

4 BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Introduction

- 4.0 Employment in Stirling district is concentrated in the service sector (over 80%) reflecting the qualities of Stirling as a tourist and shopping centre with a wide catchment area. There is an increasing commercial office employment element adding to the substantial administrative and educational component. The manufacturing employment base (less than 10%) is much more limited than elsewhere in neighbouring authorities and tending to decline, as is the small but still very important primary sector ie. agriculture, forestry, quarrying, etc. This economic structure has assisted the district in withstanding the worst effects of economic recession.

National and Regional Guidance

- 4.1 The aim of central government policy is to provide a financial and planning framework which enables business to flourish and have choice in its locational decisions. The 1989 Use Classes Order redefined the categories of industrial and commercial activity which can be regarded as compatible in planning terms and National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG) 2: *Business and Industry* advises that land identified for business and industry can be targeted at different sectors within the overall Use Classes. NPPG 2 emphasises that allocated land should be of "marketable" quality, that Local Plans should define the sites identified in the Structure Plan, and that "the planning system has to reconcile the need for industrial and business development with the maintenance of environmental quality". In 1992 the Government issued *Rural Framework* urging diversification of the rural economy through support for local community initiatives.
- 4.2 The Structure Plan's Economic Strategy covers infrastructure provision; employment training; support for indigenous industry and inward investment; and encouragement for areas and groups in the community currently disadvantaged economically. Specifically the Structure Plan policies and proposals provide for a range of industrial/business development proposals from the strategic large scale single-user and prestige business park sites down to sites and premises in small communities; plus various forms of support for specialist sectors such as offices, tourism and farm diversification enterprises, and an integrated approach by all the relevant agencies in the area of rural development.

UK Government and European Regional Aid and Incentives

- 4.3 Government and the European Community set the geographic pattern of regional aid and incentives in the UK. The aim is to relieve economic and social disadvantage by offering financial aid for infrastructure, business, labour force and community development. The incentive packages and eligible areas are currently under review.

(a) UK Government Aid

A Regional Selective Assistance (RSA) programme is due to start on 1 January 2000. This qualifies firms for a discretionary subsidy of up to 20% on capital investment. Areas within the 1984 ward boundaries of Argyll, Cornton, Gowanhill, Ballengeich, Sauchenford and Polmaise will be eligible. Most of the strategic business sites in and around Stirling are included. It is anticipated that RSA will provide a major boost to the local economy by supporting small firms and encouraging inward investment.

(b) European Aid

From 1 January 2000, eligibility for European Aid will be drastically reduced throughout the Council area. Consequently, the following funding packages will no longer be available: Objective 2 and RECHAR funding in Stirling and the Eastern Villages; the Locally Based Initiatives programme in the SPUR areas; and the Objective 5b programme for rural diversification in the remaining western and northern rural area. All these areas will however qualify for transitional funding until 2005, to help remove dependency on European Aid.

Stirling Initiative

4.4 The Stirling Initiative is the culmination of a number of studies and projects since 1984. It is the first to involve the whole town core with regards to physical fabric, access and circulation, housing, environment and economic development, and to be underpinned by commitments of funding from Central Government. The whole range of interlinked proposals published in 1992 require considerable further feasibility studies. This Local Plan cannot anticipate all the outcomes but will endeavour to establish a policy base flexible enough to accommodate appropriate elements of these proposals, and to provide a statutory Plan context for them.

POL.B1 In the urban area, the Council will support its partners in the “Stirling Initiative” by facilitating the development of a range of tourist facilities and attractions as well as improving the basic infrastructure required to sustain tourist activity.

Office and Industrial Development

4.5 Business and industry are concentrated mainly in Stirling and Bridge of Allan, and at Throsk (Bandearth) and Cowie. Industrial land take-up was very slow over the last decade, but with some developments taking advantage of the new Use Classes Order, and decisions to reallocate land for retail and leisure purposes, a climate of active development now prevails in the Stirling area. Castle Business Park is under construction in a prestigious location at Craigforth which will ultimately provide approximately 250,000 sq ft of business space. Recently planning consent has been given in outline for a Prestige Business Park at Dunblane and other business and industrial developments are under way at Springkerse and Broadleys. The implementation of the Structure Plan land allocations is detailed in the relevant town and village plans.

POL.B2 The Council will ensure that, in accordance with the Structure Plan and NPPG 2, a five year effective supply of land is available in and adjacent to appropriate settlements to accommodate business and industrial development.

*See
Business and
Economic Activity
Chapter POL.B6*

4.6 Outwith the established urban areas, the Council is keen to ensure that employment opportunities are available throughout the district. The Council will therefore encourage the establishment of new businesses in the smaller villages and towns, provided that the residential amenity of these areas is not compromised. The role of the Rural Stirling Partnership will be crucial in promoting and co-ordinating the development of new businesses in the rural area.

POL.B3 In order to encourage a broad distribution of employment opportunities, particularly in locations where unemployment levels are above average, the Council will :

- (a) permit non-polluting (Class 4) industry and business developments close to residential areas, in the smaller settlements, and, if suitable sites or premises are available, in rural areas;
- (b) support existing and future local economic development initiatives and partnerships;
- (c) seek, where practicable, to secure the relocation to more appropriate sites in the Council area of existing industries and businesses which are proving detrimental to their immediate environment;
- (d) give sympathetic consideration to appropriate business or industrial use of vacant buildings in both urban and rural areas;
- (e) ensure, in all cases, that residential amenity is protected and infrastructure criteria can be satisfied.

POL.B4 New business-related developments will be expected to contribute positively to the environmental quality of the area. Accordingly, the Council will :

- (a) establish design, layout and landscaping guide-lines for prestige business parks and single-user high technology development sites;
- (b) establish layout and landscaping guide-lines for business and industry parks and other industrial areas;
- (c) promote environmental improvements in and around existing business premises and areas;
- (d) encourage contributions to “Percent for Art” schemes;
- (e) discourage excessive advertising displays, especially those not erected as a permanent and integral aspect of the design of new development;
- (f) encourage the provision of social and creche facilities for employees and visitors.

See
Environment
Chapter POL.E42

See
Environment
Chapter
POLS.E24 - E31

Existing Industrial Areas

- 4.7 The Council wishes to ensure that opportunities are available for indigenous firms to expand within existing industrial areas and to allow the relocation of other firms into these established areas. These areas require to be safeguarded from any gradual loss to other types of use as they contribute to the supply of prime industrial land within the district and provide choice of location. The Springkerse area in Stirling, in particular, has experienced pressure for change and the Council wishes to ensure that the predominant use in this area remains light/general industrial and storage/distribution. Business use will also be permitted.

See
Stirling Town Plan
& Proposal
STIR.B5

POL.B5 The established Industrial areas identified on the Proposals Maps will be reserved primarily for General Industrial (Class 5) and Storage and Distribution (Class 6), as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997. Business Use (Class 4) will also be permitted. In considering changes of use of land affected by this policy to non-industrial and non-business use, the Council will have regard to POL.B2.

University of Stirling

- 4.8 The presence of the University will continue to be a factor favouring Stirling. It is one of the area's largest employers and a considerable source of secondary economic activity with the spending power of its students and staff. The student population is planned to increase by some 40% by the turn of the century. The University Innovation Park provides scope for associated business developments. However, the campus is a Historic Landscape (see Para 2.35) and care will be needed to accommodate new developments.

nb *The University development programme is considered in detail in the Bridge of Allan town plan.*

Rural Economic Development

4.9 Despite the significance of the urban-based economy, Stirling district is overwhelmingly rural in character. Agriculture, forestry and other traditional countryside enterprises occupy less than 1% of the workforce but arguably make a contribution to the quality of life for most of the remainder. Following an analysis of the rural economy commissioned by Forth Valley Enterprise, the Rural Stirling Partnership has been established with a project officer to implement appropriate schemes. There is a relationship between the availability of employment in the rural area, the often relatively low wages attached to such employment, and the ability of workers to afford good housing. Some employers eg in the tourism sector, provide staff accommodation but it is not always of a good standard. Therefore developers and entrepreneurs offering employment opportunities should include the issue of staff accommodation amongst their considerations from an early stage.

POL.B6 In association with the Rural Stirling Partnership and the equivalent Eastern Villages Organisations, and through the exercise of its development control functions, the Council will support a diversity of economic activity in the rural areas and rural communities, and in particular will, subject to environmental constraints :

- (a) encourage businesses which are complementary to the primary rural activities;
- (b) encourage the re-use for business purposes of redundant vernacular buildings in suitable locations;
- (c) encourage the establishment of “telecottages” and new workspace developments;
- (d) support the provision and retention of village shops which provide essential services to the local community (where appropriate in shared premises with other businesses and/or local services).

POL.B7 In considering applications for new tourist facilities in the countryside, the Council will require that any necessary staff accommodation be integrated with the development. Where a development falls within the Loch Lomond Park Area, it will also be considered within the policy context of the Loch Lomond (Subject) Plan.

See
Environment
Chapter POL.E7

Shopping

4.10 Stirling Town Centre is the principal shopping centre of the Council area, with a retail turnover of over £100 million per annum. The town, with its excellent communications and large catchment population (which is boosted by tourist trade), also serves as a sub-regional centre. However, many residents of the district also use the major regional centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh for shopping and this along with the increasing competition from the other sub-regional centres of Falkirk, Perth and Cumbernauld requires action to ensure that Stirling’s retailing role is maintained and improved. There is limited potential to increase the local catchment population but the attractiveness of Stirling as a centre must be maintained if it is to retain its wider role and increase tourist retail expenditure.

4.11 Retailing is also important for the employment directly generated, and because it makes a major contribution to the attractiveness of Stirling for securing new employment opportunities and sustaining the important tourist and service sectors.

4.12 The Council recognises the importance of town and village shopping centres in providing convenient, easily accessible shopping provision close to residential areas and with good public transport provision. In this context the strategy of the plan focuses on the protection and enhancement of existing centres. This approach is consistent with National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) 8: *Town Centres and Retailing* which stresses the importance of maintaining the vitality and viability of existing town centres whilst reducing dependency on

the private car. Policy B8 supports development within or adjacent to existing town centres. This policy would include the development of smaller more locally based supermarkets of up to 2500 sq m net within or adjacent to existing local centres which can serve the less mobile and help to support existing shops and services.

- 4.13 It is however recognised that with modern shopping requirements and the constraints on space in the town centre not all demand can be met within the framework of existing town centres. In this respect the Central 2000 Structure Plan Second Alteration identified a need to make provision for an additional 20,000 sq m of household shopping (ie. household items such as furniture, carpets, DIY and garden goods). The household shopping centre at Springkerse is being developed in accordance with this requirement. In addition the second alteration of Central 2000 identifies the need to make provision for an additional superstore (ie. a food based store in excess of 2500 sq m net floorspace). The site at Back O' Hill is identified to meet this requirement. The Council will not support other additional superstores, out of centre household shopping centres or stand alone retail warehouses.

POL.B8 With the exception of new superstore development covered by Structure Plan Policy SPO.7, the Council will encourage new shopping development/redevelopment within or adjacent to the existing town or local centres identified on the proposals map, provided :

- (a) they are appropriate in terms of scale, character and design to the existing town or local centre as a whole;
- (b) there would be no negative impact on the vitality or viability of any town centre;
- (c) proposals adjacent to the town centre can demonstrate safe and convenient pedestrian linkages to the existing town centre;
- (d) the site complies with other local planning, parking and highways requirements;
- (e) a satisfactory retail impact assessment is submitted for all applications for new development in excess of 2500 sq m.

POL.B9 Within the existing shopping centres of the district, it is the Council's policy that shops for the sale of retail goods (Class 1) should predominate. Whilst there will be scope for changes of use from retail to other uses compatible with a retail environment, these will have to be justified against the following criteria :

- (a) the individual or cumulative effect of non-retail frontages on the viability and vitality of the centre as a whole;
- (b) compatibility with existing surrounding land uses, particularly residential.

- 4.14 Other major out of centre retail proposals not covered by Structure Plan policy on superstores or household shopping will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that there are no sites within existing town centres, that the proposal would contribute to enhanced accessibility and choice in shopping provision within the local catchment area, that there would be good public transport links and no detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of existing town centres. Applications for the expansion of existing out of centre shopping facilities or applications for the removal or amendment of conditions restricting the range of goods sold will also be assessed against the criteria set out in policy B10.

POL.B10 With the exception of a new superstore and household shopping already provided for by Structure Plan Policies SPO.7 and SPO.8, other forms of major new shopping development (greater than 2500 sq m net) will be the subject of a "sequential test" (see Glossary) and may be permitted provided that :

See
Proposal STIR.B7

- (a) the proposal would enhance accessibility and choice in shopping provision within the Stirling area;
- (b) the development would not undermine vitality and viability of any shopping centre;
- (c) there is good accessibility from the principal road network and by public transport;
- (d) there would be no requirement for substantial infrastructure provision by the public sector;
- (e) the site complies with other local planning, parking and highways requirements.

POL.B11 The Council will seek to improve the environment of the area’s shopping centres and will bring forward specific schemes for various enhancements, environmental improvements and shopfront enhancement schemes, in partnership with the retail trade, the Local Enterprise Company, and other public bodies, provided :

- (a) they are appropriate in terms of scale, character and design to the existing town or local centre;
- (b) there would be no negative impact on the vitality or viability of any town centre.

Local Shopping Provision

4.15 The existing shopping provision in the smaller towns and villages, especially for essential goods, will be of increasing local importance with rising transport costs. Local shops, sub-Post Offices and mobile shops provide an important service, to rural communities in particular. Unfortunately the number of village shops is in decline. The Council recognises the contribution that small local shops can make to residential amenity and community life, and to the attractiveness of industrial and business developments.

POL.B12 The Council will encourage the provision of local shops in appropriate new developments, and the retention of existing ones (or other businesses such as sub-post offices providing retail services) where they serve an essential convenience function.

Commercial Leisure Developments and Amusement Centres

4.16 National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG) 8: *Town Centres and Retailing* draws specific reference to town centres as the best location for new shopping but also for related uses which attract many people.

4.17 Planning Authorities are advised to encourage uses such as offices, health care, higher education and entertainment (including cinemas and theatres) and tourism to locate in appropriate town centre sites; and in the absence of suitable and readily available sites, on edge of centre sites or other sites, highly accessible by public transport. Not only does this encourage the vitality and viability of town centres, it can also improve the safety of centres in the evening. Centres are also the natural focus of communities and are usually accessible by both car and public transport.

4.18 The following policies are designed to ensure that the principle of retailing in the core area of Stirling town centre is emphasised, while complemented by other associated compatible uses in appropriate locations. The town and village plans identify the boundaries to which this policy applies.

POL.B13 Commercial leisure development (as defined in the 1989 Use Classes Order, Scotland) will be encouraged within Stirling town centre (core and peripheral retail areas) and other shopping centres as defined in this Local Plan provided the development is of such a scale and location that it is capable of being integrated within its immediate built environment, is of a standard of design and layout which contributes positively to the overall quality of the urban area and has no adverse effect on existing residential amenity. These developments may require a commuted payment or other financial arrangement to assist with the resolution of transportation issues/shortfall in on-site parking provision associated with the development.

Commercial leisure developments on edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites will only be permitted where all of the following criteria are met:

- (a) No suitable appropriate alternative site is available within or adjacent to existing town centres;
- (b) the site is readily accessible by established public transport, by cycle and by foot;
- (c) the design and layout contributes positively to the overall quality of the urban area and can achieve successful integration into the built environment; and
- (d) the proposal is in accordance with other Local Plan policies.

nb *Policy B13 covers proposals for commercial leisure development. In this context, the term refers to cinemas (including multiplex), skating rink, bingo hall, concert hall, dance hall, theatre, bowling alley or other similar uses. A sequential approach will be applied to assessing suitable sites for such developments, with priority being given to locations within Stirling Town Centre and other defined shopping centres. The town and shopping centres referred to are defined in this Local plan.*

POL.B14 The development of amusement centres may be permitted within the peripheral retail area of Stirling town centre or in other defined shopping centres where the standard of design, including its scale and relationship to its surroundings, contributes positively to the overall environmental quality of the area and where:

- (a) the development is unlikely to have an adverse impact on visual amenity or cause noise nuisance or disturbance, especially in Conservation Areas;
- (b) the development is neither adjacent nor in close proximity to residential unit(s); and
- (c) the development is neither adjacent nor in close proximity to a school, place of worship, hospital or hotel;
- (d) the development accords with other relevant Local Plan Policies.

The development of amusement centres outwith this policy framework will not be supported.

Hot Food Shops / Public Houses

4.19 In mixed use areas, the Council wishes to ensure that premises used for the sale of hot food and licensed premises do not have a detrimental effect on neighbouring properties. Residential properties above ground floor retail uses can be particularly prone to disturbance.

POL.B15 Restaurants, cafes, hot food shops, snack bars or similar establishments (Class 3), and public houses will be permitted where it can be shown that their location would not be detrimental to the occupiers of adjacent properties by virtue of noise, disturbance or odour. There will be a general presumption against siting of such establishments on the ground floor of multi-storey buildings where the upper floors are in separate occupation for residential purposes, and where the environmental criteria cannot be satisfied.

Mobile Snack Bars

4.20 The attractiveness of the districts' rural area as a tourist destination has led to increasing demands from mobile snack bar vendors to locate in this area. The Council is concerned at the impact of these uses on the amenity of the rural area and wishes to avoid a proliferation, particularly in scenic areas. Where such uses are allowed, the Council will ensure that lay-bys and car parks are not dominated by takeaway outlets and that road safety is not compromised.

POL.B16 The Council will consider the approval of mobile hot/cold food takeaway outlets, where these operate from fixed stances alongside public lay-bys and car-parks and beside Class A and non-motorway roads which serve as main tourist and recreational routes. Such approval will only be forthcoming where :

- (a) the site is outwith a National Scenic Area;
- (b) the site is not so exposed or prominent that the siting of a vehicle/ caravan would be detrimental to amenity;
- (c) the operation of the vehicle/caravan does not compromise road safety or the primary function of the lay-by/car park (to the satisfaction of the Council as Roads Authority);

Only one hot/cold food takeaway outlet will be allowed in any one lay-by or car park.

4.21 A number of industrial estates and business parks in the district have also attracted hot/cold food takeaway outlets. A number of tenants in these estates have expressed concern over the siting of these vehicles/caravans in instances where they have occupied parking spaces or compromised road safety.

POL.B17 The Council will, within each discrete industrial estate/business & industry park, permit one stance to be occupied by a mobile hot/cold food takeaway outlet, provided that the following locational criteria can be satisfied:

- (a) the operation of the vehicle/caravan will not compromise road safety (to the satisfaction of the Council as Roads Authority);
- (b) the vehicle/caravan does not occupy or obstruct any employees' or visitors' parking space.

4.22 The viability of small village coffee shops or takeaway outlets which rely on the passing tourist trade may, in some circumstances, be threatened by the emergence of a mobile outlet selling similar goods in a car park or lay-by elsewhere in that village. These shops play a vital role in the economy of small villages, by providing employment and income as well as spin off benefits to other businesses. The Council therefore wishes to ensure that village economies are not threatened in such circumstances and mobile takeaway outlets will only be allowed in certain circumstances.

POL.B18 The Council will permit small mobile hot/cold food takeaway outlets to locate on regular stances within small settlements (outwith industrial areas) only where similar facilities are unavailable in the village. Any such outlets approved must be located to take advantage of existing or specially provided off street parking space.

Tourism

- 4.23 The anticipated growth in the tourist industry will be particularly important to Stirling district. Connections with important events in Scotland's history and attractive scenery and accessibility mean that the area is well placed to benefit from increased job creation and contributions to the local economy arising from the predicted expansion in tourism. Tourism is already an important industry in the area, generating over £200 million income annually, and in the rural area alone supporting approximately 2,000 full time job-equivalents.
- 4.24 The importance of tourism has been acknowledged by the former District Council's adoption of a Tourism Strategy. However, since this Strategy was prepared, Forth Valley Enterprise, the Rural Stirling Partnership, and the "Stirling Initiative" have been established, all of which are active in tourism promotion; the Secretary of State's Working Party on the Loch Lomond/Trossachs area has reported; the concept of "sustainable tourism", which is particularly appropriate for Stirling, has developed; and the re-organisation of the area tourist boards has happened. As a consequence of the above change in circumstances, the Strategy will be reviewed.
- 4.25 Tourism in the rural areas, is likely to be a mainstay of economic growth and can perhaps take the greatest advantage, alongside recreation in the countryside, of the diversification of farm businesses. (For instance the conversion of redundant farm buildings to holiday accommodation). The development of groups of holiday chalets and of holiday villages of high quality design, particularly where such schemes incorporate recreational/wet-weather facilities and may help to extend the holiday season, will be welcomed in appropriate countryside locations. (ie. in general, not in areas of Green Belt or National Scenic Areas).
- 4.26 The needs of the tourist industry can place heavy demands on the natural environment. There is a need to ensure that new tourist developments are appropriately located and do not conflict with the conservation of the natural environment and heritage of the area.

POL.B19 The Council will only support proposals for tourist accommodation, visitor and recreation facilities which are sympathetically designed and do not conflict with the planned conservation of the landscape. As a general principle, proposals for larger scale tourist and recreational developments will be supported where they lie within key tourist development locations and only if they lie close to or are readily accessible from the principal road network of the district.

POL.B20 The Council will generally support proposals for new holiday/tourist development, within or adjacent to existing settlements, where :

- (a) it complements existing tourist facilities or involves the appropriate expansion of a free-standing hotel or guest house;**
- (b) it can be easily accessed from a main road (ie. Class B or higher classification);**
- (c) it is not detrimental to the visual amenity and quality of the surrounding landscape;**
- (d) infrastructure and servicing constraints can be met;**
- (e) it does not conflict with other Council policies or proposals.**

POL.B21 Notwithstanding the general guide-lines in Policy B19, the development of holiday villages will not be permitted :

- (a) within areas designated as Green Belt, National Scenic Areas or sites included within the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes ;
- (b) within or adjacent to National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient Woodlands, or Wildlife Sites where the appropriate bodies advise that conservation interests may be at risk;

4.27 The Council recognises that the provision of holiday accommodation may be of benefit in assisting the financial viability of some agricultural holdings.

POL.B22 The Council will support farm diversification proposals provided that the new use or activity is ancillary to the primary function as a farm.

See
Environment
Chapter POLS.E1
& E2

Tourist Facilities, Interpretation & Signposting

4.28 Better signposting and interpretation at key locations are important in ensuring that visitors are aware of the tourist facilities and attractions on offer in the area and also as a means of raising public awareness of natural heritage interests. The Council recognises the importance of this basic infrastructure including the need to identify sufficient sites for car and coach parking, lay-bys, picnic sites and viewpoints.

POL.B23 The Council will seek the assistance of the Scottish Executive, Forth Valley Enterprise, the local Tourist Board and Forest Enterprise in the upgrading of infrastructure which supports the tourist industry such as additional car/coach parking, lay-bys, picnic sites, signposting, and the upgrading of roads in the rural area to appropriate environmental standards.

4.29 There is increasing pressure on Loch Lomondside and the West Highland Way from day-trippers, ramblers and hill-walkers. The Council wishes to see some of this visitor pressure diverted away from Loch Lomondside by the development of attractions elsewhere in the district. Accordingly, the development of tourist attractions and facilities in settlements such as Callander, Aberfoyle, and Killin is being pursued, as well as the development of more extensive schemes like the "Trossachs Trail" and long-distance recreational cycling routes.

See
relevant Village
Plans

Caravans and Camping

4.30 The Council prefers to see the demand for additional touring caravan and camping pitches realised through the expansion of existing sites rather than new sites being developed. In the case of the Stirling area however, the Council recognises that there is a lack of touring caravan/ camping sites in close proximity to Stirling.

POL.B24 (a) New sites for transit tourist caravan and camping developments will, subject to the restrictions applying in designated heritage areas, be encouraged where they are readily accessible from the road network and where a high standard of screening and landscaping is proposed;

(b) Increases in capacity or extensions to such sites, and to sites providing static caravans for tourist accommodation, may be permitted in similar circumstances;

(c) There will be a presumption against entirely new sites providing for static caravans for tourist accommodation.

- 4.31 New tourist developments, such as self-catering units, can play a positive role in sustaining the economy of rural settlements by bringing income to local shops which might otherwise be under threat. Therefore, on-site shops will be discouraged in instances where local shops can provide for the day to day needs of the whole economy.

Access and Tourism

- 4.32 The Council is keen to raise awareness in the tourism industry of the need to cater for people with disabilities and to ensure that they are able to enjoy new tourist facilities. The Council, in considering applications for new tourist related developments, will ensure that these issues are addressed.

POL.B25 All developments relating to tourism should normally incorporate suitable provision for people with disabilities. To achieve this, the Council will :

- (a) seek to ensure that all hotels, boarding or guest houses and hostels provide suitable facilities for people with disabilities;**
- (b) seek to ensure that any building or amenity created with the intention of encouraging tourism will, whenever practicable, provide suitable access for people with disabilities.**

- 4.33 Access to the countryside also plays an important role in tourist activity in the district.

Agriculture

- 4.34 Agriculture has not exhibited the great change to "agri-business" which has transformed some English landscapes but a gradual intensification has occurred. More significantly, much farming land, especially hill grazings, has been transferred to other uses mainly forestry. Farming, as an industry, is highly responsive to central Government policy (now largely set by European requirements). Currently the trend is away from maximising production of crops and livestock, with encouragement for ancillary or non-farming use of land. The economic environmental and landscape impacts of any substantial move out of farming will be one of the more difficult planning policy areas for the future. There is a need to secure off-farm job opportunities to compensate for the loss of jobs in agriculture, as well as encouraging diversification and other measures which retain the viability of existing farm units.

- 4.35 Trends in agriculture have resulted in many redundant rural buildings. If these buildings are to continue to contribute to the character and amenity of the countryside, alternative uses will need to be found for them. To promote the re-use of rural buildings the Council has adopted a Development Advice Note based upon Circular 18/1987 which advocates a positive approach to the re-use of such buildings.

POL.B26 The Council will support farm diversification projects which are ancillary to and/or complementary to the farm or estate enterprise, provided that other Plan policies are not prejudiced.

Fish Farming

- 4.36 Fish Farming is an expanding industry which should bring considerable benefits to the rural economy. There is an increasing demand for this type of development throughout Stirling district. However, local experience has not shown significant job-creation or other benefits and developments can be detrimental to the environment. For new proposals therefore care must be taken to ensure that production units are sensitively located and well managed to minimise any adverse effects and maximise local economic benefits.

- nb *Applicants for this type of development should not assume that consent for associated housing will be forthcoming. The Council will require evidence of the business being viable, and not*

See
Transport and
Accessibility
Chapter POLS.T9
& T10

See
Environment
Chapter para 2.7
et seq

See
Environment
Chapter POL.E2

amenable to management by operators or employees from established housing in the area, before considering whether new housing is justifiable.

POL.B27 The Council recognises potential in the district for fish farm developments (including hatcheries, associated commercial fisheries, etc) but will give favourable consideration only to proposals which are accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment and are thereby shown to satisfy the following criteria :

- (a) locational justification;
- (b) low visual impact; and no significant visual impact on open waters;
- (c) no effluent discharge to natural drainage systems;
- (d) safe vehicular access from an adequate public road;
- (e) compatibility with neighbouring land uses;
- (f) provide an acceptable location for associated buildings (including housing in the long term if the business becomes established);
- (g) no adverse impact upon natural fish stocks and aquatic life within the loch/river system.

Minerals

4.37 The extraction of minerals is a necessary contribution to the nations' prosperity through meeting industry's need for raw materials, and providing employment opportunities, often in rural areas. Set against this essential need for the extraction of minerals are the disruptive environmental effects of the workings, and the single opportunity that exists for the mining of materials. It is therefore essential that only those minerals that are required are extracted, and that only the most appropriate sources are exploited. A full review of minerals policy has been carried out in preparing the new joint Structure Plan for Stirling and Clackmannanshire.

4.38 Sand and gravel extraction is currently the main activity in the Stirling area, stone quarrying having declined and coal mining completely ceased. At present there is not an established deficiency of sand and gravel resources; the situation with regard to hard rock is similar. The Council recognises that market areas for aggregates may overlap local authority boundaries and that it is important to attempt to meet sustainability objectives by minimising distances between sources of supply and areas of demand. Workings greater than 30 miles from the main markets will be generally considered inappropriate. In considering the release of land for aggregates working, the Council will take into account the lead times which are necessary before any mineral extraction can become fully productive. The protection of reserves for the future needs of the district is considered to be essential to the sustainability of the Council area's economy and environment.

POL.B28 The Council will seek to safeguard economically important aggregate and other mineral resources from sterilisation by permanent development on or adjacent to locations of reserves which have an existing or future proven potential for exploitation. In deciding whether the sterilisation of such resources will be permitted, the existence of alternative reserves within economic haulage distance will be a material consideration.

4.39 Applications for mineral extraction will be considered against Structure Plan Policy ENPO.21, the provisions of NPPG 4: *Land for Mineral Working* and any subsequent relevant Government advice and Policy B29. The Council will encourage the removal of all minerals in a single operation from any site where this is economically feasible. Sensitive working practices during minerals extraction will also be encouraged. Proposals for mineral workings will usually be

required to be accompanied by Environmental Information (Baseline Report) including, where appropriate, an Environmental Impact Assessment and, depending on location, a Transport Assessment.

POL.B29 Applications for new, or extensions to existing, mineral workings will only be permitted in circumstances where it can be shown that :

- (a) they meet a defined demand;**
- (b) environmental impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated (in particular, reference will be made to the effects of extraction operations on the amenity of residential and recreational areas, other existing and proposed land uses, and major roads, railways and tourist routes) and regular monitoring can be provided through environmental audits. Planning conditions and/or Section 75 Agreements will be used, where appropriate, to secure any remedial works required;**
- (c) the site is capable of beneficial reinstatement, secured through the use of planning conditions and, where appropriate, Section 75 Agreements and financial bonds;**
- (d) the workings can be adequately accessed, and vehicle movements associated with the workings will not have unacceptable effects on amenities in the locality or on existing traffic flows.**

4.40 In line with the guidance contained within NPPG 4, the Council will consult with Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland on applications for the extraction of minerals.

Telecommunications

4.41 The rapid development of telecommunications networks has resulted in increasing demand from operators to site new masts within the Council's area. Because of the line-of-sight requirement between network aerials, they will often be located on prominent features in the landscape, with an inherent possibility of coincidence with sensitive areas, such as AGLVs, and sites with wildlife or archaeological interest. Licensed Code Operators enjoy certain Permitted Development rights. Much telecommunications apparatus will be installed without the need for planning permission. However, these rights carry certain obligations, including a requirement to respect the environment. The Council therefore includes the Permitted Developments in its policy guidance.

4.42 The Scottish Executive has recognised the need for closer Local Plan guidance in relation to larger telecommunications developments. Circular 25/1985 - *Telecommunications Development* sets out Government advice on how planning authorities should deal with these matters in Local Plans. In adhering to this advice, the Council will seek to ensure that the needs of the industry are met, but only where this can be done sensitively and without detriment to the surrounding countryside. Given the extent of the AGLV in the northern and western rural areas, it is considered that a restriction on telecommunication development in AGLVs would be onerous and unworkable.

POL.B30 (a) Planning permission will normally be granted for telecommunications developments which, subject to technical and operational requirements, are sited and designed so as to minimise visual and environmental impact.

- (b) In relation to any apparatus, where the operator has demonstrated that all technically suitable alternative locations have been investigated, the Council will encourage the sharing of existing apparatus support structures. Only where this is not possible will the unobtrusive use of existing buildings or structures, or new free-standing support structures be considered acceptable.**

