

North Cornwall District Council Business Forum Meeting Notes

The forum has been established for purpose of developing a channel of communication between NCDC, local businesses and business support organisations, acting a sounding board to improve services to business across a range of areas

Meeting 22nd February 2008
Venue Eagle House Hotel Launceston

Present

Cllr Neil Burden (Chair)	Chair of Regeneration NCDC	Mark Burnett	Westland Geo
Cllr Val Newman	Vice Chair of Regeneration	Ross Compton	Westland Geo
David Chadwick	Business & Regeneration Officer NCDC	Nick Turner	South West Regional Development Agency
Richard Adams	Business Link	Mel Colton-Dyer	Truro College Senior Business Development Advisor
Brian Farmer Chris Hutchens Ivor Ough Alan Berry	Cornwall Works Bear Metal Ltd Kensey Foods Ltd South West Regional Development Agency	Derrick Daniels Robert Rush Diana Mompoloki Sam Snowdon	Danser SW PFA Research Ltd SWRDA Train to Gain
Louise Oldham	Unlocking Cornish Potential	Celwyn Richardson	Federation of Small Business
Ian Riddle John Richings Grayburn Owen	Enterprise Tamar Enterprise Cornwall North Cornwall Business Adviser	Philip Kennen Jo Lake Ian Gent	Kernow Farm Plastics Cornwall Retail Skills Business Link
Julian Greaves Richard Taylor	Envision Inscape Design Services	Bryan Vines Nick Goff	North Devon College Corven Vending Services
Apologies			
Darren Lawrence Peter Castell	Job Centre Plus Combined Universities in Cornwall	Diana Lobb Toby Lott	Train to Gain Skills Broker Continental Underfloor Heating
Mike Kormanic Andy Peters	Fitzgerald Lighting Ltd Cornwall College	Phil Ugalde Rupert Wilson	Proper Cornish Ltd Steins Seafood Restaurant
Thelma Sorensen	Cornwall and IOS Economic Forum	Sue Lovell	Truro College Business Centre Manager
Catherine Smith	Acting Head of Strategy & Regeneration NCDC	Chris Ingram	Continental Underfloor Heating Ltd
Anne-Marie Slattery	DMT Business Services Ltd	Claire Harris	Train to Gain
Ian Rigby	Enterprise Tamar	Mark Charlesworth	Bower Commercial Development
Hayley Bilney	Redpoint Consultancy		

1. Introductions

- 1.1 Cllr Neil Burden opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

2. Matters Arising

- 2.1 David Chadwick reported on actions arising from the previous forum meeting held on the 19th October 2007.

2.1 Local Development Framework (LDF)

Further to the discussion held on the 19th October led by John Pinch, Forward Planning Manager, the Examination in Public of the Regional Special Strategy (RSS) Panel Report has now been published which recommends (inter alia) a substantial increase in housing numbers in North Cornwall, up from a proposed 7600 houses until 2026 to a proposed 13400. This has significant implications for the LDF process i.e. the need to consult on different options, major infrastructure implications (PPS12), site assessments will need revisiting / extended, the evidence base will need a complete reassessment, employment land maybe affected etc. It is therefore no longer viable for NCDC to be certain of being able to submit the core strategy for North Cornwall pre April 2009.

This is extremely disappointing as we believe that the Council's LDF documents were on course to meet the timetable, indeed the way we had handled it had been praised as an exemplar by GOSW.

In addition, the County Joint Implementation Executive (One Cornwall) has now agreed that in Cornwall we will be working now towards a single Core Strategy for the County. Officers will be reporting this to Planning Committee in February, with the recommendation that because of factors beyond our control we cease work on a North Cornwall LDF and participate in a single core strategy work with the County.

Until such time as a single LDF is produced for the county the current policies will remain.

- 2.2 At the meeting on the 19th October there was discussion relating planning issues facing businesses that are located in a rural area. It was highlighted that many small businesses provide important local employment opportunities but find it difficult to locate suitable premises from which to operate. The use of certain farm buildings, for example, does not comply with current planning policy, but often these buildings are viewed by the businesses as ideal in terms of cost, their location to market, location to potential/ actual employee base and suitability for the work which is being undertaken. The point was also raised that small start up businesses do not have sufficient revenue in their early formative years to afford the larger units established on industrial estates and therefore require cheaper options. However such alternatives are difficult to find and this is seen as a barrier by prospective/ actual business owners and entrepreneurs. These concerns expressed by forum members have been taken on board and are being discussed with NCDC Economic Development Unit and Development Control. Forum members will be kept updated on progress.
- 2.3 Forum members also suggested that within the core strategy, consideration should be given to how the development of the proposed 65 ha of employment land development will support a range of employment sectors, in what locations, the types of employment and how many jobs will be safeguarded or created, perhaps via a strategy linked to housing development and other economic development issues. Work is ongoing to support this type of approach through County wide fora in support of transition arrangements to a unitary authority and forum members will be kept updated on progress.

3. Convergence

3.1 Diana Mompoloki, Head of Convergence at the South West Regional Development Agency presented the latest information about the Convergence Programme for Cornwall and what this means for local businesses.

3.2 A Powerpoint presentation is available for download on the NCDC website

3.3 The EU has just entered a new phase of funding for its major funding streams that will run from 2007 to 2013. The funding streams comprise the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly is benefiting from Convergence status in recognition of the problems experienced by the economy. The intention is to maximise the complementarity between the programmes as well as other funding streams

3.4 The aim of the Convergence Operational Programme for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly is "To establish the momentum for transforming the economy to a high value added economy where knowledge, environment and quality of life underpin sustainable economic growth". The Programme has four operational objectives that will guide the activity to be supported with funding and which must be taken into account when developing plans and projects:

1. Transforming the economy to a more knowledge based, high value added economy with a broader range of sectors, and a reduced dependence on low paid jobs
2. Increasing the range of employment opportunities available to the community
3. Managing economic growth in a sustainable manner
4. Taking a leading role in investing in the drivers of a low carbon economy

3.4 Key features of the Cornwall Convergence programme include:

- The South West of England Regional Development Agency is the managing authority
- Approx £314m has been allocated under the European Regional Development Fund
- A further £134m has been allocated under the European Social Fund targeting revenue based programmes such as training.
- A key challenge for Convergence is to grow higher paid jobs
- The SWRDA has a single pot of funding which can be used to match fund projects.
- Funding can support enterprise and growth including workspace developments, business support programmes, transformation to infrastructure such as Newquay Airport and improvements to the digital infrastructure. In addition key settlements will qualify for funding to unlock the potential of place, Bodmin qualifies as one such town.
- European competition rules will apply in respect of support offered to individual businesses – business can be supported by public funds up to a maximum of £160k over three years (this includes any European or UK funding)
- Business Link is the gateway for all business support, working within the scope of the UK Business Support Simplification Programme; a national government initiative to simplify and improve how business support is delivered, reducing confusion in the market place.

- Business Link will work to an IDM model (Information Diagnostic and Brokerage) acting as an independent broker referring businesses to specialist support following and identification of particularly need and requirements.

3.5 Forum members expressed views that future programme planning should include improvements to the current ITC and Broadband infrastructure; it was stated that some business still cannot access Broadband particularly in remote rural areas. Such improvements should include improving the capacity of the digital infrastructure network to meet increasing business demands e.g. increasing bandwidth in line with services available elsewhere in the UK and abroad.

3.6 Forum members also expressed the view that there is also a need to make available more employment land and business premises for the future, particularly in those areas that are struggling to cope with demand at the current time.

3.7 In addition, views were expressed that the transport infrastructure in North Cornwall should be improved, particularly to improve public transport links that enable local people to access employment and training.

4. Close and Next Meeting

Councillor Neil Burden closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. It was agreed that the next meeting will focus on the NCDC Business Survey results and future of the NCDC Business Forum.

Time: 8:00am – 10:00am. Breakfast included
Venue: TBC