

FIRST DRAFT

Newcastle-under-Lyme Economic Development Strategy 2012-17

In a nutshell:

This strategy is about how Newcastle Borough Council, working with the business community and local partners can improve the economic prospects of the area. It has been shaped with the following aspects in mind:

Our approach:

The strategy has four themes, arranged in the following sections

- ‘*Economy*’ – Transforming the business base
- ‘*Place and Infrastructure*’ – Physical transformation
- ‘*People*’ – Transforming ambition
- ‘*Image and Marketing*’ – Transforming perceptions

Each section then sets out a series of actions we propose to undertake (or work with others to undertake).

In each section we look at the **strengths** which the Borough has to offer and the **opportunities** which we may be able to capitalise on and we develop **proposals** which take advantage of these;

We identify a number of **shortcomings** in the economy / skills mix / image etc. of our area and identify interventions to address them (or at least, mitigate them);

In spite of the present economic circumstances and the impact this has on public finances, we will still approach this strategy with reasoned **ambition**. That is, we will set ourselves stretching goals and set out a programme of action which will seek to improve the economic fortunes of the Borough.

We will do this by building a broad **consensus**, through consultation with our partners and with the local business community who will both help influence the work that the Borough Council should undertake and will also play their own parts in delivering elements of this strategy.

A key element of our approach will be **prioritisation**. The Council cannot do everything. It is important therefore to focus on the things which are going to have the greatest impact and which the Council is best placed to influence. Where possible, we will follow the principal that ‘resources follow priorities’. In doing so, it will be necessary to also make clear what are *not* our priorities.

Some of our priorities are, by their nature, sub-regional (rather than specific to the Borough) and here we will work closely with partners from throughout North Staffordshire.

This strategy is a framework for getting things done - ultimately we will only be judged on getting things done and it is only by achieving things (as often as not in partnership with others) that the Borough will enhance its reputation for being effective.

We will learn from past interventions and use this **experience** to overcome barriers to change; we will be open to external challenge and use this to learn from others' experiences too. (In some instances we will be doing the right things already in which case our approach may be to carry on).

Our strategy is not a detailed delivery plan but it does include indicative actions to show how the stated objectives will be taken forward. The strategy will be exposed to challenge, will be widely consulted upon to gain broad support, and will then be used to set the context for long term investment and develop more detailed **action plans**.

'Transforming North Staffordshire'

'Transforming North Staffordshire' (North Staffordshire's Economic Development Strategy) was adopted by the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership and the three North Staffordshire local authorities in 2008 following detailed and thorough economic analysis, optioneering, consultation and participation between The Work Foundation (the principal authors) and local partners. It provides the **sub-regional framework** for pursuing the economic development of the area as a whole.

This wider strategy provides much of the analysis, evidence base and rationale for this Borough-specific strategy. 'Transforming North Staffordshire' has a number of detailed recommendations, arranged by:

- Economy
- Place and Infrastructure
- People, and
- Image and marketing

This format is adopted as an appropriate framework for this strategy, demonstrating how the Borough Council and its partners propose to take forward its recommendations with the specific objective of improving the fortunes of the Borough.

Newcastle-under-Lyme: A Borough Profile in figures

The Borough of Newcastle and is based around the historic 800 year old **market town** of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Kidsgrove, six miles to the north, is the Borough's second town. The Borough is part urban (together with neighbouring Stoke-on-Trent forming the western part of the North Staffordshire conurbation) and part rural. The Borough is also home to the country's largest campus university, Keele University.

The town lies along the A34 and is also well served by the M6, the A500 and the A50. Lying on the West Coast Main Line, four trains an hour connect Stoke-on-Trent Railway Station, 3 miles from Newcastle Town Centre, to London Euston (1 hr 27mins) and Manchester (37 mins). Four airports, Manchester, East Midlands, Liverpool and Birmingham lie within 50 to 75 minutes drive.

The Borough's **population** has grown from 122,200 in 2000 to around 125,000 today and is projected to grow to 130,700 in 2025.

Around 50,400 people **work** in the Borough, of which 6100 are self employed and 44,300 are employees. The 70:30 split between full-time and part-time employment closely reflects the national pattern. The level of self-employment (6.9%) is lower than the GB average of 9.1%.

Manufacturing accounts for 9.2% of **employment** (c.f. GB: 10.2%), retailing and hospitality 30.2% (GB: 23.4%), transport and communications 14% (GB: 5.8%), finance, IT and business services 12.4% (GB: 22.0%) and local government, education and health 25.5% (GB: 27.0%).

Amongst the Borough's more significant private sector **employers** are Phones 4U Ltd., Leoni Wiring, Ibstock Brick, science park companies such as Bio composites, Siemens Wind Power and Cobra Therapeutics, engineering firms such as Converteam, KMF Engineering and Simon-Hartley, in the logistics field, New Look, George, TK Maxx, and AAH, and a wide range of professional services firms including Knights, MHL, Hacking Ashton and The Aspire Group. Keele University and Newcastle College are significant employers in the HE / FE sectors.

The local resident workforce is slightly **better qualified** than of the country at large, i.e. 32.5% are qualified to degree level (c.f. GB 31.3%, West Midlands region 26.0%), 53.5% have 2 or more A levels (GB 51.0%, West Midland region 45.4%), though the numbers with no qualifications (13.4%) is a little higher than GB (11.3%), but less than the West Midlands region (15.1%).

Earnings on the other hand lag behind the national average with median earnings for male full-time workers £479.5 compared with a GB figure of £541.9.

Job seeker numbers in the Borough (2.6%) are below the average figure for GB (3.4%) but the numbers on Employment Support Allowance or Incapacity Benefits (7.3%) are higher (GB 6.6%). (All figures November 2010). At July 2011 there were 158 'NEETs' in the Borough (16 to 18 year old not in employment, education or training), the wards with the highest numbers being Holditch (16), Chesterton (11) and Cross Heath (10).

Rates of **new business formation** (based on the number of new VAT registrations as a % of total stock) at 9.6% is a little lower than the national average of 10.2% but higher than the regional average of 9.4%.

Shop vacancy rates in Newcastle Town Centre (11.1% in May / June 2011) are broadly the same as the average for town centres across the UK (11.2%).

Newcastle Under Lyme Town Centre has a **commercial floorspace** of 105,343 sq m. and this compares with Stoke-on-Trent City Centre (203,077 sq m.); Stafford Town Centre (110,282 sq. m.); Macclesfield Town Centre 96,680 sq m.; Stoke Town Centre 75,391 sq m. ; Longton Town Centre 66,965 sq m.; and Leek (46,580 sq. m.).

There are currently 50,738 **households** in the borough and over the next five years it is planned that this will rise by 1591 to 52,329. Over the five year period 2005-10, 1485 new houses were completed, an average annual rate of house building of 297. The figure for Staffordshire as a whole over the same period was 13,580 (2716 p.a.)

Over the ten year period 2000-2010, 89.3 hectares of **employment land** was developed in the Borough, an average annual rate of development of 8.93 ha p.a. Across Staffordshire as a whole 583.7 hectares were developed (58.3 ha p.a.)

Further information about the Borough can be found on the ONS (Office for National Statistics) website.

'Building Prosperity'

Building Prosperity was the title of the Borough Council's Economic Development Strategy 2005-10. This was built around six core priorities

- Creating a strong and vibrant town centre
- Encouraging the growth of high value business clusters
- Encouraging entrepreneurialism and the development of the small firms sector
- Demanding high quality built design and investing in the quality of the public realm
- Promoting the Borough, and
- Linking the benefits of new investment and new jobs to the less well off sections of the community.

While not everything which the Borough Council set out to do in 2005 was achieved, it's possible to identify a number of notable successes in this time:

- Developing Jubilee 2, the £10.5 million new Health & Wellbeing Centre.
- Maintaining a strong independent retail sector in the town and a busy open market
- Refurbishing Lancaster Building (now partly re-let for offices), and The Guildhall, (now a customer centre),
- Enabling the development of the magnificent new FE College
- Developing an informal partnership with the business community that has delivered a programme of town centre events
- Developing an investment framework (SIF) for the town centre
- Fighting the expansion of Tesco at Trent Vale to protect Newcastle Town Centre
- Completing the site preparation and infrastructure for the 70 acre expansion of Keele Science Park
- Developing innovation centres to encourage high value businesses
- Business Boost competition – rewarding high growth potential
- Enterprise in Schools (developing the 'world of work' programme with FineST, the Carousel of Opportunity in primary schools, support for the career academy at Newcastle College)
- Launch of the Town Centre shop-front grants award project in the town centre conservation area
- established an annual Design Awards scheme led by the Civic Society
- Working with both Instaffs and Make it Stoke-on-Trent to attract new businesses
- the completion of the Lymedale Park (3600 jobs) and High Carr Business Park ((650 jobs) development schemes together with the smaller Knutton and Silverdale industrial estates..
- Produced Town Centre investment brochure
- Significant housing development begun at the former Silverdale Colliery and former Collins & Aikman (Cross Heath) sites having secured considerable sums of external funding and investment in partnership work.

- secured substantial investment that delivered the 'BREEAM Outstanding' 'Blue Planet' development in the Chatterley Valley
- Business Panel still going strong
- The successful delivery of the Housing Market Renewal Programme in Newcastle centred on the Knutton, Cross Heath and Silverdale areas (new housing, skills training, building facelifts and investment in public realm)
- The establishment of the Jobs, Employment and Training Scheme (JETS) and the Family Employment Initiative (FEI) supporting people into training and work.

These successes are important not only in their own right but also as a means of inspiring the Borough Council and the partners with which we work that things can be achieved over the long run as long as we have

- Clarity about what it is we consider to be important
- Are prepared to collaborate between our different organisations (and not be precious about allocating or claiming credit)
- Are prepared to commit time and the necessary resources and
- Stick with it.

The Strategy at a glance

- *'Economy'* – Objective: Transforming the business base

1. We will develop a long term economic strategy built on 'diverse specialisation', aiming to increase both the proportion of knowledge intensive employment and the proportion of high quality jobs in retail, leisure, tourism and distribution.
2. We will develop a co-ordinated enterprise strategy.
3. We will invest in emergent knowledge intensive sectors, building on higher and further education expertise.
4. We will invest in the development of the professional and business services sector.
5. We will make the most of the Borough's successful logistics sector.
6. We will seek to optimise the benefit to local companies from public sector procurement.

- *'Place and Infrastructure'* – Objective: Physical transformation

7. We will draw up a Masterplan to guide the future development of Newcastle Town Centre
8. We will bring forward proposals for retail and business accommodation in Newcastle Town Centre with priority placed on growing its professional services and a distinctive retail offer.
9. We will promote the further development of Keele Science and Business Park.
10. We will endeavour to enable the development of higher quality housing for current and future residents, with an explicit aim to increase the attractiveness of North Staffordshire as a home to affluent residents.
11. We will bring forward new sites for employment and housing through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to enable the further growth of the Borough.

- *'People'* – Objective: Transforming ambition

12. We will raise skills, reduce worklessness and raise aspirations as a core element of all transformational strategies.
13. We will work towards getting the right skills mix to increase productivity.
14. We will stimulate demand for higher skills and create opportunities for people to acquire skills for current and future industrial structure.
15. We will develop a long term strategy to address worklessness.

- *'Image and Marketing'* – Objective - Transforming perceptions

16. We will develop an external marketing strategy for the Borough
17. We will improve the quality of life offer for current and future residents.
18. We will support the development of North Staffordshire's 'experience economy'

19. We will use the Strategic Investment Framework as the basis for investment in the cultural and retail experience of Newcastle Town Centre
20. We will develop a network of North Staffordshire 'ambassadors'.

'Economy' – Transforming the business base

1. We will develop a long term economic strategy built on 'diverse specialisation', aiming to increase both the proportion of knowledge intensive employment and the proportion of high quality jobs in retail, leisure, tourism and distribution.

The Work Foundation 'Ideopolis' research, which studied how places thrive in the knowledge economy, concluded that the most successful places are those that

- (a) build on their existing strengths and
- (b) develop 'diverse specialisms'.

This recommendation developing 'diverse specialisms' goes to the heart of the Borough Council's approach to promoting the Borough, attracting new business and increasing employment opportunities. While the Borough Council will, of course, continue to work with its partners across North Staffordshire to help deliver sub-regional objectives it will also seek to play to Newcastle's distinctiveness, as reflected in:

- A differentiated town centre offer (compared with Hanley or out of town locations such as Festival Park)
- A strong professional and financial services sector
- Prospects for accommodating executive housing
- A thriving research based university and a science park housing numerous high technology companies
- Borough-specific (and or town centre-specific) marketing initiatives aimed at attracting inward investment.

These are reflected over the course of this strategy.

2. We will develop a coordinated enterprise strategy

North Staffordshire region needs to become more enterprising *across the board*. This encompasses business start up and growth for all companies, not purely those that are high value or high growth. Specific actions advocated include:

- Encouraging Keele & Staffordshire University to develop a joint enterprise to help 'spin-out' more knowledge intensive businesses
- Developing an innovation framework
- Developing academic & business networks to support the growth of innovative and knowledge intensive businesses
- Investing in high growth businesses regardless of sector
- Developing more customer-focused business support across North Staffordshire and
- Regularly conducting reviews of business needs

Joint work between Keele and Staffordshire Universities is being taken forward in the Business Innovation Group (details following page), whilst the LEP is taking on some aspects of enterprise coordination as described below.

In 2011, the business support delivery network is undergoing change with the wind down of Business Link West Midlands and the need to create something new that is responsive to local need. The LEP has recognised the challenge of filling this gap and is taking a lead role in creating an Enterprise Action Plan and has identified the following areas for attention:

- Analysis of the current Stoke and Staffordshire business environment.
- Work towards a collaborative business support package that reflects the variation inherent between businesses
- Bringing together key business support agencies under a LEP agreed strategy to improve the coordination and consistency of the area's business support offer

The Borough Council will support development and delivery of the LEP enterprise action plan and any enterprise action groups that sit within this.

The LEP has stated that it will continue to develop a host of measures designed to put business first including:

- the 'red carpet treatment' – local councils working as one to streamline planning and other technical processes to make it easy for businesses to invest
- the creation of a LEP growth fund to provide start up finance for business investment
- the creation of an Educational Trust by the universities, working with the LEP to develop Enterprise Skills to meet business needs
- support for the drive to ensure superfast broadband is available across the area and
- lobbying to promote the area as a premier investment location at a national and international level.

Whilst the delivery of business advice, coaching or mentoring is clearly something which sits outside of the normal activity of the Borough Council we will seek to support the services of our partners by promoting them to local businesses and signposting to the services on offer. Where we are able to add value, for example through co-ordination or hosting activity this will also be on offer to our partners. Although the opportunity to attract external funding to support enterprise activity is now much reduced, the Borough Council will support co-ordinated bids, where the opportunity arises, to attract funding for enterprise activity. Such opportunities include ERDF and the Government's Regional Growth Fund.

Further actions include:

- Business Enterprise Support (BES): we will work with BES to help in the delivery of its enterprise support schemes, including the New Enterprise Allowance Scheme, setting up a network of volunteer mentors and the ERDF funded business coach in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- Promoting Enterprise in Schools: We will continue to promote enterprise in schools, predominantly through the District Employer Education Partnership (DEEP) which brings together schools, colleges, training providers and local employers to influence educational delivery to meet the needs of the 21st century. Notable past successes have been an awards ceremony to recognise the contribution of local businesses and the development of the 'Carousel of Opportunity' aimed at introducing primary school children to the wide range of potential jobs open to them.
- Business Boost: we will support the continuation of the annual Newcastle Business Boost competition. This brings together public, private and education sectors in support of local businesses and, since its inception in 2008, has provided in excess of £40,000 direct investment in their growth and development.

3. We will invest in emergent knowledge intensive sectors, building on higher & further education expertise.

North Staffordshire enjoys enormous benefit from its being home to two Universities, Keele and Staffordshire, that offer a range of science, creative, technology, business and humanities opportunities for research and study. To a large extent these are the drivers of knowledge intensive jobs through the support that they give to graduates in starting their own business and the services that they offer to business. The Borough is also home to Newcastle under Lyme College, which is consistently in the top 25% of further education colleges nationally for success rates in AS/A level and advanced vocational courses and has excellent progression rates to Higher Education. In partnership with Staffordshire University, the College offers the opportunity to study Foundation Degree and Foundation year courses.

With the closure of Advantage West Midlands and Business Link West Midlands (the latter to be replaced by a national web-based support service), much of the strategic co-ordination work on enterprise, which includes sector specific actions, will transfer to local partners and the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Economic Partnership (LEP). Specifically, the Borough Council will work closely with the LEP and its partners in the higher and further education sectors aiming to develop superfast broadband, encourage the growth of creative industries, promote technology transfer and provide specialist business accommodation:

- Superfast broadband

Superfast broadband is an area where the LEP is taking a lead both in collecting evidence and bidding to Broadband Delivery UK to attract resources

to upgrade the Staffordshire broadband network. The LEP has recently celebrated an award of £7.4 million to support broadband provision in Staffordshire and the Borough Council will support the LEP delivery plan for broadband and will continue to advocate for the delivery of superfast broadband in the key areas of Keele University & Science Park, Newcastle town centre and across the North Staffordshire conurbation

- Creative industries

Partners to this economic development strategy have identified that digital creative firms are a potential growth area for the Borough. Attracting this type of firm relies on the availability of superfast and reliable broadband, discussed above. Further, the right style of business premises and the opportunity to cluster with other digital technology firms is another factor that will encourage the growth of digital creative firms in the Borough. Delivery of this type of accommodation relies on external funding opportunities being available to the Borough Council or through delivery in partnership with other organisations to achieve an attractive offer to the market.

Recognising the role of the creative industries in the local economy, every encouragement will be given to the re-use of existing property in the town for businesses such as graphic design, film and media, publishing, animation, music and computer/console games software development including, where suitable, the re-use of council-owned premises.

- Technology Transfer

The recently established Business Innovation Group (BIG), a partnership between Keele University Science Park, Keele University, Staffordshire University and the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce will be the prime driving force to provide businesses with specialist and strategic advice. Targeted sectors will include professional services, creative, medical, manufacturing technology and environmental and the group will work closely with the LEP to deliver the service.

Whilst the Business Innovation Group is a new addition to the portfolio of services offered by the two partner Universities, both have existing expertise in providing services to business whether it be through Knowledge Transfer Partnership, consultancy and research or enterprise support. More specialist areas are also provided such as the Keele Hub for Sustainability and the Staffordshire University ARBOR European Funded project which is pursuing excellence in the use of biomass and its Environmental Chamber which allows businesses to test out the effects of the weather on new materials and products.

- Specialist business accommodation

Keele University & Science Park, in terms of business accommodation is the Borough's flagship offer to knowledge intensive industries. Tenant businesses provide a variety of jobs spanning ICT, Medical Technology and

Healthcare (see further 'Place and Infrastructure' section). A recent survey demonstrated the value that the Science Park delivers in creating higher skilled jobs, it found that employees based at the Science and Business Park were paid a higher weekly salary than average for the North Staffordshire area, indicating a requirement for a higher level of employee skills from Science Park tenant businesses.

The high specification of the Innovation Centre buildings and the proximity to the University naturally attracts businesses with a vested interest in research and development, higher level skills and or the kudos of association which could benefit their bottom line. The Borough Council will continue to work with Keele University & Science Park to encourage development of Keele Science Park Phase 3 and attract knowledge intensive businesses to Keele Science Park through marketing support, lobbying for infrastructure investment and planning advice.

Keele University Science Park is continuing to innovate the way in which it supports knowledge intensive businesses. The Nova Centre, which will open in January 2012 in the refurbished Farm House on Keele campus, is designed to offer a follow-on support package for these early stage companies that will benefit from a 2-year business growth programme and office accommodation. For those that are not ready to take business accommodation there is also an offer of a Virtual Office. The Nova Centre will favour businesses that can demonstrate their plans for significant growth, employment opportunities, provision of new products and services, introduction of new skills to the area, or are highly innovative.

The Borough is working with Keele University to explore means by which this initiative might be rolled out to suitable businesses in Newcastle Town Centre.

4. We will invest in the development of the professional & business services sector

Professional & business services are an important knowledge intensive sector that offers the potential for further growth in Newcastle. Our approach is based around three main activity areas:

- Appropriate accommodation (both commercial and residential),

The provision of appropriate commercial and residential accommodation is necessary to attract and retain highly skilled workers in these sectors. Proposals for new business accommodation in Newcastle Town Centre and new executive housing are contained in the Place and Infrastructure section

- Working with FineST

FineST is the umbrella professional services network in North Staffordshire and is host to future FineST, which aims to develop and create opportunities for the future leaders of North Staffordshire. As members of FineST, the

Borough Council will continue to work with them in promoting networking, good practise and opportunities for increasing business opportunities and by hosting events.

- Supportive procurement policies

We will continue to work with FineST to ensure that local businesses have access to procurement opportunities. This has included working on the development of a 'highway code' for collaboration, assisting smaller companies to work together to bid for larger contracts.

5. We will make the most of the Borough's successful logistics sector

Logistics has been a major growth area in the North Staffordshire economy over the past decade, due largely to the good connectivity that the area enjoys (now it has the A50 east-west route as well as the M6 connecting the north-west and the Midlands) and our position close to the centre of the country. We will continue to court such development.

It is mistakenly believed that logistics employs fewer people (in relation to floorspace occupied) than manufacturing, pays poorer wages and requires a poorer range of skills. Recent research from inward investment agency Instaffs UK suggests that this is not necessarily the case. For instance, the three large distribution firms based at Lymedale Park, New Look, TK Maxx and George are all national or regional headquarters and, as a result, employ a considerable number of managers, finance, IT, legal and HR staff, logistics engineers, and technical people as well as drivers and warehouse staff. These three firms employ around 2100 people between them. Most manufacturing firms occupying similarly sized buildings would not necessarily employ more people, offer better pay or require a greater range of skills than these (though clearly high value-added, high technology manufacturers would and hence the priority given in this strategy to the further development of Keele Science Park).

At the time of writing there are two large distribution buildings, Alto 415 at Lymedale and Blue Planet at Chatterley Valley (415,000 sq. ft and 385,000 sq. ft. respectively), both commissioned in advance of the current economic downturn, which remain unlet. These are being actively marketed by their developers. These buildings are also capable of being occupied by large scale manufacturing firms should there be development enquiries from manufacturers seeking space of this size. The Council will work with their developers and their agents to find suitable occupiers for these buildings, each of which, when occupied could potentially bring 500 or more new jobs to the area.

The Council has plans to continue the development of the Chatterley Valley site on land to the west of the Blue Planet building, (described as Chatterley Sidings and Peacock Hay). The high cost of site preparation and off site highway improvements (in the absence of further financial support from

Advantage West Midlands) may now make this difficult to realise, particularly given the slow down in the economy in general and in the market for large scale logistics development since 2008. The Council will work with the landowners and their agents to explore alternative means of bringing forward Peacock Hay for light industrial development without the need for such extensive ground modelling and highway investment as was previously envisaged.

We recognise the marketing value of having such an environmentally prestigious building as Blue Planet in the Borough and will continue to specifically promote this in marketing literature produced by the Borough Council and work with partners to secure a tenant for the building.

6. We will seek to optimise the benefit to local companies from public sector procurement.

The Borough Council spends around £20 million each year on procuring goods and services. A number of actions has already been undertaken to make doing business with the Council as easy as possible for local businesses. This includes a dedicated procurement section of the website, work undertaken with FineST to develop a 'Highway Code' for collaboration, and regular contact with local business organisations.

Sensitive procurement can also have a positive effect on the local economy and the environment. Larger contracts frequently include a requirement for companies to explain how they would 'increase the local pound' and minimize environmental impact. Information is also required on the sustainability of a provider's supply chain and sourcing arrangements. For example, the tender specification for the café within Jubilee 2 required the identification of average food miles linked to the provision of the service, and the use, where possible, of local trainee placements and apprenticeships.

We will continue to support local people and businesses through the council's procurement policies. This will include improvements to the website to allow easier access to contract information and wider dissemination of relevant information through websites such as Build-up North Staffordshire (BUNS) and Think Local 4 Business (TL4B). We will support local people into jobs through use of the 'Public Procurement Framework for Jobs and Skills' which comprises several approaches to securing contractor support for training and recruitment initiatives, thereby securing greater access to jobs and skills for local people.

'Place and Infrastructure' – Physical transformation

7. We will draw up a Masterplan to guide the future development of Newcastle Town Centre

The Borough Council and its partners have developed a 'Strategic Investment Framework' (SIF) as a vision for the future development of the town centre and to frame a series of actions to raise the attractiveness and appeal of the town (see further 'Image and Marketing').

Taking its lead from the SIF the Borough Council commissioned master planners Broadway Malyan (supported by commercial agents Cushman & Wakefield) to undertake a series of development options and commercial development appraisals of development sites in Newcastle Town Centre and this makes a number of recommendations about the planning and development of the three key development sites in the town, Blackfriars, Ryecroft and Nelson Place.

A key recommendation is that new retail led regeneration is the catalyst for further regeneration of the town centre and that

- the Ryecroft site (based on the site of the former Sainsburys supermarket and land adjoining, including potentially that of the present Civic Offices) is identified as the priority site to develop this.
- Nelson Place (a block of sites to the east of Barracks Road) is identified as suitable for the creation of a new Civic Quarter and,
- in the case of Blackfriars (the block between Blackfriars Road and Pool Dam), a range of uses complementary to the town centre, including bulky goods retail; residential or civic uses are proposed. Retail development here would be considered to be in competition with, rather than complementary to, the town centre.

This development options study was based on optioneering against objectives for the town centre and viability assessments of those options. The delivery strategy sets out the option of a development agreement approach (between the Council and a selected developer) to achieving the preferred form of development for Ryecroft and Nelson Place. Finally each site is subject to design briefs which set out the design principles which should be followed when developing proposals for each of the three sites. An excerpt from these is provided below:

IMPORT SPD DIAGRAMS HERE

Converting this master plan into realisable development projects is the subject of the next section.

8. We will bring forward proposals for retail and business accommodation in Newcastle Town Centre with priority placed on growing its professional services and a distinctive retail offer

Plans for Newcastle Town centre's retail and business accommodation are contained in the masterplanning work discussed above.

New Retail Development

The Ryecroft site based on the site of the former Sainsburys supermarket and the present Civic Offices is identified as the key retail opportunity in the town as this lies inside the town centre ring road and would therefore work with the grain of existing pedestrian shopping flows based around the High Street, Castle Walk and The Ironmarket.

The development strategy for the Ryecroft site envisages a development of around 180,000 sq. ft. of new retail space comprising a 60,000 sq. ft. department store and a quality food store of around 35,000 sq. ft. (acting as co-anchors to the scheme), a further 60-90,000 sq. ft. of retail units designed to satisfy the current lack of modern purpose built retail floorspace in the town and a 750 space car park. Only with this scale and level of ambition, it is felt, can the town achieve the necessary 'step-change' in its shopping fortunes and turn back the long-term loss of trade to out-of-town retail parks.

The first step in realising this was made with the acquisition of the former Sainsburys site in July 2011, in partnership with Staffordshire County Council. The next key step is the marketing of the development opportunity in order to seek a development partner to work with the Borough Council to realise a retail development of the scale and character described above. Once this is achieved, then a decision by the Borough Council will be made on the relocation of its offices (to enable the developer to assemble a large enough site for the scheme).

The Ryecroft scheme will accommodate retailers which have not up to this point have been able to locate in the town due to the limitations of current property offer (typically historic, narrow, deep and multi-level).

Consideration will also be given to managing the change in the retail focus of the town centre which is likely to result from the Ryecroft scheme and the impact this may have on the more peripheral shopping areas of the town. For instance, a complementary string to the Council's development strategy is to play to the town's strength in independent shops, many of which are clustered in areas like Bridge Street, Merrial Street, King Street and Lower High Street. It is anticipated that custom in these areas of town will be increased if and when the Ryecroft scheme is completed as a result of increased numbers of shoppers and visitors to the town but in addition to this, these clusters of independent shops will be more actively promoted (see further 'Image and Marketing') as one of the town's distinctive attractions along with 'town centre events', 'where to eat', 'town centre trails' and 'the food market'.

New Business Accommodation

Town centres are the most sustainable locations for new office development as day time workers help to support nearby business in shops, leisure and food and drink without the need to make additional journeys. The Borough Council will promote the further development of offices in the town (and promote the availability of available offices in the town such as Lancaster Building) and will work with Instaffs and the North Staffordshire Inward Investment team to attract and steer office enquiries to the town.

Discussions are underway about the possible co-location of the Borough Council, Newcastle Police Station, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and County Council staff based in the Borough. Depending on the outcome of the Ryecroft redevelopment, see above 'New Retail Development', this could take the form of a new consolidated offices providing substantial financial savings to all parties.

In private sector terms, there are a number of suitable development opportunities in the town, including land adjoining the new Travelodge, the former Maxims Nightclub site (together with land adjoining), the former Blackfriars Bakery site, land adjoining the new Sainsburys store and the site of the former Zanzibar nightclub in George Street. Achieving that investment will, of course, depend on the strength of market interest and the appeal of the sites available.

Currently much of that interest is finding its way not to Stoke-on-Trent City Centre or Newcastle Town Centre (the key development priorities for the two local authorities) but to out of town locations. With this in mind, sketch schemes have been prepared to demonstrate how office developments of between 8000 and 50,000 sq. ft. might be accommodated on four sites in Newcastle Town Centre, each capable of accommodating modern open plan style buildings, generally of three storeys in height, each with plentiful car parking. These are illustrated below:

IMPORT ARCHITECT'S DRAWINGS HERE

Just as the Borough Council successfully challenged the decision to allow the doubling of the size of the out of town Tesco supermarket at Trent Vale in 2010 (a decision, which, if permitted, would have had drawn significant levels of trade out of Newcastle town centre), the Council will also challenge proposals to continue the leakage of jobs in the professional and financial services sectors out of Hanley and Newcastle to out of town centres where there are suitable, available and attractive alternative development opportunities in Hanley or Newcastle Town Centre. Some of these are demonstrated by the sketch schemes illustrated above.

Complementary interventions

Complementary factors in making Newcastle Town Centre a more desirable location for new investment in both retail and offices are also

- Investment in the quality of the public realm: a £1.2 million start on the town centre public realm project will be made in 2012 with the closure of Hassall Street to through traffic, new paving and street furniture and investment in attractive new market stalls. However, in the long term, significantly greater investment is required to enhance the fabric, look and feel of the town to visitors, office workers and shoppers. Sources of funding this will continue to be explored.
- A better food and drink 'offer': while the town has a number of good restaurants, it is planned to support these by promoting what we have and through improvements to the 'visit Newcastle' and 'Places to eat in Newcastle' web sites
- Increased town centre living: a number of edge of town sites suitable for housing development exist (the former Tittleys Fruit and Vegetable Warehouse in George Street, The First Bus Depot on Liverpool Road, and the former Bristol Street Motors site off London Road, and developers will be encouraged to bring forward residential-led schemes on these sites
- Improving the management of town centre car parks (this could include, for example, a review of the pricing structure, pay-on-exit arrangements and payment by card)..
- Creating a clearer 'sense of arrival' in the town centre through VMS (variable message signs) drawing attention to where to park in the town and forthcoming town centre events.

Some of these actions are discussed further in the section 'Image and marketing'.

9. We will promote the further development of Keele University Science and Business Park

The Borough Council will continue to work closely with Keele University to realise its plans for the further development of its Science and Business Park, including the development of the next phase of the park, the development of a Conference and Training Centre, further Innovation centres, and increased promotion and marketing for inward investment.

Phase 3 of Keele Science Park comprises 70 acres (28 ha) of prime development land adjoining Keele University. The science park to date comprises a Postgraduate Medical School and four Innovation Centres with a combined floorspace of 110,000 sq. ft. of high tech business space

accommodating 50 technology based companies employing around 700 people. Bio-composites, Erigal, Siemens Wind Power, Cobra Therapeutics, Recipharm Cobra, Dermal Technology, Internet Central, Navman Wireless, Synetrix and TRB Chemedica are amongst the firms based here. These represent high value, high growth, high tech businesses with first class pay and career prospects and skills requirements – opportunities for local people to aspire to (both as prospective employees and to establish like enterprises themselves) and as a magnet for bringing fresh blood into the area.

The new phase of development comprises 13 development plots which could potentially accommodate around 600,000 sq. ft. of new business space and around 2500 new jobs. The frontage plot is planned to be developed for a major Training and Conference Hotel expected to be developed in 2012 and the existing Home Farm building, to be known as the Nova Centre, is currently being renovated for business occupation.

The University is also exploring the use of Home Farm for graduate enterprise. With the support of Staffordshire County Council, a fifth Innovation Centre, 30,000 sq. ft. in size, is due to be completed by the end of 2012 and this will accommodate the needs of two growing technology firms (currently housed in smaller premises on the science park) as well as space for new businesses. Plans for a sixth and seventh Innovation centre are also being drawn up, though the timetable for their construction will depend on market demand.

The pace of development on the park will be increased through greater proactive marketing of the site using the host of blue chip companies located on the park as a key selling factor.

Whilst the Staffordshire Local Economic Partnership (LEP)'s proposal to create a North Staffordshire 'enterprise zone' (based on a portfolio of three sites - Etruria Valley, the former Creda factory at Blythe Bridge and Keele Science Park phase 3) was unsuccessful, the submission process demonstrated the will amongst the local authority and business community to push for new inward investment.

The establishment of a four star conference hotel, which could start development in 2012, will help showcase the area, the Science Park and the businesses based here as well as hosting their international visitors. This would be a significant economic boost for the area (many business visitors currently often stay outside the area altogether e.g. near to Manchester Airport) as well as providing an important marketing tool for the area in its own right.

10. We will endeavour to enable the development of higher quality housing for current and future residents, with an explicit aim to increase the attractiveness of North Staffordshire as a home to affluent residents

Newcastle (and North Staffordshire as a whole) would benefit enormously if a larger proportion of the higher income people who work in the area were to choose to live in or close to the urban area. The impact would be felt in terms of the range of the local retail, food and drink and cultural offer the area is able to maintain, the make-up of the school population as well as the harder economic consequences of higher rate income and consumer spending. Importantly (in the context of an economic development strategy) housing high earners locally would also help to retain local entrepreneurs (and would-be entrepreneurs) and business leaders close to the area in which they work.

Currently around 13,000 professional people and senior managers commute to work into Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle from the surrounding Districts of Stafford, Staffordshire Moorlands and (the former local authority districts of) Congleton or Crewe and Nantwich. There are many reasons why people chose to live a distance from their place of work including schooling, lifestyle, the environment, a certain retail offer and availability of the right type of property. These reasons provide the starting point for establishing what can be done to reverse (or, at the least, reduce) this.

In the 1930s Newcastle Borough Council established a residential area to the south west of the town centre (The Westlands) with the explicit objective of housing higher income groups. So it can be done. Recent research from consultants Arc4 suggests that the market for top-end executive housing (of a value of £500,000 or more) across North Staffordshire as a whole may not be large and could be satisfied by the provision of 10 to 20 new build properties per year (i.e. this may only therefore account to around 200-250 properties over a 15 year period).

Housing high earners locally is a North Staffordshire-wide objective, not limited to the Borough alone and the Borough Council will work with our planning colleagues across the area to identify suitable locations for what is sometimes referred to as 'executive housing'.

Newcastle Council is shortly to prepare a Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) to identify suitable sites for new development in the Borough and one of its objectives will be to make some provision for higher value housing. A clear pointer to geographical preference is illustrated by the fact that nearly half of all E to H banded residential properties in the Borough lie in just three wards, (Keele, Loggerheads and Whitmore, and Westlands).

While it is not envisaged that this will be proposing new development in the open countryside, or in the form of 'gated developments', one option it may explore could be to permit the small scale growth of established villages such as Madeley, Loggerheads or Keele which have schools, shops and community facilities so allowing for a more sustainable form of development. Opportunities may also lie in the provision of development plots suitable for self-build housing.

11. We will bring forward new sites for employment and housing through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to enable the further growth of the Borough

The private sector is the principal engine of growth; but that growth can be frustrated by a lack of suitable and viable development opportunities which are attractive to the market. This includes the availability of sites, modern infrastructure and a supportive and easy to use planning regime.

In the short term there is sufficient land for new housing development and new employment development but to avoid the prospect of future growth being artificially held back by a sites shortage, work is now underway to prepare a Site Allocations Development Plan Document to make provision for new land allocations up to the year 2026.

Feedback from the development industry makes it clear that developers and their industrial clients (whether factories and logistic companies) are looking for sites which are relatively close to the principal road network (which in Newcastle terms means the A34 or the A500). In recent years the success of Lymedale Park, Parkhouse East and West and High Carr Business Park provides clear evidence of this and the Council in its role as local planning authority will aim to bring forward future land of this calibre and type to meet the needs of the next decade and more.

The Borough Council has also jointly commissioned an independent review of its employment land portfolio (with Stoke-on-Trent City Council) against the projected employment land needs of the area over the next 15 years and the recommendations from this study will be used to inform decisions on future site proposals (The Development Plan Document (DPD) referred to above)..

Much of Newcastle's success in attracting new industrial employment to the area in recent years can be attributed to a central location and good accessibility to the nation's motorway network via the M6 and A50. Connectivity via rail is also a key asset for the area's businesses with frequent direct rail services to London Euston. Long term, the area may be served by the high-speed route, HS2, which will operate a 200 - 240 mph service between London and the regions (akin to the French TGV). There will be stations serving this route to the east of Birmingham and at Manchester Airport but it is not known whether this will make provision for a stop in North Staffordshire. If this cannot be secured, then future Government lobbying will focus on retaining the quality and frequency of service to and from Euston that the area currently enjoys.

Theme C, 'People' – Transforming ambition

It is widely recognised that the changing national economy requires that we provide a labour market with the right skills to participate fully in the local economy. This is especially important in North Staffordshire as evidence indicates that we have not yet addressed the demands of a changing economy.

Although post industrial decline has left a legacy of low paid industrial jobs we have made much progress and will continue to build on our successful track record of economic development, regeneration and inward investment.

It is acknowledged that in Newcastle under Lyme and North Staffs we rely too much on low wage sectors such as call centres and distribution, which keeps the economy at the low value end. (The imbalance between gross weekly pay is currently Newcastle 404.5, West Midlands 467.5 and Nationally 500.4) Evidence also suggests these jobs are necessary in order to provide a mix of opportunities for the wider community.

The positive legacy of the Housing Market Renewal Programme has seen local areas uplifted through new housing developments, housing refurbishments and environmental improvements. All of which make Newcastle a more attractive place to live and work and encourage new people and businesses to move into the area – reversing the negative perception held by some.

However, evidence also suggests that skilled young people are more likely than anyone else to leave the area. We will work with the LEP and other partners in order to address this issue.

In 2008 the Work Foundation report suggested the implications for long term economic development are significant and that the situation needs to be addressed. Since 2008 much has been achieved through close working with our partners to concentrate our efforts on key priorities. An example of this is the more strategic and joined up approach in North Staffs to address worklessness. This approach was initiated by the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership (NSRP), which brought partners together in order to work collaboratively to address the issue.

12. We will raise skills reduce worklessness and raise aspirations as a core element of all transformational strategies

We know that skills are integral to accelerating economic prosperity; creating competitive business advantage and empowering individuals to change their own lives for the better and we recognise that higher and further education has a critical role to play in ensuring that we have the right skills mix to help build a stronger, evenly balanced and more vibrant economy.

As well as having the right skills mix, employers require people with employability skills. Important elements of employability skills include a positive attitude, a professional approach, being well motivated, displaying appropriate work behaviour, good communication skills, a flexible approach, an ability to present themselves appropriately, turn up on time and be committed to the work. This is echoed in the Staffordshire Employers Skills Survey 2010 (phase 1), which states that employability skills were considered to be of more importance than vocational and formal qualifications.

Also, a recent survey by the Institute of Directors found that 90% of its members believed that not only could the education system do more to prepare young people for the world of work, but that businesses should do more too.

The role of schools

Schools need to know what businesses are looking for and employers need input from schools to better understand how businesses can make effective contributions to the curriculum. In Newcastle schools the District Employer Engagement Group (DEEP) is a delivery mechanism for the Staffordshire Partnership, which has a county-wide responsibility for employer engagement with respect to work experience, work-related learning, the new Diplomas and professional development for teachers.

The Family Employment Initiative

Skills gaps issues are also being addressed locally in Newcastle through partners such as the Family Employment Initiative, Newcastle under Lyme College (NULC), the Aspire Group, Newcastle CVS and through The Work Programme. However we still have many issues to address regarding our supply of readily employable people.

There is a particular challenge in providing the right kind of training for those people who have been unemployed over a long period of time and especially those who have never worked. In July 2011 2,406 people were claiming Job Seekers Allowance, which is 1.8% lower than the West Midlands figure and 0.8% lower than the Great Britain figure. However the total claimants stand at 11,350 and 5,860 of these are claiming Employment Support Allowance, which is slightly higher than the West Midlands and Great Britain percentage.

In order to address these issues Newcastle under Lyme College (NULC), Employer Engagement Team work closely with employers to better understand their demands for skills and to ensure that the college delivers the correct training to meet their needs.

The Skills Funding Agency's (SFA), invest £4 billion annually into colleges, (including NULC) providers and other training organisations to provide the education and training needed by employers, employees and future employees to progress and improve what they do - increasing the chances of success for all.

Here in Newcastle we work in partnership to support the SFA mission to ensure that people and businesses can access the skills training they need to succeed. This is informed by the needs of businesses, communities and sector and industry bodies. Our formal link with the SFA is through the LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation group.

As stated earlier in 2008 we saw more emphasis placed by partners on joint working to agree targets, identify gaps and reduce duplication of services. Partners worked together to produce the North Staffordshire Employment and Skills Business Plan 2008-2011. The overall aim of the plan was to reduce worklessness and develop a highly skilled local workforce to improve economic performance and competitiveness.

The Jobs, Enterprise and Training Service

A key initiative prioritised within the plan was the establishment of the Jobs Enterprise and Training Service (JETs) which integrated worklessness support measures for those people furthest away from the workplace. In addition to the JET service, in Newcastle the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, the Borough Council and Aspire worked together to establish the Family Employment Initiative, which has been based in Knutton since 2009.

As well as the wider employment and skills partnerships, a local employment and skills partnership group was established - Newcastle Employment and Skills Group (NESG) to bring partners together to oversee the JET and FEI as well as providing valuable networking time to share good practice and to ensure that partners added value to each others work rather than duplicate services, which had happened in the past.

Since February 2009 FEI have engaged with over 600 people, provided training for over 200 and supported almost 200 people back into work. Evaluation carried out by Ekosgen in July 2011 shows that FEI delivers good value for money with an average cost of £1,813 per client supported back into work. This compares very favourably with similar programmes and equates to a social return on investment of up to £22.28 for every £1 invested.

The work of the FEI combined with a more joined up approach with partners has also addressed a number of the recommendations in the North Staffs Skills for Life Research and Evaluation Study 2010. Recommendations include better collection, management and sharing of data, clear indicators of priority wards, geographic targeting of provision and measures to maximise participation and most importantly accessible service delivery.

Volunteering

As part of the journey back into training and work it is widely recognised that volunteering can provide unemployed people with skills, experience, increased confidence and self esteem. 'Work Together' is a Great Britain wide initiative that aims to encourage unemployed people to consider

volunteering as a way of improving their employment prospects while they are looking for work. Locally voluntary and community organisations play a significant role in the 'Work Together' programme. Jobcentre Plus recognises the important role that voluntary work can play and is encouraging unemployed people to consider taking up volunteering whilst they are looking for paid work, as well as ensuring they are fully aware of what they are able to do.

Actions

- Continue to support the successful FEI model in Newcastle
- Explore funding options to sustain the FEI model post March 2013
- Continue to work with the LEP E&S Implementation Group to address priorities identified in the work plan
- Re-establish NESG in order to ensure effective communication between service deliverers
- Work with partners to address employability issues
- Continue to work with Staffordshire Partnership and the DEEP group to raise ambitions of the young people in schools

13. We will work toward getting the right skill mix to increase productivity

As stated earlier, evidence suggests that as well as having the right skills mix, employers require people to be employable. This issue is recognised by the Local Enterprise Partnership, Enterprise and Skills Group, (a partnership of local employers with a shared interest in transforming the local economy and providing public agencies with the knowledge and expertise necessary to ensure that provision meets the needs of local business, now and in the future).

The LEP Enterprise and Skills Group have identified eight priorities, which will be progressed by the Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group through the work plan, which is updated annually:

- Apprenticeships
- Enterprising Culture
- Life Skills / Foundation Learning
- Science / Technology / Engineering / Maths as a career path
- Future Skills / Jobs
- Graduate Implementation
- Business Support / Start up advice
- Communication

The Implementation Group will focus on issues relating to the provision of skills (for both adults and young people); the employability of the Stoke and Staffordshire workforce; barriers to business start ups/enterprise; and

supporting small and medium enterprises (including social enterprise) to thrive and grow.

Keele University addresses the LEP priorities by offering professional development courses and training for industry, public sector and a range of other organisations in a variety of study options. Many of the courses are accredited by professional bodies and count towards continuing professional development portfolios.

Keele University also have access to hundreds of highly skilled and enthusiastic graduates and students who can bring fresh ideas to benefit business. The University is currently working on a range of initiatives to suit different employers and different students with various commitments. Opportunities include:

- Graduate internships of up to 12 months
- Student placements to take place either during vacation periods or part time during term time
- Work experience opportunities of up to 4 weeks

Actions

- Continue to work in partnership with the LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group to address priorities
- Continue to work in partnership to support Keele University, Finest and NULC to address skills gaps

14. We will stimulate demand for higher skills and create opportunities for people to acquire relevant skills for current and future industrial structure

To stimulate demand for higher skills and create opportunities for people to acquire higher skills the Borough Council will work with the LEP and support the work of the lead organisations in this field: Keele University, Staffordshire University, The North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce, Newcastle under Lyme College, Stoke on Trent College and the LEP.

The issue of relevant skills is recognised by the Keele employability charter, which states that a degree alone is not enough. The aim of the charter is *to prepare graduates for their future in work and as citizens by developing breadth of vision understanding and ability to be effective in different environments.*

Keele University is committed to ensuring that in addition to subject knowledge, all students will acquire generic employability skills and to have the opportunity to develop these further through the completion of a personal

development portfolio, Keele Certificate of Employability and through work placement and internships.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) reinforces the view that employers are looking for more than just technical skills and knowledge. They particularly value skills such as communication, team working and problem solving. Evidence suggests that job applicants who can demonstrate they have developed these skills will have a real advantage.

The Keele offer has been further enhanced by the recent announcement that Keele University Science and Business Park (KUSBP) and Keele University have teamed up with Staffordshire University and the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce to form the Business and Innovation Group (BIG) – see 'Economy' section for more details..

This work is complemented by Finest, professional services network. The Finest mission is to be a catalyst for the growth and development of member businesses and the professional services sector in North Staffordshire, through its Projects Group key objectives are the recruitment and retention of skills in North Staffordshire along with supporting and raising aspirations in all tiers of education

Gaps in training have also been highlighted as an issue by the Local Enterprise Partnership. Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) as a career path have been highlighted as an area to improve. A key action of the LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group Workplan is to ensure that training providers have the capacity to ensure that employer demands are met.

Evidence suggests that we don't have enough young people choosing science related subjects; consequently we cannot meet the demands of the sector. Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has raised this as a serious issue for the UK and suggests that we need to double the number of new science graduates over seven years or see skills jobs disappear. This issue is echoed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS), which aims to inspire young people (16 – 19yrs) to take up science and maths post 16.

A positive example, which addresses this issue locally is Staffordshire University who currently provide a work based MSc in professional engineering. The work based approach provides both direct and indirect benefits for the employer by avoiding costs associated with having key personnel away from work for extended periods. Study and the assessment material is negotiated individually with each student so as make maximum use of what is needed by the employer

Actions

- Work with Keele University and Staffordshire University to identify opportunities for graduate placements

- Work with Staffordshire University to prioritise engineering training to meet local firms requirements
- Continue to work with Finest focusing on support for the business and professional sectors
- Work with partners to provide more focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths)
- Continue to work with the LEP to address current and predicted future skills gaps

15. We will develop a long term strategy to address worklessness

Although the claimant levels in Newcastle continue to fall, as stated earlier there are currently 5860 Employment Support Allowance claimants in Newcastle. This figure remains persistently high. These are the people who are furthest from the jobs market and who require tailored support to re-engage with the training and jobs market.

Get Britain Working is the Governments approach to reform the welfare system in order to fight poverty, support the most vulnerable and help people break the cycle of benefit dependency.

The Work Programme is a key strand of this approach, which aims to ensure good value for money for the taxpayer by basing payments largely on results, and paying providers from the benefits saved from getting people into work. It is very much a partnership between Government and providers from across the public, private and third sectors - including social enterprises.

It is anticipated that the Work Programme, which will see the expansion of the private sectors role in the welfare state will guide the long term unemployed back into work.

The issue for Newcastle is to ensure that the Work Programme compliments existing programmes such as Family Employment Initiative, which continues to have a positive impact across the Borough and has achieved good results.

We will continue to work closely with the Aspire Group which plays a key role in addressing worklessness in Newcastle. Aspire's Employment and Skills Strategy March 2010 clearly describes their approach to deliver on the employment and skills needs of residents and is viewed as part of the Aspire Groups core business. This focuses on work placements, apprenticeships, qualifications, jobs, self-employment, training and support for new businesses and enterprises.

PM Training, which is part of the Aspire Group, is one of the largest social enterprises in the country. It aims to tackle worklessness among young people by offering those with limited or no formal qualifications an alternative route into employment. PM Training is currently establishing a new training centre in Newcastle. The centre will provide more opportunities for local young people to access training and apprenticeship opportunities. The centre will feature workshops, training areas, classrooms and offices and will help young

people to develop essential skills in the construction and housing sectors. It is anticipated that the centre will create training for 150 young people and 100 of these will go on to apprenticeships. PM Training helps to support around 200 apprentices each year across a wide range of service areas.

It is widely recognised that apprenticeships give people the chance to learn and gain nationally recognised qualifications - while getting a weekly wage. The Staffordshire Providers Association (SPA) acknowledges that an apprenticeship is one of the best ways to fill the skills gap in the UK workforce. SPA provides a communications network with member organisations and encourages links with other professional bodies to improve the quality of learning with regional and national developments.

By signing the Memorandum of Understanding the Council will seek whenever possible (subject to compliance with its Standing Orders) opportunities for work with PM Training either directly or via its list of suppliers of services, sector firms and other third parties. PM Training will seek to secure maximum local benefit from projects through the provision of training and supply of apprentices. For instance, in the Housing Market Renew Programme, PM Training carried out work on the gateways project along Knutton Lane and Lower Milehouse Lane as well as facelift work on Knutton High Street and St Bernards Road, creating apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds, adult apprenticeships and training through 'Train to Gain', in total providing training and employment opportunities to 75 people.

Actions

- Ensure join up between existing initiatives and Work Programme
- Continue to work with the FEI and Aspire Group to address the worklessness agenda and especially the promotion of apprenticeships through PM Training building on the Aspire Group's employment and skills strategy
- Work with partners to host a high profile apprenticeship event for local employers
- Continue to work in partnership with the LEP to address worklessness, and
- Locally we will continue to work in partnership with Newcastle-under-Lyme College, which delivers a range of apprenticeship frameworks as well as bespoke training to employers through 'Straightforward Training', its employer engagement department.

Theme D, *'Image and Marketing'* – Transforming perceptions

16. We will develop an external marketing strategy for the Borough

Whilst much of this strategy is focussed on making a tangible transformation, unless people are aware of the changes taking place and the assets currently on offer, transformation is unlikely to happen. The Borough, and the role it plays in the wider sub-region, needs marketing – and this is not simply synonymous with advertising. Attention needs to be paid to ensuring that both the 'product' and the 'price' are right to elicit a response from our target markets. In addition, marketing messages must be based on reality rather than aspiration. The SIF has provided a clear and strong framework around which to base town centre marketing initiatives but the Borough has much more to offer both as an inward investment and a tourism destination.

How: Specific actions are

Market Newcastle's assets as an inward investment location

Within North Staffordshire, enquiry handling and promotion of the area as an inward investment location is primarily carried out by two organisations, Invest Staffordshire and Make It Stoke-on-Trent, the former (previously Instaffs) based in Stafford and covering the whole county and the latter (previously the North Staffordshire Inward Investment team) based in Stoke. The first priority of our approach to future marketing will be to ensure a seamless service is created between these two teams to maximize the benefit to the area.

The focus of these two organisations is sub-regional, but as far as the Borough itself is concerned the principal objectives of our marketing strategy are:

- To raise the profile and investor-awareness of Newcastle Town Centre, its qualities and development opportunities; this will include office development, leisure and retail, food and drink and residential development, all of which we will seek to bring in greater numbers to the town centre.
- To promote Keele Science Park for high tech inward investment including new Innovation Centres, and a new Training and Conference Hotel.
- To attract manufacturing and other employment investment to sites and premises around the Borough including land at Chatterley Valley, Chesterton, Lymedale Park, Cross Heath and Silverdale.

To do this we will work with our colleagues at the City and County Councils, and with agents, land owners and intermediaries to identify prospective investors, present investment opportunities to them and help them to overcome obstacles which may stand in the way of their development intentions.

We will use digital media, including the Borough Council's own website and that of Instaffs and the 'Make it Newcastle' brand, as well as the printed media, including the preparation of a new Employment Land Compendium. Regular dialogue with local and regional agents, architects and commercial advisors will also play a part in promoting the Borough and its investment opportunities.

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LEP should agree how the area will be marketed externally

The LEP has proposed the development of a unified strategy for Stoke and Staffordshire for tourism, and the same for inward investment, with delivery thereafter.

- NBC will work closely with the LEP in marketing the area and will ensure that its voice is heard in the development of strategies and subsequent action plans

17. We will improve the quality of life offer for current and future residents

North Staffordshire needs to improve the quality of life offer for current and future residents based around the different selling points for different groups. Newcastle has a key role to lay in the differentiation of the sub-region and so it is vital to work with partners on the development of our offer. Because of the varying needs and expectations of different groups we will need to emphasise a variety of different selling points.

How: Specific actions are

Develop 'offers' for key target markets of high skill workers

Typically these might include young professionals seeking affordable housing and an easy commute or more experienced professionals looking for 'executive homes' and access to schools. Before developing offers it is essential to define our target markets, therefore we undertake a review to determine customer profile and define target markets.

Use the SIF to deliver 'quality of life' improvements in Newcastle Town Centre.

The town centre is at the heart of the Borough community, and a key economic driver and improvements here will demonstrate a shift in organisational and partnership culture towards a more creative, proactive and co-ordinated approach to delivering local quality of life. Through the SIF, we will aim to develop the distinctiveness of the place and facilitate, through development where required, a balance of appropriate town centre uses that supports this, particularly focussed on the cultural and retail offer but also seeking to enable offices, leisure and housing of appropriate scale.

We will seek to maintain and develop a complementary and distinctive offer to that of Stoke-on-Trent City Centre, consistent with the North Staffordshire brand and in a reciprocal strategic manner.

We will specifically develop the town's role as a 'character centre', focussing particularly on revitalising the soul of the town centre, notably its street markets (The Stones) and marketplace.

We will 're-imagine' and re-assert Newcastle as an urban market town – a key part of the quality of life offer that in turn supports our longer term aim of becoming more recognised as a 'University Town'.

We will promote, modernise and upgrade the quality of the street markets, keeping them relevant to our local community as well as developing a higher quality, sustainable markets culture that is distinctive and, over time, attracts a wider range of visitors..

18. We will support the development of North Staffordshire's existing 'experience economy'

The annual tourism economic impact assessment, undertaken by the Enjoy Staffordshire Partnership, shows that in 2009 1.6m trips were taken to Newcastle, with an estimated total spend by visitors of £94m. Furthermore, almost 2,500 jobs are supported by the tourism sector in the Borough.

Gradually increasing affluence has led to the growth of the 'experience economy', whereby consumers are seeking added value from retail, leisure and tourism sectors. There are many gems in the North Staffordshire experience economy, including Alton Towers, Trentham Gardens, ceramics, canals, etc, all of which are easily accessible from Newcastle.

How: Specific actions are:

Identify joint projects as a sub-region to develop local tourism

Tourism is an area where all local authorities in the sub-region benefit from working together to build on assets across the area, such as theme parks, ceramics, gardens and canals to increase the proportion of visitors staying overnight and thereby spending more in the area. The LEP has identified a growing rural economy supported by the tourism and food and drink sectors as a key attribute of the county. Furthermore, the LEP Board acknowledges its need to work with existing partnerships and specialist sector interest groups, one of which is the Destination Management Partnership (DMP). The DMP, known as the Enjoy Staffordshire partnership, has made a significant contribution to tourism within the area but more needs to be done to create a clearer tourism offer.

With the pending increase in student fees, all universities will be seeking ways of differentiating their offer. Although, as a campus university, Keele is a self-contained unit, it recognises that it needs to offer potential students an excellent experience package. For example, students tend to live off campus in their second year and quality of life factors in the vicinity play a more important role, e.g. good transport links and a vibrant retail, leisure and cultural offer.

- NBC will support LEP marketing and tourism related initiatives to attract visitors, business tourism, inward investors, students.
- NBC will continue to support the Enjoy Staffordshire Partnership and will seek ways to play a more active role.
- NBC will work with Keele to improve the student experience and links with the town centre.

Investigate options for improving the quality of hotels, conference and eating/drinking facilities in the area.

As the recession continues to bite and more people choose to holiday within the UK, the scope for attracting UK visitors to the Borough grows. The opening of the town centre Travelodge, plus plans for the Keele conference hotel has increased the number and range of bed spaces available to visitors.

Business tourism is another area for development and Keele campus is a consistently popular and award-winning destination.

- NBC will work with Keele University to promote the development of the Keele Sustainability Hub. Based on the Home Farm site, this will be used to house and demonstrate the latest environmental technologies. This facility will be open for businesses, schools and the public to learn about environmental technologies and will also be available to the community for exhibitions/lectures, etc relating to environmental technologies.
- NBC will seek to bring the former St Giles & St George's school back into use, possibly as a conference/training centre, for the benefit of the town centre generally and for the wider benefit of the local business community.

19. We will use the Strategic Investment Framework as the basis for investment in the cultural and retail experience of Newcastle Town Centre

Newcastle town centre plays a pre-eminent role in the economic future of the Borough. In response to this a Strategic Investment Framework (SIF) for the town centre has been developed with considerable input from partner organisations providing a context and a delivery vehicle for actions to improve the economic well-being of the town centre. Although the SIF represents a long term commitment, the action plan is revised annually.

The over-arching aims and principles of the SIF were to develop the distinctiveness and character of Newcastle town centre. The SIF summarised Newcastle as an urban market town with a progressive campus university. The inter-relationship between these two identities lies in a collective need for maturing and expanding the Borough's overall quality of life offer, investing in both housing development and proactive place marketing that expands the critical mass to support an enhanced town centre.

Pillar 1 of the SIF, 'Retail Remade' proposes actions to improve the 'core business' of the town, significantly improving the retail offer, environment and experience by building on existing strengths and character. Pillar 2, 'town and culture' is about creating reasons to dwell in the town centre, specifically growing the cultural and leisure offer and housing.

How: Specific actions are:

Retail should continue to play a strategic part, particularly as it can contribute to the quality of life for visitors and for current and potential residents. Over the last two years, during the worst part of the recession, the vacancy rate within the town centre has consistently been lower than the national average. Whilst a number of high street chains may have disappeared, the independent sector has remained fairly robust over the period, suggesting a certain resilience amongst local businesses. However, the town currently lacks floorspace of sufficient size to attract key multiples. Attracting large scale developer investment into the town centre is covered in the section Place and Infrastructure.

- Retail networking and communication

The development of the retail offer needs to be a partnership between all town centre stakeholders. Based on SIF recommendations, steps have been taken to set up a town centre partnership, which will have a legal entity and bring together retail, leisure, food and drink businesses, local authorities, police, educational establishments, etc, to develop Newcastle as a destination.

- NBC will work with existing town centre businesses to set up a town centre partnership (TCP). The TCP will develop initiatives to raise the profile of the town and increase footfall.
- Retailers, possibly through the TCP, will be encouraged to consider a loyalty card scheme.
- NBC, with other partners, will explore the possibility of a town centre website, listing shops, restaurants, etc alongside other relevant information.

- Investing in the quality of the public realm

The SIF recognised that there was a need to improve the environment within Newcastle Town Centre to improve its attractiveness to shoppers. The identity and performance of the street market is critical to this.

Locally, research conducted for the Borough Council has shown that the market suffers from a poor layout in the town and that the market stalls are urgently in need of replacement. The Borough Council, in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, has prepared proposals to close Hassell Street to through traffic in the daytime and re-align the street market whilst providing new modern market stalls and re-paving the Hassell Street / High Street junction to reinforce its status as a pedestrian area. Associated works will also take place to introduce a bus lane on Barracks Road and create a new taxi rank at the entrance to the Ironmarket. Following public consultation on the proposals, the Borough Council's Cabinet has approved this scheme for implementation and delivery will begin in 2012.

- Shops for art

A scheme will be developed in conjunction with relevant partners to make vacant shop units look more attractive. This has already been trialled and it is planned to build on the work already undertaken. Typically this might include artwork displays and possibly other cultural uses such as 'shop front theatre'.

Pillar 2 of the SIF, 'Town and Culture', is about creating reasons to dwell in the town centre, specifically developing the cultural and leisure offer. One of its key recommendations is consolidating the local food and drink offer and seeking ways of promoting the offer within the town centre. In this respect, the Borough Council will

- work with partners to develop the 'local food' offer for the town centre. This could include simple actions, such as encouraging market traders and other outlets to promote the origin of the foodstuffs, to more complex solutions such as a food festival,
- explore, in conjunction with partners, the possibility of setting up a local tourism group. The Borough Council has worked with retailers during 2010 and 2011 to deliver a series of events, in addition to the popular Jazz & Blues Festival, designed to raise the profile of the town and increase footfall. Some key retailers have become more involved with event organisation and this good work will be further developed.
- establish a cultural partnership. Design and innovation emerged as key drivers across the sub-region in the North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy 2004-2014 and prominent amongst the innovative actions have been tourism-related projects such as festivals and events. Events programming (in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent) is a significant area of development for the *city region* - encompassing sports, cultural, business and other events - and will be a key plank of our image-building work.

The Jazz & Blues festival, started in Newcastle town centre in 2006, provides an excellent example of how partnership working can develop and sustain a successful event. Furthermore, in 2010, a small amount of funding from the

County Council provided the spur for a number of successful events aimed at raising the profile and increasing footfall in the town centre. These included a Mad Hatter's tea party, an Oatcake festival and a summer holiday themed event with a children's treasure hunt. The Breast Cancer Campaign also organised a very well supported 'Pink' day in the town centre raising over £6000 for the charity. In 2011, the Oatcake festival and the 'Pink' day have been reprised, along with trialling new ideas including an 'Historic Frolic', a festival of dance and a week-long programme of circus related activities.

- An events group was formed in spring 2011 and this group will develop an annual programme of events which will contribute towards the aims of the TCP. As well as building on the successful Jazz & Blues festival, other key events will be developed. This might include, for example, building the Oatcake festival into a more extensive food festival, or taking advantage of Newcastle's historical connection with the development of the modern circus.
- Market the town centre to supplement tourism and inward investment objectives

The SIF highlights the fact that several of the challenges faced by Newcastle are interlinked and thus any potential solution must be cross-cutting. Property consultants Alder King suggest that the main reason for the lack of retail investment in Newcastle is that there is a general lack of awareness of the town within North Staffordshire and elsewhere, as well as it being blurred amongst neighbouring and competing centres such as Hanley. This suggestion clearly paves the way for, and exemplifies the benefits of, a coordinated marketing campaign for the town centre. However, in developing a marketing strategy for the town centre, it is essential to treat the town as a product.

NBC, in conjunction with partners will produce a marketing strategy for the town centre

20. We will develop a network of North Staffordshire ambassadors

We recognise the value of good publicity for North Staffordshire as a whole and the need to highlight and celebrate our successes. The report 'Transforming North Staffordshire' recommends the creation of a network of Stoke and Staffordshire Ambassadors who are passionate about what the region has to offer. The ambassador network should be made up of individuals passionate about the area who are seen as volunteering their time and enthusiasm (rather than 'hired celebrities' employed to promote a region about which they have no intimate knowledge or empathy. The network also requires clear objectives and a clear, unambiguous and consistent message promoting the benefits of investing, living, working and studying in North Staffordshire.

There are a number of models already in existence for ambassador schemes; some involve small number of high profile, well known ambassadors, deployed carefully and sparingly at high profile events, others use large numbers of less well-known ambassadors from a broad range of backgrounds. Both models have their strengths and weaknesses.

How: Specific actions are

As this is a North Staffordshire-wide issue, NBC will work with the LEP, the County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the universities to encourage the development of ambassadors willing to promote the area within their fields of influence.

Alongside this, the Borough Council will continue to run its business forum, the Newcastle Business Panel, to discuss issues of strategic importance to the Borough.

Monitoring and Review

The Borough Council will publish an evaluation and review report at the end of the five year period covered by this strategy (2017) and a mid-point report, two and a half years from adoption, reviewing progress against the objectives set.

The mid-point review will give decision makers in the borough Council and their partners the opportunity to assess success to date, remind ourselves why initiatives are being pursued and the join-up between them. The review may also take the opportunity of fresh initiatives or changes in the economic or financial landscape and capitalize on them. It may also suggest changes in emphasis or priority.

A more detailed review will be undertaken after five years, after which changes in the economic and financial circumstances of the country (and the area) will be more clear and it may then be more appropriate to consider more fundamental changes in direction, including new initiatives.