

Darlington Economic Strategy Annual Monitoring Report

November 2013

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Introduction

The Economic Strategy for Darlington was approved in September 2012 and contains a commitment to undertake an annual review and assess progress against the targets and recommend future priority actions, which this report seeks to do.

The key objective in monitoring the economic strategy is:-

1. To assess the extent to which the actions are delivering on the objectives we wanted to achieve;
2. To identify what has been done and what still needs to be done;
3. To identify any issues affecting progress;
4. To produce an updated economic strategy action plan that takes account of prevailing economic and social issues that have arisen, including global and national economic turbulence, policy changes and social need.

This document is structured to provide the reader with an:-

1. an overview of the current economic position of the borough,
2. an overview of the work that has been done during the past year.

Appendix 1 contains the revised/updated Action Plan.

Context

The Economic Strategy for Darlington was developed in 2012 by Darlington Partnership and the Council through consultation with local employers, business support organisations, trade bodies, education providers, investors and local entrepreneurs.

The 2012 – 2026 strategy replaces the 2001 Darlington Gateway Strategy. The Darlington Gateway Strategy helped the borough attract substantial public and private sector investment which led to Darlington's economic indicators improving faster than other areas. The strategy was updated in 2007 but following the global economic downturn, the recession and the severe reductions in public sector funding available for economic regeneration, it was considered necessary to fundamentally look at what the borough's economic strategy should now be. The Borough Council cannot create economic growth on its own, but it can, by working closely with businesses and other agencies, create the right environment for companies to set-up, flourish and drive economic growth. Against this backdrop it was considered important to take the opportunity to re-align Darlington's economic strategy within the context of the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), given the importance of the LEP to the Darlington economy. And, from early 2014, each individual LEP will be required to submit to Government their Strategic Economic Plans - these plans will ensure that LEPs have a robust strategic economic plan for local growth - based on a strong rationale, value for money and partnerships for delivery.

Through our own economic strategy and action plan we will make the case to focus financial support made available through the LEP, Government Departments and other funding mechanisms on our priority schemes designed to facilitate Darlington's economic growth, whilst at the same time scanning the horizon for emerging opportunities which have the potential to contribute to Darlington's sustainable economic growth, such as:-

1. National Biologics Manufacturing Centre – this exciting new development presents opportunities for attracting further investment, talent and opportunities in the development and commercialisation of pharmaceuticals into the global marketplace as well as presenting opportunities to further develop the supply chain and forge strategic synergistic links with other businesses in the region;
2. East Coast Mainline and Bank Top Station – by working collaboratively with Network Rail and other local authorities as part of the East Coast Mainline Consortia we have the opportunity to develop a “whole industry and regeneration solution” for Bank Top Station. Such a solution will increase the frequency and decrease the journey times of trains to and from London; address connectivity and capacity issues. Bank Top sits at the heart of many of the key regeneration schemes within the borough and this work will cement its role as not only a key resource for Darlington, but also one for the Tees Valley.

3. Build on the success of the country's first ever Festival of Thrift, which attracted over 27,000 visitors from all over the country. Held over two days the festival at Lingfield Point featured 70 stalls and a host of thrift related attractions including swap shop stalls, craft workshops and guest speakers. Visitor numbers exceed over 12,000 on its first day with people travelling from as far afield as London to visit the event.

The following bullets outline some of the other key economic priorities and activities for Darlington over the coming 12 months:-







- **Infrastructure** – taking forward the economic case and lobbying for an integrated transport network including improvements in road, rail and air connectivity. Infrastructure also includes the River Skerne flood alleviation scheme, releasing Town Centre development land; bringing forward strategic employment sites and the delivery of superfast broadband, along with exploring the potential to become a “wi-fi town”.
- **Investment** – accessing public and private sector investment to deliver key elements of the economic strategy. Targeting opportunities including the Government funded Local Growth Deal and EU structural funds (managed through the LEP), influencing Network Rail and Highway's Agency investment decisions, impacting on strategic transport infrastructure and working to encourage private sector investment.
- **Innovation** – targeting Darlington's high growth SMEs, whilst also building on existing sector strengths in advanced manufacturing/engineering, logistics/distribution and the digital creative sectors, whilst supporting emerging growth sectors such as sub-sea and biologics.
- **Enterprise** – promoting Darlington as an outstanding business destination in terms of its location, quality of life, skilled workforce and business environment;
- **Skills** – support education, skills and employability initiatives that match the needs of the local economy, including continuing delivery of the successful Foundation 4 Jobs initiative, the ongoing promotion of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, whilst also best supporting those who need help in accessing employment opportunities;

Note that where activity is taking place through the Tees Valley LEP, such as work on EU Structural Investment funds and on the Tees Valley Investment Plan, this is captured in TVU plans and monitoring reports, and not necessarily reflected within this document.

Overview – The Economy of Darlington

The following section provides a snapshot of the economy of Darlington in 2013 using a variety of key economic indicators and national datasets. Through these we are able to measure the success of the economic strategy in achieving its objectives, which in turn will help shape this and future action plans.

















In all instances the latest available data has been used. It is important to note that there is significant time lag for publication of some of the data, with sub national data released more slowly. It is therefore essential that we revisit these figures over the coming months and years and feed into ongoing action plans as appropriate. Where the Darlington Trend figure is underlined, Darlington has performed better than the national trend.

Indicator	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Darlington Trend (2008 to latest data)	Better/ Worse or Same (2008 to latest data)	National Trend (2008 to latest data)	Most Recent Local Data – Direction of Travel
GVA per annum¹	£2,008m	£1,959m	£1,978m	£1,981m	n/a ²	n/a	Darlington economy decreased by - 1.34%		UK GVA grew by 3.85%	
GVA per hour worked³	88.2	87.3	85.2	84.1	n/a	n/a	Decreased by - 4.64%		UK = 100	
GVA per head	£20,070	£19,509	£19,612	£19,592	n/a	n/a	Decreased by - 2.38% per head		Grew by 1.63% per head	

¹ GVA per annum is Darlington's contribution to the national, regional or sub-regional economy

² n/a = Not available

³ Indexed to UK = 100

Indicator	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Darlington Trend (2008 to latest data)	Better/ Worse or Same (2008 to latest data)	National Trend (2008 to latest data)	Most Recent Local Data – Direction of Travel
Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI)	£12,737	£13,469	£13,685	£14,121	n/a	n/a	Grew by 3.1%		Grew by 2.6%	
Median weekly workplace based earnings	£440.1	£431.6	£440.5	£448.5	£459.2	n/a	Grew by 4.34%		Grew by 5.9%	
Median weekly residence based earnings	£415	£436.4	£455.9	£433.5	£436.5	n/a	Grew by 5.18%		Grew by 5.83%	
Number of VAT or PAYE registered enterprises	2,655	2,660	2,590	2,530	2,625	n/a	Decreased by - 0.57%		Decreased by -1.1%	
Employment rate	70.6	71.3%	68.7%	71.2%	67.8%	68.9%	Decreased by - 0.8%		Grew by 0.7%	
Unemployment rate	6%	7.1%	9.2%	8.4%	10.3%	9.6%	Grew by 65.5%		Grew by 51.2%	
JSA claimants	1,925	3,195	2,770	3,450	3,560	3,220	Grew by 67.2%		Grew by 91.3%	
Number of people with an NVQ4 or above	18,400	18,500	19,200	19,200	17,100	17,400	Decreased by - 5.43%		Grew by 21.49%	

Summary

In line with the national picture the 2008-2009 recession had a significant impact on Darlington's Economy, with most economic indicators still below pre-recession levels. On most indices Darlington's economy has performed less well than the national average, though changes in 'cost of living' measures (Gross Disposable household income / median earnings) have out performed the national trend, though these indices are still below the national average.

Where available, recent trends (2011 -2013) show a slightly improving picture; with a slight increase in total GVA per annum, a small increase in employment rate and a reduction in JSA claimants.

The productivity of jobs within the borough (measured by GVA per hour worked) has decreased by 4.6%, over the period 2008 - 2011. This suggests that either (or a combination of both), people are working longer, less productive hours or that the jobs lost within the local economy represented higher value added employment.

More detailed analysis (contained in appendix 2) shows the loss of 1,500 manufacturing/construction related jobs in the period 2009/10 to 2010/11. The most recent data shows that in 2012/2013, 30.8% of all jobs in Darlington were within the Public Administration, Education and Health sector, which equates to 15,500 jobs. The distribution, hotels and restaurants sector is the second largest, accounting for 22.9% of all jobs (11,500). Manufacturing (3,700) and Construction (2,700) sectors account for 5.3% and 7.3% of jobs and the Agricultural sector accounts for only 1.2% of all jobs in the borough.

Gross disposable household income per head in 2011 has risen slightly to £14,121; however this includes the combined incomes of all people sharing a particular household or place of residence, and includes every form of income (e.g. salaries and wages, pensions, benefits etc). Darlington's rate compares favourably with £13,560 per head in the North East, although nationally the figure is £16,250. Though median weekly workplace and residence based earnings have risen between 2008 and 2012, they are still lower than the Tees valley and national average on both measures. To attain the Tees Valley and national average, median weekly earnings in Darlington need to increase by 0.8% (£3.80) and 10.5% (£48.40) respectively.

The number of VAT and/or PAYE registered enterprises decreased by 125 between 2008 and 2011, although between 2011 and 2012 an increase of 95 VAT and/or PAYE registered enterprises was posted. 86.7% of enterprises in Darlington are categorised as micro (0 – 9 employees); 10.87% are classified as small (10 – 59 employees), 1.58% are classified as medium sized (50 – 259 employees) and 0.79% are classified as large (250+ employees)

The employment rate in the borough (68.9%) has started to show signs of recovering during late 2012 after reaching a low point in 2011. As of April 2012 – March 2013 the employment rate in the borough was 68.9%, although this is still lower than the pre-recession rate of 74.6%. The unemployment rate has fallen from 10.3% in April 2011/March 2012 to 9.6% April 2012/March 2013. This equates to 4,800 economically active people seeking work. The number of JSA claimants grew by 67% between 2008 and 2013 (1,925 to 3,220). Of the 3,300 JSA claimants (as of July 2013) 915 were aged 18 – 24 years.

Section 1 – Action Plan (2012 – 2026)

The Economic Strategy Action Plan identified ten priority actions that we intended to deliver via four themed headings. In turn this led to 35 sub-actions that would contribute either individually or collectively towards delivering a priority action.

Theme	Priority Actions	
The right place	Action 1	Develop a new approach to promoting Darlington to businesses, investors and visitors within and beyond the UK, building on key themes including our international rail heritage
	Action 2	Develop and promote the cultural, retail, leisure and housing offer within the borough to support economic growth
The right people	Action 1	Improve the skills of the labour force (current and future) to ensure that they match the needs of existing and potential employers
	Action 2	Retain talent in the local labour market
The right infrastructure	Action 1	Fix immediate issues that prevent economic growth
	Action 2	Influence investment decisions to support the economic development of Darlington
The right business conditions	Action 1	Support the development of supply chain opportunities to both the public and private sector
	Action 2	Develop sector actions to maximise existing and future economic aspirations
	Action 3	Work to develop a strong business support offer in Darlington that caters for the needs of all businesses
	Action 4	Have an appropriate range of new start and grown on property available throughout Darlington

Progress

Progress has been achieved across all four themes within the action plan, and this is discussed further under each theme heading.

Objectives to be achieved
Profile of the borough is raised throughout the region, UK and the world
Reduced migration to other employment, retail, leisure or cultural centres

Priority Actions	No of sub actions	Sub actions completed	Sub actions on target	Sub actions behind schedule	Sub actions deleted	Overall status
2	7	1	4	0	2	

Achievements:-

Action 1: Develop a new approach to promoting Darlington to businesses, investors and visitors within and beyond the UK, building on key themes including our international rail heritage

- Produced a promotional toolkit, incorporating a “Darlington” DVD and marketing literature. Aimed at a variety of audiences the toolkit also includes a suite of Regeneration Factsheets, which can be refreshed annually.
- Identified a list of influential business ambassadors to actively promote Darlington’s considerable business assets and high quality of life.
- Commissioned a new online Vacant Sites & Premises Register to promote available sites and premises to new start; expanding and incoming businesses.

Action 2: Develop and promote the cultural, retail, leisure and housing offer within the borough to support economic growth

- Approved Town Centre Regeneration Plan
- Worked with developers Terrace Hill to bring forward a new leisure development within the town centre. The scheme will deliver a cinema, hotel, plus restaurants, bars and shops, as well as create up to 500 permanent jobs.
- Delivered activity through:-
 - ❖ Distinct Darlington, including:-
 - Recruitment of four Town centre Rangers
 - Delivery of Town Centre Events and promotional activities
 - Partnerships with others to deliver support to Town Centre businesses
 - ❖ the Darlington Housing Strategy, including: -
 - New homes built in West Park, Harrowgate Hill, West End of Darlington, Cockerton and Town Centre Fringe
 - Delivered housing investment programme of home improvements throughout local authority housing stock
 - Brought forward new housing sites at Lingfield Point, Central Park and the former Darlington Football ground, Feethams

❖ Creative Darlington. including:-

- Supported the development of The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts and transition of arts activity formerly located in the Arts Centre to alternative locations in Darlington
- Worked with Darlington for Culture in promoting their first Arts Festival in May 2013 and with Wayne Hemingway, Marchday and other partners to stage the first national 'Festival of Thrift' at Lingfield Point.

Deleted sub actions:-

- Three sub actions within Place Action 1 have been merged into one sub action as it was felt that these actions were intrinsically linked to each other, the new sub action contained within Appendix 1 - Action Plan (2013/2014) is:

- ❖ Work with Darlington's Business Ambassadors to promote the Borough to a wide variety of audiences, both in the UK and abroad.


Are we achieving our Right Place objectives?

Good progress has been made across all sub-actions, though in terms of the headline objectives it is too early to measure the impact of the activity that has been undertaken to date. The Action Plan has been updated to ensure that we continue to work towards achieving our objectives under this theme, and to include a number of performance measure to be used to assess progress.

THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Objectives to be achieved

Close gap between skills needs and skills availability
Reduce levels of worklessness/young people not in education, employment and training
Skilled local workforce able to meet business needs
Reduce levels of JSA claimants

Priority Actions	No of sub actions	No of sub actions completed	No of sub actions on target	No of sub actions behind schedule	No of sub actions deleted	Overall status
2	9	1	7	1	0	

Achievements:-

Action 1: Improve the skills of the labour force (current and future) to ensure that they match the needs of existing and potential employers

- Delivered the Foundation for Jobs Initiative across the Borough. In its first year (April 2012 to March 2013) the initiative exceeded targets by creating 123 new apprenticeships (target: 100), 125 internships/Jobcentre Plus Work Experience placements created (target: 100). 1,150 young people from Darlington schools or colleges have had meaningful contact with industry (target: 100), and 66 young people received introductory training focussed on self-employment and entrepreneurship;
- Delivered a number of high-profile events and initiatives for school-age children through Foundation for Jobs, including a Low Carbon event; a Hovercraft-building challenge; the first roll-out of the Virgin Money 'Make £5 Grow' scheme outside of the Newcastle area; an 'Apprentice-style' challenge for Business Studies students, together with the organisation of an awareness-raising event for Careers Advisers across the whole of the North East held at the Nissan plant;
- TVU (on the back of a £7M RGF award for skills) have agreed to role out the Foundation for Jobs initiative across the Tees Valley;
- Continued delivery of the Encouraging Engineering Scheme – securing an additional 2 companies outside of the Borough to host Summer 2013 vacation work placements. 10 undergraduate students are currently being supported under the scheme;

Action 2: Retain talent in the local labour market

- Delivered a Careers & Opportunities event to 300 young people to give them a flavour of the employment opportunities and sectors operating within Darlington. The event attracted a diverse range of businesses and sectors;
- Delivered the Flexible Support Fund wage subsidy (May 2012 to May 2013), resulting in 29 new apprenticeships being created, together with 31 new jobs (not apprenticeships);
- Launched the Foundation for Jobs Wage Subsidy (June 2013). To date this has supported 19 individuals into apprenticeships, with a further 5 apprenticeships pending;
- Worked in partnership with the other 4 Tees Valley local authorities and TVU to secure £2.7M ESF funding to deliver a Workforce Skills project and a Local Response Fund. Project delivery commenced at the start of October 2013;

- The Business Engagement team continued to act as a host employer under the Jobcentre Plus Work Experience programme, offering 8-week placements to young unemployed people with a view to getting some valuable work experience on their CVs. Since signing up as a host employer in September 2011, 19 individuals have had Work Experience placements. To our knowledge, 10 have gone on to secure paid employment and 2 have gone back into education;
- Working in collaboration with Esh Group and Keepmoat in respect of the new build housing at Cockerton and Central Park to fulfil their developer obligations for local employment and apprenticeships.


Actions/sub-actions behind schedule

- Utilise existing groups of cross-sectoral employers' forums to discuss skills issues - this sub action has not developed as envisaged. In its place the Councils business engagement team are working with companies through the new workforce skills project to identify skills needs and shortages within existing workforces' and to understand future skills requirements'.

Are we achieving our People objectives?

As is the case for the other strategy themes, it is too early to assess whether the actions within the strategy are having a significant impact on achieving the People objectives, though recent trends on employment rate, JSA claimants and numbers of people qualified to NVQ level 4 are all showing a slight improvement between 2012 - 2013.

Objectives to be achieved
Business and employment growth is supported.
Key sectors (existing and emerging) are supported for growth
Darlington remains a viable and competitive location for business

Priority Actions	No of sub actions	No of sub actions completed	No of sub actions on target	No of sub actions behind schedule	No of sub actions deleted	Overall status
2	5	1	2	2	0	

Achievements:-

Action 1:- Fix immediate issues that prevent economic growth

- Contracted specialist consultants to carry out an audit of Darlington’s employment sites and premises to identify constraints to development. The findings of this work will be used to inform the development of an action plan aimed at addressing the issues identified.
- Worked closely with BT to positively influence their decision to bring high speed digital broadband to the Borough.
- Audit of future and ongoing energy needs linked to development of ‘Making and Growing Places’ Local Plan, work includes engagement with utilities on potential infrastructure requirements for new development sites.

Action 2:- Influence investment decisions to support the economic development of Darlington

- Secured funding/investment to deliver major regeneration activity in the borough, including £3.3m ERDF funding to deliver a business Incubator/Innovation Centre on Central Park.
- Commenced delivery of a number of major schemes which will have a positive economic impact on the borough, including:-
 - ❖ Town Centre – Cinema development; Department for Education relocation; Multi storey car park (Feethams area);
 - ❖ Central Park has been confirmed as the preferred location for the National Biologics Manufacturing Centre (NBMC);
 - ❖ Environment Agency and TVU acknowledged Town Centre Fringe as a strategic investment opportunity to support jobs and growth.
 - ❖ Plans for major infrastructure improvements at Bank Top Station have been identified as a priority within the Tees Valley draft Strategic Infrastructure Plan. Darlington Council has been at the forefront (seconding a member of staff to drive forward this work) of the development of an Economic Business Case prepared through a partnership of 21 LEPs, used to influence decision making on the preparation and award of the East Coast mainline rail operating franchise. The new franchise operator will takeover responsibility in February 2015.

Actions behind schedule

- Proposals for capacity improvements on the trunk road network (A1 and A66) have been flagged up with the Highways Agency. The Highways Agency have recently adopted a new 'Route Based Strategy' approach to management of the strategic highway network, and will publish a draft strategy for the A1 , A19 and A66 (East of the A1) early in 2014. In parallel with work on the Strategy, the HA have commissioned a scheme appraisal on improvements to the A66 roundabout at Little Burdon.
- Digital Strategy
Work on the digital strategy is behind schedule, though has now commenced with four workstreams:
 - i. Digital Economy
 - ii. Digital Participation
 - iii. Digital Connectivity
 - iv. Delivery of Services❖ TVU are reviewing the role of Digital City

Are we achieving our Infrastructure objectives?

The past 12 months has seen substantial progress in attracting investment and business growth in Darlington. It is too early to be certain if this trend will continue, however planned development at Central Park, renewed levels of interest in housing development and indications that investment in transport infrastructure, particularly rail maybe be forthcoming, point towards a positive outlook for business growth.

THE RIGHT BUSINESS CONDITIONS

Objectives to be achieved
Retain growth businesses and attract new businesses to the borough
Business support service more closely aligned to business needs
% decrease in business failure rates by 3 rd birthday
% increase in GVA per filled job and high growth businesses in the borough
More opportunities for local businesses to tender for local opportunities

Priority Actions	No of sub actions	No of sub actions completed	No of sub actions on target	No of sub actions behind schedule	No of sub actions amended/deleted	Overall status
4	14	3	8	1	2	

Achievements

:-

Action 1:- Support the development of supply chain opportunities to both the public and private sector

- Developed and delivered meet the buyer events, and supported local suppliers in use of the NEPO e-procurement portal.

Action 2:- Develop sector actions to maximise existing and future economic aspirations

- Work is in progress to complete a logistics study, town centre retail study and public sector jobs study, each looking at future growth potential within these sectors.
- Work is ongoing with the sub sea sector to support its development in the borough.

Action 3:- Work to develop a strong business support offer in Darlington that caters for the needs of all businesses

- Secured £80,000 from the Local Area Agreement (LAA) Performance Reward Grant (PRG) to continue to deliver start-up provision and support to newly-established businesses through the 'Enterprising Darlington' project. Since 18 April 2013, 84 clients have been supported. At present we are aware of at least 6 new businesses having started and 22 clients having been referred to the NEA and 'Ready for Business' schemes;
- Successfully concluded the ERDF-funded Enterprise Coaching project (operational from August 2010 to 31 March 2013). This project provided support and advice to individuals resident in the 10 deprived wards, who were considering self-employment. 203 ERDF-eligible clients were supported. The 203 clients have resulted in the creation of 74 new start businesses (which equates to 36% going on to establish a new business). Latest records indicate that 60 of these businesses (81%) are still trading. 11 businesses (15%) are no longer trading. Out of the 203 Enterprise Coaching clients seen, 101 (50%) have decided that self employment was not for them. A further 211 clients have come through the Enterprise Coaching route, resulting in a combined total of 414 clients advised, however only 203 of these are eligible for support through ERDF due to the wards where they live. These additional clients established a further 62 new start businesses, leading to a combined total of 136 new start businesses. Accordingly, 136 new start businesses have been established through advising 414 clients (33% of clients have established businesses) and 125 of these businesses (92%) are still trading;

- Strengthened the Business Engagement team 'offer' with an additional member of TEDCO staff having been assigned to work on business start ups through the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) scheme 2 days per week. Since June 2013, this individual has worked with/is working with 49 clients, which has led to 17 business plan approvals / pending starts and 3 business starts to date;
- Completed the annual refresh of the Business Information Guide, which details business support provision available locally;
- Refreshed the Business Engagement Strategy, culminating in the allocation of individual visit schedules to allow a more involved and direct approach to working with and supporting Darlington businesses. Implemented a new programme of events and seminars in partnership with Teesside University. The Enterprise Development Programme 2012-2013. The first of these workshops was held on 17 October 2012 and is part of a series of workshops within the 'path to success' programme;
- Conducted a series of proactive business visits across the Borough, visiting businesses, ward by ward, to distribute information on business support available locally; to take enquiries and obtain up to date contact information;
- Delivered the 2012 Town Centre Retail Awards - despite difficult economic times, 2012 saw 155 entries and 45 finalists across 13 award categories. Key sponsors being: the Council; The Cornmill Centre; Distinct Darlington Ltd; The Northern Echo. 2012 saw the welcome attendance of Duncan Bannatyne, OBE, who presented the Fashion Retailer Award.

Action4:- Have an appropriate range of new start and grown on property available throughout Darlington

- Commissioned a new online Vacant Sites & Premises Register to promote available sites and premises to new start; expanding and incoming businesses;
- Implemented a new programme of financial support through the High Street Innovation Fund (HSIF) to encourage the occupation of previously vacant ground floor units in the town centre, whilst also encouraging new start businesses. Through this funding, 17 businesses have opened up in previously vacant units, we have committed to supporting a further 9 businesses taking occupation and expected to open in the near future. Of the total £100,000 HSIF allocation, £34,400 has been spent to date, with a further £55,800 having been allocated/committed. HSIF monies have been spent on: financial incentives for new businesses opening, improvements to priority vacant units etc.

Amended/deleted sub actions:-

Two sub actions have been deleted under action 1 , these are public procurement road shows and the development of case studies to be promoted by webcasts on the Darlington Partnership / Council website. Meet the Buyer events and case studies on the NEPO portal are considered to be meeting the support requirements for suppliers to access supply chain opportunities. Number of suppliers winning local contracts will be used as a measure to assess if current levels of support are having an impact.

Note: recent legislative changes to procurement regulations should assist local businesses in winning public sector contracts.

Are we achieving our Business Conditions objectives?

As with the three other themes it is too soon to measure the degree to which the Business Objectives are being met. Recent data on the number of VAT or PAYE registered enterprises shows that Darlington experienced a net increase of 95 businesses (3.8% increase) in the period 2011-2012, this against a period of four years of decline, during which time the Borough experienced a net loss of 125 businesses, 2008-2011. The most recent figures on GVA per hour worked and on GVA per head, which is for 2011 show that this was still declining, though the rate of decline 2010-2011 had slowed considerably.