

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM UPDATE REPORT**

**Cabinet Member(s):** Cllr Richard Chesterton

**Responsible Officer:** Richard Marsh, Director of Place

**Reason for Report:** To update members on activities undertaken by the Economic Development Team during the last quarter.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That members note the contents of the report.

**Financial Implications:** The report is an information report and does not of itself have any financial implications.

**Budget and Policy Framework:** The activities described in the report help to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan and the objectives and actions identified in Mid Devon's Economic Strategy. There are no further budget implications that have not been subject of previous reports.

**Legal Implications:** There are no legal implications arising from this information report.

**Risk Assessment:** There are no further risks associated with the updates in this report that have not already been reported.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** No Equality implications have been identified.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** The work of the Growth, Economy and Delivery team supports the corporate objectives for the economy:

- Bringing new businesses into the District
- Business development and growth
- Improving and regenerating our town centres
- Growing the tourism sector

**Impact on Climate Change:** The impact of individual projects on climate change has been included in the individual reports that will have already been presented to committee.

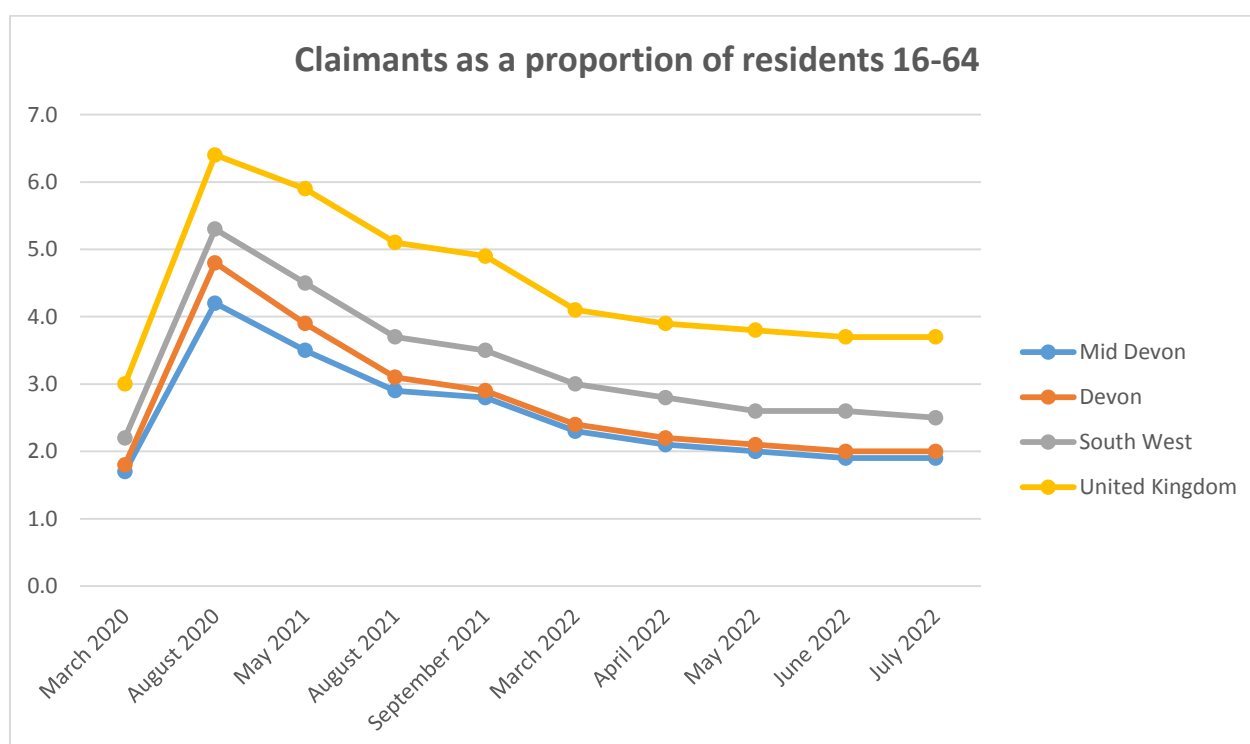
## **1.0 Background**

This report provides an update on the latest economic statistics and on the work carried out by the Economic Development Team during that last quarter.

## 1.1 Economic Update - Unemployment Statistics

Against a backdrop of further business uncertainty, in part due to the increasing costs of fuel, transport, raw materials and supplies, and high job vacancy rates, the latest release of unemployment statistics for July show that unemployment rates continue to reduce slowly in line with national trends but remain slightly higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Area	Mar 20	Aug 20	May 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Mar 22	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Mar 20 - Jul 22
Mid Devon	1.7	4.2	3.5	2.9	2.8	2.3	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.9	11%
Devon	1.8	4.8	3.9	3.1	2.9	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.0	10%
South West	2.2	5.3	4.5	3.7	3.5	3.0	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.5	12%
UK	3.0	6.4	5.9	5.1	4.9	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.7	19%



For those people aged 16-24 there has been a rise nationally in the number of claimants, with a slight rise in numbers of under 25s claiming UC in Mid Devon, (although numerically fairly small). Given the number of vacancies this is somewhat surprising but may be related to students finishing courses.

MDDC Economic Development team has been working actively with JobCentre Plus in Tiverton to put on Job Fairs at the Pannier Market. The latest event on the 20<sup>th</sup> July saw 19 employers and over 250 participants. Feedback from the employers has been positive, and it is intended to arrange further job fairs both in Tiverton and in Cullompton (Credon is served by the JobCentre Plus, Exeter). The next event for Tiverton is booked for the 5<sup>th</sup> October. In response to the need to support Ukrainian guests into work, we have also run a specific job fair in partnership with DWP (Department of Work

and Pensions) and CHAT, with translators on hand to support as required. A number of Ukrainians have already found work in and around Mid Devon.

## **2.0 Economic Development Work Programme Update**

Over the last two months the largest pieces of work have undoubtedly been the development and submission of two large funding bids, the largest being to the second round of the Levelling Up Fund and the other to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Together, these have taken up much of the team's capacity.

### **2.1 Levelling Up Fund**

The Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid for Cullompton Eastern Relief Road was submitted by the deadline of the 3<sup>rd</sup> August. This was a major undertaking in collaboration with Devon County Council in order to prepare the detailed evidence required to complete the application and to supply the supporting paperwork. The final bid was for £19.5 million towards the total project cost of £31.25 million. We are now awaiting a response from the Government, which is due in the autumn (no specific date has been announced).

### **2.2 UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

The Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was submitted by the application deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> August. As already reported to this committee the bid was for £1.06 million and would see investment into a number of economic initiatives in the district over a three year period, under the Funds three themes:

#### **Communities and Place**

- Support for revitalising our town centres –‘Love your Town Centre’ scheme
- Support a thriving agricultural sector that showcases field-to-fork practices and low food miles to market
- Strengthening the Visitor Economy

#### **Supporting Local Businesses**

- Support for local start-ups and micro-businesses (SMEs)
- Support the development of incubation and flexible work-space
- Support for business innovation and adoption of modern processes and advanced technology by local start-ups and micro-businesses

#### **People & Skills**

- Support for young people not in employment (or underemployed)
- Support workforce development in skills for a new economy – Green Skills

The bid has been through the initial technical assessment. We are now waiting for the detailed assessment by DHLUC. Assuming approval of the investment plan, we are hoping the projects identified will be able to begin in October, according to the plan schedule.

### **2.3 Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone**

The Cullompton Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) continues to work with property owners to develop applications to the grants scheme. Two further grants have been approved.

A second round of consultation for the public realm project in the Higher Bullring has just concluded. The results are now being collated and considered as part of the final design to be taken forward by Devon County Council.

Following the resignation of the Cullompton HAZ Project Office, we have conducted one round of recruitment with no success. We are currently employing someone on a part-time basis to overlook the project in the interim period as we continue to try to recruit to this post.

### **2.4 Review and Relaunch of the Tiverton Shopfront Enhancement Scheme**

Following the completion of the Covid-related business grants schemes, the team has been working towards the intended relaunch of the Tiverton Shopfront Enhancement Scheme. The Scheme is subject of a separate report to this committee.

### **2.5 Non-Domestic Rates Relief Covid 19 – Additional Relief Fund**

On 25 March, the Government announced plans to provide an additional business rates support package, worth £1.5 billion, to support businesses in England affected by COVID-19 but not eligible for existing support linked to business rates.

Mid Devon have now allocated the funding to 27 businesses, 8 of which are classed as 'strategic' in our area with a total value applied of £ 1,164,024. The financial help has reduced bills in financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23. The amount awarded is fully funded by the Government.

### **2.6 Homes for Ukraine**

Members of the team continue to support the Council's involvement in the Homes for Ukraine programme, helping to commission the necessary support for Ukrainian families as they settle in the UK. Over the last few months in conjunction with the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing we have commissioned Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT) to provide a Ukrainian support worker to undertake welcome visits, and to support and sign-post guests to essential services; and Citizens' Advice to provide specialist technical support with benefits and other financial and legal issues. More recently, with the possibility of further housing support needs emerging at the end of the initial six month period, we have been working with CHAT to commission support services to actively work with hosts to maintain

hosting arrangements, and to support the transfer of Ukrainian families into the Private Rented Sector.

**Contact for more Information:**

John Bodley Scott, Economic Development  
Team Leader  
[jbodleyscott@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:jbodleyscott@middevon.gov.uk)

**Circulation of the Report:**

Cllr Richard Chesterton  
Cllr John Downes  
Leadership Team

**List of Background Papers:**