

Press release: Lancaster & Morecambe Vision

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For Immediate release

The City Of Lancaster & Morecambe – A New Economic Vision For The 21st Century

The consultation process towards a new economic Vision for Lancaster & Morecambe is launched.

Over the last twelve months the Lancaster & Morecambe Vision Board has been engaged in the process of fact-finding, brainstorming and debate towards devising its Vision for the City. The views of local people have been taken into account through a suggestion box, 'The Vision Box', as to what Lancaster & Morecambe should aspire to become and what it might be capable of achieving.

The Vision Board's work is now complete (for the moment), a draft Vision has been devised and the ball is now in the court of the citizens of Lancaster & Morecambe. The Vision Board would like to hear from local people and organisations in support of the Vision or to express their views and give constructive feedback.

The Vision, and a summarised version of the Vision, together with supporting economic research can be viewed on www.ilovelancastermorecambe.org

A structured and detailed feedback form is provided on the website, which should make it easy to respond. Or for those with less time but who still wish to communicate their views, a quick citizens' poll is also available. As an incentive to respond, three prizes of 'dinner for two' will be awarded at the end of the feedback period - drawn randomly from all respondees. The choice of restaurant will be entirely at the discretion of the prize winners, except that one must be in Lancaster, one in Morecambe or Heysham and the third in rural Lancaster & Morecambe.



For those who don't have their own computer with internet connection, our local libraries all have computers for public use. Printed copies will also be held (but cannot be removed) at Lancaster, Morecambe and Carnforth Town Halls, at the libraries, at Salt Ayre Sports Centre and at the offices of the Chambers of Commerce.

The consultation feedback period ends on the 13th March - so please respond before then.

Following consultation, all responses will be collated and considered and the Vision will be amended in the light of majority public opinion. It will then be adopted as the Vision for Lancaster & Morecambe. And then the hard work starts!

The Vision will form the basis of a rigorous delivery plan, will trigger bids for funding, and should prove to be the starting point for a renaissance of the City.

There is no substitute for reading the Vision, however attached to this press release is a summary of its essence.

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Please also see the website: www.ilovelancastermorecambe.org

The Vision in a nutshell

We believe that the combination of Lancaster, Morecambe, Lunesdale, Bowland, Carnforth, Heysham and Glasson Dock, together with the countless village and rural communities dotted around our district represent something of an undersold asset, a priceless treasure. Add to that the incomparable Morecambe Bay, the historical legacy of the castle, Lancaster's prosperous Georgian past and the prowess of the University, one of the best in the country, and we believe that we have something so distinctive that we should be considered to be one of the most desirable places to live and work in the whole of the North of England. As Vision Board Manager Catherine Potter admits "OK, perhaps we're a little biased, being Lancastrians and Morecambrians through and through. But this place is a million miles away from the typical cloth-capped image of Lancashire."

In the North West of England, much of the regeneration focus tends to be upon Manchester, Liverpool and the newly designated Central Lancashire City Region, with Preston at its core ... and as a result we tend to be overlooked in regional thinking and regional spending programmes. But not everyone wishes to live and work in the big urban metropolises and we know that quality of life is better here than in any of those places. Vision Board Chair, Professor Paul Wellings, Vice Chancellor of the University, suggests that "In Lancaster & Morecambe, we could redefine what it means to live in a City - to benefit from the central facilities and services, economic power and plentiful quality, interesting, highly paid jobs that an urban centre inevitably offers - but with the quality of life benefits that the sea, the hills and the human scale of this City bestow."

But we won't be able to achieve our full potential and become a truly modern fully-functioning city unless and until we overcome the fracturing of Lancaster & Morecambe into two. And we believe there is a psychological as well as a physical dislocation. The physical fracture can only be fixed by significantly improving transport links between the two centres, easing congestion and speeding up the time it takes to drive or hop onto public transport between the two - and this will require lobbying and considerable public investment - so this is a central plank of the Vision. The psychological divide can only be overcome by adopting a less separatist view of each of Lancaster and Morecambe - thinking of the two as one,

enjoying living in one part of the City and working or playing in another, and being proud of the conjoined whole.

And to achieve this we believe we need to rebrand ourselves as *The City of Lancaster & Morecambe* ... and we don't just mean the urban areas ... this identity would also envelop all of the villages and valleys that make up our very green and beautiful City.

Vision Board member and NW Entrepreneur of the Year, Trevor Bargh of Charter Solutions states "We believe that we should be positioning ourselves and raising our profile in the context of the wider North West through our overwhelming association with high quality education. And this leads to focusing onto those elements of the knowledge economy where we already possess great expertise - in those branches of IT and environmental sciences in which the University already has an international reputation." By developing clusters of businesses specialising in these same or related branches of IT and environmental technology we will gradually develop a unique identity in the knowledge economy, which will attract international attention and respect and, more importantly, the quality jobs associated with these sectors.

Other elements of the Vision focus upon the threat over the next 25 years to the jobs at Heysham power station and we wish to work towards establishing an alternative substantial renewable energy industry, based upon the expertise we already possess, the unique geophysical characteristics of our coastline and hills, and upon our innate green sensibilities. We would also like to explore the possibility of establishing a new recycling industry - likely to be one of the biggest growth markets over the next few decades. Helen Child, Chief Executive of high-tech finance house G-T-P Group, also a Vision Board member, claims "Both of these industries, renewable energy and recycling, have the potential to create jobs at all levels - entry, mid and high end - and we need to create quality new jobs for all."

Last but by no means least, we also talk in the Vision about tourism. It is generally accepted that what we really mean by tourism in Britain these days is the health or otherwise of the 'visitor economy' in general, whether by 'visitor' we mean someone from overseas, from the next county or even a local. We need to be addressing all of these markets. And we state in the Vision that 'our desirability as a place to live is inextricably linked to our attractiveness as a tourist destination, as many of the facilities and entertainments on offer are enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.' As Ian Barker, Leader of the City Council, says "One of our great strengths is that we don't simply have a sublime coastline, or some beautiful countryside or some fabulous historic architecture, as do many other places ... we are fortunate to have all

three. And it is the combination of all three that makes *The City of Lancaster & Morecambe* special as a place to live and to visit." But we do need to improve the facilities and attractions on offer at Morecambe, we need to address certain grot spots throughout the City and we need to ensure that rural tourism is properly developed and marketed. But we specifically suggest that in order to truly put us on the map in terms of attracting people to visit and stay in the City, the castle is our principal world class asset, and should be transformed into a substantial visitor attraction ... which we also appreciate cannot be achieved overnight.

So, the Vision is of an equal and integrated future for the City of Lancaster & Morecambe in which we can move with ease from one part of the City to another, a vision with the knowledge economy and excellence in education at its core, a vision in which we stand out from the crowd in the fields of renewable energy and recycling, and a vision in which we are both a renowned visitor destination and considered to be one of the most desirable places to live and work in the North of England.

This is our Vision, we hope you share it.

