

PRESS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

A NEW ECONOMIC VISION FOR LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

The North West Development Agency has spearheaded the formation and funding of a new body established to propose a distinct economic vision for Lancaster District.

Residents and businesses will have noticed a number of significant new commercial and social developments across the District in recent years and, perhaps more significantly, announcements of other strategic developments on the drawing board. Notable amongst these are: the Lancaster Business Park at junction 34, the Kingsway redevelopment, Infolab21 at the University, the Urban Splash revitalisation of the Midland Hotel, the West End Master Plan, the imminent Luneside East development and the possibility of a major retail extension in Lancaster's 'canal corridor' area.

Clearly all of these developments have been co-ordinated and planned in the context of various community and economic regeneration strategies for the District. However, the North West Development Agency is keen that Lancaster devises an ambitious and distinct economic vision for itself, a dream of what this area is capable of achieving in the medium and long term, with the right levels of public and private investment and a co-ordinated plan of action. To this end, the **Vision Board** has been established. It will work as the economic building block of the Local Strategic Partnership.

It is a true public / private partnership, with representatives from the major employers in the area, smaller high growth private sector businesses and an elected representative from the City Council.

Inevitably, the Vision Board will consider the retail offering of both Lancaster and Morecambe, transport issues, questions of training and employment, incentives and barriers for the development of local businesses and the attraction of inward investment from outside of the

District, and of course the tourism and leisure industry. The focus will be very much economic, however it will be impossible to consider economic issues without addressing such matters as poverty, crime, education and sustainability.

Professor Paul Wellings, Vice-Chancellor of the University and Chair of the Vision Board makes the point: “Most of us who live here in the District, whether in Morecambe, Lancaster or in one of the rural villages, acknowledge and appreciate the strengths and attractions of the area. We are blessed with a spectacular and varied landscape and our urban centres are of a manageable and human scale, resulting in significant quality of life benefits for the population. However we do have our weaknesses including lack of business space, issues around road congestion and transport links to Morecambe and Heysham, and pockets of social deprivation where a sector of our community is not fully participating in the economic benefits that are already there to be enjoyed. And on the tourism front we really ought to be competing more strongly with Chester and York for heritage short breaks and making better economic use of our unique assets of Morecambe Bay and the wonderful seafront and promenade.”

Newly appointed Vision Board Manager, Catherine Potter, stated ‘The general feeling is that we are presently something of a hidden treasure and punching below our weight. Indeed perhaps some people would prefer that we stayed that way – our own little secret. However exploiting our undoubted assets to increased economic effect should benefit the community across the board, creating new and better jobs and improving quality of life for all.’

The initiative is strongly supported by the City Council. Leader, Councillor Ian Barker, commented that “economic prosperity, linked to education, training and availability of quality skilled employment, has to be the bedrock of high standards of living across the District. The Vision Board will have an important role to play in defining how Lancaster and Morecambe develop in a sustainable, fair and inclusive way.”

The Vision Board members will spend the next few months hypothesising and brainstorming their thoughts about what the District could look like in say 20 years time. Those ideas will be rigorously sanity checked and prioritised before taking the form of a written draft vision ... and then the next stage will be a process of public consultation to determine wider views of how we can best exploit our local assets in a changing global environment for the benefit of all of the community.

**For further information please contact Dawn Groundsell on 01524 582041
dgroundsell@lancaster.gov.uk**

Notes for editors:

Timetable for Vision Board activities:

Now – early Autumn – developing the Vision

September / October – first draft of Vision produced

October / November – refinement of Vision

December / January – public consultation process commences

Vision Board Members

Prof. Paul Wellings (Chair)	Lancaster University
Trevor Bargh	Charter Solutions
Cllr. Ian Barker	Lancaster City Council
Amanda Belcham	The Dukes Playhouse
Jim Birkett	National Farmers Union
Martyn Butlin	British Energy
Jim Catterall	Craigwell Hotel
Helen Child	GTP Group
Mark Cullinan	Lancaster City Council
Gill Gardner	OSG Solicitors
Nicholas Gillibrand	Mason Gillibrand Solicitors
Roger Horn	Bailrigg Property Company
Allan Kenny	Reebok
Naim Munshi	Sultan
Colin Newsham	Forrest Hills
Jerry North	St Nicholas Arcades
Jon Price	LA Serve UK
Geraldine Smith	Morecambe & Lunesdale MP
David Taylor	Irvine Taylor
John Walden	In Touch
Ben Wallace	Lancaster & Wyre MP
Ian Whittaker	North West Development Agency
Lois Willis	Storey Gallery
David Wood	Lancaster & Morecambe College