

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Pat Hackett
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Business and Tourism
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	David Armstrong, Assistant Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to Members of the Council on matters relevant to his portfolio. The launch of the Growth Plan in January was a key milestone in delivering the Wirral Plan and its pledge outcomes.

1. GREATER JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN WIRRAL

In January, Wirral's ambition to become a major hub for clean energy took a step further forward with news that 235 jobs are set to be created at a new business park off the A41 in Birkenhead. Offshore Energy is a key sector for Wirral and this was further boosted by an announcement that leading offshore wind energy company DONG Energy is setting up new facilities at Cammell Laird, site of Wirral's historic shipyard. DONG Energy signed to lease facilities at the Cammell Laird site in Birkenhead from Peel Land and Property. They will employ up to 50 people at this new construction base for the Burbo Bank expansion, DONG Energy's latest offshore wind farm, in Liverpool Bay.

Also in January, the Carmet Tug Co, based in Eastham and operating internationally, had the opportunity to purchase land and assets to allow them to expand into maintenance and repairs, growing their business turnover by a potential £1.5m. The expansion was made possible thanks to a £147,650 Business Growth Grant from Wirral Council, designed to provide support to businesses for viable projects that will enable their expansion and a growth in local employment. The success of the project will also benefit the wider maritime industry and supply chain in Wirral, securing and creating local jobs. The majority of vessels utilising the slipway for maintenance will be from outside Merseyside and, as it is important for ship's profits that vessels are out of the water for as short a time as possible, they will seek additional services in the area at the same time, bringing a further boost to the economy.

Birkenhead Business Improvement District (BID): In December 2015 Businesses voted overwhelmingly in favour of introducing a Business Improvement District to central Birkenhead. Birkenhead BID will commence on 1st April 2016 and in the meantime the BID organisation are busy planning the delivery of the BID business plan and designing a new website to coincide with the launch. Over the next five years the initiative is expected to lever in over £2million of investment, which will be used to deliver activities that will result in a safer and cleaner town centre, improved access and amenities and on promotional events to attract increased footfall into Birkenhead

2. WORKFORCE SKILLS MATCH BUSINESS NEEDS

The YEG Programme, part of a wider city region programme, supports eligible young people into sustained employment. The programme is targeted at young people aged between 18 and 24, who have been unemployed and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance/Universal Credit for between 2 and 9 months and are not participating in the DWP Work Programme.

The service provides Job Coaches, who work with young people on a one-to one basis to provide a personalised package of support in order to guide them into sustainable employment. Of the 400 young people engaged in this intensive support programme since May 2015, 180 have entered employment and continue to receive support to ensure sustainable employment.

3. VIBRANT TOURISM ECONOMY

The latest figures show that Wirral's visitor economy is the fastest growing in the Liverpool City Region, and it has grown by 40% since 2009. The tourism economy in Wirral is worth £355 million, employs 4,800 FTE's and attracted around 7.5 million visitors in 2014. Updated statistics for 2015 will be due out in the spring/summer.

The Wirral Tourism implementation plan for 2016/17 has been developed, based on budgets to be agreed at Cabinet, and includes the Discover Wirral short break and Wonders of Wirral day visitor marketing campaigns; development of the www.visitwirral.com website and related social media; national press visits; targeted literature and tourism business engagement & support. A Wirral visitor research study is being conducted, throughout 2016 to inform the development of the Wirral Tourism Strategy going forward, to support the Wirral Plan for 2020 and related tourism pledge.