

ANGUS COUNCIL

**RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE
ROADS COMMITTEE**

**30 MAY 1996
30 MAY 1996
6 JUNE 1996
6 JUNE 1996**

**SUBJECT: MONTROSE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPECTS
CONSULTANTS STUDY**

**REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DIRECTORS OF CULTURAL SERVICES, RECREATION
SERVICES AND ROADS**

Abstract: In July 1994, Scottish Enterprise Tayside commissioned a team of consultants to prepare an Area Development Strategy for Montrose from which specific projects could be devised aimed at securing the future well being of the town. This study has now been completed and the final version of the study report submitted for consideration. This report outlines the findings of the study and the Consultant's recommendations contained in it.

1 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the contents of the Consultant Study and awaits further reports on projects emanating from it as and when appropriate.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Consultant's brief for the study required the Project Team to investigate the needs, opportunities and aspirations within the Montrose area with a view to devising a Development Plan which identified pragmatic and sustainable initiatives drawing upon and enhancing the areas existing and potential qualities.
- 2.2 The resulting study focused in particular on the economic performance of the area, the environmental qualities of Montrose and the overall potential for tourism especially cultural tourism. The key opportunities and threats in these sectors were highlighted and a strategy for action developed which identified a number of specific projects.

A reference copy of the full study report is available from the Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Development. Copies of an Executive Summary are available on request.

3 THE STUDY

3.1 Current Performance

3.1.1 The Consultants undertook an overview of the Montrose economy using a combination of existing data and company interviews. Particular attention was paid to employment, the service sector, food processing, the chemical and oil industries and tourism. Overall the Consultants concluded that Montrose has a relatively buoyant and diverse economy but that the future is viewed with some uncertainty. There seemed to be a perception in the community that the town had already "peaked" and that a slow, gradual decline may transform into a more rapid fall unless conscious effort is expended to reinforce business competitiveness and broaden the economic base.

3.1.2 An analysis of the physical environment was also carried out. The undoubted superlative setting of Montrose, its history and townscape all contribute fundamentally to the quality of life of its inhabitants and has potential to be a major factor in attracting tourists. The study however revealed a number of weaknesses including the gradual erosion of the quality of the townscape, a lack of identifiable image and inadequate information and interpretation about the town. In addition, it would appear that the quality of the environment may to some extent be taken for granted locally and the need for improvements underestimated. The Consultants suggest that these attitudes may present a threat which, if not addressed, may undermine one of the town's major assets - the townscape itself.

3.2 The Strategy

3.2.1 An underlying factor in the strategy is the recognition of the existing positive qualities of the economy and environment of Montrose. A "fine grained" approach is advocated concentrating on conserving and enhancing the town's assets and only introducing more substantial interventions where clearly warranted.

3.2.2 The strategy comprises five major "themes" with which the suggested projects are aligned:-

Theme 1:	Building competitive businesses;
Theme 2:	Maximising the potential of visitor attractions;
Theme 3:	Revealing the latent assets of the town centre environment;
Theme 4:	Raising the profile of indigenous heritage and culture;
Theme 5:	Providing an effective focus and forum for the community;

3.3 The Projects

3.3.1 The following is a summary of the suggested projects under the heading of the theme to which each relates. The officers' comments represent the consensus view of those consulted during the preparation of this report. A summary sheet of the projects and suggested funding sources which has been extracted from the study report is appended. Members should note that this summary sheet was produced prior to reorganisation and action would now fall to Angus Council.

Theme 1: Building Competitive Businesses

3.3.2 Project 1: The Montrose Chamber of Commerce/Business Association

The business survey revealed a strongly expressed desire for some type of Business Association and the establishment of a Montrose Business Association similar to those in other Angus towns is recommended.

Comment

During the drafting of the study report a Montrose Business Association was in fact established with the assistance of the District Council and is now very active in the town.

3.3.3 Project 2: Tourist, Training and Area Promotion

It is suggested that there is potential to tailor existing tourism initiatives such as the Welcome Host and Hospitality Forum programmes to a Montrose audience. The desired impact would be to increase take-up rates of existing initiatives, to create a demand for new ones and develop an informal marketing network through sales assistants and others who come into regular contact with visitors.

Comment

Scottish Enterprise Tayside has noted the comments made and are assessing them within the context of their tourism and training development.

3.3.4 Project 3: Managed Workspace

The study identified a potential demand for small start-up workspace of reasonable quality but concluded that it was unlikely to be provided by the private sector. The creation of managed workspace (10 to 15 units at 50 square metres each) by the public sector is therefore recommended. Suggested locations include part of Patons Mill, underused premises to the rear of the High Street and underused premises in the harbour area.

Comment

There is undoubtedly a demand for this type of accommodation in Montrose, this tends to be the case throughout Angus. The need for "managed" workspace and the viability of such space in relation to likely available resources would however have to be assessed further.

Theme 2: Maximising the Potential of Visitor Attractions

3.3.5 Project 4: Tourist Information Centre

The Consultants are of the view that the present Tourist Information Centre is too remote from the town centre and have suggested that it should be relocated to a more central (High Street) location.

Comment

This is largely a matter to be addressed by the new Angus and City of Dundee Tourist Board.

3.3.6 Project 5: Caledonian Steam Railway

The Steam Railway is recognised as a potential major draw for visitors in the area but could be improved to attract even more visitors than at present. In the first instance, it is suggested that efforts be focused on improving the visitor experience and, in the longer term, the feasibility of extending the line into Montrose should be investigated. If found to be unfeasible other forms of links should be examined.

Comment

There are undoubtedly opportunities to improve the Steam Railway experience and this should be encouraged. Equally, better links between Bridge of Dun and Montrose would be desirable although the extension of the line would almost certainly be impractical.

3.3.7 Project 6: Footpaths and Cycleways

The provision of a network of long and short routes within the Montrose area is suggested as a means of exploiting the extremely varied and scenic landscape of the area and compliments the existing diverse range of outdoor activities available.

Comment

This is seen as wholly consistent with the recent national initiative to promote cycling and compliments the development of the Angus leg of the National Cycle Network. The development of a network of cycle routes in Angus will be the subject of a separate report to the Roads Committee.

Theme 3: Revealing the Latent Assets of the Town Centre Environment

3.3.8 Project 7: High Street Improvements

The removal of heavy through traffic by the construction of the Inner Relief Road is seen as a catalyst for general upgrading of the Town Centre to provide a more attractive, safe and comfortable environment. An incremental approach is nonetheless felt to be appropriate concentrating on traffic calming and improving the experience for pedestrians. It is suggested that the key design objectives should be:-

- to retain a suitable level of activity in the street by achieving an appropriate balance between vehicular traffic, parking and pedestrians;
- ensuring that the relative scales of footway and carriageway widths are kept in proportion;

- retaining a simple, linear alignment of the carriageway in recognition of the classical geometry of the space;
- creating, fitting settings or thresholds for important historic buildings;
- reducing the expanse of asphalt and releasing more space for pedestrians;
- incorporating flexibility so that part or all of the street may be closed off for events or to allow the street to be used differently at different times of day.

The study report also places emphasis on the need to instigate complimentary improvements to the facades of the High Street properties.

Comment

This is unquestionably one of the most significant proposals emanating from the study but nonetheless, the incremental approach being advocated is felt to be appropriate. In recognition of this, S.E.T. has agreed to commission the Consultants to prepare concepts designs and options for the central area based on the design objectives above as a matter of priority. This will be the subject of a further report in due course.

3.3.9 Project 8: Closes

It is suggested that a number of Closes off the High Street be identified for extensive environmental improvements, including resurfacing, lighting and signage/interpretation. Churchyard Walk has been identified as a potential first priority.

Comment

It is felt that the Closes are an important feature in the townscape of Montrose and that this project should be supported.

3.3.10 Project 9: Montrose Beach

The importance of the beach/seafront area to Montrose and the need for significant upgrading of the area is well recognised. A major redevelopment scheme which nonetheless respects the wide scenic character of the area is recommended.

Comment

A concept design study was commissioned jointly by Angus District Council and S.E.T. and will be presented for consideration during the current cycle of Committee meetings.

3.3.11 Project 10: Signage and Interpretation

The need for a comprehensive review of the current signing of Montrose was highlighted in the study. The Consultants suggests that this presents the opportunity to prepare a strategy for new signing covering directions, locations of visitor facilities, local interpretation and graphics.

Comment

The establishment of such a hierarchy of signs is consistent with the approved integrated signposting network for Angus. S.E.T. has agreed to include this project within the Commission for the High Street/Central Area.

3.3.12 Project 11: Approaches and Arrivals

The appearance of the approaches to the town both by road and rail is felt in places to be poor and a package of improvements is therefore suggested. These improvements would include treatment of the road margins and screening/landscaping etc. where appropriate.

Comment

It is important that visitors to Montrose gain a good first impression of the town and it is therefore felt that this project should be supported.

3.3.13 Project 12: Patons Mill

The present condition of this property was highlighted as the only major example of "dereliction" in the town centre and, although the Consultants felt that housing was an appropriate use for the site, they advocated investigation into other complimentary uses e.g. leisure/tourism related.

Comment

The redevelopment of this property is highly desirable but there are a number of planning issues which require to be resolved before any redevelopment could proceed. These issues are currently the subject of discussion.

3.3.14 Project 13: Relief Road

Whilst the Consultants acknowledge that they have been commissioned under a separate brief to develop a landscape treatment for the Relief Road, they highlighted that this does not extend to all of the land requiring treatment along the west of the town centre. They therefore suggest that a realistic planning and urban/landscaping design proposition is required for this area.

Comment

The construction of the Inner Relief Road is now underway and includes significant landscaping proposals largely funded by S.E.T. It is felt that the position should be assessed on completion of the works and any further action required to other area determined at that time.

Theme 4: Raising the Profile of Indigenous Culture and Heritage

3.3.15 Project 14: Events and Festivals

It is suggested that opportunity exists within Montrose (and the wider area) to raise the profile of the town to a programme of events and festivals. The Consultants have identified a number of themes and they suggest that a pilot event be organised with a view to developing a full programme in due course. This would they suggest require the appointment of an individual to co-ordinate and promote the programme (see project 15).

Comment

It is felt that this project contains some interesting ideas which should be investigated further although there could be staff implications which would have to be carefully considered.

Theme 5: Providing an Effective Focus and Forum for the Community

3.3.16 Project 15: Town Management/Co-ordination

In addition to acting as an Events Co-ordinator as outlined above, the proposed Town Manager would act as the "Town Representative" welding the business community together and championing the town is economic and tourism development.

Comment

Town centre management is becoming more common place and the benefits of an individual acting in that capacity is well recognised. It is unlikely however that any of the Angus towns is large enough to support a dedicated Town Manager but there may be merit in broadening the remit to a wider geographical area. Initial discussions along these lines with S.E.T. have been fruitful and it is intended that further discussions will take place shortly.

3.3.17 Project 16: Community Focus

It is suggested that a new facility should be developed in a central location to act as a focal point for both locals and visitors. This facility could accommodate, for example an information point (local and tourist), exhibition/performance space, meeting rooms etc. It is acknowledged that a feasibility study to identify a suitable site and an appropriate level of development would be required.

Comment

This form of facility may be compatible with the Council's thoughts on the provision of local access points and should be considered within that context.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications on the Council at this time as a result of the study. That said, Scottish Enterprise has approved initial funding of £1.2 million (including the landscaping associated with the Inner Relief Road) as their contribution to a jointly funded programme of works in Montrose over the next few years subject to Angus Council meeting its share. Angus Council's contributions to these work will be assessed on an individual basis as appropriate.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 It should be stressed that this study represents the Consultants findings and recommendations and is not necessarily an expression of the prospective partners' policies and intentions. Rather, it should be viewed very much as a working document which will provide a framework to guide future development in the town.
- 6.2 Maximum environmental and economic benefit will not be achieved by the ad hoc implementation of single projects. It is important that an area wide strategy is developed enabling a holistic approach to be adopted. This study represents the first but nonetheless major step in that process.

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Director of Planning, Transport & Economic Development

NOTE

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

AA/RM/KW
15 May 1996

TABLE 1 - MONTROSE POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

PROJECT/BASIS OF COST	MOST LIKELY SOURCE
1. Chamber of Commerce/Business Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integral part of town management/coordination role (see Project 15) 	Private
2. Tourism training/area promotion	AET/Dundee & Angus Tourist Board
3. Managed workspaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refurbished existing building 10-15 units @ 50 m² each 	ERDF/SET/ADC
4. Tourist Information Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of 40m² facility within refurbished shop unit on High Street (or within adapted ground floor of Town House) 	Dundee and Angus Tourist Board/SET
5. Caledonian Steam Railway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operational and marketing improvements b. Route extension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7km of new line 	Private
6. Footpaths/cycleways	ADC/TRC
7. High Street Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Facelifting/paint schemes, shopfront improvements; Phase I comprising High Street from Castle Place to Lower Hall Street b. Lighting for Phase I area (see a.) including renewed lighting for motorists, pedestrian scale lighting, feature lighting and seasonal/special event lighting. c. Streetscape Improvements for Phase I area (14,000m²) including renewal of footway surfaces in natural materials, extension of kerbs, installation of setts to carriageways, incorporation of special-design street furniture (No provision for diversion of services) 	SET/ADC/TRC/ERDF/Private/Historic Scotland
8. Closes project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • surface renewal, lighting, facelifting Close walls, signage at entrances. Total area 1000m² 	ADC/Private
9. Montrose Beach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taking up of existing hardstanding, creation of series of smaller carparks along Traill Drive, refurbishing existing pavilions, installing timber esplanade, boardwalk paths and viewing platform (not including dune erosion or other infrastructural works). 	ADC/TRC/Scottish Natural Heritage/Glaxo
10 Signage and Interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rationalisation of road signage • review/design enhancement of pedestrian signs • interpretive plaques or boards. 	TRC/ADC

PROJECT/BASIS OF COST	MOST LIKELY SOURCE
<p>11 Approaches and Arrival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rail approaches - Improvements to platform area, enhancements to station buildings, restoration of platform canopy. • Environmental improvements to station setting/forecourt (1200m²) • Road approaches - avenue planting, environmental improvements to road margins, (2.5ha total) erection of "welcome" signs, "gateway" features, feature lighting 	<p>TRC/SET/Railtrack Scotland</p>
<p>12 Paton's Mill</p>	
<p>13 Relief Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • landscape improvements to road corridor • additional landscape works to open space/amenity areas and preparation of sites for built development • facelifting treatments to existing superstores and environmental improvements to carparks. 	<p>TRC/ERDF/SET</p>
<p>14 Events and Festivals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing events coordinator (see project 15) • pilot event celebrating Auld Alliance • programme of events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hugh McDiarmid Festival - Women Aristocrats of Angus - Angus Bothy Nichts - Angus Weavers Trail - Lairds Story - Angus Episcopalsians 	<p>Dundee & Angus Tourist Board/SET/ADC/Scottish Museums Council/Scottish Arts Council/National Trust of Scotland/Private</p>
<p>15 Town management/coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new post; salary plus overheads (note : alternatively, could be extension of remit of existing staff member) 	<p>SET/ADC/Private</p>
<p>16 Community Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refitting of existing building to provide 300m² Arts Centre/ Information Centre 	<p>ADC/TRC/Private</p>

In addition to funding by, and through, public sector agencies there are a number of charitable foundations which may provide grant assistance if any of the projects above can be implemented through community groups. This may include:

- Shell Better Britain Campaign
- UK 2000 Scotland
- Rural Initiatives Scotland