

**ANGUS COUNCIL****POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE****24 MARCH 1998****SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY****REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT****Abstract: The report recommends adoption of the attached Environmental Strategy for Angus Council.****1 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee -

1. approve the environmental strategy contained in Appendix 1;
2. note that the Environmental Strategy Group will progress the work leading to an Angus Local Agenda 21.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Last year report No. 529/97 outlined the approach being taken with regard to the preparation of an environmental strategy. The attached document (see Appendix 1) is a proposed Environmental Strategy for Angus Council.
- 2.2 The document develops one of the Council's key themes "to improve the environment and quality of life in Angus, with an emphasis on sustainability" and will act as a framework for further works on addressing environmental and sustainability issues. It will also guide the development of an action plan. Although not being carried out specifically under an Environmental/Agenda 21 banner, there are many activities underway which provide a firm base for future action. Addressing sustainable development\* will be an ongoing process and one which needs to be at the core of policy and programme decisions. The process of reconciling economic, social and environmental issues is not always easy; difficult choices may have to be made, but the aim should always be to move **towards** sustainability. This some times requires decisions to be made in respect of a longer time horizon or using a "whole life cycle" approach.

**3 PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 This document makes a corporate commitment to Local Agenda 21 - a local agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century which will promote sustainability at a local level. LA21 work calls for greater social inclusion and partnership. Angus Council is already embarking on this approach through the forums established through the decentralisation plans and other means such as work on: the Angus Local Plan, the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA), the New Deal employment programme and the associated Environmental Task Force, the establishment of the Angus Environmental Trust, a

\*"Sustainable development" is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Biodiversity Action Plan in conjunction with the Cairngorms Partnership and the formation of the Tay Estuary Forum.

- 3.2 The aim is to develop an Angus LA21 programme by the year 2000. It is suggested that the existing Environmental Strategy Officer Group which prepared the Environmental Strategy be remitted to co-ordinate this work for the Council and report to the Management Team and the Policy and Resources Committee on progress. As this will require corporate working the Environmental Strategy Officer Group is well placed as it is comprised of representatives from all Council Departments.

#### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report but it should be recognised that much of the ensuing initiatives will be of a corporate nature and in some cases there may be a need for additional expenditure to carry out desirable projects.

#### **5 CONSULTATION**

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

#### **6 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Prime Minister Tony Blair at the UN General Assembly Special Session on the Environment held in New York in June 1997 said "I want all local authorities in the UK to adopt Local Agenda 21 strategies by the year 2000". The attached environmental strategy is presented for approval and adoption across the Council as one of the steps required in the process of developing a Local Agenda 21 strategy for Angus.

#### **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/PC/IAL  
16 March 1998

Alex Anderson  
Director of Planning, Transport & Economic Development

## ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

## INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the Council's intentions for developing a strategy, for addressing environmental and sustainability issues. It states the Council's commitment to these issues and sets out the basic aims under which the strategy will operate. It also outlines the objectives which will guide the development of an action plan.

The Council's Strategic Statement established seven key priorities for the Council, included amongst these were:-

**"To improve the environment and quality of life in Angus, with an emphasis on sustainability"**

**"To promote equal opportunities/reduce inequalities in Angus"**

**"To develop partnerships".**

This document is complementary to and further develops certain aspects of the key themes:-

**Declaration of Commitment**

Angus Council supports the principle of sustainable development and is committed to improving the quality of life for present and future generations in Angus. By a process of integrating responses to environmental, social and economic issues the Council will help to maximise human welfare while enhancing the environment in Angus.

The Council will integrate sustainability into Council strategies, policies, programmes and activities and by the year 2000 will develop an Angus Local Agenda 21 programme to promote sustainability at the local level.

**What does Sustainability Mean?**

Sustainability or sustainable development are terms which are frequently used these days but what do they mean?

**Sustainable development** means:

"Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Sustainable development is a phrase which has been used increasingly since the United Nations Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It was at the Earth Summit that over 150 Heads of States signed an agreement to implement sustainable development. The agreement was called **Agenda 21** and is in effect an action plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> century aimed at reconciling economic, social and environmental issues and enhancing people's quality of life. It covers a wide range of issues including:-

- reducing our use of energy and raw materials and reducing pollution and wastes;
- protecting fragile ecosystems;
- sharing wealth and opportunities for development more fairly at local, national and international levels.

## Angus Council

The Angus area is essentially rural in nature with seven towns and a total population of just over 108,000. It has a diverse landscape ranging from sandy beaches and cliffs along the 55 km coastline, and the attractive and productive countryside of Strathmore with its market towns to the remote upland areas of the Glens.

Maintaining the productive nature and diversity of the natural heritage of the rural and coastal areas is of prime importance. Similarly our historic, cultural and archaeological heritage needs to be protected and enhanced and the vitality and viability of our town centres maintained. It is hoped that through measures such as these, and others that improve the health and safety of our communities, that the quality of life for present and future generations of people living and working in Angus can be enhanced.

Angus Council has an important role to play in maintaining and enhancing the environment of Angus. As an employer, purchaser of goods and services, provider of services and educator and regulatory authority Angus Council can have a considerable impact on the environment. But the Council acting on its own will not be enough. Sustainable development requires partnerships, with all sectors of society making a contribution and working together.

## Aims

In working towards sustainability the Council's principal aims are:-

- to **integrate** environmental and sustainability considerations into Council strategy, policy and programme formulation;
- to work in **partnership** with other agencies, businesses, community groups and individuals;
- to consult and **involve** people more fully where decisions affect our environment;
- to work towards **sustainability** by balancing economic, social and environmental considerations for both present and future generations;
- to recognise that working towards sustainability will be a **continuing process** requiring flexibility and adaptability;
- to **monitor** and report on progress towards sustainability .

## Objectives

The objectives of the Council in pursuing its Environmental Strategy cover a wide range of issues.

### Awareness Raising

Sustainability is a difficult concept to define but is one that needs to be at the heart of many decisions and actions. Many of the things we do today cannot be sustained without irreparable damage to the environment such as using up non-renewable natural resources. By providing information and raising awareness of environmental and sustainability issues we can help people to make informed choices and persuade them to change their behaviour.

We will seek to:-

- raise awareness of environmental issues amongst staff, school pupils and local communities;
- publish information about the local environment.

### Natural Environment

We must learn to recognise the significance of our local plants and wildlife and seek to conserve and enhance them. In Angus there are a number of sites designated for their natural quality. Some are important for their rarity locally whilst others are of international importance. By careful management this resource can be maintained and enhanced. Public access to the countryside therefore needs to be managed to ensure that environmental damage does not occur or is at least confined to those areas best able to cope whilst fragile areas are left undisturbed.

We will seek to:-

- promote a sustainable approach to land and habitat management;
- protect and enhance local biodiversity;
- encourage a sustainable managed approach to public access to the natural environment;
- encourage a reduction in the use of non-renewable resources.

### Transport

The number of vehicles on the roads continues to increase and government forecasts suggest that in 20 years time traffic levels will be between 36% and 57% higher than now, unless we change our policies and travel habits. We need to look at alternatives to the car and lorry not just to help reduce pollution and to improve the environment of our towns and villages but to encourage walking and cycling as a means to a healthier lifestyle.

We will seek to:-

- maintain and enhance the public transport network;
- encourage walking and cycling as alternatives to the car;
- review the Council's business transport use.

### Built Environment

As most of the country's population lives in urban areas it is important that our towns and villages provide a good quality of life and an environment that is clean and where people can feel safe and free from the fear of crime. The distinctiveness of local architecture and townscape needs to be maintained and enhanced and the local cultural and archaeological heritage preserved for future generations to appreciate.

We will seek to:-

- conserve and enhance the historic and cultural heritage of Angus and the local characteristics of the towns and villages;
- encourage design in new or regeneration developments which will improve access for the disabled and create an environment free from the fear of crime;
- ensure that new developments are in line with sustainable development priorities in regard to location and design;
- conserve and promote a network of greenspace within the built environment which links to the surrounding countryside through a footpath network.

### Energy

Much of the energy we use for heating and lighting our homes and businesses and for transport comes from non-renewable natural resources. We need to use these resources much more wisely and efficiently, often small changes in behaviour can reduce energy consumption considerably. Alternative renewable sources need to be investigated.

We will seek to:-

- reduce the Council's use of energy in buildings, transport and equipment;
- promote energy efficiency to staff and others in the community;
- investigate alternatives to non-renewable energy.

### Pollution

The natural environment can only accommodate a certain amount of pollution (i.e. within its carrying capacity) beyond which irreparable damage can occur. Pollution is usually caused by mans' activities and can affect the air, the land and our fresh and salt water environs damaging our plants and wildlife and damaging human health.

We will seek to:-

- reduce local pollution of air, land, water and to reduce the incidence noise and light pollution;
- minimise pollution from Council buildings, vehicles and equipment and from Council working practices.

### Waste

Disposing of the many types of waste created is becoming increasingly difficult; large areas of land are taken up, great care has to be taken to ensure pollution does not result from landfill or incineration, and collection and delivery to the point of disposal adds to the environmental impact of transport. Waste minimisation through reducing packaging etc., and the re-use and recycling of materials can contribute to the waste reduction targets set by Government.

We will seek to:-

- encourage waste minimisation and reuse and recycling of materials both within the Council and amongst the community;
- use the most benign method of disposal for Council waste.

### Purchasing

The power of consumer pressure is growing. By seeking out goods and services which are less harmful to the environment than other alternatives we can help to influence the market and increase the number of environmentally friendly products available.

We will seek to:-

- purchase goods and services which do least damage to the environment.

### The Next Stage

This draft strategy document represents just the first stage in an ongoing process towards sustainability. It will be circulated widely for comment.

The Council wish to work with the communities in Angus to develop an action programme, a Local Agenda 21, to promote sustainability at the local level. The Council will develop internal management systems to improve its input to the Local Agenda 21 process and will report on LA21 progress generally.

Many things are happening already both within the Council and within the wider community and we want to build on these, but it is also important to tackle new or neglected areas.

If you have views on the document and we would like to hear from you by the end of May 1998. If you have ideas or projects to progress an Angus Local Agenda 21 we would like to hear from you at any time.

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