

**UPDATE / CHANGES TO LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSINESS GROWTH
SCHEME INITIATIVES**

Director/Head of Michael Tichford, Head of Regeneration
Department:
Report Author: Sherrie Lewthwaite, Project Officer

Recommendation: That the report is noted.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The schemes under the Local Authority Business Growth Schemes Initiative (LABGI) executive report of 24 October 2006 (Appendix 1) have all been progressed and developed apart from The Whitehaven Town Centre Programme. This report gives an update on progress of the LABGI Schemes.
- 1.2 The previous report presented proposed to recruit a Business Liaison Officer who would work closely with town centre businesses to represent their views on the Whitehaven Town Centre Task Group. The Council has not been able to secure matched funding from West Lakes Renaissance; therefore Whitehaven Town Centre Task Group Members have considered other options to achieve the desired outcomes.

2. ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Executive on 24th October 2006 a programme of initiatives was approved. An update on progress is detailed in the following paragraphs:
- 2.2 Enterprise Development Programme

This is a joint project with Allerdale Borough Council to encourage more people in deprived wards to consider self employment as a career option. The scheme would involve the recruitment of enterprise development workers, encouraging enterprise in South Whitehaven and Cleator Moor. The Council will work closely with the South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management Partnership and Cleator Moor Business Centre in the delivery of this project.

Five Enterprise Development workers were recruited and in post in February 2007 to help develop and promote community enterprise activity that will benefit the residents of the area by encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship and self employment.

2.3 Partnership Project with St. Martin's College

We have recently launched a new initiative which involves the Council paying a 50% wage subsidy to Copeland businesses employing undergraduate students and graduates under the Business Placements Programme and the Graduate Recruitment Service schemes. The subsidy covers 50% of the allowance paid to the placement student/graduate up to a maximum of £700. The scheme commenced on 1st April 2007 and to date three local businesses have expressed an interest in taking on graduates and are now involved in the recruitment process with the help of St. Martin's College. It is hoped to support 20 businesses in the first year of the scheme.

2.4 Business Development Initiatives (Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom)

This project has involved each of the three town's business networks developing a programme to address their own needs.

i. Cleator Moor:

The money allocated to Regen NE Copeland from the Business Growth Initiative has been directed towards the development of a business network for the 5 parishes involved in the partnership to support the growth of our local business sector.

At present the area does not have a business forum/ network in place to support the dissemination of information, advice and support between local companies and to businesses from external support agencies. Initial delivery has focused on background research and compilation of information.

It has been agreed that the Business Forum offers a route for the Chamber of Trade and that they will support the joint initiative. The group is also working with the Chamber of Commerce to bring area wide links and match funding to our local business network. The group have put together a comprehensive list of local businesses and to date a cross section of businesses have been approached to discuss the key issues that they are facing, the local market and support needs, etc.

ii. Millom:

The Millom Business Forum was launched in December 2005 with 75 local businesses attending the first meeting. The forum utilised funding from the Council to recruit a Support Officer to work for 14 hours a week to promote the work of the forum and organise meetings and business events. The forum plans to undertake a business survey in the town and develop a local business directory in the future.

iii. Egremont:

An appointment was made to the Marketing and Tourism post in March. The post holder works closely with businesses to look at ways to maximise the benefit that they bring to the town and to make the most of all Egremont's assets, including retailers, the improving Main Street and Market Place and the developments at the Castle to bring more visitors and shoppers into the town. The process of commissioning an upgraded website for the town is underway and will involve business in the development of that site, by looking to give an online presence to all the town's businesses with a central purchasing page that will allow even the smallest business to sell through the website.

iv. Whitehaven Town Centre Programme:

It was proposed that the funding was utilised for Whitehaven to implement recommendations from the 'Sea Change' study, including the recruitment of a Business Liaison Officer who would work closely with town centre businesses to represent their views on the Whitehaven Town Centre Task Group. In addition they would be involved in developing marketing initiatives to promote Whitehaven to potential investors and developers.

Securing matched funding for a Business Liaison Officer proved difficult and it was been suggested by the Town Centre Task Group that the funding be used to develop other projects from the Sea Change strategy including:

- Visitor signage and street furniture
- Developing a Business Improvement District for Whitehaven
- Public Realm Feasibility
- Car Parking Strategy
- Investor/ Developer Marketing

It was proposed, and agreed, to allocate £55k to this programme over the next two years with a matched contribution of £25k being sought from the private sector and £25K being sought from West Lakes Renaissance.

3. CORPORATE PLAN

The programme supports the Councils objective to create and sustain a healthy local economy.

4. BENCHMARKING

Not applicable

5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

Not applicable

6. CONCLUSION

None; this is an update report for noting

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 LABGI report to Executive 24 October 2006

Appendix 2 LABGI report appendix

List of Background Documents:

Progress Reports from Town Partnerships

Sea Change Study

Minutes Whitehaven Town Centre Task Group

List of Consultees: None

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	None
Impact on Sustainability	None
Impact on Rural Proofing	None
Health and Safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	None
Children and Young Persons Implications	None
Human Rights Act Implications	None