EXECUTIVE REPORT   **FULL 12 09 06**

BUSINESS GROWTH PORTFOLIO

COUNCILLOR CATH GIEL- PORTFOLIO HOLDER

MIKE TICHFORD - LEAD OFFICER

1   KEY ISSUES - PROGRESS REPORT

1.1   Egremont Market Town Initiative are in the process of finalising the Egremont Gateway Scheme which will see investment in the public realm and access routes into and around Egremont.

1.2   A report is to be taken to the 5 September Executive that details the elements of the scheme and the funding streams to be used. The Council are acting as accountable body for the funding and will assist the Egremont and Area Regeneration Partnership in bankrolling the scheme.

1.3   The funding requests for European funding and West Lakes Renaissance were agreed at the last board meeting but we still await formal notification which is expected shortly.

1.4   The scheme will be undertaken over the next 18 months and will see a significant investment into the town which will improve the built environment image and will assist in future economic growth for the town.

1.5   **Connecting Copeland**

This scheme assists businesses to access the wired-up economy, (including trading on-line). The project is funded by Copeland Borough Council, European Regional Development Fund and North West Development Agency.

Providing grant assistance and specialist support, the scheme enables new or start up businesses to achieve objectives through better use of technology:

•   Access new markets
•   Improve efficiency
•   Increase employment opportunities
•   Communicate more effectively with suppliers and customers
•   Provide better management information and controls

The fully eligible area budget is now allocated (Whitehaven), with an underspend in the transitional areas (Millom and Egremont). Active8 who administer the fund have applied to the Regional Support Team to request transfer of European Funds from transitional to fully eligible as there is still a

demand from this area. This request has been successful with demand led outputs.

To promote an increase in take up in transitional areas, Copeland Matters featured a promotion article along with additional business publicity, meetings with Market Town Managers in Egremont and Millom and their network groups, seeking businesses to come forward with projects.

To date the project has been successful, and it is set to achieve its targets. The project will finish December 2006 or earlier if funds committed/outputs achieved. The outputs are 120 assisted businesses, 80 new products or processes, 12 jobs created, 72 jobs safeguarded, £900,000 of increased sales and £900,000 sales safeguarded.

1.6 **Employment Sites Review**

In Copeland, the sites set to benefit from further investment are Leconfield, Cleator Moor, Bridge End, Egremont and Westlakes Science Park. The first phase of the programme is likely to involve landscaping and environmental improvements to Leconfield Industrial Estate. Options prepared by "JMP" consultants have been considered by the Working Group and are now going forward as bids for "ERDF" funding by the end of September.

1.7 **Assisted Areas Review**

Following the Council welcoming the results of the first "DTI" report, which resulted in all our Wards being retained in the Assisted Areas Map, we have received a further letter from NWDA, asking the Council to consider losing 3 wards to accommodate the additional Maryport Ward, requested by Cumbrian Partners. After consultation with senior Members, it was agreed that we would not accept the loss of any Copeland Wards.

1.8 **Evolutive**

As part of the Council's brief to encourage business development in Copeland, the Economic and Tourism Development Section have introduced an internet based property and enquiry handling system called "Evolutive", in partnership with Carlisle City Council, Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council. The system has been supplied by Alcium UK, the UK market leader in the property field.

This service was launched on 8 June at a seminar for commercial agents held at the Ennerdale Country House Hotel, in Cleator.

The service is offered free of charge to local companies, businesses looking to move to Copeland and commercial agents operating in the Borough. The database of vacant commercial properties and sites within Copeland will provide an invaluable source of information to the business community.

The system provides a search facility which enables businesses to match their property requirements with the premises and sites on the database which is maintained by the Council's Economic and Tourism Development section.

It is very pleasing to report that since June we have received more than 70 enquiries requesting information on available properties, grant funding etc. This has resulted in new businesses/job creation happening in Copeland.

2. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

None

3. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Subject: Egremont Market Town Initiative/Regeneration – Town Gateways and Car Park Project
Date of Decision: 25 July 2006
Decision Reference: EXE/06/0056
Context:
To support the regeneration of Egremont through the Council acting as accountable body for a West Lakes Renaissance and European Regional Development Fund funded project to improve the town's gateways and car parks.
Due to the Chairman declaring a personal interest in this item it was moved by Councillor G Clements duly seconded that Councillor C Geil be appointed Chairman for this item.
Decision
That

a) the funding applications to West Lakes Renaissance (North West Regional Development Agency) and Rural Regeneration Cumbria (ERDF) be supported; and

b) the Councils role as accountable body be supported.

Subject: Review of UK Assisted Areas
Date of Decision: 15 August 2006
Decision Reference: EXE/06/0067
Context:

To consider a response to the DTI proposals on the revised Assisted Areas Map.

Decision
That a) the draft Cumbrian response to the DTI proposals be endorsed;
b) it be agreed that in addition the Council make an individual response supporting the Copeland position as shown in the revised Assisted Areas Map.