

Growth Deal External Communications and PR Report, Dec 2018 to August 2019

Overview of Growth Deal Communications activity

Since our last report, in November 2018, SKV has tracked 38 relevant pieces of media coverage which mentioned the Growth Deal in some way.

The vast majority are reports covering specific Growth Deal projects and most explicitly namecheck the Growth Deal or more generally refer to LEP support, with many detailing the amount of funding provided.

There are also four or five articles included which are not about specific projects but feature references to the Growth Deal in some way. These are discussed at more length below.

Most local partners continue to reference the Growth Deal in their communications, generally in the body of their press releases or in the notes to editors, but most do not go so far as to approach SKV to arrange an LEP quote for inclusion in press material.

Around half of these references are then used by media in their subsequent coverage.

SKV has attempted to contact all Growth Deal project sponsors to ask for feedback on their PR work during the reporting period and their further plans, but we have either been unable to make contact with, or have failed to elicit a response from, project sponsors at Blackburn Council, Blackpool and Fylde College or Cumbria University.

Specific communications activity relating to projects

Releasing Growth Potential

Preston-Western Distributor (PWD)

This high-profile project, which received £58m in Growth Deal funding, has been the subject of much press interest during the reporting period.

SKV has seen approximately 15 items of media coverage in regional, local and trade media, much of this in the Lancashire Evening Post, but other outlets such as Lancashire Business View and www.lancslive.co.uk have also covered the story.

Much of the coverage focused on the Government decision, in April 2019, to go ahead with the project but media were also interested in all aspects of the PWD

story, from the possibility of a legal challenge being launched to details of its timetable and cost.

Several of the articles carried Growth Deal references.

Pennine Gateways Blackburn and Darwen

SKV has identified two media reports on the Pennine Gateways projects, of which one referenced £8.89m of Growth Deal support for the project.

Renewal of Blackpool

Blackpool - town centre quality corridors/Blackpool Tramway Extension

Developments relating to these projects were regularly covered by the Blackpool Gazette, both in a positive and negative light.

The 'Resilience Pathway', grants for facelifts for shops and the modernisation of Edward Street were welcomed but the paper also carried negative reports about the costs of tree planting and features about the impact of regeneration plans on Houndshell Shopping Centre.

These articles normally mentioned Growth Deal support but did not use quotes from LEP spokespeople.

Blackpool 21st Century Conference Centre And Hotel

The Blackpool Gazette reported positively about the appointment of Sir Andrew Parmley to lead an ambassador programme for the resort.

The article outlined the new investment and development taking place in Blackpool, noting that the new conference and exhibition centre had been funded by the LEP's Growth Deal.

AMuseum

There was a drip-feed of media reports on aspects of the museum project in outlets such as the Blackpool Gazette and BBC online during the reporting period, covering topics such as the announcement of plans for the museum and an award of Government funding.

But news of a major grant from the Heritage Fund, which was the final piece of the statutory funding needed to get the museum off the ground, attracted most media interest.

A joint press announcement by Blackpool Council in conjunction with the Heritage Fund on 24 April was covered by the Guardian, LancsLive, The Architect's Journal, Museums Association, First News and Church Times.

Blackpool Council referred to Growth Deal support in this press release. The message was picked up in two of the Blackpool Gazette articles.

Funding for housing improvements in Blackpool

Growth Deal funding of £27m was highlighted in the Blackpool Gazette's coverage of this story.

Growing the Local Skills and Business Base

Northlight

SKV worked to ensure the LEP and Growth Deal were featured in press reports of the opening of Leisure Box, part of the Northlight project, which the then PM, Theresa May, visited in April this year.

Organisers Burnley FC did not inform us of the event in advance and we were unable to reach organisers to discuss and ensure the involvement of the LEP in media activity.

So SKV used its strong relationships with local journalists to insert a quote agreed by Graham Cowley into three articles in local and regional media at the last minute.

As a result, the Lancashire Evening Post, Burnley Express and Pendle Today all included Graham's quote, which highlighted the nearly £6m in Growth Deal funding allocated to support Northlight.

In a separate piece of work, the relocation of Lancashire Adult Learning's administrative centre from Chorley to Northlight was promoted with a public event highlighting the employment and educational opportunities available there.

The story was featured in Leader Times Newspapers, Lancashire Business View and the Burnley Express but there were no Growth Deal mentions.

Innovation and Manufacturing Excellence

UCLan Engineering Innovation Centre (EIC)

UCLan's press office regularly released news on milestones relating to the flagship EIC project throughout the year, with stories covering topics such as the release of drone images of the site and time lapse photos of construction.

This resulted in frequent, high-quality and positive coverage in regional and local media. SKV has monitored at least ten articles in outlets such as Place Northwest, the Lancashire Evening Post and the North West business Insider.

All media work by UCLan included key messages about the EIC's place within the Lancashire's Strategic Economic Plan and the £10.5n funding support provided by the LEP's Growth Deal. These messages were reflected in the majority of the resulting media coverage.

Lancaster Health Innovation Campus (HIC)

There were more than 20 pieces of coverage relating to the £41m HIC – for which £17m in Growth Deal funding has been approved - on topics such as the burying of a time capsule at the site, an update on the progress of construction and the visit of LCC Chief Executive Angie Ridgwell.

These articles featured in a wide range of media, including regional outlets such as BBC Radio Lancashire and the Lancashire Evening Post, local press such as the Lancaster Guardian and business press including Bdaily, Lancashire Business View and North West Business Insider.

The university also promoted the HIC by sponsoring two business engagement events with Lancashire Business View and NW Business Insider, which were covered extensively within those publications.

Growth Deal messages were included in communications issued by the university and LEP Growth Deal support was mentioned in five subsequent articles.

Burnley Vision Park

Burnley Council included two features on Vision Park in its In Business Burnley Magazine. Both of these referred to support from the LEP's £320m Growth Deal. One article also featured a quote from Graham Cowley, highlighting how LEP funding was enabling businesses to thrive.

Farm Innovation and Technology Centre, Myerscough College

Myerscough College celebrated its 125th anniversary with a large feature in the Lancashire Evening Post, which detailed how the college had developed over the years.

There was no reference to the Food and Farming Innovation & Technology Centre supported by £3m in Growth Deal funding.

Other PR activity

As part of SKV's proactive media work, we included Growth Deal messages in our press release on Lancashire Aerospace's visit to the Paris Airshow in July.

These references, which described how UCLan's EIC and the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre had both been funded by the LEP's Growth Deal,

were included in the Blackpool Gazette and Business Lancashire's coverage of the story.

Other media coverage which included references to the Growth Deal was as follows:

- The appointment of Martin Kelly by Blackburn with Darwen Council
- The award of a CBE for former LEP chair Edwin Booth
- A report on the social value created by the Growth Deal, taken from a report to the Growth Deal Management Board.

Upcoming media opportunities for Growth Deal-funded projects include:

- Press work about the opening of a new section of the East Lancashire Strategic Cycle Network took place in September
- The official opening event for UCLan's EIC is due on October 18
- A ground-breaking ceremony for the Preston Western Distributor is planned for October 24
- Spinning Point project – the completion of Rawtenstall Bus Station is expected for end of October
- The residential aspect of the Northlight scheme is due to be launched on 7 November. Activity is also expected to promote canal moorings in March 2020
- The launch of a long-term publicity campaign about the museum in Blackpool is scheduled for this autumn
- Pendle Council is anticipating communication activity around the Lomeshaye Industrial Estate Phase 2 in January/February 2020

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