

# South Lakeland District Council

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### 20 April 2018

## EXECUTIVE REPORT

**REPORT FROM: Cllr Graham Vincent, Economy and Assets Portfolio Holder**

### **Portfolio Responsibilities**

The Council Plan objectives as they relate to the Portfolio area of work, and cross cutting work developed through the Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy.

Working in partnership to ensure a thriving and prosperous District within the context of the wider sub-region, through effective economic development, regeneration and transport strategies.

Working in partnership to ensure thriving and prosperous town centres throughout the district.

Providing public realm infrastructure to promote the local economy.

Promoting small businesses in both towns and rural areas.

### **Policies, Plans and Strategies:**

- Economic Development Strategy
- Asset Management Strategy

### **Key Areas:**

- Economic Inward Investment
- Business Support and Sector Development
- Visitor Economy
- Town Centre Planning, Car Parks and Transportation
- Markets
- Asset Management

### **Economic Inward Investment**

The Economic Development team continue to work with a number of South Lakeland businesses that wanted to grow, and require larger premises. To date most of the preparatory work has been undertaken to hopefully see progress on some of the key employment allocations moving forward.

Some examples include:

- The Herdy Company have now re-located within Kendal. Their new premises comprise a ground floor retail section, and on the first floor, administration, design, sales and export departments in a very modern lay out.
- The office development of AUK Ltd at Prizet Services will house the Head Quarters of the company, bringing new jobs into South Lakeland.
- The new regional dealership for John Deere Tractors became operational at Junction 36, Crooklands in December 2017, bringing thirty new jobs into the area.
- Kendal Nutricare has also secured a large order for the China market for its innovative healthy baby food 'Kendamill'. Securing this order will enable a further 25 jobs to be created at the Kendal site.

These successes demonstrate that a business focussed South Lakeland is becoming the area of choice for businesses to locate and grow. According to statistics provided by Nomis, in 2017 there were 675 small businesses (employ between 10-49 people) based in South Lakeland. This supports SLDC's aim to encourage businesses to start up in the area and develop.

Estimates show that SLDC is on target to achieve the 1000 new jobs in the area by 2025. Since 1 January 2014 it is estimated that a total of 381 new jobs have been created within the district, of which 26 were created in the three quarter of 2017/18.

Statistics show that the total number of visits to the Invest in South Lakeland website in 2016 was 7,932 which is lower than the 10,969 visits in 2015. The website has now been rebuilt to create a new outward facing service that has a sharper focus on informing the investor as well as capturing much more detailed information about those engaging with it, allowing better engagement with potential investors.

SLDC are continuing to work with our partners in Barrow and Lancaster to create the Lancaster and South Cumbria Economic Partnership. This will strengthen the position of our area for investment with the creation of a prospectus of opportunity and other activity in line with the recently signed ' Joint statement of intent' to collaborate on economic development initiatives. According to the Cumbria Intelligence Observatory in 2017 80.6% of Cumbria's population are economically active. Through the encouragement of this partnership this percentage should increase.

### **Business Support, Sector Development and Visitor Economy**

The Grant Funding Agreement Contract with the Chamber of Commerce has delivered above the minimum outputs within the agreement and has so far offered support to over 50 businesses over the last 18 months through their business start-up support scheme and Cumbria Growth Hub scheme.

The ED team relaunched the business forum in September 2017 and these will now be held 3 times a year as a way of engaging with our strategic employers. The first forum was attended by over 20 businesses.

A very successful sustainable energy conference was recently held in Kendal Town Hall and organised by Community Action For Sustainability (CAFS). The event was opened by Ellergreen's CEO Mark Cropper; other presenters were from Electricity NW, Quantum Strategy, and a speaker for Tesla Europe talking about battery storage.

In 2017 the reported number of business units within the district was 7385. By supporting industries and offering events to support businesses SLDC, in partnership with Lancaster and Barrow will aim to continue to increase this number. In total 3 business events were held in 2017/18 quarter 2 and quarter which were supported by SLDC. Further work is underway to secure more events.

## **Visitor Economy**

It is estimated that 18million visitors come to South Lakeland each year.

A new business-led board for Bowness and Windermere Forward has been established, and a programme manager to support the Chairman, funded by SLDC (for 12 months at a fixed amount), was appointed in January 2018. It is expected that the Board will be self-supporting within 12 months' time and will have delivered some early projects.

Public realm works on SLDC land on the Glebe shore front, delivered with the County Council, have now been completed with a £500k investment by the District Council. This has transformed the area around the Glebe and put in place the infrastructure needed to support a world class visitor destination.

The economic development team have been leading the application into the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for over £4.5m of additional monies to support flood defence works to protect businesses on the Mintsfeet Industrial Estate, the outcome of which will be known in the Summer of 2018.

## **Car Parks**

The cash collection has now moved to a purpose built office in Kendal, which was previously operated from Langston House, Windermere. This has allowed changes to the existing collection arrangements making them more focused and efficient.

A number of parking incentives have been trialed. These incentives included a number of longer opening trials, an 'early bird' offer at Blackhall Road and the existing early bird offer at the Westmorland Shopping Centre in Kendal being reduced further in price. Except for the longer opening hours, the offers have been well received by users and whilst income at the offer sites has fallen, the overall parking account has seen growth in terms of ticket sales and income across the combined parking sites. On 1 April 2018 a trial of an early bird offer has begun at car parks in Windermere, Ambleside and Grange over sands commenced.

In 2018/19 the Parking Department is planning to develop new parking offers available in Kendal and work with partners to secure public parking at the Kendal Snow Sports Club site and also to return 100% of all monies collected (after costs) to the Club to allow them to develop further. Consideration is currently being given to how this model could be incorporated at other sites in the District.

Additionally a location for a new Car Park has been identified within Kendal, off Parkside road on land which is owned by the District Council. Plans are already advanced to secure the development and planning permission is being sought. It is hoped that this car park facility will be open to users in late summer 2018.

A District Wide Strategic review of all the parking assets is planned for 2018/19 and this will include consideration of other parking sites that may become available during the coming years and how these can be best serviced to increase the parking offer within the District.

### **Markets**

Traditionally the markets (indoor and outdoor) have been at the heart of the retail offering of Kendal town centre which has much to be proud of in terms of the mix of retail units, with many unique independent, locally owned and operated shops, and as such has a feel which is distinct from many towns where national brands dominate the high street. There is evidence that in some locations, the demand for and attraction of, out-of-town shopping centres is cooling, and the 'leisure seeking shopper' is being drawn back to traditional town centres that offer attractive mixed leisure and retail, within a built environment that includes attractive older centres. This blend of old and new, within regenerated centres is providing opportunities to dwell longer with visitors being attracted by the destination and overall experience.

SLDC are continuing to look at critical success factors or other popular markets within the North West in order to learn from them to improve the offer and, in turn, rejuvenate the market with support from our property service providers, Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH).

South Lakeland District Council sees the markets as an important and integral part of Kendal Town Centre and the work currently being undertaken is to help turn the market into a popular visitor destination.

### **Asset Management**

The proposed asset review is in the process of being completed and a strong working relationship is being formed between the new property service provider, the legal and asset management department. As part of the review, detailed work is ongoing around South Lakeland House, Kendal and Ulverston Depot and some of our key car parking sites. The work on the property asset review will link in with our Economic priority and we will when opportunities present themselves make best use of our property portfolio to support economic growth, through the use of our current and future asset base.