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Broad Street Public Consultation

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) writes in reference to the above consultation which closes on 12 June 2016.

AGCC is North-east Scotland's leading business membership organisation. Representing more than 1,300 businesses with around 130,000 employees across all sectors, we work at local, national and international level to support businesses from sole traders to multinational corporations.

Introduction

When Aberdeen City Council published the city centre masterplan in 2015, the Chamber supported the progress being demonstrated by its publication as well as the details contained within. Our submission suggested that the "Streets for people" and "Keep on moving" aims of the masterplan should be considered jointly in order to improve the connectivity and the use of public spaces in the city centre.

Almost a year has passed already and the clock is ticking. The momentum and leadership shown in publishing the masterplan must now be continued and accelerated. Acting positively on the Broad Street proposals under consultation will set the foundations for delivering the overall vision of the masterplan – developing the city centre "as a remarkable 21st century destination for citizens, visitors and business".

The role of the city centre

The city centre plays a vital part in making Aberdeen City, and the wider region, an attractive place to live, work and visit. However, for too long it has been a barrier to business growth and investment, as highlighted in our North-east Business Week Survey in 2013.

A case study¹ of South London, Sheffield and Coventry showed that mixed-use streets provided benefits to these UK cities. These included a bus-bus interchange space, added retail services due to a wider street space and highlighted landmarks which are a source of local identity. A study conducted by the New York City Department of Transportation² also found that some projects which improved accessibility and created a more welcoming street environment also increased retail sales in the area.

¹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation. (2007). *Rediscovering mixed-use streets*

² New York City Department of Transportation. (2013). *The Economic Benefits of Sustainable Streets*

Our economy is at a key crossroads. At this time, it is important to prove the sceptics wrong and to build confidence among people, entrepreneurs and investors by sending the message that Aberdeen is open for business and has a positive future as a cosmopolitan city.

After consulting our Policy Council, they approved the following statement:

We are in full support of the need to modernise and re-invent Aberdeen city centre and the masterplan represents the best route forward. We acknowledge that there will be elements of the plan that do not meet with universal approval but we accept that this is inevitable and that we should proceed in the pursuit of the greater civic good.

Doing nothing is not an option - the Chamber is opposed to option 1, "keeping Broad Street open to all traffic". Chamber members want a clear message from the Council that investment, innovation and revitalisation are being actively prioritised. In addition, Aberdeen City Council's report on the transport implications of the City Centre Masterplan projects showed that improving Broad Street is absolutely necessary in order to set other parts of the masterplan in motion. Retaining the status quo in Broad Street will create obstacles for the other stages of the planned city centre improvements and raise questions about whether the plan is deliverable at all.

Next steps

AGCC members continue to support the masterplan and it must go ahead.

In approving the masterplan, the Council made a commitment to delivering changes that will improve the future economic prosperity of the city. What we need now is the confidence, brave decision-making and leadership that will deliver the individual elements of that plan and help write the next chapter in the Aberdeen success story.

Following the close of this consultation on 12 June, the Chamber calls for no further delay and a positive decision for change at the full Council meeting on 29 June; one that will, in time, come to be seen as a landmark that will begin an unstoppable momentum.

Should you wish to discuss AGCC's response to this consultation in more detail, please contact:

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