
**AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
7 JUNE 2002**

Monitoring the Structure Plan - Monitor 2002

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the second monitoring statement of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and report on the main changes since June 2000.

BACKGROUND

- 2 In February 2001 the Joint Committee won the Scottish Award for Quality in Planning for the preparation of Monitor 2000 - a set of baseline indicators to monitor structure plan policy. It was noted at the time that it was vital for structure plans to be kept up-to-date and respond to changing circumstance. This requires them to be regularly monitored and the approved structure plan indicates a monitoring statement should be prepared on a two-yearly cycle. Monitor 2002, therefore, roles forward the original indicators and updates the previous commentary. As a result of the inclusion of transportation into the Committee's remit a new section on transport is now included.

KEY FINDINGS

- 3 The summary of all key findings can be found on page 5 of Monitor 2002. However, it is important to recognise the significance of some of the figures. Whilst there is a general trend for aspects of the environment and the community to have improved, or to at least remained static, there remains a worrying downward trend for virtually all aspects of the economy except skills within the workforce. This is despite a considerable increase in capital investment and a continued prioritisation of the need for economic growth by all Councils and agencies.

THE ECONOMY

- 4 Although there is a presumption there is an overall growth within the Ayrshire economy this is not of a sufficient scale to match growth figures both at Scotland and UK wide level. The result is that relative to these areas GDP continues to fall, on the latest figures available.

- 5 In addition jobs are not being created within the economy to compensate for job losses. The number of business start-ups has fallen, levels of employment within the workforce remain below the national average and there is no employment growth in key sectors. In order to achieve a rate of employment similar to the rest of Scotland would require the creation of an additional 11,000 jobs for local residents. To aspire to "full employment" an employment rate similar to the south of England would be needed, requiring the creation of 27,000 additional jobs, and a further 14,000 jobs would be required to match the overall UK figures. On the basis of current population forecasts this is likely to be compounded by an overall loss of people of working age, and, in some parts of Ayrshire, by high levels of out-migration.
- 6 Clearly these figures present a challenge to us all. The Joint Committee will be well aware that the strategic planning process cannot of itself change economic circumstance, but can play a positive role in providing the appropriate spatial framework within which the economy can flourish. Overall economic performance depends on much more corporate action. What these figures do suggest, however, is that more radical approaches to land management may be required in the future and a clear view of what function Ayrshire as a whole seeks to fulfil in 20 years time. There is also the added impetus given by the expected completion of M77. This can best be explored in a review of the structure plan.

THE ENVIRONMENT

- 7 The last two years have seen improvements to certain aspects of the environment. Both air and water quality has improved further, and, importantly, a Local Biodiversity Action Plan has been agreed which will set a context for further improvements.
- 8 An Area Waste Plan is close to agreement, as is an Ayrshire Woodland Strategy which should provide a better context for how tree planting is used in the landscape and developed as an economic resource. Energy from renewable sources is set to increase without substantial damage to the environment. However, flooding as a result of climate change, and particularly its effects on the coast, continue to be a cause of longer-term concern. It is hoped to finalise work on a predictive model for the coast in the near future that should give us a better understanding of flood events. Although energy efficiency has yet to see an improvement, new national building regulations should bring about change.

COMMUNITIES

- 9 Again on a positive note, a large majority of residents think they are well-placed for basic services such as post offices, banks, food shopping etc. In line with government policy more than 70% of retail investment has been within the town centres. Some 54% of new housing developments have been on brownfield land, but this total Ayrshire figure hides considerable variations in individual Council areas. To aid understanding and develop priorities for action, contaminated land strategies have been prepared for each Council area.
- 10 This largely positive view of "quality of life" masks the still considerable inequalities that exist within the community, and particularly focused on the Social Inclusion Partnership

Areas (SIPs). Although comparative figures have been difficult to obtain, it does seem that, despite considerable efforts by many people and organisations, in some parts of Ayrshire poverty remains an intransigent problem.

TRANSPORT

- 11 With the addition of strategic transportation to the Joint Committee's remit, Monitor 2002 includes for the first time a section on transport figures. At this stage they must be regarded as an interim set of indicators whilst comparative government figures are awaited. Nevertheless what they do show is that on average road traffic in Ayrshire is increasing by 2% per annum. Rail public transport patronage has increased steadily to 2000/2001, but the effects of the last six months changes to timetables have as yet to be reflected in the trend figures. The importance to Ayrshire of Glasgow Prestwick International Airport is underlined by the growth rate in both passengers and freight. There has also been a considerable success in attracting Freight Facilities Grant awards for the movement of both timber and coal.

CONCLUSION

- 12 Monitor 2002 shows that despite considerable capital resource on strategic infrastructure, further improvement to the environment and a general satisfaction with "quality of life" issues the problem of a poorly performing economy and its attendant poverty continues to be the dominating feature. Whilst not seen as the cause of this dilemma, nor in a position of single-handedly being able to drive forward the changes necessary, the strategic planning process must be able to respond by a willingness to explore alternative long term futures with an open mind.

RECOMMENDATION

- 13 The Committee is asked to note the report and approve Monitor 2002 for circulation to the Scottish Executive, Ayrshire Economic Forum, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire and to each Council for their information and use in supporting Ayrshire's case for resources.

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