

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 25TH SEPTEMBER 2012

title: RIBBLE VALLEY ECONOMIC STRATEGY REVIEW 2012

submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive an update on the Ribble Valley Economic Strategy.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Council Ambitions - In addition to Ribble Valley Borough Council striving to meet its three ambitions, it also recognises the importance of securing a diverse, sustainable economic base for the Borough. The work of the regeneration section seeks to promote this.
- Community Objectives – The issues highlighted in this report will contribute to objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.
- Corporate Priorities - Delivery of services to all
- Other Considerations - None

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 It was reported to the RVBC Policy & Finance Committee on 27th March 2012 that, as a result of changes in Government policy, and the delivery of economic development, regeneration and business support, the original Ribble Valley Economic Strategy, which sets out the economic aims and objectives for the area over a 5-year period (2009 – 2014) would be reviewed. The Strategy and its actions contained a significant number of references to various structures and programmes which were either in the process of transition or would no longer exist in the future, and a review was necessary to bind together these new structures and approach to economic development in the Borough to reflect these important changes.

2.2 The Council formally adopted the original Economic Strategy in 2009, setting out the economic aims and objectives for the area over a 5-year period, and aims around 5 thematic areas of activity to guide the council in setting its own activities and resources, as well as providing a framework for partnership working, and supporting and influencing the strategies, priorities and the resource allocation of others operating in the field of economic development across Ribble Valley and the wider area.

3 INFORMATION

3.1 The draft Economic Strategy (Review 2012) document has been attached as an appendix to this report for members of the Policy & Finance Committee, and a reference copy has been placed in the members room or can be viewed on the

Council's website. In particular, members' attention is drawn to the Action Plans that are detailed within the document from pages 19 through to 25, which identify specific areas of activity to support the economic aims and objectives as well as the principal economic vision to sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley as specified within the Council's Corporate Strategy. These actions define what will be done to assist the Borough towards realising its economic vision and to aid long-term economic prosperity. Also, a summary of the key thematic areas within the document are as follows: -

- 3.2 **Regeneration & Economic Development** - maximising the areas potential to generate initiatives, projects and attract resources in line with community needs. Encourage and engage both people and businesses for collective community action.
- 3.3 **Business Support & Development** – addressing issues that facilitate healthy business performance, encouraging business start-ups, business growth and inward investment.
- 3.4 **Infrastructure & Communications** - providing the necessary 'physical environment' in areas such as transport, affordable housing, ICT & 'broadband' access, appropriate business sites and premises.
- 3.5 **Image, Marketing & Promotion** – maintaining and enhancing the perception and image of the area; inspiring and encouraging people to invest in and visit Ribble Valley whether for business or pleasure.
- 3.6 **Employment & Skills** - ensuring with partners in the public and private sectors that a diversity of training and educational opportunities are available to people and businesses to ensure a healthy labour market.
- 3.7 The Economic Strategy was broadly welcomed and following consultations with local businesses and private sector stakeholders, in particular representation from the business groups and Chambers of Trade in Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley respectively. Also, in order to reinforce common understanding and to encourage views, an economic strategy forum meeting was held as an opportunity to address current economic issues with a broad mix of business representation from across the Borough, welcoming the overall aims of the Strategy, and supportive of the issues identified and the actions proposed.
- 3.8 Finally, you agreed at your last meeting to establish an Economy Working Group, consisting of Cllrs. Ranson, Hirst, Hore, Mirfin, Horkin, Rogerson and Yearling, to further support and monitor delivery of the economic objectives and activities detailed within the Strategy, as well as address issues in relation to the Ribble Valley economy. A draft copy of the terms of reference for the group is attached at annex A of this report.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications
 - Resources – None at present, however some projects may be identified as the Strategy progresses and in such matters, a report will be presented to the Policy & Finance Committee.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal - None

- Political – None
- Reputation - The matters covered in this report link with the Council's objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Agree the Draft Strategy Review and its Action Plans.

5.2 Agree the terms of reference for the Economy Working Group set up to support and monitor activities that contribute toward a successful Ribble Valley economy.

CRAIG MATTHEWS
REGENERATION OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS: -

1. Ribble Valley Economic Strategy 2009 – 2014

For further information please ask for Craig Matthews, extension 4531.

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMY WORKING GROUP
TERMS OF REFERENCE
STRUCTURE AND REPORTING

- The group will be known as the Economic Working Group of the Policy & Finance Committee
- The Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee will chair the group.
- The minutes of any meetings will be reported to the Policy & Finance Committee.
- The meeting dates will be reactive to provide a policy steer and to respond flexibly to economic development and regeneration issues as they arise.

AIMS

- The aim of the sub-group is to aid the delivery of regeneration and economic development activities in the borough.
- To ensure the supply of employment land provision in the area meets with the identified business, economic and employment growth needs.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote understanding of general economic needs of the Borough and to advise the Council's Policy & Finance Committee as appropriate.
- To support delivery of the Economic Strategy objectives 2008-2012 as agreed by the Policy & Finance Committee.
- To ensure members are aware of economic development activities and to provide an opportunity for member guidance on economic issues within the Borough.
- To provide an informed response to affordable housing development proposals in the borough to aid delivery.
- To work in partnership with our preferred registered providers and the Homes and Communities Agency to deliver the most needed housing in the right location.
- To ensure the needs of the business community in Ribble Valley are addressed.

Ribble Valley

Economic Strategy 2009 – 2014

REVIEW 2012

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Executive Summary

Background

The Ribble Valley Economic Strategy is a means of providing clarity and detail on the Council's local economic aims and objectives as well as the actions to deliver on economic well being in Ribble Valley. It guides the council in setting its own service plans and resources, as well as providing a framework for partnership working, supporting and influencing the strategies, priorities and the resource allocation of others operating in the field of economic development across Ribble Valley and the wider area.

The Council formally adopted the original Economic Strategy in 2009. Much has changed since this time, whilst the consequences of the economic downturn in global markets were beginning to take effect in the UK, and the election of a new Government in 2010 has since brought around new changes in policy regarding the delivery of economic development, regeneration and business support. The original Strategy and its actions contained a significant number of references to various structures and programmes, which have since changed and therefore this document has been reviewed for 2012 so that it's content and various strands of activity take account of these changes, to bind together these new structures and approach to economic development.

The Economic Vision

- **TO SUSTAIN A STRONG AND PROSPEROUS RIBBLE VALLEY**

The key economic objective of the Council is to ensure that Ribble Valley remains a strong and prosperous area, and the Economic Strategy provides a focus so that the services we and our partners deliver meet the needs of our economic aims.

The main aim of the Strategy is to support and develop an economically sustainable area where investment is encouraged, skills are developed and new and existing businesses are supported. Through the work areas described in this Strategy, we aim to be recognised as a highly entrepreneurial and enterprising Borough that seeks to enhance and maintain vibrant local communities whilst promoting the protection of the environment. The document sets out desired outcomes around 5 key themes and strategic aims, each with a series of related objectives. Through a range of actions it defines how these objectives will be tackled to enable the Borough to realise its economic potential and to ensure long term economic prosperity.

Thematic Areas

The strategy sets out five thematic areas of activity. These are:

- **Regeneration & Economic Development** - maximising the areas potential for economic growth and innovation, and to generate initiatives, projects and resources in line with needs. Encourage and engage both people and businesses for collective action.
- **Business Support & Development** – addressing issues that facilitate healthy business performance, encouraging business start-ups, business growth and inward investment
- **Infrastructure & Services** - providing the necessary 'physical environment' in areas such as land for employment growth, appropriate business sites and premises, transport, affordable housing, ICT & 'broadband' access,
- **Image, Marketing & Promotion** – maintaining and enhancing the perception and image of the area; inspiring and encouraging people to invest in and visit Ribble Valley whether for business or pleasure.
- **Employment & Skills** - ensuring with partners in the public and private sectors that a diversity of training and educational opportunities are available to people and businesses to ensure a healthy labour market.

Ribble Valley in Profile

Ribble Valley is a predominantly rural Borough located in the heart of Lancashire and with an area of 585 square kilometres is the largest district in the County of Lancashire. The main commercial centres of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley are attractive market towns, which have retained much of their historic character, and are surrounded by miles of unspoilt countryside. Against this backdrop is a thriving and entrepreneurial business community of established local firms, predominantly small companies and rural industries.

Ribble Valley's strengths are in its low unemployment rates, high quality natural environment and successful businesses. Whilst the area has seen strong economic and job growth over the last decade – one of the highest in the UK – the area has also seen increasing levels of new housing and commuting out of the area for work. In the future the vision is to build on the indigenous strengths and assets of the Borough to maintain a strong and healthy economy, which contributes to the overall prosperity of the sub-region and region. One which; exhibits the right conditions in terms of infrastructure, services and environment to support its own businesses and to attract other successful businesses. A Borough, that enables enterprise to flourish, is environmentally conscious and has sustainable communities with sufficient jobs of a range and quality to better meet local needs, whilst maintaining its highly valued rural character.



This sparsely populated Borough enjoys a spectacular natural environment, much of which is included in the Bowland Forest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This natural environment obviously means that agriculture and tourism have played a significant part in the shaping of Ribble Valley's economy. Market Towns such as Clitheroe & Longridge provide two distinct focal points surrounded by attractive countryside - all of which provide important assets for the economic and social well being of the area. Over seventy percent of the Borough is in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a clear reflection of the landscape quality of the area.

The Borough has a population of around 57,800, with Clitheroe, the main administrative centre having 15,026 inhabitants. Clitheroe lies at the heart of the Borough whilst Longridge, the other main town, lies in the west. Longridge has a population of approximately 8,240. The remainder of the area is mainly rural with a number of villages ranging in size from large villages such as Whalley, Sabden and Chatburn through to small hamlets such as Great Mitton and Paythorne.

The Borough has transport links to both the M6 & M65 motorways and the A59 crosses through Ribble Valley. The rail network also has links to the West Coast mainline at Preston, and links to other major UK networks via Manchester. Also, International Airports are located at Manchester and Leeds/Bradford. This network will serve a strong role for the Borough in many ways, not only for attracting businesses and tourists to the area, but also ensuring the area is accessible to both the wider labour market and local resident population.

In Lancashire, Ribble Valley is the only district that has recorded significant employment growth in the east of the county with Ribble Valley's enterprise survival rates are also higher than national averages. With a higher level of businesses surviving after 5 years in excess of the national average. Key priority areas for Ribble Valley Borough Council include working towards a higher wage economy and ensuring quality affordable housing for our workforce.

The following statistics provided baseline information for the original Economic Strategy in 2009 on a range of factors which impact on the economic, social and environmental well being of the Borough.

Key Facts – Population: -

- Ribble Valley has a resident population of 58,000. The 3 main settlements are Clitheroe (15,026) Longridge (8,240) and Whalley (4,078)
- Ribble Valley has one of the sparsest population densities of any local authority in England with only 102 people per square km compared to an average 487 people per square km across the whole of the North West.
- Ribble Valley has a higher than average older population - 17.8% of the Borough's population are aged 65 and over. The borough has a low number of young people (31%) when compared with England (37%).
- The working age population of Ribble Valley is 34,600 (60.3% of the total population), which is similar to the North West (61.5%) and Great Britain (62%).
- It is predicted the population of Ribble Valley will increase to nearly 70,000 by 2028 (office for National Statistics).

Key Facts – Employment: -

- There are 24,100 employee jobs in Ribble Valley
- There is a higher rate of self-employment in Ribble Valley 18.9% compared to the North West figure of 7.8% and Great Britain 9.0%.
- Around 12,320 local residents travel outside of the Borough to work
- Unemployment in Ribble Valley is significantly below average.
- In 2007 there were 2,720 VAT registered businesses in Ribble Valley a total stock growth of 22%.
- Around a quarter of the working population are employed in manufacturing industries.

Key Facts - The Visitor Economy: -

- Recent years there has been a growth in visitor numbers to around 2 million people year.
- The majority of tourism businesses in Ribble Valley are small rural operations. Many are sole traders and over 50% of the accommodation stock consists of operations with three bedrooms or less and are considered 'micro' businesses.
- The revenue brought into Ribble Valley by visitors annually is estimated to be over £100 Million.
- A Visitor Information Centre is based in Clitheroe, funded and managed by Ribble Valley Borough Council. There are also a number of other facilities around the Borough providing visitor and tourism information services.

Key Facts – The Housing Market: -

- In Ribble Valley there were 22,210 households in 2001, 92% of which are privately owned. 6.2% of housing stock are second homes - for Lancashire, the ratio is 2%
- During July to September 2008, the average price of a house in Ribble Valley was £193,813. Average household incomes were £26,657, giving a household income: house price ratio of 1:7, for Lancashire, as a whole the ratio is 1:6.
- The proximity of Ribble Valley increases pressure on housing as the area is within commuting distance of urban employment areas.
- When comparing average house prices with average incomes, housing is much less affordable to local residents than the average for the County and region.
- There is a lack of supply of 'move on' properties (3-4 bedrooms). This has a knock on effect on first time buyers, as properties are not re-entering the market.
- Increasing numbers of private sector rental accommodation.

Key Facts - Health and Quality of Life: -

- 7.9% of people indicated that they were in poor general health, compared with a figure of 11% for the North West.
- Ribble Valley has a 17.1% of the resident population with limiting long-term illness. This is considerably lower than the North West with 20.7%.
- Ribble Valley Primary Care Trust has the highest proportion of people who maintain a healthy weight.
- Ribble Valley has the low proportion of people living a sedentary lifestyle and a high proportion of people doing the recommended levels of exercise. Within Lancashire, Ribble Valley has one of the lowest levels of smokers.
- Life expectancy in Ribble Valley is 81.2 for females and 78.4 for males, compared with 80.6 for females and 76.1 for males living in England and Wales.

To further aid and understand the economic position, the table on page 7 presents a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis for the Borough to capture the picture of Ribble Valley.

SWOT ANALYSIS: -

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image and perception of Ribble Valley • Low Unemployment • High Quality Natural Environment • Pleasant area to live with high Quality of Life and environmental character • Culture of Enterprise & Entrepreneurship • Established events and attractions • Rising population • Location advantages & external transport links; road (M6, M65 & A59) & rail • Low levels of unemployment & deprivation • Strong agricultural sector & resilient manufacturing & retail sector • High educational attainment and skill levels within resident population • Good business formation & self employment rates & high levels of entrepreneurship • Market towns & rural centres established in their roles • Dedicated town partnerships & Chambers of Trade • Strong employment growth & business formation in recent years • Unique heritage and environmental assets of regional significance (Clitheroe, Longridge, Whalley, Forest of Bowland AONB etc) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High housing cost • Limited amount of employment land • Hidden low wage economy in certain sectors • Small & sparse population • Lack of all weather attractions • Poor rural transport and utilities infrastructure in some areas • No established further & Higher Education Providers/Facilities • Over representation in declining economic sectors • Borough wide under-representation in 15-29 age group and generally aging population • High and increasing levels of in & out commuting (net out commuter) & worsening self-containment rate • Shallow knowledge economy & low representation of growth sectors • Low inward investment profile & limited recent success • Areas of rural disadvantage, service loss and isolation • Poor public transport provision & reliance on private transport to access employment / training • Some key sectors seen as low skill / low wage employers • Transport / Traffic constraints affecting viability of economic centres • Need for improvement to rail links |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Natural Environment • Location and accessibility to M6, M65 & A59 affording good east/west and north/south connectivity • Access to ICT Broadband Infrastructure • Vocational training opportunities (Aspire Project) • Tap and grow the volume & value of the tourism sector, particularly over night stays • Retain commuters & stem worsening self containment rate • Increase Borough's share of regional inward investment success • Potential of A59 corridor for employment development • Ability to support and build strong partnerships & collaborative working • Growth potential of existing businesses & their loyalty to area • New mechanisms, funding & legislative changes (RDPE) to support economic development • Changes in the delivery of business support (NW Business Link & business support simplification) • Corporate track record in e-Government & potential lead on ICT infrastructure / e business • Opportunities afforded by Local Development Framework • Opportunity to harness skills, knowledge & entrepreneurial potential of resident population • Opportunities afforded by environmental character & quality to grow tourism product | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of an affluent area • Lack of Government & European Funding Streams • Insufficient employment land to meet future potential needs • Housing affordability and the lack of affordable housing • Tight labour supply & perceived skills shortages / gaps (particularly lower level occupations) • Potential loss of existing firms seeking expansion • Perceived / actual mismatch of labour supply & demand • Continuing cost and competitive pressures facing traditional sectors (agric / manufacturing.) • Continuing competitive pressures facing High Streets, particularly the independent retail sector • Continuing loss of employment land to alternate uses • Low commercial vacancy rates & comparative high costs of commercial development • Short timescale of public funding creates lack of continuity of delivery programmes • Short timescale of public funding creates lack of continuity of delivery programmes • Economic growth potentially constrained by planning policies • Exodus of talented young people |

Regeneration & Economic Development

Strategic Objective

- **To identify & develop initiatives that will encourage the long-term physical and social regeneration of Ribble Valley**



A dynamic local enterprise culture is vital for the long-term competitiveness and overall success of any local economy. The prosperity of the economy in the Ribble Valley is demonstrated by having the second highest growth in business start-ups in Lancashire over the last ten years. However, there is a need to ensure that opportunities are available for businesses to continue to develop in the area. There is a need to continue to market and regenerate our market towns and villages as places to do business and to ensure that there is employment land available for development.

The issues of public transport particularly and accessibility to isolated villages are part of a perceived need for a more flexible approach and a more accessible service. Without economic prosperity, many other problems e.g. health, housing, crime, access to services are all much harder to address. This fact also reflects the current issues within the economy of Ribble Valley. Whilst the general perception from outside the area is that of a relatively affluent Borough with low levels of unemployment, the reality is that many individual and households in Ribble Valley experience lower levels of income than that of the UK average. This can create a risk of a two-track economy in the Borough, where higher income households reinforce the perception of affluence overshadowing the need to address the needs of those on lower incomes.

Regeneration should be seen a supporting activity as part of a package of economic development activity. Developing a framework for the integrated social and economic development of Ribble Valley is an underlying principle of this Economic Strategy. If we are to achieve and sustain economic well being in Ribble Valley it will be necessary not only to provide the relevant physical infrastructure, but also to develop the 'human capital' within Ribble Valley to ensure that our population are sufficiently informed and skilled to be able to participate in local economic development and regeneration activities. The need to identify and develop projects and initiatives are recognised as a priority that cuts across this Economic Strategy.

The original Economic Strategy in 2009 identified the main regeneration and economic development issues as follows:

- The need to develop and progress geographical and thematic priorities for action
- The need to link Ribble Valley's economic needs to local and national priorities
- The need to retain and enhance local services to local people and businesses
- Benefits of partnership working locally, sub-regionally and regionally
- Identify, constantly monitor and pursue opportunities in line with Ribble Valley's economic needs
- Maximising opportunities for further development appropriate to needs

Partnership Working

Government in April agreed the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The LEP is a wholly owned company limited by guarantee of Lancashire County Council, comprising of 16 Directors with 11 from the private sector.

Edwin Booth is currently the Chairman of the LEP Board. The remaining Directors are drawn from local government and university sectors.

The key purpose of the LEP is to provide the business-led leadership and single economic voice needed to enable Lancashire to compete in the market place for new jobs and investment. The LEP Board considered an independent report from Professor Michael Parkinson of Liverpool John Moores University on the development of an agreed set of strategic economic priorities for the LEP.

Key Service Centres

Clitheroe

Clitheroe plays an essential part in the rural economy of Ribble Valley and there is a continuing need to ensure the economic health and vibrancy of Clitheroe as a key Market Town and service centre, helping our rural businesses and communities remain healthy, economically and socially. A town centre masterplan has been developed to address the key issues, needs, actions and aspiration towards maintaining and strengthening the essential role of Clitheroe in the economy of the Borough as a service and retail centre for its residents and the wider rural community.

It is important that Clitheroe does not stand still and that the town and surrounding communities evolve and adapt to the changing patterns of work, culture and social activity whilst maintaining and enhancing its cultural, heritage and environmental assets. The need to maintain Clitheroe, as a thriving economic centre will be a key factor in the future economic success of Ribble Valley. A culture of independent and individual shops, restaurants, cafés, adequate car parking and efficient local transport provision and access will be essential in this process.

Ribble Valley Borough Council and Lancashire County Developments Ltd, the economic development arm of the County Council, will begin work on a Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan during 2009. The purpose of the study is to provide a clear Development Strategy and Implementation Plan to enable partners to support the promotion and revitalisation of the Town Centre, helping it to fulfil its potential as an attractive, vibrant and successful Town Centre. The Masterplan will equip partners with practical and robust project plans with options to help create a new and thriving market place and provide retail units appropriate to modern retailer requirements.

Longridge

Longridge is the second largest settlement within the Ribble Valley and has a long history of social and industrial change over the last 200 years. Located to the west of the Borough with transport links to the M6 motorway, Longridge first became recognised as a market town at the end of the 18th Century when the town became a focal point for the local farming community. The town expanded rapidly during the following century due to the large demand for labour to work in the quarries and cotton weaving mills, which emerged around this time, and the town continued to act as shopping and service centre for the surrounding villages, in particular those of Chipping and Ribchester, but also those of neighbouring villages over the district boundary within the City of Preston.

The traditional industries quarrying and cotton weaving which once supported its growth have since disappeared and today Longridge has become known for its busy town centre supported by an increasing number of independent shops and businesses. This, along with its neighbouring villages such as Ribchester, Knowle Green and Chipping, represent an area of unique heritage and environmental assets of regional significance. Longridge itself has seen a sustained growth in population in recent years and plays a continued role as key local service centre. Recent progress has seen the development at Longridge Civic Hall including new sporting facilities and the opening Willows Park Children's Centre serving the town and its neighbouring villages.

Longridge also plays an essential part in the rural economy of Ribble Valley and there will be a continuing need to work hard in partnership to deliver an ongoing programme of regeneration in Longridge as a key Market Town and service centre, helping our rural businesses and communities remain healthy, economically and socially. It is therefore vital that the town considers its future role and sustainability and the Longridge Action Plan will be developed in partnership that will address the key issues, needs, actions and aspiration.

towards maintaining and strengthening the essential role of Longridge in the economy of the Borough as a service and retail centre for its residents and the wider rural community.

Whalley

Whalley is a large village on the banks of the River Calder. The parish consists of the old village, which emerged as early as the 600's, that has grown from a traditional village centre with a large estate of new properties on the site of the former hospital just out of the centre. The population of Whalley has increased dramatically in the last 15 years – by well over 30 percent.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Progress priorities for in the major service centres of Clitheroe, Longridge & Whalley in line with their individual Action Plans, working in partnership with Parish & Town Councils and local business groups.
- Support regeneration activities in smaller settlements through the Community and Parish Planning process.
- Strengthen and develop communication mechanisms for sharing economic development information between Ribble Valley partners.
- Ensure, through effective representation, that local and national policy makers are aware of the issues facing Ribble Valley
- Ensure that the 'rural' case for funding assistance from National, Regional, Sub Regional and European sources has a high profile
- Maximise funding opportunities as appropriate to the needs of the area
- Engage with the Ribble Valley LSP steering group to take forward the Ribble Valley Community Strategy
- Work towards developing a higher wage economy

Business Support & Development

Strategic Objective

- **To work in partnership to provide support for existing and new businesses in Ribble Valley**



Ribble Valley has a strong level of business start-ups that has seen the second highest growth of all Lancashire districts over the last ten years. Sustainable development is a priority and to support this we need to help businesses strive for continuous improvement and economic growth. Sustainable development is a priority and can be assisted by providing consistent and effective business support services.

For tourism related businesses, quality is a key success factor. Improvements in facilities and quality standards within the industry are important in order to improve business performance and increase market share.

Business growth is also reliant upon possessing a varied workforce with a wide range of skills and abilities. Business development related issues, aims and activities are therefore also addressed in the Employment & Skills and Regeneration & Economic Development sections of this document.

The main business development issues identified are:

- A confusing network and a lack of awareness of organisations supporting businesses

- Inward Investment competition in other areas.
- High growth potential around A59 corridor
- Opportunity for expansion in key growth sectors such as tourism, food and drink, creative and cultural industries, digital industries, financial and professional services, sport and textiles
- A predominantly seasonal visitor economy with few opportunities for adverse or wet weather activities.

Business Support

Following Government changes regarding the delivery of business support, a new national Business Link service has now been established as new arrangements for business support in Lancashire and the UK. Business Link has been the primary agency for business support within the region and as the main gateway for access to information on the various business support programmes.

This new Business Link service includes: -

- An updated national Business Link website www.businesslink.gov.uk
- A new National Contact Centre due to come online during October 2011
- Business Coaching for Growth designed to accelerate business growth due to commence January 2012
- A national mentoring network.
- Department for Work & Pensions support for unemployed individuals looking to start a business.

Most recently, as part of these new delivery arrangements Business Link nationally has now launched two new services to help anyone looking to start up, improve and grow their business.

- My New Business - provides people in the stages of starting their business with what they need to know to get off the ground and plan for future success
- Growth and Improvement Service - provides guidance for people to get more out of their business, such as generating more sales, increasing profits, and saving time and money

Business Investment

Inward investment activity in the UK operates in a highly competitive market. Both Ribble Valley and Lancashire require a number of issues to be addressed in order for this to be developed and to attract significant inward investment in the future. Opportunities for further inward investment are also dependant on a ready supply of suitable employment land within the Borough. Also, Ribble Valley does not have the labour supply to service large scale inward investment prospects.

Research and evidence indicates that local company expansion projects and increased business start-up rates are the major vehicles for future job creation in the Borough. However, consideration will need to be given to develop effective measures that can seek to attract appropriate inward investment that can minimise the over reliance on specific employment sectors and help address issues around economic change.

The inward investment market is very competitive and smaller than in the past, however, opportunities will be sought that will highlight the key assets, due to Ribble Valley's geographical location.



Key Growth Sectors

It is recognised that it is sensible to develop an economy with a broad portfolio of employment sectors whilst capitalising upon Ribble Valley's key skills and strengths. With this in mind it is necessary to target inward investment efforts at sectors providing well-paid, quality employment opportunities, which will link in with the 'High Growth' aspirations of the UK Government. These will include businesses allied to the high quality environment including Environmental Management, Sport and Leisure and Food and Drink. In addition, lifestyle and office based activities including Arts, Crafts and Creative Industries, ICT, Financial and Professional services, would be appropriate.



Employer Relations

There is a need for greater contact to strengthen relationships with businesses in Ribble Valley to understand their needs. Workforce development is a major issue for business growth, which is reflected in the links noted between these sections. Recent research undertaken by the Learning & Skills Council indicates that there has been a decline in employer training in recent years. The need to develop further leadership, management and regeneration skills throughout Ribble Valley is also a focus of the wider strategy. As part of the business support package in Ribble Valley actions will be created that will strengthen the ongoing relationships and engagement of local businesses.



Tourism & The Visitor Economy

Tourism plays an important role in the economy of Ribble Valley. Positive features include Tourism Marketing & Events activity in Ribble Valley and an extensive provision of visitor information.

In recent years, achievements have been the encouragement and formulation of sustainable tourism activities that lead towards tourism development that respect the area's environmental assets; working in partnership with a range of agencies to develop, fund and market sustainable tourism initiatives; improving the quality of the promotional literature produced by the service, and taking advantage of joint promotional activities; maintaining the Clitheroe Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in a town centre location; supplementing the tourist information centre with a series of tourist information points in businesses and attractions in other settlements in the area and supporting the development of Ribble Valley Tourism Association.



sourced produce.

Clitheroe Castle is a significant tourism attraction and a key heritage asset in Ribble Valley.

Ribble Valley has a range of accommodation available to the visitor. Many of the operators are very small businesses and should be encouraged to participate in quality grading schemes. Visitor expectations are constantly rising and the tourism offer must meet demands for quality and service. This applies to the attractions, retail businesses and the restaurant or cafe (food & drink sector) offering locally

There is a lack of wet weather attraction provision, the opportunity for which needs to be addressed either by expanding appropriate existing attractions or encouraging new visitor attractions to the area. A gap analysis is required in order to encourage new investment within hotel accommodation, self-catering, conference venues, eating out and visitor attractions, including Ribble Valley's cultural and heritage tourism offering as appropriate.

Business tourism could be an important opportunity in developing out of season business in the Borough, such as those facilities. Developing this market will contribute to increased occupancy levels over the traditional 'low' season, hence improving job quality, business sustainability and increasing the economic impact of tourism throughout the year. Appropriate research will be undertaken that will identify whether there is scope for growing this market in Ribble Valley.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Maintain and enhance business advice and support services in Ribble Valley
- Promote a sustainable approach to business development in Ribble Valley
- Increase the profile of business support and advice services through improved promotion throughout the area using appropriate media
- Monitor incentives and schemes of support and assistance to businesses in Ribble Valley
- Seek measures towards accommodating appropriate and potential inward investment to the area
- Encourage continuous improvements in facilities and quality standards within the hospitality and accommodation industry and at visitor attractions
- Identify key areas with greatest potential to develop the leisure and cultural economy, such as walking paths, cycle routes and equestrian trails and improve the access and infrastructure at these sites

Infrastructure & Services

Strategic Objective

- **To strive for a high quality, modern and integrated infrastructure, maintaining and improving the public realm, appropriate and affordable housing, transport infrastructure and technology for the benefit of Ribble Valley business, residents & visitors without compromising the quality of the existing natural and built environment**

Infrastructure

Infrastructure refers to the physical components considered essential to the smooth running of the economy. However, there is a need to ensure that opportunities are available for businesses to continue to develop in the area. There is a need to continue to market and regenerate our market towns and villages as places to do business and to ensure that there is employment land available for development. We will continue to work with Lancashire County Council and others providers to improve the local infrastructure

The issues of public transport particularly and accessibility to isolated villages are part of a perceived need for a more flexible approach and a more accessible service.

Without economic prosperity, many other problems e.g. health, housing, crime, access to services are all much harder to address. The supply of human capital is considered in the 'Employment & Skills' section.

The main infrastructure issues identified are:

- Lack of availability of employment land for new & future investment.

- Inadequate supply of appropriate business premises accommodation
- Opportunity to further enhance and reinforce public realm
- Provision and enhancement of a quality visitor services
- Poor internal transport systems in some areas
- Good external transport networks within ½ - 1 hour
- ICT Broadband access and mobile communications need addressing as an opportunity to attract businesses

An effective transport system is essential to the efficient smooth running of the local economy to facilitate the transport of both goods and people. However, the demands of business and commerce need to be met in a sustainable manner if Ribble Valley's quality environment is to be retained. The expansion of Ribble Valley's road and rail network is constrained by the restrictions of the Bowland Forest AONB status. The enhancement and promotion of existing excellent road and rail networks should continue.

Whilst statutory responsibility for transport delivery lies with the Lancashire County Council, all those with an interest in the maintenance of effective transport links will be encouraged to ensure effective transport connectivity and access in Ribble Valley. Whilst external communication links are a positive asset to the area, the internal infrastructure is lacking, most greatly in the more rural, sparsely populated areas.

ICT

The use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) for business purposes overcomes physical barriers and should be encouraged as a means of revolutionising communication between Ribble Valley's small and medium businesses, our communities and the market place. The case for improved access to Broadband in Ribble Valley highlighting the long-term benefits towards the economic development of rural areas. The availability of ICT acts as an attraction for inward investment and business growth in e-commerce, media and cultural sectors. 'Connected Lancashire' and the development of the Destination Management IT system are also key ICT projects within Lancashire.

Land and Premises for Business Development



The availability of suitable sites and premises is essential to allow the natural growth of local businesses and attracting new ones. Existing Business Parks in Ribble Valley can help to create business opportunities to address this. However, extra-ordinary costs can be incurred in developing employment sites in rural areas. The ability of the current utilities infrastructure in Ribble Valley to support any future development will need to be assessed in partnership with the agencies responsible for water, electricity and gas.

Barrow Brook Business Park will ensure that land sales and development proposals contribute towards the development of a higher wage economy in Ribble Valley. The need for a study into potential employment sites with access to the A59 corridor highlights the potential for business growth in the South of the Borough.

The current Local Plan identifies employment land, which has not been developed for employment purposes, where the owners have chosen not to develop the land. The Local Development Framework will establish a framework for local communities to identify appropriate local land and buildings for economic use.

Ribble Valley's high quality environment provides an ideal location for many office, crafts and cultural based businesses. In order to allow the expansion of Ribble Valley's economy in particular in business services, further office accommodation will need to be provided either by new build or converted space including potential uses in redundant farm buildings.

In particular, it has been identified that there is strong potential for business development on the A59 corridor. The identification, and future provision of suitable land for future employment and business development around the A59 corridor will assist in this.

Housing

Affordable housing is one of the crucial issues that influences the economic and social strength of rural communities, and is a major contributor to long-term community sustainability. There is a shortage of affordable housing in rural areas throughout the UK and Ribble Valley is no exception. This impacts on the opportunities and choices for all rural people. Without a range of suitable properties within our towns and villages it is difficult to encourage sustainable communities and maintain a vibrant, living countryside.



The development and maintenance of decent, affordable housing and related services in Ribble Valley is therefore a priority to meet the needs of local people and support economic and community development. Priority areas include ensuring planning policies meet the needs of local people and working with other agencies to develop options for low cost home ownership. In addition further work needs to be undertaken across the County to coordinate research and disseminate information about housing needs.

The high demand for housing in the borough had an impact on the availability of affordable homes. Most recent official figures available show that the price of houses in the Ribble Valley was continuing to rise at a greater rate than that of the North West. In addition to this the Ribble Valley has the lowest social stock provision in Lancashire.

Significant housing growth in the last 10 years, including major developments at the former Brockhall, Ribchester and Calderstones Hospital sites has assisted in addressing this situation, however, the area continues to attract new residents, as a result of its attractive rural environment, high quality of life and 'adequate' transport links to other parts of Lancashire and the North West.

The high demand for housing has had a major impact on the availability of affordable housing and employment opportunities. The new regional plan for the North West has set an increased level of housing for the area that will effectively double the amount of development in Ribble Valley over the next 10 years.

Public Realm

Public Realm includes all aspects of the environment that contribute to the experience of a place or location. This includes the quality of parks, roads and transport, public facilities, signage and information, litter management, safety issues and the general quality of the street scene overall.

Whilst local authorities have responsibilities for delivery, 'public realm' forms an important part of the tourism product and the visitor economy. For example: good quality facilities can lead to increases in tourism related



economic activity. This theme is also an important aspect of attracting inward investment and reinvestment in existing businesses. Maintaining and improving the public realm is an important part of maintaining quality of life for residents.

England's Tourism management organisations have developed a national benchmarking scheme to enable visitor destinations to measure and compare their performance. The benchmarking measures visitors and resident's opinions and levels of satisfaction. The visitor survey focuses on accommodation, shops, venues, tourist information, parking, signage and public conveniences, whilst the residents' survey focuses on transport, parking, shops, local facilities, toilets and accessibility. The results of the surveys are collated and reports produced to enable participating destinations to compare themselves with similar visitor destinations. The aim is to encourage continuous improvements and monitor performance against similar destinations nationwide.

Further measures will be taken to identify the kinds of improvements to public space, which will most enhance the role of Clitheroe as a local service town and a visitor destination. Funding to make improvements will be sought from a range of sources.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Promote external transport networks e.g. regional, national links and encourage potential enhancement schemes to support this

Encourage the improvement of local **transport** provision

- Seek improvements to ICT and Broadband access across the whole community
- Identify demand for business accommodation and sites across Ribble Valley
- Develop and redevelop, through appropriate programmes, key employment sites and premises in major service centres, including the stimulation and investment in tourism projects
- Review the provision of tourism signage within the Borough
- Constantly seek measures to enhance the public realm in Ribble Valley
- Influence housing policy to meet the needs of economic and community development

Image, Marketing & Promotion

Strategic Objective

- **To constantly and consistently raise the profile and perceptions of Ribble Valley, strengthening awareness of the benefits of the area in terms of quality of life as a place to live, visit, work and do business**

In addition to tourism marketing and promotion, there is a need to constantly market and promote the facilities and services available in Ribble Valley to businesses, residents as well as visitors. These groups are diverse and will therefore have differing needs and aspirations. This being so, it may at times be necessary to employ different approaches to marketing and promotion.

The main marketing and promotion issues identified are:

- Need to raise the profile of Ribble Valley, sub-regionally, regionally and nationally
- Low awareness of economic development and business support services
- Need to research and identify customer needs internally and externally



Area Promotion and Profile Raising

There is a strong need to reinforce Ribble Valley's profile and economic needs. Consultation with businesses often indicates a lack of awareness and confusion about support services in the region. The quality lifestyle and the quality natural environment enjoyed by both businesses and residents are clearly identified as strengths in the SWOT analysis and therefore offering an opportunity to exploit. Additionally, there are many strong elements, which can be used to promote and market Ribble Valley, for example the M6, M65 and A59 transport links. We must therefore consistently raise the benefits and overall profile of the Ribble Valley message to the media.

The Borough Council will continue strong relationships with its key partners to ensure the area maintains a strong profile for potential new business investment and the visitor economy.

Tourism Promotion



Ribble Valley is recognised as a distinctive hallmark that draws visitors to Lancashire. A major strand of marketing is the promotion of Ribble Valley as a visitor and holiday destination. Key influencing factors include components of the holiday product such as the natural environment, Market Towns and villages, individual attractions, and outdoor activities. Essential to this are strong sub-brand or brands for the Borough and to ensure that all tourism publications are appropriate to business and visitor needs. Accommodation, built visitor attractions and cultural and heritage sites have the potential for further development through this activity area.

Develop and Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices

Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of the present without compromising the abilities of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable tourism activities should provide visitors with the opportunity to enjoy a quality experience without damaging the environment or creating excessive pollution. Activities in this area include the promotion of training schemes for operators and working with conservation organisations on specific projects and by encouraging tourism operators to work in a sustainable manner.



Delivery of Visitor Information

The Tourist Information Centre in Clitheroe is a recognised part of the tourism product. The centre is used both in the planning process in advance of a trip to Ribble Valley and as a first point of contact for many visitors. The face-to-face contact is highly valued. The Centre also makes a strong contribution to the local community, the economy and to the health of the area as a key point of access to local information and services.

The use of ICT in visitor information provision is changing rapidly. Ribble Valley supports a 'Destination Management System' which links us directly via the web to all participating tourism operators in the Borough, improving the quality of visitor information and improving e commerce for the hospitality trade. There are opportunities to develop the system further and there may be cost saving and revenue generating opportunities from this information system in the future. It may also be beneficial, where appropriate, to channel information through those of our partners that can contribute to providing information in an efficient and cost effective way.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Raise awareness of the importance of economic development and tourism to the local economy

- Continue to strengthen our work with tourism and economic development partners to raise the profile of Ribble Valley
- Maximise the spread the economic benefits of tourism throughout the Borough
- Develop, promote and encourage sustainable tourism practices
- Maintain an effective, quality visitor information facility through Clitheroe Tourist Information Centre and associated services in other key facilities
- Develop and promote customised branding for Ribble Valley

Employment & Skills

Strategic Objective

- **Encourage and develop educational attainment and a skilled labour market in Ribble Valley for the benefit of existing and new employers**

Skills and Employment

Ensuring an available workforce with the skills needed by local employers and being able to offer and attract quality employment opportunities issues which impact across all areas of this strategy. Ribble Valley schools persistently recorded one of the highest A-C grade GCSE pass rates in England.

The main skills and employment issues identified are:

- Lack of data to clearly identify training and development issues facing Ribble Valley employers
- The need to undertake research into skills gaps and skills needs
- Lack of skills identified in growth sectors such as culture and creative industries, leisure and sport
- Lack of career development opportunities
- Lack of training opportunities in outlying areas of Ribble Valley
- Decline in workforce development by employers
- Attraction and retention of young people



To address the skills and employment issues we need to explore innovative ways in which to co-ordinate effort between key agencies charged with the task of delivering these services. The delivery of a wider range of skills and an increase in the skill levels attained by the existing and future workforce is essential for the future development and growth of Ribble Valley's economy. There is a need to increase responsiveness to employer need, raise adult skills levels and improve the quality, diversity and accessibility of learning and skills provision throughout Ribble Valley.

Labour Market and Skills

A lack of readily available labour with the relevant skills levels can constrain business growth, particularly in culture, media and sports occupations, administrative occupations and corporate management. We will work with partners to identify training issues facing Ribble Valley employers and seek to address gaps in training provision through the development of appropriate providers. The attraction and retention of young people, in particular graduates, is a concern to many employers. The lack of Higher Education (HE)/Further Education (FE) provision in the Borough is a contributory factor, also preventing Ribble Valley from capitalising on the

growth of the knowledge economy. The proposals for a university for Pennine Lancashire are welcomed. However, it is essential that strong links and provision will available people in Ribble Valley.

Certain business sectors are increasingly recruiting staff from outside the county. This practice highlights a number of issues that need to be addressed. This situation directly impacts upon the local housing market and the labour market, suppressing wage levels. However, we need to acknowledge that this is not a new phenomenon. Further research needs to be conducted to investigate the extent of this trend and the implications for the future Ribble Valley economy. There is a lack of information, advice and training opportunities in smaller settlements and outlying areas. In addition, the appropriateness of adult education and other training provision to local employment needs and opportunities needs to be addressed.

More opportunities to develop vocational training opportunities in Ribble Valley will need to be established to ensure local businesses and people have access to good quality, convenient and cost effective learning opportunities. A wider variety of vocational courses need to be made available if Ribble Valley's economy is to diversify from agriculture and tourism related employment.

Enhance Career and Employment Opportunities

The Ribble Valley economy is providing jobs at a higher level than necessary to sustain its resident workforce. Consequently, the labour market is very tight and this has implications for new housing provision and transport improvements. However, this does not appear to be bidding up wages and low pay and seasonality remain issues. Recent evidence does not support the view that low skill levels are a particular characteristic of the Ribble Valley labour market.



The economy is broadly successful and generates high employment, especially self-employment, negligible unemployment and low economic inactivity. This high level of self-employment must not be taken for granted. The promotion of enterprise and entrepreneurship remains a priority, in particular the need to develop and sustain an entrepreneurial culture within schools and local community organisations.

Strong links are to be developed between post 14 education, work-based training, further education, higher education and employment to ensure an effective match between skills and job opportunities.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Identify employer and employee skills needs
- Supporting partnership working to provide solutions to skills issues identified
- Ensure that learning opportunities are addressing the needs of Ribble Valley businesses
- To provide learning opportunities as locally as possible
- To encourage the development of a comprehensive vocational learning centre in Ribble Valley
- Promote and develop learning activities that support lifelong learning
- Reduce seasonality of tourism related jobs
- Seek measures to encourage the knowledge economy in Ribble Valley

This Section: Action Plan Summaries: -

- Regeneration & Economic Development
- Business Support & Development
- Infrastructure & Communications
- Image, Marketing & Promotion
- Employment & Skills

Regeneration & Economic Development

- ***To identify & develop initiatives that will encourage the long-term physical and social regeneration of Ribble Valley, maximising on and seeking appropriate funding where possible***

Key Activities Action Plan

| Ref code | Activities | Other Information |
|--|---|--|
| Refresh priorities for action in key town / service centres | | |
| ED1 | Work in partnership and consult with the private sector to review ideas and priorities for action in key service centres. | Ongoing Consultation |
| Support regeneration activities in smaller settlements across Ribble Valley | | |
| ED2 | Support a range of projects in smaller settlements throughout Ribble Valley | Projects supported and implemented |
| Strengthen and develop communication mechanisms for sharing information between Ribble Valley businesses & partners | | |
| ED3 | Develop communication mechanisms for sharing information and best practice between Ribble Valley businesses. | Ribble Valley Busness Network Ribble Valley Economic Forum |
| | | |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Ensure that policy makers are aware of the issues facing Ribble Valley | | |
| ED4 | Engage with policy formers in the region to highlight the needs of Ribble Valley | Regular meetings |
| Ensure that the 'rural' case for funding assistance has a high profile | | |
| ED5 | Highlight the regeneration needs of Ribble Valley and promote to key partners | Establish a Rural Growth Network Group and develop activities |
| Maximise funding opportunities as appropriate to the needs of the area | | |
| ED6 | Collate socio-economic research to establish the current economic status of the area, assist in identifying targets and priorities for future regeneration activities and to enable effective monitoring of regeneration activities. | Ongoing research programme established |
| Work towards developing a higher wage economy | | |
| ED7 | Seek measures to attract inward investment and business start-ups in growth sectors | Direct marketing of business opportunities |

Business Support & Growth

- ***To work in partnership at local, sub-regional and regional level to provide the best possible support for existing and new businesses in Ribble Valley***

Key Activities Action Plan

| Ref code | Activities | Other Information |
|--|---|---|
| Assess and enhance co-ordination of business advice and support services in Ribble Valley | | |
| BD1 | Working with partners, review / clarify the role of business support in line with recent changes in national and local business support and service delivery, | Production of a Business Support Guide and other support information, and marketing activities. |
| BD2 | Through existing business partnerships, networks and Business Organisations and Groups, develop effective and appropriate networks to link local businesses and business support agencies together. | Business networks established & developed |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| BD3 | Provide information accessible business support advice and training provision in service centres of Clitheroe and Longridge and occasional outreach to smaller settlements as appropriate. | Business support, advice & information provision established |
| Promote a sustainable approach to business development in Ribble Valley | | |
| BD4 | Reassess supply chain initiatives in key growth sectors in particular: Tourism, Food and drink. | Supply chain networks established and enhanced |
| BD5 | Develop incentives for business and staff development | Project activity |
| BD6 | Encourage local businesses to develop and improve responsible trading practices through participation in activities such as environment best practice and corporate social responsibility | Business events held |
| BD7 | Develop and maintain effective relationships with key local employers. | Business visits |
| BD8 | Encourage improvements in facilities and quality standards within the hotel and accommodation industry through appropriate programmes. | Partnership working |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Increase the profile of business support and advice services through improved promotion throughout Ribble Valley | | |
| BD9 | Enhance links / information on business support through the RVBC Website | Website |
| BD10 | Identify business sectors with growth potential, high wages. In particular: Tourism, Food and Drink, ICT, Creative and Cultural industries, Financial and professional services, Environmental management, Sport and Leisure | Identify target business clusters and skills gaps |
| BD11 | Prepare a marketing campaign on Ribble Valley to promote opportunities for inward investment looking at light industrial & office premises, targeting higher wage sectors. | Marketing campaign undertaken |
| BD13 | Consider possibilities to develop business conferencing and residential conference market in Ribble Valley. | |
| Monitor incentives and schemes of support and assistance (including financial support) to businesses in Ribble Valley | | |
| BD14 | Promote Local Action Group (LAG) and Local Rural Development Strategy (LDS), in order to deliver a range of EU-funded measures under the the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) | RDPE programme activity |

| Enhance activity towards accommodating appropriate and potential inward investment to the area | | |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| BD15 | Develop the growth potential of businesses established around the A59 corridor through promotion of appropriate sites | Establish an A59 Action Plan |
| BD16 | Research specific local recruitment problems to better understand the barriers faced by businesses in recruiting people, particularly from within rural communities | Research undertaken |
| Encourage continuous improvements in facilities and quality standards within the hospitality and accommodation industry and at visitor attractions | | |
| BD17 | To feed into other appropriate economic strategies for the region that will have relevance and benefit to the economy of Ribble Valley | Partnership working |
| Identify key areas with greatest potential to develop the leisure and cultural economy, such as walking paths, cycle routes and equestrian trails and improve the access and infrastructure at these sites | | |
| BD18 | To support the marketing and promotion of Ribble Valley to visitors and businesses, through the work of the tourism division, events and activities investment support. | Marketing activity |

Infrastructure & Environment

- ***To strive for a high quality, modern and integrated infrastructure, maintaining and improving the public realm, appropriate and affordable housing, transport infrastructure and technology for the benefit of Ribble Valley business, residents & visitors without compromising the quality of the existing natural and built environment***

Key Activities Action Plan

| Ref code | Activities | Other Information |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| Promote external transport networks encourage potential enhancement schemes to support this | | |
| I1 | Identify areas worst affected by inadequate transport networks and poor public transport service provision. | Research programme conducted |
| | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Encourage the improvement of local transport provision | | |
| I2 | Lobby for improved transport services and links to major service and employment centres including established tourist attractions. | Ongoing activity |
| I3 | Review current parking provision and assess its suitability for the visitor market and its economic impact on businesses. | Research |
| Seek improvements to ICT and Broadband access across the whole community | | |
| I4 | Support the development and improvement of ICT & Broadband connectivity and use. | Research |
| Identify demand for business accommodation and sites across Ribble Valley | | |
| | Following BE group study maintain strong ongoing relationships with businesses with expansion needs | Business consultations |
| Seek to develop key employment sites and premises in major service centres, including the stimulation and investment in tourism projects | | |
| I5 | Identify and prepare a strategy for relevant employment sites and set out a programme to address their development potential. | A59 corridor strategy |
| Influence housing policy to meet the needs of economic and community development | | |
| I6 | Monitor the characteristics of Ribble Valley's housing market and its implications for the future development of Ribble Valley's rural economy. | Ribble Valley Housing Strategy |
| Review the provision of tourism signage within the Borough | | |
| I7 | Undertake an audit of key visitor attractions in Ribble Valley and assess appropriate signage | Audits |
| Constantly seek measures to enhance the public realm in Ribble Valley | | |
| I8 | Identify general and area-specific priorities for action in respect of improving public realm provision. | Establish & initiate public realm enhancement schemes |
| I9 | Seek to improve the public realm of the key service centres of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley through town centre enhancement initiatives. | Action plan and consultation programme |

Image, Marketing & Promotion

- ***To constantly and consistently raise the profile and perceptions of Ribble Valley, strengthening awareness of the benefits of the area in terms of quality of life as a place to live, visit, work and do business***

Key Activities Action Plan

| Ref code | Activities | Other Information |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| Raise awareness of the importance of economic development and tourism to the local economy | | |
| IMP1 | Assess visitor perception research to ascertain most effective means of marketing communication. | Research & Consultation |
| Continue to strengthen work with tourism and economic development partners to raise the profile of Ribble Valley | | |
| IMP2 | Work in partnership with L&BTB | Ongoing partnership working |
| IMP3 | Develop marketing activities that incorporate all aspects of Economic Development and Tourism promotion in Ribble Valley. | Marketing plan |
| Maximise the spread the economic benefits of tourism throughout the Borough | | |
| IMP4 | Investigate and assess area-specific need for marketing strategies in Ribble Valley | Area specific activities |
| Develop, promote and encourage sustainable tourism practices | | |
| IMP5 | Encourage businesses to participate in environmental management schemes | Business contacts |
| IMP6 | Enhance tourism information service to address visitor and local needs. | Monitoring and evaluation |
| Maintain an effective, quality visitor information facility through Clitheroe Tourist Information Centre and associated services in other key facilities | | |
| IMP7 | Ensure visitor information is available in key sites throughout the Borough | Audit undertaken |

Employment & Skills

- **Encourage and develop educational attainment and a skilled labour market in Ribble Valley for the benefit of existing and new employers.**

Key Activities Action Plan

| Ref code | Activities | Other Information |
|---|--|---|
| Identify employer and employee skills needs | | |
| ES1 | Consult with businesses in Ribble Valley to identify skills gaps, skills needs, learning and training provision. | Business consultation on skills needs |
| Support partnership working to provide solutions to skills issues identified | | |
| ES2 | Lobby for enhanced training provision for businesses and individuals in Ribble Valley. | Lobbying activity |
| To ensure that learning opportunities are addressing the needs of Ribble Valley businesses | | |
| ES3 | Monitor & support, through appropriate incentives, local training providers for key employment sectors. | RDPE grant scheme |
| To encourage learning opportunities as locally as possible | | |
| ES4 | Encourage the development of learning facilities in Ribble Valley. | Increased learning provision for job creation / workforce development |
| Promote and develop learning activities that support lifelong learning | | |
| ES5 | Encourage and promote an entrepreneurial culture within schools and local community organisations. | Projects implemented i.e. Young Enterprise and Lancashire Education Business Partnership. |

