar) all invested in Angus for the first time. These investments created a total of 264 new jobs, safeguarded 139 jobs and involved capital expenditure estimated at £25.3 million.

3. BUSINESS GATEWAY

- 3.1 Over the last year there has been an overall increase in the level of business support activities delivered in Angus by Business Gateway. Given the importance of supporting new businesses this performance is encouraging.

Table 1 – Business Gateway performance in Angus:

Activity	2013/14	2014/15
Number of business start-ups assisted	202	226 (+24)
Number of 'Growth Companies' supported (companies predicting a turnover of above £200,000 within 3 years)	7	10 (+3)
Number of companies transferred to Scottish Enterprise for 'Account Management' * (companies predicting an increase in turnover of £400,000 or more within 3 years)	3	1 (-2)
Number of business start-up workshops	34	37 (+3)
Number of workshops for existing businesses	5	10 (+5)

* Account managed companies have a Scottish Enterprise account manager and access to a range of business support tools to help achieve growth aspirations. At the end of March 2015 there were 41 Angus companies account managed by Scottish Enterprise.

4. FUNDING AND ADVICE FOR BUSINESSES

4.1 The following applications have been approved through the grant schemes available to businesses in Angus:

4.2 Angus Market Development Grant

Business	Amount requested	Status	Amount Paid
JMH Machines - Forfar	£750	Approved	£626.93

* Grants are paid on receipt of final claims and therefore may vary from amount approved

Budget Available 2015/16	Committed	Actual Paid	Budget Remaining
£10,000	£750	£626.93	£9,373.07

4.3 Angus Business Start Up – capital grant

Business	Amount requested	Status	Amount Paid
Barista Buddy (Monifieth) – coffee machine online retail	£500	Approved	£500
Budget Available 2015/16	Committed	Actual Paid	Budget Remaining
£20,003.28 **	£500	£500	£19,503.28

** budget also available to support the Angus Business First Employee Grant. No applications to date to this fund.

4.4 Angus Training Fund – no applications to date

Budget Available	Committed	Actual Paid	Budget Remaining
£6,476.25	£0	£0	£6,476.25

4.3 In financial year 2014/15 funding and business advice was provided to 32 local businesses and this helped create 41.5 new jobs and helped safeguard 111.5 existing jobs. Total funding provided directly or from external sources totalled £115,000 and this helped leverage further funding of £502,000 from the private sector.

5. EVENTS AND PROMOTION

5.1 The third Angus Business Breakfast – Funding for Growth took place on 18 March 2015 and 23 delegates attended. Feedback surveys showed that all delegates were either happy or very happy with the event and the information provided.

5.2 A Business Angus - Meet The Buyer event took place on 14 April 2015. The event offered businesses the opportunity to meet with public sector and construction buyers active in the Angus area and understand better how to do business with them. There were 21 stallholders, 6 presentations and 1-2-1 appointments with Robertson Construction available. 63 delegates attended.

5.3 VisitScotland Expo took place at the AECC, Aberdeen on 22 and 23 April. This is Scotland's premier business to business travel trade event, attracting buyers from all sectors of the industry and from all over the world. Angus Council exhibited as 'Visit Angus' and 'Carnoustie Country' in order to promote the area as a visitor destination with the aim of encouraging buyers to add Angus to their programmes and itineraries. Stand partners included Glamis Castle, House of Turin, Peel Farm, Kinnettles Castle and Carnoustie Golf Links. The Angus 'Oculus Rift' project was launched on the stand – a 3D headset which takes users on a virtual journey throughout key Angus tourist attractions. This project is the first of its kind as it uses technology designed for the gaming sector in a tourism context. Fergus Ewing Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism and Mike Cantley, Chair of VisitScotland visited the stand and tried out the system.

6. TOURISM

6.1 Officers had a key role in organising the Dundee & Angus Tourism Conference which took place on 11 March at the Carnoustie Hotel. Over 100 delegates, including keynote speaker Fergus Ewing MSP, attended the event which had a food & drink theme. There were 10 Angus based food and drink companies exhibiting and promoting their products on the day.

6.2 The annual Tartan Day Scotland Festival took place from 3-12 April 2015. In addition to a programme of local events across the county, officers worked with Historic Scotland to organise an event at Arbroath Abbey on 6 April to commemorate the Abbey and the signing of the Declaration in 1320. 1,750 visitors came to the Abbey to enjoy a full programme of events. With five years to go until the 700th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration in 2020, the Arbroath 2020 group has been established, with representatives from Angus Council, VisitScotland, Historic Scotland, Arbroath Abbey Action Group and various community groups. Arbroath 2020 will lead on plans for activity to commemorate the 700th anniversary of this significant event.

6.3 World Host is a leading customer service training programme which includes content specifically connected to tourism. This training is being offered to all Angus Council staff who provide visitor information, including library, museum and Access Office staff. The first training session will take place in June with more to follow later in the year. Following evaluation of this pilot, and if results are positive, it is intended to roll this out to local businesses.

- 6.4 Three digital kiosks, which display visitor information on what to do, where to eat and stay in Angus are to be installed locally. The Carnoustie Hotel and Glamis Castle have shown interest as host locations and discussions are being held with other venues regarding the location for the third kiosk. This will initially be a two year pilot programme to allow evaluation on usage and to determine the value of increasing the number of kiosks.
- 6.5 Officers are working with Dundee & Angus Convention Bureau (of which we are a funding partner at an annual cost for 2015/16 of £12,000) to expand the use of local produce under the 'A Taste of Angus' brand into business conferences held in Dundee and to encourage conference delegates into Angus with increased social events. In the 2014-15, conferences brought an economic impact of £204,591 into Angus, with business social events generating an economic impact of £53,655.
- 6.6 A Maritime Heritage Trail leaflet has been produced in partnership with museum colleagues, to add to the existing suite of Heritage Trails in Angus (<http://www.anguseritage.com/Places/Places-Heritage-Trails.aspx>). Copy was written by Colin Easton, Curator of the Signal Tower Museum and images provided by Angus Archives. The leaflets have been distributed at tourist information points within a 90 minute drive time of Angus.

7. UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

- 7.1 The overall unemployment rate in Angus as of February 2015 was 1.8% which accounts for 1,305 people. This shows a reduction in Job Seekers Allowance in comparison to the same time in previous years (Feb 2014 2.2%; Feb 2013 3.1%).

At present 2.5% (879 people) of those claiming Jobseekers Allowance are males and 1.2%(426) are females. This trend of more males being unemployed than females has been consistent for the past year and has led to focused support for client groups. Overall the levels of claimants in Angus are lower than the national average of 2.5%.

8. FUNDING

- 8.1 In line with the Scottish Government focus year programme, funding has been ring-fenced within the Angus Council Community Grant Scheme to support the 'Year of Food and Drink'. Grants of up to £1,000 will be available to communities, businesses and activity supporting the promotion of the food and drink sector in Angus. For application forms and guidance potential applicants should email externalfunding@angus.gov.uk.
- 8.2 Funding is provided to communities through the Angus Council Community Grant Scheme. For the year 2014/15 the Council funded 64 projects totalling £108,525.32 which included £28,562.83 that was focused on Commonwealth Games projects and activity. In addition to this the team supported communities to lever in £1,587,563.93 from external funders such as Heritage Lottery, Foundation Scotland and Comic Relief.
- 8.3 Support is also provided to other Council services to help lever in the funds they need to deliver projects and programmes. In 2014/15 Angus Council levered in £3,776,053.80 which supplemented existing budgets and supported the council priorities.

9. TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT TEAM

- 9.1 In 2014/15 the Towards Employment team registered 533 clients with the service. Of the 533, 266 clients entered employment. 203 clients entered full-time employment and 63 part-time employment. An additional 15 clients started their own business and 13 went into further or higher education. The number of clients achieving a positive employment destination has risen this year from 41% (13/14) to 52% (14/15). The Youth team worked with 32 new start modern apprentices of which 17 were within the council. This financial year the council did not achieve its 14/15 target of 30 modern apprentices working for the organisation. This could be attributed to the number of organisational changes that the council is currently undergoing. In addition to those apprentices in training 31 employers were able to access a 6 month grant against the apprentice wage costs.

10. OTHER

- 10.1 In order to inform future strategy, a contract has been awarded to consultants SQW to carry out a study to gather evidence on the barriers to growth facing engineering and manufacturing companies in the region. The study will develop options and recommendations on how to address the barriers. SQW will carry out face to face interviews with a number of Angus companies, and other stakeholders, and will report on the findings in June. A number of partners are supporting this initiative including Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and Dundee & Angus College and Dundee City Council.

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