REPORT BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE


1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this Report.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report outlines the Highlights and Achievements of the Economic Development Unit for the period 28 November 2003 – 22 January 2004.

3 HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS 28 NOVEMBER 2003 – 22 JANUARY 2004

♦ Property – 88% of the Council's industrial/commercial units are occupied (87 units occupied, 12 vacant). 88% of total possible rental income is currently being achieved. Planning consent has now been secured for the road extension at Brechin Business Park which was reported to the October Infrastructure Services Committee. As the cost of the works falls within the Director of Road’s delegated powers, Tayside Contracts have now been instructed to carry out the work with a view to the access road being completed in the early spring 2004.

♦ AngusProperty.com – To date, from the 28 November 2003, AngusProperty.com has processed a total of 82 property searches, with particulars for properties being viewed 70 times.

♦ External Funding Manager – Alison Smith, External Funding Officer within the Unit was appointed to the position of External Funding Manager.

♦ European Structural Funds 2000-2006 - A total of 48 projects have been submitted by Angus Council since January 2000 (the first rounds of applications for ESF and ERDF projects were opened for submission in September 2000 and February 2001 respectively). The total amount approved to date amounts to £3,102,934. A further 18 projects have received grant funding with Angus Council providing match funding. This brings the total amount approved in Angus to date to £4,831,955.

♦ External Funding - Liaison meetings have been held with Dundee Scout Association, Montrose Day Care Centre, Peter Pan Gateway Trust, Carnoustie Leisure Arena, Normandy Veterans Association.

Staff from the External Funding Team have attended the following meetings:

➢ Direct Grants Local Selection Group
Angus Funders Fair – the External Funding Team and Marketing Team have made preparations for this event which will take place on Monday 26 January 2004 (10.30am and 1.30pm) at The Meffan, Forfar. Direct Grants can provide voluntary and community groups with up to £15,000 for a wide range of new revenue activities including youth initiatives, community surveys, training, IT and community recycling. Individuals and organisations are being invited to attend and find out more about Direct Grants. This will take the form of a presentation on Direct Grants followed by a question and answer session with one-to-one sessions available for people interested in specific projects.

Angus Agricultural Conference (Angus Ahead Campaign) - 130 delegates from the east of Scotland attended the inaugural Angus Agricultural Conference sponsored by Royal Bank of Scotland, Reeves & Neylan and Angus Ahead which took place on Wednesday 26 November at the Carnoustie Golf Course Hotel. In recognition of its success, discussions are underway with a view to making this an annual and bigger event.

2003 Angus Ambassador Awards (Angus Ahead Campaign) - The winners of the 2003 Angus Ambassador Awards were announced at a star-studded award ceremony on Friday 28 November at the Carnoustie Golf Course Hotel, presided over by guest presenter Dougie Donnelly. Over 200 stars of the Angus business, arts and tourism sectors joined the county's artists, community representatives and aspiring youth talent to recognise those whose talents and accomplishments make them excellent ambassadors for the county. Presented by the Angus Ahead campaign, the awards give recognition to the stars of our communities, our local companies, our young people and those promoting Angus as a tourism destination.

Angus Glens Walking Festival (AGWF) - The 2003 Angus Glens Walking Festival was voted the winner of the 2003 TOURISM AMBASSADOR - Active Angus Award, at the Angus Ambassador Awards on 28 November 2003. The AGWF 2004 will be held from Thursday 3 to Sunday 6 June 2004, based again in Kirriemuir. The programme of 22 walks will be issued in the New Year.

Cairngorms Economic Development Group – The Development and External Funding Manager represents the Council on this informal group of Economic Development Officers from the Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Companies and the Cairngorm National Park Authority. The Group held its second meeting in December and agreed to undertake an audit of strategy for the Cairngorms National Park area.

Tayside Economic Forum – Held the second of a proposed series of 9 workshops in December 2003, each to consider joint action to address the priority strategic issues facing the economy of Tayside as identified in it Economic Development strategy. This second workshop was on the subject of Information
Communication Technology. The findings of these workshops will be notified to Community Planning Partnerships to determine what action is required.

♦ **Budget Review Group** – The proposed revenue and capital plans for the period 2003-07 were considered by both an officer and member officer group respectively in December 2003/January 2004.

♦ **Angus Export Survey** - Findings from the first joint Tayside Export Survey (including Angus) are currently being analysed by Scottish Economic Research (SER), University of Abertay. The information for the Survey was collected via a postal questionnaire from companies in Angus. A total of 447 questionnaires were distributed and responses were received from 109 companies, representing a 24.38% response rate. From the 109 companies who responded to the Survey, 48 are active exporters; 6 are potential exporters 10 are importers with the remainder non exporters.

♦ **Angus Enterprise In Education Strategic Partnership** – The Economic Development Manager attended a meeting of the Partnership on 11 December 2004 when the main topic of discussion was the “Determined to Succeed” Initiative. The Education Department has been given specific funding from the Scottish Executive for this initiative which will be developed as a partnership between the Education Department, Careers Scotland, Scottish Enterprise Tayside and the private sector. In a bid to engage the business community, the Economic Development Manager attended a subsequent meeting on 5 January 2004 which looked more specifically at how the new Scottish Business in the Community – Angus Group could support the links between “enterprise” and education. An action plan is now being prepared for the “Determined to Succeed Initiative” and SBC – Angus is to consider:

a) how to drive up the awareness of this initiative within the business sector;

b) the retention of businesses already supporting enterprise in education activities and the addition of new businesses to create a broader business network;

c) a new engagement model to achieve a sustainable step change in the way businesses support the education sector; and

d) ways in which the business community can genuinely shape the direction of the new initiative.

♦ **Angus & Mearns Economic Development Fund** – Monitoring Panel – In accordance with Article 34 of the minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee Meeting held on 28 August 2003, the Economic Development Manager represented the Council at the inaugural meeting of the Fund Monitoring Panel. This was held on 17 December 2003. The main purpose was to agree operational procedures for dealing with the administration of the funding package provided by Glaxo SmithKline in respect of:

a) Scottish business in the Community – Angus (a business support group comprising business representatives from across Angus);
b) An enterprise fund to encourage local businesses to create new jobs and provide employee training; and

c) A Training & Development Fund to enable unemployed people to access job specific training and increase employment opportunities.

♦ Scottish Local Authority Economic Development (SLAED) – The Economic Development Manager has taken up the Chair of SLAED which is the national body representing Local Authority Heads of Economic Development and staff from within Scotland’s 32 Councils. The Group works closely with COSLA to provide expert opinion on a range of consultations and is actively engaged in a number of direct consultations at Ministerial and Scottish Parliament level. SLAED’s main purpose is to promote economic development within Scotland from a Local Government perspective and to promote best practice amongst local government practitioners.

♦ Carnoustie Country Campaign - Responsibility for marketing specific Carnoustie Country products is now being carried out by golf consultant Gillian Harrower with specific responsibility for the Carnoustie Country Dream Ticket, Golf Classic and a new Golf Pass. The Stay & Play hotel package is being marketed separately in association with Scotia Travel of Glasgow who can package golf and accommodation.

In addition, an agreement has been reached with leading luxury golf travel specialist Perrygolf who have agreed to promote the inaugural Carnoustie Country Asian Golf Challenge to be staged in Angus June 6-12, 2004. This has resulted from the Angus in China Initiative and the special link between Tiger Beach Golf Links in Yantai and Carnoustie Golf Links.

The event, which will be managed by PerryGolf, will be based at the Carnoustie Hotel Golf Resort, and will take in five rounds of tournament play over Carnoustie Links (2 rounds), Montrose, Monifieth, and Gleneagles Hotel King’s Course. If successful, this tournament will be developed as an annual event with the potential for one or two similar events each year in the longer term.

♦ Angus Tourism Framework Co-ordination Group – Preparations have been made for the next meeting on 15 January. This is a cross-departmental group along with representatives form the Angus & Dundee Tourist Board and Scottish Enterprise Tayside and will focus on key strategic tourism matters including a review of Tourist Information Centres; an update on the outcome of the Hairst Festival 2003; issues in connection with the Cairngorms National Park; Carnoustie Country Campaign Initiatives, the Angus Angling Initiative and other marketing topics.

♦ Best Value Audit - Staff within the Economic Development Unit are meeting regularly to prepare evidence for the Best Value Audit. A service profile is being prepared together with supporting information on the unit’s operations and performance outcomes
4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation made in this report.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Directors of Law and Administration and Finance have been consulted and are in agreement with the recommendation made in this report.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The summary of key highlights and achievements given in this report outlines the wide-ranging workload of the Economic Development Unit undertaken with the support of various other departments and external agencies.

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.

DV/MM

19 September 2003

A B Watson
Chief Executive