

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

12<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2012

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>GREEN GROWTH IN WIRRAL</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>KEVIN ADDERLEY</b> <b>DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, HOUSING</b> <b>AND PLANNING</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>(RELEVANT CABINET MEMBER)</b> <b>REGENERATION &amp; PLANNING STRATEGY</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	YES

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report follows the Scrutiny Review of Green Growth in Wirral, produced by The Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which acknowledge the importance, vibrancy and potential of the 'Green Economy' to create enterprise, jobs and help Wirral to become environmentally sustainable. This report sets out proposals to develop the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review in order to respond to the needs of Wirral businesses and therefore to stimulate economic growth and create new jobs for the residents of Wirral
- 1.2 This report seeks Members' approval for a range of policy options designed to enable businesses in Wirral's 'green economy' to set up, grow and maintain competitiveness.
- 1.3 This report complements Wirral's Investment Strategy, which sets future priorities for the economy in the borough. The Strategy proposes an increased emphasis on developing a number of key growth sectors that will build on existing local specialisms and will offer the most growth potential. Two of the proposed growth sectors are Offshore Energy and the Low Carbon sectors.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The low carbon and environmental goods and services sector (LCEGS or 'Green Economy') is defined as "a community of businesses that provide technologies, goods and services that will enable the UK's transition to the low carbon economy"<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.2 The low carbon economy has been identified by Wirral and the wider city region economy as one of the transformational areas on which to focus in order to create jobs and narrow the productivity gap with the rest of the UK. K-Matrix data from 2009/2010, which is used by The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Low Carbon and Environmental Goods and services: an industry analysis commissioned by BERR (Department of Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform)

and is sourced from a number of different data banks, shows that in the period 2009/2010 there were 227 registered companies in the following sub sectors in Wirral:

**2.3 Table 1: Number of low carbon and environmental goods and services (LCEGS) companies by sector in Wirral**

Sector	Number of Registered Companies
Low carbon sub sector	105
Renewable energy sub sector	71
Environmental sub sector	51
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>227</b>

*Source: K-Matrix data 2009/2010, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills*

- 2.4 This compares to 400 companies in the Liverpool City Region as a whole, where it is estimated that 8,700 people are employed.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.5 A central plank of the Government policy for green growth is the Green Investment Bank which is designed to accelerate private sector investment in the UK's transition to a green economy. The first priority sectors for the Bank, subject to approval by the European Commission, are:
- Offshore wind power generation
  - Commercial and industrial waste processing and recycling
  - Energy from waste generation
  - Non-domestic energy efficiency
  - Support for the Green Deal
- 2.6 The Green Investment Bank will build the necessary expertise in financial markets and green investments, with the aim of both achieving significant green impact and making financial returns. However, in reality, it will only impact in Wirral if businesses are in a position to put forward viable schemes and projects which are in need of finance.
- 2.7 The green sector will also be impacted by the Government's Green Deal, which will enable many households and businesses to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. The Green Deal is a new government initiative designed to help meet the upfront cost of making homes more energy efficient. Due to be launched in late 2012, the Green Deal will enable the installation of energy efficiency measures. Although customers will repay the cost over time, this is not a conventional personal loan as the charge is attached to the meter and paid back through the fuel bill.
- 2.8 It remains to be seen how this initiative will impact on the green economy. During the course of the Scrutiny Review of Green Growth in Wirral, businesses recognised the launch of the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme in November 2011 as potentially a very significant step in changing the way that heat is generated and used. However, at the same time, there is considerable concern in the industry that the recently announced reduction in feed-in tariffs for solar panels will have a detrimental effect on the growth of that particular sub-sector.

---

<sup>2</sup> Low carbon Action Plan (2011-2015), The Mersey Partnership

2.9 The green vehicle sector is also expected to receive a boost after the government announced reforms to company tax designed to make it more attractive for firms to purchase low and zero carbon vehicles, and revealed it will extend enhanced capital allowance tax breaks to cover the purchase of zero-carbon goods vehicles.

2.10 Within the national framework, opportunities will emerge for Wirral. Wirral's Investment Strategy is a key document in setting the future priorities for the economy in the borough as part of the Council's enabling role. The Strategy has been developed following consultation with the Council's strategic partners, including Wirral Economic Development and Skills (WEDS) Partnership, the Investment Board and Invest Wirral Business Forum. In the context of green growth, it is positive that the prospects for the green sector are highlighted within the plan. Wirral's Investment Strategy 2011-2016, approved by Cabinet on 21st July 2011, aims to grow the economy of Wirral by identifying and attracting new investment and by also supporting the existing business base to grow and develop. In particular, two of the Key Policy Statements within the Strategy are:

"We will support the development of key sectors by facilitating investment into specific key projects, such as the infrastructure for Offshore Wind"

"We will attract and support the development of successful businesses, particularly those in key growth sectors".

2.11 The new Investment Strategy proposes an increased emphasis on developing a number of key growth sectors that will build on existing local specialisms and will offer the most growth potential. The growth sectors include:

- Research and Development
- Low Carbon
- Offshore Energy
- Biomedical
- Advanced technology and manufacturing

2.12 The Strategy stresses that the focus on these key growth sectors and high profile projects will be underpinned by a range of effective support services and enabling measures to attract new investment; to support businesses and to ensure that people have access to the right employment and skills services to benefit from these new opportunities.

### **Developing the Green Economy**

2.13 The Scrutiny Review of Green Growth, compiled by The Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee following significant engagement with businesses, relevant partner organisations and officers examines barriers to growth that are experienced by businesses in Wirral's Green Economy.

2.14 The Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the existing services provided to companies in Wirral's Green Economy across all departments. The committee set out 19 recommendations, aimed to further enhance and develop Wirral Council's enabling support to the 'green economy'.

## Formation of a Green Economy Officer Working Group

- 2.15 The overall strategic aim of supporting the Green Economy is to build on the current assets that exist in Wirral. The Council will play an enabling role, where possible, to support this investment and growth. Officers from a number of service areas have a part to play in that process. In order to support the development of the relevant growth sectors (namely, Offshore Energy and the Low carbon sector) a Green Economy Working Group should be formed to support that process.
- 2.16 The purpose of the Working Group is to ensure that the recommendations and existing initiatives are given the time, attention and resources required to bring about sustainable development.
- 2.17 The Officer Working Group will oversee the implementation of this Report's recommendations and the development of a long-term strategy for green growth in Wirral. Work will include monitoring and evaluating the implications of national policy changes, such as the Green Investment Bank and the Green Deal.
- 2.18 The working group will include officers from relevant departments, including Invest Wirral, Strategic Planning, Housing, Procurement, Marketing and Sustainability, as well as a small number of Members. The group will provide regular updates to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or successor committee). The first quarterly meeting of the Working Group will be arranged for May 2012.

## Enterprise Zone

- 2.19 The Investment Strategy envisages that opportunities will develop naturally and Wirral should be able to use the Enterprise Zone and, in the longer term, the Wirral Waters development, to enhance the opportunities for the green sector. The announcement of the Enterprise Zone will enable financial incentives, in the form of business rate reductions and potential capital allowances, to be available to potential investors. It is clearly important that the Enterprise Zone is used to maximise the opportunities for inward investment. As a growing sector, green business should be able to benefit. It is therefore, recommended that further work is done to identify ways in which the Enterprise Zone might specifically benefit the green sector. In addition, JESSICA funding (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas) is available to Merseyside and provides the region with a unique advantage. This scheme allows money to be made available on a repayable basis through loans.
- 2.20 An update on the potential of the Enterprise Zone to provide opportunities for the growth of Wirral's green economy should be produced for the Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or successor committee). The Officer Working Group will coordinate this activity and ensure completion by September 2012.

## Relationship with Peel Holdings

- 2.21 The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning Strategy will hold further discussions with Peel Holdings, to focus on feasible options for the advancement of Wirral's green economy as part of the Wirral Waters project.

#### Relationship with City Region Partners

- 2.22 Wirral has some key opportunities to develop its green sector and the Investment Strategy provides the tools to enable this, being supported where appropriate by national policy. The prospects for green growth in Wirral are clearly linked to those of Merseyside and, therefore, synergies with Wirral's regional neighbours should continue to be exploited.
- 2.23 The Mersey Partnership report 'Low Carbon Economy Action Plan – Delivering Economic Growth 2011-2015' examines, in detail, the opportunities for the low carbon economy. The report concludes that there is the potential for the creation of 12,000 jobs in the low carbon economy over those five years. Although the economic conditions continue to be difficult, opportunities do exist in sub sectors as varied as offshore wind, micro-generation, biomass and energy from waste, smart grid technology, retro-fitting of energy efficiency and low emission vehicles.
- 2.24 Therefore, The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning will hold discussions with officers working on inward investment at a City Region level to explore opportunities for attracting businesses that specialise in green products and services to Wirral. This activity should feed in to the activities of the Officer Working Group and an update will be provided to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee by October 2012.

#### **Improving existing support to businesses in the Green Economy**

##### Cross-Departmental Working:

- 2.25 All businesses, including those in the green sector, access a range of services provided by the Council, including those provided by Invest Wirral, Inward Investment, Marketing and Planning Departments.
- 2.26 In order to ensure that Wirral is best placed to handle and take advantage of inward investment opportunities that arise from the enterprise zone and international trade centre developments, it is required that close working relationships are further developed between officers in business facing departments including Invest Wirral, Inward Investment, Marketing and Planning Departments. This activity will be overseen by The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning and implemented by the Officer Working Group.
- 2.27 The Officer Working Group will ensure that a cross-departmental approach is taken to all business planning applications, with Invest Wirral and other relevant teams being informed of planned developments in order to support growth opportunities.
- 2.28 One of the Council's key corporate commitments is to make Wirral one of the most business friendly and supportive councils in the country; to build a place where local

employers succeed and businesses choose to invest. In order to achieve the Council's Corporate Plan objectives, Wirral is dedicated to providing a seamless contact point approach in order to support businesses with their planning needs.

- 2.29 The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning will therefore ensure that the council provides an efficient and effective service, ensuring that planning applications from investors are undertaken by a dedicated team, providing professional advice that draws on the services and expertise of all relevant business facing departments. As part of this cross-departmental approach to working, the Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning will consider the benefits of Development Control being part of an integrated planning team and review opportunities for the co-location of relevant teams. A report will be provided to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee by January 2013.

#### Invest Wirral Business Forum

- 2.30 Invest Wirral, through the Invest Wirral Business Forum and sectoral cluster groups, engage with businesses on a daily basis, listening and responding to their needs as appropriate.
- 2.31 The Invest Wirral Business Forum – [www.businesswirral.com](http://www.businesswirral.com) – provides Wirral-based businesses with public sector tender alerts, online networking and member-to-member inter-trading opportunities, a company profile page, regular email updates on business support developments, access to local business news, events and business support resources.
- 2.32 Membership is growing month by month with a targeted figure by the end of March 2012 of 2,500 members achieved. The Invest Wirral Business Forum should be developed to allow for the creation of a standalone green (environmental) cluster group, which will provide members from all sectors with a number of online services including a directory of green product and service providers, provide a sense of identity for the sector and provide clear information and improved signposting to support services for businesses that engage in 'green' business activities.
- 2.33 To be completed by Invest Wirral within a 3 month timescale, with delegated powers afforded to the Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning to oversee website development.
- 2.34 This online support will be supplemented by an Invest Wirral officer that will be dedicated exclusively to supporting and developing the Green Economy in Wirral. This activity will involve face-to-face business engagement, development of workshops and events, encouraging inter-trading and collaborations and acting as a conduit to other council services and departments. The officer will sit on the Officer Working Group and will have responsibility for coordinating its activities.

Funding Implications: £3,541

## Engagement with Green Businesses at Overview and Scrutiny Meetings

- 2.35 The Panel Members met with a number of business leaders during the Scrutiny review. The views expressed during those meetings provided a good insight into the issues faced by those businesses currently operating in a relatively immature business sector. Enabling other members of the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to debate current issues with representatives of the business community could only enhance the understanding of Members and therefore strengthen the role of the Committee in supporting the development of Wirral's green economy in the future.
- 2.36 Therefore, during the forthcoming municipal year (2012/13), the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or successor committee) is encouraged to invite a minimum of two leading Wirral companies in the green sector to meet the Committee to further explore the problems and opportunities currently faced by those companies. Suitable companies will be identified by Invest Wirral during the course of its day-to-day engagement with companies in the Green Economy.

## **Marketing and Awareness**

### Public Awareness Event

- 2.37 Lack of awareness and negative perceptions were reported to the scrutiny committee as barriers to the growth of Wirral's green economy. Wirral Council is keen to support the local green economy. Therefore, the Council will hold a large 'marketplace' style event in September 2012 aimed at raising awareness of the products and services provided by the local green economy. The event is an opportunity for Wirral Council to publicly display its commitment to supporting this sector.
- 2.38 The event will feature a marketplace of local green sector product and service providers with free exhibition space provided to Wirral based companies that provide 'green' goods and services. The event would be open to potential customers, including public sector procurement officials, businesses and members of the public. Invest Wirral will identify potential exhibitors through its existing networks and through targeted marketing in partnership with Corporate Marketing colleagues.
- 2.39 The event will have a number of distinct themes drawn from the findings and recommendations of the Green Growth Scrutiny Review:
- Skills and employment: working in partnership with JobCentre Plus, schools, colleges, universities and private training providers.
  - Business-to-business exhibition: for local product and service providers
  - Business-to-consumer showcase: for local product and service providers
  - Supporting green growth: Showcase of business support service providers, including Invest Wirral and its partner organisations
- 2.40 This valuable insight event will feature a programme of insight seminars, 1-2-1 - meet the buyer sessions, networking opportunities with developers, suppliers, innovators and procurers of renewable energy solutions, offshore wind, biomass & waste technologies, nuclear energy, automotive and green transport solutions, eco-building technology, and green construction products.

2.41 This event will be delivered by Invest Wirral, following consultation with the Officer Working Group and businesses that are currently active in the sector. This activity will be overseen by the Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning.

Funding implication: £20,000

#### Marketing 'hits' for the Green Sector

2.42 In order for Wirral to be recognised as a market leader in the green economy and build a reputation as a positive environment for green growth industries, the Marketing Department will be set a target to promote a minimum of 30 green issues per year through the Council's website and local media channels.

2.43 Special attention will be paid to promoting good news stories from local businesses in the green sector. This will require close working relationships between Invest Wirral, Inward Investment and Marketing. Marketing activities will be monitored through the Green Economy Officer Working Group and reported to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### **Creating a Green Market**

2.44 As part of the ongoing energy efficiency measures to enable the borough to move closer to its target of reducing carbon emissions by 60% by 2025, Wirral Council is investing heavily in renewable energy in 2011-12, both on making the Council's own buildings more energy efficient and also by helping community and voluntary groups take their own steps to reduce emissions through the Energy Efficiency Grant.

2.45 Other organisations are also being encouraged to follow suit. To achieve this, grants are being used to help community groups, through the Energy Efficiency Grant, to introduce a range of different energy efficiency technologies, including building insulation, heating and lighting upgrades and IT energy efficiency improvements.

2.46 Likewise, and on a larger scale, it is anticipated that the Council's Home Insulation Programme will also continue to encourage local businesses in the low carbon sector.

#### Developing relationship with landlords

2.47 In general, housing providers, both social and private landlords, have the potential to generate a great opportunities for green businesses. It is, therefore, suggested that effort is made to further persuade the borough's landlords of the benefits of making buildings more energy efficient and of pursuing the green agenda.

2.48 Housing is a huge potential market for the green economy. The proposed Officer Working Group, given its cross-cutting remit, will be tasked to encourage a positive relationship between landlords, both social and private, and local green business.

2.49 Members of the Officer Working Group will engage with Social and Private Landlords to ensure that they are aware of the opportunities that exist to utilise green products and services. Invest Wirral will support these companies to access the 'opportunity' section of the Invest Wirral Business Forum, which is a simple, electronic method of



obtaining quotes from local companies. Further, Social and Private landlords will be targeted as potential participants of the Public Awareness Event.

### Procurement Training

- 2.50 In partnership with Invest Wirral, Corporate Procurement have held supplier workshops on 'How to do Business with Wirral Council', with over 300 companies having received training to date. A guide, 'How to do Business with Wirral Council' is also published on the Council's website.
- 2.51 There is evidence that procurement procedures can appear too complicated, especially for small companies. The Green Growth Scrutiny Review acknowledged that this is of particular relevance to companies in the Green Economy, which is regarded as a 'fledgling sector with younger businesses being more prominent'. Therefore, Corporate Procurement and Invest Wirral will continue its programme of procurement training events, with targeted marketing to companies in 'green' business activities. Further, and where relevant, Invest Wirral will utilise the support services of SME Business Support Managers to deliver enhanced public sector procurement support services.

### Promotion of the Council's Environmental Policies to potential suppliers

- 2.52 With regard to the environmental credentials of suppliers, all contractors, suppliers and service providers that bid for major or strategic contracts are required to detail their Environmental Management System and to specify what impact their business has on the environment. All are required to provide any information about failure to comply with any legislation or where they have been subject to fines for transgressing those regulations and failure to do so would mean withdrawal of any contract offer.
- 2.53 The Scrutiny Review of Green Growth in Wirral suggests that greater awareness of the Council's environmental policies among suppliers might help to positively influence the environmental considerations and activities of those suppliers.
- 2.54 The Scrutiny Report highlights the need to raise the profile of green issues and to outline the Council's commitment to supporting the Green Economy and meeting its carbon reductions commitments. To address this, Corporate Procurement will ensure that all potential suppliers are made aware of environmental and sustainable procurement policies. Corporate Procurement will update the Officer Working Group on timescales for implementing this.

## **Education and Training**

### Lobbying for changes to the Funding Regime for Training

- 2.55 The Liverpool City Region Employment & Skills Board is currently engaged in ongoing negotiations with Government (Cabinet Office and the Department of Business Innovation and Skills) over devolution of employment and skills policy making and funding from Central Government. The Employment and Skills Board has provided a series of 'Asks' that have been developed in partnership with all 6 Local Authorities, principle Government agencies/funders and the City Region's Colleges and training providers.

- 2.56 As part of the newly designed national skills system an 'innovation code' will be introduced. This 'code' will enable colleges and providers to draw down funding for programmes that meet a particular employer skills need whilst they are simultaneously developed for the Qualifications & Credit Framework (the framework of approved programmes of learning that qualify for government funding).
- 2.57 One of the Liverpool City Region 'asks' of government therefore is to free up providers from the ridged funding constraints, such as those highlighted in the Scrutiny Review of Green Growth, by piloting of these new 'innovation codes' for identified growth areas where barriers in the skills system can be evidenced. This will enable providers to react much quicker to businesses while awaiting the formal qualification approval processes.
- 2.58 Alongside these localised negotiations with Government, the Department of Business Innovation and Skills will launch a national consultation this year to seek views on how businesses can be more engaged in qualification design, development and assessment. The Officer Working Group will therefore ensure that key messages on the required changes to the funding regime for training to support local green sector growth are fed into the Liverpool City Region negotiations and the national consultation.

#### Creation of a fund to encourage access to existing training opportunities

- 2.59 In order to unlock real barriers to workforce skills in the green sector, it is proposed that £200,000 is set aside as a Wirral Green Skills Growth Fund.
- 2.60 The scrutiny review of green growth in Wirral identified the cost of green industry specific courses as a prohibitive factor in the take-up of green skills training. As an example, the advertised cost of short 4-5 day courses offered by the new National Skills Academy for Environmental Technology Centre ranges from £475 to £575 per person. The scrutiny review identified a need to stimulate the green skills training market to support up-skilling of the workforce to meet the growth potential of this sector and also the opening up of opportunities to the unemployed. Taking average costs as per examples highlighted in Section 2.60 this fund would support 250+ positions to access relevant training, also recognising that within this parameter specialist training may also be identified. As two distinct target groups, it is proposed that this new fund is administered via separate mechanisms until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, as follows:
- **Business Grant:** to support up-skilling of the existing workforce to meet the potential for business growth in the green sector.
- 2.61 Invest Wirral has established clear processes and procedures for the delivery of business grants through their investment support services framework which follow the Councils standards for due diligence procedure and include robust health checks and viable project plans prior to allocation. It is therefore proposed that a Green Skills Business Grant for workforce training is offered through Invest Wirral as part of its investment grants package. This could include a company choosing to locate in Wirral for the first time, or an established business in Wirral with workforce skills requirements that will unlock potential for growth in green sector activities.

2.62 Delegated powers should be provided to the Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning for authorisation of grant applications.

Fund Allocation: £175,000

- **Individual Grant:** To support unemployed individuals to access employment opportunities in the green sector.

2.63 Wirral Council currently contracts with the Reach Out Partnership to deliver an employment programme to support workless residents into jobs. This service includes a discretionary fund to support unemployed participants on the programme to overcome barriers to employment including funding participant costs for short focussed pre-recruitment training linked to specific employer vacancies. As part of a complementary budget policy option for the economy, Members have requested the Director of Regeneration & Housing bring forward a report detailing how this contract will be re-tendered to ensure no gap in delivery. It is therefore proposed that the worklessness programme incorporates promotion of the green skills economy as a growth employment market supported by a prioritised proportion of the discretionary fund reserved for Green Skills short course training costs. The discretionary fund supports participants to overcome barriers to employment including, participant costs for short focussed pre-recruitment training linked to specific employer vacancies and clothes for interview/work etc. Based on costings from the previous Worklessness Support Programme, a budget of £25,000 would support a minimum of 70 unemployed people to access green business employment opportunities.

Fund Allocation: £25,000

**Both grants will only support training costs that cannot be met through any other source of funding.**

Wirral Apprentice Scheme

2.64 The Wirral Apprentice programme was launched in 2009 as part of a suite of interventions which formed Wirral's Economic Recovery Plan. The initial rounds offered 18 month subsidies in return for 2 year contracts of employment, supporting 167 apprenticeship opportunities across Wirral. Further funds were secured from the Liverpool City Region European Social Fund Pathfinder Enabling Programme in 2010 to supplement further Council investment. The current programme runs from April 2011 to August 2012, offering 12 month subsidies in return for 2 year contracts of employment, supporting a further 146 apprenticeship opportunities across Wirral.

2.65 Given the successful implementation of the Apprenticeship Programme thus far, and the considerable continuing interest shown from businesses it is proposed that the Council continues to invest in a wage subsidy model for the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme. Full details of the proposed new programme are detailed in the Tackling Worklessness and Supporting Apprentices in Wirral report which appears elsewhere on this meeting agenda.

2.66 In order to increase employment and skills opportunities in the green sector, it is proposed that £235,000 is set aside to ensure that a minimum of 24 apprenticeship

opportunities are ring-fenced for green growth businesses within the next round of the Wirral Apprentice Programme.

Total Budget Allocation: £235,000

#### Database of Green Skills Training Providers

- 2.67 The scrutiny review of green growth in Wirral highlighted a lack of clarity regarding the availability of relevant training providers and courses in the region; this was particularly expressed in feedback and discussions with local businesses. In order to address this, the development of a database of all green skills training providers available through Invest Wirral, Council websites, colleges and schools is recommended in the scrutiny report. Business and learner access to searchable training databases is currently publicly available via the Business Link and Next Step websites, however initial research has highlighted some limitations to its application.
- 2.68 It is therefore proposed that the Green Growth Officer Working Group undertake further detailed research, into existing services and exploring the feasibility of a Council operated database which builds in clear, locally relevant signposting course information but makes best use of existing services. Development and implementation will be directed by the Officer Working Group and progress returned to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### Green Accreditation Scheme for Wirral

- 2.69 The Scrutiny Review of Green Growth in Wirral recommended that in order to further build customer confidence in the green sector, traders who have the appropriate skill levels should be eligible to join a green accreditation scheme, similar to The Wirral Trader, operated by Wirral Trading Standards.
- 2.70 Delivery of a Green Accreditation Scheme would require staff to establish, administer and monitor the programme with proactive day-to-day engagement with 'green businesses' to promote the initiative. Benchmarking with The Wirral Trader, the closest current equivalent, shows that three officers would be required to deliver this programme with significant ongoing revenue costs.
- 2.71 Further, the imminent introduction of the 'Green Deal Quality Mark', a national, government initiated accreditation scheme for product and service providers that wish to participate in the Green Deal may negate the need for a local accreditation scheme. The Green Deal Quality Mark will ensure the right measures for each property are installed to the highest standards and consumer protection is given prime importance. The 'Green Deal Quality Mark' will help consumers identify reputable businesses even if the work is not being paid for by Green Deal finance. Invest Wirral will ensure that product and service providers in the Green Economy are aware of, and able to access, the Green Deal Quality Mark and other relevant accreditation schemes.
- 2.72 It is therefore proposed that the Green Growth Officer Working Group undertake further detailed research, exploring the feasibility of a Council backed green accreditation scheme. Development and implementation will be directed by the

Officer Working Group and progress returned to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **Planning, Land Availability and Council Properties**

### Opportunities for Section 106 Agreements (or Community Infrastructure Levies)

- 2.73 Wirral Council is committed to the use of Section 106 Obligations in the planning process, and in future will ensure a focus on training or green initiatives where appropriate. Current initiatives being developed include a business focused development management approach and the introduction of a Developers Guide. Further work is also being done on the potential for introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy, and further information and options will be brought back to Cabinet. Additionally, a report on best practice and potential uses will be brought to a future Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### Creating a green growth cluster in Wirral

- 2.74 The Scrutiny Review of Green Growth in Wirral presents the opportunity for development of a green growth cluster and debates the advantages and disadvantages of using Council owned land for the development of a green business park.
- 2.75 Alternatives suggested by the review include supporting the development of clusters through green supply chains. The Green Growth Officer Working Group will be tasked to compile a report to the Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or successor committee) that explores the rationale for creating a green growth cluster of businesses either in a geographical location (a Green Business Park) or by association in various locations across Wirral. This will form part of the long-term strategy for green growth in Wirral.

## **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 The corporate risk register will be revised in line with the draft Corporate Plan to ensure that any risks to delivering the Council's Green Growth goals are understood and mitigating actions put in place as appropriate.

## **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Not investing in The Green Economy, which has been identified by Wirral, the city region and national Government as a key economic area on which to focus in order to create jobs and stimulate investment. This could mean a missed opportunity to implement a key component of Wirral's Investment Strategy, which proposes an increased emphasis on developing a number of key growth sectors, including Offshore Energy and the Low Carbon sectors.

## 5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 This report follows The Scrutiny Review of Green Growth in Wirral, a report produced by The Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Panel employed a number of methods to gather evidence:

- Visits to local businesses already operating in the green sector
- A questionnaire, completed by 12 Wirral-based businesses
- Meetings with officers from Invest Wirral, Strategic Planning, Destination Marketing, Asset Management and Corporate Procurement
- Meetings with Wirral Metropolitan College

5.2 Invest Wirral, through the Wirral Business Forum and the sectoral cluster groups, engage with businesses on a regular basis, listening and responding to their needs as appropriate. Ongoing business and partner organisation engagement will be carried out by the Invest Wirral's dedicated Green Economy Support Officer.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

6.1 Voluntary, Community and Faith Groups that engage in trading activities, and whose goods and services fall within the remit of the 'green economy', will be able to access the support services outlined in this report.

## 7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

7.1 On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012 Council approved a budget of £500,000 for 2012/13 to support the expansion of Wirral's Green Economy which it is proposed to allocate as follows:-

<b>Summary of recommendations</b>	<b>£</b>
Development of Invest Wirral Business Forum	3,541
Public Awareness Event	20,000
Wirral Green Skills Growth Fund – Business	175,000
Wirral Green Skills Growth Fund – Individual	25,000
Wirral Apprentice Scheme – Green allocation	235,000
Salary cost	41,459
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500,000</b>

7.2 Implementing the recommendations set out in the Scrutiny Review of Green Growth in Wirral will have significant resource implications for Invest Wirral. It is proposed that temporary cover will be recruited through Wirral Council's Matrix contract for 1 year only. The cost of this temporary cover will be £34,549 at top of band and on costs.

Funding implication: £41,459 including on cost

7.3 Extended spend of policy option budgets are requested until August 2013 for the delivery of Green Apprenticeships and the individual element of the Wirral Green Skills Growth Fund. This will be to accommodate the length of apprenticeships and also to ensure there is a suitable contract length for external providers in the worklessness delivery programme. Full details of request are provided in 'Tackling Worklessness And Supporting Apprentices In Wirral' elsewhere on agenda.

## **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None as a direct result of this report

## **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached –

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010-0>

## **10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Green Growth in Wirral will support the local uptake of green skills and qualifications, enable green innovation, investment and collaboration by local businesses. It is anticipated that the support interventions outlined in this report will enable significant carbon reduction among the borough's businesses.

## **11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 None as a direct result of this report

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

12.1 That Cabinet agrees that officers should develop and implement a coordinated and robust business support service for businesses in Wirral's green economy in order to enable job creation, enterprise development and investment in the borough, as set out in this report:

- The formation of a Green Economy Officer Working Group to support the development of Wirral's Green Economy and the implementation of this reports recommendations.
- That updates are provided to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or successor committee) on the potential of Enterprise Zone to provide development opportunities in green sectors.
- That the Invest Wirral Business Forum is developed to allow for the creation of a standalone green (environmental) cluster group, which will provide members from all sectors with a number of online services including a directory of green product and service providers, provide a sense of identity for the sector and provide clear information and improved signposting to support services for businesses that engage in 'green' business activities.

- That during the forthcoming municipal year (2012/13), the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or successor committee) is encouraged to invite a minimum of two leading Wirral companies in the green sector to meet the Committee to further explore the problems and opportunities currently faced by those companies.
- That an awareness raising event takes place in September 2012 aimed at raising awareness of the products and services provided by the local green economy. The event is an opportunity for Wirral Council to publicly display its commitment to supporting this sector.
- That Corporate Procurement ensures that all potential suppliers are made aware of environmental and sustainable procurement policies.
- The Creation of Wirral Green Skills Growth Fund to unlock barriers to workforce skills in the green sector until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.
- Ensure that a minimum of 24 apprenticeship opportunities are ring-fenced for green growth businesses within the next round of the Wirral Apprentice Programme.
- That the Green Growth Officer Working Group undertake further detailed research, into existing training services and explores the feasibility of a Council operated database of green skills.
- That the Green Growth Officer Working Group undertakes further detailed research, exploring the feasibility of a Council backed green accreditation scheme.
- That the Green Growth Officer Working Group be tasked to compile a report to the Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or successor committee) that explores the rationale for creating a green growth cluster of businesses either in a geographical location (a Green Business Park) or by association in various locations across Wirral.

### **13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

13.1 The Green Economy has been identified by Wirral, the wider city region and national Government as a key economic area on which to focus in order to create jobs and stimulate investment. Wirral's Investment Strategy proposes an increased emphasis on developing a number of key growth sectors that will build on existing local specialisms and will offer the most growth potential. Two of the proposed growth sectors are Offshore Energy and the Low Carbon sector.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** *Ben Lavell*  
*Employer Engagement Officer*  
 telephone: (0151) 650 6915  
 email: [benlavell@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:benlavell@wirral.gov.uk)



## **APPENDICES**

Scrutiny Review of Green Growth in Wirral – Council website

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Wirral Investment Strategy 2011-2016 – Council website

'Low Carbon Economy Action Plan – Delivering Economic Growth 2011-2015' The Mersey Partnership

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>8th March 2012</b>
<b>Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>6th June 2011</b>