

# press release



Falkirk Council

05 October 2011

## Bo'ness Town Centre - Plans Stall On Redevelopment

Members of Falkirk Council today (October 5) decided to terminate an agreement with developers ING after hearing the firm had been unable to progress the harbour scheme due to the recession.

However, the local authority signalled that it still wanted to see redevelopment of the harbour site when the economy picks up.

ING was appointed as developer of the site in 2004. The banking giant impressed local people with ambitious plans to revitalise the Victorian dock and harbour area off the Firth of Forth - building new homes, restaurants and boating facilities.

But the economic crisis saw the scheme falter.

A report to councillors by the Council's director of development services Rhona Geisler noted: "The impact of the economic downturn and the high extra normal remedial costs associated with this area have had a significant impact on the ability of future development of this area and it is difficult to gauge when market conditions will improve.

"It is therefore suggested that the Council should undertake further consideration of the opportunity at the harbour and foreshore and the means of delivering the regeneration of this area in terms of market support and funding for these works.

"This should be with a view to fully marketing the development opportunity at a time when significant recovery within the Scottish residential development sector becomes evident."

In the meantime she recommended terminating the current agreement with ING. The Council had previously agreed to a re-phasing of the initial masterplan and an extension on time limits to allow ING to progress the scheme, without success.

Councillor Adrian Mahoney, the convener of economic strategy and development at the Council, said: "Clearly it's very disappointing that ING has been unable to progress this scheme at this time. The Council allowed for re-phasing of the project and an extension to timescales. Sadly, ING was unable to progress its plans and start work on site.

"The Council has, therefore, sadly decided to terminate their agreement with the company, but to revisit the harbour project when market conditions pick up.

"The Bo'ness shoreline is a stunning setting and hopefully something can be delivered in the future." He added: "It's worth noting that ING spent significant sums of money to developing their plans without getting a return on that investment."

Alex Wood, Strategic Land Director from ING Real Estate Development UK Limited said:

"Since 2004, ING has demonstrated its commitment to the successful regeneration of the Bo'ness foreshore however the unprecedented prevailing economic conditions mean that we are

disappointingly unable to continue as developer on the scheme.

“We adapted, with the assistance and support of the Council, our initial development plans in an effort to make the development commercially viable for both ING and for Falkirk Council and since 2004 we have spent significant amounts of money and time in an attempt to make the scheme work.

“Our relationship with Falkirk Council was always productive and we worked closely with the Council’s officers and elected officials in an effort to make the scheme work for the town of Bo’ness. We wish the community of Bo’ness and Falkirk Council well with their continued efforts to regenerate the town and foreshore.”

Whilst the harbour project stalled, councillors have also been told that there has been better success in revitalising the neighbouring Bo’ness town centre.

A £5 million Townscape Heritage Initiative, backed by the Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund (as well as Scottish Enterprise, Historic Scotland and other partners), has seen old and derelict buildings brought back to life.

At the centre of this regeneration project was the re-opening of the historic Hippodrome Cinema in the town in 2009. Scotland’s first purpose-built cinema will celebrate its 100th anniversary next spring.

A number of businesses in the town have also won awards and gained national newspaper coverage for being “best in Britain”.

Mrs Geisler said: “In addition to many significant grants awarded for building repairs and shop front improvements, extensive heritage-based public realm changes have been introduced to the town centre as well as restoration of four longstanding key derelict town centre tenement properties.

“All of these have significantly addressed negative economic and physical characteristics of the town centre, meeting goals established by the community in previous economic reviews of the town centre.

“Overall, the restored (Bo’ness) town centre is receiving positive comments from the public and traders with several new independent shops opening in the improved town centre environment.

“The town centre has attracted approximately £5m of investment including significant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Historic Scotland Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme, Scottish Enterprise, Falkirk Council and private building owners.

“HLF have expressed their satisfaction with the work undertaken to date by the THI which is due to conclude later this year.”

Mrs Geisler concluded: “It is suggested that the Council’s commitment to the regeneration of Bo’ness town centre must be sustained. Good progress has been made in upgrading the historic core of the town and this will assist the overall approach to regeneration.

“It is suggested that efforts are now directed to determining the means and resources available to the Council in pursuing the regeneration of the harbour and foreshore.”

The Council agreed that a report be brought back to a future meeting of the committee outlining potential future opportunities to build on the existing work carried out in Bo’ness town centre and how future redevelopment could take place.

- Falkirk Council ( 05/10/2011 )