

Executive Report

BUSINESS GROWTH PORTFOLIO

COUNCILLOR CATH GIEL – PORTFOLIO HOLDER

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1. KEY ISSUES – PROGRESS REPORT

1.1 Employment Sites Review

West Lakes Renaissance commissioned DTZ Consultants to complete a review of industrial sites in Copeland and Allerdale with a view to providing suitable premises for companies looking to relocate to West Cumbria, under the auspices of the nuclear decommissioning programme.

The Study was undertaken between February and June of this year and a draft report has been produced, highlighting the priority sites for future investment. Within Copeland, DTZ have recommended that Leconfield Street, Cleator Moor, Bridge End, Egremont and Westlakes Science Park are the sites with potential to attract interest from companies moving into the area.

The next stage of the project involves the plan being finalised by the Steering Group monitoring the project. In addition, further work needs to be done to assess the needs of each site and to bid for European funding to support the physical improvement works necessary to meet the needs of investors.

1.2 Assisted Areas Review

The UK Government is in the process of revising the Assisted Areas Map, in response to the EU-wide Review of Regional Aid for the 2007-13 period.

The Department of Trade & Industry (Dti) issued a consultation paper in March looking at the criteria and geographic levels by which the new map will be created. Copeland Borough Council agreed to support a Cumbria response to the consultation exercise which was supported by the County Council and the 6 District Councils.

On 9th July the Dti published its proposals for Assisted Area coverage for 2007/13. Copeland has retained its current position, under the draft proposals with 99.9% of the population included in the Assisted Areas Map. This is excellent news for the borough and if confirmed will help the area to attract new business opportunities in the future.

However, it should be noted that the Dti proposals are only within a consultative document to which interested parties have until 7th August to submit further responses.

A further meeting of the Cumbria partners is to be held on 26th July and Graham McWilliam, Economic & Tourism Development Manager will represent the Council at the meeting.

1.3 Evolutive

Following the launch of the Council's new vacant sites and premises service on 8th June a press release was issued by the Communications Unit. The release was covered prominently by both the Evening News and Star and the Whitehaven News. Several enquiries from businesses have been made since the launch which is very encouraging. The Economic & Tourism Development section are currently in contact with all commercial agents active in the borough to ensure the database of properties is as comprehensive as possible.

2. **COMMUNITY REGENERATION**

2.1 Millom:

In 2005 the NWDA awarded Millom and Haverigg Economic Development Group £1m as part of the Market Town Initiative to cover a 3 year period from 2005 to 2008.

Listed below are key projects the Group are/have invested in:

Millom Business Forum: Creation of business forums to allow, amongst other things, employers to input into the economic & regeneration of the area and also help the Market Town Initiatives to address wider business and commerce concerns in Millom. Funding allocated to this project is proving insufficient to meet business demand and additional funding sources are being sought.

Network Centre: This £1.2M construction project commenced in March and is due for completion in October 2006. It is Millom's MTI flagship project. The aim is to develop an entrepreneurial culture among local people, stimulate & support skills development for existing businesses, and also provide business incubation services for macro businesses.

A Networks Centre manager has been recruited and is developing a business plan to ensure the facility begins to operate immediately following completion and address the need to secure further revenue funding. Recruitment of additional staff to help implement its operational objectives is ongoing.

Millom Outreach Team: The project provides a dedicated team of youth workers to implement a range of initiatives to help meet the needs of young people in the area. Whilst slow in taking off due to recruitment

difficulties, the project is now up and running and has attracted around 100 young people to use its services.

Tourism Officer: A Tourism Officer has been in post since April 2006 and is working with the local Tourism sector to identify and deliver activities relating to tourism development and marketing the area to visitors. A Tourism Action Plan has been developed and is available at the Millom Tourism Information Centre.

Community Pot Grants: The aim of the grants is to fund local projects that add value to the NWDA Programme in Millom. Community groups with projects can apply for small amounts of cash to help implement them.

Swimming Pool in Millom: £14,000 was set aside to undertake a feasibility study leading to a business plan for a Swimming Pool in Millom. A feasibility study was completed in March 2006 and was positive that a 25 metre pool was viable in Millom. The MTI is seeking to secure £1.3m to build a pool within Millom School grounds. Work towards appointing a funding consultant is now underway.

Refurbishment & Regeneration of the Palladium: A feasibility study was completed in March 2006 considering alternative uses for the Palladium with the ultimate aim of eventual rehabilitation of the Palladium building. An additional £1.8M is being sought to rehabilitate this building. It is intended to appoint a design and construction team to progress the building works in the foreseeable future.

This is not an exhaustive list, merely a flavour of the varied projects the MTI have taken on. Future aspirations include the enhancement of Millom's "Gateways", development of a Eco-Tourism resource, Haverigg Satellite Community Centre, Haverigg Beach Environmental Improvement Scheme, the RAF Museum and the preparation of a Town Centre Master Plan.

2.2 Egremont Market Town Initiative

Alongside the Market Town Initiative programme, the MTI office is also implementing elements of the Egremont Mini-Masterplan within the West Lakes Renaissance funded programme of projects.

Youth Works has received charitable status and is now looking at ways to become self sufficient.

Employment Access Service is on target to assist one hundred people in its first 12 months. This project, as many others, will benefit from the development of the Community Resource Centre. The Partnership is working with CAFÉ and Age Concern to deliver this centre in the Market Place.

Community Pot Grant made its first award to the Young Cumbria Recording Project at the Wyndham Youth Centre, is providing

opportunities for young people to learn about recording and for young musicians to produce CDs and digital downloads. This project is working towards becoming a social enterprise and will also work closely with the Grizedale Arts led Creative Egremont project on the Radio Egremont project and with video artists to produce music videos.

Public Realm funding within the MTI project will be matched with ERDF funding, currently being applied for under the Egremont Gateways project to provide better signage within the town centre and to improve the visitor/shopper experience of the car parks. WLR funding will also be matched against ERDF funding in discrete elements of this project to create distinctive entrances to the town through improved planting at the gateways on the by-pass. The castle will be lit and the park alongside improved to make the most of this valuable asset.

Rural Corridors study has been completed. This proposes improvements to a number of leisure routes for walkers and cyclists. Projects from this study are also being taken forward as part of the Gateways Project.

Town Centre and Tourism Action Plans have been completed, each proposing exciting opportunities for improving the economy of the town. Examples of projects that have been proposed are: a managed workspace development at the Bridge End Industrial Estate; an office development at the Chapel Street Car Park to the east of the town centre; and an opportunity to develop the niche market of mountain biking from the town. It is hoped to progress these and the other opportunities in a number of ways, for example, West Lakes Renaissance have now commissioned some feasibility work on the Bridge End Industrial Estate proposal.

2.2 Regen North East Copeland (RNEC)

A Regeneration Manager commenced work with RNEC on 3/07/06 with the specific remit to work with partner organisation to develop schemes that assist in the regeneration of Cleator Moor and surrounding parishes.

2.3 Pheonix House (formerly known as the Old Co-op Building Cleator Moor)

The refurbishment of the The Old Co-op at Cleator Moor is complete with a Renaming and formal Opening Ceremony scheduled for Thursday 17 August 2006.

3. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

Subject: Cumbria Inward Investment Agency

Date of Decision: 25 April 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/0041

Context:

This report details the results of negotiations between Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council over Board membership in Cumbria Inward Investment Agency

Decision

That Council be recommended to approve that Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, be appointed Council's representative on the Board of Cumbria Inward Investment Agency.

4. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Subject: Cumbria Local Area Agreement – Economic Development Block

Date of Decision: 13 June 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/0020

Context:

This report outlines the work completed to date by the working group set up to develop the Economic Development Block of the Cumbria Local Area Agreement

Decision

That the signing up to the Economic Development Block of the Cumbria Local Area Agreement be supported.

Subject: Cumbria Local Agreement – Economic Development Block

Date of Decision: 13 June 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/0021

Context:

This report provides details of the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives Scheme and proposes a range of initiatives to utilise the funding which would benefit the Copeland economy

Decision

That the draft programme be approved, subject to further details being provided at the August meeting of The Executive.

Subject: Small Business Friendly Concordat

Date of Decision: 13 June 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/023

Context:

The Small Business Friendly Concordat is part of the ODPM 5 Year Plan, which states how Government, working with local authorities, will help improve their quality of life and create communities they feel proud of.

Decision

That the recommendation to sign up to the Small Business Friendly Concordat be agreed.

Subject: Market Town Initiative – Millom and Haverigg; Egremont Performance Plans 2006/07

Date of Decision: 25 April 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/00/0029

Context:

To inform Members of the approved Market Town Initiative Performance Plans 2006-7 for: Egremont, Millom and Haverigg

Decision

**That a) the achievements of the 2005-6 Performance Plans be noted;
b) the content of the 2006-7 Performance Plans be noted;
c) the bank-rolling of the Tourism Officer and Tourism Action Plan project for Millom and Haverigg be approved in retrospect; and
d) the draft agreement to be entered into with local partnerships be approved.**