

EXECUTIVE REPORT**FULL 28.02.06****BUSINESS GROWTH PORTFOLIO****COUNCILLOR JIM HEWITSON - PORTFOLIO HOLDER****MIKE TICHFORD - LEAD OFFICER****1 KEY ISSUES - PROGRESS REPORT****1.1 Staffing Update**

Carol Robertson has been appointed as Regeneration Technical Officer within the Economic Development and Tourism Section. Carol starts on the 23 February and will be working on establishing the Property Database Service, as one of her first tasks.

1.2 Employment Sites Project

Westlakes Renaissance have secured £4.4 million of NWDA and European Funding for this project. A Project Manager, Peter Thompson was appointed, in January, to oversee the initiative which has the following objectives:

- Seek to match the supply of land and buildings to demand
- Ensure the maximum take up of properties in key locations
- Support inward investment arising from NDA opportunities
- Maximise benefits of NDA activity within West Cumbria
- Improve the quality of industrial location in West Cumbria

Graham McWilliam, Economic and Tourism Development Manager, is representing Copeland on the Project Steering Group. At the last meeting on 6 February, Consultants were appointed to undertake a Commercial and Industrial Property Study which is due to be completed in early May 2006.

1.3 Vertex Expansion

Graham McWilliam visited the company with Cumbria Inward Investment Agency on 27 January. They are expanding their Call Centre operation and have recently announced an additional 50 temporary jobs which will increase employee numbers to 200.

They are currently negotiating a major long term contract with United Utilities which, if successful, will increase the workforce to 300, which would fully occupy the top floor of the building.

Lack of public transport to the site, after 6.00 pm, is an issue for attracting new staff and Vertex would like to re-establish training programmes in partnership with Westlakes College.

1.4 **Project Access**

This initiative aims to assist both companies and citizens gain access to the benefits of new computer technology. The installation of the £20 million telecommunications network is now complete and brings affordable broadband access throughout Cumbria.

An extensive marketing campaign is now underway to encourage businesses to take-up broadband and embrace new technology. Project access now have a marketing team in place, to undertake a programme of visits to businesses throughout the County.

The Council's Economic Development and Tourism Section will arrange to meet "Project Access" staff in the near future, to ensure that Copeland businesses are fully aware of the initiative.

1.5 **Retail Developments in Whitehaven**

- a) *Tesco* – Discussions are taking place with Tesco over their plan for a new store, on their existing site. The company already have a planning approval which is being reviewed in the light of the completion of the Whitehaven Development Framework Report.
- b) *Asda* – The company have submitted a planning application for a 75,000 sq ft facility, on the former Ginn's site. The building will comprise 20,000 sq ft for food, 20,000 sq ft for non-food retail with the remaining 35,000 sq allocated to offices, staff facilities and preparation/storage.

1.6 **Property Database**

The Economic Development and Tourism Section are currently trialling the "evolutive" programme which is currently being used by Carlisle, Eden and South Lakeland Councils. If successful, we hope to install the system before the end of March.

1.7 **Millom Market Town Initiative**

A range of projects within the programme are now up and running these include:

- Business Forum – Group now established with significant support for the business sector, and regular meetings being held to support business development.

- Business Network Centre – Funding secured for new facility. Construction now in progress. A dedicated Network Centre Manager is now in post and is developing the partner engagement.
- Millom Outreach Team – Youth development works now in post and scheme being implemented.
- Tourism Officer Post – Due to commence in April 2006 fully funded through NWDA.
- Tourism Action Plan – Action plan been identified and agreed by local partners. Key projects for this year being implemented.
- Community Pot – Criteria for the pot has been finalised and the project promoted locally.
- Swimming Pool Feasibility Study – Consultants have been appointed and work is ongoing
- Palladium Feasibility – Consultants have been appointed and work is ongoing.

1.8 **Egremont Market Town Initiative**

A range of projects within the programme are now up and running these include:

An eleventh project within the Market Town Initiative has been approved. The Business Network is to publish a quarterly magazine to promote Egremont Businesses and encourage the sharing of ideas and knowledge. The first issue will be in late March. This will be a good forum for regeneration news as well.

Youth Works has become a company limited by guarantee and is on course to receive charitable status by the end of March 2006.

Work is well underway on the Tourism Study. The consultants are looking at what Egremont has to offer, potential niche markets that can be exploited and accommodation issues and services issues, including eat in food provision.

The Town Centre study is also progressing. The initial report will be heard by the partnership and others interested at 4pm on 22 February in the Market Hall Supper Room in Egremont. The final report will be to the Partnership in March.

Survey work on the “Rural Corridors” scheme to open up the countryside around the town and to improve pedestrian and cycle routes into the town centre and out into surrounding areas is underway and will report before the end of March.

Building works is underway on a property in the town centre which has stood empty for many years. It will be brought back into use, providing four full time jobs in a catering business and a space for a new shop being created in addition. This work will make an important impact in the town and will show early progress in regenerating the town centre.

Florence Mine, which had been threatened by the failure to obtain Coalfield Regeneration Trust support, gained match funding from the West Cumbria Development Trust and work on the Feasibility Study with West Lakes Renaissance backing is being commissioned.

Funding of the Wheels to Work scheme which provides motor scooters to young people to help with access work is to be brought forward into the current year.

Work on the Town Centre Gateways which is being carried out with West Lakes Renaissance funding, not as part of the MTI, is underway and is being co-ordinated with the studies above. It also involves work with Grizedale Arts as part of their 12 months of art work in Egremont, again with WLT funding.

1.9 **South Whitehaven SRB Programme**

Tom Millar, Programme Manager has resigned from the post and is scheduled to leave at the end of February. The Community Renewal Manager is seeking to replace the post to enable completion of the current programme and to support development of Neighbourhood Management in South Whitehaven in to the future.

2. **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

Subject: Proposed West Cumbria Cycleway Partnership

Date of Decision: 2 February 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/05/130

Context:

This report outlines proposed new arrangements for managing the cycle way network in West Cumbria following the winding up of the Cyclepath Company last summer. It includes recommendations for Council representation in a new partnership between the local authorities and Sustrans together with an annual contribution of £10,000 – the same amount which the Council contributed annually to the Cyclepath Company

**Decision
That**

- a) Council membership of the Partnership and endorsement of the management arrangements as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding be approved;
- b) Council be recommended to appoint a Member to the Partnership Steering Group as the Council's formal representative;
- c) an annual £10,000 contribution to the Partnership's running costs be agreed subject to confirmation each year through the budgetary process; and
- d) officer responsibility for engagement with the Partnership be vested in Leisure and Environmental Services rather than Regeneration and that the budgetary arrangements be altered accordingly.

3 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Subject: Whitehaven Commercial Park

Date of Decision: 2 February 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/05/129

Context:

This report outlines a proposal to generate additional interest in a key employment site in Copeland and help to create 20 new jobs and safeguard a further 61 existing posts by relocating two expanding local businesses to Whitehaven Commercial Park.

**Decision
That**

- a) subject to a similar offer being secured from North West Development Agency funding be provided towards the site acquisition costs of the two companies concerned, up to a maximum of £5,000 per acre;
- b) the maximum land contribution from the Council will be limited to £25,000;
- c) a sum of £10,000 be set aside to market both the Moresby Parks site and other key sites within the Borough; and
- d) a maximum of £35,000 be released from the Major Projects Fund to cover the contribution to land acquisition and site marketing.

Subject: Egremont Market Town Initiative – Property Acquisition

Date of Decision: 2 February 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/05/139

Context:

To support Egremont Market Town Initiative with strategic acquisition of a vacant property to allow provision for a new community facility

Decision

That subject to confirmation that funds are available from West Lakes Renaissance

- a) the funding bid to West Lakes Renaissance to acquire a Key property in Egremont be supported;
- b) with the necessary reassurances on risk, the Council acquire, hold and maintain the property for a period not more than eighteen months;
- c) the project be built into the Capital Programme

Subject: Addendum to Agenda Item 15

Date of Decision: 2 February 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/05/141

Context:

To consider an addendum to Agenda Item 15 – Egremont Market Town Initiative – Property Acquisition which contained exempt information

Decision

That Decision EXE/05/139 be confirmed