

ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE PORTFOLIO

COUNCILLOR HENRY WORMSTRUP – PORTFOLIO HOLDER

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1. KEY ISSUES – PROGRESS REPORT

1.1 COALFIELD COMMUNITIES REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The programme commenced in 2004/5 and is set to run until September 2007/8, when all project expenditure is expected to be defrayed. The majority of the projects will come to an end in the 2006/7 financial year. The Council is acting as the Accountable Body for the Coalfields funding and is the delivery agent for two projects - Whitehaven Gateway project (complete) which is a part of the Environment Programme and the Clean and Green Team). The Council is also providing an advisory and supporting role on a number of other projects in the programme. The overall programme value is in the region of £1.4 million of which c£438,000 is coming from the Coalfield Fund. Match funding is coming from a wide variety of public, private and charitable sources and includes gift-in-kind contributions.

Project Updates

Project: Y2004 Clean and Green Team

The team continues to respond to many requests from the public, councillors and town/parish councils to deal with grot spots in the coalfield wards.

Chewing gum clearance continues, and has supported a larger clearance campaign completed by Steam Clean in the busiest area of Whitehaven Town Centre. The team has followed up in areas directly adjacent to the major clean up area, by covering streets leading off the main shopping street and market place. Work on the rota for one week in each four week period continues in other eligible areas.

Work has continued to be carried out on request of Cleator Moor Town Council in the town centre, and public recreational areas.

Some further work has also been carried out to support the Woodland Trust managing certain areas of woodland in Whitehaven, which are open to the public. Again it has mainly been litter clearance, particularly of areas that have been used by young people as drinking dens. The community police officer is working in conjunction with the council and Woodland Trust to deal with the problem.

The team have supported our Parks Department in strimming an area of woodland near the Greenbank Estate, and will be doing similar work in future in Phoenix Bridge Woodland at Cleator Moor.

Litter picking and fly tip collection has been carried out in several areas of the coalfields wards, either identified by council employees, or through complaints from members of the public.

The team has also provided support to the Whitehaven In Bloom group, to help in clearing overgrown areas and removing litter from patches of ground which the councils waste management service is not directly responsible for. This has helped greatly in preparing the town for the competition, due to take place in July.

Project Y2005 Mining Communities Environmental Programme

Moresby Back Lanes

The main construction contract commenced on 18th April. Work is proceeding as planned and completion is scheduled for the end of July.

In parallel with the main contract a walling contract commenced is being undertaken by a local Social Enterprise, "Home To Work". This contract is also nearing completion.

Community Space Project

- i) Lowca Off-Road Footpath
Work is complete other than for a small section of tarmacing which will be completed during Quarter 2.
- ii) Parton Car Park
Project completed during Quarter 1.
- iii) Birks Road Play Area
A ground investigation study has been completed but the results were not favourable. Discussions with Council's environmental protection staff have resulted in the adoption of the recommendation in the study that some limited intrusive investigation is required. This work will be commissioned and completed during Quarter 2 and the results will determine the viability of the scheme.
- iv) Hensingham Community Park
As previously explained this project was being delivered through Groundwork West Cumbria prior to its insolvency and work has now stopped. We are working with the local community and funders to ensure that elements of the scheme are completed wherever possible but as things stand the intention is not to draw down any Coalfield programme funding for this project.

Project: Y2024 Copeland Academy of Sport

The Trustees have been successful in attracting £780,000 to fund the scheme which includes both new and improved including a floodlit multi-use games area, refurbished athletics track, drainage of the existing sports pitch, improved changing facilities, gymnasium and function room, installation of a lift to make the facility accessible to all users and improved access and car parking

The main contract started on site during week commencing 13th March and is progressing well. A grant of £100K is available for the capital works from the Coalfield programme of which £84.5K has now been claimed. Completion is planned for September/October.

Adverts for the recruitment of the full-time Sports Development Officer and two part-time Administrator/Technicians have recently been placed. The Coalfield programme is providing a revenue grant of £50K towards the cost of these posts

Project: Y2003 Enterprising Copeland

InBiz Enterprise Support

The project has commenced in June 2005, later than envisaged due to restructuring within the Inbiz organization. However the project is now well-established and is delivering significant outputs focused on training and employment. Outputs to date have included:

- 6 “Pathfinder” training sessions
- 1 “Look Before You Leap” seminars
- 1 “Simplex D” session
- 2 mobile office visits
- 60+ clients provided with advice and guidance (totalling 270 Hrs)
- 7 new enterprises
- 5 new jobs
- 6 Business Planning workshops

Haig Mining Museum

The project continues to employ 4 jobs within the Social Enterprise these being the Manager, Administrator, Heritage Guide and Guide.

The project has just been successful in its application for £20K from the South Whitehaven SRB programme which will help sustain the existing jobs from post-September 06.

The Capital scheme funding for Phase 2 of the site development, primarily sourced through the Heritage Lottery Fund, to develop the museum facilities is not yet in place, and additional information has been requested by the HLF before an application will be considered. This includes the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for the site. The Borough Council has agreed to meet the costs of this essential piece of work up to a sum of £30K. This piece of work will be commissioned in Quarter 2 and will enable the Museum to work towards submission of the lottery application by December 06.

The project continues to support volunteers in developing their local skills as well as enabling the enterprise to grow and service a wider range of volunteers expanding their skill development.

Social Enterprise in North Copeland

This project has been in operation since November 2004 and is supporting a wide range of unemployed in developing their employment skills as well as supporting new enterprise growth. The project is well placed to support the unemployed and to nurture them through skills development leading to employability and encouraging enterprise growth.

In Quarter 1 2006/7, the project has created a new Social Enterprise, West Coast Cleaning (non-domestic) which is employing two staff. The enterprise has already secured two contracts – for an office block in Maryport and with Copeland Homes (Social Landlord) for void properties.

An existing Social Enterprise, “Pressed for Time” has recruited one additional member of staff in response to increased demand.

The project has also passed its 3-year re-assessment for the Matrix quality standard for providing advice and guidance and have appointed a new co-ordinator (10 hours per week) to co-ordinate the cleaning and ironing workload.

Finally the project is seeking funding to secure the purchase of a work van that will be shared between the three Social Enterprises to enable them to cover a wider geographical area and thus grow their respective businesses. Funding from the South Whitehaven SRB programme has already been approved for this purpose.

The Future

The Council received a letter from Wigan Council indicating that there may be potential to develop a follow-on programme to the existing Coalfield Communities Regeneration programme. To support Wigan’s discussions with NWDA the Council wrote a letter of support highlighting the benefits that the current programme has brought to the eligible communities in West Cumbria and confirming the Council’s willingness to be a partner to build on the successes already achieved.

1.2 TRANSPORT

An announcement is expected this month on the **A595 Parton-Lillyhall Improvement** with the likelihood that the scheme will get approval to commence early next year. This will be great news for Copeland and especially the local communities of Distington, Parton, Moresby and Lowca parishes. It will also be a significant step towards achieving one of the Council’s major economic infrastructure targets (PI E4 03).

The Council’s Transport Group is to discuss the background and issues feeding into the transport section of the **West Cumbria Spatial**

Masterplan with the consultants. A verbal update will be given at the Council meeting.

2. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

None

3. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

None