

**REPORT:** Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board  
**DATE:** 19 March 2008  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Environment  
**SUBJECT:** Widnes Waterfront EDZ Performance Plan  
**WARDS:** Kingsway, Riverside and Halton View

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To agree the Widnes Waterfront Economic Development Zone (EDZ) Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) Performance Plan for the financial year 2008/09.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members endorse the annual Widnes Waterfront NWDA Performance Plan for 2008/09.**

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 For NWDA schemes that last more than 1 year it is a requirement of the scheme approval that the delivery organisation, in this case Halton Borough Council (HBC), prepares an Annual Performance Plan. This is attached as Appendix 1.

3.2 In the last financial year up to March 2008 it is likely that £850K of NWDA will be claimed. This is less than originally anticipated mainly due to changes in the Borough's assisted status on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 which meant that two projects each with £0.5million NWDA contribution have been delayed. The main NWDA funded achievements from April 2007 to March 2008 have been:-

- completion of the new access road
- completion of Tanhouse Lane phase 1 improvements
- the start on site of the Gyratory improvements
- Linear park site investigations and design work
- Start of phase 2 gateway landscaping work
- Site investigations at the WRL owned former Croda site
- Approval of NWDA funding for the design of a landmark arts project.

3.3 Further details are contained in section 2 of the draft Performance Plan 2008/09 section 2.

3.3 This Performance Plan is for the third year of a three year programme which has now been extended to four years. The plan has been rolled forward from last year and must be agreed with the NWDA before new expenditure is incurred for which grant will be claimed.

- 3.4 The Performance Plan summarises what the Widnes Waterfront Scheme is intending to achieve in the year 2008/09.
- 3.5 It provides output detail and clarifies how HBC intends to deliver and achieve them.
- 3.6 The Performance Plan will also enable the EDZ Programme Manager to review the progress and activity in the EDZ as a key part of the monitoring and evaluation process.

#### **4.0 LOCATION**

- 4.1 The Widnes Waterfront programme area is situated between Widnes Town Centre and the waterfront environment. Since the construction of large-scale factories, plant and infrastructure in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the riverside environment has been cut off from the remainder of the town. Proposals for the EDZ are designed to regenerate the area and to improve the link between the waterfront and the Town Centre.

#### **5.0 KEY PROJECTS IDENTIFIED FOR 2007/08**

##### **Projects approved in 2006/07 and continuing into 2008/09**

- Tanhouse Lane Landscaping Improvements (phased)

##### **Projects rolled forward from 2007/08 to 2008/2009**

- Completion of the Gyrotory Improvements
- Completion of the Linear Park
- Completion of the Gateway Landscaping Improvements Phase 2
- Completion of Widnes Regeneration Limited Heron Phase 2 Industrial Units
- Completion of the landmark Arts Project

##### **New Projects for 2008/09**

- Utilities Upgrade
- Start on site of Priority Sites Phase 2 hybrid and industrial units
- Replacement of Charterhouse Bridge

- 5.1 Currently the planned expenditure for 2008/09 is £2,916,785.
- 5.2 These projects are detailed in Appendix 1, the Draft Performance Plan. There will be a presentation of the Performance Plan and an update on the progress of the Widnes Waterfront programme to Members at the meeting.

#### **6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None at this stage.

#### **7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The performance plan needs to be agreed by Halton Borough Council, the Urban Renewal SSP and the Northwest Development Agency before projects can be appraised and the allocation spent.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **8.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

None known.

### **8.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

Overall the EDZ will assist on providing job opportunities for local people and will go some way in addressing the level of unemployment in Halton.

### **8.3 A Healthy Halton**

The overall EDZ programme provides new walking and cycling routes which offer a safe and affordable means of accessing key services and thereby can overcome many of the transport barriers often faced by people who do not own or have access to cars.

### **8.4 A Safer Halton**

The EDZ programme will provide much-needed environmental improvements to the area.

### **8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

The EDZ programme is acting as a catalyst to attract developers and new businesses to the Widnes Waterfront area by creating an attractive, well-accessed and serviced area which provides a safe and attractive environment for employees and visitors.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 NWDA funding needs to be spent over the next two years on projects outlined in the NWDA Widnes Waterfront Performance Plan. Changes to this plan need to be agreed with NWDA prior to project development.

- 7.2 Delay in approving this draft performance plan will further delay key decisions for funding agencies ultimately resulting in the loss of some time dependant grants. Without this initiative, several key projects could be affected, and all of the money might not be spent within the time allocated.

- 7.3 The Council will not itself be implementing all of the projects taking place within the EDZ. Therefore, it will need to ensure that the risks associated with the NWDA funding are passed onto those third parties undertaking the projects.

- 7.4 The NWDA funding agreement provides that any breach of the agreement, no matter how technical, can trigger a right for the NWDA not only to refuse future funding under the agreement but also to

reclaim from HBC funding paid up to that date under the agreement. Monitoring of the Performance Plan will minimise this risk.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

The NWDA operates a code of Conduct relating to equality and diversity matters. All NWDA funded projects will have to adhere to this code.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

9.1 There are no background papers within the meaning of the Act.