

Transforming North Staffordshire Evidence Paper D – Detailed Recommendations

the work foundation



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Partnership

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Introduction

This evidence paper sets out a range of the recommendations that have emerged from our analysis and interviews. Whilst in the overview paper we have highlighted our recommendations about the key priorities, this paper sets out a range of recommendations under five themes:

- a. Economy;
- b. Place;
- c. People;
- d. Leadership; and
- e. Image.

Under each strand this paper sets out a rationale for action and some details of activities that could be undertaken to transform North Staffordshire. These are not prioritised in terms of timing.

All of these recommendations are underpinned by a commitment to sustainable development and managing the environmental impact of all projects. With such a significant physical and social transformation of the area planned, North Staffordshire has a real opportunity to lead the way in this area.

A. Economy recommendations

Context As set out in the Overview Paper and Evidence Paper B, North Staffordshire as a whole (and particularly Stoke-on-Trent) lags behind other places on productivity, wages and rates of employment and self-employment. Whilst other places that have struggled with years of post-industrial decline are now starting to show positive signs of change, such as the Black Country and Humberside, North Staffordshire is not. Its economy is still dominated by lower paid, lower skilled jobs, there are low levels of enterprise, and rates of worklessness are twice the national average in some parts of North Staffordshire. Despite regeneration investment in recent years, many projects have not been implemented consistently or coordinated, and ongoing decline in ceramics employment has exacerbated the challenges. North Staffordshire urgently needs to change the way its economy works.

The Work Foundation's research on how places thrive in the knowledge economy found that the most successful places are those that build on existing strengths and develop diverse specialisms. Building on what's there is about recognising existing strengths and weaknesses and playing to these: North Staffordshire already has some strengths in terms of its location, the presence of two universities, and existing clusters. Opportunities for North Staffordshire to build on what's there include: ceramics design, higher and further education (specifically the University Quarter and Keele Science Park), emergent medical and healthcare technology clusters, logistics and retail regeneration.

The diversity of these sectors is also important, as the *Ideopolis* research highlighted. Successful knowledge cities and city regions usually have a diverse range of economic specialisms for which the city or city region is known. 'Diverse specialisation' also helps to manage the risk of over-reliance on one or two industries in case of economic decline in specific industries. Being a place that is currently still struggling to recover from the decline of the key industry – ceramics – on which the sub region has historically been based makes it vital that North Staffordshire develop a new strategy for 'diverse specialisation'.

Currently the area remains dependent on a large number of small employers in ceramics (especially in Stoke-on-Trent), a small number of large employers (JCB, Britannia, Michelin, the universities, local government), a mix of employment in education, retail and leisure, and a still substantial proportion of employment in manufacturing sectors. This makes the area quite dependent on these large employers, and also vulnerable to

further declines in manufacturing unless there is a shift towards employment in more knowledge intensive parts of manufacturing. The area is weak too in key growth sectors, for example banking and finance accounts for just 10.5 per cent of employment compared to a regional average of 16 per cent and the business start-up rate is half of the national average¹. This means that, for North Staffordshire to develop diverse specialisations, it will need to grow its expertise in a few key areas.

Knowledge Intensive Industries

One of the most significant areas where North Staffordshire needs to grow its expertise is in knowledge intensive industries. Places with higher proportions of knowledge intensive industries and/or knowledge intensive workers are more productive and tend to have higher wage rates². These sectors are also the fastest-growing: over the past ten years the UK has seen its knowledge intensive industries grow by 24 per cent and jobs in these sectors grow by 17 per cent, compared to a 1 per cent growth in employment in all other sectors³. Yet, as Table 1 on the next page shows, North Staffordshire lags behind the regional and national average in its proportion of knowledge intensive industries.

North Staffordshire has some strengths in different areas illustrated in the table: for example Newcastle-under-Lyme has strengths in the private sector knowledge industries⁴ and employment in high value manufacturing in Staffordshire Moorlands is double the national average, whilst it also has Britannia and JCB as large employers. Stoke-on-Trent has particular strengths in its health and education based knowledge intensive employment. Evidence Paper B illustrates in more detail where knowledge based industries are located in the sub region.

Expansion of employment in these sectors is likely to contribute the most to North Staffordshire being able to adapt to the changing economy and increase its productivity and wealth. These are also the sectors most likely to attract highly qualified and more affluent residents to spend money in the area, generating local economic multipliers.

Experience Economy

Yet North Staffordshire will not address its worklessness issues solely by increasing high skill jobs in knowledge intensive sectors, nor will the level of employment generated be

¹ Jayne, 2004

² Jones, A. et al, (2006) *Ideopolis Knowledge City Regions*: The Work Foundation

³ Brinkley, I. (2007) *Knowledge Economy Narrative presentation*, analysis of Eurostat data

⁴ See also *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (October 2007) Experian for further details on Newcastle-under-Lyme's strengths in these areas

Table 1: Employment in knowledge based industries in North Staffordshire

	% employed in all technology and knowledge based sectors	% of knowledge industry employment in health and education	% of knowledge industry employment in high tech, market & financial service sectors	% of knowledge industry employment in high/medium technology sectors	% of knowledge industry employment in 'other' knowledge sectors
North Staffordshire	45	53	32	9	6
Newcastle-under-Lyme	45	51	37	8	4
Staffordshire Moorlands	48	46	32	16	6
Stoke-on-Trent	44	55	30	8	7
West Midlands	50	44	39	12	5
Great Britain	52	42	45	8	5

Source: The Work Foundation's analysis of Eurostat, 2006. Figures rounded.

North Staffordshire as defined by the local authority boundaries of Staffordshire Moorlands, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent

high. To have a 'diverse specialisation' strategy, North Staffordshire also needs to build on the assets it has in the 'experience' economy, ie retail, leisure and tourism. As affluence has increased people are spending less money on tangible goods and more money on 'experiences'. Spending on services, rather than physical goods, doubled between 1970 and 2005, from 27 per cent of household income to 54 per cent. This is a real opportunity for North Staffordshire which has many assets in these areas, including the fact that a third of Staffordshire Moorlands is in the National Peak District Park, the area has Alton Towers, Waterworld, ceramics 'experiences', strong local theatres and many other attractions. Employment in retail has increased in the last ten years (Experian) and the city centre came 42nd in Experian's Top 50 Retail Centres in England in 2007⁵. Growing this part of the economy is also more likely to generate jobs at a range of skill levels for North Staffordshire residents.

⁵ Experian 2007 Retail Ranking and 2017 predictions, see <http://press.experian.com/documents/showdoc.cfm?doc=2822>

Logistics

Another important sector for North Staffordshire's economy is logistics. By 2016 the distribution sector is expected to employ more people than manufacturing, whilst salaries are between 10 to 17 per cent higher than in the manufacturing sector and the additional value produced by distribution organisations has increased by 30 per cent over the last decade⁶. There are already distribution facilities available in the area, with nearly nine per cent of employment in the area is in this sector (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Logistics in North Staffordshire (2005)

Logistics	Total	Logistics 1998	% of employment	Total	Logistics 2005	% of employment	% change in employment
Newcastle–under Lyme	44,658	1,232	2.76	45,736	2,686	5.87	118.02
Staffordshire Moorlands	27,315	1,116	4.09	28,232	987	3.50	–11.56
Stoke–on–Trent	121,635	2,981	2.45	106,706	4,836	4.53	62.23
West Midlands	2,271,144	67,903	2.99	2,360,078	86,983	3.69	28.10
Great Britain	24,144,258	817,070	3.38	26,338,082	897,382	3.41	9.83

Work Foundation analysis

The logistics industry in North Staffordshire has grown fast from a small base over the last ten years, particularly in Newcastle–under–Lyme. Logistics now accounts for around 6 per cent of employment in Newcastle and around 5 per cent of employment in Stoke–on–Trent. The central location of North Staffordshire within England, with road access to a large proportion of the national consumer and business markets, coupled with the availability of brown field sites for development, combine to make North Staffordshire an attractive location for logistics companies.

Despite providing relatively low GVA, logistics is an important source of employment growth and makes a valuable contribution towards tackling worklessness – vital in North Staffordshire. There are also opportunities associated with logistics to grow knowledge intensive jobs. The transition to a knowledge based economy is likely to continue to increase demand for distribution, with manufacturers and retailers innovating to create more personalised services for customers, with efficient ways of operating and cheaper channels of delivery offering ways of competing on cost too. The location of logistics

⁶ *Making & Moving: The Future Prospects for British Industry* (Spring 2007) GVA Grimley, Cranfield University School of Management

hubs – close to markets with competitive accommodation costs – is becoming more rather than less important in the knowledge economy, with firms like Zara able to respond rapidly to consumer demand and external issues (such as few summer clothes selling in a cold winter) because designers are located next to the distribution centre. Furthermore, whilst firms within retail and logistics might not be regarded as innovative if ‘traditional’ measures of innovation (such as research and development spend) are taken into account, it is increasingly acknowledged that business processes and improvement, use of technology and the response to consumer demand can indeed be described as innovative. Whilst this sector employs a relatively low proportion of graduates, there are also intermediate and higher level jobs within logistics and the sector is predicted to grow by Experian.

When seeking to grow logistics, however, North Staffordshire must ensure that provision of land for logistics is managed appropriately and in an environmentally sustainable way. As the 2005 Integrated Economic Development Strategy commented, increasing the proportion of land devoted to logistics may not help to attract vital investment in office accommodation, aspirational housing and city living⁷. It is vital that planning for logistics accommodation is improved, that there are efforts to grow the quality of jobs in the sector, and that it is integrated into the broader North Staffordshire plans so it does not undermine efforts to develop office accommodation within the area.

Enterprise

Another issue with which North Staffordshire needs to grapple over the long term is enterprise. Despite recent progress and winning a national award for the North Staffordshire Enterprise work, the recent Enterprise Options study found that there was more to do and that if North Staffordshire had the national average rate of business activity it would create an additional 525 businesses per annum.⁸ Most interviewees highlighted lack of an enterprise culture as a key challenge for the area and that there is a need to invest in enterprise and programmes to raise aspiration, working closely with local neighbourhoods to address social inclusion issues. To change aspiration, there is also a need to better understand why levels of aspiration are so low amongst the resident population.

As well as property market failure (addressed in detail in the next section), there is a need for greater coordination across North Staffordshire in terms of enterprise support and business advice, as well as a more customer-focused approach to business support.

⁷ *Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (2005) DTZ Pineda, p.8

⁸ North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone, Enterprise Options Update Final Report, Meridien pure

This means involving the business community in designing and evaluating business support.

North Staffordshire's enterprise strategy also needs to respond more effectively to the needs of knowledge based businesses. This is because of the changing nature of small and medium-sized enterprises in the wider UK economy. In recent years the number of SMEs in less knowledge intensive sectors has been declining as the larger firms have bought or crowded out many SMEs, taking advantage of the economies of scale associated with this size, as well as confidence in a well-known 'brand'. In contrast, the balance between large and small firms in knowledge based sectors has remained roughly the same, meaning that more and more SMEs in the UK economy are in knowledge intensive sectors. There has been a similar shift in the nature of self employment as more well educated entrepreneurs set up their own businesses selling knowledge intensive services.

Recommendations

Recommendation i: The North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership should develop a long term economic strategy built on 'diverse specialisation', aiming to increase both the proportion of knowledge intensive employment and the proportion of high quality jobs in retail, leisure, tourism and distribution.

For North Staffordshire to improve its productivity it is vital that the area increase both the proportion of knowledge intensive employment to increase productivity and the proportion of high quality jobs at all skill levels and in a range of sectors to decrease worklessness.

This means North Staffordshire needs to grow sectors:

- that are highly productive, even if they do not provide high levels of employment;
- that can provide employment for local residents at their current skill levels (but also opportunities to develop and grow their skills); and
- that respond to the wider changes in the economy and increasing interest in knowledge intensive industries and the 'experience' economy.

To do this North Staffordshire will need to build on strengths across all three local authorities. The recommendations below seek to identify specific actions in more detail.

Recommendation ii: Invest in the knowledge intensity of North Staffordshire's ceramics industry.

Given Stoke-on-Trent's longstanding reputation of excellence in this area, it is the main distinctive area for which the area is widely known and in which it can specialise. Current trends suggest that the number of jobs in this sector is unlikely to be high, and the Experian baseline predictions suggest that the minerals industry (which includes ceramics) decreases by 9.1 per cent a year on average to 2,000 FTEs in 2021, from 9,100 in 2005⁹.

Nonetheless, there is the potential for the remaining jobs to respond to the wider shifts in the economy and to be high skill, productive and to build on the area's distinctiveness and strengths in this area. North Staffordshire retains: Ceram, a world-class research based institution dedicated to ceramics and its applications; Staffordshire University Ceramic Design Courses, including a globally recognised MA course; and the ceramic collection and expertise in the City Museum. The supply base is high quality, there are premises such as the Hothouse available, Keele University carries out related research on issues such as earth science, colour technology and fuel cells, and there is considerable support provided by industry organisations, including the British Ceramics Confederation (located locally), the Ceramic Industry Forum and the Association for Ceramic Training and Development. These attributes help to sustain ceramics within the sub region and to apply research to practice, enabling the industry to respond to the demands of the knowledge economy.

How: Specific actions to support making ceramics more knowledge intensive include:

- Review whether North Staffordshire's expertise could be strengthened through pooling the resources of the centres of excellence (Ceram, Staffordshire University and the City Museum).
- Build on the expertise of Ceram and Staffordshire University in particular to promote application of research to the industry and to develop a strong network of high skilled craftsmen and women in the area. This should aim to encourage sharing ideas and innovation through links with the universities in North Staffordshire and other nearby

⁹ See *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (October 2007) Experian p.25

cities, encouraging innovative sharing of ideas and showcasing where spinoffs have been generated (eg production of orthopaedic discs, rubber glove moulds etc). It should also aim to link ceramics businesses with wider markets – regionally, nationally and internationally.

- Build on existing enterprise services, especially for smaller companies, and ensure highly skilled craftsmen and women and small companies have access to finance, help with management of IP, premises and business advice as part of one package. This should be linked with Ceram, Staffordshire University, the City Museum and Keele.
- Ensure that access to services to help companies protect intellectual property and copyright are more easily available, as this is about the sustainability of the knowledge base.
- Encourage the development of higher level skills within ceramics as well as the employment and retention of more graduates, for example through the existing programmes to place graduates from Staffordshire’s design courses.
- Work with Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership, and a united North Staffordshire Destination Management organisation, to develop the ‘experience’ side of ceramics. This could involve creating a more interactive and family oriented day out in the Potteries (perhaps linked to Alton Towers as a ‘family weekend’ offer). Pottery tours should be ‘higher end’, with fewer trips to ‘seconds’ shops and more pride in what is produced in the area. As part of this North Staffordshire should continue to host, and make more of, the Ceramics Festival (as set out in the Tourism Strategy and Festivals and Events strategy).

Recommendation iii: Invest in emergent knowledge intensive sectors, building on higher and further education expertise.

Successful knowledge intensive places are those that build on the research assets of their education institutions. For North Staffordshire, this means building on the strengths of Keele University, Staffordshire University and the local FE colleges – Leek, Newcastle

and Stoke-on-Trent. Some progress has already been made in the ‘true cluster’¹⁰ of medical and healthcare technologies in Keele Science Park, whilst health has been the fastest growing sector in the area (Experian). There are further opportunities to build on this and other areas of specialism.

How: Specific actions include:

- Develop a specific strategy to grow medical and healthcare technology companies, building on existing and planned assets. The NSRP should formally support the medical and healthcare technologies group as being a core part of the NSRP plan and require the group to submit a more detailed plan in the next twelve months about how to maximise and grow this sector. This should consider how to make the most of new developments including the ‘super hospital’, the new £3million clinical research centre at Hartshill and a new Health Care Careers and Skills Academy. This strategy should learn lessons from other cities seeking to grow similar clusters such as Manchester, Sheffield and Newcastle-on-Tyne. For example, Sheffield has benefited from entrepreneurs incubating businesses and supporting them to make use of available university research¹¹. The medical and technologies group should also work with the NSRP to identify reasons why the businesses in the Science Park succeed or fail, looking specifically at changes in the external market; businesses’ needs for ‘grow-on’ space; support for intellectual property and copyright management; and demand for business advice about how to change management practices with a larger team (a key current barrier to growth). Part of the medical and healthcare technologies group strategy should include a dissemination and promotion strand, devised in conjunction with the Marketing Group, InStaffs and the Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership to identify whether there are events and conferences that can be developed eg building on the January medical conference. This would help publicise the specialism.
- Develop a strategy to attract more environmental technology companies. Keele’s strengths in this area, from scientific to policy focused research, combined with some companies already in the Science Park, mean that this is a potential area for expansion. Other places, such as Sheffield, have grown this sector in recent years and there is potential for North Staffordshire to make use of the medical and healthcare facilities to do the same.

¹⁰ *Cluster Focused Action Plan* for North Staffordshire

¹¹ See *Priorities for Sheffield City Region in the Knowledge Economy* (2007): The Work Foundation

- Develop a creative industries strategy, making use of the Burns Collett creative industries research to highlight priorities for action. These are likely to be: creating an overall strategy; understanding more about the current creative industries sector in North Staffordshire; ensuring the Creative Industry support agencies talk more; increasing awareness of the support on offer to these industries; providing more bespoke advice and support; increasing creative graduate retention and specific support programmes; and providing more appropriate workspace facilities. The strategy should seek to use the Creative Quarter, the University Quarter and the Media Village as the catalyst for creative industries across North Staffordshire. A review should also be conducted of opportunities to capitalise upon the location of the BBC in Salford, based on Staffordshire University's courses, proximity to Manchester on the train and cheap rents. This may involve developing 'fat pipe' broadband to create opportunities to provide 'home-working' for BBC employees and give it an advantage as a film location.
- Review opportunities created by FE specialisms including electrical engineering (Newcastle), advanced computing and IT support (Leek) and care, construction and business and professional services (Stoke-on-Trent). Construction in particular is likely to be important if the planned projects go ahead in the area and provide an opportunity to link local people to jobs¹².
- Review of how the NSRP could most effectively work with the two universities to maximise their contribution to the sub region and the sub region's contribution to them: The two universities are already heavily involved in many meetings and partnerships but have expressed willingness to take on a further role, for example Staffordshire University's commitment to a regional leadership to 'transform the communities and economies on our own doorstep'. The NSRP should seek to work with the universities closely to investigate how partnership working could be further improved to maximise the contribution that the local area makes to the university and vice versa.

Recommendation iv: Invest in development of professional and business services.

Professional and business services is an important knowledge intensive sector, as well as a growing sector in North Staffordshire. Experian's analysis suggests that it contributed

¹² *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (October 2007) Experian

a net gain of 2,000 jobs over the past decade in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme¹³. Growth in financial services has also been boosted by Britannia's location in Staffordshire Moorlands.

To further develop professional and business services requires North Staffordshire to invest in appropriate commercial and residential accommodation, as well as in attracting and retaining the highly skilled workers required for these sectors. This means prioritising two parts of North Staffordshire in particular: the city centre and Newcastle-under-Lyme.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Invest in the city centre Business District: We would strongly reinforce the focus in the City Centre Development Framework on 'corporate headquarters, financial and professional services businesses and public administration'¹⁴, both larger organisations and smaller organisations requiring 'grow-on' space, with some space for residential and retail use. Meridien pure's recent overview of enterprise options estimates that 111,000 square feet will be needed in the next three years, an increase on their 2004 estimate because the firm formation rate has risen¹⁵. 32,000 square feet of move-on space is also predicted to be required in the Stoke-on-Trent district over the next six years. Creating the city centre as a place of choice for professional services should help to grow the proportion of knowledge intensive employment in the area as a whole.
- Invest in Newcastle-under-Lyme's accommodation for professional service businesses: Newcastle-under-Lyme is a potential growth area for professional services. Its economy has been performing relatively well in recent years with over half its local employment (53 per cent) in the private sector and growing its employment by 27 per cent in the last ten years¹⁶. These service sector strengths also mean that Newcastle-under-Lyme is predicted by Experian, even without any interventions, to grow faster than Stoke-on-Trent to 2021¹⁷. Investing in accommodation for professional services in the town would help to capitalise upon the area as an existing asset and currently one of the most desirable areas in the sub region in which to locate a professional services business. More detail about

¹³ *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (October 2007) Experian

¹⁴ City Centre Development Framework, p.10

¹⁵ North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone, Enterprise Options Update August 2007, meridian pure

¹⁶ *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (October 2007) Experian

¹⁷ *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* p. 26

the nature of this investment is in the recommendations on 'place' below. It should be noted that the size and scale of the investment required for Newcastle town is significantly less than that required by the city centre.

- FineST should lead development of stronger networks for market services organisations. Priorities for this network should include continuing to develop its Future FineST network for young graduates, developing networks in other cities to develop markets elsewhere (regionally and nationally), identifying high potential businesses and linking them to the enterprise support available, and encouraging sharing of ideas (on non-competitive issues) to encourage innovation.

Recommendation v: Invest in strategic development of North Staffordshire's retail offer.

Retail should be made a more strategic part of North Staffordshire's development strategy, particularly as it can contribute to the quality of life not just for visitors but for current and potential residents. The East West Precinct in the city centre and the development of a distinctive retail offer in Newcastle-under-Lyme will need to be a central part of this strategy. Individual town centres may also contribute to the retail offer of the area through distinctive specialisms, for example Leek specialising in antiques or Burslem's strengths in ceramics.

It is also important to link the jobs in the retail sector with investment in workforce development to ensure that these are neither 'revolving door' jobs that people leave as quickly as they enter, or jobs in which there are no opportunities for progression (see 'people' recommendations). North Staffordshire should strive to attract head office and strategic retail functions as well as customer facing roles.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Grow retail in urban centres in North Staffordshire. Retail developments outside urban areas should not happen so that the town centres can be consolidated. Instead North Staffordshire should, drawing on the insights of the North Staffordshire Retail and Leisure Study 2005 – 2021, build on the distinctive assets of North Staffordshire's urban areas.

Activities should include:

- *Developing the city centre.* It is already the main clothing and footwear centre within North Staffordshire, accounting for 31.6 per cent of these transactions as well as dominating the ‘bulky goods’ market and accounting for a smaller proportion of food transactions¹⁸. Sufficient floorspace for retail development has been identified: the next step is acting on this (see place recommendations below).
- *Investing in Newcastle–under–Lyme’s retail.* The town is an important retail centre within the sub region, having 7.2 per cent of main food shopping, 14.6% of clothes and footwear shopping and retaining a significant proportion of shoppers from the Newcastle–under–Lyme area¹⁹. It is identified in the North Staffordshire Retail and Leisure Study as needing a small format foodstore in the short–term and clearly identified as having capacity in the short, medium and long–term to expand its non–food capacity²⁰ in a way that is distinctive from the city centre (interviewees have suggested independent boutique shops or even specialising in designer outlets for shoes so that it develops a distinctive profile). The draft Area Action Plan for Newcastle–under–Lyme, although under review, should inform a strategy to invest in development of a distinctive retail offer for the town²¹, drawing also on insights from the North Staffordshire Retail and Leisure Study and the City Centre Development Framework²².
- *Investing in other town centres.* Longton, Tunstall, Stoke and Burslem are identified as areas important to the North Staffordshire sub region and it is vital that North Staffordshire make the most of the retail opportunities available, catering to local shoppers but also building on distinctive assets of the towns, eg ceramics for Burslem or ‘antiques with a modern design twist’ for Leek²³.
- Make, and demonstrate, progress on the East West Precinct. The new retail store and bus station referred to as the East West Precinct has been discussed for some time. To demonstrate that change is happening, one suggestion was to create a

¹⁸ North Staffordshire Retail and Leisure Strategy 2005 – 2021 – please note this only covers Stoke–on–Trent and Newcastle–under–Lyme and not Staffordshire Moorlands

¹⁹ North Staffordshire Retail and Leisure Study 2005 – 2021

²⁰ North Staffordshire Retail and Leisure Study 2005 – 2021

²¹ See Newcastle Town Centre Area Action Plan 2007

²² City Centre Development Framework p.55

²³ North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy

building wrap that advertises the new centre and the forthcoming changes to the city, with some changeable panels to update people as plans evolve. Again it is vital that plans for development of the East and West Precincts are linked to those for the Business District, University Quarter and Creative Quarter.

- Work with retailers to develop pre-employment initiatives that will train and link to employment the 'job ready' unemployed in the sub region. There are many examples of retail-led regeneration including such initiatives as standard – the development of the Birmingham Bullring is a good example – and the outcomes are largely positive in terms of ensuring that the jobs created have an impact on local economic activity rates and in terms of being able to include 'skilled and ready to work' people in the business offer. Established programmes such as Marks & Start, run by Marks & Spencer, are an opportunity to link those out of work to employers already in the area.
- Undertake entrepreneurial actions to increase the retail 'offer': Initiatives such as that proposed by the city centre manager to standardise car parking rates and to encourage Sunday shopping (a slow trading day in North Staffordshire) through waiving car parking charges would also help to strengthen the retail offer.

Recommendation vi: Support development of North Staffordshire's existing 'experience economy' and finalise a North Staffordshire tourism strategy.

Increasing affluence has led to a growth in demand for services and the 'experience economy'²⁴ – sectors such as retail, leisure and tourism – requiring innovation from businesses in all sectors who are seeking to 'add value' to what they do and offer a better experience to customers. North Staffordshire's experience economy already has many 'gems', including walking trails, historic buildings, ceramics factory tours, Waterworld, Alton Towers, the Peak District, theatres, museums and Trentham Gardens. It also has canals and steam railways. These 'experience' sectors have the potential to be one of North Staffordshire's key strengths as a sub region, building on the existing leisure attractions (Alton Towers, Waterworld etc), the ceramics industry as an 'experience', the natural beauty of the Peak District National Park and local cultural attractions such as the theatres and museums. It is also one of the areas where all three local authorities could benefit from closer working, whether by improving accessibility of key attractions, making

²⁴ Spending on services, rather than physical goods, doubled between 1970 and 2005, from 27 per cent of household income to 54 per cent.

use of the canals and waterways, or simply working together to jointly promote the range of activities available, seeking to increase the proportion of overnight stays in North Staffordshire. The North Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership has already made significant progress in this area and there is a North Staffordshire Tourism strategy. The next stage is to build on this, as well as to identify some visible joint projects as a sub region.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Agree a joint external marketing strategy as 'North Staffordshire' – see image recommendations for further details.
- Identify joint projects as a sub region to develop local tourism, building on the North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy 2004 – 2014. Tourism is one of the key areas where all three local authorities within North Staffordshire can benefit demonstrably from working together to improve accessibility of existing attractions, build on assets across the area such as the canals and increase the proportion of visitors staying overnight and longer in the sub region. The Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership has made a significant contribution to tourism within the area, as has the development of the North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy. However, there are as yet no organisational resources behind this, such as a Destination Management organisation for the whole of North Staffordshire. This would help to create a clearer 'tourism offer' for the whole area that ensures people are aware that there are towns and countryside, interactive family activities (eg ceramics, Alton Towers) as well as sporting activities and cultural activities. The organisation should seek to promote how people travel around North Staffordshire – without a car this is almost impossible at present – and what there is to do for different groups of people. It will also require making more of existing strengths, such as ceramics, and updating them to become more interactive attractions for families, learning from other attractions.
- Invest in the public realm: The City Centre Development Framework highlights the importance of developing the public realm of the city centre 'within which people can be entertained, and people can use as part of their everyday life'²⁵. This is also identified as an important part of Newcastle–under–Lyme's plans to develop projects such as the Waterside Quarter. Without investment in the quality of the public realm

²⁵ City Centre Development Framework, p.5

of these two centres, particularly the city centre, it is more challenging to attract residents at all income levels to choose to spend time and money in North Staffordshire rather than somewhere more attractive.

- Investigate options for improving the quality of hotels, conference and eating/drinking facilities in the area. This should build on the North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy and aim to maximise opportunities for overnight visitors and for holding conferences linked to sectors such as medical technologies. There should also be investment in some of the service facilities such as eating, drinking and accommodation, which go with making the most of the ‘experience’ economy. This also means investing in the public realm of the city centre and Newcastle–under–Lyme in particular, increasing the attractiveness of these centres to local residents, particularly those with higher incomes who are likely to generate higher economic multipliers.

Recommendation vii: Make the most of North Staffordshire’s logistics sector.

North Staffordshire already has a growing logistics sector and the area’s central location in England, as well as the availability of appropriate accommodation, makes it likely that this sector will continue to grow in the area. It also creates opportunities for more knowledge intensive jobs to be created, such as information technology jobs that support effective distribution networks. However, there is a need for North Staffordshire to manage the environmental impact of distribution – aesthetically the buildings have not proved attractive and poor planning will not help to attract more knowledge intensive businesses and workers. It is also vital that high quality jobs in this sector are encouraged at all skills levels through close working with employers.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Develop a logistics network that links further education institutions and skills for logistics to develop the skills needed to work in the logistics industry in the local population. This should seek to raise demand for skills from the employers and employees in the area.

- Publicise the benefits of locating logistics hubs in North Staffordshire more widely, linked with the opportunities to link to nearby markets (Manchester and Birmingham) as well as the local education institutions (eg designers from Staffordshire). It is worth looking at the experience of La Coruna, which has Zara's key designers and logistics centre in the same place to allow fast turnaround of designs²⁶ – there may be similar opportunities for North Staffordshire.
- Programmes to place graduates in local companies should consider the logistics sector as a place to work and the Enterprise and Innovation Group should encourage business support agencies to work with existing companies to support growth and the development of the high tech, managerial and innovative roles within firms based in the sub region.
- Further development of distribution centres should meet high design standards and be demonstrably beneficial to the area to ensure that the most is made of existing warehouses.

Recommendation viii: Invest in a coordinated enterprise strategy for North Staffordshire.

North Staffordshire needs to become more entrepreneurial and to increase the proportion of high growth enterprises in the area. Enterprise policies should aim to support this and remove barriers to growth of high potential SMEs. However, with two universities in the area as an attractor for 'knowledge entrepreneurs', there should be a recognition that knowledge based SMEs are growing faster than other SMEs and that growth of knowledge intensive SMEs will have a greater impact on the local economy, meaning appropriate support should be in place.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Review of whether Keele and Staffordshire University could develop a joint enterprise: This will be up to the two universities but it is worth looking at lessons from places such as Emilia Romagna to consider whether the two universities would benefit from a joint enterprise to develop more spin-off knowledge intensive businesses (such as Intelligent Orthopaedics) together.

²⁶ See http://www.cbfeature.com/index.php?categoryid=VkZaU1RsQIJQVDA9K1I=&p2_articleid=Vm10YWlyUXITblJWYWs1UIZrUkJPUT09K1M=&p2_page=2 for further details

- Develop an innovation framework: Ensure that North Staffordshire develops, and publicises, a joined-up innovation support framework for knowledge based businesses that brings together the enterprise services and the universities. Key elements of an innovation framework highlighted by Peter Lovatt's European Innovation Scoreboard are: research and intellectual property; entrepreneurs and an innovation network; access to capital; business support and advice on issues such as workforce development, HR, business growth, copyright and intellectual property management; and a high quality environment appropriate for that business. This would make it easier to set up knowledge based businesses in the area and make it more likely they will survive.
- Develop academic and business networks to support the growth of innovative and knowledge intensive businesses. Regular seminars should be set up bringing together small firms and academics with common interests, with the firms setting out the difficulties they are facing and then working through potential solutions with the academics. Wider networks should also be developed by sector, building on the existing networks such as the Staffordshire Business and Environment Network, the FineST network supported by AWM and the Chamber of Commerce, to encourage sharing of ideas. These networks should also help businesses to link with wider markets in the region, nationally and internationally to help North Staffordshire businesses understand and reach their markets more effectively. There are opportunities to learn lessons from cities such as Sheffield and Newcastle-on-Tyne in this area.
- Invest in high growth businesses, regardless of sector: North Staffordshire needs to encourage the development of high growth businesses, regardless of sector, as long as growth of these businesses will not create long term problems (for example environmental issues). This means building on existing enterprise services and ensuring that businesses have access to finance, help with management of IP, premises and business advice as part of one package. This should link with areas of expertise, for example Ceram, Staffordshire University and the City Museum for ceramics. Lessons can also be learned from experiences such as that of Biocomposites, a company supported by Keele to diversify from ceramics into medical and healthcare technologies.

- Clarify the role of the Enterprise and Innovation Group, which has considerable potential to lead changes within the sub region but only if there is clarity about their responsibilities, where they have power (and funding) to make change happen and if the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership is open to listening to the Group's innovative ideas about transforming the sub region.
- Develop more customer-focused business support across North Staffordshire. The Enterprise and Innovation Group should bring together those providing business support in North Staffordshire to develop a shared overview of who provides different types of business support in North Staffordshire and where there is duplication. This should involve not only the main business support agencies²⁷, but also Keele University, which regularly provides support around IP management, the Learning and Skills Council, which can fund employment-based training, the Local Strategic Partnership and all the sector-based networks and groups (eg North Staffs Manufacturers' Group) that operate around the area. As a result of this review, the agencies should develop a 'shared framework' for working together, as recommended by Meridien pure. This should support the creation of one contact number for business support in North Staffordshire and a more customer-focused, end-to-end approach, for example one key contact that manages their use of all business support services and provides effective 'aftercare'. All businesses should be encouraged to access the key facilities that contribute to success, including finance, ongoing business advice and appropriate premises.
- Regularly conduct reviews of business needs: The business support agencies in North Staffordshire, coordinated by the Enterprise and Innovation Group, should identify a way to work together to determine market needs, how 'customers' find the services, where the gaps are, which companies have most potential for growth and hence the priorities for investment on a regular basis. This would be a cost effective way to establish business needs now and predicted demand in a range of areas, including infrastructure, barriers to growth, demands for accommodation etc. This review should also seek to link to regional trends and to learn from the experience of other places.

²⁷ Including Business Initiative, North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Advantage West Midlands, the local authorities, the Minority Businesses Association, Staffordshire University, the Prince's Trust, Stoke-on-Trent Business Brokers, Staffordshire Business & Environment Network, the Business Innovation Centre and In Staffs UK

- The North Staffordshire Learning and Skills Group should create in the next twelve months a skills map for the sub region as the basis for engagement with local employers: Working with education providers – the two universities and the four further education institutions as well as schools – and with employers the Group should create a skills map for the sub region that focuses on where are the gaps now and predicted in the future, and strive to respond. For example, there are likely to be considerable opportunities linked to construction and the local FE colleges in particular (especially Stoke-on-Trent as it has a COVE in this area) should be talking to employers about how they can train local residents and link them with the growing opportunities.
- Link the Building Schools for the Future programme with the work of the NSRP and invest in ongoing improvement of education at primary and secondary level across North Staffordshire: The Building Schools for the Future programme in Stoke-on-Trent needs to ensure that its long-term strategy and delivery plans link with those of the NSRP; this needs to happen urgently. Over the next twelve months work should continue to improve the performance of poor performing schools across the area and to seek funding to invest in a long-term enterprise programme for schools to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship. Whilst some tangible results may be measurable in the next twelve months such as linking plans or delivery of small-scale initiatives, it needs to be clearly acknowledged that this is an activity that needs to be sustained over the long-term if it is to make a difference to the future of North Staffordshire.

Recommendation ix: Investigate how public sector procurement could benefit the local area.

Senior representatives of the public sector have highlighted to us in interview that procurement provides an opportunity to invest money in local organisations. Many public sector organisations procure services nationally rather than locally, from catering to consultancy. Reviewing opportunities to build local capacity and invest in high quality local companies could help attract companies to the area. The legal implications of this, of course, would need to be reviewed.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Lead public sector stakeholders, working with the third sector, undertake a review of how procurement practices could change and report back to the NSRP on what changes would look like and the legal implications. Organisations such as local PCT trusts have already indicated willingness to participate and consider options for changing procurement practices where national policies allow them to do so. Development of a public sector procurement compact was also recommended by the Action Planning Group.
- Make use of public sector procurement specifications to encourage social inclusion and sustainable job creation. North Staffordshire can work with the construction, retail and other firms that will be involved in the regeneration of the sub region to ensure that employment created as a direct result of the funding available uses recruitment mechanisms to tackle social inclusion and worklessness. For example, specifying that contractors and developers commit to employing a number of people currently not working or inactive and work alongside Job Centre Plus to achieve this; or, working with contractors who commit to investing in the skills of their labour force.
- Conduct a review of how to build local capacity in relation to public sector procurement. NSRP, working with AWM, should review supply chain demands from large employers such as the healthcare sector, local government and universities, and identify where there is local capacity and where there are gaps. It should then support networks (such as AWM supported Finest) to enable the sharing of ideas and development of local capacity. There may be lessons from One North East's review of the role of public sector procurement in stimulating enterprise growth in the area.
- Develop and implement a 'public sector employment compact' whereby public sector organisations commit to working with Job Centre Plus and training providers to ensure that the accessibility of jobs within the public sector is improved and creating opportunities to people who are not working but able to work. The Action Planning Group has demonstrated a willingness to become involved with setting this up.

B. Place and infrastructure recommendations

*The look and feel of North Staffordshire does not send the message to local residents or people externally that this is a place that has stopped declining.*²⁸

Context Our *Ideopolis* research confirmed the importance of infrastructure to successful places. Two key drivers related to this were creating the physical knowledge city, which is about having the architecture and accommodation that knowledge intensive businesses and workers require. Case studies of places that have transformed themselves in recent years highlight the importance of this as an early phase in their transformation, for example Manchester.

Case Study: Manchester's physical transformation

The physical changes in Manchester over the past twenty years have contributed significantly to the city's changed economic fortunes. One local described what it used to be like: *'By the early 1980s Manchester was left an ugly central business and shopping district, surrounded by industrial dereliction, giving way to a series of inner-city public housing projects...Prosperous people still worked in the city but lived outside it in rich suburbs or the countryside'*²⁹. Manchester recognised the need to change this and to increase the city centre population (less than a thousand in the late 1980s). Later, the IRA bomb on 15 June 1996 required further investment in the city. The dramatic redevelopment of the city led to *'...iconic buildings, a mix of historical and contemporary...people are recognising the importance of locating here.'*³⁰ The success of the transformation is attributed to effective planning, initially by the independent City Centre Management company, and latterly by Manchester City Council: *'The new buildings have had a predetermined legacy, they were for something beyond a specific event...unlike the Dome'*³¹. A high volume of available office space is also frequently cited as a strength.³²

Also important to successful places is another *Ideopolis* driver leveraging strong connectivity within and outside the economic geography of the area. This is about good communications infrastructure, combined with strong transport links that enable relatively easy travel for workers between their residence and workplace, for businesses to link with other businesses in different cities and for consumers to travel to places offering services they wish to buy. Both types of connectivity are important for the economic success of

²⁸ Work Foundation interviewee

²⁹ The Economist 'In London's Shadow', 1998

³⁰ *Ideopolis* Interviewee

³¹ *Ideopolis* interviewee

³² See The Work Foundation's *Ideopolis* Case Study of Manchester (2006)

places in the knowledge economy. We have clustered these two drivers together as 'place' for North Staffordshire.

Creating a sense of 'North Staffordshire'

Current developments undermine the sense of 'place' in North Staffordshire. Rather than making the most of its multiple centres and striving to link them together in a way that complements economic linkages, recent developments within North Staffordshire have primarily been outside urban areas and in different places. This has served to create even more 'centres' within the sub region and to undermine the urban centres, particularly in Stoke-on-Trent where the population is declining by about 2.8 per cent annually.³³ Whilst some developments may cater to the needs of organisations that prefer to be located outside urban centres (eg the Science Park, logistics companies) North Staffordshire needs to ensure it counters the decline of its urban centres and capitalises on their existing and potential specialisms.

Improving internal links within North Staffordshire

Currently links between the different urban centres and business parks are poor, there is no consensus about the 'city centre', those new to the area are left with the distinct sense that North Staffordshire is not one place with many centres, but instead many places with no centre(s): and it is unsurprising that many interviewees spoke of the absence of a coherent sense of place. This needs to be improved, with closer links in particular between the city centre, Stoke-on-Trent station, Staffordshire University, Newcastle Town and Keele University. This would make North Staffordshire easier to navigate from the perspective of businesses, prospective investors or visitors.

Capitalising on the city centre

There is a city centre in North Staffordshire – Hanley West (Evidence Paper B and the Overview contain more detail on this). The city centre has the highest concentration of jobs in North Staffordshire and draws in the largest number of workers (over 19,600 from within the sub region). Its existence as the city centre was reinforced by the decision to create the Potteries shopping centre there in the 1980s and its retail success was reinforced recently when the city centre (as Hanley) came 42nd in Experian's league table of the top 50 shopping opportunities in the UK, with an estimated £6.5m spend in 2007³⁴.

³³ See http://www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/population_trends/PT125Bates.pdf and <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Politics/documents/2006/03/07/StateoftheEnglishCitiespart1.pdf>, pp. 39 – 41

³⁴ Experian 2007 Retail Ranking and 2017 predictions, see <http://press.experian.com/documents/showdoc.cfm?doc=2822>

North Staffordshire needs to do more to capitalise upon the city centre, improving the retail and commercial accommodation, the quality of the public realm and its connectivity to other parts of the sub region. This would also increase 'footfall' (passing trade) for retailers.

Capitalise on Newcastle–under–Lyme

Newcastle–under–Lyme is the other key strategic centre for North Staffordshire. It attracts around 7,000 workers each day and, as the Experian update of the Integrated Economic Development Strategy shows (and we discuss in detail in the next section), Newcastle's economy has been performing relatively well in recent years with over half its local employment (53 per cent) in the private sector and growing its employment by 27 per cent in the last ten years³⁵. These service sector strengths also mean that Newcastle is predicted by Experian, even without any interventions, to grow faster than Stoke–on–Trent to 2021³⁶. Newcastle has a strategic position within North Staffordshire being the nearest town centre to Keele University and the Science Park, sitting between Keele University and Staffordshire University, and having some areas of higher quality housing for higher income workers. This suggests that North Staffordshire could do more to capitalise upon its location, role within the sub region, its existing strengths and its future promise, and that it should be a joint priority, with the city centre, for further investment and development.

Capitalising on the other town centres

North Staffordshire has diverse strengths across the sub region. Whilst our research suggests that focusing investment on the city centre and Newcastle–under–Lyme in the short term is the most effective way to kick–start the local economy, this does not mean that all other parts of the sub region should be neglected. Although investment will be less, there is a need to make the most of the strengths of the whole area. For example, Staffordshire Moorlands is also a vital part of the North Staffordshire sub region, a fact they recognise: 'the regeneration of North Staffordshire is critically important to us'³⁷. It is the home to JCB, Britannia and Alton Towers, with over 4,000 people commuting to jobs there from Newcastle and Stoke–on–Trent, and Staffordshire Moorlands' Community Strategy has aspirations to both develop the local economy and develop the area's role as 'a place to live and a place to visit for recreational purposes'³⁸. More could be made of

³⁵ *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (October 2007) prepared by Experian for Renew North Staffordshire

³⁶ *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* p. 26

³⁷ Staffordshire Moorlands Draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2007 – 2020, p.10

³⁸ Staffordshire Moorlands Draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2007 – 2020, p.10

the local authority's assets, including its businesses, its high performing schools, location in the Peak District National Park and its recreational opportunities.

Analysis of travel to work patterns within the rest of North Staffordshire illustrate too that other places are to varying degrees also employment centres in their own right. For example Tunstall, Burslem and Fenton have strengths in ceramics, bolstered by the Burslem School of Art, and the North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy 2004 – 2014 highlights the potential for Burslem to develop its ceramics 'experience' offer for residents and visitors.

This recognition of diverse strengths is not an argument for 'jam-spreading' however. 'Jam-spreading', or the distribution of regeneration and economic development funding equally across the region, is an affliction affecting many areas striving to regenerate. Whilst jam-spreading does respond to demands from local areas, The Work Foundation's research³⁹ has found that successful cities are those that take more strategic – and difficult – decisions and concentrate funding in specific locations. For North Staffordshire this means investing in the high potential growth areas to maximise economic returns and capitalising more on other existing assets by strengthening links with the 'jewels' in Staffordshire Moorlands and the other employment centres.

Need for more business workspace

There is a lack of appropriate business workspace, leading to many businesses choosing to locate on high quality sites such as the nearby Festival Park instead, further undermining the urban centres. Improving the availability of high quality premises for established larger businesses as well as small and growing businesses is highlighted as vital to enabling further business growth. This is particularly the case as North Staffordshire needs the service and knowledge businesses that would demand these types of commercial accommodation in order to boost its economy.

Too well connected?

Our analysis shows that location remains a key advantage for the area, being centrally located in England, short distances from major cities (Manchester, Birmingham, London) and well connected to markets by road and rail (including the M6, A50/A500 and the West Coast mainline), as well as close to Manchester, Birmingham and East Midlands airports. However, this is also a disadvantage because North Staffordshire does not currently

³⁹ Jones, A. et al (2006) *Ideopolis Knowledge City Regions*: The Work Foundation: London

attract enough investment in – meaning that it is ‘*easy to travel straight through*’ and ‘*any investment is drawn like magnets towards Birmingham and Manchester, instead of drawing it from them*’⁴⁰ the way that North Staffordshire is inter-connected and the poor quality of its infrastructure makes ‘place’ one of the most significant barriers to North Staffordshire’s future economic growth.

Investing in internal transport links

One of the key challenges to creating a stronger sense of place, making more of its assets or attracting businesses is poor internal transport. There is some work underway to improve internal transport infrastructure: two new major transport projects on the A500 and A50 have been completed to improve the traffic circulation of North Staffs and the local transport infrastructure and new build residential areas are within 30 minutes public transport travelling time of key facilities. Nonetheless, challenges still remain, particularly convoluted bus routes, poor links between major centres and the A500 running alongside the railway line, bypassing the city centre rather than drawing people into the centre of the sub region.

Another issue that needs to be addressed in terms of road travel is signposting. Currently road signs are confusing because the city centre is labelled as either Hanley or the city centre, but with no explanation for visitors that they are the same place, making it difficult to get a sense of how the sub region is laid out. Some interviewees also commented that ‘*the entrances from Junction 15 and 16 do not give a good impression of the area.*’⁴¹ Car parking is identified by many interviewees as a key constraint and an important consideration for further development of commercial accommodation in the city centre (and a benefit of locating in business parks outside urban locations). There are also concerns about the sustainability of North Staffordshire, with public transport described as being poor quality and local buses and the city centre bus station coming in for considerable criticism from interviewees. Links from Stoke-on-Trent railway station – which is a vital hub and has fast links to Manchester and Birmingham, amongst other places – are poorly signposted and not of high quality.

Housing

Renew North Staffordshire has been working to tackle low demand for housing in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle and has had a number of successes in recent years in leveraging public and private sector funding for redevelopment of large areas of rundown

⁴⁰ Work Foundation interviewees

⁴¹ Work Foundation interview

housing. Over half of Renew's spending has been concentrated in the urban core area and has succeeded in attracting new residents into the conurbation. Some 72 per cent of conurbation residents now expect to be living in the area in 10 years time, and this rises to 81 per cent for the RENEW area⁴².

Despite this, average house prices are still below the regional and national averages and the slowing of the market in recent months creates new challenges, as does continued job losses in traditional industries and weak economic growth in North Staffordshire. The area also needs to significantly increase its attractiveness for more affluent residents who will not only work in the increased proportion of highly skilled jobs in the area, and help to attract more businesses who know they can access this skills base, but also spend their money locally. Without more affluent people who live as well as work in North Staffordshire, it will be difficult to transform the area.

Digital Connectivity

Digital connectivity is increasingly important in the knowledge economy and lack of access to broadband can not only inhibit growth of organisations but also disadvantage individuals. The draft Integrated Digital Strategy highlights that United States studies 'demonstrate that public sector intervention in the provision of infrastructure to support the take up of broadband has a direct effect on the economic prosperity of an area. The evidence of one case study demonstrated, for one town, 100 per cent greater economic growth relative to its peers, as a result of the municipality making its broadband network available to local businesses'⁴³.

Case Study: Dublin's connectivity constraints

Dublin has grown rapidly over the past fifteen years, particularly in terms of knowledge services. A report in 1999, however, identified broadband as a constraint on Dublin's economic growth in the *Information Society for Ireland: Strategy for Action* report. This shaped current telecommunications strategies and recommended the establishment of a limited number of designated broadband service areas across Ireland with guaranteed service availability at internationally competitive prices, removing this constraint to growth. The other key challenge that Dublin is facing is in terms of transport, with congestion around the centre a significant challenge to future growth⁴⁴.

⁴² RENEW baseline survey update, Ecotec 2007

⁴³ Draft North Staffordshire Integrated Digital Strategy p.4

⁴⁴ See The Work Foundation's *Ideopolis* Case Study of Dublin (2006)

North Staffordshire has low rates of broadband service usage by businesses and residents⁴⁵ and the draft Integrated Digital Strategy highlights in detail how changing this situation could benefit both groups and contribute to a wide range of local, sub regional, regional and national strategies. Development of connectivity could also contribute to some of the recommendations in this document, for example knowledge based jobs in the logistics sector are likely to be technology based and so growing these jobs will require the appropriate infrastructure to be in place.

Recommendations

Recommendation x: North Staffordshire needs to have a ‘masterplan’ for development across the sub region.

One of the key differences between North Staffordshire and other places is the confusing layout of North Staffordshire and its failure to capitalise on its diverse strengths. This urgently needs to be changed. To do this requires identification of priorities for development across the sub region and ensuring these sub regional plans are coordinated and complementary. Since local areas will also be leading on developments, it is important to ensure that local plans are included in the overall ‘North Staffordshire’ masterplan, with a clear sense of how these can be built upon most effectively. For example, Staffordshire Moorlands’ plans to develop Leek need to be considered when devising the long–term transport strategy for North Staffordshire as a whole.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Develop a detailed delivery plan to transform North Staffordshire with clear priorities, milestones and objectives for action, as well as strategies to gain funding to support each of the priorities. This should build on existing masterplans and strategies, for example the City Centre Development Framework, the draft Area Action Plan for Newcastle–under–Lyme and the Staffordshire Moorlands Community Strategy. This will need to inform and be informed by the Regional Economic Strategy and Spatial Strategy. This recommendation is repeated in more detail under leadership.
- Establish criteria to help assess new and ongoing developments against the overall vision: Key criteria should be: function; reasons development is located there; benefits for local area; benefits for wider sub region.

⁴⁵ Draft North Staffordshire Integrated Digital Strategy

- The North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership Development Group need to scrutinise delivery of the physical development of North Staffordshire. This group exists already, although (as set out in the recommendations under ‘Leadership’), it is important to clarify their remit, membership and reporting responsibilities.
- Sustainability must be a core element of development plans: All development plans need to consider environmental impact and ensure that high environmental standards are maintained – and publicise this as part of North Staffordshire’s ‘offer’.
- Design-led development: North Staffordshire should strive to maintain high standards of design, architecture and development within the area, working with Urban Vision North Staffordshire and CABA.

Recommendation xi: Progress city centre developments informed by the City Centre Development Framework. Projects need to be well coordinated, clearly linked to the overall vision and priorities and have clear accountabilities and detailed delivery plans agreed. There should be tangible signs of change within the year.

To start an ‘economic bonfire’ in North Staffordshire it is vital that funding is focused on the area most likely to see economic growth. Consultation with interviewees across North Staffordshire demonstrates considerable consensus that the ‘bonfire’ needs to focus on the city centre and on Newcastle-under-Lyme (see below) and on the growing areas around them such as the University Quarter and Keele University as the areas with most potential⁴⁶. The city centre, however, is in most need of considerable investment. A framework for the development of the city centre has already been established in the Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Development Framework and Investment Strategy (published in December 2005). This sets out clearly the major projects required to deliver ‘an exciting physical and economic environment appealing to investors, developers, residents, businesses and visitors alike.’⁴⁷ The vision is to deliver ‘a prosperous City Centre that is the heart, soul and mind of our region’⁴⁸.

How: Specific actions should include:

⁴⁶ Experian’s work reinforces this, see *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (October 2007)

⁴⁷ Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Development Framework and Investment Strategy (December 2005) p.4

⁴⁸ Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Development Framework and Investment Strategy (December 2005) p.8

- Formal agreement by the NSRP that the area surrounded by the soon-to-be-completed Potteries ring road is the city centre and needs to be treated differently to the smaller market town centres within North Staffordshire. The existence of the city centre continues to be the subject of debate and by the NSRP and political leaders publicly supporting the message that Hanley is the city centre of Stoke-on-Trent, it is more likely that this will become accepted. This means that the area should be referred to as the city centre (unless talking about the residential district) in all NSRP policy documents, letterheads and publications, to demonstrate the commitment of the partnership to capitalising more effectively on the city centre. The NSRP should also discuss providing sufficient resources to the city centre to ensure it is well supported (for example, one interviewee commented that currently the city centre receives less janitorial and maintenance resources than other town centres within Stoke-on-Trent⁴⁹).
- The NSRP, working with the Development Group, agree accountabilities and milestones for transforming the city centre in the North Staffordshire delivery plan. Work is ongoing to translate the City Centre Development Framework into a detailed implementation plan. In the next twelve months these plans must be finalised. Clear accountabilities, milestones and output dates need to be agreed, as well as a process for ensuring that all the separate projects are effectively coordinated and complementary. Communication of intentions, milestones and progress, both within organisations and externally, is also vital. The Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Partnership provides an important vehicle for communication about plans and progress and consideration needs to be given to whether dedicated resource should be provided for this group – for example a Business District Officer – to ensure that plans are implemented effectively.
- Plans for the Business District need to be about high value businesses and to be more demand led: Plans for the Business District, under discussion for years, need to be finalised and put into action using the framework established by the Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Development Framework (with greater clarity established about the role of the Business District in the overall North Staffordshire Core Spatial Strategy⁵⁰). Based on our research, there are only two additional comments we would make on the City Centre Development Framework. First, we would strongly reinforce the focus on 'corporate headquarters, financial and professional services businesses and

⁴⁹ Work Foundation interviewee

⁵⁰ Please note that this is for Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme: Staffordshire Moorlands currently has a separate spatial strategy.

public administration'⁵¹, both larger organisations and smaller organisations requiring 'grow-on' space, with some space for residential and retail use. Meridien pure's recent overview of enterprise options estimates that 111,000 square feet will be needed in the next three years, an increase on their 2004 estimate because the firm formation rate has risen⁵². 32,000 square feet of move-on space is also predicted to be required in the Stoke-on-Trent district over the next six years. Growing the proportion of higher value businesses in the area is vital to North Staffordshire's future productivity and to attracting more high income residents.

Second, we recommend that steps are taken to make the Business District more demand led. To do this the NSRP should work closely with businesses (for example through the Enterprise and Innovation Group set up by the NSRP) and with the Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Partnership, a tri-sector stakeholder entity which aspires to move to a Business Improvement District in the city centre in 2010. Current proposals are quite supply led and run the risk of not designing the district in a way that is attractive to target businesses. To ensure this risk is managed means engaging with businesses to understand what would encourage them to locate in the Business District and to work with the NSRP to help work through potential challenges, for example the need to balance business demand for car parking (highlighted in the City Centre Development Framework⁵³) with the need for sustainable transport strategies. Where possible, businesses that are known to be seeking premises should be approached to consider whether bespoke premises could be built for them in the city centre. This would prevent them moving to Festival Park or elsewhere. Bespoke offices can be a considerable incentive too for businesses to stay in an area⁵⁴.

- Make, and demonstrate, progress on the East West Precinct. The new retail store and bus station referred to as the East West Precinct has been discussed for some time. To demonstrate that change is happening, one suggestion was to create a building wrap that advertises the new centre and the forthcoming changes to the city, with some changeable panels to update people as plans evolve. Again it is vital that plans for development of the East and West Precincts are linked to those for the Business District, University Quarter and Creative Quarter.

⁵¹ City Centre Development Framework, p.10

⁵² North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone, Enterprise Options Update August 2007, meridian pure

⁵³ Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Development Framework and Investment Strategy (December 2005) p.37

⁵⁴ Work Foundation interviews in a range of cities

- Rename the ‘Cultural Quarter’ the ‘Creative Quarter’ and ensure plans to develop the area capitalise upon North Staffordshire’s creative strengths and contribute to growing the city centre’s night-time economy (see also Recommendation xiii below for medium-term objectives). We recommend first renaming the ‘Cultural Quarter’ as the ‘Creative Quarter’ to reflect what its role should be: to stimulate production and consumption of high quality creative services.

For this Quarter to be successful, however, it needs to complement other plans for the city centre and to be distinctive. There are a number of Creative Quarters being developed in the UK and North Staffordshire needs to make the most of its historic strengths in this area – principally ceramics – as well as building on the strengths of the education institutions in order to be of benefit to North Staffordshire as an attractor of businesses and visitors. Staffordshire University, City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College and Stoke-on-Trent College offer about 185 creative industries related courses, with nearly 2,000 students completing creative industries related courses in the city each year. Stoke-on-Trent also has two creative industries related special status schools.

In the next twelve months plans to develop the Creative Quarter need to be finalised and linked much more closely particularly with the development of the University Quarter, as there are some complementary areas of work, as well as with the plans of the Burslem Regeneration Company. This will maximise the benefits of all of these projects and reduce duplication. Key objectives should include using the Creative Quarter to develop the ceramics tourism offer in the city centre and Burslem, making it a core objective that the Creative Quarter is developing knowledge intensive businesses in the local area and starting to make visible progress on changing what remains a quiet area of the city.

One recommendation for demonstrating tangible progress in the next twelve months was made by the Cultural Quarter sub-group of the City Centre Partnership. They suggested that a design scheme should be created for Piccadilly, with shop front improvement grants coupled with subsidised rent/rates for creative businesses and a design scheme. This is seen as having the potential to “tip the balance in one of the quietest parts of the City Centre to one where survival rates are above average”⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ Work Foundation interviewee

Further progress on the Creative Quarter will need to happen over the next few years, measured against key milestones.

- Finalise plans to create new public spaces in the city centre. Investment in the public realm in this way would help to identify it as the city centre, as well as facilitating event opportunities. One suggestion for quick progress in this area would be the levelling of the raised beds at Albion Square. Any plans to create new public spaces, however, will need to be integrated into overall plans for the city centre.

Recommendation xii: Finalise plans for development of Newcastle Town’s retail and business accommodation with priority placed on growing its professional services and a distinctive retail offer.

Newcastle–under–Lyme is the other key strategic centre for North Staffordshire. It attracts around 7,000 workers each day and, as the Experian update of the Integrated Economic Development Strategy shows, Newcastle–under–Lyme’s economy has been performing relatively well in recent years with over half its local employment (53 per cent) in the private sector and growing its employment by 27 per cent in the last ten years⁵⁶. These service sector strengths also mean that Newcastle–under–Lyme is predicted by Experian, even without any interventions, to grow faster than Stoke–on–Trent to 2021⁵⁷. Newcastle–under–Lyme has a strategic position within North Staffordshire being the nearest town centre to Keele University and the Science Park, sitting between Keele University and Staffordshire University, and having some areas of higher quality housing for higher income workers.

Newcastle Town does not need the substantial investment that the city centre requires, nor should development of Newcastle Town distract or detract from the vital redevelopment of the city centre. Nonetheless, it is important that North Staffordshire takes early action to capitalise upon Newcastle–under–Lyme’s position as one of the most attractive places within the sub region for knowledge intensive businesses to locate.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Recognise Newcastle Town as the other key strategic town in North Staffordshire: Experian’s predictions for Newcastle–under–Lyme highlight its potential to grow its

⁵⁶ *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (October 2007) prepared by Experian for Renew North Staffordshire

⁵⁷ *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* p. 26

private sector businesses and particularly its professional and business services, as well as to provide an independent retail offer. RENEW North Staffordshire has also identified Newcastle Town Centre as having the potential to ‘accommodate a vibrant housing market which caters for a mixed income community’. As a consequence the city centre and Newcastle–under–Lyme should both be recognised as key strategic centres in North Staffordshire (although not requiring the same levels of investment).

- Finalise plans for Newcastle Town’s future development and make some progress on delivery: The Area Action Plan should be finalised with clear milestones for delivery of key outputs, linked with the overall delivery plan for North Staffordshire. Plans should ensure that the town maintains its historic distinctiveness as well as catering for mixed development (office and retail) that provides an opportunity to capitalise upon Newcastle–under–Lyme’s potential. In the short term, given North Staffordshire’s shortage of knowledge intensive businesses and the fact that Newcastle–under–Lyme is in the short–term one of the most attractive places in the conurbation for these businesses to locate, we would suggest that development of professional and business service accommodation should be a key priority.

A finalised plan should be supported by a mix of public and private sector funding – although it should be recognised that the scale of public investment will not be as great as in the city centre. Nonetheless, as one of the most attractive town centres in the North Staffordshire area for knowledge intensive businesses, it is important to ensure that Newcastle Town receives sufficient investment to fulfil its potential.

Recommendation xiii: Progress development of the Keele University Science Park and the University Quarter.

Successful knowledge intensive places are those that build on their education institutions’ supply of graduate labour and their research assets. For North Staffordshire, this means building on the strengths of Keele University, Staffordshire University and the local FE colleges – Leek, Newcastle–under–Lyme and Stoke–on–Trent. Some progress has already been made in the ‘true cluster’⁵⁸ of medical and healthcare technologies in Keele Science Park, whilst health has been the fastest growing sector in the area⁵⁹. There are further opportunities to build on this and other areas of specialism, particularly through further development of the Science Park and progressing plans for the University Quarter.

⁵⁸ *Cluster Focused Action Plan* for North Staffordshire

⁵⁹ *Updating the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy* (October 2007)

How: Specific actions include:

- Progress the extension of the Science Park: This should be a key priority within the North Staffordshire delivery plan, including accountabilities and key milestones agreed for the project. The AWM supported expansion of Keele University's Science Park is a critical part of North Staffordshire's development of knowledge based industries. This is currently planned to involve the identification and masterplanning of a fourth phase of the Science Park and the possible acquisition and site preparation of the Peacock Hay site in the Chatterley Valley to create a Medi-Park. This would enable North Staffordshire to build on the knowledge intensive cluster that already exists – medical and healthcare technologies – and to link growth of this to other sectors including environmental technologies.

It is also important the Science Park is put in the context of other projects within the area to ensure it is linked effectively to the wider North Staffordshire economy through transport links and strong enterprise relationships. This is important to help ensure that these developments do not act as magnets away from the core urban centres, particularly the city centre and Newcastle Town: the Science Park is primarily intended to be an attractor for highly knowledge intensive and productive businesses that would not otherwise locate in the sub region.

- Progress the University Quarter and ensure it is fully linked to the overall North Staffordshire vision, including development of the Business District and Creative Quarter: The University Quarter covers 390 acres of land between Stoke-on-Trent station and the city centre and is a vital component of North Staffordshire regeneration because of its focus on education led regeneration and increasing the proportion of highly skilled workers in the North Staffordshire area. The Quarter aims to 'generate a thriving knowledge economy that is globally connected leading to sustainable prosperity and an ambitious and dynamic community. It aims to create an integrated learning experience, focussed upon creativity, skills and employability, promoting participation and progression'⁶⁰ and progress is already being made against this vision by the partners⁶¹. Against three cross-cutting themes of technology, employer engagement and a 'Healthy City', the main projects for the

⁶⁰ University Quarter Update November 2007

⁶¹ Partners working on the University Quarter include Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent College of Further Education, City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College, NSRP, North Staffordshire Learning & Skills Council, Advantage West Midlands and the Sanctuary Housing Association.

University Quarter have been identified as being: a Science Centre; a Sports Village; a Performing Arts/Music hub; a Media Place/Creative Village; and a Knowledge Hub. Property strategies have already been prepared for the development of college and university facilities, with feasibility studies being conducted by GVA Grimley, whilst concept design proposals are in place for the Science Centre, Sports Village and Performing Arts Centre. An outline business plan is in the process of being finalised, according to the most recent update, as are plans to work closely with the community in south Stoke-on-Trent to ensure they are fully involved and engaged⁶².

The University Quarter needs to continue to deliver on key milestones and to ensure that its plans contribute to the wider North Staffordshire vision and North Staffordshire Core Spatial Strategy. Ensuring that, for example, the Media Place/Creative Village complements the Creative Quarter so that investment in both is maximised will be vital. So too will exploring ways in which the University Quarter provides an opportunity to improve links between Stoke-on-Trent station and the city centre and, helps to improve the environment of Stoke-on-Trent station to make it a more attractive residential prospect for potential commuters to Manchester and Birmingham. The plans for the Quarter need to be considered in, and supported by, all strategies for addressing the skills deficit within the area.

Recommendation xiv: Allocate resources based on distinctive functions for the different towns.

One of North Staffordshire's strengths is its distinctive town centres. These need to be an integral part of plans for physical development of North Staffordshire, with the aim to capitalise upon the distinctive assets of different areas.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Invest in Leek and Cheadle: As highlighted in the North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy 2004 – 2014, Staffordshire Moorlands contains a wealth of attractions including the Peak District National Park, Biddulph Grange, Rudyard Lake and Alton Towers. Leek is the gateway to the Peak District in the area, however, so should be the first priority for investment in the Moorlands and should be masterplanned to ensure that its potential is maximised. There is also potential to masterplan Cheadle

⁶² University Quarter Update November 2007

to create a town that is a sustainable market town as well as somewhere that services Alton Towers.

- Work with Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership, and a united North Staffordshire Destination Management organisation, to develop the 'experience' side of ceramics. This could involve creating a more interactive and family oriented day out in the Potteries (perhaps linked to Alton Towers as a 'family weekend' offer). Pottery tours should be 'higher end', with fewer trips to 'seconds' shops and more pride in what is produced in the area. As part of this North Staffordshire should continue to host, and make more of, the Ceramics Festival (as set out in the Tourism Strategy and Festivals and Events strategy). Burslem in particular, and its Regeneration Company, will be key elements of this. Fenton and Longton also have strengths in ceramics, having factory shops and so should be part of the ceramics tour of the area.
- Investigate opportunities to make use of the canals: Currently the canals are an under-utilised asset of the area. Whilst they are not an immediate priority it is important, as part of the masterplan, to consider what role they might play in joining-up the area more effectively, improving quality of life and contributing to the 'experience' economy.

Recommendation xv: Invest in transport between the city centre, Stoke-on-Trent station, Staffordshire University, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Keele University. In the first twelve months the city centre bus station should be replaced as a tangible sign of progress.

There is already a North Staffordshire Local Transport plan covering Stoke-on-Trent and the more urban areas of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands. However, at present there is not a sufficiently clear framework for delivery and accountabilities agreed across the three local authorities and this needs to be addressed over the next twelve months. Given the other early priorities, early progress should focus primarily on improving transportation links to, within and from the city centre and Newcastle-under-Lyme (including the town centre and Keele University). The first significant successes should be around links between the city centre, University Quarter and Stoke-on-Trent station, linked with development of the city centre.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Invest in local buses and replace the city centre bus station: Buses are the best public transport option for linking up the sub region and creating a greater sense of 'place'. Whilst other options have been discussed by interviewees, such as monorails and trams, these are very unlikely to gain the necessary public funding in the face of stiff competition from cities such as Leeds which have yet to gain a tram system despite having a considerably higher population. Buses are the best available answer for North Staffordshire in the short and medium term and it is vital that there is investment in this service. Within the city centre, buses should be given more priority and the city centre bus station should be replaced as part of the East West precinct development. As the City Centre Development strategy highlights, future opportunities such as integrated ticketing should also be provided for in the redevelopment of bus stops and the city centre bus station⁶³.
- Simplify bus routes and link communities with high levels of worklessness to centres of employment (see Recommendation v). With development of the East West precinct and the city centre there is likely to be job opportunities, particularly if pre employment initiatives are implemented to help overcome some of the barriers to gaining work. Creating these routes and investigating other means of overcoming barriers to using public transport (eg introducing concessions for target workless groups, improving travel information and improving safety) could all help contribute to improving the accessibility of the sub region and to reducing worklessness.
- Make progress on strengthening the links between Keele University, the University Quarter and Stoke-on-Trent station/city centre: Investigate whether a subsidised bus service could be developed to link the university more effectively to Stoke-on-Trent station, the city centre and the University Quarter. This is very important for current and future staff, students and visitors both to the University and the growing number of Science Park companies, and would support further development of the medical and healthcare technologies cluster, as well as links between Keele and Staffordshire Universities.
- Within the City Centre ensure that plans for the Business District and Creative Quarter include a Park and Ride site at Etruria: Most of the numerous Park and

⁶³ City Centre Development Strategy, p.30

Ride studies undertaken for North Staffordshire have identified potential Park and Ride sites as being at Etruria, in the vicinity of Britannia Stadium and alongside Hanley Bentilee Link⁶⁴. Chatterley Valley is also seen as having potential. Within the city centre, plans for Etruria should be developed alongside plans for the Business District and any progress on creating a Park and Ride site should be 'accompanied by dedicated, efficient, reliable and priority routes with appropriate parking supply (restrictions) in the City Centre'⁶⁵. This should also be made part of improved links between Festival Park and the city centre. Whilst businesses currently located in Festival Park are unlikely to move, they can be linked more effectively with the city centre to enable individuals to go to the city centre for lunchtime eating out or shopping and for drinks after work. This would help the city centre's twilight, retail and leisure economy.

- Start a three to five year programme to improve signposting: This would send a signal to the wider sub region about its sense of 'place', making it easier to travel around whether by car, train, foot or cycle. First, a long term programme should be started to update signs about the city centre to reinforce its importance. This would ensure that when the city centre has been transformed, the signs are in place and it is easy for visitors or potential investors to find it and see how much it has changed. Lessons from other places (eg Atlanta) suggest that it can take between three and five years to replace all signs and ensure a maintenance and updating programme is in place, so starting this work now would send a clear message of confidence as well as ensure the process was finished when the city centre developments are, rather than a few years later. The city centre should also consistently be referred to as the city centre with Hanley in brackets. Second, a long-term programme should be started to make it easier for visitors to walk, cycle, get the bus or drive around the sub region and find different places/attractions. The signposting should be tested on people who do not know the region well.
- Develop a prioritised plan for the medium and longer term to further strengthen and promote the links between the city centre, University Quarter and Stoke-on-Trent station: It is vital that it is much easier to travel between these key areas, with transport services needing to be frequent, well-known, easy to use and well promoted. Key actions in the medium to longer term (many of which are outlined in the North Staffordshire Local Transport Strategy etc.) should include:

⁶⁴ Work Foundation interviewee

⁶⁵ Work Foundation interviewee

- Improving signposting at Stoke-on-Trent station, showing where the city centre is and the options for getting there (taxi, bus, walking) – at present the station contains adverts for getting around Birmingham;
- Changing the second set of doors at Stoke-on-Trent station to ensure that 'Welcome to Stoke-on-Trent' is on the inside;
- Improving the quality and frequency of the bus linking Stoke-on-Trent station to the city centre, and promoting its existence. Buses also ideally need a pull-in and turn around area and options for this should be investigated;
- Requiring taxi drivers to have a minimum knowledge of the area before becoming licensed and investigating options to improve the quality of taxis in the area;
- Developing plans and making progress on improving the quality of the walk from Stoke-on-Trent station to the city centre, with the ultimate aim of enabling people to walk through Hanley Park and the University Quarter to the Creative Quarter – making it part of the 'experience' for visitors with time;
- Investigating whether the brownfield area on the east of Stoke-on-Trent station could be developed into an improved drop off point, car park and taxi rank, meaning that taxis could wait outside the station and there would be a view of the canal;
- Investigating the feasibility of a sustainable 'Paris-style' scheme of providing bikes for hire at the station and in the city centre.

Recommendation xvi: Invest in higher quality housing for all current and future residents, with an explicit aim to increase the attractiveness of North Staffordshire as a home for affluent residents.

Renew's most recent business plan and its determination to link the housing with the economic development strategy is important, as is its primary focus on urban areas. The key challenge will be to ensure that the development of flagship housing developments (eg City Waterside, housing linked with the University Quarter and an eco-suburb in

Etruria Valley) are linked with investment in transport links to roads and the railway. It is also vital that North Staffordshire become more attractive as a place to live as well as work for higher income workers. Many interviewees stated bluntly that there were too few high quality areas to live in North Staffordshire, and this loses the contribution that these people could make to the social, cultural and economic life of the area, as well as reducing aspirations and the skill profile of residents.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Develop a housing strategy for the whole of North Staffordshire: We would agree with Renew's focus on investing in the priority urban areas in its most recent Business Plan. However, we would argue that it is important there is a North Staffordshire-wide plan for housing to reflect the importance of areas such as Staffordshire Moorlands in offering high performing schools and a high quality of life to affluent residents in the North Staffordshire sub region. Including Staffordshire Moorlands in Renew's strategy would recognise this contribution and ensure there was a strategic plan for housing across the whole of North Staffordshire, even if investment levels were fairly low and primarily private sector led, as is currently the case for Biddulph East.
- Ensure that projects developing commercial accommodation are linked to Renew's strategies: Having a masterplan for North Staffordshire helps to link the plans for development of commercial accommodation with residential plans. These links are vital to ensure that developments are complementary. As discussed in Recommendation iv, one way of doing this could be to have a masterplan or spatial strategy group that meets regularly to assess progress against key criteria.
- Ensure quality of design: Renew should continue to work to maintain a high quality of design in the sub region and to develop an architectural guidance framework for all developers/builders/professional architects. CABE and Urban Vision North Staffordshire are likely to have a role in this.
- Review existing housing strategies to consider whether there is enough provision to attract higher income workers: There are a number of plans already in place concerning housing, for example Renew has recently launched a Business Plan focusing on priority urban areas in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme

and housing within Staffordshire Moorlands is being allocated as part of the Local Development Framework. These plans should be regularly reviewed, particularly in the medium-term, to consider to what extent the sub region as a whole is providing higher quality housing to attract higher income workers. Prosperous suburbs throughout the North Staffordshire area would help to deliver local spend and generate economic multipliers, making it more likely that retail and leisure developments within the sub region are sustainable. If there are deemed to be gaps, plans should be set in place to address this throughout the sub region as economic growth cannot be sustainable without increasing the proportion of highly paid and highly skilled workers who live as well as work in the sub region.

What: Recommendation xvii: Agree, finalise and implement an Integrated Digital Strategy for North Staffordshire.

This should consider how to raise demand for broadband within the area, what the opportunities that might be created by provision of broadband are, and should ensure that new developments take this into consideration. There is demand for this: for example, Newcastle-under-Lyme has confirmed that it is keen to implement a Digital strategy (Wireless Broadband) for the Newcastle Town Centre/Business District and Keele University, with a view to later consideration of incorporating other areas in which business activity is concentrated.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Ensure that ICT requirements are built into the planning activity for all infrastructure projects to enable new workspaces to be fully equipped to meet the demands of knowledge based businesses.
- The Enterprise and Innovation Group should work with Local Strategic Partnerships across the area to identify how the remaining recommendations of the draft Integrated Digital Strategy add value to the other enterprise strategies and make recommendations to the NSRP about what should be implemented and when, building on the evidence base. As the Integrated Digital Strategy states, there is a need to consult further with businesses and residents about their needs and demands and to ensure that delivery of digital infrastructure is coordinated through

one body, with implementation taking place at the local level and a programme of communication and education for agencies, local businesses and residents. As the report highlights, there are lessons to be learned from elsewhere about how to increase use of broadband facilities within deprived communities and the Local Strategic Partnerships will need to take a significant role in advising and directing any work with these communities.

- The BBC and other media stakeholders should be consulted about whether the existence of terabyte technology across the sub region would give North Staffordshire an advantage as a potential 'creative industries' location capitalising on the BBC's relocation to Salford.

C. People recommendations

Context As the economy shifts having the right ‘skills mix’ – a labour market with appropriate skills at all levels to participate in the local economy – becomes more important. This is increasingly about skills at level 2 and above (intermediate and high level skills). In North Staffordshire this is both an important and complex issue. As interviewees commented, the skills of the labour market in North Staffordshire have not caught up with the demands of a changed economy:

‘North Staffs has some very skilled people without the paper qualifications to show it...a very good and dedicated workforce.’

‘There are plenty of people to employ but many of them haven’t got the right skills. For example, Retailer B has to recruit from South Birmingham as they can’t find the right skills in North Staffordshire’⁶⁶

Like other cities that have witnessed post-industrial decline North Staffordshire has a legacy of low paid industrial jobs and does not have a track record in economic development, regeneration or inward investment that would have created opportunities for people outside the ‘pits or the potteries’, which would have changed the nature of the local labour market. As one interviewee put it *‘employers had a vested interest in keeping inward investment out of the area as it would push wage rates up’⁶⁷.*

Over-reliance on low wage sectors

It was widely acknowledged by interviewees that in North Staffordshire’s current economy there is a *‘reliance on low wage sectors such as call centres and distribution’⁶⁸*. And this situation again keeps the local economy at the low value end: a lack of high skill organisations and a lack of people with skills to work within these organisations should they decide to locate there. As one interviewee remarked, *‘there are quite a lot of low value jobs but these are needed because of the low skills base’⁶⁹*. The implications for long-term economic development are significant: *‘A small workforce with lower relative productivity is a reality that could lead to the area being less likely to attract and develop value added business over time’⁷⁰*. This is a cycle that needs to be broken.

⁶⁶ Work Foundation interviews

⁶⁷ Work Foundation interview

⁶⁸ Work Foundation interview

⁶⁹ Work Foundation interview

⁷⁰ Work Foundation interview

Low skills

Statistics reinforce the concerns of interviewees:

- Stoke-on-Trent is in the top 5 per cent of districts with the highest percentage of working age residents without level 2 qualifications (basic qualifications).
- Only Staffordshire Moorlands has a lower than national average for low/no qualifications.
- Across North Staffordshire, there is a below average proportion of graduates (Stoke-on-Trent's is particularly low).
- Only 11.6 per cent of the workforce in Stoke-on-Trent have higher level skills (NVQ4 or above), lower than the regional average (20.2 per cent) and national (23.7 per cent). A high proportion of workers in Stoke-on-Trent (25.8 per cent) have no formal qualifications.

Attracting and retaining residents

North Staffordshire's population declined by around 1,000 per year between 2000 and 2003 and Stoke-on-Trent has seen net migration in recent years. This means that more people have left the area than have moved in. In the context of wider demographic changes, if this trend continues the implications of an ageing population will soon be felt. Furthermore, skilled young people are more likely than anyone else to leave the area.

This creates two related challenges. First, many businesses looking to locate or grow in places with a labour market with high/intermediate level skills will not see North Staffordshire as the right place to invest as human capital is a primary location factor for many firms. Second, without organisations offering jobs at these levels, young people with skills leave and those without may not see the point in obtaining them if the job opportunities are not available. One interviewee described the *'limit to the extent to which you can persuade young people that if you get better qualifications you get better jobs...there are no signs of better jobs'*⁷¹. The percentage of young people not staying in education is above the regional and national averages in North Staffordshire (with the exception of Staffordshire Moorlands).

Related to this are the quality of life factors that will act as an incentive in the attraction and retention of people which will be critical to the future economic success of North Staffordshire. At the moment, the lack of high value jobs and an incoherent offer around 'quality of place' are significant barriers to attracting new people. As one interviewee

⁷¹ Work Foundation interviewee

remarked, North Staffordshire is '*not known as somewhere that people with high disposable incomes would choose to live.*' As other research has demonstrated, this is mainly about jobs, housing and the provision of public services. However, it is also about the access to services, leisure, culture and other lifestyle related activities. One interviewee commented that there is '*not a lively night scene unless you want to be paralytic*'.

Within the national context, North Staffordshire is not alone in lacking a diverse range of outlets and activities for people to spend their money, but with many cities benefiting from the growth of niche consumer, service, leisure and cultural outlets, North Staffordshire runs the strong risk of being overlooked by significant numbers of people who otherwise might find the sub region somewhere desirable to live given housing costs and the transport connections to jobs. This loses the social, cultural and economic contribution these people could make to the area. Alongside this, it is also necessary to focus on the existing population in North Staffordshire, both in terms of community engagement and raising what many interviewees called the 'aspirations' of the area.

Worklessness

The problem of worklessness, inactivity and incapacity benefit claimants are profound in some areas of North Staffordshire. Worklessness, skills and jobs have a strong spatial element: high value employment that does exist is located outside of the city and town centres as well as those people with high level skills living either outside of the towns or outside of North Staffordshire all together. Furthermore, as in other places, deprivation in North Staffordshire is concentrated in pockets: those with low/no qualifications reaches over 70 per cent in some wards (well over the national average) and these wards also have a very low proportion of graduates. This means that there are some wards in North Staffordshire where worklessness and benefit dependency are concentrated: this is an infrastructural as well as a social policy issue as the poor linkages within North Staffordshire serve to further exclude some areas within the sub region from participating in the economy.

There are two key pieces of evidence that are important for North Staffordshire's future strategies to recognise. First, evidence suggests that employment growth does not generally have any impact of long-term unemployment: job growth can occur even if unemployment is rising. Second, most job opportunities within a specific place are not

created by employment growth but occur when vacancies are created by people leaving their jobs and employers seek to fill those vacancies (about 5–6 times the number created by employment growth)⁷². Thus, going forward, worklessness in North Staffordshire needs to be addressed by focusing on removing the barriers to work in existing opportunities for those not economically active as well as by seeking job growth.

Recommendations

Recommendation xviii: Raise skills, reduce worklessness and raise aspirations as a core element of all transformation strategies.

North Staffordshire has twice the national average of people on Incapacity Benefit and there are multiple social difficulties which the area is seeking to address, particularly in Stoke-on-Trent although also in some wards within Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands. Challenges include higher than average rates of poverty, poor health, teenage pregnancy, crime and substance abuse. High – and well above average – levels of people with low or no skills, low levels of people with high skills, and many people who have skills that are not appropriate for the changing jobs that are available are amongst the most significant barriers to North Staffordshire adapting successfully to the changes in the wider economy.

Case study: North Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire

Skillsbuilder is a national programme run by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust to tackle worklessness resulting from pit closures. SRB provided £203,000 (matched with £579,000) to enable the project to run in North Nottinghamshire and extend its work to those affected by local manufacturing industry redundancies. The project works with redundant workers to assess their skills needs and supports their retraining into an appropriate industry through an intermediate labour market scheme. The project placed trainees with construction, electrician, and plumber employers – sectors where there are skills shortages. This project offered a wage subsidy and contributed to external training costs, in return for permanent job outcomes⁷³.

North Staffordshire needs an agreed strategy to address inequalities within the sub region and to ensure that all developments have a social inclusion component built in as a matter of course. This does not mean that resources should be ‘jam–spread’ but instead means that each action should take into account the impact it will have on social

⁷² Renewal.net

⁷³ See SQW Alliance review www.sqw.co.uk/file_download/26

inclusion: whether existing inequalities will be reinforced, how to ensure that better social outcomes can result from the strategy and which other activities will help to mitigate negative consequences for people who may be excluded from the opportunities or new potential that North Staffordshire will have.

How: Specific actions should include:

- The NSRP should agree that skills and worklessness are key elements of its transformation strategy and identifies yearly milestones to make progress on this. North Staffordshire faces huge challenges in this area that will take decades to address. Nonetheless, it needs to start now. Long term objectives should include:
 - Raising the skills levels within the sub region so that it has a national average of people with at least level 2 skills. To do this will require work with schools, colleges and employers to raise demand for skills from individuals and employers, and to ensure high quality supply of skills;
 - Addressing the multiple barriers to work facing many workless individuals, including low skills (both formal and 'soft'), physical and mental health problems, lack of affordable and flexible childcare, transport problems or having been on benefits for a significant amount of time⁷⁴;
 - Increasing the proportion of highly skilled workers, working with universities.

Recommendation xix: Take a phased approach to getting the 'right' skill mix to increase productivity.

To achieve this goal, North Staffordshire needs to adopt a sub regional approach to developing, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. By necessity, this strategy should be long-term, building on existing work that aims to raise aspirations and to send signals to business and to people living in North Staffordshire that the 'low skills equilibrium' is starting to shift. The current skill profile of North Staffordshire is more low skill than it is high skills and thus a phased approach to the development of the right 'skill mix' is necessary. North Staffordshire should continue to aspire to the development of high value work in all industries and should also focus on moving people with no or low skills up stage by stage.

⁷⁴ *Helping People from Workless Households into Work* (2007) National Audit Office, p. 6

To meet these objectives will require a combination of a strategic and localised approach. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to worklessness: 'flexibility and local autonomy are critical to effective worklessness interventions'⁷⁵. Successful interventions do, however, tend to be coordinated at a sensible level of geography – in this case the sub region – but to be designed in a holistic, client-centred and customised way for the particular needs of local clients. Taking a long term and strategic approach to worklessness across North Staffordshire means that worklessness should be a key part of strategies to improve the physical regeneration of the area and to invest investment in housing, skills, transport, health and crime, and that projects should be coordinated and investment targeted. It also means that interventions by local providers can be evaluated. Having local autonomy about how interventions are delivered, however, means that interventions can be tailored to the specific needs of individual clients: a critical success factor for worklessness initiatives.

How: Specific actions should include:

- The North Staffordshire Learning and Skills Group should create in the next twelve months a skills map for the sub region as the basis for engagement with local employers: Working with education providers – the two universities and the four further education institutions as well as schools – and with employers the Group should create a skills map for the sub region that focuses on where the gaps are now and predicted to be in the future, and strive to respond. For example, there are likely to be considerable opportunities linked to construction and the local FE colleges in particular (especially Stoke-on-Trent as it has a COVE in this area) should be talking to employers about how they can train local residents and link them with the growing opportunities.
- Predict and respond to demand: Where there is demand for intermediate level jobs in growing knowledge sectors, such as technicians in medical and healthcare technologies or the potential cluster of environmental technologies, this should feed into the design of appropriate local courses to aim to upskill residents and link them to growth sectors. There are also likely to be considerable opportunities linked to construction and the local FE colleges in particular (especially Stoke-on-Trent as it has a COVE in this area) should be talking to employers about how they can train local residents and link them with the growing opportunities.

⁷⁵ *Effective Interventions to tackle worklessness: review of evidence* (2005) ERS, Northumbria University and Durham Business School, p.2

Recommendation xx: Stimulate demand for higher skills and create opportunities for people to acquire relevant skills for current and future industrial structure.

North Staffordshire needs to create mechanisms for attracting firms which require labour at intermediate and high skill levels and at the same time to attract, retain and up skill people to work in these roles. For some key knowledge based industries, the primary driver for location is human capital which means that investing in education is vital. In addition, developing housing and transport to bring skilled labour to North Staffordshire. In addition, North Staffordshire Enterprise and Innovation Group need to work with existing employers to stimulate demand for investment in the skills of their existing labour forces.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Make use of the opportunity created by the University Quarter to stimulate demand for skills locally (from individuals and employers) and to attract highly skilled individuals. It is vital that the University Quarter project delivers on its strong intention to work closely with employers to link courses and provision to demand in the locality where possible.
- Continue to make use of programmes to place graduates in local organisations, which can help graduates see local opportunities and help local companies innovate. These activities should be coordinated across the sub region as a whole, linking the two universities and the FE colleges.
- Link growth in knowledge intensive sectors to stimulate the experience economy: For example through investigating opportunities to hold conferences, improve marketing and invest in hotels, restaurants and general tourism.

Recommendation xxi: Develop a long term strategy to address worklessness.

Worklessness is twice the national average in Stoke-on-Trent and an ongoing challenge for North Staffordshire. Increasing the proportion of people in sustainable employment would reduce the productivity gap between North Staffordshire and elsewhere as well as deliver tangible benefits for those individuals and their families in terms of physical and mental well-being and reducing poverty.

How: Specific actions should include:

- The NSRP should develop a long term strategy to address the multiple and complex worklessness issues within North Staffordshire. This should provide a strategic framework for holistic worklessness interventions, ensuring they are coordinated but that local autonomy is encouraged. This means that key partners within North Staffordshire, including the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus and key community providers, will need to agree an overall approach and priority issues to address. This will help ensure that some of the barriers to work such as transport, which can only be addressed at a sub regional or higher level, are dealt with at this strategic level. It will also help coordinate approaches to larger employers when seeking to develop work placements, making it easier to implement good practice such as engaging employers from the start, working within their interests and capacity, creating confidence and communicating regularly⁷⁶. When developing the strategy stakeholders should consider piloting some interventions primarily in a small number of target areas that are the most deprived; an approach being taken by some of the City Strategies (eg that of Greater Manchester)⁷⁷. It is also vital that the overall worklessness strategy review a range of interventions, including investment in young people (eg working with schools, mentoring), pre–employment placements with employers and taking a personalised approach to contact with individuals facing significant barriers to work.
- The NSRP should also ensure that delivery of the overall worklessness strategy is localised where possible. This learns from the successes of other interventions about being client centred: the most successful interventions are those where organisations work in partnership and with sufficient autonomy to take a holistic approach to client need. For example, some individuals will be in greater need of post placement support than others. For most local areas, people are more likely to engage with worklessness interventions if local people are employed as advisers, premises are located centrally or somewhere accessible to the local community, and advisers do outreach work, for example visiting GP surgeries, libraries and community centres⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ *Effective Interventions to tackle worklessness: review of evidence* (2005) ERS, Northumbria University and Durham Business School

⁷⁷ See <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfare-reform/pathfinders.asp>

⁷⁸ *Effective Interventions to tackle worklessness*

- As part of the worklessness strategy, seek to build on existing assets and the city centre development through pre-employment initiatives that will train and link to employment the 'job ready' unemployed in the sub region. There are many examples of retail-led regeneration including such initiatives as standard – the development of the Birmingham Bullring is a good example – and the outcomes are largely positive in terms of ensuring that the jobs created have an impact on local economic activity rates and in terms of being able to include 'skilled and ready to work' people in the business offer. Established programmes such as Marks & Start, run by Marks & Spencer, are an opportunity to link those out of work to employers already in the area⁷⁹. The development of the East West precinct in the city centre and of retail in Newcastle Town creates an opportunity to do this over the next twelve months. Other existing major employers, including those in tourism, healthcare and public services, may also be willing or able to get involved, particularly if appropriate pre-employment initiatives are developed and can then be customised for them.
- Link health interventions to the overall NSRP strategy: Health remains an ongoing challenge in North Staffordshire. Without a healthy workforce, achieving the other actions will be even more challenging. During the next twelve months the PCT should ensure that interventions to improve health are strongly linked with the overall NSRP plans and the NSRP should formally recognise the important role these have to play. Pathways to Work and the Condition Management programme also contributes to this.
- Work with the Primary Care Trusts in the North Staffordshire area to investigate options for improving local health outcomes and addressing barriers to employment. The local PCT has already indicated its strong engagement in contributing to the local area, for example through employing local companies where possible to deliver some of its obligations. It may be worth also exploring opportunities to link initiatives to address mental and physical health problems within the area to pre-employment initiatives, as carried out within Scotland (see below). This could be reviewed within the next twelve months as a precursor to a longer-term programme.

⁷⁹ See Jones, A. et al (2005) *Marks & Start: Opening the Door to Employment*: The Work Foundation

Case Study: Pre–employment initiatives in NHS Scotland Boards

Recognising the link between health inequalities and worklessness, the Scottish Government has been working with NHS Boards to set up pre–employment initiatives that support local unemployed job seekers through training programmes and into jobs within the boards. Working closely with Job Centre Plus and local partners, these initiatives have supported over a thousand people into sustainable employment with benefits to the Boards themselves in terms of recruitment, to local communities that are served by the Boards and to the wider and potentially long–term health of Scotland. There are many examples of other approaches to pre and post employment programmes that could be learnt from in North Staffordshire.

- Develop and implement a ‘public sector employment compact’ whereby public sector organisations commit to working with Job Centre Plus and training providers to ensure that the accessibility of jobs within the public sector is improved and creating opportunities to people who are not working but able to work. The Action Planning Group has demonstrated a willingness to become involved with setting this up.

What: Recommendation xxii: Improve quality of life ‘offer’ for current and future residents.

North Staffordshire needs to improve the quality of life ‘offer’ for current and future residents based around the different selling points for different groups. For example, commuters to Manchester and Birmingham might be attracted by low cost housing whilst others may be attracted by central location and access to other areas of the UK. This offer will require city centre and housing developments to ensure that what is being created will hold appeal with different groups.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Develop ‘offers’ for key target markets of high skill workers: This should include young professionals seeking affordable housing and an easy commute to Manchester/ Birmingham; experienced professionals who want access to quality of life and interesting jobs; and potential entrepreneurs. The Marketing Group should seek to develop these offers in detail.

- Ensure the masterplan considers 'quality of life': Use the masterplan to inform decisions about quality of life issues, making the most of Staffordshire Moorlands, some of the urban assets in the area and the cultural offer in the city centre and Newcastle.

Recommendation xxiii: Seek to raise aspirations within North Staffordshire.

Low levels of aspiration are an ongoing challenge for North Staffordshire that act as a barrier to increasing skills and transforming the area. This takes a long time to address but some activities can be undertaken and it should be made a core part of long-term plans for the sub region.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Pilot a mentoring programme with North Staffordshire Ambassadors: Pilot a mentoring programme with young people to raise aspirations, see priority one above.
- Link the Building Schools for the Future programme with the work of the NSRP and invest in ongoing improvement of education at primary and secondary level across North Staffordshire: The Building Schools for the Future programme in Stoke-on-Trent needs to ensure that its long-term strategy and delivery plans link with those of the NSRP; this needs to happen urgently. Over the next twelve months work should continue to improve the performance of poor performing schools across the area and to seek funding to invest in a long-term enterprise programme for schools to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship. Whilst some tangible results may be measurable in the next twelve months such as linking plans or delivery of small-scale initiatives, it needs to be clearly acknowledged that this is an activity that needs to be sustained over the long-term if it is to make a difference to the future of North Staffordshire.

D. Leadership recommendations

*'Leadership comes before anything.'*⁸⁰

Context The importance of leadership should not be underestimated in driving successful places in the knowledge economy. Strong leadership around a knowledge vision, supported by networks and partnerships was identified as a key driver of successful knowledge intensive places in the *Ideopolis* research, which found that all had strong civic, private and/or third sector leadership aiming to create greater knowledge intensity in the area, and which were based on strong networks across different industries. The research also identified leadership as particularly important to those cities seeking to turn around failing economies, with Sheffield and Manchester examples of where leadership has made a significant difference. For interviewees across North Staffordshire, as the quote above indicates, leadership was seen as vital.

Demand for leadership and partnership working

Most interviewees regarded leadership as critical to the transformation of North Staffordshire and nearly three in five (58 per cent) of those attending the Forum meeting held in May 2007 said that lack of an agreed strategy and agreed priorities was the key challenge for the leadership. This is not to suggest that leaders, whether MPs, local politicians, civic officers or business leaders, are not working very hard to make change happen – they are and it is clear that progress is being made. It is also important, as highlighted earlier, to distinguish between the different challenges facing different organisations within North Staffordshire and some of the weaknesses highlighted in this document apply particularly to one or two organisations. The organisational issues within Stoke-on-Trent City Council are recognised by interviewees and external assessors as quite different to those within Newcastle-under-Lyme or Staffordshire Moorlands Councils, or indeed those within other organisations such as the local health Primary Care Trusts.

Nonetheless, there is a sense within North Staffordshire that the transformation of the area can only be achieved if different organisations at different stages of development work together. Consensus amongst leaders across North Staffordshire about where the area should be headed, with an agreed vision providing a framework for decision-making and an agreed delivery plan that highlights priorities for action (informed by and informing local strategies, policy documents and decisions) is vital if the area is to transform itself.

⁸⁰ Work Foundation interviewee

Building on local identities, rather than hiding behind them

The strength of local identities have held North Staffordshire back in the past as they have made it difficult to make bold decisions for the whole area and resulted in lots of individual projects, some of which have not complemented other ongoing work. There is a need to ensure that these local identities are maximised – building high value jobs and some tourism around ceramics, for example – without compromising the need to ensure investment is focused and prioritised. The strength of local identities have held North Staffordshire back in the past, not because local pride is unhelpful – it's vital – but because it has made it difficult to make bold decisions for the whole area and resulted in lots of individual projects, some of which have not complemented other ongoing work. There is a need to ensure that these local identities are maximised – building high value jobs and some tourism around ceramics, for example – without compromising the need to ensure investment is focused and prioritised.

Governance, accountability and innovation

For partnership working to be effective, issues around governance will need to be resolved also, with clarity about which bodies have the power to take decisions in different areas and the relationship of the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership with local authorities, key stakeholders and groups that report to it. Clear accountabilities are vital too.

Yet clear accountabilities should not prevent innovation; rather they should enable the taking of managed risks. Many interviewees argued strongly that the culture of some North Staffordshire organisations positively discourages innovation and transformation, with many people feeling disempowered and unable to take action or make decisions. The complexity of decision-making structures also inhibits rapid decisions being made, reduces clarity about who to go to in order to get a decision made and leaves people feeling unable to influence outcomes. There is not enough 'distributed leadership' in the area and a feeling that instead of encouraging social enterprises and not-for-profit organisations to innovate and rewarding success, that larger institutions are keen to run everything and inhibit local action rather than encouraging managed risks.

Investing in management and delivery capacity

A mixed track record on delivery reduces levels of trust in the ability of politicians and officers to deliver. There is work ongoing to change the way that strategies are delivered.

In the past, there has been a lack of local capacity and often it is the same people who have overseen failed strategy after failed strategy. With new staff, the partnership and funding now available, this is the time to act. As with most local authorities, North Staffordshire faces challenges around management capacity to deliver large-scale and complex projects. This is an issue that needs addressing: in the public sector, where many responsibilities lie for enabling change to happen; in the private sector, where improved management and leadership could contribute to improved productivity; and in the third sector, where there is scope for considerable innovation to help address the significant economic and social issues facing North Staffordshire.

Recommendations

Recommendation xxiv: Agree a shared vision for the whole of North Staffordshire and a focused delivery plan – with clear priorities – to achieve this vision and to ensure projects and policies are coordinated.

The new leadership at Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Newcastle-under-Lyme, as well as the creation of the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership, create significant opportunities to address some of these barriers to delivery such as leadership and management capacity, the need for a long-term perspective and a clear way to work together. Change is already happening. Yet for these changes to be effective over the long-term there is a need for individuals and institutions to be supported by a clear governance structure that sets out which bodies have authority to make which decisions, and what the inter-relationships are between different organisations. It is also vital that leaders across North Staffordshire agree a shared vision and delivery plan, that a strong team of officials is built to drive through delivery of this plan, and that where experts are needed in some areas of North Staffordshire, they are brought in to fill the skills and capacity gaps that still exist.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Representatives from the NSRP Board, North Staffordshire local leaders and North Staffordshire MPs should meet, together with private sector and community representatives, to discuss and agree a shared vision to 2030. Our report suggests two alternatives: one 'bottom-up' vision developed by multiple stakeholders and one developed by The Work Foundation that builds on this 'bottom-up' version but with some amendments in response to stakeholder feedback. We recommend that

leaders accept this second vision, set out below. Whilst we recognise that this will require some further work before final adoption, we would argue that it is shorter, more memorable and more distinctively 'North Staffordshire'. Whatever the final vision agreed is, it should be agreed at the earliest possible moment. There is a temptation to spend so long agreeing the vision that delivery is less of a priority: this cannot happen in North Staffordshire.

The best of both in North Staffordshire: prosperity and quality of life by design

By 2030 North Staffordshire will be offering the best of both to residents and visitors:

- A place at the heart of the UK's creative ceramics businesses and ceramics tourist industry;
- A place for growing knowledge businesses and for ambitious knowledge workers;
- A place for enjoying the delights of the city, market towns and the countryside – from the Potteries shopping centre to the Peak District National Park;
- A place for working, studying at the universities and enjoying attractions like Alton Towers and Waterworld;
- A place ambitious for growth but concerned always with sustainability.

- Develop a detailed delivery plan to transform North Staffordshire with clear priorities, milestones and objectives for action, as well as strategies to gain funding to support each of the priorities. We would recommend that this plan is fully informed by the priorities for action set out in the overview report. This plan should be signed off by the NSRP and by local political leaders as agreement across the board will be required to ensure the plan is delivered. This delivery plan should be informed by the Regional Economic Strategy and Spatial Strategy as well as by each local authority's strategies to identify clear priorities for the sub region as a whole. It should also consider scenarios for how the new jobs in the city centre will affect demand within the sub region for ICT, housing and public services such as education and transport.

This is not to suggest that the only activity in the sub region will be what is in the delivery plan: clearly local communities will still progress their own plans for development, even where these are not included in the delivery plan priorities. Nor

is it to suggest that North Staffordshire has a joint core strategy that covers every issue. It is to argue, however, that there is a need for the sub region as a whole to invest most substantially in agreed priorities that will realise benefits across North Staffordshire. There is a need too for improved coordination of projects across North Staffordshire – particularly but not only relating to the core priorities – to avoid the piecemeal approach that has all too often prevailed in the past.

- **Develop a communications strategy:** It is important that the NSRP communicate effectively with key stakeholders, both internal and external, to ensure that there is awareness not only of intended actions but that successes are celebrated and a sense of momentum is created. This will help ensure that strategies, policy documents and decisions are better coordinated and feed into the overall vision and delivery plan for North Staffordshire.

Recommendation xxv: Create a culture of named accountabilities and personal responsibility.

How: Specific actions should include

- **Finalise the structure of the NSRP and how it is organised.** The near-finalised Board includes representatives from Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Staffordshire County Council, as well a range of partners from the public, private and voluntary sector, reflecting best practice elsewhere⁸¹. Membership now needs to be finalised so the Board can settle in as a body, with agreement about which organisations will have lead responsibility for (and chair) key meetings. There are lessons here from other cross-boundary structures, for example in Leeds City Region different local authorities chair the main body and the groups in charge of the four key work strands.

As part of finalising the structure it is also important to formally agree accountabilities and ensure these are transparent through publishing information about who is accountable for which area. Formally agreeing and publishing the office structure and scrutiny process will contribute to greater clarity about how the Board works and how it will drive forward delivery.

⁸¹ As stated above, members in January 2008 included representatives from: Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Staffordshire County Council, Advantage West Midlands, English Partnerships, Housing Corporation, North Staffordshire Primary Care Trust, Keele University, the Learning and Skills Council, Staffordshire University, three private sector and three community members, and the Government Office for the West Midlands.

- Agree and publicise the relationship of local authorities to the NSRP: For the NSRP to be successful it is important that there is greater clarity and transparency about the relationship of each local authority to the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership Board. This will involve agreement of the role that each local authority plays on the Board and subsidiary groups, as well as the issues on which the Board will have delegated authority to take decisions for all or part of the sub region. Whilst we recognise that some local authorities have concerns about this, and that all local authorities already have their own strategies in a range of areas (eg Community Strategies for Staffordshire Moorlands, Newcastle–under–Lyme and Stoke–on–Trent) it is vital to have an open discussion about this in the next twelve months and agree the terms on which the Board is operating. The agreements reached then need to be publicised.
- Agree and publicise the remit of the subsidiary groups and their relationship to the NSRP within local authorities and to those groups: The subsidiary bodies to the NSRP have been set up but there is a lack of clarity about their remit, their authority and their relationship to the NSRP. This needs to be resolved to enable the groups to make progress, and also to ensure that the Board is fully aware of what the groups are doing. This should involve, as a minimum, agreeing the remit of each Board and ensuring that minutes of meetings are circulated to Board members. It is also important to ensure that the different groups – Development, Enterprise, Marketing and Renew – are able to help ensure that individual projects are coordinated as part of an overall vision for North Staffordshire.
- The NSRP needs to ensure that accountabilities are transparent and associated with named individuals. Lessons could be learned from the experience of the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham’s work to unite politicians and officers in terms of accountabilities.
- The NSRP needs to urgently simplify delivery structures. Decision–making processes need to be simplified and a review conducted of whether existing organisational structures enable or impede delivery. It should be much clearer who people should go to for decisions and this should be tested by a number of groups from a ‘customer’ perspective (eg Enterprise Group, Marketing Group, local communities). There should be greater clarity about how individuals are contributing to the delivery of the

shared vision, as that empowers leadership at all levels rather than feeling a need to constantly rely on senior managers and leaders. This will also require a celebration by senior managers of those individuals who are behaving in the desired way – at present interviewees have suggested that the culture of organisations does not reward new ideas or challenge, and this should not be the case.

- Governance arrangements should be finalised, learning lessons from Manchester about working across boundaries and ensure that different authorities and organisations have the opportunity to chair key meetings, for example the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities is currently chaired by Wigan.

Recommendation xxvi: Invest in the capacity of senior managers.

North Staffordshire and particularly Stoke-on-Trent faces significant challenges around management capacity to deliver large-scale and complex projects. This is an urgent issue for the area as there has not previously been investment in bringing in groups of experts to directly deliver large scale economic regeneration projects prior to the creation of the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership. This is starting to change but remains an ongoing challenge. There are also issues in the private sector, where improved management and leadership could contribute to improved productivity, and in the third sector, where there is scope for considerable innovation to help address the significant economic and social issues facing North Staffordshire.

How: Some specific actions should include:

- Ongoing investment in the capacity of leaders and managers working in the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership, and in key local authorities such as Stoke-on-Trent, to deliver large-scale transformation is required: One of the main barriers to implementation of previous strategies has not only been lack of consistent focus but also skills and capacity issues, something that is already starting to change within the area. Within the next twelve months it is important that skills and capacity gaps for delivery of the NSRP plan are identified and that experts are brought in to support key leaders and managers across the area where required. A programme of support and mentoring should also be put in place to help enable leaders and managers to deliver a very demanding programme of work. The NSRP should work with the LGA, IDEA

and leadership organisations to devise a programme for investment in the capacity of senior managers, especially around delivery. Development groups should be used to build capability and focus on solutions and personal change.

Recommendation xxvii: Political leaders and officials need to balance efforts to ensure that the views of local communities are represented with external pressures.

Part of North Staffordshire's distinctiveness is that it is made up of a collection of different market towns, larger towns and rural areas. Yet too often in the past the identities of individual areas have been so vigorously protected that it has been difficult to establish the strong links between the towns and the city centre and to agree priorities for action. Political leaders and officials need to ensure that the distinctiveness of parts of North Staffordshire is not lost, but that local identities do not prevent the area from being 'more than the sum of its parts' by working together more closely. This will require strong leadership, for example leaders emphasising that the city centre is the city centre, that priorities have been decided upon for a reason etc, but also a strong community engagement, consultation and communication strategy to ensure that the transformation of North Staffordshire is owned by those who live and work there.

How: Some specific actions should include:

- Local politicians should work to ensure that local identities are not subsumed in the economic development strategy – but that there is a recognition that external marketing needs to respond to customers, whilst internal conversations must recognise that changing North Staffordshire requires targeted investment. Places such as Manchester City Region, Sheffield City Region and the Black Country all contain different places with a strong sense of individual identity but that recognise the need to work together and to target investment. Internally each place has its own identity and those who get to know the area will appreciate the diversity. Externally, they have recognised that people recognise one 'big brand' so recognising this helps marketing, attracting of inward investment and tourism.
- Formal agreement by the NSRP that the area surrounded by the soon-to-be-completed Potteries ring road is the city centre and needs to be treated differently to

the smaller market town centres within North Staffordshire. The existence of the city centre continues to be the subject of debate and by the NSRP and political leaders publicly supporting the message that Hanley is the city centre of Stoke-on-Trent, it is more likely that this will become accepted. This means that the area should be referred to as the city centre (unless talking about the residential district) in all NSRP policy documents, letterheads and publications, to demonstrate the commitment of the partnership to capitalising more effectively on the city centre. The NSRP should also discuss providing sufficient resources to the city centre to ensure it is well supported (for example, one interviewee commented that currently the city centre receives less janitorial and maintenance resources than other town centres within Stoke-on-Trent⁸²).

- There should be a strong community engagement strategy to ensure that the community are helping to shape and own the vision. This will require an effective multi-level communication strategy that defines policy, process and delivery expectations. It will need to tell a compelling story of what has already been achieved, what needs to be done and what sustained success will look like, demonstrate belief and resilience around what needs to be done and not shy away from the difficult and hard choices. It may include:
 - Community group consultation at ward level
 - Through local councillors
 - Local authority presentations, newsletters and updating through planned communications
 - Online consultation as an easily accessible part of authority websites plus links from partner agency websites
 - Leaflets at council/agency offices, libraries, police stations etc.
- Review the recommendations of the Action Planning Group who have strong views about the importance of leadership and the ways in which it could be improved. This group should be involved, where possible, in helping to inform and implement elements of the delivery plan.

⁸² Work Foundation interviewee

E. Image Recommendations

'Poor internal and external image is apparent and is a feature of all the area's strategic studies and additional reports'⁸³.

Context Linked to leadership is the importance of creating a distinctive 'knowledge city region' offer for North Staffordshire – a distinctive offer for knowledge intensive businesses and workers who are considering investing, working and living in the area, supported by diverse cultural and leisure facilities. Our *Ideopolis* research found that having a clear 'offer' can support the development of knowledge businesses when it helps people understand the benefits of living and working in the area, when it changes perceptions about the area, and when the 'offer' is firmly rooted in the reality of life and work in the area.

There are two elements to this. The first is about changing internal perceptions of the area and, critically, changing aspirations. The people who live in North Staffordshire need to believe that it is being transformed, to have pride in the area, and to believe it offers them opportunities of good quality jobs and a high quality of life for themselves and their family. For this to happen requires other activities around the economy, skills and infrastructure to happen. Without this shift in the image of the place in the minds of the people who live there, it is very difficult for the area to change its external image as it will not be based on reality.

The second element is about the external image, however, and about communicating more effectively with the outside world. North Staffordshire has a poor external reputation that currently inhibits internal investment, tourism and relocation to the area. This needs to be addressed through transformation of the area – promoting an unrealistic image will not work as people will quickly realise if the promotion is untrue (learning from Glasgow) – and through development of an image that resonates locally as well as externally, although the way it is communicated may well be different. The outside world does not know where North Staffordshire is at present, so this needs to be changed. People do know Stoke-on-Trent as the home of the potteries, however, and it attracts tourists on that basis. People also know about the tourist attractions in Staffordshire more widely, including Trentham Gardens, Alton Towers, the ceramics tourism etc. It should be noted that external marketing and internal descriptions do not need to be the same; residents know the area; external people do not.

⁸³ North Staffordshire Zone Implementation Plan, p.12

This is not just about marketing, however. It is about prioritising: considering what the area's assets are, how they measure up against what potential residents, visitors and investors might be looking for, and then how these can be capitalised upon and communicated more effectively to target groups (for example high value businesses or knowledge workers). This 'external perspective' thinking should also inform the development of the vision and implementation plan for North Staffordshire, as currently a number of interviewees identify the area as 'too internally focused' and not thinking enough about its role in the wider economy⁸⁴.

Recommendations

Recommendation xxviii: Develop a network of 'North Staffordshire Ambassadors'.

How: Specific actions should include:

- The NSRP, working with the Marketing Group and Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership should agree specific objectives for the North Staffordshire Ambassadors and measures of success to ensure it does not simply become a 'talking shop'. These objectives need to be clear and to ensure that some tangible change is achieved within the next twelve months. The Marketing Group should be asked to identify members of this network (which should include businesses, civic organisations, voluntary organisations and others) and to present to the NSRP a process for coordinating the network and evaluating to what extent it is achieving its objectives.
- The Ambassadors should be an integral part of the communications strategy for the delivery plan. Having high profile support from key stakeholders across the area signals the importance of this plan to North Staffordshire and involving Ambassadors in celebrating success as it happens will also help gain press coverage and demonstrate continuity. High profile individuals may also help to engage people in the process and should be part of the consultation process. Measures of success could include:
 - Key figures in North Staffordshire publicly promoting the importance of sub regional working;
 - Celebration of a tangible success in the first twelve months, organised by the Ambassadors;

⁸⁴ Work Foundation interviewee

- Local people feel they know what is happening in the area and approval ratings are high;
- Recognition that Hanley is the city centre and most public documents refer to it as 'the city centre', rather than Hanley.

One suggestion to publicly show the breadth of support for the North Staffordshire vision and delivery plan is that at any local launch of the delivery plan, key stakeholders should publicly sign a book to demonstrate their support for cross–North Staffordshire working and for the priorities in that delivery plan.

- When signing up, members of the North Staffordshire Ambassadors should be asked to identify any areas where they are willing to provide mentoring support. Implementation of the North Staffordshire vision and delivery plan will require support from across the area, as well as access to a wide range of expertise. If members of the network identified issues on which they would be willing to provide coaching support or have expertise, this would provide leaders with a person to speak to informally should there be barriers to delivery. Ambassadors should also be asked to indicate whether they would be willing, in principle, to be involved in project groups on specific issues so that the NSRP can draw on a wide range of talent and expertise within the area.

Recommendation xxix: Develop an internal strategy within North Staffordshire to raise aspirations.

Low aspiration within the sub region is regarded as one of the most significant barriers to addressing worklessness, raising skills and changing the sub region. Developing a strategy to help raise aspirations.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Develop a pilot mentoring programme: The NSRP Marketing Group should review whether it would be possible to create a pilot mentoring programme for young people in a particularly deprived ward within North Staffordshire. This would need to have clear objectives, have a resourcing strategy, and be evaluated at the end of a set period of time. There is real enthusiasm for this to happen and by involving high

profile Ambassadors for the area, it could contribute to the fifth priority of addressing worklessness in the long-term and raising aspirations.

Recommendation xxv: Develop an external marketing strategy for North Staffordshire.

This should be about external marketing and should be gradually developed over time. The focus needs to be primarily on delivery of tangible transformation, but unless people are aware of the changes taking place, and the assets the area currently has, transformation is unlikely to happen. The key to successful marketing is, however, to base all messages on reality rather than aspiration.

How: Specific actions should include:

- The Marketing Group and Staffordshire Destination Management Group should develop an external relations strategy for North Staffordshire, building on where the area is now. This should involve two elements. First, helping ensure that North Staffordshire is more externally focused when it comes to policy discussions, for example ensuring that representatives from the area are more involved in regional and national policy discussions, working closely with Advantage West Midlands and the Regional Assembly. Second, developing a strategy to promote existing assets of the area, for example the medical and healthcare technologies cluster, the design element of ceramics, the strengths of the universities. Over the longer term this strategy is likely to grow and should be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Agree how North Staffordshire will be marketed externally. Our recommendation is that it should be as 'Stoke and Staffordshire': this builds on InStaffs and our own research about how the area is described. It is also how the area is described on the BBC website, although this does include the whole of Staffordshire rather than only North Staffordshire. InStaffs currently uses Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, reflecting North Staffordshire's combination of rural countryside and the main city, and we would argue that 'Stoke and Staffordshire' is a way of describing the sub region that helps to geographically place it and helps to promote the 'offer' of the place as providing urban and rural assets. Within North Staffordshire the term 'North Staffordshire' could still be used. However, this will need to be agreed by leaders

and officers, particularly within Staffordshire. 'Stoke and North Staffordshire' is an alternative although plays more to the internal issues within the sub region than the groups they are trying to market the area to.

- » The Marketing group should build a strong narrative around North Staffordshire's unique qualities and encourage its use across local and county authorities and related agencies. This should be proud of the history and what has already been achieved, but recognise the size of the challenges ahead. This will need to involve a range of authorities and agencies as otherwise this will not work. A suggested narrative for North Staffordshire's key qualities from the Action Planning working group should be considered (see Evidence Paper C).
- » The Marketing Group should ensure that this considers how the Peak District National Park assets can best be publicised. Having part of the local authority in the Peak District is one of Staffordshire Moorlands' greatest tourism assets, and it needs to be clear how being involved in the 'Stoke and Staffordshire' brand would make more of this (eg by publicising easy public transport links), as well as linking with other promotion the area has through the Peak District.
- Promote a 'surprising North Staffordshire' type of marketing strategy, building on successes as they happen, to publicise the area and counter negative images. The Marketing Group should develop a targeted marketing strategy to key groups – experienced entrepreneurs considering relocating, individuals who might consider commuting to Manchester and Birmingham, and larger companies who might wish to locate in the city centre/other town centres. This strategy should seek to publicise the 'surprises' about the area, eg specialism in medical and healthcare technologies. It should also seek to change the image of ceramics – a distinctive specialism but one about high design and high quality homes. Options could include publicising the area as being about 'homes', building on the ceramics, design, new homes being built, quality of life in parts of the sub region etc.

Recommendation xxx: Build on the Creative Quarter to use creative industries as a catalyst for regeneration, develop a long-term festival and events programme, and work towards a high profile event in five years.

Many cities that have transformed themselves have made use of some kind of catalyst, usually a combination of external circumstances and internally generated change. In recent years there has been increased interest in the contribution of cultural and creative industries. This is partly because they play such an important role in the UK's economy⁸⁵. It is also because there are a number of examples of post-industrial cities stimulating their regeneration through creative and cultural industries. For example, the culture of Manchester in the 1980s was seen as vital for changing perceptions of the city, whilst in Glasgow the 1990 City of Culture bid and the investment in culture-led regeneration was a turning point in the city's fortunes.

In North Staffordshire there are already some creative industries and creative successes on which to build, including the ceramics industries, local theatres, museums and incubation spaces. There is also a precedent of a large-scale event creating pride within the local area: the Garden Festival in 1986, which involved reclaiming land and included sculptures and artwork from over 100 artists, Anthony Gormley among them, was regarded as a great success⁸⁶. Capitalising upon these existing strengths, as well as the good location between Manchester and Birmingham, could help North Staffordshire to attract creative industries and to retain the young graduates from Staffordshire University who are currently looking for jobs elsewhere because there are few jobs available and few places for them to produce and sell their work⁸⁷. Creative industries are an important source of GVA as well as having an impact upon the 'feel' of a place.

The Creative Quarter will be developed as part of the city centre developments (identified as priorities). In the medium term, building on the Events and Festivals strategy and the creative industries strategy, North Staffordshire should seek to actively build on its creative industry assets, particularly ceramics and university specialisms in media and design. This has the potential to create a distinctive reputation for the area as well as to strengthen the potential of the city centre to be a creative hub and place where consumers wish to spend their leisure time.

How: Specific actions should include:

- Work with Staffordshire University and the Cultural Development team to develop an 'offer' for creative industry businesses seeking low-cost premises and access to

⁸⁵ Hutton, W. et al (2007) *Staying Ahead: the economic performance of the UK's creative industries*: The Work Foundation

⁸⁶ Cultural Development Business Plan 2007/08

⁸⁷ Number 4 Broad Street Feasibility Study, nmp

the facilities at Staffordshire University and Burslem. Where possible these premises should be based in the city centre Creative Quarter and the review should consider whether these should be small as 'grow-on' space is available already in the Creative Village at Staffordshire University. This should be linked to a wider enterprise strategy and to the Burslem Regeneration Strategy;

- Finalise the Events and Festivals Strategy, working with the Marketing Group to identify key events and festivals that will help attract tourists and visitors and change the image of the area and focusing on these, for example the biennial Ceramics Festival. The events should, as set out in the draft Events and Festivals Strategy, seek to build on assets such as the Creative Quarter and to work with the North Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership.
- As part of the Events and Festivals Strategy and the Tourism Strategy, identify potential conferences in specialist areas which would publicise the sub region as a specialist in the area (for example medical and healthcare technologies) and bring in revenue, as well as making the area more attractive for hotels and restaurants.
- Investigate options for a high-profile event the area can host from 2012 onwards: Learning from other cities, in the medium term North Staffordshire should also review whether it could attract a high profile event in the future (for example 2012, around the Olympics, or later) which would act as a showcase for the changes within the city. This should be reviewed carefully: for every Manchester Commonwealth Games and Glasgow City of Culture, there is a less successful Sheffield Youth Games. It is also important that North Staffordshire does not seek to compete for too high profile an event: it needs to be realistic about what it could and could not attract.

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The Work Foundation

21 Palmer Street

London

SWH 0AD

Telephone: 020 7976 3500

Email: enquiries@theworkfoundation.com

Website: www.theworkfoundation.com