

Executive Report**ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE PORTFOLIO****COUNCILLOR HENRY WORMSTRUP – PORTFOLIO HOLDER****FERGUS McMORROW – LEAD OFFICER****1. KEY ISSUES – PROGRESS REPORT****1.1 Coalfields**

The Northwest Coalfield Communities Programme for 2005/06 has a number of projects operating and the current status of these projects is as follows:

Enterprising Communities: The 3 projects within this scheme (Haig Mining Museum, Inbiz, Social Enterprise for North Copeland) are all in operation and are on profile for delivering projected outputs although spend is less than originally forecast. This is expected to be resolved in the remaining period of the year.

Mining Communities Environmental Programme: This programme consists of a number of individual projects, which are progressing at varying speeds. The main project within the programme for this year is the Moresby Back Lanes Scheme, which is currently going through the tender process and seeking confirmation of outstanding match funding. The community group have been advised of the essential requirement to move the scheme forward as the opportunity for rolling funding forward into 2006/7 is guaranteed. European funding for the project was considered on the 2nd December to address a major funding gap.

Clean and Green: This project is progressing well and on schedule for maximising expenditure and delivering outputs.

Copeland Stadium: This project has been approved by the Board but is currently not able to be implemented as there are still financial uncertainties related to VAT issues to be resolved. Clarity is being sought from the group's financial advisor prior to us being able to take forward a local approval. The Board of the Coalfield Programme required confirmation of the situation by 1st December so that decisions could be made by the Board.

A meeting was held on 5th December to discuss further funding from the Coalfield Regeneration Trust that has become available to the North West Coalfield wards. Criteria for accessing this new resource will be

confirmed at the meeting and members will be made aware of what is available to wards/community groups.

1.2 Townscape Heritage Initiative

The Townscape Heritage Initiative has funding allocated within it to support general shop front improvements and to support the Cleator Moor Co-op refurbishment as well as opportunity to support large-scale renovation to a single property approved within the programme.

This funding is available until December 2006 and officers are currently submitting claims to draw down funding against the Cleator Moor Co-op refurbishment and officers within Regeneration will liaise with potential interested parties to encourage take up of the grant allocations still available.

1.3 Transport

A595 Parton-Lillyhall Improvement:

The Public Local Inquiry into the Parton-Lillyhall Improvement was held between 22nd and 25th November at the West Lakes College. A Council Officer presented evidence and was cross-examined by the Highways Agency's legal representative and objectors to the scheme. A good deal of evidence heard by the Inspector related to the pros and cons of incorporating an additional stretch of road southwards to a new roundabout junction near Rectory Brow. The Council's case included reference to the benefits of such an arrangement but not at the expense of a delay and possible shelving or cancellation of the whole scheme.

The Inquiry was due to be closed following site inspections on the 25th November but a late complication emerged in relation to the compulsory purchase orders. This will involve a 12 weeks adjournment to sort out an ownership problem but the Inspector undertook to deliver his report to the Secretaries of State as soon as possible thereafter so there should only be a short delay in the overall process. A decision is expected by Spring next year.

A meeting has been held with the Department for Transport regional and national representatives to discuss the inclusion of a study into the 'journey time' improvements to and within West Cumbria that will be needed to support economic transformation. The work is to be done as part of the West Cumbria Masterplan process. The Council has recently been represented at a Regional Spatial Strategy workshop focussing on transport priorities. We pressed the need to include Regeneration, particularly West Cumbria, as a key priority not just congestion.

The Treasury has initiated a piece of work into the role of infrastructure in the economy led by Rod Eddington, outgoing Chief Executive of British Airways. We have submitted our views again highlighting the need to priorities to support economic development and GVA growth.

2. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

None

3. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

None