



Thriving Economy

Thematic Progress Update

March 2022

A Plan for West Devon



Lead Member Introduction

Since we adopted our strategy in September, we've worked hard to ensure we support our Economy to recover from the pandemic as well as preparing for future opportunities.



Cllr Peter Crozier
Lead Member for stimulating a thriving economy

This is the first report on progress against our agreed plans to support a thriving economy in West Devon. I am really pleased that the significant progress made so far and that plans are progressing for how we may place ourselves to bid for funding from the Community Renewal Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund.

During this period we have:-

- Delivered a range of physical enhancements to our towns through use of the governments welcome back fund
- Implemented processes and delivered new Omicron business support grants to businesses impacted by the new variant
- Supported a new Town Centre Wifi scheme for Tavistock through Additional Restrictions Grants
- Engaged with commercial agents and land owners to develop a stronger understanding about current supply and demand of commercial and industrial units within West Devon.
- Commenced survey work with the business community in Okehampton to understand the appetite for a business improvement district or chamber
- Met with Department for Transport to understand why our levelling up tranche 1 bid for Okehampton Transport Hub was unsuccessful – and secured agreement from Devon County Council that we will submit an updated application to the next round

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| Activities on Track - 12 | Activities off track – 0 | Activities not yet due to start – 0 |
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Cllr Peter Crozier

Cllr Peter Crozier

Lead Hub Member for Thriving Economy



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| Action TE1.1 Develop a West Devon Visitor Economy Plan | |
| Key Highlights | |
| <p>A visitor marketing plan is in development involving both the Placemaking and Communications teams. Town and Parish Councils have helped to inform the plan through the engagement that's been ongoing since November. The aim for the plan is that this can then be built upon to develop a fully-fledged marketing strategy for the whole of South Hams and West Devon during year two of the corporate strategy (2022/23). The marketing strategy will be an evolving document due to the rapidly changing economic environment in which we find ourselves.</p> <p>Tourism data has been secured during the first year through an external contract. The balance of the budget is recommended to be rolled into 2022/23 for allocation within this objective and to be focused on delivering the activities set out within the marketing strategy.</p> | |
| Key Risks / Issues | |
| N/a | |
| Looking ahead to the next 6 months | |
| Engagement with Members on the draft marketing plan | |
| Overall Rating | Green – On Track |

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| Action TE1.2 Support place-based public realm enhancements in West Devon | |
| Key Highlights | |
| <p>This objective focused specifically on public realm improvements at North Tawton, Okehampton and Tavistock.</p> <p>North Tawton Town Council have made use of Welcome Back funding to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planters at the gateways to the town • wildflower borders • bunting in the town centre <p>We have tried to support them with further public realm enhancements through the use of ARG (the Community Recovery Grants) and are currently navigating a path that will enable us to release the additional funding for these improvements to be delivered. The extra improvements include renovation of the clock tower in the town centre, benches in key locations, and additional planters throughout the rest of the town.</p> <p>Our economy officers, are currently working with Okehampton Town Council to ensure that funding is spent that will have the maximum impact on driving footfall through public realm improvements. We are confident that this can be achieved before the end of the financial year. The town has already received support to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pig shaped bicycle racks • bench refurbishments throughout the town centre • planting of low maintenance, insect friendly shrubs on verges • Painting of bridge railings and finials • signage improvements • sensory garden installation • additional amenity improvements at Simmons Park <p>In Tavistock, the BID has already utilised Welcome Back funding to implement:</p> | |



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> town centre planters vacant shop vinyl campaign <p>The economy team has been working with Tavistock BID to discuss further improvements to the town centre. Although not directly a public realm improvement, the BID have also been supported to access £30k of ARG through the Community Recovery Fund to develop a town centre Wi-Fi scheme which will be rolled out over the coming months and which will include footfall monitoring software to measure the vibrancy of the town centre, while providing a service that will appeal to visitors to the town. This project has also led to match funding of £50k being drawn down through the BID towards these improvements.</p> | |
| Key Risks / Issues | |
| N/a | |
| Looking ahead to the next 6 months | |
| The focus for the next phase of improvements is on highly visible public realm based window vinyls for empty premises and flags for lamp posts, as part of the #MyPlace campaign. | |
| Overall Rating | GREEN – ON TRACK |

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| Action TE1.3 Promote active travel, cycling, horse riding and walking routes across West Devon | |
| Key Highlights | |
| This work is being included within the visitor marketing planning. | |
| Recommendation for this to be merged with TE1.1 during 2022/23 and 2023/24. | |
| Key Risks / Issues | |
| N/a | |
| Looking ahead to the next 6 months | |
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| Overall Rating | GREEN – ON TRACK |

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| Action TE1.4 Progress plans for an ecomuseum across West Devon to maximise the assets of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Dartmoor National Park and Tamar Valley AONB | |
| Key Highlights | |
| This project has been slow to progress following the unsuccessful CRF bid. However, Government feedback has been taken on board. The Shared Prosperity Fund may allow for the ecomuseum to be included within our submission this summer, we're awaiting further details on the eligibility to make a final recommendation. Meanwhile the proposed boundary, narrative and brand for the ecomuseum is in development and will be delivered by the end of April. Partners remain engaged. | |
| Key Risks / Issues | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key issue is that the CRF bid was not successful and so at this stage the plans cannot proceed as originally set out. | |
| Looking ahead to the next 6 months | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing work to position us to resubmit to the next funding round | |
| Overall Rating | GREEN – project underway despite a delayed start |



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| Action TE1.5 Champion Improved Digital (Broadband and Mobile Phone) Connectivity across West Devon | |
| Key Highlights | |
| <p>The Placemaking Team was able to influence the Community Recovery Grants project, which enabled businesses to apply for ARG to support the rollout of fibre broadband to their premises. This has enabled a significant amount of funding to be utilised in support of fibre rollout, and has drawn down match funding from both the business community and Openreach to improve delivery of fibre to isolated parts of West Devon.</p> <p>Engagement continues with Connecting Devon & Somerset and we continue to request the sharing of data for planned Airband and Openreach installations.</p> <p>Local Government Association (LGA) sees our digital connectivity programme as trailblazing and refers to our work as pathfinding. An evaluation report is in development and their plan is to share this with the government.</p> | |
| Key Risks / Issues | |
| Require more data from Connecting Devon & Somerset | |
| Looking ahead to the next 6 months | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement with the farming community is our next step - Sharing of the evaluation report with the government | |
| Overall Rating | GREEN – ON TRACK |

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| Action TE1.6 Offer business advice services for existing, expanding and new businesses | |
| Key Highlights | |
| <p>Since joining the Placemaking Team during August, the Economic Development Officers have visited every business park, industrial estate and town centre in whole of West Devon, to develop a better understanding of the business communities that we serve. The team has also used these visits to identify vacant units that can be promoted for inward investment opportunities and to facilitate growth within the local business community. During these site visits, numerous business meetings have taken place, identifying issues faced by the business community and opportunities to encourage and facilitate business growth, resilience and diversification.</p> <p>By getting to know our business community, we have been able to help shape projects like the Community Recovery Fund, making the programme better suited to serve local businesses, and ensuring that over £200k has been awarded to have a genuine impact on businesses across West Devon. We have also liaised with local business support providers and started the process of building a positive rapport with them, to ensure that the Council is able to effectively signpost businesses to other support that could benefit them. These organisations include BIP, YTKO, The Diverse Regeneration Company, Devon School for Social Entrepreneurs, and others.</p> <p>The team has also dealt with a number of direct enquiries from businesses looking for information, advice and guidance. Given that Economic Development is a relatively new service offered by West Devon Borough Council, many businesses had established other channels for finding information, advice and guidance. However, the number of enquiries being directly received by the team is</p> | |



increasing, and our reputation within the business community is creating a strong foundation upon which future activities can be built.

BIP was commissioned to support businesses and employees, resulting in more than 300 engagements.

Key Risks / Issues

N/a

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- BIP will continue their work programme
- We shall continue to engage with businesses and develop our business database

Overall Rating **GREEN – ON Track**

Action TE1.7 Remain prepared to respond to any future government business grants (Covid-19 or other)

Key Highlights

The Placemaking Team continues to liaise with Devon County Council, the HotSW LEP, and other bodies that are the main coordinating bodies for responding to Government funding opportunities. We have also supported and influenced the delivery of ARG funding for businesses, including leading the Devon Local Authorities in lobbying BEIS for additional support, and changes to guidance that would improve our ability to delivery funding to our business communities.

Key Risks / Issues

N/a

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- We shall continue to look out for new grants to bid for
- We have begun to prepare for submitting to the Levelling Up Fund Tranche 2 and the Shared Prosperity Fund

Overall Rating **GREEN – ON Track**

Action TE1.8 Deliver an Inward Investment Campaign aimed at attracting new businesses to West Devon

Key Highlights

West Devon businesses have been included within the Devon County Council led Devon Delivers inward investment programme, and this campaign has been running since July 2021.

A West Devon specific inward investment plan is in creation and will be delivered by the end of the 2021/22 financial year. The Placemaking Team has been undertaking the groundwork that will make the development of an inward investment plan possible.

We have developed a strong understanding of our business parks and industrial estates (the main locations for encouraging meaningful inward investment activities) and have identified all vacant units across the whole of SW Devon. The team has also started to build a rapport with the Estates Team and with the Assets team to ensure that we are able to promote existing and future units owned by SW Devon to potential investors.



The team has also engaged with commercial agents and land owners to develop a stronger understanding about current supply and demand of commercial and industrial units within West Devon.

The team is also engaging with businesses on existing employment sites to improve their amenities and make them more appealing for future business investors and existing employees. In West Devon, the focus of this work has been around Pitts Cleave, where poor amenities and neglected landscaping is making the sites undesirable for investment.

Key Risks / Issues

N/a

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

It is proposed that a West Devon specific inward investment plan be developed over the next 6 months (for completion during quarter 2 of the 2022/23 financial year). This can be delivered in parallel with current activities and will help to set out a pathway for attracting investment to the area.

Overall Rating **GREEN – ON Track**

Action TE1.9 Continue to support the Tavistock Business Improvement District (BID)

Key Highlights

The Placemaking Team has regular catch ups with the BID Manager. Site visits have been undertaken with the BID manager and have included introductions with some of the businesses which are BID members within the town centre. We have been working with the BID to move forward with other objectives, including public realm improvements, and we have supported the BID through the accessing of funding with the Community Recovery Fund.

Key Risks / Issues

N/a

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- Continue with supporting the Tavistock BID manager.

Overall Rating **GREEN – ON Track**

Action TE1.10 Establish a new business forum within Okehampton

Key Highlights

The Placemaking Team have undertaken several visits to the town since September and had conversations with a number of businesses. The informal feedback received from the businesses we have spoken with has identified an appetite for some kind of business forum to be established but uncertainty about what structure it should take. It was decided that a more methodical approach was required to gain insight into the current level of support for a business forum and that a survey would be the best solution moving forward.

Team Telemarketing, a specialist marketing company, have been commissioned to undertake a data cleansing exercise (using business information received via Visit Okehampton) so that we have up to date contact information for the businesses within Okehampton Town Centre. Now that this has been completed, they have commenced survey work with the business community, using a series of questions which have previously been shared with Okehampton Town Council’s working group.



The findings have since been presented to the Okehampton Town Council with our recommendation to attempt to create a Business Improvement District. This was supported in principle and we're currently costing the 12-18month campaign, reporting back to the Town Council at the end of March.

Key Risks / Issues

- Costs of the campaign not being co-funded by Okehampton Town Council

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- At the end of March we shall know whether we will be continuing with this work, once the Okehampton Town Council have decided whether or not to co-fund the BID start up campaign over the next 12-18mths.

Overall Rating **GREEN – ON Track**

Action TE1.11 Deliver a West Devon Transport Hub through the Government Levelling Up Fund

Key Highlights

We were unsuccessful in winning Levelling Up Fund Tranche 1 monies. We've agreed with Devon County Council to bid for Levelling Up Fund Tranche 2, we've secured feedback from Department for Transport on how to strengthen our application from the first round, and we now await the opening of the fund, anticipated to be during April 2022.

Key Risks / Issues

Not winning the grant

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

Await opening of the application funding window and submit application

Overall Rating **GREEN – ON Track (Revised Plans)**

Action TE1.12 Submit a bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Key Highlights

Working from what little information is available on the criteria for bidding into the Shared Prosperity Fund, we are beginning to form a short list of projects to discuss with Members. A workshop of officers is planned for 9th March involving Assets, Housing and Placemaking. We're expecting the bid to open during June 2022.

Key Risks / Issues

The opening of the grant being delayed

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- Officer workshop to refine shortlist of projects
- Bid written and submitted

Overall Rating **GREEN – ON Track**

