ANGUS COUNCIL

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE   23 NOVEMBER 1999

SUBJECT: TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE BID FOR ARBROATH

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

Abstract: Angus Council has been awarded a grant of up to £15,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, to develop a townscape regeneration scheme for Arbroath.

1   RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Director of Planning and Transport be authorised to commission suitable consultants to develop a townscape regeneration scheme for Arbroath, and to report the consultant's findings to the Committee.

2   BACKGROUND

2.1   Report No. 453/99 contained details of a proposed bid for funding for Arbroath, under the second bidding round of the Heritage Lottery Fund's "Townscape Heritage Initiative". As stated in original Committee report, the scheme requires the applicant bodies to:

- **Demonstrate significant problems of disrepair and/or mutilation of historic buildings.**

- **Outline the reasons specific to the area that are believed to be responsible for the problems and how they are to be addressed.**

- **Justify the need for public sector intervention and investment (rather than, or in addition to, the use of statutory powers) and to resolve them in ways which will preserve and enhance the heritage and cultural value of the area, as well as contribute to its regeneration.**

2.2   In making the award the Trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund (the body who considered the application) **"recognised the heritage merit and need in the area and in this context decided to make a formal grant offer of up to £15,000 or 75% of the eligible costs (whichever is the less) towards the development of a Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme."** The grant is to fund a feasibility study to assess how a full scale project could be developed. The precise area, or areas, which will be selected for the full scale capital project have not been identified as yet, but will be within the conservation area. Consideration may be given to parts of the West Port conservation area also. The offer of grant is subject to the execution of a contract between the Trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Angus Council which will be forwarded with the guidance notes for the next stage of the project. The brief for the development will need to be agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund and to that end an exploratory meeting was held with officers of the

HLF on 10 November; Historic Scotland were represented at the meeting given that they will have a close interest in the project and are expert advisers to the HLF.

3   OPTIONS

3.1   Given that Arbroath is currently the focus of considerable regeneration work, including streetscape projects, the harbour initiative and the ongoing development of the visitor centre project at the Abbey, it is desirable to link any THI project with the overarching strategy for Arbroath. The rationale which underpins the THI scheme is one of economic regeneration and repair of buildings so there is a basis for developing the brief and integrating a THI project with the overarching strategy for Arbroath.

3.2   It may be appropriate to consider the following approaches:

- The development of gap sites/derelict areas of land.

- A focused enhancement of a specific group of historic buildings in the High Street area and/or harbour area.

- Regeneration of an area in close proximity to the proposed visitor centre at the Abbey.

3.3   There are, of course, a number of other options and these will be fully discussed before deciding on how the brief should be drawn up.

3.4   THI capital projects have already been started in Glasgow, Stirling and West Wemyss with substantial budgets. 50% of these budgets was provided by the HLF, and the total project fund allows the cost of a project officer, or team, to be met. Angus Council would be represented on the team by an officer, acceptable to the HLF, on the basis of their conservation qualifications and CV. However, that officer would only have a monitoring role, to ensure that best conservation practices were implemented. There are not, therefore, any major manpower implications for the Council.

4   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1   It is estimated that a study to develop a THI scheme for Arbroath would cost around £20k. The HLF have offered a grant of up to £15,000 or 75% of the eligible costs, whichever is the less. This leaves the Council to fund approximately £5k from the Planning and Transport Revenue Budget in 1999/2000.

4.2   If the stage 1 bid is successful, the Council will have to consider how to fund the capital costs of the project. Possible sources include the Local Capital Fund, Departmental Capital Budget and external agencies, such as a Housing Association and the private sector. A full THI capital project will run over three years, so the funding could be spread over three budgetary years.

5   CONSULTATION

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

6   CONCLUSION

6.1   The award of funding is an ideal opportunity to explore regeneration issues in Arbroath with a view to developing a fully-fledged THI project over the next year or so. Much work has already been done on Arbroath. The consultants will be able to draw on this work and integrate the THI scheme with the overarching strategy for the town. Commissioning the consultants does not commit the Council to developing a THI scheme at this point in time nor does it commit the HLF to provide capital funding in the future. Once the consultants have reported back to the Director of Planning and Transport, the Committee will be able to consider the findings and the financial implications, and then decide whether the project should be taken to full development stage.

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/PM/SP/IAL
16 November 1999

Alex Anderson
Director of Planning and Transport