

Climate Change Member Advisory Group Meeting, 13 July 2022

Economic Development Update

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Medway's economic development function's key priority was successfully delivering £13.5 million of grant funding to sustain businesses during lockdown restrictions and support them during economic recovery. During 2022/23 economic development resources have been strengthened and the function is being further developed.

There are a number of economic development initiatives being scoped and delivered. A new business support service for Medway will encourage businesses to embrace sustainable working to drive forward the zero carbon economy agenda. Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce will deliver the business support programme and as part of the scale up project will encourage innovative businesses to implement zero carbon changes as well as having dedicated advisers to assist businesses to move towards zero carbon.

Economic development's engagement with businesses is rapidly expanding. Medway's business newsletter has over 2000 recipients with an average 47% open-rate and we are looking to expand this figure. At least once a month, one of the schemes promoting carbon neutrality is promoted as a priority. Medway for Business, our business partnership, will be relaunched as Business for Medway and this will enable dialogue with a growing, wider range of businesses to encourage engagement with the climate change agenda, strategy and associated actions. A Customer Relationship Management database is being developed to support this and on-going communication and engagement. Any potential grants and support schemes that drive the zero-carbon agenda will be promoted and the 2022 Medway Business Awards will also embrace this. We are engaging with Medway's Rotary Clubs to create a network to encourage corporate social responsibility with a specifically environmental focus for small businesses to engage with their staff.

A 'tackling climate change' section highlighting: LoCASE, Solar Together Kent, Workplace Charging Scheme, The Kent Realising Electric Vans Scheme has been included in Medway's business support leaflet that has been distributed at recent events including 1000 copies at the Kent Construction Expo and Business Vision Live events. A QR code was created and promoted as an active link to Medway Climate Agenda. Medway also co-presented with the University of Greenwich at the Big Networking Breakfast at Kent Vision Live and highlighted the new Medway Food Innovation Centre and pioneering work to achieve net zero, reduce food waste and restore biodiversity.

Businesses still face challenges after surviving the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions and need further incentivisation to invest in climate change actions. Subject to securing additional investment, Medway has the opportunity to further develop its business support function to support businesses drive forward the zero-carbon agenda and address climate change.