

**ANGUS COUNCIL****PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE****11 MARCH 1999****SUBJECT: ARBROATH ABBEY DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE****REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT**

**Abstract:** This report presents for consideration the proposed revised funding package for the development of Arbroath Abbey and recommends how the project can be taken forward.

**1 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (a) notes the financial implications of proceeding with the development of Arbroath Abbey as outlined in this report;
- (b) authorises the Director of Property Services in consultation with the Director of Planning & Transport to commission design consultants to prepare more detailed designs of the proposed visitor facilities subject to the fee submissions coming within the available budget of £50,000.
- (c) agrees to meet 75% of the cost of the more detailed designs up to £37,500, this expenditure to be met from the Local Capital Fund in the financial year 1999/2000 subject to Scottish Enterprise Tayside meeting the balance;

**2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 In December 1998, the Council approved in principle the revised proposals for the development of Arbroath Abbey at an estimated cost of £2,131,333. It was also agreed that consultants should be commissioned to prepare more detailed designs without delay and that the Council meet 50% of the cost (estimated at £50,000) subject to Historic Scotland and Scottish Enterprise Tayside meeting the balance.

**3 CURRENT POSITION**

- 3.1 In mid-December 1998, Historic Scotland advised the Council and Scottish Enterprise Tayside that, due to the high level of present commitments, it had placed a moratorium on all expenditure for next financial year, including the commitment to contribute £13,000 towards the design fees referred to above. The Abbey project was subsequently the subject of a detailed re-appraisal, as a result of which Historic Scotland confirmed that it would not be able to commit itself to the project as currently envisaged or programmed.

- 3.2 This position was seen as gravely concerning as the commitment of Historic Scotland is essential to the success of the project. As a last resort, the Director of Planning & Transport with the agreement of the Convener offered to pick up Historic Scotland's share of the design costs. It was also suggested that the application for Heritage Lottery Funding should proceed as soon as possible and, if successful, could be used to off-set the lack of capital funding from Historic Scotland.
- 3.3 This offer has been taken up and Historic Scotland has now agreed that it will remain a full partner in the project. It has confirmed that it will provide a fixed contribution of £13,000 which will specifically cover a proportion of the interpretative display material in later years i.e. not during the financial year 1999/2000.
- 3.4 In return for the lack of capital funding however, Historic Scotland has pledged to meet the full revenue costs of keeping the site open and staffed throughout the year. This cost is not insignificant as the Abbey currently runs at an operational deficit.
- 3.5 In view of the above and the very tight timescale, a short list of six design consultants was drawn up and invited to tender for the preparation of the more detailed designs. Tenders are to be returned by Monday, 22 March 1999. To expedite matters, it is recommended that the Director of Property Services be authorised to commission the successful tenderer without delay subject to the fee submission coming within the available budget of £50,000.

#### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Members will be aware that funding of £500,000 towards this project via the Council's Local Capital Fund has been approved. Confirmation that an ERDF award of £772,819 has been approved has also been received. Scottish Enterprise Tayside has confirmed its commitment to the project and, in particular, to the funding of the external environmental improvement works. In addition, it is also willing to meet 25% of the design fees.
- 4.2 The above represents a substantial funding package but clearly Heritage Lottery Funding is essential to make up the shortfall caused by the withdrawal of Historic Scotland capital funding. The submission of an application for HLF funding is therefore critical and will be progressed as a matter of priority. The Committee will be kept informed on progress.

#### **5 CONSULTATION**

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

#### **6 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The significant reduction in capital funding from Historic Scotland is regrettable but there is every reason to be optimistic that this can be off-set by Heritage Lottery Funding. That being the case, the project can proceed as approved without impacting on the funding package. Crucially, Historic Scotland are now fully committed to the project and will assume responsibility for meeting the full revenue costs on completion.

**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  
3 March 1999

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