

ANGUS RURAL AND ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP

RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY OF ANGUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

PRESENTATION – NEIL PRENTICE

Background

- Angus Council and ACPP have approved the Angus Economic Development Strategy for 2007-2012 – ‘Towards Sustainable Prosperity.’
- The Angus Economic Development Partnership (an ACPP thematic group) has the lead role in its development and implementation
- The Action Plan has also been approved by ACPP and is due to go to Angus Council’s Infrastructure Services Committee for final approval

Angus Economic Development Strategy

AEDS has four main themes which mirrors the work of the thematic groups if the Angus Community Planning Partnership: The Economy; The Environment; Healthy, Safe and Caring Communities; and Lifelong Learning.

The Economy section of the plan considers a number of areas which requires progression. These areas include:

- Supporting Competitiveness;
- Building on Existing Strengths;
- Growth in ‘Green Jobs’;
- Improving Perceptions of Angus;
- Research and Development; and
- Infrastructure

Rural Development

Working in economic development in rural areas, using the available supporting mechanisms is difficult to the myriad of definitions of what is ‘rural.’ For examples, the SRDP uses a threshold of 3,000 population to define rural (this is further subdivided) and LEADER uses a threshold of 10,000 population.

Business Support

Business support has changed substantially over the last 12 months. Prior to the changes at Scottish Enterprise, the main support was delivered through contracts with the Business Gateway. However, since April 2008 contracts have been managed through local authorities (Tayside-wide in the case of Angus). These contracts are now more target-focused and the Tayside contract is now delivered by Enterprise North East Trust who also have the contract in Grampian. These contracts have targets for business start-ups, VAT + companies and the growth of identified existing businesses.

There are ongoing issues around the lack of support for existing businesses which have not been identified as having potential for significant growth. In addition, the Business Gateway website continues to prove very difficult to navigate, making accessing the appropriate support difficult and often off-putting.

With the restructuring of Scottish Enterprise, the scope for local delivery and local decision making is limited. Scottish Enterprise is now targeting potential growth companies (turnover £400k +) and 30 Angus companies are account managed by Scottish Enterprise on a national basis. Key sectors for Scottish Enterprise include:

- Life Sciences
- “Electronic Markets”
- Tourism
- Food & Drink
- Energy
- Financial Services

From 2000 on, Councils were encouraged by Government not to be as active in Business Support as they had been in past decades, with Scottish Enterprise and Business Gateway taking on more responsibility. However this stance has now changed.. Angus Council has recently agreed to employ 2.5 Business Advisors, who should be in post in January 2009. These advisors will be focusing on the key sectors identified in AEDS, most if not all of which have implications for rural areas.

Examples of Work

Particularly through EU funded projects, Angus Council has been able to support business groupings in the county, including a Crafts Association and a Fishing/Angling initiative. There has also been targeted support in particular geographic areas, including Glen Isla and more recently, Outdoor Angus, a private sector led business group has been established to market Angus as a destination for outdoor pursuits.

Available Support

Angus has a grants scheme available to small businesses (less than 25 employees), up to £5k for capital investment, equipment and property development. There is a condition that successful applicants must demonstrate added value to their business beyond the Angus boundary. In addition, Angus has a Market Development Grant of up to £1k per applicant which can assist businesses access markets abroad.