

ANGUS COUNCIL

SPECIAL ARRANGMENTS COMMITTEE – 23 JUNE 2020

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 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 on 10 March. This report covers the period from 15 May to 15 June 2020.

1. INVESTMENT – PROPERTY AND LAND

- 1.1 The occupancy rate for our commercial property portfolio up to May 2020 remains high at 93%. From April to May 2020 we received 9 enquiries, which is a reduction of 57% on the same period the previous year. This can be directly attributed to the impact of the Covid-19 situation and its effect on the economy. Our expectation is that enquiries will rise as lockdown restrictions are removed.
- 1.2 We have offered all of our tenants a 3 month rental holiday, which they could begin in either April, May or June. To be clear this is a deferment of rent. Currently 22 of our commercial property portfolio tenants have taken up the offer of the 3 month rental holiday out of a total of 57 eligible businesses.
- 1.3 Two of our businesses have terminated their leases, since the lockdown began, which will result in a reduction in rental income of £13,000 and an increased rates liability, until these premises are re-let.
- 1.4 Despite this we successfully attracted a new tenant within the trades and construction sector. The new tenant took occupancy of their unit in May, which has resulted in an additional £3,350 in rental income per year, creating 1 new job with the potential for 2 more.

2. BUSINESS SUPPORT

2.1 Invest in Angus

From 1 January to 31 May 2020, the Invest in Angus website received 6,497 visitor sessions which was a 39% increase on the same time in 2019 (4,679 visitor sessions in 2019). Those visiting the site spent an average of 2 minutes 24 seconds on the site.

Top five webpages viewed	1 Jan – 31 May 2020	1 Jan – 31 May 2019	% Change
Homepage	5,021	3,712	35.26%
Covid-19	1,703	-	-
News	798	348	129.31%
Covid-19 Funding	696	-	-
Event Directory	522	301	73.42%

On 23 March, the UK was put into lockdown due to Covid-19. A new page was launched on InvestinAngus.com on the same day to provide support to businesses, sign posting to various organisations to provide advice and financial support. As the number of funding sources increased, it was decided to create a page specifically for this information. The table above shows the visitor numbers to these pages.

Following the move to Phase 1 of lockdown restrictions on 29 May 2020, the website was amended to reflect new sector specific guidance and this was further updated following the Phase 2 announcement on 18 June 2020. Funding information is updated as changes are made including new funds that are available and funds that have closed to applications.

Digital communication and campaigns are mainly conducted through Invest in Angus Twitter (@businessangus) and LinkedIn. Twitter has a current following of 2,303 people/business pages. The page attracted over 241,000 tweet impressions between 1 January and 31 May 2020. Invest in Angus LinkedIn page now has 574 followers. These social channels are used to promote current guidance for businesses, current funding available and events scheduled to take place.

2.2 Business Gateway

The table below shows the Business Gateway delivery statistics by local authority area to the end of May 2020.

Please note that Angus clients also attend events and meetings in Dundee as it can be more convenient. This accounts for approximately 20% of clients and will factor into the Dundee statistics and is not shown in the Angus figures.

Business Gateway Delivery by LA area to May 2020

	Angus	Dundee	Perth & Kinross	Total
Business Start Ups ◇	58	97	76	231
Early Stage Growth*	2	7	0	9
Start Up Workshops	3	8	5	16
Existing Business Workshops	0	4	5	9
Growth Advisory Service Referrals#	5	3	4	12
Covid-19 Survive & Thrive	16	27	29	72
Digital Boost Events	2	2	2	6

◇ *Start-Up figures reflect businesses which have started up and which have received support from Business Gateway services. The start-up figure for Angus could be higher – this figure does not therefore reflect those businesses which have started up but which did not seek support from Business Gateway.*

* *Early Stage Growth (ESG) clients are start-up clients or businesses which have been trading for less than eighteen months, and plan to create additional jobs in their local economy.*

Businesses projecting increase in turnover of £200k+ over next three years.

Businesses projecting increase in turnover of £400k+ over next three years and meet the criteria for Scottish Enterprise Account Management will continue to be referred to SE. There is not a target for this but BG will report on any successful referral.

Business start ups are ahead of profile, this is mainly due to carry over from 2019/20 as there was minimal start up activity during April. Early stage growth is behind profile - also due to minimal start up activity during April.

Start Up and Growth Workshops are ahead of profile. Delivery is now all on-line via Zoom (Elevator have a professional licence for Zoom and therefore should have no issues with delivery through this method).

It should also be noted that the Business Gateway National Unit have very quickly moved to develop and deliver significantly more on line workshops via webinars and on-line tutorials for

both Business Gateway mainstream workshops and Digital Boost. There has also been a focus on delivering topics that are relevant at this time covering business resilience, HR etc.

The Covid 19 outbreak saw Business Gateway inundated with enquiries from businesses across Tayside. There were over 500 initial enquiries during the first few weeks from businesses seeking advice on a number of issues but particularly in relation to finance and how to access Government grants along with many HR related enquiries. Following this initial surge of enquiries, the new Covid-19 Survive and Thrive support service was put in place. This service provides Adviser support to businesses to help them through the current situation by focussing on getting their businesses back on track, providing advice and support with business planning, finances and cash flow, and identifying opportunities. This new service has been very busy and is over profile at this stage. It is envisaged that this will be the main area of Business Gateway activity for at least the next few months and therefore the focus of BG resources.

Growth Advisory Service activity is low as expected, however there are some indications that a few businesses are finding new opportunities in the current situation.

In terms of Growth Pipeline, there is still no Scottish Enterprise support available in terms of funding but businesses can still access the advice of SE Specialists. It is unclear whether this category of support will exist in the future.

SE Account Management is under review and is unlikely to continue in the current format, therefore there is no clear path of referral to Account Management at present. However, SE have advised BG to inform them of any businesses they feel has growth potential and would previously have been referred for Account Management.

Digital Boost funding was only confirmed at the end of April. Business Gateway are currently in the process of agreeing workshop delivery with STEP and currently reviewing the bids for the Digital Boost one to one service.

- 2.3 An Angus Business Barometer survey was developed and sent out to businesses across all sectors and industry networks week commencing 22 June. This will inform the council's Recovery plans and align activity to the specific needs of Angus.

3. GOLF SECTOR

From 1 January to 31 May 2020, the Carnoustie Country website received 2,820 visitor sessions, a decrease of 52% compared to the same period in 2019 (5,849 visitor sessions). There has been a significant drop in online visits due to Covid-19.

Top five webpages viewed	1 Jan – 31 May 2020	1 Jan – 31 May 2019	% Change
Homepage	1,233	2,191	-43.7%
Courses	868	391	122.0%
Packages	596	-	-
Dream Ticket	236	-	-
Carnoustie Country Classic	184	-	-

Carnoustie Country Facebook currently has a following of 15,094 people. The total reach on Carnoustie Country Facebook for 1 January to 31 May was 677,201 people. The focus of Carnoustie Country social media during the period of lockdown has been on reminiscing about playing golf and creating the ultimate 18 holes in Carnoustie Country.

Since golf courses were permitted to reopen on 29 May, the focus has been on the local audience and promotion of membership offers. There has been a significant upsurge in membership, especially in the young adult age group, which has helped compensate for the significant loss of visitor revenue. Social distancing restrictions has limited the number of available tee times which has meant that there are few visitor tee times available and in some cases none at all. Clubhouses and Professional Shops remain closed as per the guidelines.

The Golf Carnoustie Country Industry group have commenced regular virtual meetings for members where we are able to provide practical advice and support as well as information gathering to inform recovery and action planning. This includes a new approach to business practices and developing and marketing products to targeted local and domestic markets.

4. TOURISM

- 4.1 From 1 January to 31 May 2020, the Visit Angus website received 56,615 visitor sessions, decrease of 21% compared to the same period in 2019 (71,456 visitor sessions). There has been a significant drop in online visits due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Top five webpages viewed	1 Jan - 31 May 2020	1 Jan - 31 May 2019	% Change
Webcams	6,583	15,712	-58.1%
My Angus	6,054	-	-
Homepage	4,692	7,005	-33.0%
Events Directory	2,727	7,755	-64.8%
Walking and Hiking	2,015	2,408	-16.3%

The table above shows that during this period, there has been a drop in online visits compared to the same period in 2019. This is predominantly due to Covid-19, events being cancelled and lockdown.

There has been a significant decrease in page views for the webcam page due to the removal of the Arbroath Signal Tower webcam. This was because the webcam needs to be replaced.

Visit Angus Facebook currently has a following of 12,170 people. The total reach of Visit Angus Facebook for 1 January to 31 May was 707,951 people. The focus of Visit Angus social media during the period of lockdown has been on reminiscing about Angus, sharing stunning images of Angus, asking people to share their memories and join the conversation.

A Visit Angus consumer newsletter is sent each month to over 1,600 people, including information about must-see experiences in Angus. The average open rate for this is 49% which is well above the industry average. During the period of lockdown, newsletters have focused on topics such as the creation of an Insider's Guide to Angus and a virtual visit to Angus.

A tourism business newsletter is sent each month to 143 tourism businesses in Angus, including information about events taking place, sector related news and funding opportunities. The average open rate for this is 23% which is well above the industry average.

- 4.2 The Angus Tourism Co-operative (ATC) have established fortnightly 'huddles' which any business with an interest in tourism can attend. Each meeting focuses on a different topic and is hosted by the ATC board. The meetings provide an opportunity for businesses to share information, ask for help from other businesses and discuss challenges and innovation stories.
- 4.3 A new toolkit for tourism businesses has been developed which aims to provide some guidance as we progress through the Scottish Government route map out of lockdown. The toolkit contains information about the Visit Angus communication plan, assets available for businesses and campaigns businesses can get involved in. The toolkit is hosted on the Invest in Angus website.
- 4.4 The Insider's Guide to Angus campaign has now closed for suggestions. The campaign has been a great success with over 300 suggestions made via facebook and the Social PinPoint map. These suggestions will now be collated by the Pride of Place industry working group and discussions will take place on how to progress this activity.

5. FOOD AND DRINK

- 5.1 'Appetite for Angus' (A4A) announced the appointment of Daniel Muir to the official post of co-ordinator for the group. This subgroup of Angus Tourism Co-operative (ATC) received 6 months funding through Scottish Government Covid-19 Supporting Communities Fund, which will be

managed in Angus by the Murton Trust. Daniel has been a member of the steering group since January and will work with food and drink companies across Angus as well as acting as the primary focal point.

- 5.2 A4A launched their website <https://appetiteforangus.com> on 4 June 2020. This now has the full list of businesses who are operating online orders and deliveries across Angus and Tayside under 'Eat and Drink Local'. The combination of retail, takeaway and restaurants and home preparations is kept up to date weekly providing an essential service to local communities. This places all links to Facebook groups, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and a new YouTube channel together in a valuable resource that will promote Angus as a food tourism destination.
- 5.3 Angus Council have supported the development of NeighbourFood Hospitalfield (Arbroath) Market who are starting the enrolment of food and drink producers. One of the key aims is to shorten supply chains (zero food miles, Farm to Fork), matching up local Angus producers and customers, and this market is one of the main ways of doing that. Angus Council are supporting the signing up producers and customers at this stage with a view to holding the first online market end of June 2020.
- 5.4 The Tay Cities Regional Food and Drink Group reconvened on 16 June 2020. They explored the need for a single cross regional strategy that aligns to the TC Regional Economic Strategy and Action Plan, Ambition 2030 vision (fishing, farming, food and drink) and that of those local industry led group requirements. The Scotland Food and Drink UK Market Development group is leading supply chain work in a national recovery plan, with LAs pulling together actions in local Covid-19 recovery planning.

6. ENGINEERING AND MANUFACTURING

- 6.1 The Tay Cities Engineering Project Partnership met on 16 June 2020. The Tay Cities Outline Business Case (OBC) was submitted to the Scottish Government on 29 May 2020.
- 6.2 Economic Development aided a Call to Action for PPE clear Perspex Shields for Angus Council Environmental Service to fit our Parks crew cab vans for social distancing measures. The current lead time of this material extensive due to shortages in supply in line with demand. This was aided by Tayside Engineering Network (TEN) to local manufacturing businesses to ensure local supply chains were utilised as part of our Procurement policies.

7. TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- 7.1 Tay Cities Trade and Investment Partnership meeting was held on 28 May 2020. Scottish Development International (SDI) have virtual missions and webinars in current delivery over the next 2 months to Germany, Netherlands and Ireland. Sector teams were arranging webinars on Africa (energy), Switzerland and the Nordics (Tech), USA (Investment – Global Scots) plus Food & Drink/Seafood opportunities in US, Middle East, Spain and Germany. Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce and Scottish Chambers have discussed business mission activity covering Dubai, USA, Scandinavia and Netherlands and delivering further Technical Export Training to businesses. Tay Cities Business Month website is changing to becoming Tay Cities Business Support to serve as a central resource to share event info and signpost to available regional and national business support.

8. SKILLS

- 8.1 The Skills Team deliver 3 Scottish Government contracts, Employability Fund Stages 3 and 4 and Modern Apprenticeships in Business and Administration. We have tailored our delivery to meet requirements of contract compliance and of lockdown and as such are using telephone, email and Skype to support our clients at this time until face to face support can resume.
- 8.2 Implementation and the co-design of projects has started on how to spend £340,000 funding from Scottish Government to make the greatest impact in Angus. This is part of a 3-year Scottish and Local Government's ambition to reduce child poverty through the delivery of activities via the Parental Employability Support Fund. This gives Angus Council the

opportunity to deliver a flexible, responsive and user-led model of employability support for people both in and out of employment. This support will help people to access or progress into employment bettering their and their families' circumstances, ultimately reducing child poverty rates. Some of the work will be focussed on recruitment into the new provision for Early Years provision in Angus.

- 8.3 The Skills Team continue to offer a key worker, person centred approach to support and guide those looking for employment in Angus and have extended this provision to include residents up to the age of 60 and those who are perhaps a little further away from the job market. An In Work Training Allowance through funding from No One Left Behind is available to businesses for the benefit of unemployed residents in Angus who meet eligibility criteria and have barriers to employment. The monies are to provide training and development opportunities for the individual as an employee within the business and we are actively encouraging engagement with those employers willing to pay the Living Wage as part of our Fair Work commitment.
- 8.4 We are currently developing an Angus Job Matching Portal using the Hanlon management system. The new portal will be an additional resource for us to offer to residents and local businesses and will supplement the recruitment service we offer to businesses and our employability support services. This should be operational by start of July.

9. Angus LEADER Programme (Hosted by Angus Council)

- 9.1 A project fund of £2,126,586 is now fully committed by Angus LEADER Local Action Group (LAG)

The LAG will spend the remainder of the programme monitoring live projects, processing claims, gathering evidence of programme targets and contributing to developing arrangements for post BREXIT rural development. Completion arrangements for the programme are now complicated by Covid-19 and lockdown, with more projects likely to run out of completion time the longer that lockdown continues – the Angus spend at risk to date is approximately £11,000, for cancelled seasonal (summer) actions in tourism and catchment management projects. Angus LEADER is currently engaging with the national programme to identify issues and agree mitigations.

10.. OFFSHORE WIND

The number of businesses registered with Forth & Tay Offshore has increased by 50% to 152 businesses since the 'Meet Your Neighbour Business Breakfast' for offshore wind on 27 February 2020. 31 of the sign ups are Angus businesses

Since 1 January 2020, the Forth & Tay Offshore website received 2,579 visitor sessions and 11,552 pageviews. Over half of sessions were during February and March 2020. Most pageviews hit About, Home page and Directory. 74% of sessions were from UK and 10% were from the USA. Those visiting the site viewed on average 4.5 pages per session, spending an average of 4 minutes on the site.

The third Angus offshore wind e-newsletter for June 2020 was distributed featuring business support, NnG's tier-1 contractors and their required work, webinars, and links to the supply chain capability survey and directory - <https://www.forthandtayoffshore.co.uk/>

REPORT AUTHOR: Alison Smith, Service Leader – Strategic Policy and Economy
EMAIL DETAILS: SmithAJ@angus.gov.uk