

<b>ANNUAL REPORT BY CABINET MEMBER – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARKETS AND PROPERTY</b>
---

***Progress during the year******Twyford Court Units, Rotherwas***

New units at Twyford Court, Rotherwas were declared open on Friday, 25 June 2004. The completion of the six new units and associated roads is one of the first completed projects funded with Rural Regeneration Zone funding in this area. The units have taken six months to construct and cost around £1.3 million with funding coming from Advantage West Midlands, Objective 2 European Regional Development Fund and Herefordshire Council.

***New Internal Estate Roads, Rotherwas***

Two new internal roads have been completed utilising AWM funds on Rotherwas linking Holme Lacy Road to Netherwood road and a further link from Netherwood Road to Southern Magazine site. These roads will allow the Southern Magazine site to be developed once the Rotherwas Access Road has been constructed.

***Rotherwas Business Centre***

Planning permission has been secured for the Rotherwas Business Centre which will include 14 offices and 10 light workshop units. Work is continuing to try to put together a funding package for the scheme.

***Opening of the Leominster Industrial Estate Access Road***

The newly completed Leominster Industrial Estate Access Road was officially opened by Tony McNulty MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport on Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004. This £5 million scheme will open up 30 acres of new employment land on the Leominster Enterprise Park which should help to create up to 500 new jobs.

***Rotherwas Access Road***

The Council has successfully secured planning permission for this scheme and is now working to secure the funding to enable the scheme to proceed at the earliest possible opportunity. In March 2004 the Council took a delegation to the Minister, Tony McNulty MP to press the case for funding for the scheme. An application for funding for the scheme has subsequently been submitted to the Department of Transport and a decision is anticipated during December of this year. A petition in support of the scheme is currently being put together and it is anticipated that a further local delegation will go to see the Minister to promote the scheme at the end of October.

***Edgar Street Grid***

The Council and Advantage West Midlands are continuing to develop proposals for the 100 acre Edgar Street Grid site to the north of the existing historic City Centre. The Council has adopted a Masterplan for the site and key proposals have been integrated into the Herefordshire Unitary

Development Plan. The Council and Advantage West Midlands are working together to establish a Joint Venture Company to take the proposals forward to implementation. Work is commencing on site acquisition and an early task for the Joint Venture Company will be the selection of appropriate private sector development partners.

### ***City of Living Crafts***

The Council has continued to develop projects in the City Centre as part of the City of Living Crafts Programme.

**Council's Capital Programme** - The Council has approved approximately £1 million in its capital programme, for a range of City Centre Enhancements over the next few years. Schemes included are Eign Gate refurbishment, Shop Front Grant Scheme, Initial works on High Town/High Street and Victoria Footbridge refurbishment.

**Eign Gate Refurbishment** - The Council has commissioned options for the refurbishment of Eign Gate which will go out to public consultation in the Autumn of this year with a view to being implemented early in 2005.

**Hereford Cathedral** - The Council is working with the Cathedral to develop a Heritage Lottery bid for the Regeneration of Cathedral Close and associated Cathedral buildings. A Project Planning Grant has been secured with a view to submitting a full bid for Heritage Lottery funding later this year. In the interim, a schedule of remedial works has been completed in the Cathedral Close. New turf and top soil has been laid, improvements have been made to the surfacing of the paths and pot holes have been filled.

**Castle Green** - The Council has commenced work on putting together a team to develop a Heritage Lottery bid for a major refurbishment of Castle Green and its environs.

### ***City Partnership***

Cynthia Spauld has now been appointed by the Hereford City Partnership as the new Hereford City Manager. She is already working on a range of initiatives which should support the health and vitality of the City.

### ***South Wye SRB Programme***

The South Wye SRB Programme continues to perform well with £2.6 million of SRB money being drawn down attracting over £5 million of other funding and 30 Projects are currently being supported. The highlight of the year as always being the South Wye Big Event on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2004. We are continuing to work with the Partnership and AWM to try to identify a sustainable way forward once the current SRB Programme comes to an end in 2006.

- Overall relationships have been built with key partners in South Wye, i.e. Asda and George Wimpey, in order to best benefit the local community.

- 600 people have volunteered and 2 community facilities have been completed. A further 2 are underway this year.
- Police reported a significant reduction in crime during the period.
- Over 9,000 people attended the Big Event
- The programme has spent £2,614,908 SRB funding to date and attracted £4,337,273 other public funds and £998,056 of private funds.
- 30 projects are currently being supported.
- The Promoting Positive Behaviour Project has reduced the need for fixed term exclusions at Hayward High School.
- The South Wye literacy project has assisted 400 learners since 2001
- A holiday scheme run by the community development team provided 280 places for children's activities, which was booked up within 48hrs.

Challenges for year ahead –

- The Programme entering its final stages of funding and is focusing on exit strategies this coming year.
- Each project has been asked to submit a forward plan detailing what happens when SRB funding ends in 2006, and the partnership is currently looking to purchase an asset which will provide an income stream and which will be of benefit to the local community.
- They are also in discussion with ASDA regarding community facilities on the new site as well as Health provision.
- The partnership are acutely aware that they need to identify additional sources of funding in order to continue with the work in South Wye, and the forward strategy group are working towards producing an action plan for the future of the programme.

### ***Development of new Economic Development Strategy***

During the year work has commenced on developing a new Economic Development Strategy for the County. Consultants EDAW have been appointed to develop the Strategy guided by representatives of key organisations in the Herefordshire Partnership including the Council. A series of consultation events were undertaken which involved Council Members, Herefordshire Partnership, Parish Councils and businesses. Final work on the Strategy is now being completed and the new Strategy will be in place by the end of this year. The work has provided a very useful analysis of the issues currently facing the County and will provide a framework for agreeing shared priorities to ensure the future economic health of the County.

### ***Visit by AWM Chairman – Nick Paul***

AWM continues to be an important funding partner for the Council in delivering its local economic development priorities. Whilst the revenue position of AWM is currently constrained, their ability to invest in capital schemes is something we need to take full advantage of in Herefordshire. We have continued to try to build effective working relationships with AWM at the highest level. In May Herefordshire Council hosted a tour of the County for AWM Chairman Nick Paul and secured his support for key projects such as the Edgar Street Grid, Rotherwas Access Road and Leominster Access Road.

***Challenges for the next year***

The challenges for the forthcoming year really relate to building on the progress we have made on the issues/projects summarised above. Key priorities will continue to be taken forward in the Market Towns and Hereford City including Edgar Street Grid, Rotherwas Access Road, the development of Leominster Enterprise Park.

The context for this activity will be the new Economic Development Strategy and the Herefordshire UDP will also play an important role in driving the allocation of the central employment land. In particular there will be an opportunity to bring forward a new business park in Ross on Wye.