

South Lakeland District Council
Council
17 December 2019

Portfolio: Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio

Report from: Cllr Robin Ashcroft

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, promoting Culture leisure activities and the arts and developing strategy for cultural assets.

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

The Council plan objectives in relation to promoting culture, leisure activities and the arts.

To work with our cultural organisations to attract investment and to promote South Lakeland as a premier area for Arts and Events.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

- Economic Development Strategy
- Arts and Events
- Grants Strategy
- Licensing and Statement of Gambling Policies

Key Areas:

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

- Arts and Culture
- Grants
- Public Halls
- Use of community assets for the promotion of arts and culture
- Heritage and Events
- Heritage Listed Buildings and built environment
- Voluntary Sector Engagement in relation to Culture and Leisure
- Leisure and Recreation
- Licensing and Gambling
- Cross Authority Economic initiatives

Economic Inward Investment

Following a full application from SLDC and the Environment Agency, ERDF funding of £5.34m was secured in March 2019 for Kendal flood alleviation measures. This overall cost of the Kendal phase is £16.3m. Planning permission was granted in June 2019 for the Kendal phase of the scheme, which is expected to be delivered in reaches by March 2022. Phase 2 of scheme will be Flood Risk Management at Burneside, Staveley and Ings, with Phase 3 upland storage continuing to be developed. The total cost of the scheme has increased to £72m and the EA's full business case to secure the money to deliver the wider scheme is expected to be signed off by the end of 2019.

A £2.35m Coastal Communities Fund bid has been successful; £1m of the 'Experience Morecambe Bay' scheme will be put towards Grange-over-Sands Lido and Promenade enhancements, with the further £1.35m delivering an extension of Morecambe Bay Cycleway, an extension to the Bay Cycleway electric bike network and a number of smaller scale projects around the bay led and delivered by Morecambe Bay Partnership and the Morecambe Bay Coastal Communities Team.

Following the submission of an Expression of Interest for Kendal for the Future High Streets Fund, a response from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government has advised that, while not successful in the first round of bidding, it would be pass ported to the second round of the fund which will begin in early 2020, with SLDC invited to renew its bid at that time.

The Economic Development Team continue to have a dialogue with landowners, agents, businesses and potential developers to bring forward allocated employment sites in the South Lakeland Local Plan. Follow up conversations are being had with respondents to the 2018 Business Premises Survey who indicated a wish to expand their business. The 2019 survey was sent in November to 4,600 businesses and responses to this will be important in informing our strategies, plans and policies for the future to enable economic growth.

The Council continues to engage with Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership and influence the development of the Cumbria Local Industrial Strategy, which is now being progressed with central government through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Similar partnership working is also taking place with the Lake District National Park Authority in the

development of their Local Plan, and with the local authorities involved in the Borderlands Growth Deal.

Business Support and Sector Development

The Council has had continued participation in economic partnerships, including the Lake District National Park Business Task Force, Furness Economic Development Forum, Kendal and Ulverston BIDs, Kendal Futures, Bowness and Windermere Forward and Sedbergh Economic Partnership among others. SLDC has also built on its working relationships with strategic partners such as Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Tourism, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, attending a number of recently formed business sector panels.

Following the success of the previous three year scheme, SLDC has continued its partnership with the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, funding district-wide Business Support in South Lakeland for 2019/20. This means that businesses in South Lakeland of any size, sector and stage in life, including pre-start up, have access to business advice at no cost to them.

The MintWorks continues to be a much valued business centre, operating at close to full occupancy and with its conference and meeting room facilities in regular use. Its success is inspiring consideration of similar hubs across South Lakeland, from both the private and public sectors, the next of which is planned for the renovation of South Lakeland House and Kendal Town Hall.

Ulverston BID has approached SLDC with the intention to hold a ballot, inviting eligible Ulverston businesses to vote on the BID's renewal for a further five-year term, which would run from 2 September 2020 to 3 September 2025. Upon Cabinet approval on 5 February 2020, the ballot would be held in June/July 2020.

Visitor Economy

SLDC has agreed, with other local authorities, to make a financial contribution to Cumbria Tourism towards STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) research for 2019, which measures the volume and value of tourism across Cumbria, helping to inform tourism policy and development.

The latest STEAM figures for 2018 showed that South Lakeland's contribution is by far the highest share of any of Cumbria's districts, totalling £1.3 billion and representing 44% of the county's total tourism revenue of £3 billion. The tourism sector supports 16,177 full-time jobs in South Lakeland, which is almost half of all the tourism-related jobs in Cumbria.

Town Centre Planning, Car Parks and Transportation Strategies

The Kendal Town Centre Strategy is now in an advanced stage and due to be finalised in early 2020. The strategy will set out clear guiding principles for Kendal's future development in line with changing consumer and high street trends. This will include the encouragement of more mixed town centre uses, with more leisure, entertainment, work and living space, and less reliance on retail. The Strategy incorporates findings from the Car Parking Study, Markets Study, and the Kendal Highways and Transport Improvement Study. As the private sector-led Kendal Vision progresses through Kendal Futures, work continues to ensure that strategic work is complementary.

The Council have undertaken a car parking study of Kendal to understand where publicly available visitors, shoppers, workers and public transport car parking is under stress. The study identifies how those stresses are likely to change over time, how council car parks and other publicly owned car parks and on street car parking can be most effectively managed to maximise town centre viability and visitor spend; and to quantify the need for additional parking spaces in the context of effective parking and traffic management. Whilst this report is currently in draft and will be released in due course, actions have been taken to address some of the points in the report such as:

- Acquisition of Dowker Lane Car Park
- New Car Park on Parkside Road – Planning obtained and the scheme is currently out to tender.
- Review of all parking signage in the Town Centre to improve visitor experience.
- Installation of EV charging points throughout the District through Grant funding which was discussed at Cabinet in October 2019.

Markets

Earlier in 2019 it was agreed at Cabinet to explore the potential for an innovative and experienced operator to manage Kendal's indoor and outdoor markets as part of a two stage procurement process. As part of Stage 1 the Council investigated what interest there was in the private sector to take on the running of Kendal markets, whether that be running the markets as one or as two separate markets, understanding the financial implications this would have on our revenue budget, understanding the economic benefits that a new operator could bring to the town and investigating what social value could be added through a different operating model for the markets.

On 2nd December 2019, the Council released the tender with a return date of 24th January 2019, seeking formal tenders with a view to outsource the management of the markets. The tender had been delayed following an expression of interest from Kendal seeking permission to appoint a company, co-operative or partnership who is innovative, and experienced in running markets.

Arts and Culture

The Council has been continuing to work closely with strategic cultural partners and organisations to encourage, support and promote culture, arts and events across the district. Close partnership working with Arts Council England and other cultural organisations has resulted in funding being secured to facilitate significant initiatives to promote South Lakeland as a leading cultural destination and premier rural area for arts, events and festivals.

The Council is supporting the major capital infrastructure developments of the Wordsworth Trust 'Reimagining Wordsworth', the new capital redevelopment of Abbot Hall Kendal and the 'Our Digital Future' initiative at the Brewery Arts Centre.

The Council continues its work with its creative partners, Craven District Council, Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks on the 'Great Place Lakes and Dales' initiative delivering the remaining programme and action plan to promote the development of sustainable, resilient and creative communities which will in turn retain and attract younger people to South Lakeland and Craven districts to influence, support and create our future economy.

The Council has continued to work with partners to support leading cultural events such as the Lakes International Comic Art Festival, Lake District Summer Music Festival,, Kendal Mountain Festival, Lakes Alive and the Tour of Britain where Kendal hosted the Stage 4 event finish of the cycle race on Beast Banks Kendal after it passed through several South Lakeland villages on route including Sedbergh, Barbondale and Kirkby Lonsdale. We have also continued to support significant community events and cultural initiatives such as Ulverston Lantern Procession, Printfest, Ulverston International Music Festival, Kendal Torchlight, the Ruskin Museum Coniston and Old Laundry Theatre Bowness.

The Council is exploring new opportunities for cultural partnerships, initiatives and development as a cohesive part of the Lancaster South Cumbria Economic partnership initiative and the promotion of the Cumbria Public Health Strategy.

Grants

As agreed at Cabinet on 6 February 2019 the council reviewed grant commitments year on year to strategic cultural partners. These agreed strategic cultural partners demonstrate a high importance to the districts cultural offer.

Public Halls and use of community assets for the promotion of arts and culture

The Council has been supporting cultural and local events for communities through the use of public halls. Regular events held in SLDC halls include:

- Weekly coffee mornings
- Wedding Ceremonies
- Fitness Classes
- Language Classes
- Financial support through the Eden and South Lakes Credit Union
- Theatre performances
- Magistrates and Civil Courts

Heritage, Events and Heritage Listed Buildings and built environment

The Burton-in-Kendal Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSiCA) is a three year programme which aims follows a programme of improvements to buildings throughout the village to preserve the heritage and stop the loss of important architectural detail. Progress includes:

- The recent commencement of work on a £200k public realm improvement scheme to enhance this important space at the centre of the village and alleviate flooding problems to nearby properties.
- A grant offer towards the repair of the prominent Royal Hotel property
- Good progress in the preparation of a Conservation Area Management Plan and Village Design Statement.

The Council has recently given a grant to Cartmel Village Society to enable them to undertake a Conservation Area Management Plan. The aim is for this to use this plan as a supplementary planning document which will be used to inform the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plans for Lower Allithwaite parish.

Leisure and Recreation

The Council has been continuing to work in partnership with GLL to provide local leisure opportunities such as exercise classes, pool facilities, gym and indoor sports facilities for communities at locations in Kendal, Ulverston and Windermere.

A feasibility study is continuing in relation to Ulverston leisure Centre. The Council is continuing to liaise with user groups and GSK regarding future proposals. Once the feasibility study has been completed a formal consultation period will be held with user groups and the Town Council and once this has been concluded a report will be considered at Cabinet to formally agree the facilities mix.

Licensing and Gambling

As part of the Customer Connect Programme, the Licensing Service is undergoing a redesign to improve the customer journey by creating the opportunity to apply or renew a licence online. Whilst the service redesign is underway, business as usual continues.

Cross Authority Economic initiatives

SLDC continues to work in partnership with Lancaster City Council and Barrow Borough Council to increase the economic prosperity of the Lancaster and South Cumbria region. The three councils are working closely to develop a more sustainable economy and jointly promote the area as a place to live, study and build a career.

The shared economic prospectus, outlining key strengths and opportunities, was launched at Lancaster University in June 2019, where around 100 local businesses and organisations attended who were supportive of the initiative and interested to find out more.

Momentum has continued since then and conversations are now ongoing between the three authorities on the possible development of a growth deal proposal for Lancaster and South Cumbria. This ambitious plan would seek national investment for various strategically important projects to support economic vibrancy around Morecambe Bay.