

**Report for: Economy and Assets PDG**

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Date of Meeting:	6 March 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Economic Development Team Update</b>
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Steve Keable, Planning & Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Richard Marsh, Director of Place
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All wards
Enclosures:	N/A

**Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

To update Members on projects and activities undertaken by the Growth, Economy and Delivery Team during the last couple of months.

To also update Members on the review of the Economic Strategy for Mid Devon.

**Recommendation(s):**

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

**Section 2 – Report**

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This report provides an update on activities carried out by the Growth, Economy and Delivery Team since the last meeting of this group.

**2.0 Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund**

2.1 Work continues on the delivery of the final phase of the Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Fund Delivery Plan. Some key items to note include:

- **Flexible Workspace:** Works on the Tiverton work hub commenced on 2 December 2024 and are due for completion by 11 March 2025. Progress is good. No complaints have been received from users of the carpark and the contractor continues to minimise disruption. Expression of Interest have been sought from potential operators and these are being considered.
- **Field to Fork:** The Field to Fork photography project, has so far, successfully supported 10 businesses, showcasing their images and posts across our social media platforms, accompanied by a dedicated blog on our Visit Mid Devon website. At the time of writing there were 7 businesses remaining in the project, and we will promote a new business each week with their unique content. As we approach the conclusion of the project, we have a finale reel that will highlight images and footage collected throughout the entire initiative, providing a fitting finish for the overall project. The businesses involved have expressed their gratitude for the positive experiences with our photographer and have appreciated the quality of the footage received.

Business involved and supported:

- Bickleigh Mill
  - Sandford Orchards
  - Canal Tea Rooms
  - Thunderflower
  - Culm Valley Inn
  - The Duck at Yeoford
  - The Lost Kitchen
  - Quicke's Cheese
  - UK BBQ School
  - Devon Cookery School
  - Hanlons Brewery
  - Quoit at Cros
  - Hartnoll hotel
  - Rull Orchard
  - Thorne Farm Shop
  - Wellhayes
  - Crediton Food Festival (will be promoted later in the year)
  - Electric Nights (will be promoted later in the year)
- **Visitor Economy:** The Visit Mid Devon campaigns have been actively promoting the region as a prime destination for visitors, showcasing its scenic walks, attractions, events, and accommodation options. Collaboration with local businesses has led to successful competitions that have increased the area's visibility. Additionally, several new businesses have joined the initiative, further strengthening the campaign. The Field to Fork project has also contributed to enhancing visual content, enriching the overall promotional efforts. Over the Christmas period, we conducted a 'Shop Local' campaign to encourage support for local businesses. This was

complemented by the promotion of free parking, which was advertised through online channels, radio and press, ensuring widespread awareness and engagement.

Devon and Partners Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) is a recently formed public/private sector partnership between the county's local authorities, destination management organisations and regional businesses. We sit on the advisory board for this partnership. The LVEP is currently forming their growth plan for Devon.

Main objectives are:

- Grow Visitor Spend - Create new growth by pivoting the visitor economy from day to stay
  - Spread the Benefits - Spreading visitors across Devon for more local income and greener benefits
  - Create a Year-round Economic Driver - Develop and present a year-round offer, attracting across the seasons
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- **People and Skills:** The Skills Employment Hub has relocated its Monday services from Cullompton to Crediton. This decision was made in response to accessibility challenges faced by their clients, particularly those in Crediton where the caseload has been steadily increasing. We are pleased to announce that they will be utilising a room in the Bookery, a community space we supported and funded in the initial phase of the Work Hub Development Scheme. Additionally, they have Learn Devon advisors available in both Hubs (Tiverton and Crediton), dedicated to promoting adult learning opportunities.
  - **Business Support:** The Prosper business support programme continues. The Prosper programme offers free support to potential entrepreneurs, new and existing businesses seeking to grow as well as specialist support for green innovation or those seeking to become employers. Take up remains lower than anticipated.

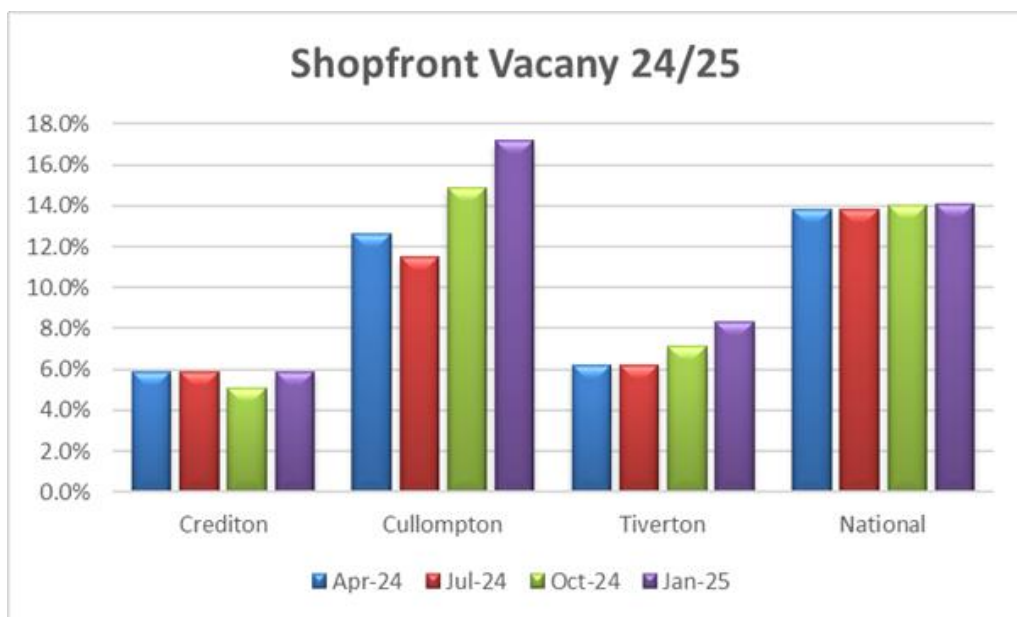
As part of the Devon Agri-Tech Alliance (DA-TA) project delivery – the following three events have been held in February and were available, free of charge, to Mid Devon farm businesses:

- An Inheritance Tax Workshop/ webinar - Tuesday, 4th February 2025;
- An Agroforestry Workshop at Elston Farm, Copplestone - Monday, 10th February 2025; and
- A Regenerative Farming Workshop hosted at the Devon Rural Hub Building in Cheriton Bishop - Tuesday, 18th February 2025

2.2 Following the Government's announcement of a year's extension to the SPF programme, the group at its last meeting considered proposals for a Year 4 Delivery Plan. It should be noted however that the monitoring of this fund will now sit with the County Council and that our allocation is much reduced.

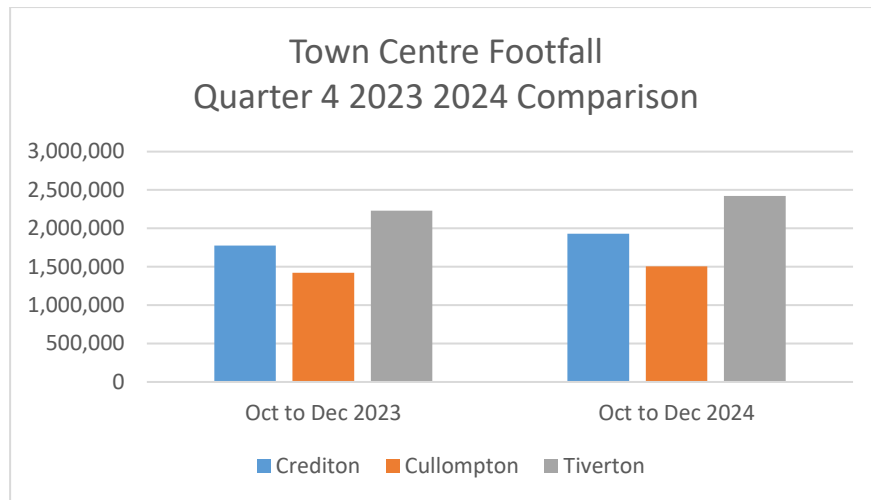
### 3.0 Town Centre Health

3.1 Quarter 4 shopfront surveys took place in January 2025. All three towns have seen an increase in the number of vacant units since the Quarter 3 report, albeit Crediton has only seen a marginal increase bringing it back to where it was in preceding quarters. Both Crediton and Tiverton are performing better than the national average (reported at 14.1% for January 25).



3.2 With regards to footfall, all three towns have reported a year-on-year increase.

- Tiverton, October to December has recorded a total footfall in 2024 of 2,421,000 compared to 2,231,000 for the same months the previous year. This is a (9.2)% increase.
- Crediton, October to December has recorded a total footfall in 2024 of 1,932,000 compared to 1,776,000 for the same months the previous year. This is a (7.4)% increase.
- Cullompton, October to December has recorded a total footfall in 2024 of 1,505,000 compared to 1,424,000 for the same months the previous year. This is a (9.5)% increase.



#### **4.0 Business Rate Relief Drop in Session**

- 4.1 Upcoming changes to Business Rates Relief will impact particularly on some businesses that receive Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief. With this in mind, in partnership with the Business Rates Team, Economic Development are holding a drop in information session at Phoenix House from between 11:30 – 19:00 on Thursday, 20th March, 2025. This will be supported by a communications plan that will go live before the bills are issued and will continue until the date of the drop in session.

#### **5.0 Economic Strategy Review**

- 5.1 Three Informal PDG sessions have now taken place on 24 October 2024, 12 December 2024 and 23 January 2025. These sessions have been run as a series of workshops considering topics such as business growth, innovation and skills, thriving places and business engagement. The next session (3 April 2025) will be based around the theme of Infrastructure (including land and property). Through these discussions there has been recognition of the importance to utilise the next Economic Strategy as a means of raising the profile of the District and the matters of key interest to our businesses. This is important given the changing landscape of potential opportunities and will also assist in ensuring that the needs of mid devon businesses are reflected through local government reorganisation. The Strategy will also be informed by a business survey which is shortly to be undertaken.

#### **Financial Implications**

The report is an information report and does not of itself have any financial implications and require any decisions.

It is hoped that the report demonstrates that the Economy and Growth team is achieving in line with expectations in terms of the successful utilisation of grant monies and other financial resources.

#### **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.

### **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.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

It is acknowledged that there is a relationship between economy and equality whereby disadvantaged groups of people can have greater or lesser opportunities for economic advantage depending on the climate and growth potential. Economically disadvantaged individuals are socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital or credit opportunities as compared to others in the same or similar line of business who are not socially disadvantaged. There are unfortunate intersections between socioeconomic status and those with protected characteristics or from marginalised or minority communities putting them at greater risk of social and therefore economic disadvantage. Social and digital isolation issues across a rural district has the potential to exacerbate these risks.

Mid Devon's Prosperity Programme and the Economic Strategy outline key projects to tackle these risks and grow the economy. They are supported by equality assessments and communication plans.

Key strands of the work of the Economy and Growth team continue to seek to address and tackle causes of inequality and deprivation.

### **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

## **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 18.2.25

**Statutory Officer:** Maria DeLeiburne  
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer  
Date: 18.2.25

**Chief Officer:** Richard Marsh  
Agreed by Corporate Director  
Date: 18.2.25

**Performance and risk:** Dr Steve Carr  
Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager  
**Date:** 21/02/2025

**Cabinet member notified:** (yes)

#### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Adrian Welsh, Strategic Manager for Growth, Economy & Delivery  
**Email:** awelsh@middevon.gov.uk  
**Telephone:** 01884 234398

**Background papers:**