


WALSALL REGENERATION COMPANY ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009 for Homes & Communities Agency and Communities and Local Government

Date Established March 2004	
Core Partners Walsall Council, Advantage West Midlands, English Partnerships	
Board members 12	
Chair Ben Reid	
Chief Executive Officer Dr Peter Cromar	
Staff Numbers 5 FTE	
Business Plan Period April 2009 – March 2012	
URC Area (ha's) 780	
Population 16,785	Walsall town centre and surrounds

General Overview

- **Chairman's Review**

No-one can deny Walsall is going places. The transformational change that WRC's leadership is playing a key part in delivering will have a positive impact on Walsall businesses, families and communities for decades to come. It will provide the physical environment, the skills and the opportunities that are required for a sustainable future. Perhaps most importantly of all, it will restore the confidence and aspirations of the people of Walsall and give them a town and a future they can be proud of.

- **Chief Executive's Review**

WRC continues to play a significant role in accelerating the major developments contained in the WRC Prospectus for Growth document, in spite of the significant economic challenges that are currently being faced both locally and nationally. The need to focus on the quality and number of jobs in Walsall remains paramount as is the need to make sure Walsall offers a wider range of skilled jobs in the growing sectors of the economy. The need to differentiate Walsall as a place where it is easy to do business in order to attract investment and development is recognised as crucial. The working relationship between WRC and the founding partners has grown stronger and has continued to be constructive and robust over the last year, with all partners, including the local authority, having made a commitment to maintain current levels of funding for at least the next 12 months. This year has witnessed significant advances in the company's key transformational projects -

- **Walsall Waterfront.** Planning permission for a new hotel on the Waterfront North (Urban Splash) development was granted on 27th January 2009 and an operator has been identified. Discussions to secure an operator for the Car Park have been ongoing and a winner of the RIBA International Architecture Competition for the Lex site was announced in 2008. WRC have commenced work to draw up an interim usage plan for this piece of land. Discussions have been taking pace between the developers of the Waterfront South site (Jessups), RSLs and HCA to draw up a partnership development agreement, which will accelerate the delivery of the scheme. An initial visioning brief for Waterfront West has been completed and agreed in principle with key landowners.
- **Outline planning permission for the Walsall Gigaport scheme** was secured in December 2008 for 1.5 million sq. ft 21st Century office development in the heart of the town, including data hub, business innovation/incubation centre, live/work units, health centre, hotel and public realm/infrastructure, all underpinned by fibre optic Next Generation Access Broadband technology. Numerous discussions have been held with potential developers/ operators and an Investment Prospectus was launched at MIPIM 2009. A revised Outline Funding Application to the value of £22 million was submitted to AWM in March 2009.
- **A contractor was appointed to carry out the Darlaston SDA pilot remediation works in March 2009.** WRC have commenced work in drawing up a masterplan for DSDA focusing on employment areas (excluding the IMI site and the Darlaston SRF area). Detailed highways design works are ongoing through the council's highways team who are close to submitting the final Major Scheme Business Case to DfT.
- **The construction of the £65 million New Walsall College is progressing to timetable and will be open in September 2009.** Tesco have commenced carrying out site investigation works on the site of the existing college which will be making way for a brand new retail superstore. Tesco and Walsall Council are continuing to address reserved planning matters.
- **An 'Our Net for Walsall' event was held in July 2008, to share best practice from the Netherlands around how Next Generation Access Broadband connectivity can deliver significant community benefits, with the Birchills neighbourhood earmarked as a potential pilot area in Walsall.** A consultancy report entitled 'Building a New Birchills Together' was completed in September 2008, leading to the endorsement of the recommendations by the Council and the area's inclusion in the Strategic Regeneration Framework. A Task and Finish Group to drive forward a Birchills Project Plan has been formed.
- **The construction of the new Manor Hospital commenced during Summer 2008 and is progressing to schedule**

Area of Operation

• Strategic Framework Overview

Walsall Regeneration Company (WRC) was granted Urban Regeneration Company status by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in December 2003 to spearhead urban regeneration within an approved designated area. The WRC was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee in March 2004 with Advantage West Midlands, English Partnerships and Walsall Council as founding members.

Working closely with the founding partners alongside private sector organisations our main objectives are to:

- Provide a unified vision and framework for regeneration that raises aspirations and makes a real and lasting difference to the economy and people of Walsall
- Remove the obstacles and barriers to regeneration and development
- Raise the profile of Walsall regionally and nationally and generate confidence in the town as a place to invest, work and live
- Make a genuine difference by securing commitment from investors, both public and private, through a clear resonance with central Government initiatives for creating sustainable communities and urban renaissance
- Encourage high quality urban design within a framework for sustainable development

An in-depth assessment of the issues facing Walsall revealed demographic decline, low skills levels, a poorly performing town centre, an inadequate economic structure for the 21st century and poor quality public realm. In developing 'Walsall: A Town for Enterprise – A Prospectus for Growth', our strategic aims are to achieve a revitalised town centre that is climbing the league table, to increase the residential population, exploit Walsall's location, utilise the canal as an artery for regeneration and to align Walsall's Renaissance with the Black Country Study and the growth of the West Midlands region.

To implement our strategic aims we have identified a small number of major transformational projects which will deliver an increased GDP through encouraging better skills, improving the quality and choice of housing, creating an office market and addressing the leakage of disposable income from the local economy.

Key projects

Project Name & Description	Current Position on Previous Milestones As at 31 st March 2009	Project Milestones 1 st April 2009 to 31 st March 2010
Canalside Communities – Significant new sustainable communities will merge with existing ones to form residential clusters between the town centre through Reedswood and beyond to Leamore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caparo Birchills – Planning permission granted subject to ongoing S106 matters • Pleck Road Scheme construction ongoing • Birch Street Scheme project under development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress of these residential schemes will be affected by the prevailing economic challenges, with the aim being to witness completion of the Pleck Road Scheme, and for progress to be made on the Caparo and Birch Street schemes
Walsall First - Business, Learning Campus and Retail – Major regeneration project incorporating creation of a business and learning campus anchored by the new college and including major retail investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College construction is approaching completion • Tesco have commenced site investigatory works in preparation for new superstore build 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tesco are to submit reserved planning matters in Summer 2009 • The new Walsall College will be open in September 2009 • Tesco to commence build of new store before the end of 2009.
Walsall Gigaport – 1.5 million sq ft scheme to create a dynamic office corridor to the north of the new ring road, using 21 st Century technology platform to attract new industries to the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline planning permission secured in December 2008 • Investment Prospectus launched at MIPIM in March 2009 • Revised Outline Funding application submitted to AWM in March 2009. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OJEU notice to be issued for appointment of scheme delivery partner / Approval of revised Outline Funding Application – Summer 2009 • Selection of scheme delivery partner by March 2010
Strategic Public Realm – Creation of vibrant, high quality public realm, including Covered Streets, Public Art / Urban Sculpture Park, and 'New Walsall' initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility report on 'Covered Streets' initiative completed in September 2008 • 'New Walsall/Town Centre' group established in March 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'New Walsall/Town Centre' group to drive forward Strategic Public Realm Strategy during 2009 • 'New Walsall' stakeholder events to be held in Spring 2010.
Waterfront – An ambitious £180m regeneration project to create a new 'quarter' with residential, retail offices, hotel and public art alongside the canal and Town Wharf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterfront North – hotel planning permission secured in January 2009. MyPlace lottery funding secured in December 2008 for 'Green Rivers' Boxing Club. • Waterfront South – Jessups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterfront North – Landscaping to be carried out Jun – Aug 2009. Hotel construction to commence during 2009, followed by Car Parking Hedge construction. Interim usage for the Lex site to be drawn up. • Waterfront South – Agreement to be signed with HCA/RSL in Spring/Summer 2009, followed by

	<p>continuing negotiations with HCA and RSLs to draw up partnership development agreement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterfront West – initial visioning brief complete. 	<p>commencement of 'East Zone' build.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterfront West – Project development to progress along with landowner discussions.
<p>Transport Hub & Station Street – A major remodelling incorporating upgraded bus facilities and improved links to the railway station. Existing buildings along Station Street will be refurbished to create a mix of high quality office space, apartments and retail outlets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid planning permission secured for Station Street development in January 2009 'New Walsall/Town Centre' Group established in March 2009 with key players to explore transportation issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'New Walsall/Town Centre' Group to drive forward strategy and plans for revamped town centre transportation facilities during 2009/10. Station Street developers to draw up scheme delivery strategy during 2009/10
<p>St Matthew's Quarter – A new ASDA superstore incorporating 1000 space car park with 'city living' apartment schemes to be supplemented by major redevelopment of surrounding streets, including George Street and Walsall Market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall Council approved Development Agreement with Norton & Proffitt in October 2008 and outline masterplan scheme drawn up for future phases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed scheme to be designed incorporating 2 anchors during 2009. Planning application to be submitted early 2010.
<p>Darlaston SDA – A major national strategic site next to the M6 J10 requiring substantial investment to remediate and bring the land back into productive economic use.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot remediation contractors appointed in April 2009. PxP held discussions with potential masterplanners for the IMI site WRC commenced drawing up masterplan for the remainder of the Darlaston core employment area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Scheme Business Case for highways submitted June 2009 Pilot remediation process May – July 2009 CPRG approval for full site remediation and commencement of works – Sept 2009 Construction of canal bridge complete, full approval for MSBC from DfT by end of 2009

Value For Money

Many of WRC's achievements in terms of outputs and subsequent impact upon key economic indicators will be witnessed during the coming years as our major projects either commence delivery and/or reach completion. It is clear that much that has happened in Walsall would not have been possible, and certainly not within the timescales achieved, without the leadership and vision of WRC, particularly in terms of the progress made with the Walsall First, Walsall Gigaport and Darlaston SDA projects. During 2008/09 WRC has convened and chaired the following project specific steering groups to promote the uptake of regenerative benefit for local people and business

Partnership for Walsall Economic Regeneration (The Economic Pillar of the Local Area Agreement)

Skills Enterprise Business
 Business Learning & Retail Campus
 Retail Academy
 Construction Academy
 Fibre Optic Technology

WRC chairs the 'New Walsall/Town Centre' Steering Group and has established and chaired Task and Finish Groups for Birchills, Town Centre Management and Public Art during 2008/09. It has recently established and chaired a Next Generation Access Broadband Working Party, bringing together local authorities from the City Region to maximise regenerative benefits from collaborative working in this vital area.

Good News Opportunities For The Year Ahead

- Construction and landscaping works will commence on both the Waterfront North and South schemes during 2009/10.
- The new Walsall College will be open in September 2009, followed by the demolition of the former college in preparation for the new Tesco superstore build.
- Pilot remediation will be carried on the DSDA IMI site from May – July 2009, followed by full remediation which will carry on beyond April 2010. Canal bridge improvements will be complete by December 2009, along with anticipated approval for the Major Scheme Business Case highways proposals.
- The Outline Funding Application for Walsall Gigaport is expected to be approved by AWM during the Summer 2009, and a scheme delivery partner will be selected by March 2010.

Links to Other Programmes

Advantage West Midlands, European Regional Development Fund Programme, Highways LTP, Learning & Skills Council.

Evaluation/ Succession Planning - The 5 year evaluation is to take place during Summer 2009.

Direct Output	Lifetime	Achieved up to 31/3/09	% of lifetime outputs
Public Sector investment (£m)	166.1	80	48.2
Private Sector investment (£m)	865.6	27.0	3.1
Commercial Floor Space (sq m)	273,620	9,000	3.3
Jobs Created	8,175	400	4.9
Housing Units	2,819	146	5.2
Land brought back into use (ha)	86.6	7.2	8.3

Lifetime gearing 5.5

Brokered Output	Lifetime	Achieved up to 31/3/09	% of lifetime outputs
Public Sector investment (£m)	0	0	0
Private Sector investment (£m)	174.0	80.0	46.0
Commercial Floor Space (sq m)	27,500	27,500	100
Jobs Created	1,100	1,100	100
Housing Units	0	0	0
Land brought back into use (ha)	0	0	0

Finance

Income & Expenditure for the period ended

31/03/2009

	Budget Annual £000	Budget YTD £000	Actual YTD £000	Forecast Outturn £000	
Income/Funding					
EP	272.9			272.9	
RDA	272.9			272.9	
Council	250.0			250.0	
ERDF	70.0			49.6	
Other				93.6	
	865.8	0.0	0.0	939.0	
Expenditure					
Staff Costs	417.4			410.9	44.9
Offices/Premises Costs	84.4			80.6	8.8
Traveling/Transport	0.0			0.0	0.0
Consultants PI/Proj	122.1			267.8	29.3
PR/Marketing	234.2			155.2	17.0
Other	0.0			0.0	0.0
	858.1	0.0	0.0	914.5	100
Surplus/(Deficit)	7.7	0.0	0.0	24.5	
Average No. of Staff	4.25				

Comments