

LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL CONSULTATION RESPONSE

ON

THE LANCASHIRE ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2010

FRAMEWORK OF PRIORITIES

OCTOBER 2009

1. Lancaster City Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Framework of Priorities for the Lancashire Economic Strategy 2010. We believe that the proposals are timely and provide a clear statement of intent with the potential to hold together sub regional priorities and a cohesive approach to economic development and regeneration. This is particularly important at a time when there are major challenges in the wider economy, a degree of uncertainty regarding future policy priorities at national and regional level and new and developing sub-regional arrangements are set to bring about changes in the way we all work together.
2. In general terms, we believe the Framework of Priorities indicates a clear, purposeful approach, reinforced by an emphasis on the civic leadership role of Lancashire County Council for the whole of Lancashire. We welcome the intention to ensure strategic links between transport, housing and education and believe that this will support the development of more holistic priorities, clarifying the sub region's messages as part of the "single conversation" with government at regional and national level.
3. Following from this, we would like to see stronger, clearer references to the role that Lancashire County Council and its strategic partners can play in representing the interests of the sub-region at regional, national and international levels. Given the potential and aspirations of the Lancashire sub-region, challenged by emerging policies and inevitable financial constraints, it is vital that we all understand the context in which we are working and what opportunities exist for us, so that we can take the maximum opportunity to gain involvement and influence at all levels. The Lancashire Economic Strategy 2010 should be able to indicate how this aspiration can be achieved by the Lancashire partners.
4. Recognition of the importance of the private sector is emphasised in the proposals and we strongly support this. However, we urge Lancashire County Council to ensure that engagement with, and understanding of, the views and needs of the private sector is broad enough to be representative of major employers, businesses in specific growth sectors and the multitude of small businesses that make up our local economies. As

part of the developing MAA arrangements we welcome the opportunity to facilitate engagement with and support for businesses across the district of Lancaster.

5. We welcome the references to partnerships and MAA arrangements, which run through the proposals and we assume that partnership working with other local authorities in the sub-region is implicit in this. However, we would like to take the opportunity to emphasise the role and contribution of local authorities, which bring to the table a local democratic mandate, a strong understanding of needs and opportunities, valuable local contacts and partners and delivery capability.
6. We believe that the priorities identified in the framework provide a good representation of the key opportunities of the Lancaster district but although we note the inclusion of regional parks and 'Energy Coast' we would like to see specific references to the development of stronger links across administrative boundaries, particularly Cumbria.
7. In this respect the reference to "Spatial" in para. 1.9 requires clarification. The report should articulate a spatial vision for the sub-region and MAA areas and clarify what is trying to be achieved in spatial terms – e.g. develop a North-South knowledge growth corridor, a regenerated coast based on tourism/environment/energy. It should also set out how we will develop external linkages with Manchester, Merseyside, Yorkshire, regional ports and airports and Cumbria. Similarly, in terms of the visitor economy offer, we should aim to develop synergies with neighbouring attractors such as the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.
8. The Shared Priorities for Action refer to "Lancashire's seven strategic development opportunities" and we assume that Lancaster Science park is included as a Regional Strategic Site. Given the recent reviews of strategic sites and the agreement of priorities within MAA's, we suggest that, at this stage, it might be helpful to identify the seven priorities for clarity.
9. We strongly welcome the County Council Priorities for Action, which suggest that Economic Development is a priority and that Lancashire County Council will use its influence and align its resources to support the Lancashire sub-region's economic aspirations. We are very supportive of the intentions expressed, which indicate that the county council will take a focused and deliberate approach to ensuring that policy and service delivery are consistently lined up with economic priorities.
10. We note with interest the approach to strategic land assembly and disposal of assets, which reflects some new and different thinking. Whilst we recognise that such arrangements can be complex to develop, there are potentially significant long term benefits and we support the county council intention to review these opportunities. We look forward to further information in due course on the private sector leadership team, the future focus of LCDL activities and the business finance schemes.
11. On the whole, we believe the proposals are positive and the key principles embodied in them are right for the future and we look forward to working with Lancashire County Council and our other partners across the sub-region to contribute to the long term economic growth and prosperity of Lancashire.