

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 16 AUGUST 2016

ARBROATH 2020

REPORT BY STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

ABSTRACT

This report relates to proposals by the Arbroath 2020 community group celebrating the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approves that permission is given for Arbroath 2020 to develop proposals in consultation with Angus Council and Historic Environment Scotland for community led improvements to the open space in front of the main entrance to Arbroath Abbey to create a civic space;
- (ii) Approves that, should the proposals come to fruition and achieve the required external funding, the bronze sculpture of the Declaration by David Annand, currently situated on the A92 at the southern entrance to the town, is relocated to the area beside the Abbey entrance as part of the initiative, on the condition that a landscaped planting bed or another suitable installation is created in its place, funded and maintained by local community groups or the Arbroath common good.

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

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Angus is a good place to live, work and visit;
- Our communities are safe, secure and vibrant;
- Our natural and built environment is protected and enjoyed.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Arbroath 2020 is a community group which was formed in 2014 with a view to mark the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath – originally issued in Arbroath on the 6th of April 1320. The Declaration was the first step towards the democratic environment which we enjoy today, and is truly of international importance.

3.2 While the ruins of Arbroath Abbey still stand as a magnificent iconic landmark, and its story is told in an impressive visitor centre, nothing marks the place where the Declaration is believed to have been created.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Arbroath 2020 have identified the area in front of the main entrance (shown on **Appendix 1**) to the Abbey (which is held on common good), as an area that could be enhanced and improved to create an appropriate legacy for Arbroath of the 700th anniversary. They have consequently had informal but positive discussions with Historic Environment Scotland and Visit Scotland.

- 4.2 Members will be aware that the Council is currently taking forward a major project in the Abbey Quarter to replace unpopular flats with new high quality council housing for rent. The blocks of flats have been demolished to prepare the way for construction to start at the end of the year.
- 4.3 The design for that project has been the subject of extensive consultation, including with Architecture and Design Scotland. As the project design very much takes account of the wider urban and historic context around the site itself, Council officers have had informal discussions with Arbroath 2020 representatives to consider potential synergies and possibilities for bringing additionality to both the Council's project and proposals from Arbroath 2020, if they can be taken forward in a co-ordinated way.
- 4.4 Members will also be aware that the recent Arbroath charette identified an ambition to enhance the Town Centre environment, to improve the retail experience for both visitors and residents alike, and to re-invigorate the local economy. As the space around the Abbey is very much linked to the High Street, it is considered that these proposals would make a substantial contribution to these wider community aspirations.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Council give permission for Arbroath 2020 to take forward the development community led improvements to the space in front of the main entrance to Arbroath Abbey, in consultation with both the council and Historic Environment Scotland, to create an enhanced civic space to be a focal point for visitors exploring Arbroath and also to provide an open space where the community could hold outdoor events. A plan of the draft initial proposals is shown in attached at **Appendix 1**. More information including some artist's impressions of the proposals have been provided in the Members' Hub. The materials for the initiative would be complementary to those used in the new council housing project nearby in the Abbey Quarter, so that an integrated design style runs through both projects to deliver a consistent rationale.
- 5.2 It is also proposed that the new space be re-named in recognition of the anniversary, and a name could be chosen from options put forward in a public consultation.
- 5.3 Arbroath possesses a fine bronze sculpture of the Declaration by David Annand, currently situated on the A92 at the southern entrance to the town. It is difficult for visitors to view when entering the town and is often missed, whilst access on foot is also difficult. Members are therefore asked to approve that the sculpture is relocated to the area beside the Abbey entrance as part of the initiative, on the condition that a landscaped planting bed or another appropriate installation is created in its place, funded and maintained by local community groups or the Arbroath common good fund.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The estimated costs of creating the civic square and relocating the statue are in the region of £250,000. These costs would be met by Arbroath 2020 who intend to raise funds through Crowdfunding, other donations and appropriate grant applications. The change of layout created by the proposals is considered to have a negligible impact on future maintenance. There are therefore no financial implications arising from the contents of this report for the Council.

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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Appendices:
Appendix 1 - Plan

