

ReWyre ReNewed 2015 Prospectus

2014 Autumn Conference feedback and the next 5 years



The ReWyre

Foreword

I'm very proud of the success that the Council has made of its ReWyre regeneration initiative and of the real benefits it has been able to deliver over the last five years. We must continue to move forward and look at the new challenges the district faces and that is why I arranged the October conference. We were all inspired by what Wayne Hemingway had to say and have focussed our plans for the next five years of ReWyre on some of the exciting ideas Wayne's presentation generated amongst the delegates on the day. I'm very much looking forward to continuing the delivery of real benefits to the residents and businesses of Wyre Forest for the next five years.

It is vitally important that the Council, as a community leader, has a clear set of plans and priorities to support its visionary economic development and regeneration work going forward. The Council is absolutely committed to delivering on its existing commitments such as the £2million public realm improvement scheme in Kidderminster Town Centre, but also to finding long term solutions to some of the most challenging and complex sites within the district such as Worcester Street and Bromsgrove Street, rather than applying short term fixes.

Our businesses and residents must have confidence that the Council is striving to ensure that the district has a flourishing economy and that's exactly what our ReWyre initiative sets out in this report.

CLlr John Campion, Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration



The ReWyre

Story so far

In September 2009 Wyre Forest District Council launched a prospectus for the regeneration of Kidderminster. Working with partners, the ReWyre initiative was born and a partnership was established to drive forward the regeneration and transformation of Kidderminster and provide an ambitious long term vision for its future focusing on;

Wealth and Jobs

Creating an environment and culture that helps to establish Kidderminster as an **entrepreneurial town and a business friendly location.**

Transport

Creating a **highly accessible town** and enhance accessibility within the District and connections to the wider region.

Homes and Communities

Regeneration of **brownfield sites** delivering **renewed housing choices** including new **affordable** homes and **stronger communities.**

Design and Environment

Creating a town that **capitalises** upon its **natural and cultural assets.**

The purpose of this prospectus is to reflect on the progress that has been made by the ReWyre initiative over the last five years and to look at how we can sustain the momentum to create a brighter and exciting future for Kidderminster.



The Original Action Areas

ReWyre conferences were held in 2010 and 2011 and brought together business leaders, designers and developers to consider the future prospects of Kidderminster and the surrounding area.

It was clear that there was a genuine desire and will to create a brighter and better future for Kidderminster but recognition of the challenges that were faced. The 2009 Regeneration Prospectus identified four main Action Areas

Kidderminster Town Centre

Tackling the effect of the ring road, realising key development opportunities and improving gateways into the town

Churchfields

Creating new homes and connecting the area to surrounding communities and the town centre

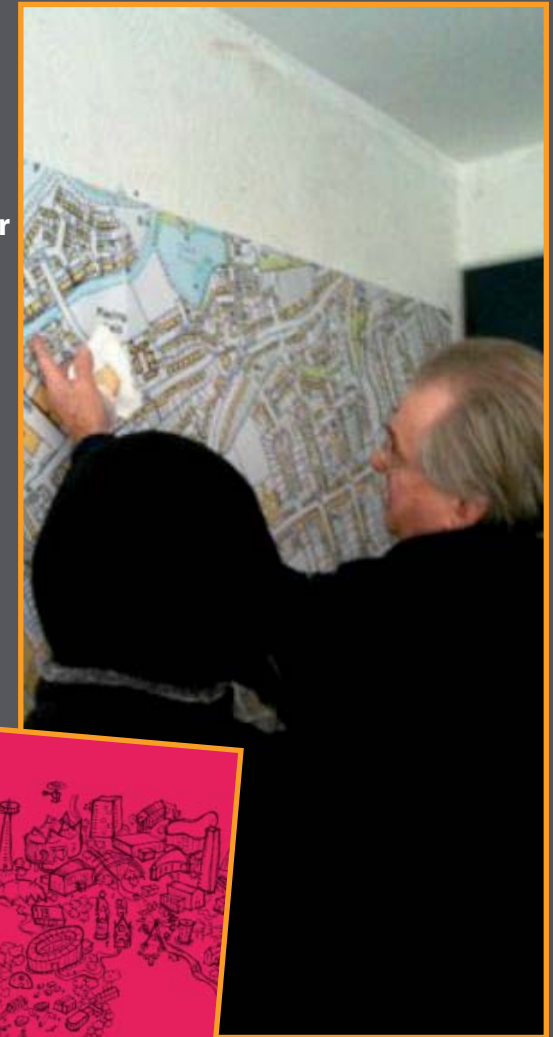
Comberton Hill

Positioning the area as a gateway to the district

Former British Sugar site

Realising new development opportunities on the former British Sugar site now known as Silverwoods

Together they create Kidderminster's
'Arc of opportunity'



ReWyre and the State of the area debate (SotAD)

The ReWyre conferences brought together business leaders, public sector partners and land owners/ developers to consider the future prospects of Kidderminster and to identify how partners could work collectively to take forward some of the aspirations and plans set out in the ReWyre prospectus.

Recognising the changing national economic climate, the then Leader of the Council initiated 'State of the Area' (SotAD) debates in 2012 and 2013 to engage with partners, businesses and the public with a view to shaping the response to the decline of the local economy and to agree actions the Council and others could put in place to drive local economic recovery. These debates culminated in a strategic shift in the way that the Council approaches economic development and regeneration and broadened out the focus of the ReWyre project from Kidderminster to the rest of the district.

The impetus of the SotAD propelled the ReWyre activity onwards and with the Council channelling significant amounts of its own resources into its economic development and regeneration programme has resulted in £2m of capital and revenue investment set aside to kickstart the delivery of a number of key projects; as well as leveraging in considerable public sector investment through partners and national funding streams. In addition, the Council has sought to promote a can-do 'open for business' culture to successfully nurture the growth of local companies and attract new inward investment that otherwise would not have invested in the district.

What has ReWyre and SotAD delivered?

The Council's investment and commitment to this visionary work and change in culture is now bearing fruit with tangible progress being made by the Council and its partners in delivering its economic development and regeneration programme and perhaps most importantly attracting new private sector inward investment to the district bringing in hundreds of new jobs.



Key Achievements

Since ReWyre was launched in 2009, an effective public-private partnership has been established which is committed to delivering the vision set out in the Regeneration Prospectus.

Weavers Wharf Extension

Wyre Forest District Council has been working closely with the owners of Weavers Wharf, Henderson Global Investors, to facilitate a dramatic transformation within the centre of Kidderminster. Plans, which received permission in April 2014, focus on the demolition of Crown House, which will make way for a major new public square at the Bull Ring. The River Stour will also be opened and a new retail anchor store will be accompanied by new trees and landscaping, new street furniture, seating and extensive areas of pedestrian space. The project will help reinforce Kidderminster as a regionally important retail destination. This investment alone is worth £11m and is anticipated to contribute £4.5m of net additional Gross Value Added (GVA) per annum to the local economy.

Traditional retail centre of Kidderminster - Vicar Street, Exchange Street and High Street

The Council has led an extensive public engagement exercise to help plan the future of the traditional retail centre of Kidderminster and committed to undertake a £2m Public Realm improvement scheme for Exchange Street, High Street and Vicar Street that will commence in early 2015. The Council has invested £500k of capital funding, and Worcestershire County Council a further £1.5million to support the delivery of this scheme.

Churchfields

The Council led the development of a masterplan for this former industrial area of the town to re-imagine it as an urban village. Following adoption of the Churchfields masterplan by the Council, the first phase of residential development on the former Georgian Carpets site is nearing completion with 250 new homes being built in the area. The second phase will deliver more residential units with some small scale commercial development and significant investment in the highway infrastructure serving the site.



Key Achievements

Kidderminster Railway interchange

Working alongside transport colleagues from Worcestershire County Council a business case was developed for a new transport interchange at Kidderminster Railway station for which planning permission was subsequently granted; this led to a provisional allocation of £2.5m for 2016/17 being secured from the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as part of the Local Growth Fund deal round 1 and a further £1.8m of funding is also being sought from the Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) as part of the Local Growth Fund 2, to accelerate the commencement of the scheme in 2015/16. Further work is also being progressed on the business case for halts on the Severn Valley Railway at Silverwoods and the West Midland Safari Park to support mainline train services to Bewdley.

South Kidderminster Enterprise Park (SKEP)

Despite failing to secure a second Enterprise Zone as part of the GBSLEP Enterprise Belt proposal that would have included Wyre Forest at its southernmost tip, the Council decided to continue the momentum that had been generated by the bid to declare a Local Development Order (LDO) for the area known as the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park. The LDO was adopted in 2012 and offers the business community a simplified planning process, helping a number of local firms to expand their business. A number of major local businesses have used the LDO to expand their operations in the district.

In May 2014, Amada UK opened its new £2m reconstructed UK Technical Centre, which will showcase the company's state of the art machines and systems to its customers and in June 2014, Beakbane opened its new £1.2m new factory which includes new production areas for the efficient manufacturing of the company's machine protection equipment.



Key Achievements

Former British Sugar site

The former British Sugar site was identified in the original ReWyre prospectus as being a major brownfield site with an opportunity to deliver significant regeneration. Real strides have been made in transforming this site (now known as Silverwoods), with the first phase of development already underway which will result in up to 250 new high quality homes.

The Council identified that the site would not be able to deliver its full potential without the provision of a new link road. The Council supported the land owner in delivering the £8m first phase of the link road which is now complete. Funding for phase 2 of the Hoo Brook Link Road has also been secured through Pinch point funding and the two LEPs with **work due to commence in 2015 and completion expected in 2016**. This £20m infrastructure investment is key to improving the development potential of employment sites along the Stourport Road and will unlock further new homes and employment development opportunities on the Silverwoods site itself; it will also reinvigorate the Hoo Brook Industrial Estate with many plots currently occupying a secondary location on the estate soon to occupy premier locations fronting the new link road.

An immediate return has been achieved on this investment with the decision by Amtek to invest over £20m in the former Lawrence's Recycling plant that could deliver up to 500 new jobs in its aluminium casting business. **The Council itself has shown its commitment to Silverwoods by identifying the site for its new multi million pound Leisure Centre which will be complete in 2016.**

SPACE

Wyre Forest has a rich history of small and medium sized businesses driving economic growth. Through the SotAD debates it was identified that incubator and business enterprise units were in short supply locally. **The Council has supported the delivery of 7,500 sq ft gross of new flexible work space located at the Hoo Brook Industrial Estate in Kidderminster**, offering small workshop spaces, offices and storage space linked to support packages to help businesses to start up, develop and grow. The facility known as SPACE is now fully let with 13 small businesses taking advantage of this unique opportunity.



Key Achievements

Short Term Retail Support

The Council recognises that the way we shop is changing, internet sales and 'click and collect' is changing the way shoppers use the traditional town centre retail offer; Kidderminster is no exception and is currently undergoing a market led transition in the way it operates. During this period the Council has actively sought to support the retail trade in the Town Centre in Kidderminster.

A Town Centre Manager covering each of the three towns in Wyre Forest has been employed by the Council to work with local traders, organise events and promotional activities and in Kidderminster has established a Town Team.

The Council was given national recognition in the Grimsey Review 'The Vanishing High Street' for the way in which it used its £100k High Street Innovation Fund to subsidise business rates for retailers taking up empty shop units. In parallel the Council has invested over £50,000 in grants to refurbish empty shops. The Council has supported 37 empty shop units back into occupation through the support package offered. The Council has also introduced free parking across all of its principal town centres every week as well as continuing to make parking free across all of its car parks at certain times of the day for Christmas and New Year. Investment has also been made in Christmas lights and events and activities over the festive period to help boost footfall at this key time for traders.

Local Apprenticeships

Wyre Forest's low skill, low wage economy continues to be one of the district's greatest challenges. The Council alone cannot turn this around and it needs the support of education providers and partners to address the issue.

However since 2012/13, the Council has successfully invested £50k per year in partnership with Kidderminster College to help local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with the cost of taking on a local apprentice, with over 35 apprentices supported since the start of the scheme. This is a step in the right direction in giving our young people an opportunity to get on the employment ladder. As an employer itself the Council has also taken on a number of apprentices who have been successful in their chosen areas.



ReWyre ReNewed Conference

2014

The ReWyre ReNewed conference took place at Spring Grove House on the 13th October 2014. Around 60 delegates attended the event including local business leaders and education champions. The event, hosted by the BBC's **Joanne Malin**, incorporated presentations from **Mark Garnier MP** for Wyre Forest, **Cllr John Campion**, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration for Wyre Forest District Council, **Wayne Hemingway MBE** and **Cllr Marcus Hart**, Leader of Wyre Forest District Council.

On the day the Key messages were:

ReWyre has come a long way in 5 years despite the tough economic climate

The priority areas identified in the original Prospectus remain relevant today

Progress is being made on the delivery of a number of key projects

There are excellent examples of public-private joint working

There is still work to be done

Since the launch of ReWyre the council has channelled significant investment into its economic development and regeneration programme, setting aside £2m of capital and revenue investment to kick start the delivery of a number of key projects.



Wayne Hemingway

ReWyre ReNewed Conference 2014 key note speaker

Wayne Hemingway MBE believes in the supremacy of design, whether in clothes or in buildings. Projects include a new settlement of 3000 homes in Lothian and apartments in Manchester's Northern Quarter. His high profile development on Tyneside won a series of major awards including Building Magazine's Best Housing-Led Regeneration.

Wayne Hemingways Key Messages For the ReWyre conference

Creating 'Generous Public Spaces'.... Places designed for people to use, enjoy and improve **at no cost and for no profit**

'Swim at your own risk'

i.e. Copenhagen Harbour Baths, rolling back rules and regulations and **trusting people** to do the right thing

Town centres are not just about shops but about **creating a wider experience**

Trusting in design and pushing back on the developers/ house-builders that continue to build **poor quality housing**

We need to create the conditions for young creative people to thrive



The Workshops

Rethink, Renew, Reposition

The afternoon session consisted of workshops that enabled delegates to voice their ideas about key regeneration priorities for the area. There were three workshop themes.

Workshop 1: ReThink

How do we create a new point of distinctiveness that sets Wyre Forest apart from its competition? Let's ReThink what Wyre Forest as a place could look like in the future.

Facilitator: Bob Young, Academy of Urbanism

Workshop 2: ReNew

How can we work together to continue to ReNew Kidderminster Town Centre and create a place where people want to live, shop, work and visit?

Facilitator: David Tittle, MADE & ReWyre Management Board member

Workshop 3: RePosition

How can Wyre Forest make itself more attractive for inward investment and business growth? Let's RePosition Wyre Forest as a place to invest and create wealth and jobs.

Facilitator: Neil Morris, OGL Computer & ReWyre Management Board member

Key themes Feedback from the workshops can be distilled into four key themes:

- Supporting new business investment
- Creating new homes and communities
- Improving connectivity
- Design



Supporting new business investment

Workshop Key Points

Build on what we already have by attracting more high value companies to the area.

Let's continue to make things!

We need to capitalise on key sites and premises
Can we capitalise upon the recent Amtek investment?

Work pro-actively with businesses to take on young people and create more apprenticeships

We need to understand more fully what skills are needed by our local employers

We need to engage better with local businesses and break down barriers

We need to **sell ourselves** more effectively, target our efforts and show we are **'open for business'**

We need to improve the range of leisure and cultural activities to encourage highly skilled workers to relocate to the area

Not just about inward investment; we need to create spaces/facilities for entrepreneurs /creative industries to thrive

More business activity (non retail) in Kidderminster town centre

Wyre Forest has some very successful tourism attractions but most visitors are day trippers; lack of overnight stays, The **Growth of West Midland Safari Park should help to address this issue**

Our waterways provide an opportunity for growth i.e. New pubs, cafes, marinas etc.



Creating new homes and communities

Workshop Key Points

What do we want Kidderminster to look like?

- A place 'to be'
- Good atmosphere/vibe
- Open spaces / cultural offer
- Stimulating
- A fun / generous place
- Freedom from controls
- A network of well connected streets

We have a number of key strengths which we can build on to develop new communities i.e. **Buildings of heritage value, waterways, tourism attractions, parks, nature reserves, proximity to countryside, carpet and music heritage, lower cost of living, proximity to adjacent economies**

Empty shops in the town centre Short term uses i.e. Meanwhile space

Pop up shops

Worcester Street / Eastern Gateway; opportunity to create a new residential community
Not just about building homes; need to provide quality public spaces, events and areas to socialise – **Kidderminster needs a 'heart & soul'**

We need to better engage young people to enable them to contribute to society but to also find out what they want to see happen in their area

We need to improve the town centre offer for families

We also need to promote a greater sense of pride and promotion of the area from local residents



Improving Connectivity

Workshop Key Points

Improving the local road and rail network is still viewed as a key issue

Linked to above is the need for good connectivity to attract advanced manufacturing and other high value industries

The Ring Road is still a concrete collar!

Need to improve key commuter routes out of the district

SVR Halt at Silverwoods and Safari Park could help to exploit linkages between tourism attractions

Need to secure investment to improve Kidderminster Railway station

Need to create more safe pedestrian and cycling routes within Kidderminster town centre

Need to reduce surface level car parking in the town centre to better utilise land and reduce town centre congestion



Design

Workshop Key Points

We need to bring back the 'kerb appeal' of new developments and street frontages

Need a network of well connected streets and spaces

Link design to heritage, culture and nature

Integrating new developments alongside our waterways

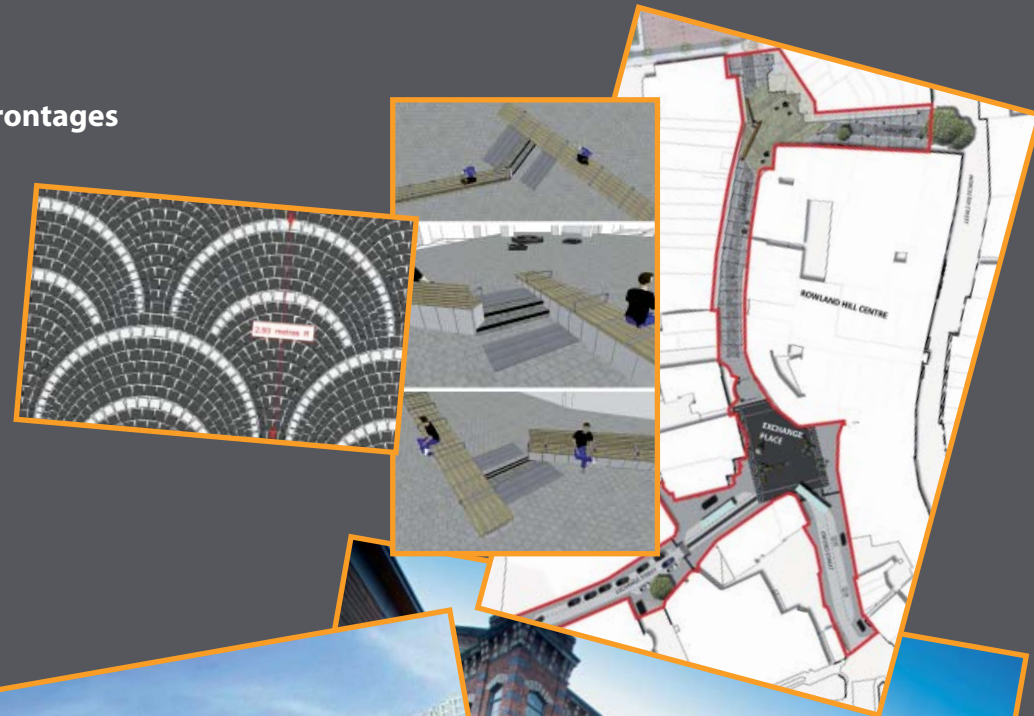
Create quality public spaces which have interest and are fun

We must involve the community and engage with the younger population

Empty properties provide an opportunity for imaginative re-design/re-use

Need to 'plant a seed' to help local people see what the future could look like for key sites i.e. Worcester St/Eastern Gateway

Promote exemplar design on key development sites



Direction of Travel

There was a clear consensus at the ReWyre ReNewed conference that the initiative had made real progress since it was launched, but it was only part way through its journey and there was significant work left to do if some of the many opportunities that were identified in the Prospectus were to be realised.

Over arching philosophy' Swim at your own risk'

Continuing to take off the financial and procedural straight jacket. We need to continue to **be bold, brave and not be afraid to take risks**

The New Town Centre / Retail Core

Weavers Wharf / High St / Exchange St / Vicar St is the 'town centre' no point fighting against the tide, we should **embrace the change** and work to deliver a high quality new retail led scheme and quality public realm.

Re-imagination of Worcester St and the Eastern Gateway

Need to develop a vision and plan for this area. **Potential residential led development scheme with high quality design and green spaces.** Consideration of short term use of some of the vacant properties, possible introduction of 'meanwhile' uses to encourage activity

Creating Generous Public Spaces

Public areas within town centres where people want to meet up with friends and family and spend their leisure time. Spaces which are not subject to rules / regulations and encourage people to have fun, be creative and engage with the heritage (past and modern) of the area

Encouraging more inward investment into the district

Riding on the back of the Amtek effect we should seek to improve the skills of our local workforce to take advantage of these opportunities

'Economic Gardening'

Looking after our existing key companies and ensuring that they continue to be nurtured and supported to grow in Wyre Forest



Future ReWyre Action Areas

'Swim at your own risk'

Continue to be bold and brave
Harness the creative spirit of it's citizens
to shape our spaces and communities
The council cannot do it on it's own, we must
create the right environment for others to
take their own risks

Action Areas

The Council will continue to lead by example
Embed the philosophy into all its regeneration activities
Create an environment free of regulation and control
Create space where people want to live and visit

Lead Organisations
ReWyre Partners

Kidderminster Town Centre/ retail core

Action Areas

Complete 1st phase public realm improvements
by October 2015
Demolition of Crown House and expansion of
Weavers Wharf
Kidderminster Railway Station improvements
Encourage phase 2 of the Churchfields Urban Village
concept
Implement ring road enhancements
Develop proposals to re-engineer the Souther Gateway

Lead Organisation
WFDC/WCC

Henderson's Real Estates
WFDC
WCC/Network Rail/LEP's
Landowners/WFDC/WCC

Re-imagination of Worcester Street and Bromsgrove Street areas

Action Areas

Re-opening of Worcester Street to traffic
Imaginative short term use of vacant properties
New long term vision and regeneration framework
for Worcester Street and Eastern Gateways areas
incorporating 'exemplar design' principles.

Lead Organisation
WCC
WFDC + property owners

WFDC + public/private
land owners

Future ReWyre Action Areas

Creating Generous Public spaces



Action Areas

The creation of 'Exchange place' public open space
Develop a 'Music Heritage Trail' around Kidderminster Town Centre
Realise the potential on the Town Hall as a quality performance venue
Creation of a multifunctional public open space at the Bull Ring incorporating open air speciality markets and events
Incorporating a well designed, multifunctional public space into the regeneration proposals for Worcester Street and Bromsgrove Street



Lead Organisations

WFDC/WCC
WFDC
WFDC
Henderson's Real Estates/
WFDC
WFDC + public/private
land owners

Encouraging more business investment into the district and improving skills



Action Areas

Complete phase 2 of the Hoo Brook link road to unlock the full potential of the Silverwoods development site and support the growth of businesses along the Stourport Road corridor
Continue to encourage inward investment
Support local FE Colleges and provide training providers the right learning opportunities to meet the needs of high value industries.
Identify potential sites and funding opportunities to develop new enterprise work space, start up and youth entrepreneurial activity facilities
Develop intensive mentoring schemes to help identify and support young entrepreneurs



Lead Organisations

WCC/St. Francis Group
WFDC/WCC/LEP's
WFDC/WCC/LEP's
FE Colleges and training
providers
WFDC
WFDC/FSB/FE Colleges/
Schools

Future ReWyre Action Areas

Economic Gardening



Action Areas

Support the landmark development at West Midland Safari and Leisure Park (WMSLP) to boost the local visitor economy

Support the development of proposals for a SVR 'Halt' at the Silverwoods site and WMSLP to facilitate further business investment and development of tourism opportunities

Identify 'grow your own' initiatives to support and nurture existing growth companies within the district

Identify potential sites and funding opportunities to facilitate additional 'grow on space' for 2nd stage businesses

Build on the 'Wyre Forest Enterprise champions'

Pay it Forward initiative to encourage business to business support



Lead Organisations

WMSLP/WFDC

WFDC/WCC/WMSLP/SVR

WFDC/ReWyre partners

WFDC

WFDC

Conclusion

Wyre Forest District Council already has a well established programme of economic development and regeneration activity following the launch of the ReWyre initiative in 2009 and the State of the Area debates in 2012 and 2013.

The ReWyre ReNewed conference held on 13th October acknowledged that real progress had been made by the Council and its partners in delivering regeneration benefits to the district and achieving some of the ambitions set out in the original Regeneration Prospectus.

However, the current economic conditions in Wyre Forest mean that further activities are required to improve the overall economic prosperity of the district and to bring forward credible and deliverable plans for a number of key regeneration sites within the area.

Wyre Forest's continued low household income levels will not be significantly changed over the next five years, but what we must seek to do through ReWyre ReNewed is to ensure that the decline is halted, and the trajectory is positive. Skills and aspiration are the major challenge to our local economic and social well being, we have made some strides in these areas, but there is much more to do.





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