

# North Somerset Council

## Report to the Executive

**Date of Meeting: 21 October 2020**

**Subject of Report: Economic Recovery Update**

**Town or Parish: All**

**Member Presenting: Cllr. Mark Canniford, Executive Member Business, economy and employment**

**Key Decision: Yes**

### **Reason:**

The decision to endorse the Visitor Economy Action Plan is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the Local Authority

### **Recommendations**

1. That the Executive note the work undertaken in relation to economic recovery and;
2. That the Executive endorse the Visitor Economy Action Plan for adoption.

#### **1. Summary of Report**

This report provides an update on the economic recovery work undertaken since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes:

- Progress against a series of immediate support projects previously agreed by Corporate Leadership Team and Executive.
- A summary of the new Economic Plan - endorsed via Executive Member Decision 20/21 DE 134
- A summary of the Visitor Economy Action Plan.

### **Policy**

The Corporate Plan states an overall commitment to an Open, Fair and Green North Somerset. Economic recovery contributes to this commitment. More specifically, the projects and associated plans will support the following corporate objectives:

- An attractive and vibrant place for business investment and sustainable growth
- To be a carbon neutral council and area by 2030
- A transport network which promotes active, accessible and low carbon travel
- A broad range of new homes to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability
- A focus on tackling inequalities and improving outcomes
- Partnerships which enhance skills, learning and employment opportunities

## 2. Details

The following table provides an update on the immediate support projects designed to respond to the economic impact caused by Covid-19

Activity	Description	Progress	Impact	Legacy
Outdoor public seating	Provision of appropriately distanced tables and chairs to support local retail, increase confidence, create space for the public to reconnect post lockdown and encourage visits to towns	Provision in three town centres. Project completed on 15 October 2020	Sites were well-used and received positive feedback from businesses and the public. An evaluation of the scheme will be undertaken to fully understand impact and learning for any future opportunities.	The Economy Team is exploring the possibility of purchasing and providing tables and chairs to town centre organisations to enable this activity in future years.
Virtual high streets	Online shopping platforms for each town centre. <a href="https://wearenailsea.co.uk/">https://wearenailsea.co.uk/</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nailsea has launched</li> <li>Weston planned launch 22<sup>nd</sup> October</li> <li>Clevedon and Portishead are still planning</li> </ul>	13 businesses now have digital access, ability to enhance their market reach and improved resilience	Platforms have been built on a self-sustaining model with a proportion of business sales taken to maintain the websites.
Made in NS marketplace	Online marketplace for food, drink and creative businesses whose products are made, grown, reared or produced in North Somerset.	Launched: <a href="https://made.innorthsomerset.co.uk/#/">https://made.innorthsomerset.co.uk/#/</a> (use Chrome)	22 businesses now have digital access, ability to enhance their market reach and improved resilience.	
Cultural programme	A high-quality cultural programme delivered across North Somerset town centres. Designed to promote our places to visitors and encourage dwell time in our town centres.	Launched on 1 <sup>st</sup> September. <a href="http://theatreorchard.org.uk/">http://theatreorchard.org.uk/</a>	Anticipated outputs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 flagship event</li> <li>6 smaller events</li> <li>60 businesses supported</li> <li>5 organisations supported via digital transformation</li> <li>10 face to face work experience placements and 100 webinars</li> </ul>	Pump priming cultural activity should unlock future funding from national organisations. In addition, this programme is aimed at providing business support to build resilience in the sector.
Universal business support	A high-quality universal pre-start, early growth and business resilience service delivered in business convenient and socially inclusive settings. An additional £75k was secured from WoE Growth Hub and matched into the programme.	Launched <a href="https://northsomersetenterpriseagency.co.uk/">https://northsomersetenterpriseagency.co.uk/</a>	The programme will support 830 businesses, deliver 70 new businesses and 60 jobs.	This is 3-year funded programme
Digital inclusion	Project directly targeting the digital divide exacerbated by Covid-19. Supporting with the shift to digital learning, accessing virtual employability support and equipping residents to undertake jobs in the new virtual and remote working environment. Providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One to one assessment and support for individuals</li> <li>Access to IT equipment</li> </ul>	Match funding has been secured from DWP to recruit a project co-ordinator  Anticipated launch date Nov 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>120 households loaned equipment</li> <li>20% supported by a 'digital buddy'</li> <li>80% enrolled on a basic skills course &amp; 20% on L3 course</li> <li>20% engaged with pre-employability providers &amp; 25% moved into employment</li> </ul>	This funding will be used to prove concept and our ability to deliver programmes of support. There will be an opportunity to bid for further funding and we can use evidence from the project to enable this.

An envelope of funding was allocated to these projects and the activities are being delivered within scope of this allocation.



In addition to the immediate support projects a new Economic Plan has been developed and signed off via Executive Member Decision. The Economic Plan and signed member Decision are included as background papers. The Economic Plan commitments are included in appendix 1.

Two of the commitments have already been delivered, including the adoption of an Employment and Skills Strategy (endorsed by Executive in September 2020) and the development of a Visitor Economy Action Plan (VEAP). Endorsement of the VEAP is being sought from the meeting of this Executive. A diagram in appendix 2 shows the relationship between the Economic Plan, VEAP and other strategic documents.

The Visitor Economy Action Plan intends to increase visitor spending and support the retention of this income within the economy, to benefit local employment, businesses and communities. A summary of the VEAP is provided at appendix 3.

### **3. Consultation**

Due to the need to work at pace to review, update and reprioritise our visitor economy work, the VEAP has not been through any external consultation. However, the priorities in the VEAP are informed from consultation with the Economic Renewal Steering Group, which includes

AGM Holdings	North Somerset Enterprise Agency
Alder King	North Somerset LGBTQ+ Network
Alliance Homes	Ovation Finance
Bristol Airport	The Future Economy Group
Business West	The Gold Standard
Chambers of Commerce	The Port
Citizens Advice Bureau	Theatre Orchard
Curo Housing	Triangle Networks
Disabilities Networks	Voluntary Action North Somerset
Federation of Small Businesses	West of England Rural Network
Job Centre Plus	Weston College
Lloyds Bank	

In addition, contact has been made with NS Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) network, Weston Malayalees, North Somerset Bangladeshi Association and Disability Access Group to seek input. In relation to the visitor economy these stakeholders suggested we need to coalesce support around the sector, improve the quality of jobs, focus on environmentally friendly tourism and diversify our offer by focussing on culture and creativity.

The VEAP has been through scrutiny via a special session on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September. Feedback was positive and included a desire to encourage responsible and active tourism.

### **4. Financial Implications**

Beyond the financial implications associated with Economic Plan (covered in the Executive Member Decision 20/21 DE 134), the VEAP and economic update provided in this paper do not commit the council to additional expenditure.



## **Costs**

None

## **Funding**

N/A

### **5. Legal Powers and Implications**

There is no statutory requirement to publish a Visitor Economy Action Plan. However good quality and up to date strategic plans help the Council to carry out its functions effectively

### **6. Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

'Green recovery' is one of the key foundations of identified in the Economic Plan. The Economic Plan commits to a series of priority projects all of which will contribute to delivering the council's climate emergency action plan, for example support for start-up businesses to develop environmentally business models, a focus on sustainable and green tourism, green skills and an inward investment strategy which encourages low carbon activities to locate in North Somerset. The Economic Plan has been developed with the council's Climate Emergency Project Manager and measurement of impact has been aligned with the council's annual emissions report.

The VEAP will prioritise the development and promotion of environmentally friendly tourism activity in North Somerset. It also commits to reviewing our events strategy to align it with corporate priorities – this will include understanding how our events programme can help to meet our emissions target.

### **7. Risk Management**

Both the Economic Plan and VEAP are ambitious and action focussed documents. There is a risk that in adopting such an approach the council raises expectations about its ability to mitigate significant and structural economic impacts caused by Coronavirus lockdown and social distancing measures. However, the risk of not pursuing these plans is that activity continues but is not co-ordinated, targeted or impactful. The risk can be mitigated through clear communication about the role NSC is taking in the various strategic recommendations e.g. influencing, delivering or enabling.

### **8. Equality Implications**

EIAs have been completed for the Economic Plan and Visitor Economy Action Plan. No negative impacts from either piece of work was identified.

### **9. Corporate Implications**

The priorities and actions in the VEAP are not solely attributable to the Economy Team and will require work across the organisation in departments that work directly with residents, businesses and stakeholders. The following commitments will have cross-council/ corporate



implications. Discussions have taken place with the relevant officers to ensure these commitments align with their existing priorities:

- Develop and promote an eco-tourism campaign identifying the environmental benefits of 'staycationing' in North Somerset
- Encourage businesses to adopt the principles of reducing plastic, sourcing food and drink locally and adopting environmentally friendly practices
- Review and retarget our events strategy to respond to demand and economic challenge
- Create links between North Somerset town centre transformation and visitor economy to ensure positive outcomes for the sector.
- Focussed support for accommodation providers to improve the quality of their offer to enable them to appeal to visitors with higher levels of disposable income
- Encourage high-quality accommodation providers to choose North Somerset as a place to expand, invest and set-up

The corporate implications of the Economic Plan were considered in the Executive Member Decision.

## **10. Options Considered**

In relation to the decision to develop a VEAP the following options were considered:

1. Not to develop a VEAP - rejected due to the significantly changed economic landscape and challenges being faced by the sector and its employees
2. Develop a VEAP at a slower pace with a greater degree of external consultation – rejected due to the need to move at pace and the ability to work with partners to strengthen our interventions during delivery.

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### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Economic Plan commitments

Appendix 2: Diagram – relationship of the Economic Plan to other strategic documents

Appendix 3: Visitor Economy Action Plan Summary

### **Background Papers:**

- [North Somerset Economic Plan 2017 – 2036](#)
- North Somerset Economic Plan 2020
- North Somerset Economic Plan 2020 Equality Impact Assessment
- North Somerset Visitor Economy Action Plan
- North Somerset Visitor Economy Action Plan Equality Impact Assessment
- North Somerset Employment and Skills Strategy
- Executive Member Decision – Economic Plan (20/21 DE 134)



## Appendix 1: The Economic Plan Commitments

**Full fibre and 5G:** Ensure next-generation digital connectivity and telecommunications technology is supplied into premises, workplaces and homes.

**North Somerset Local Plan:** Develop evidence led economic input into the new Local Plan to deliver mixed and sustainable communities with new homes, jobs and infrastructure.

**Town centre transformation:** Encourage our town centres to become thriving places to live, work and enjoy.

**Tech adoption:** Ensure businesses can adopt digital technology and maximise the benefits.

**Mobility as a service:** Develop wider access to on-demand transport, mobility services and carbon-efficient local delivery solutions.

**Low carbon inward investment:** Grow North Somerset's green economy by working in partnership with regional inward investment organisations and working with residents to access skills to support the sector.

**Infrastructure for local working:** Provide digital infrastructure and facilities for local working so that our places can realise the maximum opportunities of distributed and flexible working.

**Retrofitting buildings, community energy, renewable energy and carbon reduction:** Maximise benefits of energy efficiency schemes by ensuring local people have the right skills to make the most of the job opportunities.

**Employment and skills strategy:** Focused activity around opportunities for those who have lost their jobs and are disenfranchised from the labour market combined with the provision of opportunities to reskill, upskills and deliver access to further and higher education.

**Strategic employment sites:** Protect jobs and deliver sustainable activity which retains positive outcomes within the economy and benefits local employment, businesses and communities.

**Visitor economy action plan:** Deliver a plan which prioritises the promotion and growth of environmentally friendly holidays, and targeted support to improve the quality and diversity of our visitor economy.

**Creative industries action plan:** Deliver a plan which prioritises sustainability throughout the supply chain, makes the case for investment and nurtures talent.



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**Enhanced business support programme:** Commission a universal pre-start, early growth and business resilience service and support SMEs to develop inclusive practices into their business models, such as employee ownership.

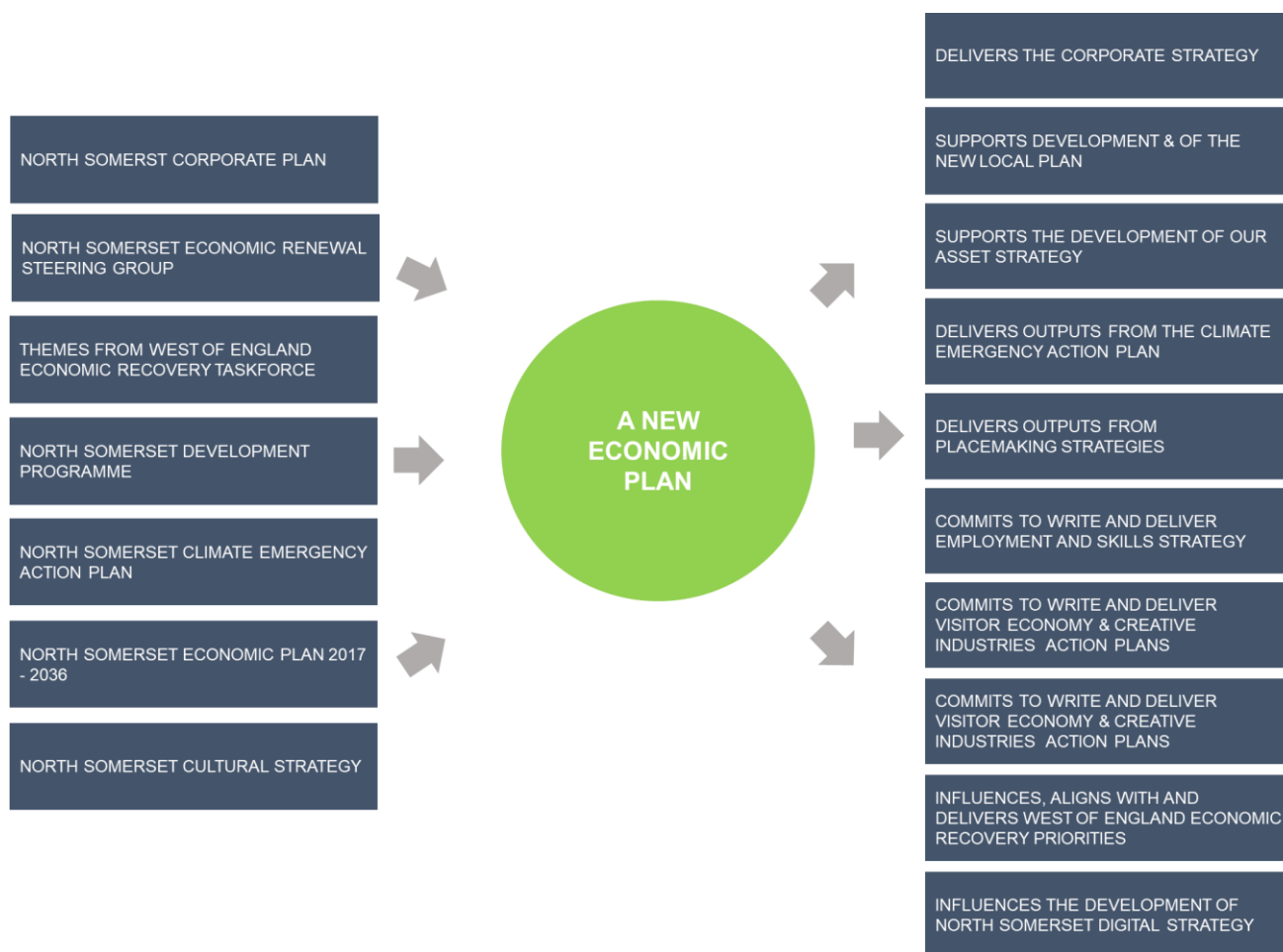
**Voluntary, community and social enterprise:** Work with the sector to help them demonstrate the positive impact they have on the economy and jointly make the case for increased investment.

**J21 enterprise area:** Directly invest and seek investment to help the creation of jobs.

**West of England working:** Prioritise regional partnerships to ensure maximum impact across the West of England to grow businesses, protect and create jobs.



## Appendix 2: Relationship between Economic Plan and other strategic documents







### **Appendix 3: Summary of the Visitor Economy Action Plan**

Prior to Covid-19 tourism was one of the UK's largest and fastest growing industries, generating £106 billion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) a year. In North Somerset it was indirectly worth over £373 million and supported around 7,300 jobs.

However, even prior to Covid-19 the sector had some challenges:

- More visible than valuable – despite employing many people, the industries making up the visitor economy only generate 15.3% of North Somerset's GVA.
- Poorly paid jobs - salaries are on average below other industries in the South West. In addition, ONS data shows that industries typically found in the visitor economy have a higher than average proportion of zero hours and precarious employment.
- Susceptible to economic threats including recession, currency fluctuations, taxation, rising costs and falling revenues. The impact of Brexit on the sector was a cause for concern, both in terms of being able to recruit staff and in terms of the potential reduction of consumer demand.

Layered on top of this, the Covid-19 crisis is having a devastating impact on the sector. There is a lot of data predicting the impact, however at the headline level:

- 84% of accommodation and food services businesses reported reduced turnover
- 63% drop in visitor spend anticipated for the UK as a whole
- Highest level of furlough in sectors represented in the visitor economy and 75% of businesses surveyed in North Somerset said they will need to make some redundancies.

Responding to these challenges, the following page provides a high-level summary of the VEAP.



The action plan:

The table below summarises the action plan priorities, activity already underway and priority projects. NB – the action plan includes more projects and interventions than those listed here. These projects are the priority next steps, due to limited resources to deliver this activity prioritisation is vital.

Priority	What's happening already	What's next (priority actions)
Increase the visibility of North Somerset as a destination and what it has to offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are gathering and maintaining a bank of high-quality images to promote our existing offer which will strengthen and reinforce North Somerset's destination messages.</li> <li>We have explored ways of promoting this new material, for example newly established Visit North Somerset Instagram account.</li> <li>We have launched North Somerset Film Office to maximise the promotional opportunities created by filming and film tourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build partnerships with our Destination Management Organisations and utilise their expertise in promoting North Somerset as a destination by developing a digital marketing campaign.</li> <li>Support content generation projects (selfie spots, tours, trails etc.) that allows visitors to create their own content and spread on social media.</li> <li>Encourage and support our partners to create itineraries designed to deliver what visitors are looking for.</li> <li>Explore partnership opportunities to sponsor signage in key locations e.g. M5</li> </ul>
Increase the value of the visitor economy sector and sub-sectors in North Somerset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiating a partnership with Visit Somerset to deliver a series of targeted workshops to our visitor economy businesses to increase capacity building, productivity, sustainability, levels of accessibility and inclusive growth.</li> <li>Start-up and small business support available for visitor economy businesses via North Somerset and the Growth Hub's investment in a Universal Business Support Programme.</li> <li>Launching Weston Place Making Strategy. This document provides a prospectus to refresh the regeneration vision for the town and align the activities that define the experience (i.e. the product) of Weston.</li> <li>Launching Weston Place Agency, a structure for greater collaborative place leadership between partners in Weston. This will bring focus and unity to a breadth of passion, assets, resources and content of organisations and interests to better broadcast Weston's product and increase value across the town.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-ordinated work with the Employment and Skills Strategy to understand the skills requirements to improve the quality of jobs in the sector and where jobs cannot be saved due to redundancies what reskilling and upskilling needs there are for people effected</li> <li>Focussed support for accommodation providers to improve the quality of their offer to enable them to appeal to visitors with higher levels of disposable income</li> <li>Encourage high-quality accommodation providers to choose North Somerset as a place to expand, invest and set-up</li> </ul>
Increase the diversity of the current offer to better match visitor trends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the adoption of a North Somerset Cultural Strategy the council has directly invested in the North Somerset Cultural Programme to deliver a programme of activity aimed at enlivening our town centres and encouraging new audiences.</li> <li>Launched Made in North Somerset Marketplace to showcase local produce.</li> <li>Delivered outdoor seating areas in our four town centres as a direct response to social distancing impacts on businesses and to encourage visitors.</li> <li>Weston General Stores - £1.7m secured to repurpose redundant retail space in Weston town centre to deliver workspace for collective trading platforms entrepreneurs, micro-manufacturing, events and rehearsal, cycle hub, business support, and skills, learning and employability.</li> <li>Negotiating a partnership with Visit Somerset to undertake market segmentation research to inform business development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and promote a tourism campaign identifying the environmental benefits of 'staycationing' in North Somerset</li> <li>Encourage businesses to adopt the principles of reducing plastic, sourcing food and drink locally and adopting environmentally friendly practices</li> <li>Review and retarget our events strategy to respond to demand and economic challenge</li> <li>Create links between North Somerset town centre transformation and visitor economy to ensure positive outcomes for the sector. Particular focus on cultural offer</li> </ul>