

EXECUTIVE REPORT**FULL 27 06 06****BUSINESS GROWTH PORTFOLIO****COUNCILLOR CATH GIEL- PORTFOLIO HOLDER****MIKE TICHFORD - LEAD OFFICER****1 KEY ISSUES - PROGRESS REPORT****1.1 Regeneration North East Copeland**

The Partnership have successfully interviewed and made an appointment to the post of Regeneration Manager for Cleator Moor and Area the officer will be in post from July 2006 following which the Partnership will be working with key stakeholders and West Lakes Renaissance to develop a programme for regeneration investment.

1.2 Egremont and Millom Market Town Initiatives

Both Egremont and Millom Market Towns have had their Performance plans for 2006/07 approved which details the projected schemes and level of investment for the current financial year, the plans were presented to the Executive on the 13 June for information.

Both Market Towns are currently working with West Lakes Renaissance to develop Gateway enhancement schemes as part of the initial investment from West Lakes Renaissance Business Plan, it is hoped that priorities will be identified and key schemes worked up in the near future.

1.3 Connecting Copeland

Applications are now being considered again for Connecting Copeland. This scheme was temporarily on hold due to match funding difficulties.

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 RST (Regional Support Team) to request a transfer of funds from transitional to fully eligible areas as there is still demand in Whitehaven.

It is planned to have a feature in next Copeland Matters along with additional business publicity following meetings with Market Town Managers in Egremont and Millom and their network groups.

The project will finish on December 2006 or earlier if funds are fully 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.

1.4 **Community Response Fund**

The fund is targeted at people who have been made redundant to help them become self employed or secure employment through re-training. To date there have been 80 applicants to the fund: 69 have been awarded funding, 38 have claimed or partly claimed funding, 16 people have found employment, 4 are now self employed, 2 are waiting to hear about employment following an interview.

This fund is now fully committed. An application is being prepared for further funding of approximately £180,000 from West Lakes Renaissance to continue this successful scheme. This will enable 3-4 years funding based on the existing take up.

1.5 **Whitehaven Business Newsletter**

A partnership has been formed between The Whitehaven News, The Whitehaven Maritime Festival and Copeland Borough Council to produce a business newsletter for Whitehaven businesses. The editor is Colin Edgar, (also Editor of the Whitehaven News), this newsletter will be used as a business facing side of the Economic Development and Tourism Section to help communicate the planned changes for Whitehaven and also opportunities for assistance. It will be used by local shop staff to encourage spending in the town by offering incentives. It will also serve as a communication tool for Whitehaven Maritime Festival 2007.

1.6 **Evolutive**

As part of the Council's brief to encourage business development in Copeland, the Economic and Tourism 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 Development and Tourism section. The property information is supplied by a network of commercial

agents operating in Copeland and it is expected that the new system will generate 200 enquiries per annum.

1.7 **Project Access**

Project ACCESS the major investment in Cumbria helping both companies and citizens gain access to the benefits of new computer technology, is now complete and ready for service.

Project ACCESS has been funded and executed by the North West Regional Development agency. The installation of this £20m telecommunications network, "one of the best in the world" is now almost complete and brings affordable broadband telecommunications and access to the internet throughout the vast majority of areas in Cumbria.

Without access to affordable advanced telecommunications services many Copeland companies will find it increasingly difficult to compete with the rest of the world given our geographic location. Indeed companies that have already installed systems are now reporting reduced costs, improved efficiencies and increased sales. Economic Development staff have met project access staff to discuss how the scheme can be promoted to Copeland businesses, in the future it is proposed to submit an appropriate article within Copeland Matters to promote the initiative.

2. **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

None

3. **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

Subject: Cleator Moor Business Centre 2006-07

Date of Decision: 4 April 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/05/196

Context:

This report seeks approval for a Service Level Agreement for 2006 -07 in regard to Cleator Moor Business Centre.

Decision

That

- a) **the end year Service Level Agreement Report be noted; and**
- b) **Service Level Agreement for 2006-2007**

Subject: Review of the UK Assisted Areas

Date of Decision: 4 April 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/05/198

Context:

A draft response to the Department of Trade & Industry's consultation paper has been prepared by Cumbrian partners. Copeland Borough Council has the opportunity to sign up to the joint response which argues the case for the retention of Assisted Area Status in West Cumbria and Furness

Decision

The the draft Cumbrian response to the national consultation, to support the case for Copeland retaining its eligibility for Assisted Area Status within the constraints of national policy be endorsed.