

Bowness and Windermere Forward

Economic Action Plan, August 2017

Bowness and Windermere is an inspiring place to visit and enjoy, to live and work. As a visitor destination and a location that attracts a diverse population of all ages and backgrounds to live, it requires:

- Strong leadership and coordination with resources to manage quality-driven change;
- A world-class visitor environment and facilities with world-class standards of service in a diverse and high-quality private sector hospitality offering;
- Exciting environmental design will create a cohesive, navigable and seamless place for visitors and locals - with a strong identity through landscaping, signage and street furniture;
- An exciting cultural offering built on and around our inspiring lake and natural landscape; supporting festivals for photography, art and culture, plus music and theatrical events;
- Transport infrastructure with access and connectivity that meets the needs of locals and visitors as a gateway hub for the Lake District; and,
- A clear story presented to the world through engaging brand building that supports a strong local economy, an exciting cultural offer and a strong/growing sense of community.

Background

Following the '*Local Economy: Scoping the Way Forward*' report produced in December 2015 by Douglas Wheeler Associates, Bowness and Windermere Forward was established to develop and drive an Economic Action Plan for the prosperity and sustainability of Bowness and Windermere.

The purpose of the public/private partnership is to encourage a new culture based on strong leadership, consensus, transparency, trust, an ambitious 'can do' attitude and strong local commitment with a real focus on delivering consensus priority projects under the Action Plan through means of effectual partnership working.

This will take shape as a private and public sector partnership (please see Terms of Reference) to discuss emerging economic development opportunities, address the local economic development 'vacuum', challenge complacency and status quo, provide leadership, and act as a proactive vehicle to coordinate economic investment in Bowness and Windermere.

The main activities of Bowness and Windermere Forward are to lobby, influence and inspire politicians, private and third sectors, champion Bowness and Windermere and enable and deliver projects using partner resources.

Vision for the Group and the Town

- An exemplar of public/private sector working together, achieving the raised ambitions for the town;
- Bowness and Windermere working more closely together for the mutual benefit of the town, promoting cohesion and community spirit through partnership working;
- A resilient visitor economy that secures longer stays and higher visitor spend, distributing visitors more evenly around Windermere and Bowness;
- A more-diversified economy with high paid jobs and less reliance on seasonality;
- An economy that has stronger linkages with its lakeside context;
- A cultural destination that celebrates its identity being at the centre of the English Lake District World Heritage Site;
- A town that welcomes all visitors, including international audiences;
- A high quality public realm throughout the town;
- A town that promotes sustainable transport – both in terms of a destination but also as a launch to experiences in the wider Lake District, including culture, adventure and recreation on the western shore.

Development and Delivery

Delivery of the Bowness and Windermere Forward Economic Strategy and Action Plan will need significant input and strategic direction from key business and public sector partners.

Project development will ideally take the shape of securing medium term funding for a fixed term, part time Project Manager (0.4 FTE) to assist with delivery of the action plan, associated business cases and funding bids; project planning and initiation; and project delivery.

Initial costs would be needed for each project that will form a higher-level action plan/economic development strategy, and costs would need to factor in project development and delivery costs for a Bowness and Windermere Forward Project Manager.

Initial Project Development Budget (year 1)

Project Development: £250 per day, 2 days per week/16 hours per week.
45 weeks per year (allowing for leave time).

£500 (per week) x 45 weeks = **£22,500**

Plus project delivery budget = **£10,000**

Total ask for year one = £32,500

It is expected that more funding will be brought in via the Project Manager role, so while this is the initial ask, more funding needs to be bid for to ensure sustainability of the project development and delivery.

Suggested Milestones for Project Development within Year 1:

- Match funding bids and associated business cases for project; to support *both* project development and project delivery (year 1/ongoing).
- Short term project delivery plan developed, actioned and delivered (year 1).

- Development of medium and long term economic plan with agreement from partners (years 1-3).
- Report quarterly to BWF Project Management Committee.

Examples of Defining Projects for BWF Project Manager and Board

Short Term (1 year)

- *Develop Strong Vision with Action Plan* – project development to enable project delivery and strong private sector buy in to vision, action plan and board activities. This will include project costing, and it is expected that small and medium scale funding bids would be explored and accessed for project development and delivery.

Key Partners: Project Manager, BWF Board, all private and public sector partners.

Delivered by: within the 1st quarter.

- *Social Media and Website navigation* – one social media platform to feed all activities and events in to for Bowness and Windermere, and could also link to a branding exercise including website development which will act to harmonise the links between Bowness and Windermere, to act as one economic entity. Other themes to consider for the economic development for Bowness and Windermere (as per the Wheeler Report) include; delivering economic infrastructure; developing Bowness and Windermere as a destination (visitor economy); promoting community enterprise and third sector opportunities. All of which will begin to work against the perceived (and actual) lack of community and economic cohesion between Bowness and Windermere.

Key Partners: SLDC, WTC, CCC, Project Manager, BWF Board.

Delivered by: end of year 1.

- *Branding Exercise and Community Cohesion: possible themes including Arts and Culture/Food and Drink* – using strong themes to strengthen what it is Bowness and Windermere have to offer, both locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Such themes might include arts and culture, or food and drink, which can go on to establish events and festivals catering for residents and visitors alike. Linking with major national arts institutions and museums for local exhibitions, local artisan food and drink producers, markets etc.

Key partners: Lakeland Arts Trust, national art institutions, local producers and business operators, marketing consultant, LDNPA (World Heritage links), SLDC, CCC, WTC.

Delivered by: end of year 1.

- *Improved and increased business space* – looking at empty retail units and office buildings, along with strategic public sector assets, and ascertain the demand for more professional and higher quality business and office space for local business and businesses looking to move in to the area.

Key partners: Commercial Agents, SLDC, CCC, WTC, private sector business, The Windermere Works.

Delivered by: end of year 1, though likely to be medium term implications also.

Medium Term (2-3 years)

- *Strategic Asset Review* – gather an understanding strategic assets belonging to public and private sector, scope out potential for project development and new facilities within existing buildings and premises. Public sector intervention could play a role, as the limited, or in some instances, failure to effectively exploit local assets plays a significant role in constraining the economic prosperity of our town.

Key partners: all public sector partners, local commercial property agents, private commercial landlords, private sector.

- *Improving activities around the Lake* – Windermere Lake is the main economic driver for Windermere and Bowness, and key partners need to engage in a programme of activities in and around the Lake and promote the opportunities more widely for visitors, residents and further business engagement around the lakeshore. This may revisiting the Glebe as a strategic asset for the town and how it can be better utilised to drive economic activity.

Create a multi-day itinerary for Windermere and Bowness that includes the larger tourist attractions around the lakeshore, encouraging Bowness and Windermere to be the gateway opportunity for the Lake District and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Key Partners: Lakes Users Forum, Windermere Lake Cruises, Lakeland Arts Trust and Windermere Jetty, private sector partners based on the lakeshore, LDNAP and Brockhole Visitor Centre, SLDC and Lake Wardens, WTC, Millerground Forum, National Trust.

- *Public Realm* – raising the ambitions of the public realm throughout Bowness and Windermere, and working with delivery partners to deliver a *world class* public realm that will exceed the expectations of visitors and residents, and be fitting within the Lake District UNESCO World Heritage Site. Potential to bring in significant match funding for more ambition capital and public realm schemes.

Key Partners: CCC, SLDC, WTC (maintenance contractors and contract managers for public sector bodies), private sector partners and investors.

Long Term (3-5 years)

- *Establishing an International Cultural Centre* (long term) – given the increasing visitor numbers from emerging international markets abroad (China, Japan, Russian, South America) to the Lake District, particularly with the upcoming UNESCO announcement in mind, working with key partners to establish a Bowness and Windermere International Cultural Centre that acts as a destination hub for international visitors, showcasing our distinct literature and cultural heritage, with significant opportunities for private sector involvement. Potential for up to 5 FTE roles being created.

Key partners: Japan Forum, China Forum, University of Cumbria, Lancaster University, Lakeland Arts Trust, LDNPA, SLDC, CCC, Private Sector involvement. Significant external and private sector funding could be accessed for this.

- *Improving connectivity and encouraging car alternative schemes* – deliver better cycle, walking and accessible routes in, around and between Bowness and Windermere, to encourage more sustainable means of transport in the town, reduce congestion and *improve infrastructure* for projected increase in visitor numbers to the Lake District. This will need to take in to account parking provisions (car parks and road side parking) and routes in to and out of the town.

Key Partners: CCC, SLDC, WTC, private sector partners, cycle businesses, public transport operators, car share schemes and community transport groups.

- *Tourism BID* – explore the options and feasibility around a sectoral tourism business improvement district for Bowness/Windermere/Lake Windermere (possibly wider scheme of Lake District/Cumbria Tourism BID), the aims of which would be to create a more sustainable local tourism economy that can compete on a national and international stage with destinations that have a similar scope and portfolio.

Key Partners: Cumbria Tourism, BID specialist/consultant, Board and Project Manager, LDNPA and UNESCO, CCC, SLDC and other district authorities dependent on the scale/feasibility of the BID, large visitor attractions, .

Delivered by: Feasibility ascertained in the short to medium terms, while it is expected that the BID would not be approved/delivered or balloted in the medium-long term.

Bowness and Windermere Economic Development Matrix

<p>Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offer a strategic direction for the future of Bowness and Windermere. ▪ Offer a world class destination that serves the functional purpose of both residents and visitors. ▪ Promote Bowness and Windermere as complimentary, working more closely together as a single economic entity. ▪ Continue to improve and lobby for better connectivity (focus on transport and broadband). ▪ Revisit existing development proposals, bring forward and support new development opportunities for housing and employment. ▪ Capitalise on funding opportunities to support project delivery. ▪ Support improvements for infrastructure for walking, cycling and electrical vehicles, promoting sustainability and active travel. ▪ Review parking provisions for all, reduce congestion, improve traffic flow. ▪ An economic focus with a strong fit with Cumbria LEP, LDNPA, CCC, SLDC strategic priorities. 	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protect and enhance our natural and built environment: high quality public realm, museums and cultural heritage, cultural assets, visitor services and facilities. ▪ Continually improve, deepen and broaden, the quality of the visitor experience: cultural tourism project development - arts, museums, World Heritage Site, itineraries, food and drink, sports and active leisure, cycling, walking, swimming, nature-based, indoor and outdoor leisure, festivals and events. ▪ Innovate destination marketing and communications (national/international/niche/targeted), and effective and innovative use of digital and social media channels. ▪ World-class destination marketing, combined with digital technologies and communication, to secure the volume and value of tourism sought from targeted markets.
<p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economy less seasonal ▪ Increased footfall ▪ Increased quality of visitor spent ▪ Increased overnight stays ▪ Improve sector employment opportunities and skills ▪ Maintain destination ranking ▪ Maintain brand ranking ▪ Increased heritage and culture market share ▪ More business/community sectors accessing funding streams (EU/National/Regional/Local) ▪ More cultural activity participation and community cohesion ▪ Meet/exceed visitor expectations; accommodation, public realm, visitor services and facilities. 	<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A high quality, highly productive and resilient sector and economy where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In a poor year the sector is commercially viable; - In an average year the sector is profitable and reinvests to stay competitive; - In a good year, profits are very good, and investment and developments are undertaken. ▪ The visitor economy increases its contribution to GVA and economic wellbeing, transforming business and delivering higher paid and secure jobs.

The economic development of Bowness and Windermere needs clear, strategic leadership and direction.

Whilst greater direction and focus will be achieved through this strategic plan there is a need to establish a group or body with representation of the most senior level from the key businesses and organisations within the town. The group would act as a board overseeing the strategy and championing the strategic, flagship projects and opportunities that emerge.

By gaining representation from different business and organisations there is scope for greater thematic integration of activities and senior leaderships to sign up to a clear agenda, promoting an increased sense of buy-in to project concepts and priority activities.

This established group for local economic development would be objective and independent with an emphasis on regeneration activity that addresses needs and opportunities that is not constrained by historic relationships that may undermine public, private and third sector collaboration.

It is crucial to stress that this is not a plan for any other individual organisation within the district or county, and no organisation would be able to solely and successfully deliver a plan of this scale.

This is a plan which, to be successful, needs to be **owned and delivered by a wide range of organisations** and from the private, public and voluntary sector. Achieving this will require a new and different way of working as is proposed as part of this plan, and as part of Bowness and Windermere Forward as a team for economic development.