

Market and Coastal Towns Association



Community Studies

Lot 2: Support for Communities in Project Plan
Development

Watchet

30 June 2008

Report no:FO5-NE02984



Market and Coastal Towns Association



Community Studies

Lot 2: Support for Communities in Project Plan Development

Watchet

Author: Claire Pugh

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Pugh', positioned above a horizontal line.

Checker: Gareth Denning

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G.R. Denning', positioned above a horizontal line.

Approver: Gareth Denning

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G.R. Denning', positioned above a horizontal line.

Report no: F05-NE02984

Date: 30 June 2008

This report has been prepared for Market and Coastal Towns Association in accordance with the terms and conditions of appointment for Community Support dated May 2008. Hyder Consulting (UK) Limited (2212959) cannot accept any responsibility for any use of or reliance on the contents of this report by any third party.

Hyder Consulting (UK) Limited

2212959

HCL House, St Mellons Business Park, St Mellons, Cardiff CF3 0EY, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)870 000 3001 Fax: +44 (0)870 000 3901 www.hyderconsulting.com



Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Watchet Economic Strategy	3
3	Additional Information	11
3.1	Suggested Format for Economic Strategy Brief	11

1 Introduction

Hyder Consulting were commissioned by the Market and Coastal Towns Association (MCTA) in May 2008 to provide consultancy support to six town partnerships throughout the north of the South West region. Hyder were appointed to assist the following towns:

- Cirencester
- Highworth
- Stonehouse
- Watchet
- Wellington
- Yate

Each of the towns required assistance in prioritising projects that have emerged through the preparation of their Community Strategic Plan.

During the course of the study, the community plans of the different towns and communities engaged have thrown up a variety of challenges and opportunities. However, the communities and individuals involved have displayed a number of common characteristics that have made the work very rewarding for the consultants involved. This has included:

- A strategic understanding of the importance of market towns and their role in sustaining rural and urban communities;
- A commitment to their local areas and the development of their communities;
- A wish to see the principles of sustainable, economic and physical development applied;
- The willingness to develop and move forward through partnership work; and
- Innovative ideas and practices on how to make their plans work.

This short report summarises the project that the Watchet Action Strategic Partnership Group (WASP) has identified as being their priority for action in the short and medium term. The proforma format is intended to enable key stakeholders to easily identify the intentions of the group as they seek to implement the Strategic Plan, and recognise where their support may be required. The proforma also aims to provide answers to the questions that will be asked by potential funding bodies and attempts to provide a way forward for the partnership in progressing the project's development.

We trust the work done by Hyder will support the development of Watchet and the implementation of their community plan.

If any further clarification and information is required please contact me at the address provided.

2 Watchet Economic Strategy

The following proforma has been compiled in accordance with the format provided by the MCTA at the onset of the commission and with reference to the Watchet community plan, the consultation undertaken in its preparation and meeting with WASP.

Upon meeting with WASP it became apparent that the need for an economic strategy for Watchet was considered to be the priority for action. The intention of the strategy would be to inform the partnership and the Town Council of how best to meet the requirements of existing businesses within the town, and provide pointers for how the town can diversify its economy. The starting point for this would be to identify potential funding sources for commissioning the strategy, demonstrating the benefits it will bring and highlighting key issues that will enable potential consultants to clearly identify with the requirements of the partnership. This is the task the study team have focussed on and is reflected in the project proforma on the following pages

The proforma has been issued to the MCTA and SWRDA for further consideration and appraisal.

MARKET AND COASTAL TOWNS ASSOCIATION	
PROJECT PROFORMA	
Project Title:	Economic Strategy for Watchet
Community Agent/ Lead Contact:	Carol Stone/Sally Renzy Martin
Organisation:	Watchet Action Strategic Partnership (WASP)
Address:	C/O Watchet Town Council
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	carolstone@ukonline.com/ raffles@btinternet.com
Brief Description of the Project	
<p>To undertake an Economic Regeneration Study for Watchet.</p> <p>The project includes securing the funding, compiling the brief, commissioning consultants and overseeing the delivery of an Economic Regeneration Study of the settlement of Watchet.</p> <p>Core components of the brief should include the need to establish a baseline of the existing economy and the need to devise a series of project recommendations to ensure the long term sustainable economic growth of the town..</p>	
Needs and Opportunities	
<p>The following needs have been identified from a variety of sources to inform the type of study that will help the Watchet Strategic Action Partnership to achieve their stated objectives :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A lack of up to date comprehensive data on the economy of Watchet. ▪ Currently an absence of agreed actions or initiatives to directly contribute to the economic growth of the town. ▪ The 2005 study for West Somerset on Economic Research and Development identified several strategic issues that require attention in Watchet. This includes the fact that the local working population are looking further afield for work, a comparatively higher proportion of people employed in declining industry sectors, a lack of local business support for the work of the Partnership and an absence of a business register. As far as can be determined, there is no action plan in place to push forward progress <p>The following opportunities have been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential for existing business sites and the town centre for accommodating new businesses in the area. ▪ The potential to brand the town as a 'low carbon town' offering a unique selling point, with the hope of attracting specialist businesses and improving the tourism sector. ▪ The need to investigate the needs of smaller businesses and home workers in 	

the area (which is common throughout Somerset and Watchet)

Aims and Objectives

The production of an Economic Regeneration Study will address the following aims of the WASP Community Strategic Plan:

To foster a resilient local economy by encouraging and supporting existing and new businesses

Maximising Opportunities for inward investment and promotion

Provision of skills training

Encouraging expansion, innovation and diversification

The following objectives have been identified to achieve these aims:

- Provide a Baseline all existing businesses within Watchet
- Identify existing business needs, and understanding what can be done to assist their continued/increased success in the future
- Understand the importance of home-working, what employment sectors undertake this type of working, what is attractive about home-working
- Identify barriers to attracting new businesses to the area, how can these barriers can be removed/alleviated
- Identify potential growth sectors of the economy
- Establish ways to develop a unique selling point for Watchet- identifying a niche sector, such as a low carbon economy
- List priority actions/projects for the economy based on the baseline information

This is by no means an exhaustive list, and the partnership and identified project partners may consider other issues need to be addressed.

Strategic Fit (including national, regional and local policies, strategies and initiatives)

This section outlines the National, Regional and Local policy/strategy documents that are supportive of the project.

National

“England’s rural areas: steps to realise their economic potential” Commission for Rural Communities (2007), this document was produced to advise the government how rural communities can be strengthened, it demonstrates the huge contribution rural communities make to the National economy, and suggests ways in which the rural economy can be strengthened. Within the report it is stated that -

“In some areas rural businesses are contributing proportionally less economic output than would be expected from their share of employment or business base. This means the existence of unfulfilled potential from firms and workforce in rural England. The challenge is to extend growth

and productivity across more firms, employees and communities in rural areas”

Regional

Regional Economic Strategy for the South West

The strategy provides broad level objectives for the South West of England for the period 2006-2015. The strategy acknowledges the importance of market towns and rural areas in economic terms, and stipulates that-

“The key to successful rural communities is flexibility. This should allow support to be given to local solutions that meet the needs to the changing needs of rural communities. It will be important to address key access to services , affordable housing and significant changes to agriculture”

Delivery actions between 2006-2009 relevant to this project are identified as-

- Secure a sustainable future for rural areas

Local

Somerset Economic Strategy (prepared by Somerset Strategic Partnership)

The strategy sets out the visions and objectives for the economy until 2015

Chapter 3 of the Somerset Economic Strategy states that-

- Somerset’s Market towns are key employment and service centres for their surrounding rural areas and their future competitiveness is key to the development of the County’s rural economy ;
- Nevertheless many of Somerset’s market towns currently have a narrow economic base and are vulnerable to future decline. Strengthening the economic base of these towns and combating constraints on their competitiveness are key issues

West Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010 (Produced by the West Somerset Strategic Partnership)

The strategy sets out the objectives/aspirations of the community for West Somerset on a number of themes. Objectives of relevance to this project include-

- To make West Somerset a quality location for business by providing adequate land and premises for workspace
- Providing relevant, accessible business support and promotion

Economic Research and Development Strategy in West Somerset (Clive Miller and Associates) 2005

The issues identified in this report are discussed within the Needs and Opportunities section.

Partnership Working

This project will require strong partnership working. Watchet Action Strategic Partnership Group will be responsible for gauging interest from stakeholders in forming a steering group, and to oversee that the various stages involved are overseen and carried through.

Other partners that should be involved include-

- Watchet Town Council
- West Somerset District Council (to include Economic Development and forward planning sections)
- West Somerset Strategic Partnership (this group comprises a number of members such as, local businesses, the police, National Health Service, education, employment and Local authority, as well as not for profit organisations). They will be important to involve as they can help draw up the project brief, and help identify the desired outcomes of the project.
- Somerset Strategic Partnership - the partnership has a similar structure to the West Somerset Strategic Partnership, but at a higher spatial level; the partnership could help form the project brief, and could also help in identifying sources of funding
- Watchet Association of Commerce, Enterprise and Tourism - this organisation should be involved as they can feed in the views of local businesses on what they feel the issues are and what they would like the study to achieve.
- Smaller businesses - these businesses may not be represented by Watchet Association of Commerce, Enterprise and Tourism, however their views are equally important, and so they should be involved with the study.

Actions and Implementation (what key actions and milestones are necessary to make the project work?)

This section sets out what stages are involved with a brief description of each stage.

Stage 1 - Creation of steering group, to include businesses representatives, local councillors, and other individuals with an interest in the project. Momentum at the local level is needed to drive the project forward; also the steering group are able to feed information about local issues which the consultant and other partners may not be aware of.

Stage 2- Steering group to liaise with the partners to identify and apply for funding to enable the commission of the study. A project brief will also need to be prepared to set out what the consultants need to do, and should also set out the timescales in which to complete the work.

With regard to the concept of a low carbon economy, the partnership may specify within the brief that the consultants investigate ways in which to achieve this. It may be useful to look at examples of other smaller towns which are adopting a carbon neutral/ low carbon economy. Examples of such towns include Biggar, South Lanarkshire, Scotland; Stirling, Scotland and Ashton Hayes, England.

Stage 3 - Go out to tender for a consultant, followed by interviews with those shortlisted and then appointment of an agreed consultant to carry out the study.

Stage 4- Appointment of Consultant

Stage 5- Inception meeting with the appointed consultant, involving all partners, to ensure the methods of consultation are agreed and that there is an understanding of what the study needs to achieve

Stage 6- Consultants undertake study, whilst reporting back to the partnership at agreed intervals, as agreed in the project brief and inception meeting.

This process is likely to involve discussions with local commercial agents to discuss demand and

need for business units, interviews with businesses (by telephone or by person - this should be agreed at the inception meeting)

Stage 7- Agreeing the priority actions with the consultant that arises from the baseline information.

Stage 8- Production of final report

Geographical Area the project covers

Due to the nature of the study there is not a focus on a specific area within Watchet. The study will need to assess the economic conditions for the whole of Watchet. The study area boundary could be the electoral ward boundary, or the partnership and partners may deem a specific boundary that is more appropriate to the particular requirements of the study and being firmly based on local knowledge.

Timelines (How long will it take for the project to be delivered and what are the key milestones?)

Task	Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Steering Group		■	■										
Produce project brief and identify funding				■									
Tender and Appointment of Consultant					■	■							
Inception meeting							■						
Consultants undertaking study- reporting back and interim report								■	■	■	■	■	
Agreeing Priority Actions												■	
Production of Final Report													■

The chart above outlines the approximate timescales of each of the stages, again this should be used as an indicative guide, and will be dependent upon circumstances such as local momentum to take the project forward and the availability of funding.

From inception to completion as the timetable indicates we have estimated the project would take

12 months.

Value (including costs and funding sources)

Aside from the time cost anticipated from the compilation of the study brief, the commission of an economic regeneration strategy is anticipated to be in the region of £20,000-£25,000.

Factors likely to affect the actual cost of the study include the requirements of the brief in terms of consultation detail.

Potential sources of funding for the study include-

- **Somerset Rural Renaissance Scheme (2009-2009)**- Somerset Rural Renaissance Partnership have been awarded £150,000 from SWRDA to spend on projects between 2008-2009. Two deadlines are in place to receive bids for funds, the first is September 1st 2008 and the second is November 1st 2008 (if any funds remain) The funds are available to organisations that develop projects that will be of benefit to a range of businesses - early discussions with funding officers is advisable to help put together an evidence base to demonstrate the need for funding.
- **Somerset County Council Rural Regeneration Fund**- grants of £5000 are available for projects, provided they meet one of the criteria set, for this project the relevant aim/objective is diversifying and developing Somerset's rural economy- the fund is open to community organisations and social enterprises. Again early discussions should take place to find out if the project is eligible for funding

Impact

The impacts of the project are set out below:

Key action	Impact in needs and opportunities
Creation of a Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong and robust partnership between public and private sectors • A more comprehensive business base • Businesses are engaged and feel increased commitment to Watchet
Comprehensive list of businesses, their needs and, vacant units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of the economy and how it works • Data that can be utilised to benchmark future success • Implementation of initiatives to reduce vacancies
Identification of Priority Actions for the Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses witness real action for Watchet, and feel more positive about the economy • Potential to use the action plan as a marketing tool to attract new businesses

Risk Assessment and Management

Risk	Management
Lack of willingness to form steering group	WASP to explain project to relevant partners and stakeholders, and what the benefits of the project will be. It will also be important to explain how their involvement will contribute to the success.
Funding Application turned down	Ensuring the project meets as many of the funding criteria as possible. Provide as much supporting evidence to demonstrate why the study is needed and the associated benefits of undertaking the study
Low Response rates from Businesses	Prior to the surveys taking place, ensure that local businesses are advised of the study taking place, and the benefits to them for participating in surveys i.e.; potential funding for future projects such as business support networks etc...
Identification of additional support funds from the partners	Continued engagement with partners to identify other sourcing of funds for the priority actions /projects identified in the study, to ensure their delivery

3 Additional Information

In addition to the project proforma, the following information has been prepared to assist the Partnership in progressing the next stages of the project.

3.1 Suggested Format for Economic Strategy Brief

1. Introduction

- Requirements of the Brief

To undertake an Economic Study for Watchet on behalf of WASP and its relevant partners

- Purpose of the study

To identify the factors that are currently restricting the economic growth of Watchet, to undertake a comparative study of similar sized settlements based on valuable baseline data created during the course of the study

- Output expected from the study

A Report containing an economic profile of Watchet, an analysis of comparative towns, the results of any focus groups, surveys and consultations to provide an accurate portrait of the state of the economy in Watchet

2. Detailed description of what is required

- Client details
- Point of contact
- Role of WASP/Town Council Steering Group
- Procedure for consultant to report back to client

2.1 The Study

- Description of the Scope of work

2.2 Expectations

- Desk Review of existing economic data and associated reports
- Review of local public and voluntary sector strategies
- A review of the role that tourism plays in Watchet
- A review of the role of the marine based sector

- A review of the role of independent traders/ cottage industry/ home workers
- An analysis of the workspace requirements of Watchet
- A benchmarking comparison with settlements of a similar size and characteristics at a local, regional and national level
- An action plan detailing potential areas/projects/measures that would facilitate the development of Watchet as an enhanced economic centre

2.3 Methodology – Desk Research, Business Surveys, Focus Groups

2.4 Aims of the Project

2.5 Objectives of the Project

To include:

- To provide key baseline economic data for Watchet
- To collect detailed data for Watchet that will enable a full assessment of the vitality and viability of the town in economic terms
- Understand the effect that Watchet's location has on the broader economy and prioritise actions to help mitigate the future effects of this
- To identify initiatives to help increase the economic prosperity of the town and surrounding areas
- To identify the role of Watchet in helping to deliver the economic strategies of the wider region.
- To work with businesses and retailers to understand their future skill and workspace requirements
- Help to inform/add value to planning and regeneration schemes.
- To adapt best practice from elsewhere to provide guidelines for how Watchet can successfully diversify its economy whilst retaining its identity

3. Background Information

A description of Watchet and the current economic pressures it faces

4. Sources of Economic Information

5. Available resources to assist the consultant

6. Final submission requirements

Number of copies of report required, need for presentation, electronic copy etc.

7. Proposed Timetable

8. Budget and Payment Arrangements

9. Consultant Specification

Description of skills and experience the consultant should demonstrate in the tender return.

10. Tender requirements and selection

11. Contact details for further information.