

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

2 JUNE 2009

SUBJECT: BRECHIN THI UPDATE : ECONOMIC STRATEGY

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

<p>Abstract: This report is the third update on the progress of the City of Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative.</p>

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee –

1. note the contents of this third report on the progress of the City of Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative and;
2. agree Appendix 1, Summary Land Use and Economic Development Strategy for Brechin, for submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The City of Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is a five year programme of heritage led regeneration funded by Angus Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland. The total budget is just over £2,900,000 and it is run by a dedicated Project Manager who is based in the former Registrar's Office at 32 Panmure Street, Brechin.
- 2.2 The THI aims to regenerate the centre of Brechin by undertaking a number of physical projects and by engaging with the local community. There are a number of "Priority Projects" based upon reusing/repairing prominent historic buildings and finding uses for them. There is a budget for small grants based upon a selection process to ensure maximum value for money. There are also sums for public realm projects, training in traditional building skills and community engagement.

3 PROJECT PROGRESS

- 3.1 **Priority Projects:** Meetings have been held with owners of all the priority projects and significant steps forward have been made in the grant application process. The owners of 29-33 High Street have fee tendered for and have recently appointed an architect experienced in historic building repair projects. The owners have stated their intention to refurbish the retail unit on the ground floor and the upper floors for rental accommodation. Emergency structural repairs have been undertaken to the rear stair tower in order to allow a full site survey by the architect, which is now well underway.

The owners of the category 'A' listed Merchant's House (68-72 High Street) are currently tendering for a design team and have similarly stated their intention to apply for grant funding through the THI. Historic Scotland has prepared an Arch 1 report which outlines grant eligible repairs and this has been made available to the owners. This is a significant and historic building which will require sympathetic and careful consideration due to the rarity of the historic roof timbers.

Work began on site on the 3rd of November 2008 at the Town House museum; the first grant aided Priority Project attracting a THI grant of £218,438. The works have included the removal of 20th century partitions and services to the main first floor exhibition floor, repairs to joists and the construction of new partitions to the rear building (2-4 Church Street). During the course of the works, a number of potentially significant discoveries have been carefully recorded by a team of archaeologists. Details on the progress of the project are available, along with general information on the THI, on the Angus Council Website (<http://www.angus.gov.uk/brechinthi>). Regular updates are being given to the Friends of the Townhouse Museum.

The owners of priority projects 33 High Street and 39-41 High Street have confirmed their interest in applying for grant funding but it is currently unclear whether the owners of 45-47 High Street will participate in the THI. The lack of a purchaser for the East/St Columba's Church is a concern. The Project Support Group and Partnership Executive are currently looking at options and solutions for these buildings and possible alternative projects.

- 3.2 **Small Grants:** The first small grant was awarded in late 2008 to reinstate the historic window pattern of 22 Panmure Street (above Steel Fingers and Maxine's). These were crafted by local joinery firm EJ Croll, after consultation with Historic Scotland, and the windows were installed in March 2009. Interest in the small grants scheme continues to be good and a number of owners of significant listed buildings of high townscape value have approached the THI for possible grant funding. The owners of 1-3 Market Street/Dalhousie Bar have appointed a lead design professional and a site survey has now been undertaken. A grant application is anticipated once the tender for the building work has been undertaken. The owners of the category A listed complex of buildings at 25-27 High Street, above 'Sporty' and located within Anderson's Close, a location on the Brechin Heritage Trail, are now in receipt of an Arch1 report from Historic Scotland and have tendered for a conservation accredited architect. The buildings are located next to the priority project at 29-33 and the combined effect of restoration of this group of buildings will have an extremely positive effect on the central High Street area if both projects proceed.
- 3.3 **Public Realm Work:** the budget for public realm work includes enhancement of a number of closes located off the High Street, including that of Anderson's Close, referred to in 3.2. The THI Project Officer has met with Training Services to discuss the potential to carry out repair work to the Cathedral Walls on Channonry Wynd whilst also providing a training exercise for skill seekers through Jobcentre Plus.
- 3.4 **Training and Community Participation:** Several meetings have been held with the construction department of Angus College and this has resulted in a new partnership between the College and the Brechin THI. The THI and Angus College applied for, and were successful in obtaining a grant award from Scottish Government and the European Community Rural Tayside Leader 2007-2013 Programme. The combined

grant funds will be used to undertake a feasibility study within the Tayside Region on traditional building skills. The main aim of the survey will be to gather information on existing skills in the construction sector and to present a report and specialist company directory for the residents of Brechin and Tayside. The information gathered will help identify priorities in terms of skills gaps and training requirements. This will be the first in a three phase project which in the long term will potentially result in the provision of 'bolt on' traditional building skills qualifications at Angus College and other local colleges. The survey will be undertaken between June and August and results are to be published in October 2009.

An archaeological dig is planned to take place in the grassed area adjacent to the Cathedral Hall in the first week of September 2009, to coincide with Scottish Archaeology Month. Volunteers will be invited to take part in the dig, who will be supervised by a professional archaeological team which will be appointed after the tender process has been undertaken.

The series of lectures that are being held at the THI office continue to be well received by the members of the public that have attended. These free lectures have covered a wide range of topics and have been organised in conjunction with the Friends of the Townhouse Museum and the Brechin Civic Trust. The talks are being advertised in the local press as well as on the websites of the Friends and the Civic Trust.

- 3.5 **Publicity:** Regular updates have been given at the City of Brechin Area Partnership meetings. A number of articles have appeared in the local and regional press on THI matters and this will continue over the lifetime of the THI.

4 ISSUES

- 4.1 Local interest in the THI grant scheme appears to be consistent. However, the current economic climate may preclude some individuals from applying for grant as a financial contribution is necessary from property owners on all projects, apart from those to the public realm. This means that a reduced spend may be experienced on a few of the priority projects which will require consideration by the PSG and dialogue with the external funding partners in order to facilitate any redistribution of grant monies.
- 4.2 In the last THI report 1140/08, approval was sought to serve a planning contravention notice to legally identify the owners of 83-87 High Street which continues to blight the lower end of the High Street. Authorisation was subsequently given at the Development Standards Committee, report 131/09, to serve an amenity notice under Section 179 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 in order to compel the owners to upgrade the appearance of the building or to facilitate direct action to recover the associated expenses. This was served on the 26th of March and no appeal has been lodged to the Scottish Ministers by the deadline of 30th April. A six month period of time has now begun from 30th April in which the owners are required to carry out the remedial works. If after this time the work has not been carried out then Angus Council has the power to undertake the work and to claim back the costs direct from the owner retrospectively.
- 4.3 Regular progress meetings have been held with the external funding partners and claims have been submitted on a quarterly basis. The Project Officer was selected to

give a presentation at a Historic Scotland Training Seminar at Stirling Castle on the 29th of October to project officers on the City of Brechin Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme/THI. Both Historic Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund have expressed their satisfaction in the progress of the Brechin THI.

- 4.4 The finalised Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) for Brechin was approved by the Committee on the 21st of April (report 343/09) and has now been formally adopted by the council. The CAMP will be made electronically available on the THI webpage as well as on the Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes webpage.
- 4.5 The Committee are requested to note that a condition of the THI contract was to publish an economic development strategy for the town of Brechin within 18 months of the commencement of the contract. Since the bid was submitted in 2006 for partnership funding for the THI, Angus Council has developed, approved, adopted and published a number of key strategic measures which constitute an overarching strategy for both Angus and Brechin. These include the Angus Economic Development Strategy, the Community Plan, the Single Outcome Agreement and the Angus Local Plan Review (2009). Appendix 1 summarises the land use and economic development strategy for Brechin which is now in place.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

7 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.

8 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

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

12. We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations

- The importance and benefits to society of the environment is recognised.

9 CONSULTATION

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

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The THI is now in its second year of implementation. One priority project (Townhouse Museum) is on site and the grant application process has commenced for a further priority project (29-33 High Street). Interest is continuing for small grants although the application process can be lengthy where statutory consents are required. The newly formed partnership between Angus College and the THI which will be jointly undertaking a feasibility study of traditional building skills provision in Tayside is a first, but positive step towards securing the training and improvement in skills in the medium to long term to maintain and repair the traditional buildings of Brechin and the wider area.

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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.

P&T/SK/IAL
8 May 2009

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY LAND USE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR BRECHIN**1.0 BACKGROUND**

1.1 The Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) was established in January 2008. It is a five year partnership programme between the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Historic Scotland and Angus Council to provide a grant scheme to enable heritage led regeneration through enhancing the historic buildings and general environment of Brechin central conservation area. It seeks to improve the standards of repair and ongoing maintenance of properties through training and encourage community participation by raising awareness and appreciation of the built heritage of the town.

1.2 The key aim of the City of Brechin THI is:-

“To promote and effect building reinstatement/repair and the re-development and re-use of vacant properties within the designated Conservation/THI Area and by doing so act as a catalyst to encourage complementary activities which, together with the THI, will jointly contribute to the regeneration of the city centre in particular and the rest of Brechin in general.”

1.3 The Brechin THI sits within an overall economic regeneration strategy for Brechin which has been pursued in successive Local Plans over the past 10 years and is a key element of a range of strategies and plans currently in place and adopted by Angus Council. Many of these strategies and plans were published subsequent to the submission of the THI Stage 2 Bid in 2007 and now provide the context for both Council and Community Planning priorities in Angus including Brechin. This document sets out the way the strategies work together and identifies how the priorities and actions being progressed collectively address the issues facing the Angus communities including Brechin.

2.0 SOCIO/ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

2.1 As part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative Stage 2 bid submitted in 2007, consultants Campbell Macrae Associates undertook an extensive socio-economic appraisal of Brechin, compared to the rest of Angus and Scotland. The key findings of the appraisal have been updated and are summarised below:-

- Population decline between 2001-2006 however marginal increase in 2007 possibly due to in-migration.
- Ageing population, with fewer families and a higher percentage of single households than the rest of Angus/Scotland. Percentage of people over pensionable age is higher than the Scottish level and accounts for almost a quarter of the local population.
- Levels of economic activity are lower than rest of Angus and lower percentages of self employed people and full time students.

- Brechin residents are more likely to be employed in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and health than residents of Angus or Scotland.
- High percentage of residents work/study from home or travel less than 2km (53.6%) compared to Angus/Scotland.
- High percentage of residents engaged in lower level occupations compared to Angus/Scotland.
- High percentage of residents with no qualifications compared to Angus/Scotland.
- Local school leavers have lower attainment levels than the rest of Angus/Scotland. School leavers are more likely to go straight into employment than enter higher/further education compared to their counterparts in Angus/Scotland.
- Fewer Brechin residents are within the ABC1 higher social grades compared to Angus/Scotland.
- Unemployment levels in the Brechin/Montrose Travel to Work area remained lower than in Angus/Scotland and are currently rising at a slower rate.
- Average pay in Brechin is likely to be lower than the average for Angus due to high levels of those in social grades DE and lower level jobs.
- Brechin generally experiences low levels of deprivation but there were two areas Queens Park and Drumachlie which exhibited high levels. Whilst Queens Park has been regenerated the Drumachlie area is within the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland.
- Levels of crime within the town are generally low.
- Recent increase in business start up levels which is comparable with the Angus average and compares well with rest of Tayside.
- Currently high demand for employment land resulting in need to establish additional land. Recent increase in jobs from two new business developments.
- High percentage of social rented housing and lower percentage of owner occupiers compared to Angus/Scotland. Percentage of Council owned housing stock is higher than rest of Angus/Scotland.
- Significant increase in private sector house completions since 2006.
- There is an identified need for affordable home ownership although average house prices in Brechin are low compared to the Scottish average.
- Residents of Brechin enjoy reasonably good levels of access to a range of local services and facilities.

- Brechin town centre has experienced a decline over a number of years in terms of the range of outlets and services on offer. A number of properties are vacant and in a poor state of repair contributing to an overall impression of neglect.
- Increase in visitor numbers to local visitor attractions.

3.0 THE ANGUS CONTEXT

3.1 Angus Council has for a number of years recognised the particular issues facing Brechin and has actively sought ways to support the community and provide the impetus for regeneration and improvement. The issues identified for Brechin are reflective to a greater or lesser extent to those of the other Angus communities and are being addressed through the Community Planning process through the Angus Community Planning Partnership and its thematic partnership groups.

3.2 The Angus Community Partnership has recently published a draft Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) for the period 2009 – 2012. The Single Outcome Agreement for Angus is an agreement between Scottish Government and Angus Council setting out the national outcomes which all public sector partners will prioritise for Angus.

3.3 The Angus Community Plan 2007-2012 includes the following Vision:-

“Angus will be a place where a first-class quality of life for all can be enjoyed, in vibrant towns and pleasant villages, set in attractive and productive countryside. The area will be dynamic and outward looking contributing to the culture, environment and economy of Scotland”.

3.4 The partnership has agreed a number of priority areas which need to be addressed to deliver this vision and enhance the quality of life for the people of Angus over the coming years. These are set out in the Community Plan as follows:-

- changes to the demographic profile of Angus;
- sustainability of communities, the economy and the environment;
- business growth;
- engaging with communities;
- young people
- alcohol misuse.

3.5 The Community Planning partnership and its thematic groups aim to deliver a range of outcomes associated with the above priority areas and through this process achieve the outcomes within the SOA. These are supported through a range of plans and strategies being progressed by each of the partnership groups as follows:-

Angus Economic Development Partnership -	Economic Development Strategy and Economic Digest
Lifelong Learning Executive Group -	Lifelong Learning Strategic Statement
Health Improvement Action Group -	Health Improvement Plan

Community Safety Partnership -	Anti Social Behaviour Strategy Community Safety Strategic Assessment
Angus Alcohol and Drug Partnership -	Drugs and Alcohol Action Plans
Community Care and Health Executive Group -	Care Group Strategies Local Improvement Targets
Children's Services Executive Group -	Integrated Children's Services Plan
Angus Rural and Environment Partnership –	Angus Rural Strategy

3.6 In addition and in support of the above, Angus Council has developed plans and strategies dealing with land use, social, economic and environmental matters at a strategic and local level. These include:-

- **Draft Corporate Management Action Plan 2009-2010;**
- **Angus Development Plan** comprising the Dundee and Angus Structure Plan (2002) and the Angus Local Plan Review (2009);
- **Angus Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2004-2009.**

3.7 The plans and strategies currently in place share common objectives of ensuring that the physical, social and economic needs of all communities in Angus are provided for in a sustainable manner. These strategies are giving rise to a number of upcoming projects in Brechin which range from investment in projects such as the Brechin Flood Prevention Scheme to training and community initiatives such as the new Vocational Learning Centre at Brechin High School. Some of these projects and initiatives affect areas outwith the historic core of Brechin but are wide ranging in their impact and can compliment the THI proposals.

4.0 SUMMARY OF LAND USE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR BRECHIN

4.1 **The Dundee and Angus Structure Plan (2002)** and the **Angus Local Plan Review (2009)** are key land use planning documents guiding the future development of Angus. The Structure Plan sets out the strategic land use planning framework for Angus over the period 2001-2016 which in turn provides the context for the Local Plan which translates the strategic guidance into more detail. **The Angus Economic Development Strategy (2008) and associated Action Plan (2008-2011)** seeks to move Angus towards achieving sustainable prosperity. Together these documents provide a land use and economic development strategy for Brechin which seek to improve the economy and environment of Brechin and provide the context for the Brechin THI. A summation of the strategy context for Brechin is set out below.

ANGUS LOCAL PLAN REVIEW (2009)

- 4.2 Regeneration and economic development has been the key focus of a development strategy for Brechin in successive Local Plans including the Brechin Local Plan (1984), the Angus Local Plan (2000) and the recently published Angus Local Plan Review (2009).
- 4.3 The development strategy for Brechin set out in the first Angus Local Plan (2000) which covered the period 2001 to 2006, sought to encourage economic regeneration and inward investment by providing opportunities for business, leisure, tourism and housing together with environmental improvement of the town centre.
- 4.4 Since the publication of the first Angus Local Plan (2000) a number of elements of the development strategy have progressed including:-
- The establishment of a new Business Park (16.5 hectares) in the west of Brechin offering sites and premises for a range of employment uses;
 - The establishment of a new gateway visitor attraction in the west of the town (Pictavia/Brechin Castle Centre);
 - Residential development underway at Bearehill/Rosehill (93 houses) with number of properties occupied;
 - Redevelopment of vacant brownfield sites including Witchden Road and Guthrie Park for housing;
 - Completion of façade treatment scheme within the town centre;
 - Community woodland (7.3 ha) established by Angus Council on their land holding at Cookston.
- 4.5 The development strategy for Brechin set out in the Angus Local Plan Review (2009) which covers the period 2006 to 2011 continues to support and build upon measures aimed at improving the attractiveness of the town for inward investment. This includes the provision of attractive and well located sites for housing to the west of the town, developing the potential for recreation and tourism and promoting the regeneration and improvement of vacant and underused sites. The regeneration and improvement of the town centre environment including the establishment of the Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative remains a key focus of the strategy.
- 4.6 The Development Strategy for Brechin seeks to:- **Objective:- provide for a range of housing development by releasing greenfield land on the west side of the town and promoting the use of available brownfield land;**
- 4.7 Housing led regeneration and the redevelopment of vacant, derelict and underused property are key elements of the development strategy for Brechin. By allocating greenfield land for housing which is expected to be attractive to house builders and house purchasers in conjunction with the redevelopment and improvement of vacant buildings and land it is hoped that people and businesses will be attracted to live, work and invest in Brechin.
- 4.8 Consequently the Angus Local Plan Review allocates land in the west of Brechin at Dubton Farm for housing development and recreational open space. The site is well located in terms of access to Brechin Business Park which is the main employment area as well as schools, the town centre and gateway facilities in the west. The

provision of passive and active open space as part of new development at Dubton Farm including community woodland, play areas and path networks linking to the town centre and gateway facilities to the west will add to the recreational resource in this part of Brechin.

- 4.9 The strategy also seeks to improve the environment of Brechin by promoting the redevelopment and regeneration of a range of vacant sites for housing or other uses including:-
- former Andover School, Nursery Lane;
 - Albert Place;
 - Scott Street Goods Yard;
 - former Gas Works, Witchden Road;
 - Southesk Street/Commerce Street;
 - Queens Park Housing Estate.
- 4.10 In addition to the sites identified above the Local Plan Review allows for housing and employment development on unidentified sites through policies SC3: Windfall Sites and SC17: Industrial and Business Use. Local Plan Policy also takes account of the Angus Local Housing Strategy and the need for affordable housing in Brechin through Policy SC9: Affordable Housing – which requires 25% affordable housing to be provided on all housing developments of 10 or more houses or sites greater than 0.5 hectares.
- 4.11 **Objective :- Support measures which will regenerate the town centre and enhance its historic character and general environment;** The strategy for all the towns in Angus including Brechin is to maintain a retail function in the central area, resist development which will undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre, and allow diversification of complementary town centre uses to provide daytime and evening activities.
- 4.12 Brechin is a small traditional former market town providing a basic range of convenience and durable goods shops which serve a local need. The majority of the town centre including its core retail area lies within the Outstanding Conservation Area reflecting its architectural and historic importance. As highlighted above, the regeneration and improvement of the town centre is a key element of the Brechin development strategy. The Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative builds upon previous environmental improvement schemes and is part of a package of complementary measures designed to support the physical and economic regeneration of the town and its historic core. This includes Local Plan Policy SC23: Support for Town Centres and Policy SC25: Upper Floor Use – which supports non retail uses on upper floors within town centres to improve the visual and economic attractiveness of these areas .
- 4.13 **Objective:- Improve the environment by encouraging urban renewal of vacant and underused sites;** By promoting the reuse or redevelopment of vacant, derelict and underused property and land, resources are recycled and the locality is regenerated. There are a number of vacant and underused sites in Brechin that provide opportunities for redevelopment. The Local Plan promotes the reuse of a number of such sites some of which now have planning permission.

- 4.14 The Local Plan also provides general policy guidance on the protection and enhancement of the built and natural heritage including the encouragement of high design standards and sustainable use of resources.
- 4.15 **Objective:- Support the potential for recreation and tourism development by reserving a site in the west of Brechin for improved visitor accommodation as part of the existing gateway facility.** Tourism is a major source of income and employment throughout Angus. The range and quality of visitor accommodation is vital to developing tourism and extending the length of the tourist season. The strategy seeks to enhance Brechin as a tourist destination and improve the range of facilities for existing and future residents. The allocation of a site for a hotel adjacent to Brechin Business Park complementing the existing visitor facility in the west of Brechin is designed to achieve this. In addition Local Plan Policy SC20: Tourism Development is generally supportive of tourism proposals throughout Angus where they improve the range and quality of existing attractions and/or extend the tourist season.
- 4.16 **Objective:- Integrate recreational open space in association with the release of new land for housing development in the west of the town.** The Local Plan Review seeks to protect existing open spaces as well as ensuring that new development is accompanied by an appropriate level and type of open space and that it is well designed and maintained. Open spaces in Brechin serve a range of functions, they contribute towards the character of the town, are an important sporting and recreational resource, provide opportunities for wildlife and nature conservation and contribute towards the health and wellbeing of its residents.
- 4.17 The Angus Local Plan Review protects important recreational areas in Brechin including public parks, sports grounds and other amenity areas from development under Policy SC32: Open Space Protection. In addition specific land allocations for improved open space and recreational facilities are also made at Cookston adjacent to the A90(T) and as part of new housing development at Dubton Farm.
- 4.18 Each element of the strategy seeks to improve the attractiveness of Brechin as a place to live, work and invest and is designed to contribute toward the wider regeneration and economic development of the town. Since the publication of the Finalised Angus Local Plan Review in 2004 a number of elements of the Brechin development strategy have been progressed including:-
- Planning application submitted for a residential/commercial and open space development at Dubton Farm;
 - Redevelopment of Albert Place for housing currently underway;
 - Site at Southesk Street/Commerce Street redeveloped for a food retail unit;
 - Regeneration of Queens Park Housing Estate for mixed tenure housing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- 4.19 The Angus Economic Development Strategy “Towards Sustainable Prosperity” reflects the policy position of the Angus Economic Development Partnership one of eight thematic groups reporting to the Angus Community Planning Partnership. The Angus Economic Development Strategy was adopted by Angus Council in April 2008 and sets out strategic objectives under the four Community Planning themes as follows:

The Economy

- Support the competitiveness of Angus businesses, particularly through adoption of sustainable principles and technologies.
- Build on the potential strengths of Angus in key economic sectors and encourage efficiency synergies in key locations.
- Encourage growth in jobs to widen job opportunities within Angus.
- Enhance physical infrastructure with due regard to the environment.
- Increase awareness and perceptions of Angus locally, nationally and internationally.
- Encourage research and technological developments.

The Environment

- To identify, harness and manage natural assets in Angus for economic gain without detriment to these assets.
- Support sustainable energy and energy efficiency initiatives.
- Promote the environmental excellence of Angus as a locational advantage for investment and attraction of visitors.

Healthy Safe and Caring Communities

- Support economically inactive people to overcome barriers to employment.
- Support growth of the social economy and social enterprise.
- Recognise the value of voluntary and unpaid work.
- Encourage businesses to contribute to community activity.
- Support health initiatives which will improve the workforce.
- Assist fellow EU and international workers to contribute to Angus socially.

Lifelong Learning

- Encourage an entrepreneurial culture.
- Support in-work workforce development.
- Support community learning in providing literacy, numeracy and other key work and capacity building skills.
- Work with education, Skills Development Scotland, training agencies and the business community to improve communications and co-operation.
- Supported skills development particularly through working with further and higher education establishments.
- Monitor changing labour needs, alternative working patterns, trends in employment law and promote opportunities to business.

4.20 A detailed Action Plan 2008-2011 associated with the delivery of these strategic objectives was approved by the Angus Community Planning Partnership and Angus Council in November 2008. A summary of the objectives and actions of particular relevance to Brechin including linkages with the THI are set out below.

4.21 **Objective: Support the Competitiveness of Angus Businesses particularly through adoption of sustainable principles and technologies:** Angus Council has employed four new Business Advisers to work with Enterprise North East Trust

(ENET, Business Gateway contractor for Tayside), Scottish Enterprise and the Private Sector (e.g. Dundee and Angus Chamber and Federation of Small Businesses) to provide support to Angus Businesses. The Business Advisers are based at Brechin Business Park within a recently opened new Enterprise Business Centre operated by ENET. Brechin Business Association (BBA) has been investigating the establishment of a Business Improvement District for part or all of Brechin Town Centre. This approach would complement the THI and the Council will provide BBA with support in pulling the bid together.

- 4.22 **Objective: Build on the potential strengths of Angus in key economic sectors and encourage efficiency synergies in key locations:** A new Tourism Strategy and Action Plan is currently the subject of extensive consultations. The strategy recognises the importance of Tourist Information facilities with one of only two such facilities in Angus operated by VisitScotland being located at the Pictavia Visitor Centre in the west of Brechin. Improvements to this facility are proposed. Businesses on Brechin Business Park will be encouraged to look at ways in which they can work together to reduce individual burdens and improve their “green” credentials e.g. Green Travel Plans, joint recycling. The Council will facilitate meetings between the town centre retailers and businesses to investigate opportunities for efficiencies/service improvements based on business co-operation.
- 4.23 **Objective: Encourage Growth in jobs to widen employment opportunities in Brechin:** Availability of serviced employment land at Brechin Business Park and property elsewhere in Brechin will continue to be promoted seeking to attract new business investment.
- 4.24 **Objective: Enhance Physical Infrastructure with due regard to the Environment:** Demand for employment land in Brechin increased dramatically in 2008/09 and there is a need to identify additional allocation beyond 2012 in the next Local Plan review. Improvements will be undertaken to Brechin Business Centre in 2009/10. The Townscape Heritage Initiative will continue to be supported and backed up by a bid to the Scottish Government Town Centre Regeneration Fund.
- 4.25 **Objective: Increase awareness and perceptions of Angus locally, nationally and internationally:** Support for community led events including the Brechin Arts Festival aimed at attracting visitors to Brechin will continue to be provided. Attractions such as the Caledonian Railway, Town House Museum, Brechin Cathedral and Round Tower will continue to be promoted through the Angus Marketing Portal, Angusahead.com. Investment in public sector owned facilities such as Pictavia will continue as long as budget is available. If the businesses in Brechin town centre can agree on a joint marketing promotion initiative this will be covered through Angusahead.com.
- 4.26 **Objective: To identify and harness natural assets in Angus for economic gain without detriment to these assets:** Work is ongoing to develop a Catchment Management Plan for the River South Esk along its entire length.
- 4.27 **Objective: Support sustainable energy and energy efficiency initiatives:** All of Angus Council’s Economic Development portfolio including its properties at Montrose Road, Southesk Street and Brechin Business Park will be assessed for Energy Efficiency Certificates and a programme of efficiency improvements will be proposed.

- 4.28 **Objective: Support economically inactive people to overcome barriers to employment:** The Fairer Scotland Fund supports the employment of a team of key workers covering Angus, to assist the economically inactive in partnership with agencies such as Skills Development Scotland, Job Centre Plus, Angus College and the Volunteer Centre Angus through an Employability Framework. One key worker covers the towns of Brechin and Montrose while due to the sizeable eastern European community in Brechin, another key worker employed specifically to support this community spends a considerable proportion of his time in Brechin.
- 4.29 **Objective: Support health initiatives which will improve the workforce in Angus:** The Focus on Alcohol Angus project is responsible for the engagement of local communities in relation to the issues associated with alcohol. In Brechin and the surrounding area, the project's Health Happy Community initiative has been established and continues to develop. Using a social marketing campaign devised by older and younger people in the community, this project is currently involving local partners and community members to highlight alcohol problems that parents may have and how those issues impact on their children. Brechin High School and the primary schools in the area undertook an extensive school survey confirming that these problems exist and need to be acted upon locally.
- 4.30 **Objective: Support community learning in providing literacy, numeracy and other key work and capacity building skills:** Angus Council's Community Learning team run a range of literacy programmes (reading, writing, numbers) to a wide age range from its Brechin Damacre Centre on the edge of the Town Centre. It also runs a weekly job club from the same facility, providing personal guidance on a range of matters including job search, CV's and preparing for interviews. The Centre also teaches English as a second language as well as Polish and Czech to assist locals to communicate with new residents. There is also a support group for young adults who have not yet secured training or jobs (part of the More Choices more Chances Group).
- 4.31 As part of the THI a partnership with Angus College is being sought to provide construction sector master classes aimed at developing and promoting traditional building skills as bolt on qualifications. Through the THI, work is ongoing to develop links with local schools to improve understanding of the need to adopt specific techniques and materials when dealing with historic properties as well as to enhance awareness of the built heritage. Opportunities are also being offered to skillseekers to work on public realm heritage projects in Brechin.
- 4.32 **Objective: Support skills development particularly through working with further and higher education establishments:** A new vocational learning facility operated by Angus College was opened at Brechin High School in 2008. The Brechin facility is only the second in Angus to be co-located with a town secondary school after a very successful pilot in Forfar.
- 4.33 **Objective: Monitor changing labour needs, alternative working patterns, trends in employment law and promote opportunities to business:** Town centre businesses will be invited to identify common training needs such as window dressing and marketing and assistance will be offered to provide appropriate training.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The various issues facing Brechin are recognised and are being addressed through a range of strategies and plans which provide a framework for the regeneration and economic development of the Angus communities. The land use and economic development strategy for Brechin sets out medium to long term objectives and actions which will be pursued by the Council and its partners. These are designed to improve the social, physical and economic wellbeing of Brechin of which the THI is a key focus. Many developments and actions have already taken place and are having a positive impact whilst others are planned and have still to come forward. Angus Council will continue to implement the strategy for Brechin and seek investment and improvement to the area in the context of the range of overarching strategies that exist for Angus.
- 5.2 The City of Brechin THI scheme is closely aligned with various strategies and policy documents currently in place. In particular the THI aims to contribute towards:
- Realising the Community Plan vision by improving the attractiveness of Brechin town centre, promoting its vitality and viability, conserving its built environment and encouraging urban renewal as well as potentially increasing new business and skills opportunities.
 - Consolidating and strengthening Brechin town centre as well as protecting and enhancing its built environment in accordance with the strategy and key policies of the Dundee and Angus Structure Plan (2000) and Angus Local Plan Review (2009).
 - Improving the attractiveness of Brechin for inward investment and new housing in accordance with the development strategy and key policies of the Angus Local Plan Review (2009).
 - Improving the vitality and viability of the town centre including supporting the use of upper floor accommodation within the centre of Brechin for residential use in accordance with the development strategy and key policies of the Angus Local Plan Review (2009).
 - Improving the environment by encouraging the regeneration of vacant and underused buildings and supporting the change of use of vacant retail units in accordance with the development strategy and key policies of the Angus Local Plan Review (2009).
 - Maintaining a retail function within the central area in accordance with the overall strategy for town centres and retailing as outlined within the Angus Local Plan Review (2009).
 - Potentially increasing new business opportunities and community learning skills which are key objectives of the Angus Economic Development Strategy.
 - Enhancing physical infrastructure with due regard to the environment which is a key objective of the Angus Economic Development Strategy.

