

## **Economic Development Strategy Update**

Good progress has been made on the agreed short-term actions of the Economic Development Strategy, since its approval in March 2022. The main actions and outputs are set out below under each economic objective.

In addition to progress on specific actions set out in the Economic Development Strategy action plan, the Council has developed plans for the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund from 2023/24 onwards. Both rounds are targeted at supporting businesses to become more productive, supporting them to start and grow, as well as increasing the diversity of their offer. The funding also supports with community resilience and infrastructure and increasing skill levels.

### **Key Economic Objective:**

#### **Improve skills and opportunities and reduce inequalities**

- South Gloucestershire and Stroud College have been awarded funding to support the development of green tech courses from the Berkeley training centre.
- Engagement with further and higher education providers including SGS College, Hartpury College and Seetec Plus to develop support for land-based businesses, courses for adult learners, additional support for 14–16-year-olds and courses available for residents who are in receipt of benefits.
- Liaison with the County Council to ensure the Multiply programme meets the needs of residents and businesses.
- Commissioning of consultants to prepare a Cultural Strategy, ensuring a holistic approach to economic prosperity is considered as part of this.
- Partnership work with Stroud District's Growth Hub including:
  - Weekly update meetings between Stroud Growth Hub and the Economic Development Team
  - Planning for future joint events and District outreach to deliver support to businesses
- Partnership work with the district's social enterprises, which has been focussed initially on engaging and supporting them through the UKSPF process.

### **Key Economic Objective:**

#### **Create advanced and connected workspaces and communities**

- Publication of an updated sustainable transport strategy and funding and delivery plan to support the development strategy of the Local Plan.
- The national TOMs framework has been implemented, ensuring Social Value is a priority of procurement opportunities encouraging local employment and upskilling and increased access to procurement opportunities for local businesses.
- Progressed land assembly and the planning application for Phase 1B of the Canal Project to allow commencement on site in Spring 2023.

- Canals Strategy adopted as a supplementary planning document and an Action Plan commenced.
- Levelling Up bid focussed on Stroud town centre developed with partners and submitted. The proposed bid will enhance cultural spaces; support increased footfall in the town centre and make improvements to walking and cycling accessibility within the town centre.
- Developed statements of common ground with the promoters of Local strategic site allocations in preparation for the examination hearing sessions.
- Progressed work on a series of priority brownfield development projects, including Brimscombe Port, May Lane, Tricorn House and One Public Estate project.
- Worked in partnership with destination management organisations to prepare marketing material to promote active travel and public transport as sustainable travel methods.
- Continued partnership work with the Town and Parish Council's through Market Towns Forums, individual meetings, stakeholder engagement for funding opportunities and Tourism focussed initiatives.

**Key Economic Objective:**

**Reduce carbon and ecological impacts**

- The retrofit programme is progressing, however at a slower rate due to inflations and the cost of materials
- Supporting the transition from commuting by use of private car to active travel methods through the development of the District's UKSPF and supporting initiatives that develop shared bicycle schemes for commuters and visitors.
- Funding the strategic walking and cycling network through the Council's strategic CIL and walking and cycling capital budgets.
- Working with parish councils to develop local walking and cycling schemes for funding from the Council's capital budget.

**Key Economic Objective:**

**Boost our market towns and rural vitality**

- Recruited Tourism officer and in post since July 2022, with the following outcomes met to date:
  - Development of a place making app, with a focus on walking and cycling that reaches across the district and encourages users to explore the district and support independent traders whilst doing so. To date there has been 749 individual users since the app went live, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022.
  - Working with the app developers to improve the offer for end users including a programme of district wide events available through the app.
  - Working with partners to promote the district as a year-round destination and looking to encourage tourism footfall and spend.

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- Developing the Unique Selling Point of the District and individual market towns to support and offer year-round vitality of the market towns.
- Social media training support for businesses in the District is still available with over 450 businesses signed up and actively using the support including webinars, the online toolkit and accessing training videos.

**Key Economic Objective:**

**Support inward investment into the local economy**

- Marketing consultants appointed to develop an inward investment focussed Prospectus for Stroud District, expected to launch in December 2022.
- Review and updating of the District's webpages for local businesses underway, as well as ensuring signposting to both external and internal partners take place, with a one council approach to support.
- Stroud Districts inwards investment offer is currently being developed, with support from consultants to market to the appropriate audiences and develop up a website.