



County Durham Economic Partnership

Regeneration Working Group - Thursday 25th May 2006

Barnard Castle Vision

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report aims to:
 - i. Inform the Working Group of the proposals to progress the Barnard Castle Visioning work identified in the Single Programme Investment Plan.
 - ii. Gain approval to progress a Single Programme application to action activity identified in the Single Programme Investment Plan

Background to the Barnard Castle Vision

- 2 Barnard Castle is identified as an investment priority in both the Regional Economic Strategy and the County Durham Economic Strategy.
 - i. The Regional Economic Strategy highlights that *"Market Towns and our heritage and cultural assets offer huge opportunities for regional prosperity"* with Barnard Castle, along with Berwick being identified as investment priorities.
 - ii. The County Durham Economic Strategy 2002-07 also highlighted Market Town activity as a priority and Barnard Castle was one of four (along with Middleton in Teesdale, Crook and Stanhope) Market Towns to receive RDP/Single Programme Investment between 2001-2006.
- 3 The recent evaluation of the Market Town Initiative received by CDEP from EKOS Consulting in February 2006 highlighted that *"Barnard Castle is a significant town with a large economic hinterland. It is a classic market town and acts as an administrative, retail and commercial centre and has a number of strengths which makes it suitable for further and significant investment under the MTI programme. These are a track record of delivery, robust delivery arrangements going forward, some potentially high profile regionally significant investments and the capacity and opportunity to generate significant benefits for the town and the*

wider rural area. The successful delivery of some of the major proposals will require additional expertise to be made available to finalise and project manage new major investments.”

- i. The following recommendations were made in the EKOS evaluation:

Recommendation 1

CDEP and ONE NorthEast continue to support Barnard Castle as a regionally significant market town.

Recommendation 2

Teesdale District Council, Durham County Council, Teesdale Marketing and its partners, CDEP and ONE NorthEast develop a regeneration framework/investment strategy for Barnard Castle and the wider area to identify key new developments which contribute to the County's Economic Strategy. This strategy should include an assessment of the additional expertise and delivery arrangements needed to bring forward larger investment projects, although any new capacity should complement the strong local delivery ethos.

Way Forward

- 4 In response to the above the Single Programme Investment Plan 2006-08 recognises the evaluation work and the significant potential to move towards a more ambitious agenda with the commencement of a visioning exercise for Barnard Castle. Accordingly sub regional and regional resources have been identified to carry this work forward. An allocation of £300,000 for 2006/07 has been identified in the Single Programme Investment Plan 2006-08 along with a further £100,000 regional funding to implement recommendation 2.
- 5 It is proposed that as part of this year's allocation Teesdale District Council (as applicant), with partners Teesdale Local Strategic Partnership, Teesdale Marketing, One NorthEast, Durham County Council and County Durham Economic Partnership apply for funding to commission a study of Barnard Castle.
- 6 The overall aim of the study is to establish a new shared 20 year vision and development strategy for Barnard Castle with a detailed action plan produced. The study will establish the potential within the town and its hinterland for an economic 'step change' to make the area a sustainable growth point for County Durham based on a clear understanding of the quality and character of the historic town.
- 7 The study will have four key components:

- i. **Visioning and Strategic Plan**- A visioning exercise leading to the production of an aspirational 20 year holistic strategic vision for Barnard Castle.
- ii. **Detailed Deliver Plan** - Consultants will be required to prepare a detailed delivery plan for the first 5 year period which identifies a maximum of 10 priority actions with a detailed project plan (in a pro forma to be devised and agreed between the parties), funding sources and delivery mechanisms.
- iii. **Economic Strategic Options Study for Teesdale, County Durham**- The production of a comprehensive economic strategic options study for Teesdale to cover the period 2006-2011 together with a development strategy, action plan and investment programme to realise this vision.
- iv. **Capacity** - To ensure that the conditions are in place for meaningful community engagement, effective delivery of the visioning, development strategy process and the delivery of the Detailed Delivery Plan.

8 The benefits of this approach are that:

- i. It will develop both a long term sustainable holistic vision for Barnard Castle as well as a shorter term five year deliver plan.
- ii. This is a partnership approach. Teesdale District Council will be applicant and are supported by a steering group made up of representatives from County Durham Economic Partnership, One NorthEast (Regeneration and Environment Teams), Teesdale LSP, Teesdale Marketing and Durham County Council.
- iii. Is in line with both ONE NorthEast and CDEP investment priorities as well as the recommendations made in the above mentioned EKOS evaluation.

Recommendation

- 6 In order to assist the delivery of the Single Programme Investment Plan the Regeneration Working Group is requested to endorse the proposal to progress the project.

Andrew Walker
 County Durham Economic Partnership Secretariat
 May 2006