



Draft Wyre Borough Economic Development and Visitor Economy Strategy

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Vision and Objectives	2
3. Optimise Partnership Relationships	3
<i>Opportunity:</i>	4
4. Strategic Initiatives	6
4.1. Green Economic Development:	6
<i>Opportunity:</i>	6
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	6
4.2. Rural Economic Development:	8
<i>Opportunity:</i>	8
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	9
4.3. Town Centres:	10
<i>Opportunity:</i>	11
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	11
4.4. Visitor Economy	13
<i>Opportunities:</i>	14
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	16
4.5. Business Support:	19
<i>Opportunity:</i>	21
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	21
4.6. Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone:	23
<i>Opportunity:</i>	24
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	24
4.7. Port of Fleetwood and adjacent industrial sites	25
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	25
4.8. Employment Sites & Premises	26
<i>Opportunity:</i>	26
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	27
4.9. Transport	28
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	29
4.10. Education, Employment and Training	30
<i>Opportunity:</i>	30
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	30

4.11. Inward Investment.....	32
<i>Proposed Commitments:</i>	32
Appendix A: Table of Initiatives.....	A-1

1. Introduction

Wyre Council is committed to delivering economic growth and prosperity.

This Strategy sets out a framework to guide the economic development of Wyre over the next 10 – 15 years.

It is the culmination of extensive stakeholder engagement, baseline context review and the subsequent development and refinement of strategic interventions. See Appendix B for Background and Context and Appendix C for Big Issues.

This document presents a strategic view of how Wyre Council will drive activity through a series of commitments and actions which our research tells us will create the conditions for growth and economic success across the borough.

Our **Council Plan** identifies 'Growth and prosperity' and 'A thriving local economy and town centres' as key priorities. As such, the overarching objective of this document is to set out how Wyre Council can help sustain thriving town centres, a rural economy and support the delivery of economic growth and prosperity in the borough, and in so doing, drive improvements in the quality of life of all residents.

Encouraging small businesses is at the heart of our approach and our actions seek to create opportunities for new businesses, better ways of doing business and new jobs. Our commitments also seek to increase awareness of Wyre as a borough and its diverse attractions, encouraging more visitors from outside the area, both holidaymakers and day visitors, who will bring added revenue to our local accommodation, hospitality and retail businesses.

Our recent successes include:

- Wyre Business Awards, an annual business excellence recognition scheme and ceremony, managed by the council which continues to grow in scale and celebrates the fantastic achievements of businesses in Wyre.
- 'Neptune', a multi-million-pound partnership project to safeguard the fish processing industry for Fleetwood, which involved purchasing a 40,500sqft commercial fish and food processing facility on Fleetwood docks to create new units for 11 food businesses.
- Fleetwood Market, a £4m investment in an improvement and decarbonisation project to help sustain its future as a key attraction for Wyre's visitors.
- The use of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) for business support services by Boost Business Lancashire and Chamber Low Carbon, and Rural England Prosperity Funding to support business growth and job creation at Old Holly Farm and Rostock Dairy.
- Wanderland – Wyre's first family festival – attracting 1,900 visitors from across Lancashire and into Manchester.

As we work to deliver on our actions, we will continue to listen to our businesses and tailor our provision and approach so that we deliver for Wyre and make a real difference for all our residents, visitors and businesses.

2. Vision and Objectives

Our vision for economic development and the visitor economy is underpinned by our [Council Plan](#) vision and is:

- **To grow and enhance the economic and environmental well-being of Wyre through the promotion of sustainable businesses of all sizes, new and existing, and the continued development of thriving and welcoming towns.**
- **To promote Wyre as a destination of choice for visitors by offering a full and varied events and activities programme, promoting Council and heritage assets, and supporting tourism businesses to prosper through creative campaigns and place-based marketing support.**

The initiatives in this Strategy support the delivery of the Council's ambitions and intent for the borough:

- **Wyre is a place where everyone can prosper. We want everyone in Wyre to have access to jobs and share the benefits of economic growth; live in thriving, safe, more environmentally sustainable and welcoming communities; and be healthier and independent for longer.**

Consideration has also been given to the direct effect of the Strategy on our 2024 corporate priorities:

- **Develop Wyre's town centres to be thriving and welcoming places to live, work and visit;**
- **Support and champion Wyre's growing tourism economy by promoting our coast to countryside offer, tourism businesses, attractions, assets and events while celebrating our heritage;**
- **Grow the local economy through delivering the best support for small businesses and start-ups;**
- **Encourage local people to develop new skills to access better paid work.**

The sections to follow set out our strategic priorities (as initiatives). These have been developed based on research, policy, data and consultation. The key issues are described under each initiative, and sitting under each are our commitments with the actions we will take to drive forward economic development and visitor growth.

3. Optimise Partnership Relationships

Partnerships are critically important to the effective delivery of this strategy. To make the best use of the limited resources available to the Economic Development team it is essential that we optimise our relationships with key partners.

The Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board (EPB): The EPB brings together local authority partners in a formally constituted arrangement to shape and drive economic development across the Fylde Coast.

The EPB comprises of Blackpool Borough Council, Fylde Borough Council and Wyre Borough Council and three co-opted members, one each from each constituent area. Opportunities and possible threats affect the three authorities - the Board and the scope of the EPB is expanding in order to explore and better address these.

The EPB has powers delegated to it by the constituent authorities in the following areas:

- a) to review future governance requirements and delivery arrangements and how these can be best achieved on the Fylde Coast;
- b) to have direct oversight of key economic growth focussed projects and initiatives that the EPB has influence over the funding of;
- c) to have strategic oversight of other key growth focussed projects and initiatives across the Fylde Coast, and;
- d) to lobby and carry out other activities that help achieve the promotion or improvement of economic wellbeing on the Fylde coast.



Other Local Authorities: There are fourteen local authorities in Lancashire, plus Lancashire County Council. The ED Team is part of an informal network of ED officers, and this could be a mechanism for building these relationships. In addition, the establishment of the Lancashire Combined County Authority will provide further opportunities to be involved in projects beyond Wyre.

Boost: Following the discontinuation of funding from the European Regional Development Fund the Boost Business Lancashire (BOOST) services was awarded UKSPF money from Wyre Council until March 2025. Boost is the Growth Hub for Lancashire and provides local businesses with advice and access to support across areas such as access to finance, management and leadership, skills and employment.

Chamber Low Carbon: A second partnership made possible through UKSPF funding until March 2025 is the “Chamber Low Carbon” programme. The East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in partnership with North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, BOOST and Local Authority partners are supporting Lancashire businesses in saving money, reducing their carbon footprint, stimulating low carbon innovation, and achieving their Net Zero Carbon ambitions.

Within Wyre, the primary contact is through the Climate Action team, however, the Economic Development team has a key part to play in facilitating events, business contacts and signposting.

Other networks: There are many business networks in Wyre, on the Fylde Coast and, more broadly, across Lancashire (e.g. Lancashire, Pink Link Ladies, The Fylde Coast Responsible Business Network, etc). Close, positive relationships with these networks will help us to communicate, and build relationships, with those businesses that we do not yet have contact with.

Paid-for Business Support Organisations: Although there are many fully-funded business support services that exist within Wyre Borough (principally those delivered by Wyre Council through Economic Development, Visitor Economy, Climate Action, etc.), there are also high-profile paid-for services. Foremost among these are the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce (NWLCC). As with the networks a close, positive relationship with these organisations will be a benefit to the Council.

Universities and Colleges: Within Wyre there are many educational establishments. The larger ones, for example Myerscough College, provide their own business support services and can support with promoting and even hosting Wyred Up events. Looking beyond the Wyre boundaries, we have other establishments on our doorstep, such as the University of Central Lancashire and the Blackpool and the Fylde College, including Fleetwood Nautical College and Lancaster University and there is huge potential to work collaboratively with these.

Town Centre Boards: In Wyre, Partnership Boards for the town centres of Cleveleys, Garstang, Fleetwood and Poulton-le-Fylde have taken action to provide cross-sector leadership to deliver positive change and involve the wider local community. These offer unique opportunities as a partner.

Opportunity:

Building strong partnership relationships is a proactive task that requires time and attention. While partnerships do occur spontaneously, it is also essential to nurture those that matter most. Lancashire has many business support networks and the

benefits to be gained are only limited by the resource available to engage with them regularly and meaningfully.

The right partners give us:

- access to knowledge and skills that can ultimately support our other projects and initiatives.
- access to people that can ultimately support our other projects and initiatives.
- access to businesses that can ultimately support our other projects and initiatives.
- access to resources that can ultimately support our other projects and initiatives.

Taken together this gives us the opportunity to offer a more holistic approach to the delivery of our key projects and initiatives.

Proposed Commitments:

1. Engage with our existing partners more proactively to optimise the use of our resources.

Actions: maximise our presence on partner websites and social media feeds, and reciprocate with partner presence on our website and social media; conduct a partnership assessment to identify opportunities to build our partner relationships; produce a partnership engagement plan; find opportunities to run joint events.

2. Increase the number of partners we engage with.

Actions: conduct a partnership assessment to identify opportunities to build our network of partners; attend networking events to identify partnership opportunities; identify internal partners and their external partners.

4. Strategic Initiatives

4.1. Green Economic Development:

Wyre Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, in recognition of the devastating impacts climate change is causing around the world and within our borough. Following our declaration, we committed to reducing our emissions by 78% by 2035, before reaching net zero by 2050.

This section outlines the Economic Development approach to supporting Wyre's Climate Change Strategy.

In collaboration with businesses in Wyre we need to act now to create a safe world for future generations. In fact, tackling climate change creates many opportunities for Wyre. Shifting away from a fossil-fuel-based system to greener, low-carbon technologies presents many co-benefits for society, including green jobs.

One of the particular challenges with this area is the lack of knowledge for small and micro businesses in particular about how they can benefit. We will use our contacts and market intelligence to help the Climate Change Team to identify and engage with key partners.

To engage more with these businesses there needs to be an element of myth-busting; specifically around a perception that carbon reduction is only for bigger businesses and that it always costs money to implement.

Opportunity:

The Climate Action Emergency is a critical issue, and supporting our colleagues in the Climate Change Team offers an opportunity to make a difference beyond the boundaries of Wyre borough.

To support Wyre's Climate Change Strategy we can utilise our contacts through the Wyred Up network and our extensive list of partner networks. The Climate Change Team are knowledgeable in the specifics of net zero and carbon reduction so we can use our business expertise to complement this and provide them with a means to spread their message across Wyre.

Although not a huge employment sector at the moment, Local Government Association research estimates that in Wyre it is estimated that 872 jobs will be required by 2030 and 1,243 by 2050 in low-carbon and renewable energy sectors.

Proposed Commitments:

1. Develop Wyred Up members' understanding, awareness and buy-in to the need to move towards net zero.

Actions: add a section to our new website; regular coverage in the Wyred Up newsletter, include climate action in our suite of Wyred Up events; leverage our relationships with partner networks to better get the net zero message across to their contact lists.

2. Support Town Centre Partnerships to deliver sustainability and low-carbon projects.

Actions: encourage Town Centre Partnerships to keep the issue on their agendas; arrange for visits from stakeholders such as the Chamber Low

Carbon team; facilitate networking between Board Members, businesses and stakeholders.

3. Exploit the many existing touchpoints that the Economic Development Team has with local businesses.

Actions: include a discussion on net zero as standard when meeting with local businesses; introduce the Climate Change Team to relevant local business to help the businesses make the necessary adaptations needed for climate resilience; support the Climate Change Team to help landowners and the farming community to improve biodiversity on farmland and reduce emissions through change in land management practices; encourage businesses to upskill workers and transition to low-carbon technologies; explore supporting a shared transport scheme for communities across the borough.

4. Champion Net Zero on boards which shape economic development.

Actions: work with the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board to support economic growth and attract greener investment to Wyre; support the Climate Change Team to work with other local authorities across Lancashire and the Fylde Coast to coordinate climate action.

4.2. Rural Economic Development:

A large part of Wyre is rural in nature, and there are features of rurality which offer particular challenges to be addressed. Agriculture remains an important industry, but there is a trend in rural diversification through the re-use of buildings for commercial non-agricultural purposes and for tourism and leisure activities.

The current Local Plan sets out policies to facilitate continued economic growth in the rural areas whilst supporting rural diversification to promote a strong rural economy. Additionally, conversations with businesses have indicated a need for small units to enable home-based businesses to take the next step into growing their business, the conversion of farm buildings to allow for educational visits/community usage, purchase of equipment to add value to farm produce, creation of community shops and holiday accommodation.

In recent years, Lancashire County Council delivered the LEADER programme that provided grants to businesses and community groups across rural Lancashire. Examples of successful LEADER projects in Wyre include the installation of a new hydrotherapy pool at Brickhouse Farm Holiday Cottages, and a café and training room facilities at Daisy Clough Nurseries, amongst others. Subsequent evaluation undertaken highlighted that the funding had a positive impact upon rural businesses and communities providing jobs, growth and opportunities that would otherwise have not been possible. However, since the end of the LEADER programme there had been a gap in funds available. In order to address this gap, Wyre Council, in partnership with Lancashire County Council, delivered a capital grants programme through the Rural England Prosperity Fund, providing funding for capital projects in rurally based enterprises e.g. farm diversification and the food & drink sector. The number of expressions of interest received indicated strong local appetite for schemes such as this.

Opportunity:

Rural businesses are a critical component of Wyre's economy and support the many rural settlements and the wider hinterland, providing local job opportunities and rural prosperity. Furthermore, we have seen a significant increase in the number of new tourism businesses launching in rural areas in recent years, with the 'glamping' and 'staycation' markets growing steadily. Working closely with local rural businesses to better understand their specific needs will help preserve our strong rural economy.

Availability of funding is likely to be key, and whilst recent projects (e.g. Rural England Prosperity Fund capital grants programme) have benefitted from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, it is vital that projects in the short-term are undertaken in order to ensure our rural businesses thrive.

Proposed Commitments:

1. To support our rural businesses to continue to grow and diversify.

Actions: In partnership with funders, support grant programmes for small business growth in the rural area e.g. farm diversification and innovation, tourism and the food and drink sector.

2. To work with our partners to offer rural businesses access to business support and networking opportunities to share knowledge, peer-to-peer learning, and innovation.

Actions: Work with partners to identify priorities and devise initiatives; encourage rural business representatives to join the Greater Garstang Partnership Board to raise awareness of matters relating to rural economic development.

3. To proactively build clear links between rural businesses and our local education and training providers, aiding future skills development in the borough. Maximise potential of having Myerscough College, one of the UK's foremost land-based colleges, located in the borough.

Actions: Involve rural businesses in local Employment & Skills group (see Education, Employment and Training initiative). Additionally, collaborate at strategic level with key stakeholders.



4.3. Town Centres:

The challenges facing town centres are diverse and complex. Each place faces its own set of issues but, fundamentally, they all have the same purpose - to meet the needs of their catchment communities. To achieve fundamental change requires new understanding and approaches to be taken based on a unified vision, partnership working and strong place-leadership.

Having an effective overarching partnership is considered fundamental in driving sustainable change and delivering placemaking ambitions. In Wyre, Partnership Boards for the town centres of Cleveleys, Garstang, Fleetwood and Poulton-le-Fylde have taken action to provide cross-sector leadership to deliver positive change and involve the wider local community.

Town Centre Regeneration Frameworks for each town centre in Wyre set out strategic objectives and projects to achieve an agreed future vision for their respective town centres. These projects, alongside other initiatives, inform the vision and plans held by the Partnership Boards for placemaking.

'A thriving local economy and town centres' is a council plan priority, and we have made a commitment to 'Develop Wyre's town centres to be thriving and welcoming places to live, work and visit.'



Opportunity:

Many of the projects in the Town Centre Regeneration Frameworks look far into the future and most will require external funding. Government funding is likely to be key, and whilst town centre projects have benefitted from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Historic England funding for Heritage Action Zones, it is vital that projects in the short-term are undertaken to help animate town centres and draw in footfall and spend.

Proposed Commitments:

1. Support Town Centre Partnerships to broaden membership and build capacity, leadership and resources to deliver the Town Centre Regeneration Frameworks.

Actions: provide development training for Board Members; arrange networking and publicity events; run campaigns to get more stakeholders involved in the Town Centre Partnerships.

2. Tackle empty shops, prioritising 'problem' and high street properties which have been vacant for over 12 months.

Actions: trial approaches to tackle empty shops such as the 'audit, engage, encourage, promote' method by The Vacant Shops Academy; support opportunities for community management and use of high street premises; facilitate pop-ups and temporary use initiatives for community groups, small businesses and start-ups.

3. Work with businesses to hold social and experiential activities which generate opportunities for promoting town centre businesses and increase footfall.

Actions: devise a range of activities from family-friendly activities to events orientated towards older people; promote and publicise town centre activities; utilise council-owned assets to support these – such as offering free parking; encourage the Local Visitor Economy Partnership to feature our high streets in campaigns.

4. Monitor town centre vitality to help identify future interventions and assess the impact of projects.

Actions: collate visitor data held by stakeholders; survey residents and visitors; share key customer data.

5. Provide business support focussed on high street businesses.

Actions: encourage and support market trading as a way for start-up businesses to enter high street retailing; offer 'high street entrepreneur workshops' for high street businesses, which include business plan reviews and training for bridging the gap between their physical premises and the digital marketplace; introduce a business support service specifically for high street businesses under threat of closure or insolvency.

6. Develop a more attractive and welcoming street environment.

Actions: work in partnership with other funders to support grant programmes to improve shopfronts; work with landlords to install attractive decals on the windows of empty premises; add a category in the Wyre Business Awards which celebrates having the best shopfront.

7. Engage with agents and landlords to better support investment.

Actions: annual meetings to share data and information; in partnership with other funders, support grant programmes to adapt and repurpose units; work to attract new local businesses and services.

8. Support the delivery of projects prioritised by the Town Centre Partnership Boards.

Cleveleys:

- A pedestrian priority environment along the western end of Victoria Road West
- A multi-purpose space for community use
- Improved digital connectivity
- A new indoor market
- Installation of pedestrian shelters
- Improvements to Jubilee Gardens

Fleetwood:

- Public realm improvements
- Fleetwood Market – improvements programme
- Implementation of the Fleetwood Waterfront Leisure Masterplan
- [Additional priorities to be inserted]

Garstang:

- Town Centre public realm improvements
- Update of the Market offer
- A signature arts event / review of events calendar
- A community-led transport service that connects to the surrounding villages
- A 'young people's market'

Poulton-le-Fylde:

- Cottam Hall Playing Field improvements
- Update of the Monday Market
- Wanderland Festival
- [Additional priorities to be inserted]

4.4. Visitor Economy

The Council plays a key leadership role in growing the tourism sector and supporting quality of offer. By promoting a place-based marketing approach and supporting our tourism businesses with high quality digital and printed marketing assets, we can develop a strong cohesive approach to presenting Wyre as a place to visit and create a shared understanding and essence of what Wyre is all about.

By using compelling narrative and imagery in a simple, straightforward and engaging story, we can make Wyre the “hero” and develop that authentic sense of place.

We have produced a ‘**We are Wyre**’ place-based marketing package that is available free of charge to businesses across Wyre from our Discover Wyre website. This includes market insight, marketing campaign ideas and further supportive marketing collateral such as a video and photography to capture the essence of Wyre and its distinctiveness.

Within the Wyred Up family is a smaller **Tourism network**. This brings together hospitality, accommodation, and other tourism businesses together to share best practice and provide training and networking opportunities. We provide promotional opportunities and marketing support, enabling the network to take advantage of Wyre Council’s many channels and larger audience size.

The council has a thriving and diverse **Events programme** throughout the year. This attracts our local communities as well as visitors from farther afield. The Events programme is a key enabler in our Council plan to build pride in the borough.

In 2024, the council hosted its first Family Festival ‘Wanderland’ which attracted almost 1,900 visitors to Poulton and received positive coverage in the media and online. Visitors came from as far away as Manchester to meet Hey Duggee, Mr Bloom and take part in a range of activities for younger people. Key to growing the Visitor Economy and heightened awareness of Wyre as a borough and the brand We are Wyre, we will be building upon this first major event, with subsequent annual summer festivals.

We also provide support and guidance to other council teams, town and parish councils and external event organisers in Wyre to put on their own events, many of which have widespread recognition such as Garstang Walking Festival, Tram Sunday and Cleveleys Classic Car Show. These already attract repeat visitors from across the country and are highly regarded. They also help showcase our more rural communities and individual towns.

The annual events plan and the Discover Wyre what’s on e-bulletins are used to reinforce messages of the offer being a year-round destination to visit.

Coach tours and the travel trade already visit the Fylde Coast and Blackpool in particular. Coach tours also often incorporate Fleetwood Market in their itineraries, working with local hoteliers. While coach tours dropped off following Covid and cost of living crisis, the market is showing signs of growth, particularly as people look for short breaks and holidays in England.

We are unique in having several dedicated coach spaces for visitors to Fleetwood Market, but these are not well known about. Aligned with this we have several electric vehicle charging points and overnight campervan spaces.

Partnership working with other Fylde Coast councils – Blackpool, Fylde, Morecambe and Lancaster – could help increase visitor numbers by promoting our complementary attractions. Connecting the wider offer across the borough and beyond will help position a “resort” wide approach spreading the value and impact of tourism.

One of Wyre borough’s key assets is its **accessibility** and we intend to capitalise on this by promoting Wyre as an accessible place to visit.

Wyre is the perfect combination of rural and coastal locations with lots to do in a small area, whether visiting for the day, a weekend or a week. Our dramatic topography lends itself as an attraction in its own right for walkers, bikers, bird-watchers and nature lovers. Areas around the Forest of Bowland are home to a variety of trail running routes and Knott End offers protected nature reserves.

Visitors can explore our beautiful countryside and learn more about the heritage and natural landmarks through clearly marked trails including “Tramper” trails which are suitable for mobility vehicles. Several Changing Places toilets are also available at key locations.

The seaside areas are flat and the wide, well-maintained promenades are ideal for those in mobility scooters, with visual impairments or limited mobility.

The nationally-acclaimed Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs is a unique offering allowing people living with physical disabilities to access the beach and sea on specially-designed wheelchairs.

All of the above attract those with limited mobility or the elderly to visit our borough and enjoy a wonderful day visit or holiday.

Opportunities

There are many new accommodation and hospitality providers starting up in Wyre year on year, with creative and entrepreneurial teams many using online social media platforms. What is lacking is a cohesive narrative across them all aligning their own branding to that of the destination as a whole. By using a **place-based marketing** approach, each could amplify their messaging and boost their own marketing campaigns.

There is a plethora of images, memorabilia, online content and interest in some of our heritage assets. Together with opportunities to access funding from bodies like the Arts Council this rich information could be packaged into accessible online content, which would enable people to learn more about Wyre and “tour” some of our areas and assets prior to visiting in person. It could provide a way of whetting the appetite and also increase awareness of the borough of Wyre, where it is locations and what attractions it offers. This will build on our existing Mythic Coast app, which helps us to reach a younger audience and attract new visitors from further away.

The creation of the new Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) by VisitEngland will help grow sustainable local visitor economies across England. Working with our LVEP, we can ensure Wyre is represented at a local and national level. The LVEPs have opportunities to access funding and be part of VisitBritain's international marketing campaigns. By linking with the LVEP, we can give businesses, stakeholders and potential investors the confidence to know that they are working with a nationally recognised and resilient structure.

The LVEP are involved in the "England's Coast" initiative which promotes the Lancashire Coast as a whole to a European audience.

The upcoming Eden North in Morecambe will generate increased visitors who could be encouraged to travel south and visit Wyre while in the area.

As a Council we have a commitment to support and champion Wyre's growing tourism economy by promoting our coast to countryside offer, tourism businesses, attractions and events as well as celebrating our heritage assets. We have a growing network of tourism businesses which we will develop, support and promote through regular promotion at local community events.

The council has access to a range of tourist information locations across all four towns including Garstang Library, Fleetwood Market and Marine Hall to display material and promote local businesses. Through its support for and attendance at local community, town and parish council events, it also has ready-made opportunities to continue to promote the tourism network and the Discover Wyre brand to local and regional audiences.

We have previously published a Visitors Guide, and tourism business have told us that they would like to see us do this again. We also plan to expand the Discover Wyre website to include a list of accommodation providers.

There are opportunities to work with Affinity Lancashire, outlet shopping in Fleetwood to promote visiting Fleetwood Market, alongside Affinity Lancashire, to **coach operators**. It also provides a more attractive experience for customers who get more 'bang for their buck'.

There are also opportunities to provide greater incentives to coach operators to visit our areas, working with other local businesses to offer discounts or vouchers.

Coach operators will be able to offer short break tours as part of their programme providing coach groups with itineraries to match needs including history, activities, seaside fun, theatre shows etc. These overnight packages will enhance the value of tourism from this sector from the traditional day visitors only and significantly boost the economic impact to the local area.

Wyre's accessibility opens up our borough to everyone and makes it a truly inclusive destination of choice, particularly for those with physical disabilities. The unique charity Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs sets Fleetwood apart from other destinations in opening it up to those with disabilities.

In addition, potential government funding for healthy living initiatives such as trails, walks, cycle routes could provide investment and also promotion to support our tourism offer.

There is a growing trend for **outdoor adventure/lifestyle holidays and wellness experiences** that help people recharge their batteries and get away from the

everyday pressures of life. This plays to the heart of our offer at Wyre and is an area upon which we could expand. Packing up the diverse range of associated activities and locations we have on offer across Wyre can help attract a niche market and encourage people to come and stay.

Our country and coast offer birdwatching, dark skies, hiking, orienteering, holistic wellness, biking, jogging, trail running opportunities plus much more for the outdoor life enthusiast. There is already a well-attended park run at Fleetwood that attracts park run tourists from across Lancashire and beyond. £125m investment in the Eden North project presents obvious future potential, just further up the coast.

Wyre is also recognized for our food and drink industry, our specialist shops, markets and products are strong and we could capitalise further on this. Fisherman's Friends is an international brand and our fish and cheese industry is renowned.

Online research also demonstrates a growing interest in yoga retreats and agritourism. This is something we can explore with leisure partners.

Fleetwood is renowned for its fish, yet at present there are only a few niche providers of fishing trips for anglers. This active traveler market, along with sightseeing coastal boat tours could be explored further. This is something we could investigate working with local businesses and our partners at the RNLI, Knott End Ferry and National Coastwatch.

Proposed Commitments:

Place Based Marketing

1. Further develop and promote our "We are Wyre" toolkit and awareness of place-based marketing benefits.
2. Commission new photography and videography to support the Discover Wyre brand and We are Wyre toolkit by offering an online library.
3. Continue to invest in footfall monitoring software to ensure targeted marketing initiatives.
4. Build relationships with the LVEP for Lancashire to widen our reach and promote Wyre as a perfect location to host national events and festivals
5. Build relationships with major attractions like Ribby Hall, The Flower Bowl or Singleton's Lodges, Farmer Parr's to encourage their visitors to explore the wider area.
6. Continue to promote our heritage assets including developing and promoting digital content showcasing Wyre's heritage assets (so people can effectively 'visit' them digitally) through an archive collection, tour, facts, and 'talking heads'.
6. Relaunch the Mythic Coast trail interactive app and install QR codes on the trail that link to the app.
7. Boost our social media presence through the use of new channels and more multimedia content to attract a new, younger audience.
8. Create a dedicated area on our Discover Wyre website for film and production companies, promoting Wyre as a location.
9. Explore opportunities to work with Blackpool Transport to capitalise on opportunities to host major events linked to our accessibility through the tram network along the Fylde Coast

10. Continue to promote our licensed buildings in Fleetwood and Poulton as Wedding Venues and develop wedding packages, including accommodation offers with local providers.

Tourism network:

1. To host a season launch for tourism businesses and attractions, highlighting some of the events and attractions across the year that would generate increased footfall. This would be accompanied by distribution of an events calendar to tourism businesses.
2. Promote the tourism network at local community events under the Discover Wyre brand.
3. Produce an annual visitors' guide showcasing Wyre's tourist attractions, places to stay and eat, events and everything that the borough has to offer.
4. Host quarterly Tourism network events using local businesses as host locations. By varying venues, this could increase the attendance whilst simultaneously promoting the business itself to potential clients and suppliers and a wider audience.
5. Continue to develop the Discover Wyre website to feature tourism businesses through accommodation and what's on sections.
6. Develop a database of visitor economy businesses in the borough.
7. Continue to build relationships and promote tourism businesses on social media through shared content, case studies, spotlight features and blogs.
8. Utilise the reach of the Marketing Lancashire team to help promote the tourism network and Wyre businesses.

Events programme:

1. To deliver and promote an annual events programme aimed at all ages and across our rural villages and four major towns and work with local retailers and accommodation providers to offer incentives to visitors to extend their visit to a "staycation" or to spend in the local area.
2. To support events hosted by local event organisers across the borough and continue to chair and develop the Wyre Safety Advisory Group (WYSAG) and the Local Events Organisers' network (LEON).

Boost coach tourism:

1. Continue to develop a stronger relationship with Affinity Lancashire to market trips to Fleetwood; develop joint advertising campaigns offering itineraries involving stops at both facilities and the beach.
2. Develop a database of coach operators and produce regular e-newsletters, including pre-arrival information and offering incentives for operators to come to Wyre.
3. Improve signage to key tourist destinations and associated parking facilities.
4. Produce packages with venues like Marine Hall and Market House studios to encourage overnight visitors to watch a show or try a craft activity.

Accessible destination:

1. We will develop and deliver a marketing plan to promote Wyre as an accessible destination

2. We will create dedicated sections on the Discover Wyre and affiliated websites clearly identifying where venues or locations are accessible, and any additional support provided.
3. We will produce case studies and PR to promote the accessibility of the borough, working with partners such as Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs.

Sustainable and wellness tourism:

1. Realise the potential of our natural assets and continue to create itineraries and packages for people to get outdoors and explore our towns, our history and coastal paths.
2. Work with our leisure providers to increase the opportunities for wellness breaks and make more of our own council assets such as our five award-winning Green Flag parks.

4.5. Business Support:

At Wyre Council the concept of business support is synonymous with Wyred Up. Originally established in 2008 to encourage local companies to trade with each other, Wyred Up is a networking group for businesses and organisations located in Wyre or who contribute to Wyre's economy.



Business support is delivered with and through key partners (see Partnership Working initiative), and key amongst these are Boost Lancashire. Boost is Lancashire's Business Growth Hub, one of 37 Growth Hubs in the UK. Boost is led by Lancashire County Council and has supported over 14,000 businesses, helped create over 3,500 jobs while adding over £100m to the economy since 2013. The BOOST service is likely to change, or even finish, following the end of the UKSPF funding cycle, although it is expected that Growth Hubs will continue in some format, albeit with a reduced business support offering.

In 2023 there were 4,035 active enterprises in Wyre¹. Of these 89% employed fewer than ten workers (micro businesses) and 9% employed between ten and 49 workers (small businesses).

¹ (taken from 'NOMIS', the official census and labour market statistics provided by the Office for National Statistics)

With around 3,600 micro businesses, meaningful engagement is quite a challenge due to the sheer number of businesses and their diversity. Boost are a key delivery mechanism in making this achievable, as is the in-house Wyred Up network.

Medium-sized businesses (employing between 50 and 250 workers) make up the majority of the rest of the businesses with fewer than ten enterprises having over 250 employees.

Research from NOMIS was used to identify the largest industry sectors present in Wyre. In summary, the top five sectors, excluding public sector and health organisations, based on number of enterprises and number of employees are, in size order (largest first):

G : Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles;

F : Construction;

M : Professional, scientific and technical activities;

I : Accommodation and food service activities;

C : Manufacturing.

Key sectors which have seen growth since 2011, and which are projected to grow further to 2042, include Human Health and Social Work Activities (which serves the ageing population), Private Office Sectors (reflecting a more skilled, service sector economy), Construction, and Accommodation and Food. Manufacturing is in decline, reflecting longstanding regional and national trends as the sector moves away from low-value, labour-intensive manufacturing and a movement towards automation and 'white-collar' working.

Feedback from our Boost adviser suggests that the main risk for Wyre businesses, irrespective of sector or size, is recruitment and retention of staff. It is a challenge finding the right skilled staff and consequently growth is often restricted. In addition, businesses lack confidence in the Job Centre route and for specific skills there is a lot more success using LinkedIn, or similar, headhunting and word-of-mouth from existing staff.

Another challenge reported is accessing affordable finance at lower levels. It is considered a struggle to get a start-up loan for businesses less than 3 years old and those over 3 years who do not want large amounts.

Nationally, nearly a quarter of medium size enterprises (24%) say they also have or would like to seek support on generating new business, with other key areas business leaders are looking for advice on including beating rising operational costs (21%), achieving cost reductions (19%), dealing with cash flow problems (19%) and keeping up with tech advancements and digital trends (17%). It is reasonable to assume that Wyre businesses would have similar issues.

Our own high-level consultation with local businesses suggests that businesses value the supportive local community with 50% of respondents selecting this as a strength in the borough. Nearly 50% of respondents wanted better access to funding/financial support, which may support the Boost feedback about loans. No definitive challenges in the next ten years dominate, which tends to support the varied nature of the businesses in Wyre.

At least a quarter of respondents stated one or more of these challenges:

1. Understanding of consumer preferences
2. Succession planning

3. Perception of Wyre as a place to live, work or visit

Our internal challenges to support Wyre businesses include:

- Finding better ways to engage with new and existing members.
- Availability of grants to fund business support services.
- Increasing attendance at Wyred Up events and providing more networking opportunities. This has been a particular challenge post-COVID with national figures showing the downturn in the attendance at 'in-person' events.

To address the key points above and, as part of the "Growth and Prosperity" commitment laid out in the Council Plan 2024-2028, we will develop and deliver a comprehensive business support programme for small businesses in Wyre.

Opportunity:

Wyred Up as a brand has a distinct presence within the local business community, albeit one that we need to leverage more effectively. We have a political and organisational will to embed the service into the fabric of the borough and our flagship event, the Wyre Business Awards, has a very positive reputation. The opportunity exists, through our partners and through Lancashire- and UK-wide support programmes, to act as champions, advocates and enablers for the 4,000+ businesses in our borough.

Proposed Commitments:

1. Improve brand visibility and recognition of Wyred Up so that we can engage more meaningfully with existing members of the network and attract new members.

Actions: launch new website; continue Wyred Up newsletter; evolve Wyred Up events; dedicated membership officer; strengthen relationships with partner networks to better utilise their contact lists; set up a Wyred Up YouTube channel; hold virtual events; Wyred Up membership drive; build on the publicity generated by the Wyre Business Awards; brief internal partners (e.g. Contact Centre, Environmental Health, Planning Development, etc.) so that they can support brand awareness and promote to their customers and clients; approach key B2B stakeholders (e.g. solicitors, accountants, etc) in our towns to use their client lists; attend more networking events to promote Wyred Up.

2. Improve our 'premises' business support so that we can advise new and growing businesses.

Actions: facilitate pop-ups and temporary-use initiatives for community groups, small businesses and start-ups; put forward priorities for the Wyre Council Asset Management Plan; better signposting of existing council-owned assets (e.g. Market House Studios); provide a property look-up function on our website; investigate opportunity for development of a business centre that includes business support provision; develop a portfolio of SME hubs.

3. Engage with our business support partners more proactively to optimise use of our resources.

Actions: use dedicated membership officer to maximise our presence on partner websites and social media feeds and reciprocate with partner presence on our website and social media; conduct a partnership assessment to identify opportunities to build our network of partners.

4. Consider options for future provision of business support, in the event of Boost business support not continuing.

Actions: identify areas with greatest demand; budget for freelance support; develop business adviser competence within the Economic Development team.

5. Create a Wyred Up academy.

Actions: identify training and development opportunities for entrepreneurs and small/micro business owners; provide a mentoring service; promote entrepreneurship with grants/vouchers; deliver a “How to Set Up a Business” programme; commission business skills training for local businesses at subsidised rates; run masterclasses on financial and legal basics for business owners.

6. Set up a Wyre Steering Committee.

Actions: run a focus group with access for businesses to engage directly with Corporate Management Team; invite a member of this Committee to sit on the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board.

4.6. Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone:

Hillhouse International became an Enterprise Zone (EZ) in 2016, designated by Central Government, with the ambition of developing the site as a world-class chemical and polymer location.

Wyre Council is the accountable body for the EZ and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government, Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership in 2016. Provisions within this MoU saw the council retain business rates income from the EZ for 25 years (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2041) for investment in services and to support the delivery of economic objectives as set out in the approved Masterplan.

The EZ is primarily owned and controlled by private entity NPL Estates (NPL), with major occupiers Victrex PLC, AGC Chemicals, and Addison Project also having substantial freehold interests. As of July 2024, there are some 40 businesses located at the EZ with a variety of tenures from freehold to short leasehold tenancies. The only significant public sector landholding being in respect of the Lancashire Renewables Ltd recycling facility which is owned by Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council.

Expenditure to-date from the retained business rates growth pot has included the cost of providing an ultra-fast communications link from the “meet me” point of the Tramway network to the Gatehouse at Bourne Avenue. A contribution of match funding totalling £63,000 was also made toward the Getting Building Fund project to undertake upgrades to the EZ’s water and electricity network and to provide a new gatehouse at Bourne Road.

Target sectors include the chemical industry, polymer manufacture, energy generation and management, advanced manufacturing and engineering, and low carbon and sustainable industries. However, the principal driver behind the EZ, is job creation and industry diversification, so companies looking to operate outside those target sectors are welcomed.

On a local level, Wyre Council & Blackpool Council regularly report on activity to the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board. The purpose of which is to bring together local authority partners in a robust, formally constituted arrangement which will help shape and drive economic development across the Fylde Coast.

To give some Lancashire-wide context, the Lancashire Advanced Manufacturing and Energy Cluster (LAMEC) includes Samlesbury, Warton, Blackpool Airport and Hillhouse International Enterprise Zone sites, which combine to provide a compelling offer to investors and occupiers in globally competitive sectors critical to the economic success of the North of England. The Cluster has the potential to generate 1,000s of new high-value jobs over its lifetime and ensure Lancashire continues to build on its position as one of the UK's leading centres of excellence in advanced manufacturing and energy.

Key issues:

The future use of the Fleetwood to Poulton railway line is a critical factor in the ability of all parties to progress development at the EZ, as this will determine whether a bridge crossing is required as part of the Northern Access road – if this is the case this will add considerably to the time and cost of opening up and realising the potential of the site. As of November 2024, there is considerable uncertainty as to government support for the reintroduction of rail, following the scrapping of new rail infrastructure projects.

Utilising power generated on site would help overcome the lack of capacity for export of power to the National Grid. Linked to this NPL are developing innovative proposals for hydrogen production at the EZ, which would utilise the potential attribute of abundant power and proximity of the site to water. Ideally, the EZ will be accepted as a supplier to the UK Government Hydrogen production scheme.

The lack of available property for immediate occupation or new development underway impacts on the number of businesses locating at the EZ and the number of jobs created.

Opportunity:

Strategic intervention, with funding from the retained business rates growth reserve, could help realise significant employment opportunities in the energy, chemical and polymer sectors. EZ status will expire March 2041 which would suggest that use of the growth reserve would be best made in the next 5-10 years.

Proposed Commitments:

1. Support delivery of the masterplan for the EZ:
Actions: match fund the investment of the EZ Business Rates Growth Reserve with private and public sector investment and job numbers created; continue to invest in marketing and the preparation of responses to Department for Business and Trade investment enquiries; additional capacity in the delivery team to support delivery of the masterplan and business growth.
2. Encourage SMEs to locate at the EZ:
Action: seek to offer business support programmes to provide wrap around business support.
3. Support the provision of a training centre at the EZ:
Actions: encourage private and public sector investment; facilitate stakeholder involvement such as Blackpool & Fylde College in the provision of training and education activities at the EZ.
4. Development of site infrastructure:
 - 4a. Actions: identify and explore the feasibility of options for the Fleetwood to Poulton railway line; in partnership with funders identify and support works to open up the northern area of the masterplan.
 - 4b. Actions: support lobbying to increase the capacity of the grid power station at Stanah and supply to the UK Government Hydrogen production scheme.
5. Green Energy Hub:
Actions: provide strategic economic support to encourage private and public sector investment.

4.7. Port of Fleetwood and adjacent industrial sites

Fleetwood's sense of place and identity has been impacted by the decline of the deep-sea fishing industry, as the town competes against other seaside destinations not only along the Fylde Coast but across the rest of the UK. Fleetwood has also been hit hard by the closure of the large ICI factory 1999, and the cessation of the Stena ferry to Ireland in 2010 which resulted in many job losses. The decline of Fleetwood's industrial base has caused challenges that constrain the town centre's economic development prospects. Parts of Fleetwood suffer from acute deprivation, low income, poor health, high benefit dependency and crime.

Fleetwood Port remains a designated port, providing opportunities for port-related activities, but it has largely remained vacant, and this has impacted on Fleetwood's attractiveness and the connectivity to the area's waterfront. Regeneration and development of these sites could realise diverse new market opportunities and significant employment growth opportunities.

It is anticipated that Fisherman's Friend will redevelop their existing site following the proposed construction of premises on a new site in Fleetwood and that, subject to regulatory approvals, Fox Jackson Ports have announced that they intend acquiring and developing Fleetwood Port.

"We welcome and support the growth and expansion of an already successful local business, led by Chief Executive, Paul Fox, who is local to Wyre. This local connection to the area and the company's commitment to working closely with the community, businesses, and key stakeholders in the development of the site at Fleetwood is fantastic news for the town and the whole of Wyre.

Investment in the site has been minimal over recent years and we anticipate that the transfer of the site from ABP to Fox Jackson Ports provides a real opportunity to revitalise the regeneration of the site and surrounding area. We believe their plans will protect the port and ensure that it is used in the best interests of the town and borough. An investment of this scale into a town that has had so many problems in recent years is an exciting opportunity for economic development and growth.

Cllr Michael Vincent, Leader of Wyre Council

Rebecca Huddleston, Chief Executive, Wyre Council"

Proposed Commitments:

1. Support regeneration:

Actions: encourage private and public sector investment to aid overcoming abnormal development costs; provide strategic awareness at regional level to facilitate viability work and investment; encourage development which creates jobs, housing and supports tourism recovery.

4.8. Employment Sites & Premises

Most of the employment areas are in the west of Wyre in Fleetwood, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde. There are however, established industrial and employment areas distributed throughout the borough, and rural businesses, including several farming businesses, are important to the sustainability of rural communities and valuable to the local economy.

It is important that local economic growth is not frustrated due to lack of opportunities for investment and growth. The role of existing employment areas is important to Wyre's economy and the Fylde Coast as a whole and must be protected to provide certainty to businesses.

Local research undertaken to provide a baseline for understanding existing employment land needs for Wyre has shown that, although the borough has a good supply of available employment land in quantitative terms, some rebalancing of the portfolio is needed to maximise investment opportunities. The new Local Plan 2024-2040 has allowed the council to review its economic strategy and consider an alternative approach for the provision of employment land and supporting job creation.

Whilst commercial vacancy rates in the four main town centre areas currently sits at approximately 10%, the borough requires additional general market employment land as well as land for existing businesses to expand, and land for specialist sectors (e.g. energy generation) to meet future demand. Adopting a proactive approach to managing and improving the existing portfolio of employment sites to facilitate future growth is needed. It is imperative that we continue to develop positive relationships with landowners and property agents in the Wyre area to ensure an exhaustive knowledge of available land and resources. Additionally, it is vital that we create the right local conditions and infrastructure for businesses and assist potential.

There is also a need to consider how the council can support the recovery of the local economy following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and changing working patterns e.g. the increase in home working. Additionally, conversations with businesses have indicated a need for small units to enable home-based businesses to take the next step into growing their business.

Opportunity:

Many of the projects in plans such as the Town Centre Regeneration Frameworks look far into the future and could require years to make the sort of step change that will make a real difference. Government funding is likely to be key, and whilst recent projects to encourage additional employment space (e.g. Neptune Fish Park) have benefitted from the Getting Building Fund, it is vital that projects in the short-to-medium term are undertaken to help encourage businesses and start-ups to base themselves within the borough.

Proposed Commitments:

1. Investment opportunities in Wyre.

Actions: market and promote opportunities at strategic sites such as Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone and at council-owned sites to investors and developers; investigate adding a property search function for the new Wyred Up website; facilitate enquiries for development sites.

2. Economic growth supported by the right employment land and office space.

Actions: Progress the Fleetwood Waterfront Leisure Masterplan project and identify opportunities and funding for small-large projects; explore development opportunities to provide space for small businesses and start-ups.



4.9. Transport

Most of the employment areas are in the west of Wyre in Fleetwood, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde. There are however, established industrial and employment areas distributed throughout the borough and rural businesses, including several farming businesses, are important to the sustainability of rural communities and valuable to the local economy.

Our sole train station is in Poulton-le-Fylde town centre. This offers a comprehensive service, including links to London. There is also a tram line, which connects Fleetwood to Blackpool, via Cleveleys.

The A585 trunk road links Wyre's main urban towns to junction 3 of the M55, but this is, in the main, a single carriageway and at peak times is heavily congested in places. The exception is a new £162m bypass around the village of Little Singleton, officially opened in March 2024.

The A6 runs through the eastern end of the borough connecting settlements to the M6 and Preston to the south, and the M6 and Lancaster to the north. The current local plan is supported by highway and transport evidence prepared by Lancashire County Council, including a Highway Mitigation Strategy for the A6 corridor and Poulton-le-Fylde. This comprises a range of initiatives to support the development in the adopted local plan, including a number of highway and sustainable transport improvements. Highways consultancy is commissioned to support the local plan and identifies up-to-date transport issues affecting Wyre.

Public transport provision includes a network of bus routes connecting residents to destinations within the borough and beyond, including Blackpool, Lancaster and Preston. Some settlements do not have access to a bus service; for example, Scorton and Calder Vale only has a school service in place whilst some other rural settlements have limited services. It is inevitable that with reductions in bus services and limited access to the rail network, reliance upon private transport will continue.

In our Council Plan, we articulate our ten-year commitment to 'work with partners to deliver on the return of rail or the delivery of light rail to Thornton and Fleetwood.'

Network Rail submitted a Strategic Outline Business Case to the Department of Transport in February 2023 which is still being considered. This remains the major practical and financial constraint to us progressing a key infrastructure programme. Such a programme would have the potential to open up the northern part of the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone, as well as bring wider economic benefits to residents and businesses across Wyre. As of November 2024, there is considerable uncertainty as to government support for the reintroduction of rail, following the scrapping of new rail infrastructure projects.

Proposed Commitments:

1. Investigate the need and options available to improve the transport connectivity of rural businesses and communities.

Actions: support research and business case development of transport options; encourage private and public sector investment in targeted strategic pilots and projects such as bus priority schemes.

2. Use data and insight from transport operators, and about the use of council-owned car parks to inform services:

Actions: identify opportunities to improve town centre trade and events; work with transport operators to attract visitors and make their experience of visiting more enjoyable; use transport information alongside visitor footfall data to better understand behaviours and patterns.

3. Promote the range of transport choices available for visitors getting to and around the borough.

Actions: market the onward travel options for visitors arriving to the borough by rail and tram; explore the development of council-owned car parks to accommodate coach parking and use of car parks as 'explorer hubs'; liaise with transport operators to encourage efficiencies and reliability in the local transport network; encourage residents and visitors to use sustainable transport options and lobby Lancashire County Council to implement the Fylde Coast Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

4. Economic growth supported by necessary transport infrastructure.

Actions: align economic development commitments with the development of the Local Plan; identify and explore the feasibility of options for the Fleetwood to Poulton railway line; encourage private and public sector investment in transport improvements to support business investment and job creation; provide strategic awareness at regional level to facilitate investment.

4.10. Education, Employment and Training

Having a skilled and productive workforce is vital for our economy. Everyone in the borough should be given the opportunity to continue to learn, develop their skills and fulfil their potential. It is predicted that in the coming years Lancashire will see significant growth in employment requiring digital, tech, cyber and low-carbon skills matched by an increased number of Lancashire's residents active and skilled in the workforce.

Recent statistics highlight many opportunities for improvement locally. Currently, Wyre has a lower proportion of residents with Higher Level (4+) qualifications than the national average. Latest data shows the employment rate is below the national average, whilst economic inactivity rates are increasing (particularly in the less-advantaged areas), which results in a reduction in the available skilled workforce to meet business needs. Further, local employers have expressed concerns regarding 'work-readiness', particularly in relation to school-leavers and young people.

Below we set out commitments to ensure an adequately skilled future local workforce.

Opportunity:

The development and delivery of a programme of support for local people to access education, employment or training is a corporate priority. Strategic intervention, working in partnership with relevant local bodies (particularly our local colleges and training providers), will help realise a more skilled and employable population. Availability of funding is likely to be key, and whilst recent projects (e.g. recent programmes to address economic inactivity and raise aspirations of school children) have benefitted from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, it is vital that projects in the short term are undertaken to help better equip our workforce.

Proposed Commitments:

1. To tackle barriers to employment and increase the proportion of economically active people in the borough.

Actions: In partnership with providers and funders, encourage a programme to reduce economic inactivity in the borough which provides the necessary skills (with an added emphasis on 'work-readiness' and providing opportunities for volunteering) required to enter, or re-enter, the labour market.

2. To make local job vacancies more visible to Wyre's jobseekers, whilst giving employers the opportunity to showcase their opportunities for career development.

Actions: Delivery, working with partners, of annual 'Prosper' careers fair.

3. Encourage the development of links between job creation and skills development by local education and training providers.

Actions: Work with providers and employers to explore forming a local Employment & Skills Group consisting of local education and training providers, employers, and local authorities. Furthermore, build on the unique offers available at local colleges e.g. Myerscough College, Fleetwood Nautical Campus.

4. To enhance the role of the council as a large local employer.

Actions: Continue to offer apprenticeship, work experience & volunteering opportunities within the council, supporting our volunteers to gain future employment where possible.

5. To maximise the alignment of careers programmes, education and skills curriculum delivery with the needs of business.

Actions: Support the Lancashire Skills Pledge through Council Officers offering their services as Enterprise Advisers to local High Schools (and promoting the Lancashire Skills Hubs' initiatives to local employers), building stronger connections between local schools and employers.

6. To drive an inclusive and diverse workforce, that is agile and skilled to meet changing demands.

Actions: Deliver Wyred Up campaigns and events for our local SMEs focussing on skills development, in particular digital/cyber, in order to diversify the skillsets of Wyre employees and residents so that our economy is more digitally ready. Additionally, we will deliver activity to encourage Low-Carbon initiatives, and to increase awareness of any benefits local SMEs can avail themselves of e.g. training/apprenticeship levies.



4.11. Inward Investment

Places can benefit from strategic economic leadership in order to facilitate public sector investment and influence private sector investment decisions.

Major projects need to be identified, and funding made available to develop proposals in readiness for future grant-funding opportunities. Leaders need to work with Lancashire County Council, Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board, Lancashire Economic Directors Group and the North West Cities and Local Growth Unit to help raise project awareness at a regional and national level. Engaging with local MPs is also vital to build awareness and potential lobbying for investment – which has more recently emerged as a requirement in government-funded grant programmes.

Proposed Commitments:

1. Working with the North West Cities and Local Growth Unit:
Actions: share data about place and proposals; host annual visit to raise awareness of issues and priorities.
2. Working with Lancashire County Council:
Actions: strategic input from Lancashire County Council to the Town Centre Partnership Boards; identify investment opportunities annually for the Lancashire Investment Prospectus; raise awareness of issues and priorities with the Lancashire Business Board.
3. Project development:
Actions: fund the development of proposals for major projects in readiness for future grant-funding opportunities; explore opportunities for heritage and culture projects which deliver place making and regeneration benefits.
4. Work with the Local Visitor Economy Partnership to raise the profile of Wyre as a place to invest:
Actions: highlighting previous investments and promoting a clear picture of current opportunities and benefits such as the availability of “Full Fibre” network which runs across the Fylde Coast.
5. Promoting priorities at national level:
Actions: liaison meetings with MPs to facilitate their input and lobbying for investment in key strategic projects; MP support of Town Centre Partnership Boards.

Appendix A: Table of Initiatives

Timescale to commence and deliver* has been categorised as:

Ongoing: throughout

Ongoing: by demand

Ongoing: subject to grant funding

Already commenced: will continue [insert frequency]

Short (1-4 years)

Medium (5-10 years)

Long (11-15 years)

INITIATIVES SUMMARY		
4.1 Green Economic Development		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*
Develop Wyred Up members' understanding, awareness and buy-in to the need to move towards net zero.	Add a section to our new website.	Short (1-4 years)
	Regular coverage in the Wyred Up newsletter, include climate action in our suite of Wyred Up events.	Already commenced: will continue monthly
	Leverage our relationships with partner networks to better get the net zero message across to their contact lists.	Ongoing: throughout
Support Town Centre Partnerships to deliver sustainability and low-carbon projects.	Encourage the town centre partnerships to keep the issue on their agendas,	Ongoing: throughout
	Arrange for visits from stakeholders such as the Chamber Low Carbon Team.	Ongoing: throughout
	Facilitate networking between board members, businesses and stakeholders.	Ongoing: throughout

Exploit the many existing touchpoints that the Economic Development Team has with local businesses.	Include a discussion on net zero as standard when meeting with local businesses.	Ongoing: throughout
	Introduce the climate change team to relevant local businesses to help the businesses make the necessary adaptations needed for climate resilience.	Ongoing: throughout
	Support the climate change team to help landowners and the farming community to improve biodiversity on farmland and reduce emissions through changes in land management practices.	Ongoing: throughout
	Encourage businesses to upskill workers and transition to low-carbon technologies.	Ongoing: throughout
	Explore supporting a shared transport scheme for communities across the borough.	Short (1-4 years)
Champion Net Zero on boards which shape economic development.	Work with the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board to support economic growth and attract greener investment to Wyre.	Ongoing: throughout
	Support the climate change team to work with other local authorities across Lancashire and the Fylde coast to coordinate climate action.	Ongoing: throughout
4.2 Rural Economic Development		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*
To support our rural businesses to continue to grow and diversify.	In partnership with funders, support grant programmes to boost small business growth in the rural area e.g. farm diversification and innovation, tourism and the food & drink sector.	Ongoing: subject to grant funding

To work with our partners to offer rural businesses access to business support & networking opportunities to share knowledge, peer-to-peer learning, and innovation.	Work with partners to identify priorities and devise initiatives; encourage rural business representatives to join the Greater Garstang Partnership Board to raise awareness of matters relating to rural economic development.	Ongoing: throughout
Proactively build clear links between rural businesses and our local education and training providers, aiding future skills development in the borough. Maximise potential of having Myerscough College, one of the UK's foremost land-based colleges, located in the borough.	Involve rural businesses in local Employment & Skills group (see Education, Employment and Training initiative). Additionally, collaborate at strategic level with key stakeholders.	Short (1-4 years)
4.3 Town Centres		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*
Support Town Centre Partnerships to broaden membership and build capacity, leadership and resources to deliver the Town Centre Regeneration Frameworks.	Provide development training for Board Members.	Ongoing: throughout
	Arrange networking and publicity events.	Ongoing: throughout
	Run campaigns to get more stakeholders involved in the Town Centre Partnerships.	Ongoing: throughout

Tackle empty shops, prioritising 'problem' and high street properties which have been vacant for over 12 months.	Trial approaches to tackle empty shops such as the 'audit, engage, encourage, promote' method by The Vacant Shops Academy.	Ongoing: throughout
	Support opportunities for community management and use of high street premises.	Medium (5-10 years)
	Facilitate pop-ups and temporary-use initiatives for community groups, small businesses and start-ups.	Ongoing: throughout
Work with businesses to hold social and experiential activities which generate opportunities for promoting town centre businesses and increase footfall.	Devise a range of activities from family-friendly activities to events orientated to older people.	Ongoing: throughout
	Promote and publicise town centre activities; utilise council-owned assets to support these – such as offering free parking.	Ongoing: throughout
	Encourage the Local Visitor Economy Partnership to feature our high streets in campaigns.	Ongoing: throughout
Monitor town centre vitality to help identify future interventions and assess the impact of projects.	Collate visitor data held by stakeholders.	Ongoing: throughout
	Survey residents and visitors.	Ongoing: throughout
	Share key customer data.	Ongoing: throughout
Provide business support focussed on high street businesses.	Encourage and support market trading as a way for start-up businesses to enter high street retailing.	Ongoing: throughout
	Offer 'high street entrepreneur workshops' for high street businesses, which include business plan reviews and training for bridging the gap between their physical premises and the digital marketplace.	Ongoing: throughout
	Introduce a business support service specifically for high street businesses under threat of closure or insolvency.	Ongoing: by demand
Develop a more attractive and	Work in partnership with other funders to support grant programmes to improve shopfronts.	Ongoing: subject to grant funding

welcoming street environment.	Work with landlords to install attractive decals on the windows of empty premises.	Ongoing: throughout
	Add a category in the Wyre Business Awards which celebrates having the best shopfront.	Ongoing: throughout
Engage with agents and landlords to better support investment.	Annual meetings to share data and information.	Medium (5-10 years)
	In partnership with other funders, support grant programmes to adapt and repurpose units.	Ongoing: subject to grant funding
	Work to attract new local businesses and services.	Medium (5-10 years)
Support the delivery of projects prioritised by the Town Centre Partnership Boards.		Ongoing: throughout
4.4 Visitor Economy		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*
Further develop and promote our “We are Wyre” toolkit and awareness of place-based marketing benefits.	Relaunch the We are Wyre collateral through the e-bulletin and at the Tourism Network meeting.	Spring 2025
Enhance media assets.	Commission new photography and videography to support the Discover Wyre brand and We are Wyre toolkit by offering an online library.	Summer 2025 and ongoing
Data gathering.	Continue to invest in footfall monitoring software to ensure targeted marketing initiatives.	October 2024

Partnership working.	Build relationships with the LVEP for Lancashire to widen our reach and promote Wyre as a perfect location to host national events and festivals	Ongoing
	Build relationships with major attractions like Ribby Hall, The Flower Bowl or Singleton's Lodges, Farmer Parr's to encourage their visitors to explore the wider area.	Ongoing
	Explore opportunities to work with Blackpool Transport to capitalise on opportunities to host major events linked to our accessibility through the tram network along the Fylde Coast	Ongoing
Enhancing our digital presence	Continue to promote our heritage assets including developing and promoting digital content showcasing Wyre's heritage assets (so people can effectively 'visit' them digitally) through an archive collection, tour, facts, and 'talking heads'.	Ongoing
	Relaunch the Mythic Coast trail interactive app and install QR codes on the trail that links to the app.	Summer 2025
	Boost our social media presence through the use of new channels and more multimedia content to attract a new, younger audience.	Ongoing
	Create a dedicated area on our Discover Wyre website for film and production companies, promoting Wyre as a location.	Spring 2025
	Continue to promote our licensed buildings in Fleetwood and Poulton as Wedding Venues and develop wedding packages, including accommodation offers with local providers.	Ongoing
Grow the Tourism Network	To host a season launch for tourism businesses and attractions, highlighting some of the events and attractions across the year that would generate increased footfall. This would be accompanied by distribution of an events calendar to tourism businesses.	April 2026 and annually

	Promote the Tourism network at local community events under the Discover Wyre brand.	January 2025
	Produce an annual visitors' guide showcasing Wyre's tourist attractions, places to stay and eat, events and everything that the borough has to offer.	From April 2025 and quarterly
	Host quarterly Tourism network events using local businesses as host locations with the support of the Economic Development team. By varying venues, this could increase the attendance whilst simultaneously promoting the business itself to potential clients and suppliers and a wider audience.	Ongoing
	Continue to develop the Discover Wyre website to feature tourism businesses through accommodation and what's on sections.	Ongoing
	Develop a database of visitor economy businesses in the borough.	Ongoing
	Continue to build relationships and promote tourism businesses on social media through shared content, case studies, spotlight features and blogs.	Ongoing
	Utilise the reach of the Marketing Lancashire team to help promote the tourism network and Wyre businesses.	
Deliver a varied and vibrant events programme.	To deliver and promote an annual events programme aimed at all ages and across our rural villages and four major towns and work with local retailers and accommodation providers to offer incentives to visitors to extend their visit to a "staycation" or to spend in the local area.	Ongoing
	To support events hosted by local event organisers across the borough and continue to chair and develop the Wyre Safety Advisory Group (WYSAG) and the Local Events Organisers' network (LEON).	Ongoing

Boost coach tourism.	Continue to develop a stronger relationship with Affinity Lancashire to market trips to Fleetwood; develop joint advertising campaigns offering itineraries involving stops at both facilities and the beach.	Ongoing
	Develop a database of coach operators and produce regular e-newsletters, including pre-arrival information and offering incentives for operators to come to Wyre.	Ongoing
	Improve signage to key tourist destinations and associated parking facilities.	December 2024
	Produce packages with venues like Marine Hall and Market House studios to encourage overnight visitors to watch a show or try a craft activity.	Autumn 2025
Promote Wyre as an Accessible destination.	We will develop a marketing plan to promote Wyre as an accessible destination.	Summer 2025
	We will create dedicated sections on the Discover Wyre and affiliated websites clearly identifying where venues or locations are accessible, and any additional support provided.	December 2025
	We will produce case studies and PR to promote the accessibility of the borough, working with partners such as Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs.	December 2025 and ongoing
Promote sustainable and wellness tourism opportunities.	Realise the potential of our natural assets and continue to create itineraries and packages for people to get outdoors and explore our towns, our history and coastal paths.	Ongoing
	Work with our leisure providers to increase the opportunities for wellness breaks and make more of our own council assets such as our five award-winning Green Flag parks.	Ongoing
4.5 Business Support		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*
	Launch new website.	Short (1-4 years)

Improve brand visibility and recognition of Wyred Up so that we can engage more meaningfully with existing members of the network and attract new members.	Continue Wyred Up newsletter.	Already commenced: will continue monthly
	Evolve Wyred Up events.	Short (1-4 years)
	Dedicated membership officer.	Short (1-4 years)
	Strengthen relationships with partner networks to better utilise their contact lists.	Medium (5-10 years)
	Set up a Wyred Up YouTube channel.	Short (1-4 years)
	Hold virtual events.	Short (1-4 years)
	Wyred Up membership drive.	Short (1-4 years)
	Build on the publicity generated by the Wyre Business Awards.	Short (1-4 years)
	Brief internal partners (e.g. Contact Centre, Environmental Health, Planning Development, etc.) so that they can support brand awareness and promote to their customers and clients.	Short (1-4 years)
	Approach key B2B stakeholders (e.g. solicitors, accountants, etc) in our towns to use their client lists.	Ongoing: by demand
Improve our 'premises' business support so that we can advise new and growing businesses.	Attend more networking events to promote Wyred Up.	Ongoing: by demand
	Facilitate pop-ups and temporary-use initiatives for community groups, small businesses and start-ups.	Ongoing: by demand
	Put forward priorities for the Wyre council asset management plan.	Ongoing: by demand
	Better signposting of existing council-owned assets (e.g. Market house studios).	Short (1-4 years)
	Provide a property look-up function on our website.	Short (1-4 years)
Investigate opportunity for development of a business centre that includes business support provision	Short (1-4 years)	

	Develop a portfolio of SME hubs.	Medium (5-10 years)
Engage with our business support partners more proactively to optimise use of our resources.	Use dedicated membership officer to maximise our presence on partner websites and social media feeds; and reciprocate with partner presence on our website and social media.	Short (1-4 years)
	Conduct a partnership assessment to identify opportunities to build our network of partners.	Short (1-4 years)
Consider options for future provision of business support, in the event of Boost business support not continuing.	Identify areas with greatest demand.	Short (1-4 years)
	Budget for freelance support.	Short (1-4 years)
	Develop business adviser competence within the economic development team.	Short (1-4 years)
Create a Wyred Up academy.	Identify training and development opportunities for entrepreneurs and small/micro business owners.	Short (1-4 years)
	Provide a mentoring service.	Short (1-4 years)
	Promote entrepreneurship with grants/vouchers.	Short (1-4 years)
	Deliver a “how to set up a business” programme.	Ongoing: by demand
	Commission business skills training for local businesses at subsidised rates.	Ongoing: by demand
	Run masterclasses on financial and legal basics for business owners.	Ongoing: by demand
Set up a Wyre Steering Committee.	Run a focus group with access for businesses to engage directly with Corporate Management Team.	Ongoing: by demand
	Invite a member of this Committee to sit on the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board.	Short (1-4 years)
4.6 Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone		

Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*
Support delivery of the masterplan for the EZ.	Match fund the investment of the EZ Business Rates Growth Reserve with private and public sector investment and job numbers created.	By agreement: throughout
	Continue to invest in marketing and the preparation of responses to Department for Business and Trade investment enquiries.	Ongoing: throughout
	Additional capacity in the delivery team to support delivery of the masterplan and business growth.	Short (1-4 years)
Encourage SMEs to locate at the EZ.	Seek to offer business support programmes to provide wrap around business support.	Ongoing: by demand
Support the provision of a training centre at the EZ.	Encourage private and public sector investment.	Ongoing: throughout
	Facilitate stakeholder involvement such as Blackpool & Fylde College in the provision of training and education activities at the EZ.	Ongoing: throughout
Development of site infrastructure.	Identify and explore the feasibility of options for the Fleetwood to Poulton railway line.	Short (1-4 years)
	In partnership with funders identify and support works to open up the northern area of the masterplan.	Short (1-4 years)
	Support lobbying to increase the capacity of the grid power station at Stanah and supply to the UK Government Hydrogen production scheme.	Short (1-4 years)
Green Energy Hub.	Provide strategic economic support to encourage private and public sector investment.	Short (1-4 years)
4.7 Port of Fleetwood and adjacent industrial sites		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*

Support regeneration.	Encourage private and public sector investment to aid overcoming abnormal development costs.	Medium (5-10 years)
	Provide strategic awareness at regional level to facilitate viability work and investment.	Medium (5-10 years)
	Encourage development which creates jobs, housing and supports tourism recovery.	Medium (5-10 years)
4.8 Employment Sites & Premises		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*
Investment opportunities in Wyre.	Market and promote opportunities at strategic sites such as Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone and at council-owned sites to investors and developers.	Short (1-4 years)
	Investigate including a property search function for the new Wyred Up website.	
	Facilitate enquiries for development sites.	
Economic growth supported by the right employment land and office space.	Progress the Fleetwood Waterfront Leisure Masterplan project and identify opportunities and funding for small-large projects.	Short (1-4 years)
	Explore development opportunities to provide space for small businesses and start-ups.	Short (1-4 years)
4.9 Transport		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*
Investigate the need and options available to improve the transport connectivity of rural businesses and communities.	Support research and business case development of transport options.	Medium (5-10 years)
	Encourage private and public sector investment in targeted strategic pilots and projects such as bus priority schemes.	Medium (5-10 years)

Use data and insight about the use of council-owned car parks and from transport operators to inform services.	Identify opportunities to improve town centre trade and events.	Ongoing: throughout
	Work with transport operators to attract visitors and make their experience of visiting more enjoyable.	Ongoing: throughout
	Use transport information alongside visitor footfall data to better understand behaviours and patterns.	Ongoing: throughout
Promote the range of transport choices available for visitors getting to and around the borough.	Market the onward travel options for visitors arriving to the borough by rail and tram; explore the development of council-owned car parks to accommodate coach parking and use of car parks as 'explorer hubs'.	Medium (5-10 years)
	Liaise with transport operators to encourage efficiencies and reliability in the local transport network.	Ongoing: throughout
	Encourage residents and visitors to use sustainable transport options and lobby Lancashire County Council to implement the Fylde Coast Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.	Ongoing: throughout
Economic growth supported by necessary transport infrastructure.	Align economic development commitments with the development of the Local Plan.	Ongoing: throughout
	Identify and explore the feasibility of options for the Fleetwood to Poulton railway line.	Short (1-4 years)
	Encourage private and public sector investment in transport improvements to support business investment and job creation.	Ongoing: throughout
	Provide strategic awareness at regional level to facilitate investment.	Ongoing: throughout
4.10 Education, Employment and Training		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*

<p>To tackle barriers to employment and increase the proportion of economically active people in the borough.</p>	<p>In partnership with providers and funders, encourage a programme to reduce economic inactivity in the borough which provides the necessary skills (with an added emphasis on 'work-readiness' and providing opportunities for volunteering) required to enter, or re-enter, the labour market.</p>	<p>Ongoing: subject to grant funding</p>
<p>To make local job vacancies more visible to Wyre's jobseekers, whilst giving employers the opportunity to showcase their opportunities for career development.</p>	<p>Delivery, working with partners, of annual 'Prosper' careers fair.</p>	<p>Short (1-4 years) annual event</p>
<p>Encourage the development of links between job creation and skills development by local education and training providers.</p>	<p>Work with providers and employers to explore forming a local Employment & Skills Group consisting of local education and training providers, employers, and local authorities. Furthermore, build on the unique offers available at local colleges e.g. Myerscough College, Fleetwood Nautical Campus.</p>	<p>Short (1-4 years)</p>
<p>To enhance the role of the council as a large local employer.</p>	<p>Continue to offer apprenticeship, work experience & volunteering opportunities within the council, supporting our volunteers to gain future employment where possible.</p>	<p>Ongoing: throughout</p>
<p>To maximise the alignment of careers programmes, education and skills curriculum delivery with the needs of business.</p>	<p>Support the Lancashire Skills Pledge through Council Officers offering their services as Enterprise Advisers to local High Schools (and promoting the Lancashire Skills Hubs' initiatives to local employers), building stronger connections between local schools and employers.</p>	<p>Ongoing: throughout</p>

To drive an inclusive and diverse workforce, that is agile and skilled to meet changing demands.	Deliver Wyred Up campaigns and events for our local SMEs focussing on skills development, in particular digital/cyber, in order to diversify the skillsets of Wyre employees and residents so that our economy is more digitally ready. Additionally, we will deliver activity to encourage Low Carbon initiatives, and to increase awareness of any benefits local SMEs can avail of e.g. training/apprenticeship levies.	Short (1-4 years)
4.11 Inward Investment		
Proposed Commitment	Action	Timescale*
Working with the North West Cities and Local Growth Unit	Share data about place and proposals.	Ongoing: throughout
	Host annual visit to raise awareness of issues and priorities.	Ongoing: annual
Working with Lancashire County Council.	Strategic input from Lancashire County Council to the Town Centre Partnership Boards	Ongoing: throughout
	Identify investment opportunities annually for the Lancashire Investment Prospectus.	Ongoing: annual
	Raise awareness of issues and priorities with the Lancashire Business Board.	Ongoing: throughout
Project development.	Fund the development of proposals for major projects in readiness for future grant funding opportunities.	Ongoing: throughout
	Explore opportunities for heritage and culture projects which deliver place making and regeneration benefits.	Ongoing: throughout
Work with the Local Visitor Economy Partnership to raise the profile of Wyre as a place to invest.	Highlighting previous investments and promoting a clear picture of current opportunities and benefits such as the availability of “Full Fibre” network which runs across the Fylde Coast.	Ongoing: throughout

Promoting priorities at national level.	Liaison meetings with MPs to facilitate their input and lobbying for investment in key strategic projects.	Ongoing: throughout
	MP support of Town Centre Partnership Boards.	Ongoing: throughout