

WINDERMERE & BOWNESS-ON-WINDERMERE: LOCAL ECONOMY: SCOPING THE WAY AHEAD

FINAL REPORT

To

South Lakeland District Council
Lake District National Park Authority
Windermere Town Council
South Lakeland Federation for Small Business

The logo for Douglas Wheeler Associates is a dark green square with the company name in white, bold, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in three lines: "Douglas", "Wheeler", and "Associates".

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CONTENTS

	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Review of Strategies & Stakeholder Consultation	4
3. Local Economic Profile & Changing Economic Context	8
4. Consultations & Workshop: What Are The Issues?	11
5. Emerging Economic Themes & Opportunities	18
6. Conclusions, Next Steps & Recommendations	23

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Windermere and Bowness-on-Windermere are centrally located in the South Lakeland area, approximately 8 miles from the area's largest town of Kendal. Junction 36 of the M6 motorway is only 15 miles (20 minute drive), while Windermere's train station provides access to the Westcoast Mainline and is where the Oxenholme to Windermere railway line terminates. Windermere town centre also accommodates a good variety of local shops including a branch of Booths supermarket. Windermere is just over one mile from the Lake. Bowness-on-Windermere is one of the most popular family tourist centres in the Lake District with its choice of boat trips/boat hire on Lake Windermere and attractions like the World of Beatrix Potter.

Today the local Bowness-on-Windermere & Windermere economy is driven by tourism but what about the future local economy? The public, private and third sectors (South Lakeland District Council/SLDC, Lake District National Park Authority/LDNPA, Windermere Town Council/WTC and South Lakeland Federation of Small Business/FSB) commissioned Douglas Wheeler Associates Ltd (DWA) in mid-July to scope out the short/medium/long term future of the local economy, identify the 'business case' to support action, promote new investment and prepare a document to be used to progress discussions to establish an effective partnership, action plan and delivery mechanism.

BRIEF: FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

Five questions about the future local economy were to be addressed namely:

- What are the likely **future local economic drivers** and how proactive can the public, private and third sectors be to ensure a more resilient local economy that includes more than **just the visitor economy**?
- What is the **vision** for the Bowness-on-Windermere & Windermere local economy, how can **more strong new business be encouraged to start up and grow** and how can the local area appeal to higher spending visitor markets?
- Just how complementary are Bowness-on-Windermere & Windermere: is the whole greater than **sum of the parts and what are the joint future priorities**?
- Is there value in a more specific study on **economic potential for the Lake**?
- What is the **best vehicle** to coordinate local economic development across the public, private and third sectors in the local area?

DWA APPROACH

The DWA approach was to undertake the following tasks over a six lapsed week programme and summarised in the chart below.

Task
1. Commissioning Meeting
2. Review Strategies & Consultations
3. Economic Baseline
4. Partners Workshop
5. Draft & Final Reports

FINAL REPORT: STRUCTURE

This Final Report is presented in the following five chapters:

- Review of Strategies & Stakeholder Consultation
- Local Economic Profile & Changing Economic Context
- Consultations & Workshop: What Are The Issues?
- Emerging Economic Themes & Opportunities
- Conclusions, Next Steps & Recommendations

2. REVIEW OF STRATEGIES & STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

A desk review of the various up to date strategies, policies, studies, proposals and initiatives has been undertaken and is summarised below.

The Cumbria Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2024

The Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was established in 2011. Cumbria LEP's 10-year Strategic Economic Plan concentrates on FOUR strategic priorities with intervention through FOUR economic drivers. This 'four by four' approach aims to deliver the maximum benefit for Cumbria and drive economic growth at a county, national and international level. Cumbria's business, public and voluntary sector partners, working through the Cumbria LEP, have identified the following priority themes:

- Advanced manufacturing growth
- Nuclear and energy excellence
- Vibrant rural and visitor economy
- Strategic connectivity of the M6 Corridor

The FOUR economic drivers are business support, skills development, infrastructure improvements and environmental sustainability. The LEP has identified Cumbria Business Growth Hub as the focus of business support across the county. The Growth Hub provides a one-stop-shop, making it simple to access the support business needs. The Edge has also been established as a Skills Support for the Workforce project, funded by the European Social Fund and Co-financed by the Skills Funding Agency.

The LEP's Regional Growth Fund programme is also in place and provides support to promote private sector investment, with a focus on manufacturing and SME businesses within the county. Local workforce skills and supply chain growth will also be vital to fuel and support the ambitions of advanced manufacturing companies. The Strategic Economic Plan highlights the vital importance of infrastructure investment in order to maintain the current momentum.

The visitor economy, including business tourism, is also highlighted and although already the highest value sector in rural Cumbria, it nevertheless presents significant growth potential. *'The Lake District: Cumbria'* is an international brand thanks to the unique combination of cultural heritage, landscape and adventure opportunities it offers. The Strategic Economic Plan highlights that currently only 8% of Cumbria's 38 million visitors come from overseas. **Critically the brand needs to be strengthened to be recognised in the rapidly expanding tourism markets of South America, China, Japan and India. Overseas visitors are worth £68 per person per night compared with £54 for a domestic visitor.**

The Strategic Economic Plan highlights the strong correlation between successful economies and places with a diverse and vibrant cultural, education and leisure offer.

Cumbria County Council: Cumbria's Economic Ambition 2011-2014

The Plan has three clear aims:

- Challenging poverty in all its forms
- Ensuring that the most vulnerable people in communities receive the support they need &
- Improving the chances in life of the most disadvantaged in Cumbria.

The five key priorities for action are:

- The excellent north south communications enjoyed by the main towns along the M6/West Coast Main Line corridor.
- West Cumbria's global reputation and expertise in nuclear and clean technologies.
- The County's strengths in the growing advanced manufacturing sector, particularly in submarine construction, biopharmaceuticals and LED clusters.
- The world class rural landscape and strong Lake District tourism brand.
- Opportunities to improve Cumbria's workforce skills.

Cumbria Tourism: Destination Management Plan 2014 - 2016

As well as major investment proposals and projects the Plan includes a range of supporting initiatives and programmes required to transform the visitor economy in Cumbria and contribute more fully to economic growth and regeneration. The initiatives include:

- Further improvements to accommodation and attractions to raise standards throughout the county, with a view to attracting overseas markets.
- Marketing, image building and brand strengthening.
- Sustainable transport connections into and around the county with a particular emphasis on West Coast Rail and public transport services around the county.
- Investment in the public realm and access infrastructure, targeted towards town centres, popular visitor destinations and key footpath networks.
- Enhanced co-ordination and promotion of Cumbria's rich arts and cultural offer and quality accredited food and drink, [via Taste].
- Continued development and investment in growing outdoor activity markets - particularly the adventure walking, water sports and cycling sectors, [via Adventure Capital].
- A targeted approach to skills and business development within the tourism sector.
- Rapid introduction of superfast broadband and mobile phone /4G.
- Raising environmental standards and resource efficiency within Cumbria's visitor economy - particularly in terms of accommodation and transport services.
- More robust support and financial underpinning of the Destination Management Organisation from public sector bodies.

LDNPA Partnership Plan 2010 & The Partnership's Plan 2015-20

The Lake District National Park Partnership is currently in the process of reviewing the Partnership's Plan. This new Partnership Plan will set out how the partners will work together to proactively and effectively manage the Lake District as a National Park and as a prospective World Heritage Site. The Plan will provide the overarching strategy for the Lake District, setting out what is special, what results are being aimed for and the approach to making these results a reality.

The 2030 Vision for the English Lake District is that it will be:

- An inspirational example of sustainable development in action.
- A place where its prosperous economy, world class visitor experiences and vibrant communities come together to sustain the spectacular landscape, its wildlife and cultural heritage.
- Local people, visitors, and the many organisations working in the Lake District or have a contribution to make to it, must be united in achieving this.

The Plan identifies the World Heritage attributes of Outstanding Universal Value that are specific aspects of each of thirteen Special Qualities. In practical terms, the Special Qualities provide an all-encompassing explanation of what is exceptional about the Lake District.

The Plan also includes 34 strategies and actions structured around following:

- **Spectacular landscape:** A landscape which provides an irreplaceable source of inspiration, whose benefits to people and wildlife are valued and improved. A landscape whose natural and cultural resources are assets to be managed and used wisely for future generations.
- **A prosperous economy:** Businesses will locate in the National Park because they value the quality of opportunity, environment and lifestyle it offers. Many will draw on a strong connection to the landscape. Entrepreneurial spirit will be nurtured across all sectors and traditional industries maintained to ensure a diverse economy.
- **World-class visitor experiences:** High quality and unique experiences for visitors with a stunning and globally significant landscape. Experience that competes with the best in the international market.

- **Vibrant communities:** People successfully living, working and relaxing within upland, valley and lakeside places where distinctive local character is maintained and celebrated.

Bowness and Windermere are recognised as a gateway and rural service centre and the original 2010 Plan aimed to:

- Protect the vitality of the shopping areas in Windermere & Bowness: Central Shopping Areas are identified on the Proposals Map.
- Give priority to the provision of local affordable housing to help redress the housing imbalance: sites are allocated in Windermere/Bowness to provide a mix of housing types and tenures appropriate to meeting the identified needs of these communities.
- Maximise the development opportunities on small sites to contribute to meeting the identified housing needs and seek to allocate new employment land at Windermere/Bowness.
- Develop opportunities for sustainable tourism focussed at Windermere and Bowness where they enable the economic and physical regeneration of the area.
- Support the provision of allotments and the provision of facilities for young people in Windermere/Bowness.

Bowness Bay & Glebe Framework Masterplan (2010)

Bowness Bay and The Glebe is a Strategic Regeneration Location where LDNPA are seeking to improve the area as part of a wider improvement programme. The aim is to deliver a world class visitor destination around Windermere Lake. The Framework Masterplan highlights the poor quality of some of the facilities and environment including; limited choice of cafes and restaurants, lack of wet weather attractions, poor quality of architecture of many of the waterfront buildings and a public realm dominated by tarmac and parked vehicles. The Framework highlights the need for a fresh approach to meet the **recognised quality 'brand' of the Lake District and of an aspiring World Heritage Site.**

The Masterplan summarises the future demands of Bowness Bay and The Glebe in terms of raising the type and quality of experience for visitors to become an exemplar of the Lake District offer, with sufficient capacity to accommodate large numbers of visitors and sufficient diversity to meet the aspirations of many different user groups. Fundamentally also Bowness Bay and The Glebe is an open space, on a lakeshore and therefore the vision for the future is of the **'best waterfront park, ever'**. The park and the Park is envisaged as a:

- Lake District destination
- structure for accommodating many activities: parks within a park, daytime and evening, temporary and permanent.
- continuous public realm linking fell and lakeshore
- legible space, managing movement including arrival, interchange and departure
- setting for pavilions, accommodating visitor services and all-weather attractions
- managed space with an agreed standard of maintenance and coordination of events and activities.

The Masterplan aims to increase car parking capacity of Braithwaite Fold, to replace car parking lost along Glebe Road and to increase overall capacity, using greened deck structures set into the topography to limit visual intrusion. The aim is for this to become a key arrival point for Bowness and a transport interchange for car users transferring to bus, bicycle or boat. A people mover would link Braithwaite Fold via the lakeshore with Bowness town centre. A new visitor development known as the Courtyards, would provide leisure facilities, specialist retail and food and drink outlets over two levels, with the potential for office and business accommodation over. This will be a key stepping stone to the town centre proper, 'which will remain the focus for an improving shopping experience'. A number of other 'pavilions' will be developed, replacing poorly designed buildings along the lake edge and this includes a new lakeside hotel.

Delivering the Masterplan has faced challenging implementation issues include fragmented land ownership, difficulty in agreeing priorities and significant business interests with differing priorities. Windermere Aquatic Ltd are now working with LDNPA on a £20m redevelopment plans

for the site they own and have already invested £3m on waterfront improvements with a further £1m to be invested commencing November 2015 on marina expansion. The County Council working closely together with LDNPA & SLDC are also delivering an initial project using LEP 'Optimising Connectivity' (Local Growth Fund) funding. The funding is time limited, and highway improvements for Optimising Connectivity need to be completed by early 2017. The initial project aims to enhance the Glebe to improve local residents' and visitors' experience and see it contribute to a world class visitor experience. As part of the current project for Glebe Road, SLDC already had £200,000 in the Capital Programme over the next two years to make improvements in the main foreshore area within the Council's ownership. Public consultation has been undertaken and final plans produced for planning were submitted in May 2015 and the works would be programmed over two years, commencing in the autumn.

Strategy for Economic Growth (SLDC) 2014

In April 2014 South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) committed to a **new Strategy for Economic Growth** that has been developed in response to SLDC's adopted **Local Plan**. The Strategy for Economic Growth has been prepared in parallel with Cumbria LEP **Strategic Economic Plan** (SEP: see above). Through its **Strategy for Economic Growth** SLDC is committed to working with employers, partners and investors to deliver high quality jobs, development and economic growth and promoting training opportunities in South Lakeland.

The vision and economic purpose is to make 'South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore'. Activities to deliver these strategic outcomes are grouped into five strategic priorities for action namely to:

- Secure improvements in productivity and employment through business growth and new enterprise
- Achieve a more flexible and highly skilled workforce
- Ensure that investment in infrastructure stimulates growth
- Promote a low carbon sustainable economy
- Attract and promote business investment in South Lakeland.

SLDC Council Plan: Updated February 2015

SLDC's vision remains for South Lakeland to be the best place to live, the best place to work and the best place to explore. The four priorities to achieve this are:

Economy:

- support the development of higher paid jobs in South Lakeland
- help towns and villages to thrive commercially whilst retaining their distinctive character

Housing

- help deliver new affordable and open market housing through private sector led developments across the district
- improve the quality and condition of private sector housing and reduce the number of empty homes
- work together to significantly reduce the risk of homelessness

Environment

- help residents to reduce the total amount of household waste and extend the range of recycled materials from the kerbside
- make progress in reducing carbon emissions and become more energy efficient
- support communities to become more energy efficient
- SLDC and its communities will enhance and protect the district's high quality environment

Health and Wellbeing

- SLDC and its partners will support health improvements and reduce health inequalities
- build upon our cultural reputation as a place for nationally and internationally recognised arts, events and festivals

SLDC will also work in partnership with the third sector to deliver public health initiatives and continue to explore opportunities with community groups, parish and town councils to **devolve services and/or council assets** where there is an appetite to do so. SLDC also aim to encourage people to recycle more so that the amount of waste sent to landfill is reduced. SLDC are also **actively promoting cycling** in South Lakeland and working in partnership with key organisations across the district, to help deliver safer routes to work and school and encourage people to take up cycling as part of their leisure activity. SLDC are also actively supporting the regeneration of town centres by doing more to encourage festivals and events, which also contribute to the wellbeing of our communities.

SLDC Housing Strategy 2015-2025

Clearly housing is a critical issue for SLDC. The District needs new affordable, market and specialised housing. New and existing housing needs to have a positive effect on health and be energy efficient. The Council Plan seeks to provide homes to meet need and SLDC has a vision of providing quality new homes and raising the standard of existing homes to meet housing needs, improve health and support economic growth. (See Above). The Housing Strategy therefore sets out an enabling framework for specific measures that will deliver this vision. The Lake District National Park Authority who are the responsible planning authority for Windermere and Bowness has allocated 19 sites within the wider SLDC area (1 of these is a mixed use site that has a housing element) to deliver an estimated 269 new homes by 2025.

Windermere, Bowness & Troutbeck Bridge: This is our Community Plan?

The Plan was prepared by Windermere Town Council with extensive public involvement in 2009 and updated in 2011 and 2012. The Plan includes around fifty two issues and actions on housing, toilets, parks spaces & leisure, green and clean, community wellbeing and safety, communication, highways and sustainable transport, skills/training/employment and local economy.

Review of Strategies & Stakeholder Consultation

The policy review sets a high level but consistent context for a consideration of the future of Windermere and Bowness-on-Windermere local economy. This new **LDNPA Partnership Plan** identifies how the partners will work together to proactively and effectively manage the Lake District as a National Park and as a prospective **World Heritage Site**. Bowness Bay and The Glebe is a **Strategic Regeneration Location** where LDNPA are seeking to improve the area as part of a wider improvement programme. The aim is to deliver a world class visitor destination around Windermere Lake.

The policy review and the stakeholder consultations highlighted emerging opportunities to use funding and investment from new development (e.g. Community Benefit Agreements, Section 106, New Homes Bonus) so that for example Windermere Town Council working partners like will now have more scope to develop new innovative approaches to facilitate local economic development. Overall the policy review and consultations highlighted the clear commitment to sustainable economic growth in Windermere and Bowness-on-Windermere in particular support to diversify the local visitor economy, continue to and improve the visitor offer and to deliver high quality jobs, sustainable development and to promoting training opportunities.

3. LOCAL ECONOMIC PROFILE: CHANGING ECONOMIC CONTEXT & ISSUES

ECONOMIC PROFILE

The 'Windermere & Bowness Economic Profile: September 2015' was prepared by Research and Information Officer, Policy & Partnerships at SLDC and is available as a separately bound document. The analysis used mostly ward level data for four local wards (Windermere Bowness North & South, Windermere Town & Windermere Applethwaite). The definition of Windermere used includes the Troutbeck area, because this is part of the Windermere Applethwaite and Troutbeck ward (See Map in the Profile). This section briefly highlights the main conclusions.

Population

According to the ONS's mid-year estimates, the population of Windermere (four wards) stood at 8,735 (See Figure 3.1) persons in mid-2012. Just over half of residents: 51.4% female v 48.6% male is in line with the national average. Overall, the town's population has increased by 6.1% since 2002 which is slightly lower than the rate of increase for England & Wales (7.5%). The population however, grew faster than that of South Lakeland as a whole and Cumbria.

Fig 3.1: Windermere: mid-year population: 2002-12 Fig 3.2: % change population by age 2002-12

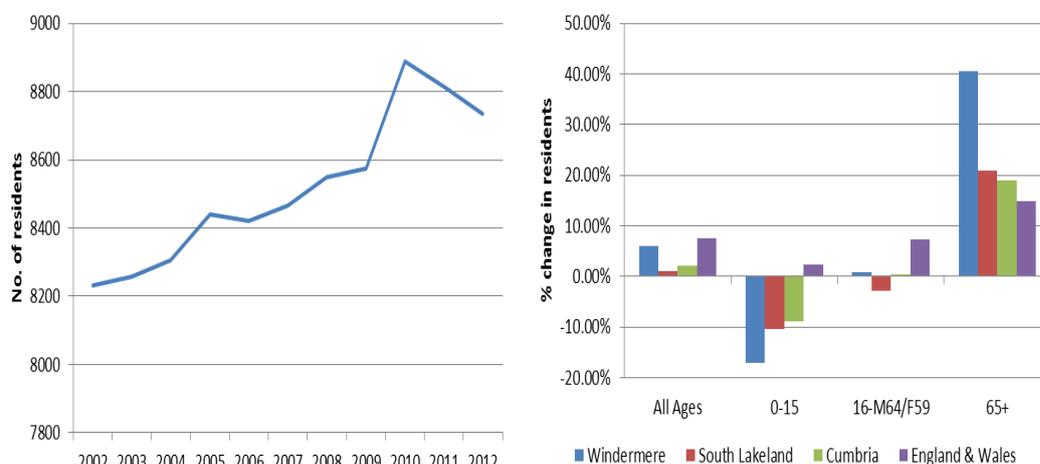


Figure 3.2 shows that overall population growth described above has not been distributed evenly by age. There has been a decline of 17% in the number of 0-15 year olds in the four wards since 2002 alongside a small rise in the number of 16-64 years olds (0.9%) and a significantly large rise in the number 65+ year olds (+40.5%).

Unemployment & Economic Activity

Whilst the Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) claimant data is an incomplete measure of unemployment as it only counts those eligible for, and claiming, JSA, it nevertheless provides a useful guide to the number of people in an area who are not currently working but are actively seeking work. In July 2015 there were just 18 JSA claimants in Windermere (four wards), 0.4% of the working age population. This is the same as the district average, but below the county and national rates of 1.1% and 1.7% respectively.

Economic activity rates in Windermere are higher than nationally with 82.6% of 16-64 year olds classed as economically active in 2011 compared to 76.8% nationally. Males are more likely to be economically active than females with 85% of males in the four wards economically active at the time of the Census compared to 80.2% of females. In both cases this is higher than the nationally average, with the female average also being higher than the district average (males is the same).

Summary Windermere & Bowness Economic Profile: September 2015

The important economic statistics from the Economic Profile are summarised on the next page with South Lakes, Cumbria and England & Wales comparisons.

- Population 8,735 persons in mid-2012: increased by 6.1% since 2002: England & Wales 7.5%
- Decline 17% in 0-15: a small rise in 16-64 (0.9%) & significant rise in 65+ (+40.5%)
- Small growth working age persons 41 (+0.9%): -2.8% in South Lakes: stable in Cumbria & England & Wales +7.3%.
- 18 JSA claimants: 0.4% of working age pop: South Lakes average: Cumbria 1.1%: England & Wales 1.7% (July'15)
- Economic activity rates (16-64) are higher 82.6%: 76.8% England & Wales
- Working age population has average qualification levels: 29.8% qualified to level 4
- 2011 Census 14,896 employed residents in the four wards (includes self-employed)
- Accommodation & food services employs 1,152 (27.3%) 11.9% SLDC & 5.6% E&W
- Managers, directors & senior officials: includes 814 of employed residents: 19.3%
- Average house price in Windermere is 9.6 times average household income
- Around 1,000 NNDR paying businesses: self-catering holiday lets 35.4%
- 60 new business bank registrations in Windermere & 699 in South Lakes in 2014

CHANGING ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Economic Policy Context

The UK Government is committed to continuing to re-balance the economy, so that it is less reliant on financial services and public spending in the future. The UK Government wants to see sustainable, private-sector led growth and an expansion in international trade. It has a deficit reduction programme that includes continued significant real-term cuts in public spending; a welfare reform agenda aimed at incentivising work; and an approach to further and higher education aimed at raising the status of vocational education and making providers more responsive to learners and businesses. Specific new priorities will become clearer after the mid November Spending Review.

There is also a strong commitment to devolution, localism and customer choice in public services. A raft of centrally controlled targets has been removed; new providers are being encouraged to enter the public service market; and new financial mechanisms are being put in place to provide greater flexibility for local authorities to raise their own revenue. The financial constraints place significant responsibility on public sector agencies to find new, more innovative ways of working and to develop strong partnerships so that effective interventions are made by the right organisations at the right spatial level. This requires a new relationship between citizens and public sector agencies where agencies **adopt a facilitation role to ensure and enable, rather than 'do' as in the past.** This has significant implications for investment in Bowness-on-Windermere & Windermere.

World Heritage Status

There is strong support across the range of National Park partners to make the Lake District National Park a **World Heritage Site** with a decision from UNESCO in July 2017. A World Heritage Site is a place (such as a forest, mountain, lake, island, desert, monument, building, complex, or city) that is listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as of special cultural or physical significance. Therefore the aim must be to deliver a world class visitor destination around Windermere Lake, including Bowness-on-Windermere & Windermere

Lakes Market Towns Partnership & South Lakes Development Trust

The Market Town Initiative was a Regional Programme focusing on the Regeneration of Market Towns. The Lakes Market Towns Partnership was established in 2002 with representation from Ambleside, Windermere and Bowness. A Project Officer was funded until 2010/11. The principle aim of the programme was to stimulate Economic Regeneration focusing on creating jobs, Enterprise Development Business Growth, Built Environment Improvements and skills development. The Partnership was dissolved in 2012. The South Lakes Development Trust that was originally established in 2004 for 'the benefit of the public of rural regeneration in the areas of social and economic deprivation' and was dissolved in 2010.

Unsuccessful Business Improvement District (BID)

Windermere and Bowness Chamber of Trade (WBCT) organised the BID ballot of 800 companies in the LA23 postcode area in February 2012. The ballot attracted enough yes votes to pass the 'tax principle', with 150 voters in 297 supporting the idea. The ballot however failed because it did not attract necessary support from larger firms and failed to get a majority from the business ratepayers in respect of the total rateable value. There was a majority in favour but a successful BID has to satisfy the criteria on both counts.

Changing Economic Context: Conclusions

Clearly there is a strong UK Government commitment to sustainable, private-sector led growth devolution and localism. The dissolution of the Lakes Market Towns Partnership and South Lakes Development Trust together with the unsuccessful BID means there is a 'local economic development vacuum' and an acknowledgement of the requirement for local action based on coordination, strong leadership and consensus on priorities.

4. CONSULTATIONS & WORKSHOP: WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Based on the review of economic policy documents and the consultations that have been undertaken, the following nine key issues have been identified and the potential economic development responses that have emerged are also highlighted in *italics*.

1. Visitor Economy: Need To Diversify & Promote Enterprise/Entrepreneurs

There may be an over reliance on the visitor economy/tourist sector resulting in some limited and still seasonal employment opportunities. Under employment and lower wages are still an issue. Only a limited amount of land is available in Bowness and Windermere to develop for employment use.

Encourage higher value, higher wage employment opportunities so that local income is less dependent on the visitor economy/tourism sector. Explore potential for appropriate alternative employment for example; bespoke/specialist manufacturing, cultural and creative industries and heritage related opportunities, environmental technologies, and small scale renewable energy installations. There is scope for infrastructure investment and to identify/allocate employment land/sites for expanding local businesses. Aim to encourage more business to start up, create more jobs and help sustainable local businesses expand (McClures/Lakeland Fells Furniture). Explore opportunities to promote enterprise/entrepreneurial activity possibly focussing on an enterprise hub: incubator/accelerator.

2. Continue To Improve Quality of Visitor Experience: World Heritage Status

A very high proportion of visitors coming to the Lake District, pass through Bowness and Windermere. This is the primary road gateway into the Lake District from the south and the national rail network extends to a terminus at Windermere. Department of Transport has made a commitment that the Oxenholme-Windermere Electrification scheme will be completed by 2017 although it has been put on hold for approximately 6 months. The announcement also referred to the importance of keeping Windermere connected to Manchester airport which is crucial for overseas visitors.

The *Lakes Line Community Rail Partnership* reports that passenger footfall at Windermere Station was 374,686 in 2012/13 and an increase of 98% since 2002/03. GoLakes Travel website promotes ways to explore the Cumbria and the Lake District without a car. Bowness is also a key hub on the Windermere ferry network and the first significant centre with all services that many visitors to the Lake District encounter. Bowness can be reached by car from the cities of Greater Manchester and Liverpool in less than 90 minutes.

The number of visitors, commuting patterns and people's transport choices result in significant congestion in some places at certain times of the day, week and year, particularly on the A591. This adversely impacts on the amenity and interests of local businesses, residents and visitors' experiences as well as producing significant carbon emissions

In some cases the accommodation and facilities offered to visitors, including the public realm is looking tired and does not offer the quality of experience that some visitors expect. There is also a need to ensure more visitor stay overnight/s and therefore spend more money in the local economy. Recent Investment in the quality of the public realm, especially in Windermere has resulted in positive impacts (more occupied units and pavement cafes). Initial improvements focussing on Bowness Bay and the Glebe are underway or committed (see Chapter 2 above). Some locations in the area are under substantial pressure from the numbers of visitors and this may adversely affect the environment and the quality of visitor experience. There is a need to recognise the facilities and requirements of the rapidly expanding tourism markets of South America, China, Japan and India with particular 'ethnic' and other language/dietary requirements. (e.g. Japan Forum)

Need to continue to address some of the under-investment in the tourist industry and in the public realm, to ensure that the area remains attractive to visitors and meets the standards expected of a potential World Heritage Site and in order to continue to support the local economy. There is a significant risk that Windermere and Bowness get 'left behind' as a competitive visitor destination. The opportunity to promote events/festivals and continue to improve and promote

the network of visitor attractions is essential. The last Windermere Air Show planned for 2012 was cancelled.

Is there an opportunity to develop an even more cohesive and sustainable visitor destination of World Class quality by managing the required changes and improvements through planning policy and accelerated partnership working? (See 9 below)

3. Housing Affordability: Stubborn Issue

High house prices have led to a distorted housing market. Open market housing is unaffordable to some local people and there are limited opportunities for people to access affordable housing. The limited opportunities for new development in the National Park combined with the very particular and acute pressures on local housing markets (due to the popularity of the National Park for second homes and retirement for instance) means LDNPA need to ensure every new dwelling contributes towards counteracting these pressures. LDNPA do this by restricting the occupancy of new housing, and by allowing new housing where and when it is needed. As the organisation responsible for planning in the Lake District National Park, LDNPA try to make sure new buildings or conversions are of a type needed by people who live and work locally.

Providing local affordable housing to help redress the housing imbalance is essential. This will enable people to live closer to their jobs. This could be achieved by allocating sites in Bowness and Windermere, using exception/'wind fall' sites and individual development opportunities, including very small scale development.

4. Demographics: Ageing Population

Bowness and Windermere has an ageing population partly due to its popularity for retirement and the loss of young adults due to the lower wage economy and high house prices. As well as being a challenge for the future provision of health and social care facilities this also means that there is a considerable wealth of 'social capital' in terms of active 'semi-retired' people with specific skills and time to volunteer.

Explore potential for appropriate alternative employment, promote enterprise/entrepreneurial and providing local affordable housing will help to retain/attract young people and use the wealth of local 'social capital'.

5. Maintaining A Range of Independent Local Shops & Services: Identifying Complementary Roles for Windermere & Bowness

The high level of second home ownership, out of town retail centres in settlements outside the National Park and the internet have reduced the viability of independent convenience shops. Maintaining a range of shops to serve local needs as well as visitor demand is an issue for both Windermere and Bowness.

Example: Manchester-based MCR Property Group acquired the 16-unit Quarry Rigg Shopping Centre in Bowness early in 2014 and invested upwards of £1million in a successful major revamp. The units have been marketed on lower rents and due to the size of the units a lot of the retail units pay very little in terms of business rates. The units are now largely fully occupied and occupiers include: cafe operator Chocobar, clothing boutique Blue Owl, Laura Ashley, Mint Cake Mine, Age UK South Lakeland, Bowness Beauty, KD's Café and The Bowness Deli and Sandwich Bar.

Aim to protect the vitality of Bowness and Windermere town centres and promote a proactive approach (see above) to ensure a balanced mixture of local and visitor goods/services and in a way that ensures Windermere and Bowness complement each other (whole greater than sum of parts).

6. Prioritising & Delivering Opportunity Sites/Buildings

In the last ten years a number of significant local development proposals have been identified and with the demise of NWDA not all have been progressed. Opportunity sites include:

i. Bowness Bay & Glebe Framework Masterplan: see above

ii. **Windermere Jetty:** New build world-class land and water national heritage museum: exhibition, galleries, wet dock conservation workshop, jetties & learning centre. Managed by Lakeland Arts with HLF and other funding committed and the project is programmed to reopen in 2017.

iii. **Ferry Nab Adventure Centre:** Proposals include water sports centre, changing facilities, extended jetties/berthing, mountain bike facilities & car park extension. Planning application submitted. SLDC leading.

iv **Caravan Site:** SLDC owned operated by Caravan & Camping Club. Further investment proposed.

v. **Orrest Head Farm Site:** National Trust owned. Feasibility Study completed in 2006, for a gateway, reception and arrival point for Windermere and Bowness but little progress.

vi. **Langstone House:** SLDC owned and declared 'surplus to requirements'. Windermere Town Council has a user right (with a small, associated lease) and holds its meetings in the Council Chamber and uses the adjoining office for its Clerk. Windermere Town Council pays the equivalent of a rent for the benefit it receives. Alternative uses and options for conversion to affordable housing and other uses are being considered.

vii. **Blackwell The Arts & Crafts House:** Grade 1 Listed quality attraction with recent investment completed. Managed by Lakeland Arts

ix. **Magistrates Court:** Vacant County Council owned building in a strategic location between Windermere and Bowness. Opportunity to consider 'asset transfer' and alternative uses.

7. Community & Third Sector Opportunities

In South Lakeland there is also now strong commitment to localism, devolution of delivery to communities, and third sector organisations. The current financial constraints mean developing strong partnerships with communities and third sector organisations is essential. In Bowness & Windermere the extensive social capital and civic infrastructure means that third sector organisations in the towns could be well placed to develop innovative approaches to providing local services and facilities.

The 2011 Localism Act gave powers to local communities to produce their own, locally distinctive Neighbourhood Plans to guide development decisions in their localities. There are also new opportunities to use funding and investment from new development (e.g. Community Infrastructure Levy, Community Benefit Agreements, Section 106, New Homes Bonus) and this means that Windermere Town Council and partners could have more scope to develop new innovative approaches to facilitate local economic development, invest in improving infrastructure and other projects.

This new context raises a number of opportunities for third sector organisations in Bowness and Windermere to actively contribute to the local economy and unlock funding from sources like the Big Lottery (Investing in Ideas/Awards for All) and Heritage Lottery Fund (Heritage Enterprise). (See Section 9 below)

8. Economic Potential of the Lake

Clearly the management of the lake cuts across a large number of agency agendas and has environmental, economic and community implications. Since the 10 nautical mph speed limit was introduced in 2005, Windermere lake usage has changed. There are now **many different users of the lake**, from the more active windsurfers, boaters and canoeists to those who enjoy taking a lake cruise or a walk along the shoreline. Some belong to clubs and organisations, whilst others are independent and different recreational activities may sometimes conflict. There is a strong heritage of swimming in Windermere, with longstanding events such as the annual Lake Windermere long distance swim, and the cross lake swim recognising the unique challenges that Windermere provides. New events such as the Great North Swim (a mass participation event) mean that there has been an increase in people participating in open water swim events and also in discovering open water swimming generally.

The first Management Strategy was produced in 2005, the revised strategy Windermere Management Strategy in 2011 and a refreshed management strategy is being progressed and thematic discussion groups have been established. This could be a good opportunity to explore the wider economic development potential of the Lake in a more fundamental way.

9. Establishing A Coordinating & Delivery Vehicle

In the current economic context (Section 3 above) and with the squeeze on public sector spending, the demise of Lakes Market Towns Partnership, South Lakes Development Trust and the unsuccessful BID there is a need to **explore new and different approaches to coordinate local economic development priorities**. The overall aim would be to coordinate, focus and align business (small, medium & large), community/third and public sector strategic economic development initiatives in **Bowness and Windermere**. This would improve communications across then three sectors, champion a sustainable economic development agenda and deliver on agreed priorities.

Is the time right to establish a neutral forum with expertise, commitment and some resources to focus on a longer term vision/ brand for Bowness and Windermere, agree strategic priorities across the emerging economic development opportunities, provide leadership and become a proactive partnership vehicle, co-ordinating economic investment?

PARTNERS WORKSHOP

The Partners Workshop was held at Windermere Social Club on 23 September 2015 and attended by around twenty people with a good representation from the private, third and public sector. After a welcome from Councillor Giles Archibald (SLDC) there was a presentation on the brief & approach, strategic context, baseline 2015 economic profile, summary of consultations, emerging themes: challenges & opportunities. The presentation included contributions from the floor from:

- Nigel Wilkinson: Windermere Lake Cruises
- Steve Ratcliffe: Director of Sustainable Development LDNPA
- Amanda Davies: Brambles Tea Room & FSB

After the presentation the attendees went into three smaller groups to identify specific positive and negative aspects of the local economy now in 2015 and what the Bowness & Windermere local economy could be like in 2025.

1. ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE & ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF THE LAKE
<p>Positives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The Lake: landscape & views + International/national recognised brand + Strong hospitality offer & based on independents + Gateway with strong transport links & connections + Fantastic place to live <p>Negatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of economic opportunities outside tourism: need to diversify the local economy - Failure to maximise the use of the Lake (constraints: speed limit, flexibility, policy, coordination) - Seasonality of visitor economy - Basic infrastructure e.g. public realm, signage & parking - Connectivity: Broadband & physical/community connections Bowness & Windermere - Ladder of space for creatives would be beneficial - Affordable housing for young families is crucial
<p style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">2025 Vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Range of activities on the Lake: sports/culture events & festivals - Bowness & Windermere better linked/connected: improve connections - Towns collaborating & working together - Diverse economy/area/population: opportunities for young people to stay in the area - High quality & well maintained public realm - Space & sites for all types of business - Increase visitor spend & retain spend in the local area

- Maintain B&W as a destination & grow & strengthen
- World class quality: place & offer
- Support growth sectors & keep skills in the local area

Coordination

- Recognise that B & W are independent communities with different histories but look for synergy
- Strong leadership
- Joint working & common ownership of priority projects
- Focus on delivering a string of connected projects
- Partnership group with staff/resource
- Need independent coordinator
- Flexible regular review: constituted & could be asset based

2: VISITOR ECONOMY: BOWNESS & WINDERMERE AS A DESTINATION 2025

Positives

- + Landscape
- + People
- + Vibrant visitor economy: scale & variety of attractions
- + Public transport links
- + Reputation & strong profile

Negatives

- Ageing population
- House prices & lack of affordability
- Low wages & higher cost of living
- Two communities: improve communication
- Car parking & road infrastructure
- Access to the Lake

2025 Vision

- Use World Heritage as an international hook
- Diversify local economy & employment
- Diversify the type of visitors attracted
- Improve navigation: social media, one stop shop/portal & signage/interpretation on the ground
- Balance of start-ups & traditional established visitor economy businesses
- 12 month holiday destination: More planned events/festivals
- Identified WOW factor: what are the attractions ?
- Lake & water are crucial
- Agreed priority projects ready to go
- Tourism BID could promote marketing/branding

Coordination

How

- Needs a funded resource FT/PT: funding?
- Clear agreed Action Plan
- Coordinating organisation with a constitution
- Needs support services & embrace service providers: influence priorities/spend

Who

- Business
- South Lakeland District Council
- Lake District National Park Authority
- Windermere Town Council
- Federation Small Business
- Chamber of Trade
- Lake users

3: COMMUNITY & THIRD SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES

Positives

- + Skills in the local population
- + Café culture in Windermere: public realm improvements
- + Range & choice of hotels
- + Brand image: National Park, Lake, Windermere: may be confused
- + Natural beauty & opportunities that come from that
- + Improved access: arrival & welcome
- + Proactive marketing e.g. Japan/China Forum
- + Less visible non tourism businesses

Negatives

- Lack of unity: three sectors not speaking with 'one voice': B & W are different communities
- Local convenience shop & services
- Perception that 'Bowness is Blackpool'
- Limited marketing to visitors at the source: home country/region: marketing is done once they arrive: apathy?
- Missing young/family visitors staying over: next generation: older visitors go to 1/2 places in a day trip
- Wet weather facilities

2025 Vision

- Better links & joint projects to strengthen unity
- More/diverse employment/careers opportunities for young people: education/skills to move to a more 'sustainable local population'
- Skilled & motivated workforce
- Strong partnership working: promote one community: all three sectors: community playing a key role
- Infrastructure needs met: broadband/4G would assist in marketing/navigating
- One town: ONE NEW NAME
- New investment/development to link B & W
- Tourism BID could promote marketing/branding

Coordination

- Review the existing arrangements: understand who is doing/proposing what: clear on roles & values
- Engage across the three sectors but timing is key
- Recognise the skills in the local community: bring the right skills together: strengthen relationships & look forward
- Identify a 'hook' that will motivate individuals: threat or opportunity
- Establish a committee structure with key roles & local involvement: needs to be lean & avoid bureaucracy/red tape

Overall: Key Projects Identified

- Audit of existing organisations & their plans the look to prepare an Action Plan with priority projects (infrastructure, housing, arts/culture, events funding)
- Establish a coordinating structure: across three sectors
- Invest in signage & navigation: links to transport, attractions & marketing
- More free parking: Miller Ground
- Work/invest to take advantage of World Heritage status

The outcomes of the Partners Workshop have been reflected in the economic themes and opportunities that are presented in the next Chapter (5).

5. EMERGING ECONOMIC THEMES & OPPORTUNITIES

TOWARDS A 2025 VISION

Preparing a 2025 vision for the Bowness & Windermere economy is outside the brief for this scoping study but the consultations and the workshop have identified a series of values that could underpin the vision, namely to recognise the importance of:

- The distinctive natural environment and cultural heritage of the Lake and setting of Windermere and Bowness, the high quality of life that the area offers and the opportunity to move to a more low carbon economy;
- Diversifying the local economy and attracting higher value-added activities and jobs underpinning long term economic success;
- The private, public and community in both Windermere and Bowness working much more closely together and looking forward to build a consensus and get behind delivering priority projects
- Celebrating and promoting enterprise, creativity and innovation;
- Economic growth from within Bowness and Windermere as a means to create wealth and well-being for young people, existing and new residents and businesses.

Three themes have been identified and refined based on the economic development policy review, socio economic profile, research, consultations and the workshop. The three interrelated themes are:

- 1: Delivering Economic Infrastructure
- 2: Visitor Economy: Developing Bowness & Windermere As A Destination
- 3: Promoting Community Enterprise & Third Sector Opportunities

The three themes and indicative priority opportunities/projects were reviewed at the Partners Workshop and are described below.

THEME 1: DELIVERING ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

To facilitate economic growth, investment in infrastructure for the visitor economy, economic diversification, service business and in placemaking in Bowness.

A more **diversified local economy** and a **stronger entrepreneurial business base** in Bowness and Windermere is essential, promoting **new uses in vacant and underused buildings and sites** are essential components in diversifying the local economy and sustaining economic development. Investment in economic infrastructure including the delivery of **high speed broadband and 4G** will be crucial for Bowness and Windermere.

There is however currently significant infrastructure investment underway or committed including:

- Highway improvements for ‘Optimising Connectivity’ at the Glebe;
- Windermere Aquatics Ltd.’s ambitious plans to expand the marina, redevelop and substantially improve the retail/food & drink offer and develop a new hotel in partnership with an established operator;
- The Jetty opening as a world class national visitor attraction in 2017 at the same time as the potential of World Heritage Status in 2017.

Bowness and Windermere needs to build on this investment and evolve as a more **distinctive and compelling destination** where arts/cultural, enterprise, commercial, retail, public, and social functions overlap with a diverse range of uses. A more diverse range of uses is fundamental to appeal to local residents, young people, professionals, families and visitors. In this context projects that diversify uses in Bowness and Windermere and promote enterprise, business /start up/incubation/acceleration, creativity, culture, arts/music and appeal to young people will be crucial. A **ladder of business accommodation** for start-ups and growing local businesses and targeted particularly at the creative industries will be required. **Affordable housing** for young people and families will also be essential.

The potential of the Lake and the water body to contribute more to the wider Bowness and Windermere local economy needs to be explored further and an outline brief is highlighted in the Chapter on Next Steps.

The current capacity of the existing combined sewerage network in Windermere may also be a barrier to new development. It seems that the current network has the capacity to deal with waste from new development; it is frequently overwhelmed by surface water during heavy rainfall events. (To be confirmed) On these occasions sewage waste is discharged into the lake. This has obvious impacts on the water quality of Windermere, the lake.

The key economic infrastructure priorities that have emerged are:

- Continue to improve connectivity: transport & broadband
 - Incubator space: ‘ladder’ of business space & sites
 - Promote Bowness and Windermere as complementary: work more closely together
 - Target growing economic sectors e.g.
 - environment/freshwater research based on the Freshwater Biological Association and spin off opportunities
 - digital & creatives
 - Small scale added value manufacturing/making
 - Affordable housing: young people & families
 - Existing development proposals to be revisited/explored:
 - Glebe: continued investment
 - Orrest Head Farm & Rail Station: New Gateway: development framework to be reviewed/explored
- Radical projects to be explored
- Actively promoting walking/cycling/electric vehicles & managing car parking
 - Car alternatives: e.g people mover/cable car from Rail Station/gateway to the Lake

THEME 2: VISITOR ECONOMY: DEVELOPING BOWNESS & WINDERMERE AS A DESTINATION

To proactively develop the existing visitor economy and target younger and higher spending visitors to stay longer.

Very clearly local competitors like Kendal, Ambleside and Keswick are investing in short, medium and long term projects to make them much more competitive places, Bowness and Windermere cannot afford to fall further behind and complacency is a real threat.

There is a definite opportunity in Bowness and Windermere and an emerging willingness to work even more closely with the existing tourist businesses and encourage more collaboration between businesses to help themselves. The aim should be to drive the visitor economy even more effectively and develop as forward looking destination. This would build on Bowness and Windermere’s long established reputation for ‘daytrip visitors’ and growing a new reputation that would be based on Windermere Jetty opening in 2017 with a focus on heritage and culture and in future environmental/wildlife tourism, events and festivals.

The aim should be to promote tangible ‘centres of excellence’ with significant visitor potential. The existing centres and facilities like Blackwell Arts & Crafts House (Grade 1 Listed quality attraction) Lakeland Cruises, Beatrix Potter and new centres like Windermere Jetty as a national attraction need to be better connected, collaborate, continue to be actively promoted and explore opportunities for joint initiatives including marketing, ticketing & events. It will be essential to target the next generation of visitors aged 18-24 who are far less likely to be minded ‘to visit the

Lakes' than those aged 55 and over. In Bowness and Windermere there is a real opportunity to radically change this trend and look to appeal to younger people, across generations an overseas visitors.

In this context Windermere and Bowness can be promoted as a destination 'where the visitor eats, sleeps, discovers and explores' with a network of attractions that encourages visitors to stay longer overnight/s and spend more. Bowness and Windermere need to invest in the appropriate infrastructure, quality offer, facilities and programme of events. Local accommodation, food and drink, independent retail and transport sectors need to work even more closely together and to actively develop and promote the visitor economy and to take advantage of possible World Heritage Status in 2017. The objective has to be to increase income generation and improve the resilience of the tourism businesses.

Tourism Business Improvement Districts (BIDs): have been developed and managed by local tourism business in other locations in the UK (e.g. Uniqueness/Loch Ness & Torbay Retail & Tourism BID). In Windermere and Bowness the aims could include:

- Improve visitor experience; environmental/wildlife tourism, outdoor adventure, culture & heritage, food & drink, events
- Visitor numbers/target markets
- Length of stay/spend
- Economically sustainable business & jobs

Cumbria Tourism are exploring a 'county wide BID approach'

Therefore there is also an opportunity to explore establishing a **Tourism Business Improvement District (BID)** in Windermere and Bowness to ensure local tourism business work even more closely together to develop as a destination through a series of agreed additional marketing activities, initiatives and services. The BID would provide a sustainable financial model to deliver the agreed key Action Plan programmes and priority projects.

The key visitor economy priorities that have emerged are:

- Identify more clearly the essence of the Bowness and Windermere destination in 2025?
 - USP: Centres of Excellence, natural & built heritage, Lake cruises +?
- What are the key components of the cultural offer: world class cultural landscape/artistic inspiration +
- Invest in the quality of product: public realm, accommodation, service
- World Heritage Status opportunity: invest & work to realise opportunity
- Building on private & third sector investment e.g. Windermere Aquatics & Windermere Jetty
- Target expanding markets: China, India, South America
- Destination marketing: explore Tourism BID
- Short term : use the 'once in a generation' publicity around the opening of the Jetty 2017 to promote and present a coordinated and 'joined up' quality visitor offer
- Short term: essential to improve signage and pedestrian/cycle connections to the network of attractions outside Bowness & Windermere e.g. Blackwell Arts & Crafts House & Windermere Jetty

THEME 3: PROMOTING COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE & THIRD SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES

To actively exploit the tremendous social capital available in Bowness and Windermere, strengthen community enterprise and actively develop third sector organisations to unlock economic regeneration opportunities.

In South Lakeland there is already a commitment to devolution of delivery to communities, and third sector organisations. The current public sector financial constraints place significant responsibility on local authorities to develop strong partnerships with communities, and third sector organisations, so that effective local interventions are made by the right organisations. There are already around **100 community, youth and sports groups** in Windermere and Bowness as well as a significant base of retired/semi-retired population with a wealth of experience and particular skills. Therefore this **extensive social capital** means that third sector organisations in Bowness and Windermere could be well placed to develop innovative approaches to providing local services and facilities. This will require a focus on encouraging more volunteering particularly among younger people, empowering and building further capacity within the two communities. The aim is to enable individuals' and groups to do more themselves, by working in partnership with each other and delivering projects that **benefit both Windermere and Bowness**.

The South Lakes Development Trust (SLDT) that was originally established in 2004 for 'the benefit of the public of rural regeneration in the areas of social and economic deprivation' and was dissolved in 2010. There could now be an opportunity to explore the possibilities of re-establishing a development trust that would learn lessons from the SLDT experience and look to explore opportunities for the community to acquire local 'public assets' and exploit their economic development potential in partnership with private sector investment.

This new context raises a number of opportunities for third sector organisations in Bowness and Windermere to actively contribute to the local economy and unlock funding from sources like the Big Lottery (Investing in Ideas/Awards for All) and Heritage Lottery Fund (Heritage Enterprise).

The key visitor economy priorities that have emerged are:

- Retaining young people & families: affordable housing & sustainable employment
- Exploiting local social capital: promoting volunteering: use skills in community
- Actively promote local community involvement & opportunities in the visitor 'centres of excellence' e.g. Blackwell & the Jetty
- Community ownership of assets: undertake audit & re-establish Development Trust
 - to acquire & reuse a local heritage building
 - e.g. Magistrate Court: strategic location between Bowness & Windermere
- Explore partnership funding opportunities
 - e.g. Heritage Enterprise
- Look to enhance the economic development role of third sector organisations

ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF THE LAKE

There are many different users of the Lake, from the more active windsurfers, boaters and canoeists to those who enjoy taking a lake cruise or a walk along the shoreline. Some belong to clubs and organisations, whilst others are independent. The speed limit for powered craft on Windermere requires all powered craft to travel at or below 10 nautical mph, except for enforcement or rescue activities. Good practice in visitor management lies at the core of sustainable tourism, the challenge is to spread the economic benefits of visitor activity, extending water based recreational opportunities and at the same time reducing pressure on sensitive environmental locations.

The Windermere Management Strategy was originally prepared in 2011 with a five year timeframe and outlined the Vision for Windermere, namely to create a lake that is:

- beautiful, clean and peaceful
- valuable and safe home for wildlife
- a place we can all enjoy for its scenery, culture, and recreation
- a focal point for local communities and visitors; and which is

- central to sustaining a vibrant and healthy local economy.

The Strategy included more than sixty actions structured around:

- A Prosperous Economy
- A World Class Visitor Experience
- Vibrant Communities
- Spectacular Landscape

The Windermere Catchment Restoration Programme was established in 2009 in response to the decline in water quality of Windermere over many years. The programme aims to:

- Improve the water quality and protect the natural ecology of the catchment and its lakes.
- Increase environmental awareness amongst resident and visitor communities by providing opportunities to celebrate and enjoy what is special about Windermere and its catchment.
- Ensure that improvements to lakes and landscape in the catchment support a healthy local economy

A refreshed 'management strategy' is being progressed and thematic discussion groups have been established. As part of the refresh, the opportunity for new visitor 'product development' could be explored, which would grow sustainable water and land based tourism and in turn stimulates economic activity in different locations around the Lake, where it can be accommodated. The aim should be to create sustainable jobs and attract a new niche visitor market to explore the area, which can bring both social and economic benefits to communities and local businesses.

The refreshed strategy should highlight the vision and future direction for water and shore based activity. The outline brief for the plan would include

- Review best practice in lake 'economic development' and management in Europe/North America
- Identifies new future appropriate lake related visitor opportunities/recreational activities including opportunities for new marina/moorings and support facilities
- Identify medium/long term opportunities for public access to/views of the Lake: aim for a long distance footpath/cycleway around the Lake
- Determines the appropriate levels of lake use and development
- Opportunities for a regional/national/international programme of water based events:
 - sport
 - arts e.g. Lakes Alive
 - ensure Windermere and Bowness businesses benefit
 - utilise an exemption to the byelaw
- Environmental tourism: on/off shore wildlife & outdoors
- Short term management issues: increasing supply of moorings with facilities (SLDC revenue), speed limit, public jetties and water skiing
- Establish an updated long-term vision and management objectives.
- Respond to current and predicted future threats and opportunities to enhance or change the values and uses of Lake Windermere.

6. CONCLUSIONS: NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

Overall the clear conclusion that has emerged from the research, consultations and Partners Workshop is that Bowness and Windermere would **benefit from having a succinct Economic Action Plan** in place for all public, private and third sector stakeholders and not just the public sector.

Clearly these are very challenging times. LDNPA, SLDC and CC along with the rest of the public sector in England, is facing up to a **very tough financial climate**. Public sector budgets are likely to reduce over next three years. Costs are rising while funding is reducing, making it harder to balance public sector budgets and protect services. The main objectives of the Economic Action Plan are highlighted below.

- Develop and test the themes highlighted in the ‘Local Economy: Scoping The Way Ahead’
- Provide an evidence based business case to support action
- Provide an economic focus for local investment
- Confirm the fit with Cumbria LEP/LDNPA/SLDC strategic priorities:
 - Ensure a thorough, authoritative & tactical Plan
- Support funding bids: traditionally difficult: e.g. HLF/BIG
- Joined up/linked projects: maximise benefits
- Consultation on the plan will help to build consensus
- Identify priority actions: capable of delivery

DELIVERY CONTEXT & COORDINATION

Bowness and Windermere is one very small part of much larger local, regional, national and international economy. The economic development landscape however, is also a crowded one and there are a range of different local agencies like LDNPA, Cumbria Tourism and FSB with interests that extends beyond Bowness and Windermere. In addition there are developers and commercial agents, housing associations, voluntary/third sector organisations, that all have roles in supporting the development and growth of the Bowness and Windermere economy.

Therefore, there are risks of duplication, lack of transparency and wasted resources if relationships are not carefully managed. In Bowness and Windermere there is also something of a ‘**local vacuum**’ with for example the demise of Lakes Market Towns Partnership, the dissolution of South Lakes Development Trust and the recent unsuccessful BID. Therefore it will be essential to fill the vacuum, **challenge complacency, negative perceptions and lack of trust** from these most recent experiences. The aim should be to establish a new culture based on good leadership, consensus, transparency, trust and above all an ambitious ‘can do’ attitude. At the same time a number of significant infrastructure investments are underway or committed including: highway improvements at the Glebe, Windermere Aquatics Ltd.’s ambitious to expand the marina, redevelop and substantially improve the retail/food & drink offer and develop a new hotel in partnership with an established operator, the Jetty opening in 2017 as a national visitor attraction and the very significant potential World Heritage Status in 2017. Clearly there is now a tangible opportunity to build on these recent investments.

To effectively address these and the other issues identified in this ‘*Local Economy: Scoping The Way Ahead*’ report and build on recent investment, a new strong local commitment in Bowness and Windermere is required. A transparent approach that builds trust, with a real focus on delivering agreed priority projects will all be essential. Based on the research, consultations and the Partners Workshop there is now a clear requirement for action based on coordination, strong leadership and a consensus on priorities. Bowness and Windermere needs ‘**one economic development team**’!

Delivery Proposals: ‘Short Life’ Coordinating Group

Experience elsewhere has shown the importance of a respected ‘neutral forum’ to discuss emerging economic development opportunities, challenge the status quo, provide leadership and act as a proactive partnership vehicle to co-ordinate economic investment.

SLDC/LDNPA/WTC and FSB has to move quickly and decisively so as to keep up the momentum that has been built up over the last few months. Effective leadership and a tangible commitment to delivering sustainable local economic development will be essential. As a consequence the following delivery arrangement is recommended:

- In the short term a focussed group, with a clear commitment to further develop and deliver an Economic Plan based on this scoping work, should be established. The group would include strong local business representatives.
- The group would have an independent chair (Project Champion) and monitor progress on delivering Action Plan projects and continue to build consensus around strategic programmes and projects. The principle of establishing a short life Delivery Group was discussed at the Workshop on 23 September.

The short life 'Coordinating Group' is the most appropriate agent to coordinate local economic development and lead delivery of an Economic Action Plan. The Group need to be committed to ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of different agencies and groups involved in supporting economic development in Bowness and Windermere are clear, to use existing structures and agencies to deliver priority projects where it can and focus on accountability for delivering projects.

The Coordinating Group cannot grow the local economy alone, but in leading the delivery of and working with private, public and third sector partners; it can help support Bowness and Windermere towards a more resilient and therefore sustainable economic future. The membership of the Group would include representatives of **private/businesses/FSB, community/WTC/third sector and LDNPAA/SLDC & other public sector partners.**

The Coordinating Group would meet on say four occasions annually in the first two years and then review progress and agree whether to continue.

The main roles of the Coordinating Group would be to:

- Act as an independent forum with a clear economic focus for private public, & third sector representatives
- Use limited resources and work through other agencies with a focus on progress and accountability
- Lobby influence inspire: politicians & public private & third sectors
- Explore funding staff resource: **initially one FT/PT coordinator**
- Develop a vision: action plan & consensus on priority projects
- Champion Bowness & Windermere
- Coordinate project delivery formal/informal structure

NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The main next steps and recommendations are as follows:

- SLDC/LDNPA/WTC/FSB to establish a 'Short Life' Coordinating Group with an early first meeting. *December 2015/January 2016*
- Coordinating Group to organise/commission an Economic Action Plan to develop and test the themes highlighted in the 'Local Economy: Scoping The Way Ahead'. *February - March 2016*

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