

EXECUTIVE REPORT

FULL 13 12 05

BUSINESS GROWTH PORTFOLIO**COUNCILLOR JIM HEWITSON - PORTFOLIO HOLDER****MIKE TICHFORD - LEAD OFFICER****1 KEY ISSUES - PROGRESS REPORT****1.1 Millom and Haverigg**

Detailed appraisals of schemes have been undertaken on projects for 2005/06 and have been approved by the Millom and Haverigg Economic Development Group schemes approved for implementation are:

- *Employers Forum* – to support wider business sector growth and development.
- *Young People skills development project* – This project works with the youth delivery groups in Millom and the Police to support youth engagement and skills development, officers have been identified for appointment shortly.
- *Tourism Action Plan* – Continuation of an officer post is being supported through this project to enable ongoing development of enterprises linked to tourism growth for the town and surrounding villages.
- *Community Pot* – This is a dedicated resource to enable a wide range of projects to make applications for support through the Market Town Programme, local awareness of the resource is being developed.
- *Transport Liaison Group* – Transport and communications within and around Millom and Haverigg were seen as a key issue, therefore group has been established to move forward local issues, the first meeting has been held.

The main scheme within Millom is the provision of Millom Network Centre which will be a new facility to support economic growth and service provision within the area. The project has been approved by the local partnership and has been submitted to the North West Development Agency for their approval which will take place on the 20 December 2005, once approved it is envisaged that the scheme will commence early in the new year.

Copeland Arts Service is active in the Millom area, engaging with the Market Towns Initiative, working in partnership with Mandy Penellum to develop a programme or brochure of cultural events taking place in Millom

over the year. If this is successful there is no reason why a similar partnership cannot be developed in Egremont.

1.2 **Egremont**

Ten of the first year's twelve projects have now received approval from the Board of the Egremont and Area Regeneration Partnership.

A Project to strengthen the operation at the Youth Works based on the Orgill Estate, was the first to get underway. New appointments have been made to the staff to enable the centre to open regular hours. Work is underway to attain charitable status and to continue to strengthen links with other youth providers in the town.

The Partnership is working with InBiz to provide an outreach service in Egremont of their successful advice and practical support service for people wishing to start in business. One person has already been helped into business and another business opening on the Main Street is in an advanced stage of planning.

An employment access service to be run by the Cleator Moor Business Centre will be running from the library starting soon.

Appointments have been made for consultants to carry out the Town Centre and Tourism Studies. Work on these will commence in the next ten days and is due to be completed early in March. These studies will inform future work in the town centre, including recommendations on car parking and marketing.

The first building grant is due to be awarded, subject to contract, for one of the most derelict buildings in the town centre. This building, which has stood empty for many years, will be brought back into use, providing four full time jobs in the catering business and a space for a new shop being created in addition. This work will make an important impact in the town and will show early progress in regenerating the town centre.

1.3 Graham McWilliams joined the Council on 1 December as Economic Development and Tourism Manager from Eden District Council. Graham will be bringing a wealth of experience to the post vacated earlier in the summer by Mike Williams.

Economic development activity has been at a low ebb since Mike left, followed shortly afterwards by Zena Bergman who was promoted internally to a post in the Nuclear and Sustainability Department. Graham is working with recently appointed project officers Sherrie Lewthwaite and Julian Smith. A replacement will be recruited to the Economic Development Assistant's post shortly.

1.4 **Connecting Copeland**

*The project commenced in late 2003 and is due to complete at September end 2006.
The project goals/ progress are:*

The assisting of at least 120 eligible businesses

The present total of businesses assisted stands at 91; this represents just over 75% of the required project total within approx. 75% of the time elapsed. In addition to this companies have not had direct assistance but used the engagement with the business advisor as a springboard for further activity.

The introduction of at least 80 new products/processes within participant companies

Evidence suggests the project is over-achieving in this area and this looks set to continue into next year. The original target of introducing at least 80 of the participating companies to new products and processes should be exceeded due to the very nature of the project.

The creating of 900k in increased sales

This figure is presently not available due to the time-lag between project implementation and the subsequent production of audited accounts from which to draw the required data. The possible impacts will not be known or fully evidenced until the corresponding accounts are produced and can then be compared with previous years accounts; where applicable.

Ready for Access - 'Ready for Service'

This project is now ready and is being rolled out in Cumbria. The companies driving this project forward are: NWDA, Cumbria Digital Development Network, Cumbria Vision, Commendium Ltd, Cumbria County Council, Your Communications and BT linked to £3Million NWDA funds.

The current take up of broadband is 25% in Cumbria, just above the national average of 24%, the aim is for 75-80%. A team of 12 marketeers will work to identify projects to address ICT priorities, and secure resources to make these projects happen, giving individuals and businesses access to fast, reliable, and affordable internet connections with high speed and flexibility, enabling efficiency and cost savings with 24 hour access to market information.

Black spots are being identified reactively and solutions created either by extending satellite coverage or survey/ exchange work. It is not possible for a finite 100% coverage.

1.5 Community Response Fund

Copeland Borough Council agreed a loan of £5,000 to start the fund to be re- repaid end of initiative.

More detail to follow on the projects supported.

2 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

None

3 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Subject: Market Town Studies

Date of Decision: 8 November 2005

Decision Reference: EXE/05/0098

Context: This reports presents proposals to support Egremont and Millom Market Town Partnerships by bankrolling strategic studies within their programmes

Due to the Chairman declaring an interest and leaving the room during consideration of this item and an apology being received from the Deputy Chair it was moved by Councillor G Blackwell duly seconded that Councillor J Hewitson be appointed Chair for this item

Decision

That a) Councillor J Hewitson be appointed Chair for this item;

b) financial support be approved to bankroll up to £102,000 to deliver strategic studies; and

c) the studies be incorporated within the Capital Programme.