

## **Economy theme**

***Compiled by Jamie Evans, Devon County Council***

### **1. Reducing economic inequalities**

*Why was the high level strategic issue chosen? (using evidence base and theme lead's expertise on subject area)*

- There are large levels of inequality between different places in Devon with major concentrations in certain areas. Torrington has the second lowest level of workplace based earnings in the whole of the UK and Ilfracombe is within the worst 10% of deprived communities in England (These are among 12 priority regeneration communities in Devon-other prioritised areas also show significant levels of deprivation). Data sources include ID2004 - which we have mapped at a local level in Devon, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings and ongoing qualitative work in regeneration in Devon. The Regeneration RAP includes reference to this and provides mechanisms for implementation of solutions.

*Why the particular contributory (linked) issues have been chosen? (using the evidence base and the theme leads' expertise on their subject areas)*

- Children & Young People – Skills development and Youth employment in particular and links with enhancing entrepreneurialism and innovation
- Culture - Can provide a massive contribution to regenerating communities. Contributes to building stronger community identity.
- Energy – Can contribute to improving financial sustainability of communities and reducing fuel poverty. Potential for community ownership of projects.
- Environment – Ensure improved built and natural environment to contribute to quality of life and community and business sustainability. Strong contributions to this issue via the creation of a Devon brand. Transport and communications infrastructure supports vibrant communities.
- Health – Major links to quality of life and community sustainability. Priority communities generally show higher levels of health deprivation than elsewhere
- Housing - Major links to quality of life and community sustainability, particularly through affordable housing and the need to provide for 'key workers'. Priority communities generally show higher levels of housing deprivation than elsewhere. Infrastructure development needs to support housing.
- Older People - Major links to quality of life and community sustainability. Higher levels of older people in coastal priority communities (6 out of the 12 communities). Helping older people make use of skills in the workplace driving entrepreneurialism.
- Safer Devon - Major links to quality of life and community sustainability.
- Strong Communities - Major links to quality of life and community sustainability and the unlocking of economic potential in communities. The creation of a Devon Brand links well with creating community pride and a sense of place.

*How the findings of the Evidence Base Theme Reports, Check For sensitivity to equality has informed the issue*

- Equality should form a cross cutting theme throughout all strands of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Specific comments have been taken on board regarding the need to a new approach to equality that is practical and allows measurement and tracking progress towards equality. Particular attention to be paid to groups where they experience persistent employment penalties e.g. mothers with young children amongst others.

*How the contributions made during the public consultation of the evidence base have been integrated within/dealt with?*

- While the emphasis of the Economy theme has changed, therefore specific points made on particular sections may not be strictly relevant, however, comments made have been read and digested with attention paid to overall messages. These are being taken account of in the ongoing refinement of the economy section, in particular the need to include consultation results as part of the evidence base and the Sustainable Development Commission's five revised principles.

## **2. Access to suitable, attractive employment and skills**

*Why was the high level strategic issue chosen? (using evidence base and theme lead's expertise on subject area)*

- Earnings levels in most parts of Devon are significantly lower than the national average, while the cost of living (especially housing) is much higher. Torridge has the second lowest level of workplace based earnings in the whole of the UK. Diversity of quality, fulfilling employment varies significantly, with lack of opportunity for many. Business productivity is generally low away from Exeter (and to a lesser extent in South Hams) and growth forecasts point to low overall growth trends. Some skills issues in North Devon and Torridge especially for higher level skills and getting employers to utilise these. Significant growth points are planned to the east of Exeter and East of Plymouth. All of this evidence has been highlighted by the DEP and is being included in the draft Devon Economic Strategy, which will provide mechanisms for implementation of solutions.

*Why the particular contributory (linked) issues have been chosen? (using the evidence base and the theme leads' expertise on their subject areas)*

- Children & Young People – Skills development and Youth employment in particular and the potential for entrepreneurialism and business opportunities
- Culture - Can provide a major contribution to the economic viability and attractiveness of communities to business. Can also provide spin-off business opportunities in its own right
- Energy – Renewable energy and move towards a low carbon economy can: Contribute to improving financial sustainability of communities; Drives productivity through reducing financial leakage from the economy; has the potential to drive up skills levels and innovation and diversify the employment base in worst performing areas.
- Environment – Ensure improved built and natural environment to contribute to quality of life and community and business sustainability. Environment can act as an economic driver. Can provide a major contribution to the economic viability and attractiveness of communities to business and drive forward innovation and productivity growth. Can also provide spin-off business opportunities in its own right. Transport and communications infrastructure supports successful businesses.
- Health – Major links to quality of life and employability. Satisfying employment often indirectly leads to health benefits
- Housing - Major links to quality of life and community sustainability. Suitable housing needs to be located near to employment. Significant growth points planned for east of both Exeter and Plymouth. Infrastructure development needs to support housing.
- Older People - Major links to quality of life and community sustainability. Higher levels of older people in coastal priority communities (6 out of the 12 communities). Helping older people to utilise skills and experience for benefit of the economy (and also scope to be mentors), driving entrepreneurialism.
- Safer Devon - Major links to quality of life and community sustainability. Safer communities potentially more attractive to businesses
- Strong Communities - Major links to quality of life and community sustainability and the unlocking of economic potential in communities. Potential for greater levels of entrepreneurialism and business opportunities to make a major contribution.

*How the findings of the Evidence Base Theme Reports, Check For sensitivity to equality has informed the issue*

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