

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE – 27 MAY 2014**

**VISITSCOTLAND – PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT FOR 2014-15**

**REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**ABSTRACT**

This report seeks approval of a funding package for VisitScotland (VS) services to Angus Council for 2014 – 2015.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

- (i) conclude a Minute of Agreement (MOA) between Angus Council and VisitScotland for a period of one year (from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 inclusive) for the management of key visitor information facilities in Arbroath and Brechin (by VisitScotland) on a shared basis at a cost to Angus Council of £39,000; 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 outcomes 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 in and visit

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Reference is made to Article 9 of the minute of meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee of 28 February 2012 and Article 6 of the minute of meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee of 19 November 2013.

3.2 VisitScotland manages two Visitor Information Centres (VIC's) in Angus - one at Arbroath Harbour Visitor Centre and one at Pictavia, Brechin. Angus Council has paid a contribution to VisitScotland for the operating costs of these two VIC's as outlined in a formal Minute of Agreement (MOA). The past two MOAs, have been signed for a two year period and have agreed to a contribution of approximately 48% of the running costs of the Arbroath and Brechin visitor information centres. However, VisitScotland is now investigating the potential of making as many of its VICs as possible 'cost neutral', i.e no net costs to VisitScotland. There has also been a shift in the past few years in the way that visitors access information. More people are finding out about the area they are visiting by digital methods, and as such the way in which information is made available must evolve. Therefore the long term viability of every VIC is being considered by VisitScotland.

3.3 The Brechin VIC has been identified as having too little footfall in relation to the running costs. This is further impacted by the limitations of VisitScotland's own retail offering at Brechin. Therefore VisitScotland has stated that it cannot currently commit to the Brechin VIC opening beyond the end of October 2014. The final decision on this is pending the outcome of an Angus Council feasibility study being undertaken on options for the future of Pictavia (See Report No 601/13)

- 3.4 The proposed contribution by Angus Council of £39,000 covers the Arbroath VIC for the period April 2014 – March 2015 inclusive, and the Brechin VIC for April 2014 – October 2014 inclusive along with additional support as detailed below.
- 3.5 VisitScotland has agreed to work in partnership with the Council to determine the future of the VIC at Brechin and this has been included as part of the feasibility study on Pictavia. A separate report on the options for Pictavia, following the conclusion of the feasibility study will be brought forward. It is for this reason that a recommendation is made at this stage to conclude an agreement with VisitScotland **for one year only**.
- 3.6 As part of the MOA, VisitScotland has also agreed to support the Council's own tourist information points, in terms of giving the staff the tools they need to deliver visitor information to a consistent and coordinated standard.
- 3.7 VisitScotland will continue to work with Angus Council on joint national marketing activities, and the proposed £15,000 contribution in the MOA will ensure Angus tourism is showcased as part of the VisitScotland national marketing campaigns. This element is part of a the VisitScotland European Regional Development Fund for New Seasonal Tourism Campaigns funded project that levers out an additional £10,000 of national marketing activity – thus giving a total of £25,000 worth of media and direct mail marketing specifically for Angus.

#### 4. EVALUATION OF THE 2012 – 2014 MINUTE OF AGREEMENT

- 4.1 The 2012 – 2014 Minute of Agreement with VisitScotland committed the council to funding approximately 48% of the net running costs of the VICs at Arbroath and Brechin, as well as a contribution towards key national media and direct mail campaigns – a total funding package of £54,000. The benefits gained from this are reported below:

The VICs operated in Angus were open as follows (2013 opening hours):

Location	Days Open	Public opening date from	Public opening date to	Time open	Time closed
Arbroath	Monday-Saturday	02/04/2013	30/09/2013	09:30	17:00
Arbroath	Sunday	02/04/2013	30/09/2013	12:00	16:00
Arbroath	Monday - Saturday	01/10/2013	28/10/2013	10:00	17:00
Arbroath	Sunday	02/06/2013	28/10/2013	10:00	16:00
Arbroath	Monday - Friday	29/10/2013	31/03/2014	10:00	16:00
Arbroath	Saturday	29/10/2013	31/03/2014	10:00	16:00
Brechin	Monday - Saturday	02/04/2013	31/10/2013	09:00	17:00
Brechin	Sunday	02/04/2013	31/10/2013	10:00	17:00
Brechin	Saturday	01/11/2013	31/03/2014	09:00	17:00
Brechin	Sunday	01/11/2013	31/03/2014	10:00	17:00

- 4.2 Total footfall for **2013/14 was 26,010 for Arbroath and 8,334 for Brechin**. This is a **6% drop** at both sites from the previous year. The following table shows the pattern of footfall throughout the financial years 2012/13 and 2013/14:

	Arbroath 2012/13	Arbroath 2013/14	Brechin 2012/13	Brechin 2013/14
April	2647	2308	951	1112
May	2205	2832	1039	990
June	3140	2861	1224	822
July	4380	4386	1322	1115
August	5886	4917	1248	1380
September	2894	2714	934	982
October	1923	1548	920	791
November	970	960	225	210
December	596	564	205	176
January	649	643	138	188
February	953	792	274	240
March	1318	1201	344	312

4.3 The Arbroath VIC is open Monday to Saturday all year round (with varying opening and closing times depending on the season), but is closed on Sundays during the winter. The Brechin VIC is open Saturday and Sunday throughout the year but is closed from Monday to Friday during the winter, as per Pictavia's opening hours.

4.4 The main purpose of 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 VICs can handle ticketing for venues and attractions. For instance the Brechin VIC handles ticketing for Pictavia, while the Arbroath VIC handles ticket sales for The Abbey Theatre.

4.5 Angus Council contributes £15,000 per annum through the MOA towards specific national marketing activity. This is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, levering in grant funding equivalent to circa £6,000 and so gives Angus £21,000 worth of campaign activity. In 2012-13 this was through the 'Surprise Yourself' and 'We'll point you in the right direction' national campaigns and was a general 'reasons to visit Angus' message. This was achieved through direct mail, door drops, press inserts, media press ads and a radio campaign as follows:

▪ Spring 2013

This was a campaign featuring a generic Angus message highlighting the Angus Glens, Golf and the history of Angus from the Picts to the Declaration of Arbroath.

Direct Mail – 86.3k inserts in a VS direct mail-shot sent to warm UK leads

Door Drops – 991,123 door drops delivered within a 2-3 hour drive time

Press Inserts – 400,000 leaflets inserted in Sunday Times, The Observer, Scotland on Sunday, Scotsman, Sunday Sun, Newcastle Evening Chronicle.

Media Press Ads – Scotsman Double Page Spread (readership of 154,000), The Herald Travel Supplement half page advert (readership of 154,000)

Radio Campaign – ran on stations within 2-3 hour drive time (opportunities to hear of 700,000).

▪ Autumn 2013

This was the first time Angus had run an Autumn campaign with VS. It was in partnership with Dundee to maximise the spend and activity of both local authority areas VS marketing budget. The Angus element of the campaign focussed on our four Autumn Festivals in order to encourage visitors to Angus in the quieter shoulder Autumn months.

Media Press Ads – Sunday Herald double page spread, Press & Journal double page spread, Scotland on Sunday 4 page pull out, and Herald 4 page pull out (combined opportunities to see of 575,361).

▪ Spring 2014

There is campaign running currently which is part of the VS 'Brilliant Moments' campaign, again in partnership with Dundee. This has highlighted the Angus heritage message through the Tartan Day Scotland festival and includes direct mail and media press ads.

## 5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 It is proposed that a new Minute of Agreement to cover the financial year period of 2014/15 be concluded with VisitScotland as outlined below.

### On Arrival

It is proposed that VisitScotland continue to operate the visitor information centre at Arbroath Harbour Visitor Centre for a further one year. It will also operate the visitor information centre within Pictavia, Brechin until 31 October 2014. Operating arrangements for Brechin beyond that date will be reviewed pending the outcome of the current Pictavia feasibility study. The proposed agreement is based on a funding contribution from the Council of £39,000 towards the running costs of both VICs and also includes support for the Council's own tourist information points to ensure Council staff are able to supply consistent and coordinated information to visitors.

### 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 had access to key communication databases and increased marketing channels across a domestic and international market. It is therefore proposed that we capitalise on this opportunity and contribute £15,000 for partnership marketing activity in 2014-15. It is envisaged that this will take a similar form to the campaign in 2013 -14, working in partnership with Dundee to ensure best value for money and maximum reach. As this continues to be part of an ERDF funded project it will leaver out an additional £10,000 giving a total of £25,000 worth of national marketing activity specifically for Angus.

### Evaluation

The agreement will require a year end report to be provided by VisitScotland to the 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.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The cost of £54,000 per annum will be met from the Economic Development Revenue Budget in 2014/15. This amounts to £39,000 towards the running costs of the Arbroath and Brechin VICs along with support from VisitScotland for the Council's own tourist information points to ensure Council staff are able to supply consistent and coordinated information to visitors, and £15,000 for specific partnership marketing activity.
- 6.2 It is proposed that the figure be paid in two instalments over the year as follows:
- |              |              |          |
|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Instalment 1 | July 2014    | £27,000  |
| Instalment 2 | January 2015 | £27,000. |

**RICHARD STIFF  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**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.

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