



investing in children

**Investing in Children Report on the  
Economic Development Planning Day:  
Riverside Cricket Club**

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I was very happy to be chair for the first Economic Development Planning day at the Riverside. I think it was very successful and seemed to be very enjoyable for all those who took part.

Having been involved in a number of Investing in Children projects focusing on specific issues i.e. transport and leisure facilities it was a very positive experience to be part of an event in which adults from the County Council were asking for young peoples ideas rather than young people trying to find adults who were prepared to listen to their views.

Many important issues arose from the day, which, was organised by young people. If the Economic Development Department of the County Council uses some of the possibilities young people outlined on the day I'm sure the County will be improved for the benefit of young people. This, no doubt will have positive rebound effects upon other groups in our community.

One of the most valuable elements of the day was the fact that all the young people involved were from different backgrounds and had had varied experiences. This widened the number of concerns about County Durham expressed and meant we could consider these problems from many angles. It was also brilliant for us all to meet other members of Investing in Children which we had not before!

I hope you enjoy reading this report

**Helen Swanwick**

## **Introduction**

The Durham County Council's Economic Development and Planning Department is responsible for making plans for the future prosperity of County Durham.

This means trying to ensure that County Durham is a place where people want to live and work. It means, for example, making sure there are employment opportunities, and people who can be employed. It means, for example, ensuring that people can get the right sort of training and education to be able to compete for the jobs. It means for example, ensuring that people can get from where they live to where the work is.

It also means making sure that Durham is a healthy place to live, with lots of good public facilities, so that people will see it as an attractive place to stay.

The Department are in the process of producing a 5 year plan. This needs to take account of the views of lots of different groups. Importantly, the Department, and the County Council, recognised that children and young people are one of the groups who have a right to be involved.

This is a new development, and so we have to find new ways of working. The Investing in Children Planning Day was the first step on this road.

The idea was to get a group of young people from around the County to think about the issues involved in Economic Development. Nobody imagined that, on a single day, we would come up with the answers, but what we hoped was we could at least begin the process of talking about what the key questions are.

I think we achieved this objective, and this report outlines the process, and the issues that were discussed on the day. To an extent, that was the easy bit, and the real test will be whether we can build a lasting partnership between the County Council and children and young people.

But, in relation to Economic Development, we have certainly made a start.

**Liam Cairns**  
**June 2001**

John	Ashby	Economic Development Department
Aston	Booth	Ferryhill
Kath	Bryce	County Durham Development Company
Liam	Cairns	Investing in Children
Emily	Card	Newton Aycliffe
Helen	Cottle	Crook
Giles	Dann	Economic Development Department
Kevin	Donkin	Economic Development Department
Rosemary	Edmunds	Bishop Auckland
Lorraine	Hewitt	Durham
David	Lane	Learning and Skills Council, Newton Aycliffe
Jonathan	Lewis	Ferryhill
Mark	Lloyd	Economic Development Department
Chris	Middlemas	Chester-le-Street
Mark	Middlemas	Chester-le-Street
Helen	Miller	Chester-le-Street
Lianne	Oliver	Crook
Jenna	Owen	Peterlee
Karl	Owen	Peterlee
Ashleigh	Sangster	Newton Aycliffe
Alison	Scott	University of Durham/Durham County Council
Hollie	Scott	Peterlee
Michael	Simmons	Peterlee
Ian	Smith	Durham
Berni	Stock	Investing in Children
Helen	Swanwick	Newton Aycliffe
Mark	Tallentire	Bishop Auckland
Marie	Taylor	Bishop Auckland
Andrew	Wayman	Ferryhill
Christopher	Wilkinson	Ferryhill
Louise	Wright	Peterlee

**Investing in Children**  
**Economic Development: Planning Event: 12 May 2001**  
Riverside Cricket Ground, Chester-le-Street

**PROGRAMME**

- 10.00 Introduction: Helen Swanwick  
First Impressions - Ideal! Nightmare Town Competition
- 10.10 Making an Economic Development Plan for Plumpton Town  
Helen, Emily Card, Ian Smith, Chris Middlemas & Helen Miller
- 10.30 Plumpton Town Council: Planning Committees
- 5 Committees Physical Development  
Business  
Skills and Education  
Regeneration  
Rural/Issues
- Committees will be chaired by Helen, Ian, Emily, Helen and Chris. Each committee will be able to call upon an officer from Economic Development Department i.e. Kath Bryce, Kevin Donkin, Giles Dann, John Ashby and Mark Lloyd.
- 11.30 Reports from Committees  
Summing up of the Plumpton Plan (chaired by Helen)
- 12.00 Lunch
- 1.15 Co Durham Economic Development Plan  
Presentation - Mark Lloyd  
Questions (chaired by Helen)
- 1.30 Committee consideration of Economic Development Plan  
(Committees as before, but presentations by officers of the key issues,  
and proposed solutions)
- 2.30 Tea
- 2.45 Reports from committee  
Discussion (chaired by Helen)
- 3.30 Next Steps - plans for session in July and work in between
- 4.00 Close

# **MARK LLOYD TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE**

## **12th MAY 2001**

### **THE TASK**

County Durham continues to face major challenges.

We need to address inequality in access to opportunity and tackle the deep-rooted problems of disadvantaged communities.

Unemployment is 50% higher than the national average and nearly a third of the County's population live in communities that are among the most deprived in the country.

Action is urgently needed to address the needs of these communities.

### **PARTNERSHIP**

Given the scale of the task, it is clear that no single organisation can do the job on its own.

Partnership working is therefore the key to tackling the County's deep-rooted economic problems.

In fact, more than fifty organisations are involved, including the county and district councils, government agencies and the higher and further education sectors.

The work of these organisations is co-ordinated through the County Durham Economic Partnership, which has been in existence since 1994.

### **OLD STRATEGY**

The Partnership works to an agreed programme, which is set out in the County Durham Economic Strategy.

The first Strategy covered the period 1995-2001.

Although this has been updated periodically, a fundamental revision is now due.

Circumstances have changed significantly since it was produced.

For example, there have also been changes in the global situation, with a fall-off in the number of large inward investment projects and a growing appreciation of the need to diversify into new sectors.

ICT is having a tremendous impact upon the way people work, and there is an increasing awareness that our activities must not undermine the quality of the environment.

## **NEW STRATEGY**

Work is therefore underway on the preparation of a new Strategy.

We are looking to establish a consensus on the approach we need to take over the next five years, based upon a shared vision and an agreed set of overall priorities.

This will help to ensure that all activities are fully co-ordinated, and that there is no duplication of effort between the different organisations.

As part of its vision, the new Economic Strategy will place greater emphasis on measures to ensure that *all* of the County's residents are able to benefit from the opportunities being created.

This acknowledges a major shortcoming of the first Economic Strategy - that while it was effective in creating jobs, a significant proportion of the County's residents have not felt the benefits.

## **PROCESS**

All members of the Partnership have been involved in the preparation of the draft Strategy, with a series of debates held during November 2000.

The draft will be the subject of extensive consultation with the County's residents and businesses, helping to ensure that everyone feels 'ownership'.

Today's event is a key element in this process.

The new Strategy will cover business development, learning & skills, physical development and economic regeneration.

It will also target special help on the rural parts of the County.

## **ISSUES**

Looking at some of the issues we need to address through the new Strategy...

### **Business Development**

In parts of the County there is still a reliance on declining sectors and 'branch plant' employment, which does little to encourage entrepreneurship.

The County continues to under-perform in terms of business start-up and survival rates.

In order to increase levels of entrepreneurship we need to change attitudes and raise aspirations among people of all ages.

The further and higher education sectors will have a key role to play in strengthening the economy through facilitating technology transfer.

We also need to ensure effective use of ICT as a key driving force in the knowledge-driven economy

### **Learning and Skills**

Competitive businesses need employees with the right skills, including the ability to think innovatively.

The skills required by sectors with strong growth potential are knowledge and creativity, and the ability to turn ideas into marketable products.

The businesses of the future will develop where there is a good supply of technology-based skills.

However, too many of our young people leave school with inadequate qualifications and low aspirations, and many of the County's residents lack the skills needed to reach their full potential.

Moreover, adults are often put off learning because of negative experiences in the past - although the possession of skills and knowledge has never been so important.

### **Physical Development**

There continues to be a need for public investment in the provision of physical infrastructure in the County.

This means providing high quality business sites and premises.

With regard to transport infrastructure, a balanced approach is required.

Measures designed to meet the transport needs of the economy must not undermine the quality of the environment.

However, work is needed to bring the County's - and indeed the Region's - infrastructure up to a standard where we can compete with areas closer to the main European markets.

This is particularly the case with regard to ICT, where we are lagging behind other areas in terms of the provision of broadband infrastructure.

### **Economic Regeneration**

The Strategy also focuses upon the needs of communities.

There are towns and villages in County Durham which have never recovered from the loss of the traditional industries that were their original reason for being.

Although tremendous progress has been made in terms of developing the economy of the County as a whole, some sections of the population have largely missed out on the benefits.

We must continue to work towards the creation of accessible employment opportunities, in parallel with developing initiatives that encourage disaffected people to participate.

Measures that engender a sense of hope and build confidence are not only worthwhile in themselves, but also act as a catalyst for the kind of community-based solutions that have proved to be most effective.

However, it is recognised that there is a job to do in ensuring that people's expectations are not raised only to be frustrated by a lack of opportunities.

### **Rural Areas**

The rural parts of the County face particular difficulties - even beyond the current crisis surrounding foot and mouth disease.

Most of the County is rural, with more than half of its residents living in settlements of less than 10,000 people.

In fact, the County's largest centre, Durham City, has a population of less than 38,000.

However, the County is unique in terms of its economic and social geography.

Much of the County suffers from urban problems in a rural setting.

In particular, it would be wrong to view the County in the same terms as the more affluent shire counties.

Despite their attractive setting, many of the County's settlements suffer from high levels of deprivation.

This is coupled with severe difficulties in terms of access to jobs, learning and services.

### **Cross-Cutting Themes**

There are priorities that need to permeate every area of activity within the Strategy.

These 'cross-cutting' themes include aiming for full employment, facilitating wealth creation and seeking equality in access to opportunity.

Exploiting the benefits of ICT, being innovative and achieving sustainability will also be key components in the new Strategy.

**Investing in Children Newsletter Article**  
**A report on the economic development planning event, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2001**

It was a warm, sunny day at the Riverside Cricket Ground at Chester-le-Street and a group of people had gathered, but this time it was not to hear the sound of leather on willow. The County Durham Economic Development Partnership had invited Investing in Children to discuss the new Economic Strategy, which is currently being prepared for the county.

Involving young people, in the Economic Strategy process, is very important to the County Durham Economic Development Partnership, who is responsible for producing the new strategy. They wanted young people to tell them what the main problems are within



the county, in terms of economic development, and to see if they had any ideas for possible solutions. This was a chance for young people to get their messages across to people making the decisions.

In the morning, the economic development issues of an imaginary town were discussed. Committees of Plumpton Town Council met to determine their economic development plan. Everyone was introduced to Plumpton from a video of a recent



visit by roving reporter Saffron, who looked suspiciously like Helen Swanwick! The committees could consult a map of the ex-mining town to check the locations of various parts of Plumpton, from the nuclear power station to the mansion owned by local residents Posh and Becks! The five committees covered physical development, business, education and skills, regeneration and rural issues.

Just before lunchtime, the young peoples' first impressions of County Durham were summarised. Everyone had filled in a sheet saying why they did, and did not, want to stay in the county. The great potential for change in County Durham was highlighted and this set the scene for the afternoon's activities.

Attention turned to the real life issues for County Durham. Mark Lloyd, director of the Economic Development and Planning Department of Durham County Council asked everyone to consider some of the problems, which have to be addressed by the new Economic Strategy. Officers of Durham County Council outlined the progress with the new strategy and acted as advisors to the committees in their meetings. After feedback from the meetings the group discussed the problems and had a chance to question the officers.

The main concerns of the young people included a lack of entertainment venues, from places to listen to bands to access to local leisure centres. Whilst they were concerned about the number of jobs in the county, it was felt that there are opportunities for many to follow their chosen careers in County Durham. Ideas for improvements included involving young people in community appraisals, giving young people opportunities to work with successful businesses to develop their own business interests, developing drop-in centres and increasing travel subsidies to benefit more age groups.

Before everyone left - to catch the second half of the FA Cup Final - the results of the competition were announced. Prizes were awarded to the people with the best descriptions of their ideal and nightmare communities. Aspiration for a community where there is equal opportunity for all won the day and, I think, is the consensus of the whole group, young and old.

**Alison Scott**  
**Research Postgraduate**  
**Department of Geography, University of Durham and**  
**Economic Development and Planning Department, Durham County Council.**

### **My Ideal Community/My Nightmare Community**

Throughout the day, we ran a competition to design the ideal community, and to imagine the nightmare.

At the end of the day, Mark Lloyd presented the winning entrants with a prize and a certificate.

Karl Owen won the competition to design the ideal community. Here is his entry:

To have a sociable under 18 club with soft drinks available. To have a friendly community and for the children to have individual teaching to get all of the children's education abilities up to a good standard. To have a multi-complex leisure centre so more people can have a more healthy balanced diet by exercising more, and also to entertain more people and most of all I would like an equal rights community where everyone may have their say.

Aston Booth came up with the bleakest nightmare community. Here is his entry:

Windows broken, everywhere you look there's graffiti. You have to leave your house with a gun for protection. Loads of litter and tramps on the street. Streets are deserted, trees dying. Loud music every night and cars racing all over.

## **Key conclusions**

Over the day, a number of key points emerged. Some were specific to the 5 subject areas considered in the committees, and some were more general.

### **5 Committees**

#### **Physical Development**

- Consultation exercises by various groups often fail to include young people, who have a contribution to make to the debate.
- Examples of where work is being done, or should be, to improve the environment, were the shop fronts at Wellington and Sacriston
- More parks in housing estates.

#### **Business**

- Need to encourage young people to see themselves as business people
- Issues that need attention are: Money  
Knowledge  
Support  
Confidence - self, and in others  
Transport  
Attitude
- Young people need to be able to visit successful business (plenty of experience of failure)
- County Council should invest in companies that will get round problems (e.g. transport).

#### **Skills and Education**

- Improvements in skills and education would arise from improvements in schools.
- Ideas for improving schools:
  - Abolish uniforms - they don't prevent class inequality.
  - Good order is not the same as petty rules.
  - Need respect as equals and good relationships between teachers, students and parents.
  - Improved facilities, especially computers.
  - Improved work experience and vocational courses.
  - Improved literacy courses.
  - Bursaries - to encourage people to go to college.

## **Regeneration**

- Need to take an approach that looks at everything, not just jobs and Industry
- Taking Ferryhill as an example -
  - Need to renew youth facilities and leisure facilities.
  - Need to upgrade school facilities.
  - Improve entertainment.
  - Improve shopping.
  - Improve transport.
  - Address issue of empty, boarded up houses.
  - Newest youth training facility is in Darlington.
  - Improve relationship between young people and police.

## **Rural Issues**

Example considered: Evenwood

Issues included:        Poor image of area.  
                                Environmental decline.  
                                Negative attitude to education.  
                                Isolation.  
                                Cost of transport.

Solutions included:

- Regeneration schemes to improve the image
- Give young people a voice/include young people in surveys
- Improve access to education/financial support for young people in further education/One-stop-shop advice
- Work experience with local businesses
- Appropriate training/skills
- Improve transport/make it cheaper
- Provide workspace for business
- Use empty shops/starter units
- Mobil bus - IT facility

## **General Points**

- **Geography** - There was a clear message that young people understood and related to their area - Peterlee, or Newton Aycliffe or Ferryhill - far more than County Durham. Jenna, Louise, Karl, Michael and Hollie were particularly persuasive about the need for an Economic Development Plan to take account of their circumstances in Peterlee.
- **The big picture** - Durham has to be a good place to **live** as well as work. Attention was drawn to the lack of music venues and the difficulties in gaining access to leisure facilities generally. Again, the differences between areas (see above) e.g. Durham City and Peterlee or Crook were highlighted.

## Transport

- The importance of the transport system was emphasised. A poor system, which doesn't take into account young people's lack of mobility (too young to drive, too poor to afford bus fares) was underlined.
- **Information** - Although the young people who took part in the event clearly had plenty of ideas, and plenty to say, it was clear that there was very little knowledge of what the Economic Planning Department (or indeed the County Council generally) had to offer. Ensuring that young people access the information they need is crucial.

## Conclusions

Although this was the first faltering step in engaging young people in a key debate about the future of County Durham, and we clearly have a lot to learn, there was much to be optimistic about.

The young people engaged in the debate with enthusiasm, and brought their expert knowledge of their area to the debate. There were plenty of ideas buzzing around the Cricket Club, and a general willingness (see Next Steps, below) to continue the debate.

Probably most encouraging was the fact that there was lots of learning going on. Young people were learning from each other, and from the County Council officers who were there, and the officers were learning from the young people.

## Next Steps

The next major step will be a further Planning Day, to be held at the start of the summer holidays, on 24<sup>th</sup> July. All of the young people who attended the Cricket Club will be invited back, and we will extend the invitation to others.

The young people who planned the day will sit down with the officers involved to look at what worked well and what could be made better, so that the second Planning Day is even more successful than the first.

In addition, individual young people have signed up to look in detail at a number of key issues. Investing in Children will support groups who will look at the following areas:

Employment  
Communication  
Grant Aid  
Venues

Leisure

Young people's voices in community surveys  
Respect

Liam Cairns  
11/6/01