

#### **4 PROPOSED CENTRE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES (SME'S) IN THE CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (AN408-2004)**

The Council has been approached by the Concrete Technology Unit at the University of Dundee for support to establish a centre to transfer the work of the Unit to the Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SME'S) construction community. This would be based at Dundee University and will initially employ four people.

The Concrete Technology Unit has a global reputation for excellence in all aspects of the uses of and new developments in concrete in construction. Many cutting edge innovations researched in the unit could assist the construction sector significantly. However, as the sector is characterised by a large number of smaller enterprises, the industry has traditionally been slow to adopt new ideas.

This centre aims to develop expertise in getting the new technologies into SME's and overcoming the barriers to change. Initially the target will be the SME's construction community in East Central Scotland with the intent of eventually spreading the techniques learned across the country. Total costs are estimated at £449,000 over the first two years. The centre has raised commitments for £170,000 from the private sector and £70,000 from the public sector (SEPA and Dundee University) and is trying to raise the balance from public agencies including £166,000 from ERDF and £22,000 from Scottish Enterprise. The request to the Council is to support the project with £5,000.

This is a significant project that builds on the Council's research strengths and helps pass that on to the business community. It is recommended that the Council make a grant of £5,000 available to the project. The grant of £5,000 can be met from the allocation in the Financial Plan for loans and grants for 2004/05.