



Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Limited

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Developing a Strategic Marketing Proposition for Lancashire

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Executive Summary

This report is regarding the marketing strategy of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

Recommendation

The LEP Board is asked to:

- (i) Note and comments on the contents of this report;
- (ii) Approve the proposed approach to developing a strategic marketing proposition for Lancashire, as set out in this report;
- (iii) Delegate authority to the LEP Chairman, with the support of the Director of Economic Development of the Lancashire County Council and Chief Executive of Marketing Lancashire, to finalise an agency brief in accordance with this report;
- (iv) Approve the proposals, as set out in 2.5 and 6.4 of this report, regarding the commissioning and management arrangements for the appointment of consultants;
- (v) Identify a LEP Board Director to support the LEP Chairman with this workstream; and
- (vi) Require the Chief Executive of Marketing Lancashire to provide regular updates to the LEP Board on the appointment of consultants and the resultant work programme and stakeholder engagement strategy.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Lancashire's historical under-performance regarding the positioning and marketing of the *Lancashire offer* to potential investors, businesses and growth sectors, while supporting the effective marketing of Lancashire, as



one of the UK's leading visitor destinations, remains one of the few priorities still to be comprehensively addressed by the LEP.

- 1.2 Although many local businesses and institutions are recognised as leaders and innovators in their fields, Lancashire, as a whole, has failed to promote these successes and systematically leverage key local assets and opportunities, with a view to attracting other highly motivated businesses and investors to the area.
- 1.3 Given the significant progress made by the LEP in recent years, in establishing Lancashire's most comprehensive growth strategy, investment framework and delivery programme, which includes initiatives of national significance, it is clear there is a need to enhance the understanding of the LEP's role and impact with local business communities, sectors and stakeholders.
- 1.4 To date the LEP has not invested heavily in its digital communication strategy and website and as a result both are in real need of a refresh and upgrade. Key initiatives such as Boost Business Lancashire, the City Deal, Growing Places and the Enterprise Zone have or are developing strong identities, and these and other key priorities need to be framed within an overarching LEP communications strategy.
- 1.5 Lancashire's economic-base is also one of the largest and most important, in terms of rebalancing the UK economy, but its profile and capabilities are often under-represented in the development of new national policy developments and initiatives. This must be addressed with Lancashire's role and contribution to new growth approaches such as the Northern Powerhouse better understood and more accurately portrayed.
- 1.6 This report outlines for Board consideration an initial approach to addressing these matters, including the perceived lack of a coherent Lancashire identity and offer.

2. Developing a Strategic Marketing Proposition for Lancashire

- 2.1 Strong and significant progress has been made by the LEP in driving local prosperity and growth, but the profile of the LEP's activities, and the perception of Lancashire as a major economic centre, are not as strong, or as understood, as they should be in either the regional, national or international media, or, importantly, by the local business community.
- 2.2 There is now a pressing need to overcome this profile weakness by investing more heavily in communications and media management to ensure increased and more positive coverage of the LEP, and the work of partners across Lancashire, by targeting relevant business/investor, sector specific and consumer media.



- 2.3 Key to the next phase of implementing the LEP's growth strategy is the need to challenge perceptions of the area and to reposition the Lancashire brand. This is initially expected to include two key elements:
- i) The requirement for the development of a compelling *Lancashire story*, or economic narrative, that clearly sets out a strong identity and a clear sense of purpose and place. This will underpin future place marketing and positioning by the LEP and also secure the support of its key partners, including Marketing Lancashire, who will find it sufficiently engaging to be able to deploy in support of their own activities. It will also be effective in generating the endorsement and support of the private sector.
 - ii) The requirement for an initial 12-month media and communications campaign, as part of an overarching strategy, to increase awareness of the *Lancashire offer* with key stakeholders and business sectors by employing a range of communication approaches, especially digital channels, appropriate to key target audiences.
- 2.4 To this end, subject to LEP Board approval, an independent and suitably qualified agency will be commissioned to develop a compelling *Lancashire Story*, with initial an agreed 12-month media and communications campaign, as part of an agreed strategy.
- 2.5 It is also proposed that the Chief Executive of Marketing Lancashire manages this commission on behalf of the LEP, under the direction of the LEP Chairman, with the support of the Head of Communications and Director of Economic Development at Lancashire County Council. It is also proposed that another LEP Director also be sought to support the LEP Chairman in managing this commission. The Chief Executive of Marketing Lancashire will provide progress reports to each LEP Board with the first update scheduled for the Board meeting on 16 June.
- 2.6 The Board may be aware of new national guidance following concerns that some LEPs have hired professional lobbyists to engage Ministers and Government officials, as part of their case-making activities. This is a prohibited activity and does not form any part of the proposed LEP commission, as set out in this report.

3. Developing the Lancashire Story

- 3.1 Whilst Lancashire has many key strengths, there is both a real and perceived view that its economic success is undermined by a lack of identity. Lancashire is often perceived as fragmented, misunderstood or unknown by many, not least because:
- Until recently Lancashire has historically struggled to present itself as a single coherent economic unit, which recognises its distinctive local strengths;



- Lancashire is often portrayed as a fragmented and complex place, with many claiming and competing to represent its interests; and with
 - Lancashire often viewed as geographically too diverse and peripheral to be relevant to major national and regional growth priorities.
- 3.2 Lancashire's failure to punch its economic weight over recent decades, even though it is still the third largest local economy in the North of England, is reflected in the area's uneven performance, in terms of securing new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which is defined by Government as new foreign owned companies (FOCs) locating to Lancashire and/or expanding FOCs already established in the area.
- 3.3 The key drivers underpinning success in attracting new FDI include proximity to new markets, the ability to cluster with like-minded businesses and supply chains, access to key skill pools, the density and quality of innovation networks, and the availability of high quality sites and business locations.
- 3.4 However, there is no question that Lancashire has a substantial and competitive offer for those seeking to achieve business growth. It has an array of quality development sites suited to a diverse range of business uses, excellent connectivity in a position at the heart of the UK, four high calibre universities, numerous leading schools and colleges, a wide range of business support led by the LEP's own offer, and high living standards with many recreational opportunities and areas of outstanding natural beauty on its doorstep.
- 3.5 The development of a *Lancashire Story*, which is ambitious and credible, will, in turn, tackle prevailing perception gaps by helping to:
- Identify key market strengths and compelling points of difference that enable Lancashire to stand-out in a very competitive environment;
 - Showcase evidential development of positive progress, recent and ongoing;
 - Promote Lancashire as a place where things happen;
 - Determine what is the ambition of the 'place' and ultimately what is the story of the 'place';
 - Engage with the private sector, and identify advocates for the Lancashire Story;
 - Reduce any misunderstandings about what Lancashire is;
 - Facilitate collaboration and local cross-boundary partnership working; and



- Portray a professional approach in communicating a strong identity and clear sense of purpose.
- 3.6 The LEP board, key stakeholders in the local business community and local authorities will need to be engaged as part of the development of the *Lancashire Story*. Creating a sense of ownership and building advocacy will be important to the approach taken.
- 3.7 To help convey the *Lancashire Story*, it is anticipated the agency will propose the development of an identified range of core marketing collateral and event opportunities.

4. Media and Communications Strategy

- 4.1 The media and communications strategy, and initial campaign, will harness the *Lancashire Story* and take it directly to key audiences. It will illustrate, with examples, that Lancashire is a dynamic and progressive place with an important role in the country's economic future. The campaign is expected to employ a range of channels to reach key stakeholders, but especially digital media. The over-arching goal of this initial commission is to project Lancashire's business and academic success, and the area's strategies for development, investment, learning, leisure, as well as its housing and lifestyle offer, to both mainstream and specialist audiences.
- 4.2 The agency will be expected to lead the development and implementation of a media and communications strategy designed to:
- Achieve a sustained period of external communications activity to highlight the *Lancashire Story* and to generate positive references and conversations about the place.
 - Elevate the profile of key LEP initiatives to demonstrate Lancashire's ambition and ability to deliver.
 - Attract interest from relevant parties who may engage in those initiatives.
 - Build the reputation regionally and nationally of Lancashire, as a place of growth and partnership delivery, and a location of choice for new investors/end-users.
- 4.3 Although it is not the purpose of the campaign to promote the LEP per se, the impact and role of the LEP should be a recurring theme promoted at all appropriate opportunities. The LEP Chairman and Board Directors are key figureheads for both the LEP and Lancashire, in this context, but the agency will also be tasked with identifying additional Lancashire champions as ambassadors.



- 4.4 Equally, the LEP should not be considered as the sole or essential element of every activity within the emerging strategy. Lancashire has many high quality businesses, and some very successful locally specific networks such as the Burnley Bondholders, with their own leadership and personalities, who are strong advocates of Lancashire, and who can contribute to achieving the overall goals of the strategy.
- 4.5 Marketing Lancashire is already established as the place marketing organisation for Lancashire and commands strong business and local authority support from across the sub-region. In moving forward, the LEP and other local partners will need to consider the role and contribution of Marketing Lancashire (along with other key business support agencies) in creating the sustainable capacity needed to develop and promote an agreed *Lancashire offer*.

5. Objectives of the Work

- 5.1 In summary, the key objectives of the commission are to:
- Improve the positioning of Lancashire in a national context and the LEP and Lancashire in a regional context.
 - Establish a strong and clear economic identity for Lancashire that highlights key attributes and benefits by sector.
 - Identify key stakeholders and opinion formers regionally and nationally and transform them into supporters and influencers of the Lancashire brand.
 - Stimulate interest, enquiries and subsequent inward investment enquiries to Lancashire.
 - Raise the profile of strategic investment opportunities which flow through the LEP.
 - Identify the key achievements and messages that best portray the *Lancashire Story* through a multi-channel approach to target audiences.
 - Develop engagement and closer working relationships with the private sector in communicating a united and proud Lancashire that has a confident and ambitious voice.
 - Identify a suite of marketing collateral and opportunities to showcase the Lancashire Story regionally and nationally.
 - Develop a LEP media and communications strategy, which will review current communication activities and assets, including the LEP's website and use of digital media to reach key target audiences, with an initial programme of media and communications activity.



6. Proposed Budgets and Timelines

- 6.1 The total budget for the term of the contract, exclusive of VAT, but inclusive of all fees, disbursements, and other expenses is £50,000 for the *Lancashire Story* (including collateral) and £50,000 to develop the media and communications strategy.
- 6.2 This level of funding has been previously agreed by the Board in considering the LEP's core budget for 2015/16.
- 6.3 The proposed immediate timeline for the selection and appointment of the preferred agency to deliver this commission, subject to Board approval, is as follows:
- ITT document to be circulated across relevant media/audiences w/c 23rd March
 - Agencies to submit proposal by 22 April
 - Agencies shortlisted and advised by 30 April
 - Shortlisted agencies interviewed by mid-May
 - Agency (s) appointed by 31 May
 - Inception meeting in early June
 - First progress report to the LEP Board on 16 June
- 6.4 The panel to assess the tenders will comprise the Chief Executive of Marketing Lancashire and Head of Communications Lancashire County Council, with the support of the Director of Economic Development. The LEP Chairman will lead the panel with the support of another LEP Director (to be agreed).

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The LEP Board is asked to:
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