

Growing the Economy Action Plan 2015 - 2019 - Publication Version

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## 1 . Background

### 1 Background

**1.1** In August 2015, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) released a 10 Point Plan which intends to help boost rural productivity. Whilst some points of the plan are not within the District Council's remit, there are areas which can be supported by the District Council's actions and priorities.

**1.2** On the 22 September 2015 all members were invited to attend a briefing which outlined the District Council's current regeneration and business support activity. The aim of the briefing was to seek an agreed way forward to focus limited staff resources to support the growth agenda in a sustainable manner

**1.3** Members were asked to assess a number of points for consideration, which were aimed at creating a focus for service delivery in order to make the Forest of Dean an attractive place for business. During the discussion members raised a number of issues and suggestions.

**1.4** The Action Plan seeks to reflect this discussion and proposes a list of actions for each key issue. The actions are listed in order of timescale priority. Members and officers will be responsible for delivering the objectives of the plan.

**1.5** On the 10 December 2015 the District Council's Cabinet resolved to approve the Action Plan for a 3 week key stakeholder consultation. The action plan has been amended to reflect the comments received.

**1.6** The plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure that actions are being progressed and achieved.

## 2 . Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Priorities

### 2 Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Priorities

#### 2.1 Digital Connectivity

2.1.1 One of the 10 key priorities in the Government's Rural Productivity Plan is for superfast broadband to be delivered to 95% of all UK households and businesses by 2017.

2.1.2 Members noted their concerns regarding the closure of the Fastershire project in the Forest of Dean. Moreover, limited feedback had been received from the Fastershire project managers in relation to the project's achievements within the District or where there is still a job to be done.

2.1.3 The digital connectivity priority will also address the issue of poor mobile phone connectivity due to the lack of mobile signal and data connection (3G & 4G) throughout the Forest.

2.1.4 Proposed actions are as follows:

- Investigate the outcome of BT's Fastershire project in the District and identify where the gaps remain.
- Continue partnership effort with the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association (WVFDTA) to improve digital connectivity for tourism related businesses
- Meet with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and BT to explore future investment requirements.
- Focus on greater partnership working with Gloucestershire County Council to deliver faster broadband in areas where provision is not in place.
- Continue to work as part of the Joint Economic Growth Committee to improve mobile connectivity and work with providers to improve connections within the Forest of Dean District.
- Mobile Phone Connectivity - explore potential new mast locations.
- Encourage developers to support telecommunication infrastructure within the construction phase of development.

#### 2.2 Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership & Growth Hub

2.2.1 Members noted the importance of strengthening links between the District Council, GFirst LEP and the Growth Hub. Members felt that improved links and communication would help raise the profile of the Forest of Dean both regionally and nationally.

2.2.2 Proposed actions are as follows:

## 2 . Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Priorities

- Improve communications relating to funding, events and sector groups with the LEP, Growth Hub secretariat, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Gloucestershire Chamber of Commerce, Business Clubs and FODDC Members.
- Invite the LEP secretariat to join the Cinderford Regeneration Board.
- Arrange a 'Growing the Economy' workshop/seminar event with the aim of promoting the LEP and Growth Hub to a wider audience, and to identify business and wider stakeholder economic priorities for action.
- LEP Sector Groups – Seek to increase Forest business representation on the individual sector groups.
- Actively engage with the LEP Strategic Economic Plan update and review.

### 2.3 Skills & Training

2.3.1 Members noted the importance of providing high quality skills & training for young people, in order to encourage employability and to foster indigenous economic growth.

2.3.2 Proposed actions are as follows:

- Poor education outcomes from 11-16 provision are holding back young people. Liaise with the LEP and link in with the School's Commissioner - Sir David Carter, with a target to raise the quality of pre-16 provision
- Work with providers to raise awareness of the high quality post-16 provision choices within the district.
- Lobby public transport providers and Gloucestershire County Council for improved transport options and services for transport for young people and set out an agreed minimum level of service to fit the learning day.
- Research formal apprenticeships and a student placement programme, and scope for onward progression. Research to include liaison with the post 16 providers for other young people's views. Information should be actively disseminated through schools and forest business partnership events.
- Continue to signpost skills and training events/courses run by others e.g. Forest of Dean Entrepreneurs.

### 2.4 Planning for Growth

2.4.1 Proposed actions are as follows:

- Continue to support Town and Parish Councils in the development of their Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- Continue to work in partnership to deliver key regeneration opportunities within the District such as the Cinderford Northern Quarter, Five Acres and Lydney Harbour.
- Actively engage with GCC and the LEP in the future development of countywide plans.

## 2 . Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Priorities

### 2.5 Town & Village Centres

2.5.1 Members noted the importance of vibrant and thriving town & village centres and the contribution they make to the economy of an area.

2.5.2 Proposed actions are as follows:

- Continue to monitor the health of the four towns using the LEP's Retail Pathfinder Toolkit.
- Improve member engagement and communications between the District and Town & Parish Councils.
- Review the Newent Town Team activity and explore whether this approach can be extended.
- Work with the Growth Hub to capture the business confidence input into the 2015 Annual Reports.

### 2.6 Tourism

2.6.1 One of the key growth areas for the economy of the district is the tourism sector which has seen a 48% growth in the past ten years.

2.6.2 The District Council is a partner in the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) along with Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association, Forestry Commission, Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Monmouthshire County Council. Additional stakeholders will be joining in 2016 from GFirst LEP and Hartpury College.

2.6.3 The District Council also has a Service Level Agreement with the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association to promote the destination.

2.6.4 Proposed actions are as follows:

- As part of the DMO FODDC will support World Host training.
- Tourism Business Support – Use the 'Growing the Economy' event to identify new areas of working.
- Monitor and Review the Service Level Agreement (SLA). The current SLA ends in 2016/17.
- Tourism Skills Training – Investigate how to improve school and business links.

## 2 . Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Priorities

### 2.7 Transport

2.7.1 Members considered transport as a major priority issue for the district. Transport includes road, rail, cycling and walking. Investment in transport is seen as critical in encouraging economic growth in isolated areas.

2.7.2 Proposed actions are as follows:

- Meet with Severn Bridge owners/operators, and liaise with adjacent MP's to discuss implications for Forest residents & businesses once the bridge tolls expire in 2017/18.
- Condition of the roads –
  - Liaise with GCC to ensure the Highway Improvement Programme places more emphasis on the delivery of Forest roads and junction improvement proposals.
  - Liaise with GCC to ensure that highway infrastructure is of adequate standard for the current and future increase in HGV movements to and from quarry sites should mineral extraction grow within the district.
- Greater engagement from members with the emerging and future GCC Local Transport Plan consultation.

### 2.8 Dean Forest Railway

2.8.1 Dean Forest Railway presented proposals in July to expand the existing heritage railway line north to Cinderford. Members agreed that Dean Forest Railway is a key tourist attraction within the District.

2.8.2 Dean Forest Railway is seen as a key project as it could improve both the tourism and transport offer within the district. It is also one of the most significant projects within the district which is being managed by a voluntary sector organisation. Additional benefits could include improved transportation links for young people in the district.

2.8.3 Proposed actions are as follows:

- Confirm District Council support in principle for this long-term investment to extend the route of the heritage railway.
- Investigate how the District Council and the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association (WVFDTA) can help support the delivery of the phased proposals.

## 3 . Delivery Mechanism

### 3 Delivery Mechanism

**3.1** The Action Plan will be implemented by officers from the Commercial Services team, Regeneration team, and members.

**3.2** Opportunities for apprenticeships and student placements will be explored to provide valuable work experience and to assist with the workload.



## 4 . Monitoring & Communication

### 4 Monitoring & Communication

**4.1** In order to monitor the effectiveness of the action plan, it is recommended that a Baseline Economic Indicators report is prepared to illustrate District wide and ward level data.

**4.2** Data monitored will be as follows: Gross Value Added (GVA), New Business Start-Up, Business Survival Rates, Unemployment Claimants, Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Claimants, Educational Attainment, Town Centre Performance.

**4.3** A quarterly progress report will be prepared to monitor actions. The report will be presented to the Growing the Economy Cabinet Support Group at their quarterly meetings.

**4.4** In order to continue promotion of the Forest of Dean to further economic growth, it is suggested that a quarterly briefing note is issued alongside the progress report for members, to help them inform their ward members and businesses of the action plan progress.

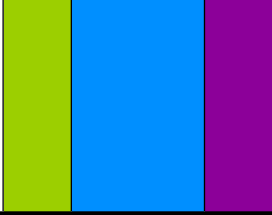



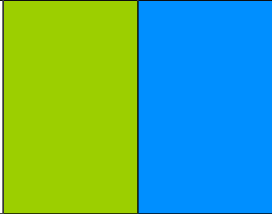


**4.5** As a DMO partner the District Council will also continue to promote the visitor destination of the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley.

## 5 . Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Timescales

## 5 Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Timescales

Short	<1 year	Medium	1 -2 years	Long Term	>2years
SECTION		TIMESCALE		RESPONSIBLE	
DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY					
1. Investigate the outcome of BT's Fastershire project in the District and identify where the gaps remain.				Officer	
2. Continue partnership effort with the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association (WVFTA) to improve digital connectivity for tourism related businesses.				Officer	
3. Meet with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and BT to explore future investment requirements.				Member	
4. Focus on greater partnership working with Gloucestershire County Council to deliver faster broadband in areas where provision is not in place.				Officer & Member	
5. Continue to work as part of the Joint Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee to improve mobile connectivity and work with providers to improve connections within the Forest of Dean District.				Member	
6. Mobile Phone Connectivity - explore potential new mast locations.				Officer	

## 5 . Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Timescales

7. Encourage developers to support telecommunication infrastructure within the construction phase of development.		Officer
<b>GLOUCESTERSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP &amp; GROWTH HUB</b>		
1. Improve communications relating to funding, events and sector groups with the LEP, Growth Hub secretariat, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Gloucestershire Chamber of Commerce and FODDC members.		Officer & Member
2. Invite the LEP secretariat to join the Cinderford Regeneration Board.		Officer
3. Arrange a 'Growing the Economy' workshop/seminar event with the aim of promoting the LEP and Growth Hub to a wider audience, and to identify business and wider stakeholder economic priorities for action.		Officer
4. LEP Sector Groups – Seek to increase Forest business representation on the individual sector groups.		Officer
5. Actively engage with the LEP Strategic Economic Plan update and review.		Officer & Member
<b>SKILLS &amp; TRAINING</b>		
1. Poor education outcomes from 11-16 provision are holding back young people. Liaise with the LEP and link in with the School's Commissioner - Sir David Carter, with a target to raise the quality of pre-16 provision.		Member

## 5 . Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Timescales

2. Work with providers to raise awareness of the high quality post 16 choices within the District.		Officer & Member
3. Lobby public transport providers and Gloucestershire County Council for improved transport options and services for transport for young people, and set out an agreed minimum level of service to fit the learning day.		Member
4. Research formal apprenticeships and a student placement programme, and scope for onward progression. Research to include liaison with the post 16 providers for other young people's views. Information should be actively disseminated through schools and forest business partnership events.		Officer
5. Continue to signpost skills and training events/courses run by others e.g. Forest of Dean Entrepreneurs.		Officer
<b>PLANNING FOR GROWTH</b>		
1. Continue to support Town and Parish Councils in the development of their Neighbourhood Development Plans.		Officer
2. Continue to work in partnership to deliver key regeneration opportunities within the District such as the Cinderford Northern Quarter, Five Acres and Lydney Harbour.		Officer & Member

## 5 . Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Timescales

3. Actively engage with GCC and the LEP in the future development of countywide plans.			Officer & Member
<b>TOWN AND VILLAGE CENTRES</b>			
1. Continue to monitor the health of the four towns using the LEP's Retail Pathfinder Toolkit.			Officer
2. Improve member engagement and communications between the District and Town & Parish Councils.			Member
3. Review the Newent Town Team activity and explore whether this approach can be extended.			Officer
4. Work with the Growth Hub for business confidence input into the 2015 Annual Reports.			Officer
<b>TOURISM</b>			
1. As part of the DMO FODDC will support World Host training.			Officer
2. Tourism Business Support – Use the 'Growing the Economy' event to identify new areas of working.			Officer
3. Review the Service Level Agreement (SLA). The current SLA ends in 2016/17.			Officer
4. Tourism Skills Training – Investigate how to improve school and business links.			Officer
<b>TRANSPORT (ROAD, RAIL, CYCLING &amp; WALKING)</b>			

## 5 . Action Plan 2015 - 2019 Timescales

1. Meet with Severn Bridge owners/operators, and liaise with adjacent MP's to discuss implications for Forest residents & businesses once the bridge tolls expire in 2017/18.		Officer & Member
2. Condition of the roads – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with GCC to ensure the Highway Improvement Programme places more emphasis on Forest roads and junction improvement proposals.</li> <li>• Liaise with GCC to ensure that highway infrastructure is of adequate standard for the current and future increase in HGV movements to and from quarry sites should mineral extraction grow within the district.</li> </ul>		Member (FODDC/GCC Members)
3. Greater engagement from members with the emerging and future GCC Local Transport Plan consultations.		Member (FODDC/GCC Members)
<b>DEAN FOREST RAILWAY EXTENSION</b>		
1. Confirm District Council support in principle for this long-term investment to extend the route of the heritage railway.		Officer and Member
2. Investigate how the District Council and the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association (WVFDTA) can help support the delivery of the phased proposals.		Officer



