

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 17TH MARCH 2010
title: REGENERATION UPDATE
submitted by: MARSHAL SCOTT – CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: CRAIG MATTHEWS – RURAL REGENERATION OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive an update on a number of economic development and regeneration initiatives supporting Ribble Valley's Town Centres.

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 INFORMATION

2.1 Clitheroe

2.1.1 The RVBC Planning & Development Committee agreed the Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan on 17 June 2010 to support the promotion and revitalisation of the Town Centre, helping it to fulfil its potential as an attractive, vibrant and successful location. Following this the Clitheroe Town Team was formed from original representatives of the consultation/steering group to work as a committed partnership of individuals, identifying actions and giving direction to enable the priority and early individual projects to be driven forward towards the overall vision to maintain and enhance the town centres' environmental and economic vitality.

2.1.2 Through the Town Team approach, representatives from Ribble Valley Borough Council, Lancashire County Council as well as local businesses and the community such as Clitheroe Chamber of Trade and Clitheroe Civic Society bring together key delivery skills – such as economic development, property, design and project management, as well as developing links with stakeholders outside of the group, including key landowners, developers and businesses that can assist in the delivery, monitoring, reviewing and development of the plan. Work is now progressing on a number of individual projects to help contribute to the wider aims of the masterplan.

- 2.1.3 These proposals aim to see improvements to key sites, such as pedestrian and vehicle routes as well as historic and green spaces to enhance the overall appeal and experience for people in and around Clitheroe Town Centre and are being assessed by the Town Team and then reported back to this committee in due course.
- 2.1.4 The town is characterised by larger open spaces and roads interlaced with alleyways, courtyards and lanes. Improving signage is of primary importance to help orientate visitors in and around the town centre and various designs will be assessed in order to compliment the town's heritage assets. Places where people can also stop, either to take a break or soak up the town centre atmosphere and muse a while are also important and are also being identified.
- 2.1.5 To make the town centre more pedestrian friendly also, a number of zones are being proposed that will improve safety and enhance the experience for people walking around the town's main shopping routes. These pedestrian priority streets will interlink the other public spaces to create a network of focal points and green spaces that guide people around the town. The existing green spaces additionally need to be enhanced with the potential to create new and improved footpaths, play areas for children and families, enhanced landscaping and planting to areas such as gateway entrances to the town centre, castle grounds and other pedestrians routes.
- 2.1.6 Improving the connection between the town centre and the market area is also seen as a focus for this work in the short term leading to the longer term plans for the market in the form of a Development Brief for the Markets Area - a priority project in progress based on the development and design principles agreed through the masterplanning process. As well as the market area, further key sites are being identified for their development and enhancement opportunities for a variety of uses such as additional potential for retail, office and residential uses. Lowergate, for example, contains a number of empty and underused properties which could suit a small retail or office function, with similar examples along the fringe of the town centre core retail environment and less used routes and spaces within the town centre. This can enrich the existing variety of uses in the town centre.
- 2.1.7 Alongside this, more robust marketing plans are being developed to emphasize its own identity. Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board are now branding Clitheroe as 'Lancashire's Food Town' and increasing promotion and tourism activities in this area can trigger wider benefits for future investment and town centre developments. The food town accolade now provides a theme to further encapsulate the brand in addition to the landscape, heritage and independent shopping aspects.
- 2.1.8 Clitheroe Chamber of Trade membership continues to grow steadily. Chamber members are regularly updated and involved during the development of the Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan and a number of members are on the Town Team. The continuing growth of the Chamber has also led to stronger partnership working with RVBC in activities to promote visitors. Successfully, around 15,000 people visited the Clitheroe Fine Food and Crafts Street Market on 14th August 2010. Following it's success, from this pilot event, a major opportunity has been identified and plans are now in progress for a Clitheroe Food Festival to be held on Saturday 13th August 2011 with a view to making it a self-sustaining future operation, which will further be developed into an annual showcase event in the Lancashire calendar.

2.1.9 Longridge

- 2.1.10 Longridge Town Team are continuing to move forward with a number of initiatives following the groups successful launch with around 100 people attending the Longridge Economy & Town Team Event on 15th September 2010. with local businesses responding positively with a commitment to working together, and assist the progress of the action plan and create activities that will support its work. Key objectives of the Longridge Town Team include; reinforcing Longridge's identity as an independent thriving market town for services; reducing the need for residents to travel elsewhere; and improving the look and feel of the town.
- 2.1.11 A Longridge Development Appraisal is currently underway to provide an evidence base and it will identify the scope and potential for improvements to the town centre and will also assess other important business locations such as Shay Lane Industrial estate. This will provide the evidence base for a future planning / policy framework for the town centre. In order to give clear guidance and a positive policy framework for the design of new buildings, spaces and the refurbishment of existing ones, the appraisal will set out an analysis of the vitality and viability of the town centre's shopping functions, as well as recommendations for the enhancement of the town centre.
- 2.1.12 The Longridge Old Station Buildings are now fully operational following its extensive refurbishment, which was supported with an RVBC grant of £100,000 towards the total costs of the works. The facility is being branded and marketed to businesses as Workstation. Features are high quality meeting space, serviced office accommodation and a 'virtual office' facility with message and post handling. The building is now able to offer high-speed internet access and plans for 2011 include business start-up advice sessions and other business support workshops to be held in the building. A new website has been created at www.longridgestation.co.uk and the facility now also acts as a vibrant community hub including a heritage themed cafe, a town archive, meeting rooms, exhibition space and tourist information.
- 2.1.13 Longridge Business Group are steadily growing a robust structure and membership to help market Longridge as a leisure / shopping / business and visitor destination. This will assist partnership working to support and strengthen activities and events in Longridge (i.e. Big Weekend, Christmas Extravaganza). Amongst discussions to assist this also, feasibility work is underway as to whether Longridge town centre could become a Business Improvement District (BID) – some of the financing issues such as the business group and local events and promotions could be assisted through the development of a BID for Longridge.
- 2.1.14 A Longridge Big Weekend is being planned for 2011 following the successful first event held in 2010. The weekend will celebrate all that is great about Longridge, Ribble Valley and Lancashire, especially food, drink, art, crafts, culture and music as a showcase event in the Longridge calendar, and following a very successful event this year the next Goosnargh & Longridge Agricultural Show is scheduled for Saturday 9th July 2011.
- 2.1.15 The Town Team, along with local company Obas UK and GB Energy, who have secured an agreement to supply Solar Photovoltaic panels to reduce energy costs at their business at Chapel Hill, are also partnering the Longridge Solar Initiative. A contract has been agreed to install solar panels at the Obas Chapel Hill premises with plans for the same to be rolled out to other Longridge firms, schools and property owners in the area - providing them with the opportunity to install solar

panels at no cost to themselves, which could reduce monthly energy bills by up to 75%.

2.1.16 Whalley

2.1.17 The Economic Action Plan for Whalley was endorsed by Planning & Development Committee at its meeting on 12 August 2010. It sets out a number of actions following coordinated work between the RVBC Regeneration Team, Whalley Parish Council and Whalley Chamber of Trade which included consultation with local residents and businesses to determine the village's future needs. Many of the actions within the Whalley plan are being met from existing regeneration resources. More specific projects are also being developed from the programme and funding sources identified to co-ordinate and enable their delivery.

2.1.18 One such project is the Whalley Live Festival to be held on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th June 2011. This event will feature a number of activities over various sites such as King Street and the main retail area, QE2 playing fields, Oakhill Academy and Whalley Abbey. This will feature music and family events, food and crafts market and a fun fair.

2.1.19 Whalley Chamber of Trade continues to be a strong group of businesses committed to the success of Whalley and the trading environment and the Regeneration Team attends the meetings of the Whalley Chamber of Trade to offer support wherever possible. New signage has been erected to direct visitors to the retail area supported with an RVBC grant and the group are working closely with the Regeneration Team to deliver the Whalley Economic Action Plan. Another project is Whalley in Bloom; the overall plan is to enter the Britain in Bloom competition for 2012 focussed around Vale Gardens, The Old Grammar School, River Calder and King Street.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS: -

Ribble Valley Economic Strategy 2009 – 2014
Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan & Vision
Longridge Economic Action Plan
Whalley Economic Action Plan

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