

## RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Dear Stakeholder,

RE: PUBLIC CONSULTATION - DRAFT RIBBLE VALLEY ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The Draft Ribble Valley Economic Strategy will outline the Council's economic aims and objectives to contribute to sustainable, successful businesses environment and a thriving rural economy in Ribble Valley. It will also provide clarity and detail on the Council's local economic aims and objectives, and provide 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 region. The Strategy will act as an over arching document with which to set out the key thematic areas that have relevance and affect on the economy of Ribble Valley and identify areas of action. These are:

- **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.
- **Business Support & Development** – addressing issues that facilitate healthy business performance, encouraging business start-ups, business growth and inward investment
- **Infrastructure & Communications** - providing the necessary 'physical environment' in areas such as transport, affordable housing, ICT & 'broadband' access, appropriate business sites and premises.
- **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.

The Draft Strategy is attached and the consultation period has now been extended to accommodate the high volume of interest generated and to enable further local stakeholder comment on any issues contained within the document. If you wish to make any comments please address them to myself either by letter to the Council offices at the address above, or email on [craig.matthews@ribblevalley.gov.uk](mailto:craig.matthews@ribblevalley.gov.uk) by **Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2009**. Further copies can be downloaded from the Council website; [www.ribblevalley.gov.uk](http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk) or alternatively I can email copies on request.

Yours sincerely,

*Craig Matthews*

CRAIG MATTHEWS  
RURAL REGENERATION OFFICER

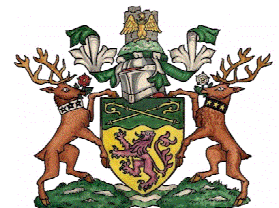
**RIBBLE VALLEY**

**AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

**2009 – 2013**

**CONSULTATION**

**D R A F T**



# Contents

<b>1. Executive Summary</b>	
Vision and Scope of the Document	3
Purpose of the Economic Strategy	3
Analysis	4
Areas of Activity	4
<b>2. Background</b>	
Policy Context	6
The Council's Role in Economic Development	6
<b>3. Ribble Valley in Profile</b>	
Population	8
Employment	9
The Visitor Economy	9
The Housing Market	10
Health and Quality of Life	10
<b>4. Key Themes - Issues and Priorities</b>	
SWOT Analysis	11
Regeneration & Economic Development	12
Business Support & Development	16
Infrastructure & Communications	21
Image, Marketing and Promotion	25
Employment & Skills	28
<b>5. Action Plan Summaries</b>	
Regeneration & Economic Development	32
Business Support & Development	34
Infrastructure & Communications	37
Image, Marketing & Promotion	39
Employment & Skills	41

## Appendix

# Executive Summary

## Our Vision

**A competitive and sustainable economy will be created for the Borough of Ribble Valley, providing opportunities for employment and continuous business development. By encouraging sustainable practices, we will seek to enhance and maintain vibrant local communities whilst promoting the protection of the environment for future generations.**

We will support and develop an economically sustainable and prosperous area where investment is encouraged, skills are developed and new and existing businesses are supported. Through the work of this Strategy and its underlying actions, we will aim to be recognised as a highly entrepreneurial and enterprising Borough.

## Scope of the Document

This document sets out the aims and objectives for a successful and sustainable economic environment for the Borough of Ribble Valley. The Economic Strategy has been prepared by Ribble Valley Borough Council to explain its commitment, approach and the activities it intends to undertake or encourage over the period 2008 – 2013 to enable it to realise its economic potential and to ensure long term economic prosperity.

The Strategy sets out desired outcomes around 5 key themes and strategic aims each with a series of related objectives. Through a range of actions phased over the short, medium and longer term, it defines how these objectives will be tackled. Additionally, progress will be monitored and the impact and success of this strategy will be measured and reviewed to ensure that progress against outcomes is achieved. An annual review of the Action Plans will identify progress and provide the opportunity to make any necessary changes. The Strategy supersedes the previous Ribble Valley Regeneration Strategy 2004 – 2007.

## Purpose of the Economic Strategy

This Economic Strategy is a means of providing clarity and detail on local economic aims and objectives as well as the intended actions to deliver on economic well being. It will guide the council in setting its own business and service plans and allocate its resources, as well as providing a framework for partnership working, supporting and influencing the strategies, priorities and resource allocation of others operating in the field of economic development. The Economic Strategy sits within the Ribble Valley Community Strategy 2007 - 2013.

Traditionally the function of economic development is any act or undertaking, which aids in the growth of the economy. Its purpose being to; stimulate the economy, expand employment opportunities, encourage the establishment & growth of commerce & industry and to enhance the economic well-being of a community.

However, economic development can no longer be regarded simply as a means of creating jobs; a much more holistic view is required. The prosperity of the Borough is inextricably linked to the education, health, transport, cultural and social issues of the area. At the national level economic development is increasingly seen as a key aspect of sustainable development.

Ribble Valley Borough Council cannot operate in isolation to maintain and manage the future economic prosperity and growth of the Borough. Successful economic development requires a supportive and positive relationship between the council, the business community, and other

partners and organisations (public, private and voluntary) involved in the field at various spatial levels and tiers of government.

Fostering economic development is also a corporate undertaking, one that can often transcend professional disciplines and service team boundaries. As such there is also a need for strong & positive horizontal and vertical links and relationships internally across the whole organisation and that with its partners in the public, private and community sectors.

The strategy gathers together a range of statistics, evidence and research to guide and influence future policies and priorities. The source documents and consultations are listed in the appendix.

## Analysis

Ribble Valley's strengths are in its low unemployment rates, high quality natural environment and successful businesses. But deeper investigation reveals weaknesses and hidden deprivation in the form of gross under-employment; an exodus of talented young people; poor transport services in deeper rural areas and a low wage economy.

Other threats facing Ribble Valley's economy include the constraint of access relating to many Government and European funding programmes; economic growth being constrained by planning policies for housing and the challenges facing the manufacturing and agricultural sector, around which many of Ribble Valley's employment depends.

Key priority areas for Ribble Valley Borough Council include working towards a higher wage economy and ensuring affordable housing for our workforce.

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

## Areas of Activity

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

- **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.
- **Business Support & Development** – addressing issues that facilitate healthy business performance, encouraging business start-ups, business growth and inward investment
- **Infrastructure & Communications** - providing the necessary 'physical environment' in areas such as transport, affordable housing, ICT & 'broadband' access, appropriate business sites and premises.
- **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.

These five themes are explored in more detail in the Strategy, where current issues and key aims and objectives are identified.

Underpinning all of the individual activities is the need for ownership and leadership of economic activity together with collaborative delivery if we are to achieve the vision of a healthy and prosperous economic environment in Ribble Valley.

## **The Way Forward**

In order to achieve the vision, Action Plans will be developed for each key work area, indicating the Council's role and delivery actions, partner organisations and outcomes. Action Plan summaries are provided for each key work area and detailed within this Strategy to provide a framework on which to develop a programme of activity that will be regularly reviewed in order to work towards our Strategic Objectives.

# Background

## Policy Context

The range of organisations involved in the areas economic development means that Ribble Valley Borough Council's activity doesn't happen in a policy vacuum.

National, regional and sub-regional economic policy & strategy, tourism strategy and spatial planning policies all have a bearing on and influence over local economic prosperity and vice versa.

In particular those of central government departments and regional office (e.g. Treasury, Dept for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform, Government Office North West), those of the Regional Development Agency (North West Development Agency) and sub-regional bodies (Lancashire Economic Partnership & Pennine Lancashire Partnership)

At the local or Borough level there are further policy documents and strategies that affect, inform and shape the content of this Economic Strategy and which are fundamental to its delivery, such as the emerging Local Development Framework, the Ribble Valley Sustainable Community Strategy and the Ribble Valley Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan. A full list of the various strategies and documents that have been considered in the production of this Strategy are detailed in the Appendices.

## Ribble Valley Borough Council's Role in Economic Development

In 2000 the Local Government Act gave a duty or power of 'well being' to local authorities to allow them to do anything that they believe would support the economic, social and environmental well being of their local area. Within this duty of well-being, the role of RVBC in economic development has historically been a mix of catalyst, enabler / facilitator and deliverer according to need.

In the recently published Review of Sub-National Economic Development & Regeneration (July 2007, HM Treasury, Dept for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform, Communities & Local Government), it is proposed that the focus of local authorities activities on economic development should be increased, and that the Government will consult upon the creation of a focused statutory economic development duty. This duty, through LSP's and the framework of Local Area Agreements (LAA) and Multi Area Agreements (MAA), includes: providing leadership, developing a vision for the local economy, supporting wider regional & sub-regional strategies, using resources & powers to develop economic potential & manage change, leveraging in private investment, ensuring that business support is co-ordinated.

## Ribble Valley in Profile

Ribble Valley is a predominantly rural Borough located in the North East 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.

In the past the Borough has seen a disparity between the scale of employment growth and that of housing and increasing levels of 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 (economic, affordable housing, transport), 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, all whilst maintaining its highly valued rural character.



Ribble Valley has tremendous potential for both economic and community prosperity. It has a unique combination of natural resources and attractive conservation areas, as well as important economic assets. 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 (ONS mid-year estimates 2006) 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 Ribble Valley has excellent communications that open up the area to the rest of the North West. The A59 is a main artery through the Borough, linking directly to the M6 and serving access routes to the M65 motorway. There are rail services from Clitheroe to Preston and Manchester.

Ribble Valley is perceived to be a relatively prosperous area, with a highly educated and skilled population, Ribble Valley has seen strong economic and job growth over the last decade. However, low pay is common across many local people, housing is expensive in many villages and the availability of affordable housing is a key issue, with many low paid families finding it difficult to find a home. Significant social divisions exist even if masked by the appearance of relative affluence.

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.

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.

## **Socio-Economic Profile**

The following statistics provide baseline information on a range of factors which impact on the economic, social and environmental well being of the Borough.

### **Key Facts - Population**

- There are 3 main settlement areas within Ribble Valley:
  - Clitheroe (population: 15,026)
  - Longridge (population: 8,240)
  - Whalley (population: 4,078)
- Between 1991 and 2007 the population of Ribble Valley has increased 7.8% compared to only 1.3% in the North West.
- 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 an older population than the North West average. 17.8% of the Borough's population are aged over 65 compared to the North West and England. 21.5% of Ribble Valley's population is over 60 compared with 21% for the North West region and 21% for England.
- Ribble Valley has a low number of young people (31%) when compared with the North West (37%) and 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 well below average. According to the September 2008

unemployment figures, unemployment in Ribble Valley is 0.7%, compared with 2.5% in the North West and 2.3% in Great Britain.

- The average gross annual pay of Ribble Valley residents in 2004 was the highest recorded in Lancashire (£18,200) reflecting higher concentrations of people holding senior employment positions living in the Borough
- In 2008, the gross weekly wage of Ribble Valley residents was £423.80 compared to £335.80 in the North West and £354.50 in Great Britain.
- The qualification profile for Ribble Valley is higher to the North West and Great Britain. Individuals of working age with qualifications at level 2 = 79.7% (North West 67%), level 3 = 55.9% (North West 46.5%), level 4 = 37.1% (North West 26.6%)
- In 2007 there were 2,720 VAT registered businesses in Ribble Valley a total stock growth of 22%.
- Distribution, hotels and restaurants account for just over a third of all employee jobs (8,540: 36.9%), a figure 12% higher than the Great Britain average. Other tourism related jobs represent 20.8% of Ribble Valley's workforce, compared to 8.1% in Great Britain.
- Around 2,900 employee jobs are in Tourism related activities. Public administration, education and health represent 7.4% of the Ribble Valley workforce, and is lower when compared to 26.8% in the North West and 25.8% in Great Britain.
- Finance, IT and other business activities are significantly lower in Ribble Valley (8.6%: 1,993) than the Great Britain average (19.8%).
- The percentage of construction jobs in Ribble Valley (6.2%: 1,437) is higher than in the North West (average 4.7%) and Great Britain (4.4%).
- 25.9% of the working population are employed in manufacturing industries.
- 7% of the total business stock is in the manufacturing sector.

### **Key Facts - The Visitor Economy**

- There has been an overall growth in visitor numbers from 1,803,000 in 2000 to almost 2,000,000 in 2008 - visitors numbers have recovered well, following the downturn caused by the Foot & Mouth outbreak in 2001.
- Around 1,200,000 of these are day visitors and the remainder are staying visitors with an average length of stay of 2.1 nights.
- 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 in 2008 is estimated to be around £100,000,000. The majority of this money is spent on accommodation, food and drink, shopping, transport and recreation.
- A Visitor Information Centre is based in the Ribble Valley Council Offices 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.
- In Ribble Valley 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**

The 2001 Census asked residents to describe their health, long-term illnesses or health problems or disabilities that restricted their daily lives. The results indicate that people in Ribble Valley are healthier than elsewhere in the country.

- 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%.
- 7.9% of people indicated that they were in poor general health, compared with a figure of 11% for the North West.
- 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.
- The following 'SWOT' analysis illustrates some of the key issues affecting the economy of Ribble Valley in 2008.

## SWOT Analysis

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

# Regeneration & Economic Development

## Strategic Objective

- ***To identify & develop initiatives that will encourage the long term physical and social regeneration of Ribble Valley, maximising on and seeking appropriate funding from national, regional and sub regional sources wherever possible***

Regeneration and economic development have always been closely related and are often confused. Not all activity that promotes economic development is regeneration – and evidence from the last 30 years shows that economic inclusion does not necessarily follow from wider economic growth. Additionally, regeneration should also deliver increased economic inclusion – ensuring that economic development improves the lives of people in the most deprived areas.

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 regional 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.

The UK Government has set key priorities where current and future investment should be targeted. In line with this, Regional Development Agencies have also developed their own regional investment frameworks that indicate specific areas where this investment will be focussed. The vast majority of funding initiatives over the next five years will be targeted towards areas based on issues of deprivation, unemployment (worklessness) and areas identified as being in significant regeneration need.

Regeneration should be seen a sub-set of economic development. Successful regeneration will be dependent upon improved economic performance. But, the relationship is not one-way. The economic performance of areas can be held back or promoted by the extent to which all individuals have the opportunity to contribute.

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 main regeneration issues identified include:

- The need to establish geographical and thematic priorities for action
- The need to link all aspects of Ribble Valley's regeneration needs to regional and sub-regional 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 funding opportunities in line with Ribble Valley's

economic needs

- Maximising opportunities for further development appropriate to needs

Despite some limited financial assistance in recent years towards improving Ribble Valley, the area is not identified a priority on the majority of regional European and UK Government funding streams. Many of the issues and needs identified in this Strategy will be used as an influencing tool to both regional and sub-regional agencies to recognise the short, medium and long term needs of Ribble Valley as a predominantly rural area.

## **Partnership Working**

A consequence of local area based regeneration partnerships are that activities can be conducted in isolation. It is therefore essential to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to enable the sharing of regeneration information and the exchange of best practice. Whilst programmes such as Regeneration Excellence in England's Northwest (RENEW) exist at a regional level, it is also necessary to ensure activity is co-ordinated at a local and sub regional level. Increased liaison between economic and regeneration forums will be developed as appropriate and in particular through the Pennine Lancashire MAA.

## **Key Service Centres**

### **Clitheroe**

The NWDA Regional Economic Strategy clearly identifies the importance of market towns as key drivers of rural economies. This theme was also identified in The Rural Strategy 2004. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have identified 207 locations throughout England to be classed as 'Market Towns'. In Ribble Valley, Clitheroe is identified as one of England's key Market Towns.

In 2004, a £1.2 million programme was launched funded by the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) to help regenerate Clitheroe through the Clitheroe Market Towns Initiative. The initiative followed the town's completion of its 'Health check' process, which highlighted the importance of attracting additional employment and creating a more diverse economic and tourism base. The scheme ran until 2007 and made great steps in helping to facilitate improvements for Clitheroe and reinforcing the local retail offer.

Clitheroe plays an essential part in the rural economy of Ribble Valley and there will be a continuing need to work hard to deliver a programme of regeneration in Clitheroe as a key Market Town and service centre, helping our rural businesses and communities remain healthy, economically and socially.

A new Action Plan will be developed that will address the key issues, needs, actions and aspiration towards maintaining and strengthening Clitheroe's essential role 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. Principally by arresting and reversing the trade lost in recent years to urban areas will be a challenging activity to ensure this takes place. 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.

## **Longridge**

Longridge is one of the major settlements within the Ribble Valley and has a long history of social and industrial change over the last 200 years. 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. Longridge has seen a sustained growth in population in recent years and plays a continued role as key local service centre. The traditional industries which once supported its growth have declined and disappeared and therefore it is vital that the town considers its future role and sustainability.

In September 2003 the BE group were appointed by the Longridge Partnership to undertake a Longridge Market Town Initiative Health check and draw up an action plan for the town. The study involved a detailed investigation of the town, covering the local economy, environment, transport and accessibility, social and community issues.

## **Whalley**

Whalley is a large village on the banks of the River Calder. The parish consists of the old village 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.

The Whalley Action group was formed following the launch of the Village Appraisal Report 2001. The appraisal contained an analysis of questionnaires circulated to local residents and businesses to identify the issues of concern to residents and businesses of the village. The purpose of the Action Group was to try to find solutions to the problems identified in the appraisal.

## **Local Strategic Partnerships - Tackling Community Need**

The Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership has been established for a number of years and engages closely with the Lancashire Strategic Partnership. A steering group drives the LSP and has steered the production of the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy. It monitors the actions within the strategy and will continue to be a key vehicle for co-ordinating the delivery of future economic regeneration initiatives in the Borough.

## **Maximising Funding Opportunities**

Under the North-West European Regional Development Fund Programme, the vast majority of priority areas for funding are focussed on regeneration in urban areas. Therefore Ribble Valley is ineligible for the vast majority of this funding. The expansion of the European Community means it is likely that structural funds will be greatly diminished and tightly focused, pursuance of alternative potential sources of funding programmes will be necessary and need to be increased.

It will be necessary to ensure that Ribble Valley is represented in relevant regeneration strategies and plans regionally and sub-regionally and programmes in order to be able to access appropriate funding. This can be achieved through active participation on relevant working groups and regeneration programmes.

Accessing regeneration funding remains problematic, particularly for rural initiatives and therefore greater priority should be given to influencing the development of a more streamlined approach to funding of regeneration activities. It is anticipated that the establishment of this Economic Strategy will assist in making it easier to access regeneration funding.

### **Priority aims and objectives:**

- Establish priorities for action in major service centres
- Support regeneration activities in smaller settlements through the Community and Parish Planning process
- Strengthen and develop communication mechanisms for sharing regeneration information between Ribble Valley partners
- Ensure, through effective representation, that sub-regional, regional, national and European 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 at local, sub-regional and regional level to provide the best possible support for existing and new businesses in Ribble Valley**

## **Business Development**

Ribble Valley has a strong level of business start-ups. We need to help these to be sustainable and strive for continuous improvement and economic growth. This can be achieved by offering consistent and effective business support services.

Sustainable development is a priority and appropriate bodies should be lobbied to ensure that environmental factors are given due consideration.

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 raised in the **Employment & Skills** and **Regeneration & Economic Development** sections of this document.

The main business development issues identified are:

- A confusing network of agencies supporting businesses.
- Lack of awareness of the activities of some agencies.
- Inward Investment competition in other areas.
- High growth potential around A59 corridor.
- Opportunity to develop social and community enterprise.
- 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**

One of the issues highlighted through consultation with businesses throughout the North West Region reveals that there are too many agencies involved in business support and there was a risk of duplication of services.

The NWDA are undertaking a review of the business support network and services in the region. Following the NWDA review, it will be necessary to work with key partners to ensure the development of more streamlined business support services and to ensure that subsequent services are effectively promoted to ensure take-up. It will still be necessary to monitor business support service provision to ensure their relevance for Ribble Valley businesses.

With regard to business support services, Business Link will work with Ribble Valley Borough Council and business support partner organisations to address start-up rates and further support needs to be put in place to ensure survival rates are improved and maintained with further growth encouraged. It is important to identify other local businesses with growth potential in order to support their ambitions for expansion, for example through skills development and other business support.

## **Business Investment**

The regions inward investment activity operates in a highly competitive market, and requires a number of issues to be addressed in order for this to be developed and to attract significant inward investment to Ribble Valley 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 region. 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.

## **Social Enterprise**

Social enterprises are businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders or owners. The significance of social and community enterprise to Ribble Valley's economy is beginning to become clearer through work being undertaken by Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership.

The future development of social enterprises within Ribble Valley can have a valuable role to play in helping create strong, sustainable and socially inclusive economies. Through partnership, we will work to increase the formation, growth and longer-term survival of Ribble Valley's social enterprise sector. Trading activities such as training and nursery provision are opportunities that could be encouraged and developed.

## **Employer Engagement**

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 public and voluntary sector 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.

The £3.2 million development and refurbishment scheme at Clitheroe Castle is now nearing completion for the Castle to be reopen to the public in Spring 2009, and includes a new building with additional exhibition space, a restaurant/café, and improved access to the North West Sound Archives, which are housed within the Castle and contain the largest collection of recordings outside London, an education suite, and improvements to the landscaping around the Castle. 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 sourced produce.

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 and the Conference Market**

Business tourism could be an important opportunity in developing out of season business in the Borough, such as those facilities provided at Stanley House, for example. 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.

## **The Business Support Simplification Programme**

In March 2008 the Government published 'Simple Support, Better Business: business support in 2010'. The document set out the vision for business support in the future, stating that supporting businesses and encouraging economic growth is a priority at all levels of Government.

It was estimated over 3,000 national publicly funded business support schemes existed. Businesses both in Ribble Valley and throughout the UK were confused by the number of schemes and discouraged from applying. Streamlining will help save them time and money when looking for support and better targeted schemes will have more impact for businesses.

The Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP) aims to make it easier for companies and entrepreneurs to understand and access advice, support and government funded grants with which to start and grow their businesses.

The Government Budget in 2006 announced that the 3,000 schemes would be reduced to 100 or less by 2010, while the Pre-Budget Report 2007 announced that Business Link would become the primary access route for individuals and businesses seeking support. The 2008 budget announced a timeline for the transfer of brokerage services to Business Link.

In October 2008 it announced that a streamlined package of support called 'Solutions for Business – funded by government' would be in place by March 2009. This package includes 30 national support products with a common look and feel accessible via Business Link.

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and Local Authorities are partners in the delivery of 'Solutions for Business' and Business Support at the Local Level. Ribble Valley's regeneration team have been and will continue to work closely with the NWDA and Business Link and other support providers to ensure that businesses in Ribble Valley are able to access and benefit from government funded business support services.

Specifically, strong relationships are being developed with Business Link North West (BLNW) that will enable the Council to strengthen partnership working in the future to ensure that the Ribble Valley business community will be able to maximise on opportunities, access and benefit from all available business support services available in the region. We will develop monitoring systems in line with this that will enable us to measure the impact and benefits that support services are having within the business community in Ribble Valley on an ongoing basis.

## **Priority aims and objectives:**

- Enhance co-ordination of 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 (including financial support) 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 & Communications

## 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. The supply of human capital is considered in the 'Employment & Skills' section.

The main infrastructure issues identified are:

- Poor internal transport systems in some areas
- Good external transport networks within ½ - 1 hour
- ICT offers opportunity to attract quality businesses
- ICT communications and Broadband access needs addressing
- Inadequate supply of appropriate business accommodation
- Certain growth can be constrained by the planning regime
- Opportunity to further enhance and reinforce public realm (i.e. Clitheroe Market)
- Provision and enhancement of a quality visitor services network and offer
- Lack of availability of employment land for new & future investment.

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.

A campaign will be established to influence the case for Broadband access 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. 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 UK Governments approach towards delivering social sustainability in a rural context will require a strategic approach to housing development in smaller settlements and villages to meet local need to build on the commitment to provide "high quality housing that contributes to the creation and maintenance of sustainable rural communities in market towns and villages"; bearing in mind the Government's target for completions of new affordable homes in rural settlements of 3,000 and under.

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.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) identifies housing growth in with sub-regional partners. In connection with this, the Pennine Lancashire Multi Area Agreement (MAA) and Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy will address specific needs and facilitate future housing development to support economic growth and the creation of sustainable communities.

## **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 streetscene overall.

Public Realm is a crosscutting issue. Whilst local authorities have statutory responsibilities for delivery, Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board and NWDA policies focus on 'public realm' issues as an important part of the tourism product and the visitor economy. For example: good quality public conveniences in appropriate locations and good recreational 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 essential 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.

Improvements to the public realm of Clitheroe were identified as necessary as part of the Market Town 'health check' consultations. In recent years, funding from the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) has enabled some enhancement schemes to take place. Further measures will be taken to identify the kinds of improvements to public space, which will most enhance Clitheroe's role 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 maintain strong relationships with its key partner agencies such as the NWDA and Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board (L&BTB), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Business Link (BL). Ribble Valley's economic needs should be represented sufficiently within these agencies. In addition to this, there is further potential for those organisations supporting Ribble Valley's economic sectors to collectively raise the profile of Ribble Valley. Strong partnership working should therefore continue to be developed.

## Tourism Promotion

The Central Lancashire City Region Programme recognises the Ribble Valley as a 'distinctive hallmark that draws visitors to the City Region. There is the opportunity to harness the economic potential of these assets and to ensure that they continue to contribute to the quality of life that distinguishes Central Lancashire from other places'.

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.

The visitor in several ways perceives the image of an area:

- Pre-visit experience: the initial decision they make, through branding and marketing materials, websites and other general information.
- Visit: The experience of their visit formed through a combination of their

experiences of the landscape and public realm, visitor information available to them and the quality of accommodation and visitor attractions.

- Post-visit: The visitor will reflect upon their experiences and compare the area to others they have visited before making their return decision.

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

Evidence to accurately identify employment and training needs within Ribble Valley is needed. 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.

## **Vocational Training**

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

## Action Plan Abbreviations

The following list shows partners who will be involved in the future delivery of the strategy.

<b>Abbreviation:</b>	<b>Partner Organisation</b>
LCDL	Lancashire County Developments Ltd
BL	Business Link North West
RVBC	Ribble Valley Borough Council
LCC	Lancashire County Council
LEP	Lancashire Economic Partnership
L&BTB	Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NWDA	North West Development Agency
RVSP	Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership
RVTA	Ribble Valley Tourism Association

## 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 from national, regional and sub regional sources wherever possible**

### Key Activities Action Plan

	Activities	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Outputs	Timescale for Delivery
<b>Establish priorities for action in major service centres</b>					
R1	Work in partnership and consult with the private sector to develop ideas and priorities for action in key service centres.	RVBC	LCDL LEP	Key service centre action plans established	2009
<b>Support regeneration activities in smaller settlements through the Community and Parish Planning process</b>					
R2	Support a range of projects in smaller settlements through the Pennine Lancashire LAG	RVBC	Pennine Lancs LAG	Projects supported and implemented	2009 – 2013
<b>Strengthen and develop communication mechanisms for sharing regeneration information between Ribble Valley partners</b>					
R3	Develop a communication mechanism for sharing regeneration information and best practice between Ribble Valley partners and project sponsors.	RVBC	Pennine Lancashire LAG	Ribble Valley LAG Forum established	2009



	Activities	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Outputs	Timescale for Delivery
<b>Ensure that sub-regional, regional, national and European policy makers are aware of the issues facing Ribble Valley</b>					
R4	Engage with policy formers in the region to highlight the needs of Ribble Valley	RVBC	LCC, LEP	Regular meetings	2009
<b>Ensure that the 'rural' case for funding assistance from National, Regional, Sub Regional and European sources has a high profile</b>					
R5	Highlight the regeneration needs of Ribble Valley and promote to key partners	RVBC	Pennine Lancs LAG	Ongoing activity	2009
<b>Maximise funding opportunities as appropriate to the needs of the area</b>					
R6	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.	RVBC	LEP LCDL	Ongoing research programme established	2009
<b>Engage with the Ribble Valley LSP steering group to take forward the Ribble Valley Community Strategy</b>					
R7	Engage with the Ribble Valley LSP and work together to deliver economic objectives	RVBC	RVSP	Ongoing partnership working	2009
<b>Work towards developing a higher wage economy</b>					

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Timescale for Delivery</b>
R8	Seek measures to attract inward investment and business start-ups in key growth sectors	RVBC	LEP, LCC, NWDA	Action plan	2009

## Business Support & Development

- ***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

	Activities	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Outputs	Timescales
<b>Enhance co-ordination of business advice and support services in Ribble Valley</b>					
BD1	Working with partners, clarify the role of business support in line with the NWDA review of business support and service delivery,	RVBC	BL, NWDA, LEP, RVEA, RVSP	Production of a Ribble Valley Business Support Guide and other support information, and marketing activities,.	2009
BD2	Through existing business partnerships, networks and Chambers of Trade, develop effective and appropriate networks to link local businesses and business support agencies together.	RVBC	BL, RVSP	Business networks established & developed	2009-2010
BD3	Provide accessible business support advice and training provision in service centres of Clitheroe and Longridge and occasional outreach to smaller settlements as appropriate.	RVBC	BL RVEA  LCC  Pennine Lancs	Business support, advice & information provision established	2009-2011
<b>Promote a sustainable approach to business development in Ribble Valley</b>					
BD4	Promote to Ribble Valley businesses the NWDA supply chain initiatives in key	RVBC	NWDA	Supply chain networks established and enhanced	On-going 2008-2010

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
	growth sectors in particular: Tourism, Food and drink, ICT, Creative and Cultural industries, Financial and professional services, Environmental management, Sport and Leisure			established and enhanced	2010
BD5	Develop incentives for business and staff development	RVBC	Pennine Lancs LAG, LSC, BL	Project activity	2009
BD6	Encourage local businesses to develop and improve responsible trading practices through participation in activities such as environment best practice and corporate social responsibility	RVBC	LCC BITC	Business events held	On-going 2009
BD7	Develop and maintain effective relationships with key local employers.	RVBC	NWDA BL	Business visits	On-going 2009
BD8	Encourage improvements in facilities and quality standards within the hotel and accommodation industry through appropriate programmes.	RVBC	B&LTB NWDA	Partnership working	On-going 2009
<b>Increase the profile of business support and advice services through improved promotion throughout Ribble Valley</b>					
BD9	To launch a dedicated business support portal through the Ribble Valley Borough Council Website	RVBC	BL NWDA LEP	Dedicated website portal	2009

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
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	RVBC	BL NWDA LEP	Identify target business clusters and skills gaps	2010
BD11	Prepare a marketing campaign on Ribble Valley to promote opportunities for inward investment looking at light industrial & office premises, targeting higher wage sectors.	RVBC	BL NWDA LEP	Marketing campaign undertaken	2009
BD13	Consider possibilities to develop business conferencing and residential conference market in Ribble Valley.	RVBC	NWDA, Private Sector	Consultation activity	2010
<b>Monitor incentives and schemes of support and assistance (including financial support) to businesses in Ribble Valley</b>					
BD14	Develop a Local Action Group (LAG) and Local Rural Development Strategy (LDS), in order to deliver a range of EU-funded measures under the Lancashire component of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)	RVBC	Pennine Lancs LAG, NWDA	RDPE programme activity	2009
<b>Seek measures towards accommodating appropriate and potential inward investment to the area</b>					
BD15	Develop the growth potential of businesses established around the A59 corridor through promotion of appropriate sites	RVBC	NWDA LCDL	Establish an A59 Action Plan	2009 / 2010

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
	through promotion of appropriate sites		LEP PL		
BD16	Research specific local recruitment problems to better understand the barriers faced by businesses in recruiting people, particularly from within rural communities	RVBC	Job Centre Plus	Research undertaken	2009
<b>Encourage continuous improvements in facilities and quality standards within the hospitality and accommodation industry and at visitor attractions</b>					
BD17	To feed into other appropriate economic strategies for the region that will have relevance and benefit to the economy of Ribble Valley	RVBC	LCC, LEP	Partnership working	2009
<b>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</b>					
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.	RVBC	NWDA LCDL  LEP  PL	Marketing activity	2009

## Infrastructure & Communications

- **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

	Activities	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Outputs	Timescale for Delivery
<b>Promote external transport networks encourage potential enhancement schemes to support this</b>					
I1	Identify areas worst affected by inadequate transport networks and poor public transport service provision.	RVBC	NWDA LEP  LCC	Research programme conducted	2011
<b>Encourage the improvement of local transport provision</b>					
I2	Lobby for improved transport services and links to major service and employment centres including established tourist attractions.	RVBC	NWDA LEP  LCC	Ongoing activity	2009
I3	Review current parking provision and assess its suitability for the visitor market and its economic impact on businesses.	RVBC	NWDA, LEP, LCC  RVBC  Pennine Lancs	Research	2009

	Activities	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Outputs	Timescale for Delivery
<b>Seek improvements to ICT and Broadband access across the whole community</b>					
I4	Support the development and improvement of ICT & Broadband connectivity and use.	RVBC	NWDA, LEP, LCC, Pennine Lancs	Research	2010
<b>Identify demand for business accommodation and sites across Ribble Valley</b>					
	Following BE group study maintain strong ongoing relationships with businesses with expansion needs	RVBC	LCDL	Business consultations	Ongoing
<b>Seek to develop key employment sites and premises in major service centres, including the stimulation and investment in tourism projects</b>					
I5	Identify and prepare a strategy for relevant employment sites and set out a programme to address their development potential.	RVBC	NWDA LEP LCC	A59 corridor strategy established	2010 / 2011
<b>Influence housing policy to meet the needs of economic and community development</b>					
I6	Monitor the characteristics of Ribble Valley's housing market and its implications for the future development of Ribble Valley's rural economy.	RVBC	NWDA	Ribble Valley Housing Strategy	Ongoing
<b>Review the provision of tourism signage within the Borough</b>					



	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Timescale for Delivery</b>
17	Undertake an audit of key visitor attractions in Ribble Valley and assess appropriate signage	RVBC	RVTA L&BTB	Audit undertaken	2009
<b>Constantly seek measures to enhance the public realm in Ribble Valley</b>					
18	Identify general and area-specific priorities for action in respect of improving public realm provision.	RVBC	Lancashire CC Town & Parish Councils	Establish & initiate public realm enhancement schemes	2010
19	Seek to improve the public realm of the key service centres of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley through town centre enhancement initiatives.	RVBC	NWDA LCC LEP	Action plan and consultation programme	2010 -2013

## 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

	Activities	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Outputs	Timescale for Delivery
<b>Raise awareness of the importance of economic development and tourism to the local economy</b>					
IMP1	Assess visitor perception research to ascertain most effective means of marketing communication.	RVBC	L&BTB	Research & Consultation	Ongoing
<b>Continue to strengthen work with tourism and economic development partners to raise the profile of Ribble Valley</b>					
IMP2	Work in partnership with L&BTB	RVBC	L&BTB	Ongoing partnership working	Ongoing
IMP3	Develop marketing activities that incorporate all aspects of Economic Development and Tourism promotion in Ribble Valley.	RVBC	LEP, Pennine Lancs LAG	Marketing plan	2009
<b>Maximise the spread the economic benefits of tourism throughout the Borough</b>					
IMP4	Investigate and assess area-specific need for marketing strategies in Clitheroe & Bowland Forest AONB.	RVBC	L&BTB	Area specific activities produced	2009

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Timescale for Delivery</b>
	Bowland Forest AONB.				
<b>Develop, promote and encourage sustainable tourism practices</b>					
IMP5	Encourage businesses to participate in environmental management schemes	RVBC	Pennine Lancs LAG	Business contacts	2009
IMP6	Enhance tourism information service to address visitor and local needs.	RVBC	L&BTB	Monitoring and evaluation	2011
<b>Maintain an effective, quality visitor information facility through Clitheroe Tourist Information Centre and associated services in other key facilities</b>					
IMP7	Ensure visitor information is available in key sites throughout the Borough	RVBC	Pennine Lancs LAG	Audit undertaken	Ongoing

## 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

	Activities	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Outputs	Timescale for Delivery
<b>Identify employer and employee skills needs</b>					
ES1	Consult with businesses in Ribble Valley to identify skills gaps, skills needs, learning and training provision.	RVBC	Pennine Lancs LAG, LSC	Business consultation on skills needs	2009
<b>Support partnership working to provide solutions to skills issues identified</b>					
ES2	Lobby for enhanced training provision for businesses and individuals in Ribble Valley.	RVBC	LSC NWDA	Lobbying activity	2009 -2010
<b>To ensure that learning opportunities are addressing the needs of Ribble Valley businesses</b>					
ES3	Monitor & support, through appropriate incentives, local training providers for key employment sectors.	RVBC	Pennine Lancs LAG	RDPE grant scheme	2009
<b>To encourage learning opportunities as locally as possible</b>					
ES4	Encourage the development of learning facilities in Ribble Valley.	RVBC	LSC	Increased learning provision for job creation / workforce development	2010

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Timescale for Delivery</b>
	Ribble Valley.		LCC	workforce development	
<b>Promote and develop learning activities that support lifelong learning</b>					
ES5	Encourage and promote an entrepreneurial culture within schools and local community organisations.	RVBC	LSC LEBP	Projects implemented i.e. Young Enterprise and Lancashire Education Business Partnership.	2010 - 11
<b>To encourage the development of a comprehensive vocational learning centre in Ribble Valley</b>					
ES6	Assist the Aspire initiative where appropriate as a primary provider of vocational training within Ribble Valley.	RVBC	RVSP LCC RV schools	Ongoing development activities	Ongoing

## **Appendix 1**

### **Local, Sub-Regional, Regional and National Strategic Context**

By carefully considering local, sub-regional, regional and national strategies, we have ensured that this strategy fits with local, regional and national priorities.

#### **Local**

- Ribble Valley Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan
- Ribble Valley Sustainable Community Strategy
- Ribble Valley Employment Land and Retail Capacity Study

#### **Sub Regional**

- Lancashire Economic Strategy
- Pennine Lancashire Integrated Economic Strategy
- Lancashire Tourism Strategy
- Lancashire Destination Management Plan
- Pennine Lancashire Rural Local Development Strategy
- Central Lancashire City Region Development Programme

#### **Regional**

- Northwest Regional Economic Strategy
- Northwest Regional Tourism Strategy
- The Northern Way
- Regional Rural Delivery Framework

#### **National**

- UK Government Rural Strategy 2004
- Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform Business Plan 2008-11
- Department for Culture, Media & Sport - Tomorrows Tourism Today
- Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs - Rural White Paper
- Rural Development Programme for England 2007 – 2013

- UK Government Business Support Simplification Programme

**Explanation of acronyms:**

NWDA	Northwest Regional Development Agency
LEP	Lancashire Economic Partnership
BERR	Office of Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
L&BTB	Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty







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