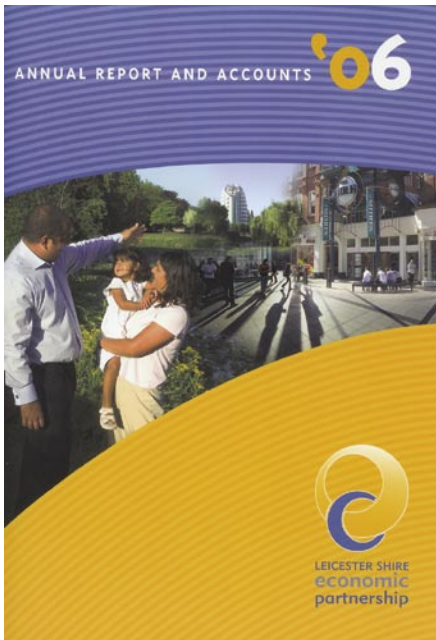




£10m Investment Success



LSEP has detailed another successful year in their recently published Annual Report and Accounts 2006.

During the financial year £9.5 million was invested to support a programme of 97 projects – an increase of 44 per cent on last year's investment.

LSEP exceeded many of its outputs which were set by *emda* (East Midlands Development Agency) showing the following results:

- Creation of 1200 jobs
- Assistance into employment for 700 people
- Formation of 100 businesses
- Improved skills for 1400 people
- Support for 500 businesses

The interim chairman of LSEP, Martin Traynor said: "These achievements are a result of working in partnership with the public and private sector and it shows how productive such working can prove to be.

"In 12 months time the new chairman will be reporting better results from a similar investment. The members of LSEP Board and officers should be very proud of not only last year, but also the progress of the company since it was formed four years ago."

The chief executive of LSEP, Kishor Tailor added: "In this year's annual report we have highlighted a number of case studies providing examples of our intervention and successes in the sub-region."

Rural Funding Gets Easier

Leicestershire's rural residents will find it much easier to get their hands on free cash when they use a new information pack.

The pack has been produced by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) with the support of Leicestershire County Council, LSEP and Leicestershire and Rutland Rural Community Council.

The application pack brings together details of 11 existing LRP grants including support for rural pubs, tourism schemes, farm diversification, micro businesses, redundant building redevelopment and shop front improvements.

Full details of each scheme are provided along with the grant criteria, eligibility and step by step details of how to complete

the application form. The form can also be completed on-line at www.oakleaves.org.uk

Gill Smitherman, LSEP programme manager said: "This is part of a programme that will see us invest £675,000 over three years and is in addition to many other programmes we are supporting to help sustain the economy. The grants support a wide range of new and existing businesses and the benefits of our investment will be enhanced by this new application pack."

Copies of the Rural Business Support Application Pack can be obtained by e-mailing: regeneration@leics.gov.uk or telephoning: 0116 265 7033.



The East Midlands: A flourishing region

Bold Vision for Region

The new Regional Economic Strategy (RES) has now been published, presenting a bold and ambitious vision for the East Midlands.

Approved by Government, the strategy belongs to the region and forms a shared vision for the future successes and aspirations of the East Midlands.

The RES has been co-ordinated by *emda* following one of the biggest consultations ever undertaken in the region. People from across the East Midlands were given the chance to contribute ideas and outline their hopes for the region's future.

Leicester City's Walkers Stadium hosted one of the 200 events which took place across the region attracting key stakeholders. A dedicated website was also set up detailing the Strategy and during the consultation period it received over 20,000 hits.

The vision outlines that by 2020:

- The East Midlands will be made up of growing and innovative businesses
- Skilled people will be employed in good quality jobs
- We will all feel part of healthy, inclusive communities and live in thriving attractive places.

Underpinned by 10 priorities, three themes are key to achieving the vision:

- Raising productivity
- Ensuring sustainability
- Achieving equality

The RES will be reviewed every three years to ensure it meets the changing priorities of a 21st century economy.

Now that the RES is complete the next step will be to produce a comprehensive action plan with key partners to ensure the East Midlands achieves the aims identified within the Strategy. It is anticipated this will be ready by early next year.

Bryan Jackson, *emda* chairman said: "It is clear that for the East Midlands to thrive and to compete with the best in Europe and the world, we must build on our distinctive strengths to ensure that our economic growth creates a prosperous and sustainable region, where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential."

"This regional strategy belongs to everyone" said Kishor Tailor, LSEP chief executive. "All individuals, businesses and stakeholders are key to ensuring we can realise the region's potential. Leaders from the public and private sectors recognise that Leicester Shire plays a very important role and LSEP aims to stimulate economic activity so that the sub-region continues to punch above its weight."

In addition to being leader of Leicestershire County Council and an LSEP Board member, Councillor David Parsons is chairman of the East Midlands Regional Assembly and he added: "The Assembly is very pleased to support its partner, *emda*, in the publication of the RES."

New Business Premises Open

New workspace units in the Belgrave district of Leicester have recently opened, thanks to LSEP in helping to secure a grant of £50,000. The units are owned and managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Rural Community Council (RCC) and will become a base for new enterprises and businesses.

The RCC is based at 133 Loughborough Road in Leicester, where it owns two buildings - one of which needed renovating so that it could be brought back into everyday use. The total cost of the work was £106,000, to which trustee Thomas Stops contributed. In recognition the annex has been renamed Thomas Stops House.

Jeremy Prescott, chief executive of the RCC, said: "Due to the poor condition of the annex, it has been under used for sometime and we have been aware of how much demand there is for business premises - especially close to our offices in the Belgrave area.

"In the long term the income we will be able to generate from the premises will enable us to further develop the work of the RCC."

Gill Smitherman, LSEP programme manager added: "One of our priorities is to bring redundant buildings back into use for employment purposes. The annex now offers an attractive working environment

and will assist the RCC to further develop its services to rural communities in Leicestershire."



Recruitment Ease for Businesses

Businesses in Leicester Shire report that it is now easier to recruit staff than it has been at anytime in the last 10 years.

When over 700 businesses were recently surveyed, 67 per cent said they were not experiencing difficulties in recruiting staff according to the Business Survey for Summer 2006. The figure is up five per cent from the previous survey for Winter 2005/06.

Another key statistic from the survey shows that just 29 per cent of businesses are being affected by skills shortages. This is a five per cent drop on the previous half year.

The Business Survey is managed by Leicester Shire Intelligence and carried out on behalf of a range of partners including LSEP, Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council, Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce and Business Link Leicestershire. The sample of businesses is representative of the size, type and location of all businesses in Leicester Shire.

“We have recognised this trend for sometime” said Caroline Boucher, project manager. “Local businesses should be increasingly confident that they can find suitably skilled staff.”

The interim chairman of LSEP Martin Traynor, said: “This is tremendous news not only for businesses but the whole economy of the sub-region. It sends out a clear message to companies either looking to move or expand in Leicester Shire. LSEP and other partners including the Learning and Skills Council will be investing further to ensure this trend continues.”

Steve Dibnah who is responsible for attracting Government Office Relocations to Leicester Shire added: “This is one of the strengths of the sub-region that we will use to attract Government departments. I believe the fact that workforce requirements can be met gives us an advantage over the competition that Leicester Shire face.”

The spotlight in this latest Business Survey concerns IT and the risks facing businesses due to equipment or software problems or improper usage.

60% of the businesses surveyed said that IT was critical to their business whilst a further 29% said it was useful but not essential. The remaining 11% said IT was unimportant or not used at all.

8% of companies said they had been the subject of a breach of online security whilst 2% thought a breach was likely in the next year and 21% thought it was possible.

61% of companies who thought they might suffer an IT security breach were most concerned about computer viruses whilst 56% of companies said their major concern was system failure/downtime. There is also widespread concern about the possibility of unauthorised access, fraud and inappropriate usage.

To try and combat this 57% of companies that use IT have a security policy of which 65% review the policy regularly.

IT security breaches were seen by many as potentially serious issues which might stop them working completely, lose confidential information and damage their reputation.

LSEP Funding at Work

The refurbished Palace opens its doors as Ibstock Community Enterprises celebrates its 10th anniversary.



Leicester City ambassador Alan Birchenall opens the Melton Learning Hub – part of the Access Centre programme.



ACE Trainers Required

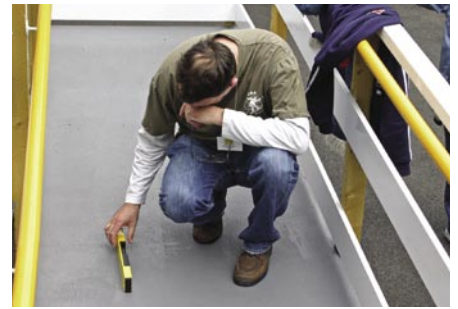
Access, Consultancy & Employment (ACE) are now looking to recruit trainees for their next programme. The training programme is funded by LSEP and aimed at people in receipt of incapacity benefit or unemployed disabled people who want to return to work.

Delivered by the Leicestershire Centre for Integrated Living (LCIL), ACE began a programme in November 2005, preparing participants to become either Access Auditors or Disability Equality Trainers.

The Access Auditor Training Course has now been accredited as a Level 3 NVQ Customised Award entitled Access Auditing for Disabled People, making it the first of its kind. The trainees on this course have now completed five modules and have begun practical access audits.

The Disability Equality Trainer Course has applied for NVQ Level 3 accreditation. The trainees on this course are working in partnership with the Disability Rights Commission and Leicester City Council, preparing disabled people for their participation in the drawing up new policies for the Disability Equality Duty Act (DDA 2005) which comes into force in December 2006.

Anyone interested in joining the next programme, which is due to start in October should contact Eric Day on 0116 222 5005.



Hundreds of New Jobs Created

During 2005/2006 Invest Leicestershire supported the creation of 367 new jobs in the city and county, showing an increase of over 38 per cent on last year's figures.

Part of Leicester Shire Promotions, Invest Leicestershire is the investment agency for Leicester and Leicestershire. They are responsible for helping businesses relocate to, or expand within the sub-region and have worked in partnership with *emda* on a number of successful projects.

The most significant increase of activity during 2005/2006 was the amount of



enquiries received, which has doubled on last year's figures. This rise has partly been due to the launch of the Leicestershire Property Directory, the online commercial property database.

William Presland, operations manager at Invest Leicestershire, said: "Now that we have the team at full strength, it is encouraging to see that there has again

been an increase in our figures. We hope that there will be some significant investments made in Leicester and Leicestershire during the next financial year."

Andy Rose, LSEP programme manager added: "We are encouraged by the success that Invest Leicestershire has achieved and the number of enquiries indicates the programme will be even more effective in the future."

The Way Forward

The Board of LSEP are finalising the company's Investment Plan and prospectus, which sets out key priorities and activities for the period 2007 to 2010.

To ensure that resources are aligned, consultation has been carried out with partners including local authorities, the Learning and Skills Council, colleges and universities in the sub-region,

Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce and other bodies representing the private sector.

Part of the programme will be delivered in partnership with the public sector and other agencies where the resources of the LSEP and partners will be pooled. Other parts of the programme will be commissioned and tendered.

The final plan has to be submitted to *emda* and is expected to be endorsed by the end of the year.

Kishor Tailor, LSEP chief executive said: "We want to ensure that the benefits from our £10 million annual investment are maximised and that by working with partners we can achieve the maximum impact for the sub-regional economy."