

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

3 MARCH 2009

SUBJECT: ATTENDANCE AT EVENT IN HONNINGSVAG - BAMSE

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

**Abstract: This report asks the Committee to approve the attendance of the Provost and an officer at a high profile event at Honningsvag, Norway in June 2009. The event includes an unveiling ceremony of a statue of Bamse, matching the bronze statue at Montrose.**

**1 RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the attendance of the Provost and an officer at a high profile event in Honningsvag, Norway in June which includes the unveiling of a full sized statue of Bamse to capitalise on existing tourism links established by the Montrose Heritage Trust with the town, at a cost of up to £3000 from the Economic Development Revenue Budget for 2009/2010.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Montrose Heritage Trust, (a group established to promote the cultural assets of the town) recognised that the story of Bamse, the Norwegian World War II seadog, provided an opportunity to raise the profile of the burgh nationally and internationally, with the potential to attract visitors to the area.
- 2.2 Bamse was owned by Captain Hafto of the Norwegian Navy and went to sea with him on the minesweeper Thorodd during the war. He achieved legendary status in Montrose where Thorod was stationed as tales of his exploits spread. He is buried in Montrose.
- 2.3 A two-year campaign was launched and in 2006 HRH Prince Andrew unveiled a bronze statue of this legendary St Bernard on Montrose Harbour, attracting significant TV and press coverage.
- 2.4 The Trust decided to capitalise on this success and in August 2008 a book on Sea Dog Bamse, written by Dr Andrew Orr and Angus Whitson was published. It was launched at an event in Montrose attended by over 250 people, including a group of civic dignitaries from Norway. Since then it has been at No 4 in Waterson's Scottish Bestseller list.
- 2.5 A website was set up [www.bamsemontrose.co.uk](http://www.bamsemontrose.co.uk) and the Trust commissioned two tourist interpretation boards at the statue and at the grave site. The Trust is now working in partnership with Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre to enhance its Home Front displays with a Bamse exhibition.

- 2.6 Contacts and co-operation with the Canadian-Norwegian groups has led to the founding of a sailing race at the Dartmouth Yacht Club in Nova Scotia called "The Bamse Cup".
- 2.6 Montrose has seen an increasing number of visitors, particularly from Norway, since then, specifically to visit the statue and the grave and has strengthened cultural and tourism links with Honningsvag in Norway, Bamse's home town.

### **3 INVITATION TO ATTEND BAMSE UNVEILING IN NORWAY**

- 3.1 In November 2008 the Mayor of Honningsvag Kristina Hansen paid a 5 day visit to Montrose and attended a reception hosted by the Provost. Honningsvag Kommune is a small community with an extended population of only about 5,000 but attracts 250,000 visitors annually. It is the northern most town in Norway
- 3.2 The purpose of their visit was to negotiate the purchase of a matching statue of Bamse to be unveiled on the waterfront at Honningsvag. There are obvious economic benefits to accrue to Angus from this initiative cementing those tourism links already established with Norway. It is planned that there will be a high profile unveiling event on **Friday 19 June 2009**, as the focus of the town's mid summer festival.
- 3.3 An invitation has been extended by the Mayor of Honningsvag to the Provost of Angus to attend this unveiling ceremony. Representatives from Montrose Heritage Trust will also be in attendance as will tourism businesses and representatives from the area. This will be an opportunity to reinforce Montrose's links through Bamse to Norway, and to raise awareness of Angus as a visitor destination.

It is therefore recommended that this invitation to Angus Council be accepted to support the Montrose Heritage Trust in expanding the Bamse tourism product, and to offer a civic presence at this high profile event.

### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Honningsvag is the northernmost town in Norway and not easily accessible. The total cost for transport and accommodation is estimated at up to £3000 which can be contained within the Economic Development Revenue Budget for 2009/2010.

### **5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

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

### **6 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

**7 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT**

7.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus.

- Growth in Tourism in Angus is achieved.

**8 CONSULTATION**

8.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Law & Administration and Head of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**9 CONCLUSION**

9.1 The Bamse project is a community led tourism initiative that has already established international links, attracted visitors and increased the profile of Montrose and Angus. This unveiling ceremony is likely to build on those existing relationships and allow the area to capitalise on the story of Bamse. It will bring further international awareness to the area in line with two of the Angus Ahead campaign objectives of maximising tourism and encouraging civic pride. Attendance by Angus Council will significantly raise the profile of the county at this high profile event.

ERIC S LOWSON  
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

**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.

ECDEV/DV/SMW/FM  
25 February 2009