

a strong local economy

Action Plan 2015 - 2020

2015 - 2016 edition (year 1)



APPROVED, MAY 2015

Note: The format of the Plan will be revised, to show the correct text size and layout, before publication.

www.harrogate.gov.uk/business

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A Strong Local Economy is Harrogate Borough Council's (the council's) number one corporate priority, in support of its over-arching vision for the Harrogate district which is 'The best place to live, work and visit'.

Priority 1: a strong local economy

**Outcomes: Harrogate district
- a place with:**

- 1 A resilient, diverse and expanding economy
- 1 A vibrant tourism experience
- 1 Excellent travel, transport and broadband connectivity
- 1 A world class conference centre

This Action Plan identifies the detailed priority areas in which the council will work with businesses and partners to support the economy of the Harrogate district, over the next five years, 2015-2020.

In identifying our economic priorities we have brought together:

- the council's [corporate priorities](#)

- the views of local companies, business organisations and councillors, Let's Talk Business
- analysis of the latest economic data and forecasts
- our experience from the current Economy Action Plan 2012-2015.
- *Comments submitted in response to the Consultation Draft Plan (March 2015)*

Let's Talk Business:

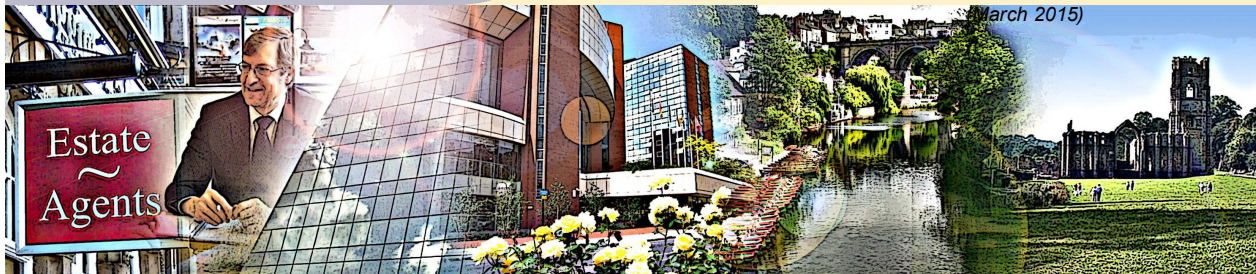
Two-way communication with businesses and partners is central to successfully delivering our work. We value interaction with businesses across the district, to gain their views on the opportunities and challenges they face, and how we can assist them in realising and addressing these.

As part of our continuous engagement with businesses and partners, we hosted 5 successful Let's Talk Business events in October and November 2014, seeking the views of companies and individuals on their priorities to support a strong local economy. The comments and suggestions that emerged from these discussions have been central to informing the format and content of this Action Plan. The priorities that were identified are summarised below:

- Transport infrastructure improvements
- Public transport services
- Housing provision
- Employment sites and premises for business
- Council support for business
- Planning policy and process
- Investment in public assets - supporting the visitor economy

• Education, skills and recruitment
Comments on the Consultation Draft Plan (March 2015) reflected these priorities, with key areas highlighted being:

Traffic congestion and car parking, provision of affordable housing, improved mobile phone and broadband services, the allocation and protection of employment sites and business premises, investment in and management of visitor attractions, including the HIC



Economic Overview:

The latest available economic data and forecasts are valuable in confirming and identifying particular characteristics of the Harrogate district, such as high levels of enterprise and workplace earnings that are notably lower than the national average (whilst average residents earnings are higher than average). The district enjoys 'full employment', with a Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimant rate of less than 1.0%, but with a significant proportion of jobs being in part-time employment.

The latest economic headlines are summarised below, including data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Regional Econometric Model and others. Further details are contained within Appendix B.



Residents of the Harrogate district:

- 158,000 resident population in 2014.
- In 2013, 14% of the district's residents were aged 16-29 years old. This is below the Yorkshire and Humber average of 19%.
- In 2014, 34,500 (22%) of the district's residents were over 65 years of age (*17% nationally*).
- The population of the district is projected to increase by 10,498 over 2012-2037, a 6.6% increase.

The Harrogate district as a visitor destination

- A vibrant tourism offer and growing international profile following a successful Tour de France Grand Départ (July 2014).
- 5.4 million visitors a year (4.7 million day trippers).
- Visitors spend circa £300 million, supporting over 8,000 jobs.
- 500 accommodation providers with over 15,000 bed spaces.
- Over 135 restaurants.
- A world class conference centre that attracted 230,000 people in 2013 - 2014.

The Harrogate district economy in numbers:

- Estimated 13,500 businesses.
- 8,370 VAT registered enterprises.
- 9,680 business premises.
- 95,000 jobs in total = 68,000 full time equivalent (FTE).
- £3.85 billion Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2015.
- An entrepreneurial district - the highest business start-up rate in the region.
- High employment rate - lowest Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimant rate on record (*0.4% of the working-age population, March 2015*).
- Education - 46% of residents are qualified to degree level or above. This is significantly higher than the Yorkshire and Humber and UK averages (30% and 35% respectively).
- Surplus of jobs - 19,500 people travel into the Harrogate district on a workday from neighbouring local authorities, whilst 18,600 leave the district.
- Resident earnings (average full-time, gross weekly pay) - higher than regional average. (£486 in Harrogate district, £479 in Yorkshire and Humber).
- Workplace earnings (average full-time, gross weekly pay) - lower than regional average, (£448 in Harrogate district, £479 in Yorkshire and Humber).
- A high proportion of part-time jobs - driven by a large number of jobs in the service sector - particularly food, accommodation, retail and residential care.
- High cost of living - high and rising house prices and a costly private rental market.
- Size of business premises - smaller than average sized office and industrial premises.

Economic forecasts expect the district's economy to grow by £325 million in GVA (8.4%) and create approximately 2,150 full-time equivalent jobs from 2015 to 2020.

However, growth in GVA has been forecasted at a slower pace than the wider Leeds City Region (11.2%), Yorkshire and Humber (10.8%) and the UK (12.6%). The district's annual GVA is expected to reach its pre-recession peak in 2019 (compared with 2015 across the LCR).

- Wholesale, finance, professional services and media activities will deliver the most GVA.
- Accommodation, food services, media activities and wholesale will deliver the most FTE Jobs.

A regular, quarterly economic overview of the Harrogate district is available to view at <http://www.harrogate.gov.uk/edu/Pages/Local-economy-statistics.aspx>

Facts and Figures

During 2013 - 2014 we:

- delivered 181 one-to-one start-up business support sessions through the Enterprise Gateway.
- delivered 29 Enterprise Gateway business workshops, attracting 248 attendees.
- delivered 4 Chartered Institute seminars, attracting 58 delegates.
- engaged with 60 businesses through our strategic employer engagement programme.
- secured over £1,120,000 grant investment for businesses for projects with an estimated total cost of over £9,040,000.
- received 222 property enquiry searches on our Commercial Sites and Premises web database.
- directly supported the retention of over 90 jobs in the district.
- increased the membership of 'Harrogate for Business' Linked In group by 29%.
- increased the number of subscribers to our free monthly business newsletter to over 1,000.
- attracted 2,718 users of business and economy services.
- received 95% 'excellent or good' customer feedback from attendees of our business workshops and events.
- responded to over 200,000 visitor enquiries through the district's Tourist Information Centres.
- attracted over 130,000 visits to our museums, galleries and Turkish Baths & Health Spa.
- engaged with over 400 tourism businesses.
- attracted 230,000 visitors to Harrogate International Centre (HIC).

Reference: Harrogate Borough Council 'A Strong Local Economy' Action Plan 2012-2015.

Delivering our Strong Local Economy Priorities

At the close of each financial year we publish an Annual Review to highlight the progress and impact of our work to support the local economy. In response to our review, and reflecting any changes in circumstances and resources, our Economy Action Plan is updated annually (March).

The council's own resources are limited and reducing, in both staff and finances, making it necessary to focus our time on actions that best support 'A Strong Local Economy'. Priorities, services and actions are regularly assessed, to ensure our resources are being used effectively and efficiently.

Whilst we need to prioritise our work, we also recognise that we operate in an ever changing environment. The ability to act with flexibility is essential to realising time limited opportunities and challenges. By maintaining strong communication with the wider business community, including the sub-regional Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and local area organisations, we will seek to respond quickly and effectively to changes, such as raising awareness of funding schemes and business information events.

Two-way communication and the active provision of

clear information are also important to the successful delivery of our actions and services. With this pro-active approach we seek to maximise awareness and take-up of the services that support our local economy, from individuals thinking of starting a business, to established and larger employers looking to diversify and grow their company.

We recognise that there are a wide number of stakeholders, partners, businesses and individuals who also have key roles in supporting the local economy, such as Visit Harrogate. A summary of these, and their own priorities and plans, are identified in Appendix B.

We do not expect everybody else's priorities to be the same as ours, because this plan is very specific to us as a district council. By consulting on our 'Strong Local Economy' priorities internally, with councillors and staff, and externally, with businesses and partners, we are building

upon the Let's Talk Business events and encouraging a shared buy-in.

As we develop and implement our priorities we will continue to work closely with our partners and stakeholders, in the private, public and voluntary sectors. Collaboration and pooling of resources are critical factors in our ability to successfully deliver our priorities.

This Economy Action Plan will be led, co-ordinated and delivered by officers across the council. The detail on delivery i.e. 'who at the council needs to do what, and by when' will sit in 'internal' council service plan documents and will be monitored through our normal performance framework.



ECONOMY ACTION 1

A resilient, diverse and expanding economy

Why this is important to the council?

The Harrogate district is successful as a business location, because of its attractive built and natural environment and its highly skilled workforce.

We want to promote and protect these strengths, by:

- supporting the sustainable growth of new and existing businesses, that does not compromise the quality of the environment, and
- encouraging appropriate inward investment into the district, to increase the diversity of sectors and number of high level skilled jobs available.

As the local authority we seek to use our powers and influence to maintain an environment that enables and supports long-lasting business growth across all sectors, creating high-value jobs and a strong economy that is resilient in the face of wider economic changes.



Priority 1a:

Identify and safeguard sites for employment use, to meet current and future business growth needs across the district

Why this is a priority

- Businesses need space to start up, move to and grow in the Harrogate district.
- Businesses have identified the benefits of employment land located near good transport infrastructure.
- Providing a range of business premises is important, with calls for small units in rural areas, high-tech business parks, industrial units, serviced sites and Grade A offices.
- The strength and resilience of the district's economy lies in the fact that its 'sector' base is wide and varied, rather than having 'all eggs in one basket'.
- It is therefore important to maintain and encourage this sectorial and spatial diversity.
- The council, as local planning authority, has a key role in this work area.

In responses to the draft Action Plan, local companies and business organisations have highlighted the importance of identifying further employment sites, and protecting existing premises of all sizes.

What we will do

- Include policies to allocate new land for employment and to protect existing land and premises in employment use, in the emerging Local Plan.
- Include the council's overarching policies for supporting the district's economy in the Local Plan.
- Implement the agreed recommendations of the Employment Land Review 2014/15 (see www.harrogate.gov.uk > planning > Local Plan for updates).
- Monitor the impact of new and amended national planning policy and legislation, such as changes to Permitted Development rights.
- Maintain statistical evidence on demand and supply of commercial land and premises, to inform the planning process and investment decisions.
- Continue to establish and maintain a regular dialogue with private sector developers and commercial property agents, to inform decision making and assist the delivery of employment sites.
- Identify and promote funding opportunities for employment land/premises development (when available) to encourage investment in sites and premises.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Adoption of new employment land allocations and employment land protection policies as part of the [Local Plan](#) by spring 2018.

Priority 1b:

Provide sites for housing, to meet the current and future accommodation requirements of employees, supporting the recruitment and retention of staff and business growth

Why this is a priority

- Some businesses report difficulty in attracting staff due to the cost of housing in the district.
- The provision of affordable housing has been identified by employers as significant in attracting staff.
- The council, as local planning authority, has a key role in this work area.

What we will do

- Include policies to allocate new land for housing and to protect existing land and premises in housing use, in the emerging Local Plan, reflecting the recommendations of the [Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015](#).
- Work in partnership across the council, including the Strategic Development team and the Housing and Operational Property teams, to review corporate land use in order to identify any opportunities for the provision of additional affordable housing for local people.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Adoption of new housing land allocations as part of the [Local Plan](#) by spring 2018.
- Monitoring the number of additional affordable homes provided on current or former council owned land, on an annual basis.

See www.harrogate.gov.uk > planning > local plan > Site Options for an update on the May 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Priority 1c:

Promote and continue to develop a more 'business friendly' approach as Local Planning Authority

Why this is a priority

- We need to address the perception amongst some businesses that as the local planning authority Harrogate Borough Council is not 'business-friendly'.
- This will be about being 'business aware' in our management of planning proposals, and investment opportunities that help to deliver high-quality sustainable developments and facilitate high-level skilled job creation.

What we will do

- Prepare a Service Action Plan setting out a programme of 'business-friendly' improvements within the Planning service, including a revised pre-application advice service and validation process for planning applications.
- Build upon training with council staff and members, to promote and embed the principles of a business-friendly approach in our everyday working life.
- Ensure that all businesses submitting commercial planning applications are in contact with our Economic Development officers. This does not guarantee that applications will always be approved, but it makes sure that the economic benefits/impact of the proposals is fully explained as part of the planning decision process.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Feedback from users of the planning pre-application advice service.
- Feedback from applicants/ agents that have submitted commercial planning applications.

Priority 1d:

Continue to provide and develop information, advice and support services for start-ups and new businesses

Why this is a priority

- The Harrogate district has above average rates of business start-ups. We want to make it easier for people starting a business to access information and advice to support them in their early stages.
- Start-up businesses sometimes do not have the resources to pay for business advice, and yet this is a time when they can benefit from impartial and professional advice.
- There is a lot of information available for start-up businesses but it can be time consuming and confusing for people to try and find out about everything they need to know.
- Businesses have told us they value the council's role in providing information, but that this service could be improved.

What we will do

- Raise awareness of business support for start-ups and new businesses by providing tailored information in all formats at locations across the district, including Business Information Points within community offices, council Customer Service Centres and libraries, via local partners' own communications and through local media.
- *Extend our sponsorship* of the free, start-up business advice service, including 1:1 appointments and a programme of workshops and events, at the Harrogate Enterprise Gateway, until 31 March 2018 as a minimum www.harrogate.gov.uk/enterprisegateway.
- Retain and promote the provision of a free, online database of commercial sites and premises, including the availability of council owned workspace and offices, through our liaison with property agents at <http://propertysearch.evolutive.co.uk/harrogate/>.
- Use electronic communication (including a free monthly e-newsletter) to keep businesses up-to-date with information on council services, events and other sources of support.
- Continue to develop a 'joined-up' council wide approach on providing information for new businesses, in particular via our business information pack, website pages and exhibitor stands at events.
- Sponsor a 'new business' award in the Harrogate Advertiser Business Awards 2015, to recognise and promote the outstanding achievements of a recently established local business.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Number of enquiries received at the district's Business Information Points.
- Number of people attending Enterprise Gateway business 1:1 advice sessions and workshops.
- Written and verbal feedback from Enterprise Gateway clients.
- Number of new business start-ups and jobs created with support from the Enterprise Gateway.
- Number of enquiries received on the Propertyfinder database.
- Feedback from property agents and attendance at the meetings of the Property Agents Forum.
- Increased number of subscribers to our e-newsletter.
- Number of 'hits' on the business pages of the council's website.
- Number of entries for the 'new business' award.

Priority 1e:

Continue to provide and develop information and support services for all established businesses, including high-growth companies, strategic employers and inward investment enquiries

Why this is a priority

- Businesses have told us they value the council's role in providing information and support but that these services could be improved.

NB: Our interpretation of 'strategic' is a flexible one, dependent upon size of business, location in the district and potential for future jobs' growth. The identified significant businesses are not fixed and are kept under review.

What we will do

- Recruit a full-time Business Growth Adviser, in collaboration with the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership, to provide pro-active advice and promote take up of local and national support services by the district's small and medium sized (SME) businesses (initial one-year post in 2015-2016, continuation subject to evaluation and funding).
- 'Strategic' employers in the district are offered a named relationship manager from the council. This officer will work with the employer to address perceived barriers to business operations and growth, e.g. land and premises, skills and recruitment, planning and regulations, using contacts across the council and other organisations and agencies.
- Inward investment enquiries, whether received via the business directly, a developer/agent or other e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership or UK Trade & Investment (UKTI), will be managed by a named officer from the Council's Business and Economy function, with direct engagement from senior officers and politicians as appropriate.
- Sponsor the Harrogate and District Health and Safety Forum's free business information events in 2015-2016 (minimum of three events per annum).

How will we know if we are successful?

- Quarterly monitoring of the number of businesses seen by the Business Growth Adviser.
- Written and verbal feedback from Business Growth Adviser clients.
- Annual monitoring of the number of jobs safeguarded and created as a result of support secured via the Business Growth Adviser.
- Half yearly monitoring of engagement with, and feedback from strategic employers.
- Half yearly monitoring of the number of inward investment enquiries received and feedback on the quality and usefulness of the service provided.
- Review of attendance numbers and delegate feedback at each Health and Safety Forum event.

Priority 1f:

Continue to work with partners in the promotion and take-up of business support and funding by companies in the Harrogate district

Why this is a priority

- We want to make it easier for all businesses to access support and funding, to help them as they start-up, develop and grow.
- There are many organisations delivering business support schemes (grants, funding, advice, mentoring) at a sub-regional, regional and national level.
- We want to make sure that these organisations are aware of and delivering their products and services directly to Harrogate district businesses.

What we will do

- Collaborate with the Leeds City Region (LCR) and York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnerships to maximise the delivery and take-up of their business support initiatives in the Harrogate district.
- Work with chambers of trade, business associations, business networks and other organisations, including those in the Voluntary and Community sector (VSC) to raise awareness of the council's business information and support services.
- Continue to work with public and private sector business support organisations, such as the national Business Growth Service (formerly Manufacturing Advisory Service and Growth Accelerator), Superfast North Yorkshire (SFNY), the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and UKTI, to:
 - ensure two-way communication and a shared understanding of local economic/ business needs and opportunities.
 - facilitate introductions and communication between organisations and local companies.
 - host business information events in the Harrogate district.
 - encourage networking and communication amongst partners
 - *raise awareness of and promote the take-up of business support.*

How will we know if we are successful?

- Quarterly monitoring of the number of enquiries received.
- Number and amount of grants and loans offered by the local enterprise partnerships, to businesses in the Harrogate district.
- Feedback from questionnaires to and surveys of delegates, businesses, clients and visitors.

Priority 1g:

Use our local authority assets, powers and influence to support local economic growth and tackle barriers to growth

Why this is a priority

- We want to use our local authority powers and influence to lobby for investment in the Harrogate district.
- We must ensure that we are maximizing the wide portfolio of property assets we own across the Harrogate district, in support of our corporate priorities.

What we will do

- Use our links with MPs, neighbouring authorities, local enterprise partnerships, partner organisations and central government to lobby and influence on economic investment decisions, including:
 - transport infrastructure and improvements
 - Local Growth Deal funded projects (via Local Enterprise Partnerships)
 - maximising the economic opportunities arising from the proposed closure of MoD barracks in Ripon during 2015 - 2020
 - European funding opportunities (e.g. [LEADER](#) programme in Nidderdale)
- and act as accountable body for external funding if appropriate.
- Review the council's Discretionary Business Rate Relief (DBRR) scheme to ensure it remains fit for purpose and actively supports investment and high-quality job creation in the district.
- Produce a Harrogate Town Centre Strategy and Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- Continue our work with local area regeneration/community partnerships to provide officer advice, information and financial support for projects with a clear economic benefit.
- Regularly monitor and report on the health of the local economy.

Support the Young Enterprise initiative in the Harrogate district, including hosting awards events.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Achievements and progress against our Economy Action Plan priorities are reported via an Annual Review, published *in June* of each year.
- Implement and *then* review a revised [DBRR scheme](#) with effect from April 2015.
- Consultancy work on the [Harrogate Town Centre Strategy and Master Plan](#), including public consultation, completed in 2015.
- Review the impact of our support for local area regeneration/community partnerships, via regular engagement.
- Publish [local economy indicators](#) on a quarterly basis.

Priority 1 h:

Encourage businesses to invest in skills and workforce development

Why this is a priority

- Some businesses identify skills and recruitment difficulties as a 'barrier to growth'.
- Investment in workforce development will bring benefits to local businesses and the people who work in those businesses, helping the wider economy to grow.

What we will do

- Encourage businesses to invest in skills and workforce development, including:
 - Developing links with training providers
 - Offering traineeships and apprenticeships
 - Offering work placements
 - Mentoring a budding entrepreneur
- Work with the Leeds City Region (LCR) and York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to ensure Harrogate district business needs are reflected in their Strategic Economic Plans, Skills Plans and initiatives.
- Identify and promote funding opportunities for skills and workforce development (when available) to encourage local businesses to invest in their staff.
- Actively contribute to the operation of the North Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub, to support new apprenticeships in the district's small and medium sized businesses (SMEs).
- Support appropriate investment in the district's education facilities, e.g. Harrogate College.
- Contribute to delivering the skills and education priorities of the Harrogate Public Services Leadership Board.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Examples of successful work will be shared through case studies.
- SMEs in the Harrogate district recruit apprentices through the support of the North Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub. (Target of 28 new apprenticeship starts with SMEs by March 2016.)

ECONOMY ACTION 2

A vibrant tourism experience

To maximise tourism's contribution to the economy, employment and quality of life in the Harrogate district

Why is this important to the council?

The visitor economy relates to the activity of all visitors within a destination, whether tourists or not. It embraces all the elements that make for a successful and sustainable destination, including the things that attract people to the place, such as the natural environment, our heritage and culture, leisure facilities, food, gardens, parks, events and scenery.

It relates to the infrastructure that helps to reinforce and shape the distinctiveness of the area and make it an easy place to visit; the quality of design, transport, parking, interpretation, public spaces and amenities. It is also served by the hotels and restaurants, theatres and galleries, and the day-to-day services that make a place welcoming and safe.

The visitor economy generates economic and social activity for visitors and residents alike. It not only supports jobs and economic well-being, but it helps to support facilities and amenities for local communities,

encourages residents to stay and spend leisure time in the local area and helps to build distinctive communities, thus increasing local pride and self-confidence. It also enhances the image of an area, turning a location into a commodity, thereby attracting commercial investment from outside the tourism industry by demonstrating to potential investors that the area is good

to locate in. It provides a source of income for the natural and built heritage, providing an economic driver for regeneration and new uses for buildings or land.

With the increased recognition, both nationally and regionally, of the importance of tourism to the economy there are a number of initiatives which could impact ultimately at a local level. The government has announced

a new £10m fund to join up tourism promotional activity across the North of England with a clear focus on increasing numbers of overseas visitors to the north.

The Yorkshire and the Humber local authorities have recently agreed a new five year regional tourism strategy that will impact tourism activity at both regional and sub-regional level.



Priority 2a:

Become a leading resource for access to tourism research and data

Why this is a priority

- There is a need for quality research information to inform strategy and development at a local level.
- To provide information on markets and trends to support existing and new tourism businesses with their development plans.
- Any activity should be tested against the evidence.

What we will do

- Economic impact measures should be measured against a set of economic criteria and be able to demonstrate real economic impact before implementation e.g. can the activity strongly influence visits from outside of Yorkshire?
- We will seek to contribute to and access Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) economic impact data for the benefit of multiple service areas, to align us to the national parks, the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and any future regionally sourced data.
- Customer satisfaction will be gauged via Tourist Information Centre (TIC) visitor surveys.
- Visit Harrogate will continue to develop its local visitor attraction monitor.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Ability to access local data results in more positive investment in new accommodation, attractions and/or events.
- Increase in business satisfaction with data provided.

Priority 2b:

Develop the local tourism product

Why this is a priority

- To create a vibrant and sustainable tourism offer across the district.
- To maximise opportunities for tourism businesses to start up and grow, addressing any existing or perceived barriers to growth.
- The quality and quantity of new and existing tourist attractions, businesses, events and activities is the sum of the visitor experience.
- A vibrant and diverse local tourism product will attract more visitors and encourage more repeat visits.

What we will do

- Ensure effective co-ordination across council services, including: Economic Development, Planning (control and policy, particularly retail strategy and transport investment), to generate, support and manage investment in tourism across the district.
- Keep the need for tourism facilities on the local planning agenda.
- Maintain and develop the district's built heritage and locally distinctive environment, including parks, gardens and open spaces which are key elements of the visitor offer.
- Manage, maintain and keep open to the public the heritage assets under the control of the council, e.g. Knaresborough Castle, the Stray, Turkish Baths & Health Spa and Royal Pump Room Museum.
- Invest in cultural activities and events through financial support for Harrogate Theatre, the Royal Hall, Harrogate International Festival and local festivals and events around the district.
- Investigate opportunities and support new developments where these can demonstrate significant local economic impact.

Priority 2c:

Monitor and maintain the quality of the visitor experience

Why this is a priority

- Visitors come into contact with a wide range of services and facilities during their stay – from where they park their car, the streets they walk along, the retailers they shop at and where they eat, to the attractions they visit and the accommodation they stay in.
- High quality and standards in each of these aspects is equally important to the overall visitor experience and will influence their decision to make return visits and word of mouth recommendations.
- The council provides a wide range of these services or influences the standards of services that shape the quality of the visitor's experience.

What we will do

- Work with council employees/retailers/hotels/taxi firms to deliver tourism focused customer service and tourism product familiarisation.
- Encourage tourism businesses to invest more in workforce development and build links with mainstream business support and training programmes.
- Through its services the council will support a high quality visitor experience by maintaining the existing high quality public realm and cultural offer.
- Work with Welcome to Yorkshire, Visit Britain, the AA, public protection and environmental health teams to ensure all accommodation providers offer a consistently high quality of accommodation, catering and customer service.
- Work with all stakeholders and businesses to ensure that visitors with disabilities have access to all tourism facilities.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Annual visitor survey/ conversion research.
- Quality and quantity of nominations in the Harrogate & District Hospitality and Tourism Awards.
- Customer feedback from all sectors provided via tourism business forums.
- Monitor visitor feedback via social networking and user-generated content sites (e.g. TripAdvisor).

Priority 2d:

Encourage development of new events

Why this is a priority

- Events can draw significant new visitors to the area and further develop the successful reputation for event hosting gained through our experience of the Tour de France.

What we will do

- Build on the district's success in hosting the Grand Départ of the Tour de France by further developing the role of major events in strengthening the local economy, engaging communities and inspiring visitor and local residents.
- Work in partnership with Visit Harrogate to develop and promote the district's event programme as part of our vibrant visitor offer in order to increase visitor numbers, enhance the visitor experience and maximise economic impact.
- Create an events fund utilising savings against the Tour de France budget.
- Support the delivery of two major events in 2015:
 - The Harrogate Big Bike Bash, a major cycling event and community celebration.
 - A 50th Anniversary celebration event of Harrogate International Festivals.
 - Work with the council's legal team to develop extended use of the Stray for large events.
- Encourage future proposals for new opportunities to develop and host major events which could have significant economic and community impact.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Delivery of an event that creates an identifiable increase in visitor numbers, as did the Tour de France.

Priority 2e:

Attract a larger share of regional, national and international tourism markets

Why this is a priority

- Growing the local visitor economy requires activity that will draw more visitors into the district from elsewhere and gain market share from other UK destinations.
- A local destination marketing organisation (DMO) can attract funding from both private and public sector partners to create a greater level of resource in order to compete against better established UK destinations.
- Harrogate Borough Council is the main funder of Visit Harrogate* which has a remit to co-ordinate tourism resources and activity across the district to drive income, innovation and investment.

What we will do

- Allocate £50,000 to Visit Harrogate for three years, 2015-2018, subject to annual review of performance against targets:
 - Build the volume and value of business tourism events through collaboration with other venues and destinations.
 - Develop collaborative working between tourism partners and stakeholders.
 - Develop and consolidate working relationships to enhance the district's regional, national and international profile.
- Provide dedicated officer time to Visit Harrogate in 2015-2016 (1.2 FTE)
- Continue the council's support of Welcome to Yorkshire, giving access to membership benefits to all of the council's visitor attractions and services.
- Implement the recommendations of the Visitor Service Review 2012 by relocating the Pateley Bridge Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in 2014-2015 and bring forward proposals for Knaresborough TIC for implementation after April 2015. Continue to monitor, support and extend services in Masham and Boroughbridge.
- Progress the integration of the council's Visitor Services with Visit Harrogate*.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Annual review and targeted outcomes from Visit Harrogate.
- Monitor Visit Harrogate web statistics.

* Visit Harrogate is the official tourism body for the Harrogate district including the towns of Boroughbridge, Harrogate, Knaresborough, Masham, Pateley Bridge and Ripon. Set up with the support of Harrogate Borough Council and North Yorkshire County Council, it is a non-profit making, public-private partnership with the remit to drive and support tourism in the area.

ECONOMY ACTION 3

Excellent travel, transport and broadband connectivity

Why is this important to the council?

The movement of people and goods is essential for a strong local economy on a variety of levels. To enable businesses to attract employees and customers; for goods and services to be moved efficiently to regional, national and international markets, and for visitors to easily access events and attractions across the district.

In our engagement with local businesses transport related issues are repeatedly highlighted as a major concern and key priority for investment and improvements.

This was highlighted in the responses to the Consultation Draft Plan, with transport connections and traffic congestion being key issues.

Comments and suggestions range from changes to the local road network, to assist traffic flow and reduce travel times, to the provision of new rail halts. Much of the responsibility for local transport lies with North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC). We will continue to work with the county council to be pro-active locally and nationally in lobbying for investment in all our transport networks.

We want to ensure that, where possible, the district secures infrastructure improvements and funding for its air, road, rail and bus links and networks, together with significantly enhanced facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

Broadband connections and the speeds have become of increasing importance, and we are actively working with SFNY, and on the promotion of the new Broadband Connection Vouchers Schemes, to provide and improve services across the district .



Priority 3a:

Lobby for Rail Improvements

Why this is a priority

- To provide improvements for rail users across the district.
- To make Harrogate more attractive as a visitor destination.
- The Leeds - Harrogate - York rail line is growing but the poor quality of rolling stock and limited frequencies provide constraints to growth and inhibit the opportunity for rail to be as attractive as driving.
- Rail growth is high on the national agenda currently and we need to capitalise on any available opportunities.
- There are a number of rail infrastructure projects on-going which will benefit from council support.

Many local companies and business organisations, including the Harrogate Chamber of Trade, have told us how important rail services are to the operation of their business.

What we will do

- Work with the new Inter City East Coast franchise to realise the increased level of Harrogate to London service outlined in their franchise bid.
- Support future East Coast mainline infrastructure improvements to maximise service provision in future.
- Respond to any High Speed Two consultation or studies to represent the needs of Harrogate district.
- Work with the existing and future Northern franchise holder to bring about service, ticketing and information improvements where possible.
- Work with Northern Rail, NYCC and other partners to assist in bringing about improvement to Harrogate rail station.
- Lobby for improvements to other rail stations in the district if a suitable opportunity arises.
- *Continue to* lobby for the Leeds - Harrogate - York rail line to be electrified and support the enabling infrastructure developments of double tracking and signalling improvements.

How will we know if we have had a positive impact?

- Growth in passenger numbers through stations across the district.
- Improved level of service on the Leeds - Harrogate - York rail line.
- Enhancements to rail stations in the district.

Priority 3b:

Lobby for, or lead on (where appropriate) improvements to the road, public transport, air, bicycle and pedestrian networks

Why this is a priority

- New infrastructure is essential in order to improve the quality of facility available to various types of transport user.
- Traffic congestion in Harrogate and Knaresborough has been identified as an economic constraint by the LEP.
- As a result it is important both to provide new infrastructure to help alleviate the issue and to ensure there are quality alternatives in place to using the car.
- Connections to key locations, such as Leeds Bradford Airport, are imperative to ensure the district is highly accessible.

What we will do

- Jointly commission a new traffic model for the district with NYCC to provide a tool suitable of assessing future highway implications and able to model solutions to the current congestion problems.
- Aim to work with the government as part of their Cycling Delivery Plan to provide a mechanism for delivering new, and improving existing, cycling infrastructure.
- Deliver the actions contained in our travel plan to lead by example in Harrogate and show intent to reduce single occupancy car use to free up road space for those who need it most.
- Integrate transport into our Local Plan.
- Monitor funding opportunities that may be able to bring about improvement to transport networks.
- Work with NYCC (when required) to bring about road, public transport, cycling and walking improvements.
- Support the growth of Leeds Bradford Airport, where appropriate, support any associated surface access improvements and support improved flight opportunities.

How will we know if we have had a positive impact?

- Cycling partnership established with the government.
- Increase in walking, cycling and public transport use.
- More schemes developed that are ready for funding bids.

Priority 3c:

Lobby for improved access to higher speed broadband and mobile coverage

Why this is a priority

- Some parts of the Harrogate district have slow, or no broadband coverage and limited mobile coverage, particularly the rural areas.
- Access to higher broadband speeds and better use of IT can make businesses more competitive and help create more employment opportunities in rural areas.
- Superfast North Yorkshire (SFNY) is the lead organisation for fibre broadband and there is a benefit for a council officer to act as a point of contact for the Harrogate district.

The new Broadband Connection Vouchers Scheme is currently time limited, with grants available on a first come/first served basis.

What we will do

- Continue to act as the Harrogate District Broadband Co-ordinator for Superfast North Yorkshire (SFNY).
- Raise awareness with businesses and communities of the benefits of improved levels of broadband as they become available, through the rollout of fibre broadband.
- Work in partnership with SFNY to bring forward community schemes for the 10% of premises within North Yorkshire outside of the range of the new fibre network.

Promote the take-up of the Broadband [Connection Vouchers](#) Scheme, supporting businesses and social enterprises to obtain a grant of up to £3,000 to upgrade to faster, better broadband

How will we know if we have had a positive impact?

- Number of companies in the Harrogate district that use SFNY business support programmes.
- Number of schemes to progress upgraded broadband, outside of the range of the new fibre network.
- The percentage of the district with access to higher speed broadband services.

Number of Connection Voucher applications awarded, each quarter.

ECONOMY ACTION 4

A world class conference centre

Sustain Harrogate International Centre (HIC) as a major UK conference and exhibition centre

Why is this important to the council?

HIC is owned by the council and its purpose is to create sustainable benefits to the local economy through direct and indirect employment, and business visitor spend in the district. In 2013-2014 HIC generated a district wide economic benefit of £47m and is forecast to generate a benefit of £62m in 2014-2015.

The attraction of the Harrogate district as a destination is a key factor in why organisers choose HIC, and we will work hard to ensure that all our local services are co-ordinated and focused on delivering the best service.

In managing the HIC we will ensure that all our stakeholders have confidence in the management of the venue, are aware of the events taking place, its direct financial impact and its wider economic impact.

In March 2013 HIC set out a five year plan with the following key objectives:

- Increase tenancy revenues by 5% year on year over the next three years (2013, 2014, 2015), by 10% in 2016-2017 and by 12% in 2017-18.
 - Secure a minimum of 70% repeat business by improving our sales packages and agreeing three year contracts for all key annual events.
 - Increase revenue and margin from the sales of additional services by 10% year on year.
 - Invest 10% of income from lettings and ancillary services to re-investment in HIC.
 - Invest 20% of income from event waste charges into onsite waste sorting and recycling initiatives (£7,000 in 2015-2016).
 - Invest 20% of annual electrical income into energy saving initiatives such as occupancy sensor switching of lighting in foyers, circulation areas, toilets and staff areas (£30,000 in 2015-2016).
 - Achieve an occupancy rate of 200 days in the Royal Hall by 2018.
- Our sales strategy is focused on six specific business objectives:
- Winning short lead business, primarily corporate events, to improve HIC's short term financial performance and fill gaps in the venue diary.
 - Increasing our share of the national association conference market by developing relationships with organisers and bidding to host future events.
 - Winning back lapsed customers who have used HIC in the past but no longer bring events to Harrogate.
 - The retention of existing events, particularly the larger exhibitions, aiming to secure three to five year long-term contracts.
 - Securing new exhibitions, particularly consumer shows by promoting HIC and Harrogate itself as a great venue and location to launch new shows.
 - Attracting events to Harrogate that can make use of the venue, when it is not being used for business events, which have significant benefits for the district such as the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival and the British Association of Barbershop Singers. As well as working in partnership with Harrogate Theatre to attract and promote entertainment events in both the Royal Hall and the main auditorium.

Priority 4a:

Investment in the facilities at HIC

Why this is a priority

- HIC operates in a competitive, sophisticated market where venue supply outstrips demand.
- Investment in HIC creates resource challenges for the council. However it is essential to ensure that the venue can compete effectively in the future as there is such a long lead time for major events.

What we will do

- Respond to customer feedback and the venue competition by investing in the facilities, including the long term property maintenance needs, as well as updating and replacing plant and equipment to ensure reliability and energy efficiency.

How will we know if we are successful?

- Monitoring customer feedback on a regular basis.
- Reviewing progress of the 10 year HIC Investment Plan, 2015-2025.
- Securing long-term event bookings.

Priority 4b:

Secure new business at HIC

Why this is a priority

- Over reliance on existing repeat bookings leaves HIC and the council financially vulnerable in the long term, particularly during a recession.

What we will do

- Produce and deliver a clear marketing plan to support the sales strategy, which focuses on market research and analysis, promotional buyer events, public relations, direct mailing, website, e-shots, advertising, winning industry awards and exhibiting at key regional and national exhibitions.
- Ensure that HIC prices are competitive. Review sales packages in order to deliver more inclusive services which ensure that customers receive value for money whilst margins are maintained.
- Continue to invest in the training and recognition of good service in our staff and emphasise good service in all communications with our customers and prospects.
- Continually ask our customers what they think of the HIC venue and services.
- Identify longer term development needs for the HIC site, to meet the requirements of potential future events, including the production of outline proposals and feasibility.

How will we know if we are successful?

- HIC annual marketing plan produced by September each year.
- New events secured.
- Reviewing customer feedback.
- Long-term bookings secured.

Priority 4c:

Secure repeat business at HIC

Why this is a priority

- Retaining existing business ensures that the venue is more financially resilient over the longer term and provides the confidence to invest in the future development of the site.
- A sustained diary of regular repeat events also provides confidence in partner businesses to invest in the district for the long term.

What we will do

- Produce and deliver a clear marketing plan to support the sales strategy, which focuses on market research and analysis, promotional buyer events, public relations, direct mailing, website, e-shots, advertising, winning industry awards and exhibiting at key regional and national exhibitions.
- Ensure that HIC prices are competitive. Review sales packages in order to deliver more inclusive services which ensure that our existing customers receive value for money whilst margins are maintained.
- Continue to invest in the training and recognition of good service in our staff and emphasise good service in all communications with our customers and prospects.
- Continually ask our customers what they think of the HIC venue and services.
- Identify longer term development needs for the HIC site, to meet the requirements of existing events, including the production of outline proposals and consulting with existing event organisers.

How will we know if we are successful?

- HIC annual marketing plan produced by September each year.
- Repeat events secured.
- Reviewing customer feedback.
- Securing long-term bookings.

Appendix A

Monitoring the economy of the Harrogate district, February 2015

Monitoring the economy
<http://www.harrogate.gov.uk/edu/documents/EconomicOverview.ppsx>

These statistics are the latest available at the time of publication (February 2015).

More information, including the Quarterly Economic Overview, is available at www.harrogate.gov.uk/business

Appendix B

Policy context, spatial and strategic influences

The majority of the Harrogate economy (approximately 80%) is most strongly influenced by relationships with the wider Leeds economy, particularly Harrogate town itself. The remaining 20% (including some of the market towns and rural areas) has more affinity with the North Yorkshire economy. Working relationships with partners in both the Leeds City Region and York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas are therefore both important for Harrogate Borough Council.

The council's Corporate Plan sets out our long-term vision for the Harrogate district, including Priority 1: A Strong Local Economy, which relates directly to this action plan. A wide number of other strategies, policies and other factors influence the economic-related work and priorities of the council, and have been considered when developing this document. The following 'influences' are worthy of particular note:

Harrogate Borough Council/Harrogate District Context

- Local Plan 2001.
- Core Strategy 2009.
- Visit Harrogate, Destination Management Organisation for the district.
- Harrogate Public Services Leadership Board.
- North Yorkshire County Council Local Transport Plan - Harrogate.
- 'Functional' Economy Context, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and regional areas.
- Leeds City Region (LCR) Strategic Economic Plan, 2014+

- York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Strategic Economic Plans, 2014+
- Superfast North Yorkshire - extending the roll-out of faster broadband across the county.
- Welcome to Yorkshire.

Chambers of trade and business associations in the Harrogate district

National context

- White Paper on Local Growth.
- Localism Act.
- Department for Communities and Local Government - Growing Places Fund.
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs - Rural Economy Growth Review.
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport - Broadband Delivery UK.
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport - Government Tourism Policy.
- Department for Transport - Local Transport Policy.
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

European context

- The European Strategic Investment Fund (ESIF) Programme, 2014 - 2020, incorporating:
 - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).
 - European Social Fund (ESF).
 - European Agricultural, Fisheries and Rural Development (EAFRD) which is delivered in England via the government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and its Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

Appendix C

Monitoring and reporting performance on Action Plan priorities

Service indicators: These are about monitoring the impact and success of the actions identified in this Economy Action Plan

Indicator	2015 – 2016 <i>target</i>	2014 – 2015 <i>target</i>	2013 – 2014 actual
Percentage of council business services customer feedback that is good or excellent ¹	tbc	Target:95% Actual: 92 %	Initial target: 85% Actual: 95%
Number of people using council business services ²	tbc	Target: 3,200 Actual: 3,021	Initial target: 2,200 Actual: 2,745
Number of visitors to the council's 'business' webpages	tbc	<i>Base line for 2015 – 2016 target</i>	13,000
Number of business 'assists' ³	tbc	tbc	201
Number of business start-ups via Enterprise Gateway ⁴	tbc	tbc	40

Visitor Economy service - Performance Indicators TBC

HIC service - Performance Indicators TBC

(Footnotes)

- 1 Based on customer feedback questionnaires for users of business and economy sponsored events and business services
- 2 Commercial property enquiries, business support enquiries, e-newsletter subscribers and LinkedIn users
- 3 Businesses receiving 'hands on' support from business and economy delivered/ funded service e.g. Enterprise Gateway, Inward Investment enquiries, Strategic Employment Engagement (and SME Growth Adviser,2015 onwards)
- 4 Number of Enterprise Gateway users that actually start up in business