

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGNERATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE UPDATE

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Richard Chesterton
Responsible Officer: Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration

Reason for Report: To update members on progress with key Economic Development Service Priorities.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted

Relationship to Corporate Plan: It supports the corporate objectives for the economy.

Financial Implications: There are no additional financial implications arising from the report.

Legal Implications: None

Risk Assessment: None

Equality Impact Assessment: None anticipated

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress of key projects and initiatives developed or supported by the Growth, Economy and Delivery team (GED team).

2.0 Devon Hydro and Smart Grid Project ('Mills Project')

- 2.1 Works on the Environment Agency (EA) permissions have been continuing throughout November and December. At the time of writing, the full application to the EA is expected to be submitted by the end of December with the aim of achieving approvals in March.
- 2.2 As part of the submission to the EA, detailed design work is being undertaken to show the structural designs and works that will be required to the weir to enable the hydro generators to be installed. This work will also enable the planning process to be started within MDDC.
- 2.3 The Council's Economic Development Officer is continuing to work with the Hydro Mills Group to ensure that all 3 hydro projects are taken forward together (though permissions for each site will not be dependent on the other projects).
- 2.4 A business case has now been developed over the option of funding the project directly by the local authority rather than seek out other funding streams. This would enable the project to register for Feed In Tariffs (FITs) which would more than double

the income generated from the energy from the scheme (for the lifetime of the scheme), leading to a similar payback period compared to if grant funding was being received, but having a much longer term impact. The desirable scheme is estimated to cost approximately £650k with a payback period of 7.84 years if no grants were received but FITs registration is successful. The payback period already takes into account a maintenance cost for the scheme which should enable it to operate without additional investment for many decades.

3.0 Exeter and the Heart of Devon (EHOD)

- 3.1 Building upon the last few years of successful delivery of economic activity across the EHOD area, the partnership is now looking to update its joint economic strategy in the New Year to reflect changing roles and areas of focus for each local authority and to ensure that the partnership continues to evolve.
- 3.2 The roles within the partnership are changing, with Exeter taking a much stronger focus on the skills agenda and other authorities identifying new areas of work for the authorities to consider.
- 3.3 Mid Devon continues to lead on business transformation – developing new ways that Councils can deliver business support, and looking at ways local authorities can become more commercially minded. MDDC are also the district authority representative on the management board for the Growth Support Programme, which we helped to develop.

4.0 LEADER Programme

- 4.1 The LEADER programme is now closed for new applications. As of 1st December 2018 there was £121,663 remaining in the budget, with full applications still to be considered amounting to over £488,000. There may be an opportunity to share in the national underspend for this programme, which could help fund some of this potential overspend. The Local Action Group will have until the end March 2019 to decide which applications to support. There is now very little doubt that the original allocation of £1.29 million will be spent, with the opportunity to draw down further funding in the order of a couple hundreds of thousands for the benefit of small businesses in the district.

5.0 Destination website

- 5.1 In partnership with the Tourist Information Service (TIS) and Tiverton Museum we have submitted an application to the LEADER fund for a destination website to help promote the District and collate all the relevant information on one site. The TIS will maintain the site and produce a visitor guide each year with the support of the Council. We hope to hear if we are successful in February 2019. We had over 25 letters / emails from different organisations and businesses in support of this project.
- 5.2 The project will create a central website for the promotion of leisure related activities to attract visitors to Mid Devon and inform residents of the range of local activities and attractions available to them. At present there are no coordinated marketing efforts for Mid Devon. The Mid Devon Attractions Group recently identified this as a contributing factor to the lower levels of tourism in comparison to other Devon districts.

- 5.3 We are planning to have an interactive map which will promote our walking and cycling routes, places to eat, accommodation, tourist attractions, farmers' markets and shopping areas. The website will allow visitors to create their own itinerary by designing a 'to do' list of activities such as walking routes that are appropriate to their needs, encouraging them to spend more time in the area.

6.0 Master planning: Tiverton town centre

- 6.1 A report went to Cabinet on 22 Nov 2018 to consider the summary of responses following the Stage 1 public consultation on the Tiverton Town Centre Masterplan, including a summary of the key themes that have emerged through the consultation exercise and the next steps. There were a number of recommendations but importantly it was resolved that the production of the masterplan progresses towards stage 2 public consultation. A first working draft of the masterplan is expected shortly.

7.0 Devon and Somerset Metro project.

- 7.1 This project seeks to deliver new railway stations at Cullompton and Wellington and involves officers working in partnership with a range of stakeholders and interested parties.

7.2 Business case appraisal update

Business case appraisals for new stations at both Cullompton and Wellington have been looked at and take account of findings from 2014 work on travel patterns from the new stations; predictions of patronage levels and updated economic assessment based on revised cost information (£14 million capital cost assumed for each station at this stage). Patronage is predicted to be 400 journeys per day to/from Cullompton. We are advised to treat these figures with caution, but that they do not appear out of scale with patronage figures from Cranbrook and Newcourt each of which reached over 250 journeys / day in year 2. In terms of value for money, two scenarios were tested -where the project meets the cost of providing the train service between Exeter and Taunton plus the cost of operating the stations (Cullompton value for money category: High) and the project meeting just the cost of operating the stations without the cost of the service (Cullompton: Very high).

7.3 Station feasibility study

A brief was prepared to commission high level work to understand how the two stations at Cullompton and Wellington can be physically accommodated on the proposed sites in order to result in a report on the ability of the sites to accommodate the station facilities and rail infrastructure. Consultants have now been appointed and the work is underway. It is expected that results will be available late December. The brief includes an expectation that the consultant will give a presentation at a future metro group meeting of preliminary findings.

8.0 Tiverton Market Events

8.1 Market Events

The Market has recently introduced a number of new events, including a monthly Farmers Market, a 6 monthly Holistic and Wellbeing event, a Wild West day, monthly car boot sales, a 'Last Minute Gift Fair', and regular Art

and Craft sessions on Wednesdays. This includes drawing, rural crafts such as spinning and weaving and making craft articles. During December up to Christmas Eve the market will be open 7 days a week. In November The Market held a special event for Remembrance Day with displays of over 2,000 drawings and paintings of poppies produced by pupils from 13 schools in and around Tiverton, together with knitted poppies donated by the public.

8.2 Social Media and Promotion

During the last 6 months social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) is being used to promote market and town events and has helped to expand promotional reach. As an example the Christmas switch-on post (Light up Tiverton) reached over 40,000 people with 3,600 views (reported as one of the best visited switch-on for years) and the Reindeer visit on 22nd December already has over 30,000 people reached. Fliers are still produced and distributed through town centre businesses.

8.3 General

Lettings at the market over the past year have been higher than 2017 with every month achieving the 'greater than 80%' target. Footfall counts at the market show a 3.9% increase over 2017 (done quarterly). 60% of goods on the market are from Devon/South Somerset and 95% of traders are also local i.e. within 25 miles.

8.4 Town Centre Partnership

The Tiverton Town Centre Partnership has now been established and a constitution adopted. Sub groups looking at publicity and promotion have been created. A Christmas marketing campaign has been done and adopted. A preference has been expressed for Sunday opening in December up to Christmas rather than late night shopping. This has been progressed with over 50 shops agreeing to open. A Town Centre partnership Members Facebook site has been created (closed site for members only)

Tiverton recently appeared on 'Irish TV in UK' with a half hour programme on town and market. (This can be seen on line at <https://theirishintheuktv.com> and click onto episodes and we are number 82)

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Circulation of the Report: Cllr Richard Chesterton
Leadership Team

List of Background Papers: None