

South Lakeland District Council
Council
Wednesday, 13 July 2022
Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder
Report

Portfolio: Cllr Robin Ashcroft

The Council Plan objectives as they relate to the Portfolio area of work, and crosscutting 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.

Meeting 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

Economic Inward Investment

SLDC continues to play a crucial role in working with regional and national partners to secure millions of pounds worth of inward investment into the district, including:

- Cross-a-Moor Roundabout – Contributions to the £11.6m scheme included amounts from SLDC and Cumbria County Council, with £3m secured from Highways England Growth Housing Fund, £925k from CLEP through Growth Deal funding and £2.4m from CLEP through the Cumbria Infrastructure Fund. Following project cost increases SLDC, National Highways and Cumbria County Council increased their financial contributions to ensure delivery of the project. The project has now concluded and the official opening took place on 8 June. As well as enabling the development of 1,000 new homes, the new roundabout will reduce congestion and improve safety. National Highways have also constructed a new wetland area to ease flooding in Swarthmoor. A new pedestrian footpath follows around the wetland area and seating has been installed creating a recreational site for the community. The scheme improves biodiversity through the planting of a variety of plant species and native hedgerows.
- Grange Lido and Promenade – £2.2m towards Lido restoration, funded by SLDC. £2.35m was secured from the Coastal Communities Fund for a joint Morecambe Bay Partnership/SLDC Bay-wide programme, of which £1m is earmarked for the promenade and connectivity with the lido.
- Kendal Flood Risk Management Scheme – Estimated construction cost for all three phases is £72m. The first element in Kendal is estimated to cost around £18m, with £13m secured from the EA and £5m of ERDF funding. The Council is continuing to work in partnership with the EA to ensure that the funding requirements from the ERDF funding are met through branding and material requirements, submitting claims and providing regulation progress and monitoring reports. A recent internal audit gave the Council the highest credited rating 'substantial assurance' ensuring that all the ERDF funding requirements were being met and to a high standard. Full details of the project progress has been reflected in the Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder Report.
- South Lakeland House Renovations – SLDC successfully secured £439,522.00 of LEP funding to support the creation of additional business space in Kendal town centre. This funding supported the overall project cost creating a new flexible, modern workspace available to rent. The works have now concluded and the new space has created a professional and flexible enterprise centre in Kendal Town Centre. The Kendal Business Hub offers 9 spacious and attractive offices to rent with hot-desking opportunities, along with meeting areas for hire, enabling businesses to take up short-term residency or hire rooms for meetings, training and conferences.
- GSK Masterplan – A masterplan has been completed by SLDC on behalf of the GSK Taskforce to guide the future development of the GSK site in Ulverston following the company's recent decision to reduce its operations on the site. This Masterplan seeks to establish a prosperous future for the site as a life sciences and advanced manufacturing park; and to safeguard and create high value employment in the area. Concentration is now with partners on delivery of the vision, for which Phase 1 of the leisure capital redevelopment at Priory Road in Ulverston will be an enabler.

- Borderlands Place Programme – SLDC continues to partner with Cumbria County Council and other public and private sector stakeholders as part of the Ulverston Town Team which is producing a Place Plan and Investment Plan for the town which will determine where to prioritise the £3m secured through Borderlands Place Programme, as well as seeking future additional investment.
- Kendal Vision – Following the partnership agreement with Kendal Futures on the further development and delivery of Kendal Vision, the Council is contributing £285,000 over the next three years towards a Vision Manager, Action Groups, and funding for feasibility studies and development work. A Town Team for Kendal has now been formed to support this activity and help deliver on these shared aspirations, including lead officers and elected members from SLDC, Cumbria County Council, Kendal Town Council and Kendal Futures.
- Levelling Up Fund – This government fund is designed to invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK and will support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport and cultural and heritage assets. Working closely with partners including Cumbria County Council, Kendal Town Council, Kendal Futures and Kendal College, SLDC has developed an application focused on the regeneration of Kendal town centre, in line with strategic priorities identified in the Kendal Town Centre Strategy and Kendal Vision. It is a competitive bidding process and the outcome is expected to be known later in 2022.
- Shared Prosperity Fund – This fund is part of the Government’s Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025. All areas of the UK will receive an allocation from the fund via a funding formula. SLDC will receive an allocation of £3.8million to be invested over the next three years, subject to submitting an approved investment plan to Government. This must be submitted by 1 August and is currently in development, being shaped through engagement with local partners and organisations.

Business Support, Sector Development and Visitor Economy

The 2021 Business Premises Survey was sent to 4,000 businesses on the South Lakeland Business Rates register had a response rate of 28% (1,119 responses), which is considered a statistically significant sample and can be considered representative.

Three quarters of respondents feel confident about the next twelve months, with a similar proportion expecting their staffing levels to stay the same. Compared to the results from the 2020 survey, there has been a 25% increase in confidence rates, which can be linked to positivity following the lifting of Covid restrictions.

Of the 1,119 responding businesses, 19% (208 businesses) indicated that they would expect their premises needs to change in the next 3 years. The majority expect to increase in size by means of expanding their existing premises or moving to a larger site. The 2020 survey showed a slight shift towards more businesses wanting to downsize, however this year’s results are showing a shift towards a need for larger premises. The majority of those looking for new premises would do so either in an edge of town (e.g. industrial estate) or town centre location, with Kendal being the most likely location.

Findings from the survey will feed into the Local Plan Review and help the Council to better understand the employment premises needs in the future for the Westmorland and Furness footprint.

The Council is continuing to provide essential services, partnering with Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Cumbria Tourism to provide business support, making a significant financial contribution to delivering free support to start-ups and existing businesses and delivering the Covid-19 Recovery Marketing Plan. The Covid-19 Marketing Plan was developed to restore consumer confidence following the pandemic and inspire visitors to visit the area safely.

South Lakeland's economy is heavily reliant on the Visitor Economy, which was significantly impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic restrictions and now is heavily impacted, like many other sectors of the economy, by recruitment challenges. The Council continues to work with partners through its Building Financial Resilience and Strategic Economic Renewal Group to better understand and collectively work to address this complex issue.

The Council was successful in securing funding through the Reopening the High Streets Fund and Welcome Back Fund. These funds formed part of the wider support government has provided to communities and businesses, to protect jobs and support the most vulnerable. These funding streams allowed the Council to seek ways to boost the look and feel of high streets, run and support publicity campaigns, encouraging people back into the high streets and improve green spaces whilst working in accordance with the ERDF Funding regulations.

The Reopening the High Streets Fund supported the appointment of Marshals who patrolled key tourist hotspots in Bowness, Windermere and Ambleside to share Covid guidance and monitor the area to encourage visitors to visit the area safely and with respect. Other interventions included 20mph speed limits in Town Centres, raising Covid-19 awareness and support for businesses reopening, reopening of public toilets and providing businesses with Covid-19 materials, sanitising stations etc.

The Welcome Back funding supported the installation of footfall counters in key town centres across the District to monitor footfall, as well as an extension of the Marshals contract who patrol Windermere, Bowness and Ambleside over the weekends and bank holidays, providing support and reassurance to visitors, businesses and the local community. Other activity delivered included the creation of promotional videos showcasing the highstreets' offer, support for Christmas markets, 3D virtual town tours, new litterbins to replace damaged ones throughout the District and temporary street planters.

As a direct response to Covid-19, the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Culture and Leisure established an Economic Renewal Strategy Group for South Lakeland, which includes representation from MPs, major employers and partners from around the district. This group has allowed the Council to better understand the challenges being faced and each meeting focuses on a key topic, which has included the Local Plan, Brexit, Recruitment, Advanced Manufacturing, Town Centre Prosperity and the Visitor Economy. Moving forward the group will meet on a bi-annual basis with the next meeting planned to take place in October 2022.

The Council recognises the green economy as a high growth sector and, having declared a Climate Emergency, continues to offer green business support and promote environmental awareness through its partnerships with Cumbria Action for Sustainability, Future Fixers and Green Small Business.

CAfS' is offering support for 12 micro, small or medium sized businesses of up to 20 hours and a subsidised energy audit.

Future Fixers inspires and encourages people to launch purposeful and ethical businesses. This programme includes 6 training sessions, a one-to-one session, training resources, group coaching and access to the wider Future Fixers community.

Green Small Business offer a certification scheme with support for businesses to tailor their environmental management plans and policies to reduce their carbon footprint and increase profitability, helping small businesses to better manage their environmental impacts.

Town Centre Planning, Car Parks and Transportation Strategies

The Council published its Kendal Town Centre Strategy, which sets out a long-term strategic approach to ensuring Kendal remains an attractive place to live, work and explore. This has helped to inform the Council's plans, policies and priorities and is being used to help secure future investment. The Strategy was launched jointly with the Kendal Vision, led by public/private sector partnership Kendal Futures, and a partnership approach is being taken to deliver on their aspirations to create a more sustainable and vibrant Kendal.

An Ulverston Place Plan has now been produced through the Borderlands Place Programme. This has been shaped by the Ulverston Town Team, including SLDC and a number of other public and private sector partners. It sets out the priorities for future investment for the town, and will be used to inform the Borderlands Investment Plan.

Culture, Arts and Events

Since Covid restrictions were lifted events and festivals have resumed, including events organised by the Council's strategic cultural partners; Lake District Summer Music, Kendal Torchlight, Lakes International Comic Arts Festival and Kendal Mountain Festival, all of which promote South Lakeland and support the district's economy.

The council has established a new internal Events Co-ordination Group bringing together key service areas across Licensing and Public Protection, Locality, Assets, Culture, and Parking Services. The group has provided support and guidance to event organisers throughout the district working with a significant number of organisations providing a customer focussed single point of contact approach to events on Council land and for key major events in the district. The work of the ECG will continue to be developed over the next 12 months.

The ECG group co-ordinated the work on HM Queens Platinum Jubilee and events that took place on Council land. To celebrate the historic occasion of HM Queens Platinum Jubilee the group initiated *The Light District* a once in a lifetime celebration where people across South Lakeland were invited to temporarily light up homes, gardens, buildings and monuments to create a district wide beacon of light to participate in the national moment of beacon lighting at 9.45pm on 2nd June and throughout the Commonwealth. The beacon of light was created North, South East and West of the district with Dove Cottage Grasmere, Kendal Castle, The Market Square Monument and The Hoad - Ulvertson all being lit up in purple.

The Council's support to its Strategic Cultural Partners helped in enabling the District's cultural and heritage organisations being successful in securing crucial financial investment through the national Cultural Recovery Fund, administered by Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage and the British Film Institute, with over £1.7 million investment secured which supported the development of Covid contingency plans for their operations.

The council has agreed to continue the allocation of revenue funding identified in the Council's budget to the Council's designated 12 Strategic Cultural Partners contributing to the economic prosperity of South Lakeland, to maximise impact and benefit to communities and effectively continue to deliver Council priorities in the period leading up to the creation and first year of

the new Westmorland and Furness authority's operation. This targeted strategic approach will further develop South Lakeland's cultural and creative industries and lever in additional economic and cultural investment into the district.

The Council's recognition of the value of public investment in culture that supports the wider ambition and delivery of economic, cultural, social and environmental priorities of the Council has helped to promote South Lakeland as a great place to live work and do business and as a leading rural cultural destination. The Council's strategic approach to SCP funding has also enabled organisations to lever significant levels of other funding investment for the benefit of the area from the Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage, Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, and significant national trusts and foundations. Some of the SCPs of the council are also National Portfolio Organisations of Arts Council England.

The Council has continued to be a supportive partner and investor in major capital infrastructure developments of the Wordsworth Trust 'Reimagining Wordsworth project and the 'Our Digital Future' initiative at the Brewery Arts Centre Kendal.

The Reimagining Wordsworth major capital project has been delivered - Wordsworth Grasmere has had its official opening and is now a transformative family friendly cultural heritage attraction featuring Dove Cottage, an upgraded Wordsworth museum, garden, family and community-learning space that is now fully open to the public.

The Brewery Arts 'Our Digital Future' project met its objectives and ambitions by refurbishing, reinvigorating and delivering digital upgrades. The venue has improved the cinemas, theatre, music venue, creative studios and is now a refreshed and modernised facility welcoming back audiences.

The Council has been working in support of the Farmer's Arms development at Lowick by Grizedale Arts. The Farmers Arms project will expand the work of The Valley project, providing a much-needed dynamic creative and industrious rural community hub. It will become a new model cultural institution delivering economic and cultural benefit and reinvention in the Crake Valley. Phase 1 of the project is underway that has seen the creation of new jobs and opportunities.

The Council has continued to work with its creative partners, Craven District Council, Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks on the 'Great Place Lakes and Dales' initiative. This programme has promoted the development of sustainable, resilient and creative communities with the aim of helping to make the area more attractive and vibrant to help retain and attract younger people to South Lakeland and Craven.

Grants - Covid Recovery Response

The Council administered 14 emergency grant schemes to businesses in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The variety of grants available has helped businesses and individuals of all sizes and sectors, safeguarding businesses and jobs throughout the district.

South Lakeland District Council distributed the highest proportion of grants in Cumbria through the 14 different grant schemes it has run.

The grant schemes have included-

- Round 1 Grants (SBGF/RHLGF/LADGF)
- LRSB, CBLP, Christmas Grants

- Additional Restrictions Grants
- Restart Grants
- Omicron Grant

All grant schemes have now closed and the Council is undertaking reconciliation.

Since the first grant scheme launch in March 2020, the Council administered £152m across 14 different grant schemes.

A recent internal audit of the Covid-19 grant schemes was granted reasonable assurance and found that the use of relevant, reliable software greatly assisted in the management and administration of the grants. It found that the Council responded promptly and appropriately to the issued Government guidance and adapted its software accordingly to accommodate any new pronouncements.

Public Halls and use of Community Assets for the Promotion of Arts and Culture

Since the pandemic the Council had been supporting cultural and local events for communities through the use of public halls.

The Council presented a report to Cabinet 9th March and received approval to enter into a long lease (99 years) with UCE for Coronation Hall on the back of a Business case/plan, investment strategy and vision for Coronation Hall. A further report will seek approval for additional grant support and capital investment for Ulverston market.

Heritage, Events and Heritage Listed Buildings and built environment

The Burton-in-Kendal Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSiCA) scheme is jointly funded by the District Council and Burton-in-Kendal Parish Council, with matching funding from Historic England. The aim of the PSiCA scheme is to see the Conservation Area removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk register, following a programme of public realm improvements, grant-aided repairs to historic buildings and wider management and planning guidance.

Year 2022/23 is the final year of the scheme: the enhancement scheme of the village Square is largely complete, and included important improvements to address drainage issues in the centre of the village. Grant aided repair work to the Royal Hotel which overlooks the Square, is nearing completion to a high standard. Repair work to a property to the west of the Square is complete. Grant aided repair to a further property on the East of the Square will progress soon, subject to listed building consent. The owners of other properties offered grant aid for repairs have indicated they no longer wish to proceed.

In February 2022 cabinet approved undertaking public consultation on a draft Conservation Area Management Plan for the village of Cartmel. The draft Plan was prepared in 2019, working jointly with Cartmel Village Society. The draft Plan:

- Sets out guidance for protecting the special character of Cartmel Conservation Area
- Identifies a List of unlisted Buildings or Features of Local Architectural or Historic Significance that are of particular merit in the Conservation Area.
- Considers whether an Article 4 Direction to control permitted development is justified, and identifies properties that are considered merit this additional protection.
- Provides a strategy for Buildings at Risk

The consultation ran from 23 March to 14 April 2022 and included a Drop- In event on Friday 25 March from 2-6.30pm in Cartmel Village Hall. A summary report of responses received has been prepared and will be placed soon on the Council's website. When conservation resources allow, additional work will be undertaken before a revised CAMP is reported to Cabinet. This will include:

- Updating contact details of owners of a number of properties referred to in the draft CAMP
- Updating the recommendations in the draft CAMP to take account of the consultation responses, and
- Some further consultation on the revised recommendations.

Leisure and Recreation

Phase 1 of the redevelopment of Ulverston Leisure Centre was approved by Cabinet in February 2022, which will see an investment of £2million to the external facilities and improvement to the infrastructure on site. Further reviews will be undertaken for future phases with the new Westmorland and Furness Council.

Leisure Centres have re-opened and Greenwich Leisure Limited has been working hard to enhance its offer and sustain itself in what has been a challenging period. The leisure operator, with support from the One Public Estate partnership, agreed a sub-lease of part of Kendal Leisure Centre for MBUHT NHS to run their physiotherapy services from the leisure centre which allows the service to be run in the heart of the community and allows patients to access the facilities on site. Further discussions are currently in progress around opportunities partnership working at Ulverston Leisure Centre.

Cross Authority Economic initiatives

SLDC has worked in partnership with Lancaster City Council and Barrow Borough Council to develop a more sustainable economy and jointly promote the area as a place to live, study and build a career. A Morecambe Bay Prosperity & Resilience Strategy has been produced identifying key priorities and opportunities for the area.

There remains ambitious plans to seek national investment for various strategically important projects to support economic vibrancy and this work is now being co-ordinated in line with the ongoing discussions for Westmorland and Furness around Local Government Reorganisation, including Eden District Council and Cumbria County Council.

Tracking Information

Signed off by	Date sent	Date Signed off
Section 151 Officer	N/A	N/A
Monitoring Officer	N/A	N/A
CMT	01/07/22	01/07/22

Circulated to	Date sent
Lead Specialist	N/A
Human Resources Lead Specialist	N/A
Communications Team	N/A
Leader	N/A
Committee Chairman	N/A
Portfolio Holder	01/07/22
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	N/A
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	13/07/22