

Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder for Economic Recovery 2022-23

The first part of the year was very frustrating due to the lack of information provided in being able to move any major projects forward, but that has now greatly improved with the change of top management. I'd like to thank all staff in economic development for their hard work and dedication to service provision for the district, which is very much appreciated.

The next administration have plenty to look forward to with Eden, development of the Frontierland site and enquiries for investment already coming to the area. We all look forward to a bright and prosperous future for the district and all our residents.

Following on from the fantastic news of £50m for Eden Morecambe, the next topic of conversation was of course the Frontierland site.

Initial Expressions of Interest for proposals to develop the site were issued in late 2022, with 10 submissions being received providing a range of different options. Following the announcement of the Eden Levelling Up Fund award it was felt that there may be further interest from investors. A second Expression of Interest has therefore currently been put out with responses due mid-April. These will be scrutinised by officers and any decisions made will be with the new administration.

Site clearance work was completed last summer – which seems to have been televised on 'The Bay' but thank goodness with no bodies actually found! – although rumours of the remains of a great white whale still exist.

The Business support team have supported funding bids, including UKSPF to the total of £4.7m within the local economy. These include such businesses as Winter Gardens Morecambe, Growing Club and Electech.

Over the last twelve months, the team have been involved with delivery of Business grants, UKSPF, rural SPF, levelling up, employments skills provisions and Lancashire skills pledge. Through a range of network and partnership events, direct marketing, social media and digital content, the team have promoted and delivered economic growth and inward investment initiatives through identification of sites and premises related to enquiries, assistance with relocation enquiries as well as developing partnerships and connections with other agencies locally, regionally and nationally. The council continues to support local business groups and organisations – BID's, Chamber of Commerce, CVS, FSB, University, County etc.

Through its recovery funds the council has supported the North Lancs Chamber Expo, Love Lancaster Business Awards, The Bay Business Awards as well as several town centre events that attracted thousands of visitors to our city/town centres such as Dino Fest and Morecambe Sparkle.

The Lancaster City Council Business support Hub has increased its digital engagement levels across social media channels such as Twitter and LinkedIn by more than 50% over the last year. This is expected to continue to grow with a further development on the Council's Business pages, newsletter development and social media activity.

Additional highlights

- Creating a waste materials bank in partnership with Calico, for developers to donate unused materials to community projects.
- Working in partnership with local schools and LMC to create a district wide Careers fair.

- Working with ICT to support the council's Digital Inclusion project and roll-out to businesses.
- Morecambe Bay Chowder coached and supported to win Booth's competition to sell products moving forward through stores.
- Lancashire Industrial Decarbonisation Programme consultation BEIS- to be launched summer 23.
- Good Things Foundation – work ongoing for laptop recycling programme and internet access vouchers across the district.
- UKSPF years 1 and 2 project submission evaluations – 52 in total
- Support and promotion of the Fair Work Charter, including survey to all businesses.
- Development of the Ukraine Support Hub in partnership with DWP.
- Development of Accreditation Licence for Tattooist in partnership with Lancaster University and Environmental Health.

Annual STEAM reports published in 2022 show a steady post-pandemic recovery during 2021, with tourism visits back up to 4.96 million as compared to 2.55 million in 2020. A total of £363 million was generated within the local economy in 2021 as compared to £192 million in 2020. In 2021, nearly 5 million visitors came to the Lancaster district, equating to 10% of all tourism visits to Lancashire. 3209 full time equivalent jobs were supported by our visitor economy.

The What's On landing pages on the websites received a combined total of 57,600 visits in 2022, with the dedicated Local Events Calendar (maintained by the VIC's and destination marketing team) proving very popular as an information tool for visitors and a 'clash diary' for event operators. Local businesses, providers, artisans and artists featured in dedicated 'Shop Local' campaigns.

CLlr Tricia Heath
Cabinet member for Economic Recovery

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