

**Widnes Waterfront  
Year 5  
Performance Plan  
2010/2011**

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# Economic Development Zone Management Board

We, as members of the above mentioned Board, give our approval to the Widnes Waterfront Economic Development Zone Performance Plan, which was approved at the meeting of the Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership on 21st April 2009.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Signature</b>
Cllr. Ron Hignett	Halton Borough Council	
Ms. Claire Griffiths	PLUS Dane Housing Group	
Mr. Richard Bakes	St Modwen Properties	
Mr. Ed Burrows	Peel Holdings	
Ms. Claire Bunter	Environment Agency	
Mr. Derek Robertson	Groundwork Merseyside	
Mr. Andrew Sharp	STFC/Daresbury Laboratories	
Ms. Janitha Redmond	Homes and Community's Agency	
Mr. Chris Korall	NWDA	
Mr. Steve O'Connor	O'Connor Group Management Ltd	
Cllr. Marie Wright	Halton Borough Council	
Mr. Dick Treglea	Halton Borough Council	
Ms. Lynn Smith	Norton Priory Museum Trust	
Ms. Jane Trevor	Job Centre Plus	
Mr. Neil McGrath	Halton Housing Trust	

# CONTENTS

<b>Section 1</b>	Context
<b>Section 2</b>	Key Achievements of 2009/10
<b>Section 3</b>	Priorities for 2010/11 (including Key Projects)
<b>Section 4</b>	Delivery Structure & Management Arrangements - Financial & Project
<b>Section 5</b>	Risk
<b>Section 6</b>	Funding Profile: NWDA 2010/11 Expenditure Profile Lifetime Spend Profile
<b>Section 7</b>	Outputs NWDA Outputs 2010/11 and Lifetime Total
<b>Section 8</b>	Key Indicators of Performance / Milestones
<b>Section 9</b>	Progress Towards Outcomes
<b>Section 10</b>	Exit Strategy / Evaluation (Best Practice & Lessons Leant)

# SECTION 1

## CONTEXT

### **Introduction**

This document sets out the mechanisms by which Halton's Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership (Urban Renewal SSP) will implement the New Widnes Waterfront Economic Development Zone (EDZ) as the Economic Development Zone Management Board. Whilst the programme has been successful the key flag ship project has been delayed due to site issues and the economic downturn and a request for a further years extension has been requested. The programme is targeted at the deprived wards of Kingsway, Riverside and Halton View but because of its significance, could impact on the whole of Halton.

This Performance Plan commits Halton's Urban Renewal Partnership as the Economic Development Zone Management Board to deliver a set of projects. The Performance Plan was approved by Halton's Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

### **Purpose of Scheme**

The Widnes Waterfront is a regionally significant Merseyside gateway development. It has a substantial role to play in the delivery of a quantum economic uplift of economic activity for the North West region (Northwest Regional Economic Strategy 2006) and for Merseyside (Liverpool City-Region Economic Strategy & Action Plan 2005-2025) as well as Halton.

It has the potential to contribute towards many targets including increasing GDP and employment, deliver positive change, reversal of the regions negative image and will continue to attract support and investment from the private sector.

The Widnes Waterfront is recognised under Action 52 of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and also addresses Actions 82, 83 and 84. Due to its proximity to the New Mersey Crossing it has been recognised as an important sub-regional employment site which aims to attract good quality business accommodation on brownfield land.

The scheme also relates to Priority 2 – Business Infrastructure of the Action Plan for the Liverpool City Region, where it is identified as a Strategic Investment Area.

As detailed in the 2009/2010 Performance Plan, the Council commissioned Taylor Young, supported by Faber Maunsell, to produce a second phase Masterplan for the Widnes Waterfront area, building on the successes to date of the programme under the original Masterplan and the changing external factors since the programme's conception in 2002. Changes impacting the programme include the successful completion of many commercial and public realm projects transforming the offer of the Widnes Waterfront area, the change in the economic climate, the end of European Development Funding and the progression made towards the realisation of a second Mersey Crossing.

The 'Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework Phase 2' was adopted by the Council on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and subsequently, the vision has been updated to read

*An exciting waterfront destination and gateway to Widnes offering a range of employment, leisure and residential opportunities. Widnes Waterfront displays notable sustainable design, making the most of this unique and well connected waterside setting.*

The size of the Widnes Waterfront area has now increased to over 360 acres and includes the incorporation of the Bayer CropScience site, an associated NWDA scheme. Although the vision and objectives have been amended, there is still the underlying theme of making the area into a regionally significant, high quality environment for commercial and industrial development, accompanied by a major visitor attraction.

Underpinning the programme is the need to target the underlying problems of Widnes and its Waterfront area. These are the environment, unemployment, the business community, skills shortages and health. Out of 354 English Local Authorities for 2007, Halton is ranked the 30<sup>th</sup> most deprived area and 3<sup>rd</sup> on Merseyside after Liverpool and Knowsley (IMD 2007).

The most recent State of the Borough in Halton (January 2009) report by Local Futures indicates that the unemployment rate for Halton has risen to 3.6% (Oct 2008) from 2.9% (Oct 2007). Business density (measured by the number of firms per 1000 population) in Halton has improved since 2004 but is still lower than the national and regional averages. In 2008 there were 26.7 businesses per 1000 population in Halton, compared with 34.5 per 1000 population in the North West and 40.2 per 1000 population nationally. Halton performs poorly in terms of skills and qualification levels and is ranked 387<sup>th</sup> out of 408 districts in the country which hampers local peoples access to good quality secure job opportunities. Halton remains relatively unhealthy, ranked 371<sup>st</sup> out of 408 districts in the country, compared to 384<sup>th</sup> four years ago.

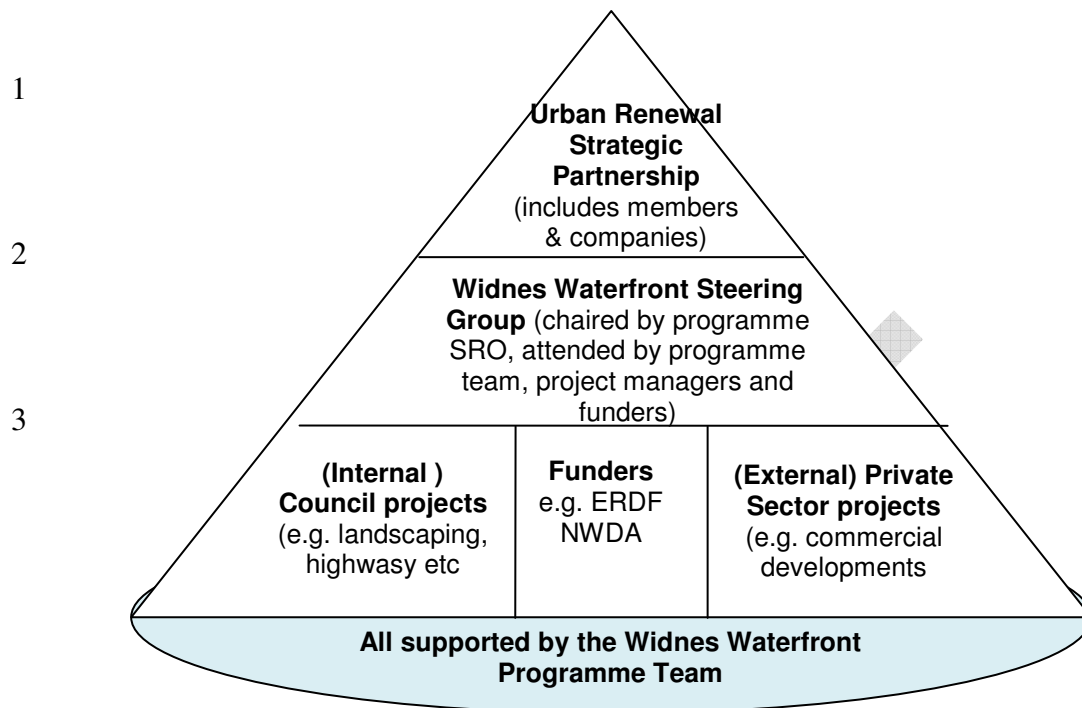
Recent unemployment figures from January 2009 to January 2010 show an increase in unemployment in all of the adjacent wards to the Widnes Waterfront area – Riverside (+3.8%), Kingsway (+1.3%) and Halton View (+1.1%). All wards apart from Halton View experienced an increased greater than the Borough average of +1.3%, with Riverside experiencing the highest increase in Widnes and the joint highest in the Borough (Office of National Statistics, February 2010).

Co-ordination of the Widnes Waterfront programme is undertaken by the Widnes Waterfront programme team employed by Halton Borough Council. The NWDA funded projects will be delivered by Halton Borough Council and it's partners in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in the Grant Funding legal agreement signed on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

### **Governance of the Scheme**

Halton Borough Council is the Accountable Body and lead partner for the Widnes Waterfront programme. The programme management arrangements for its administration are summarised in the diagram below:

## Three key organisational tiers of the Widnes Waterfront Programme



Communication is maintained between each tier, with the tier above providing governance for the one below.

- 1. Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership Board-** this is the 'Corporate' level at which the programme is managed. It is not part of the programme team however, approval for all projects is needed from the board before they can proceed.

The Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership (Urban Renewal SSP) meets on a quarterly basis and is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction of all regeneration activity. The Board is specifically responsible for: -

- The overall management of the Widnes Waterfront programme, reporting annually to the Halton Strategic Partnership Board as the Parent Organisation.
- The endorsement of projects for the Widnes Waterfront within the agreed plan, after detailed project appraisal set out in the flow chart.
- The approval of the Performance Plan each year, together with recommendations for the future resource requirements to parent funding bodies.
- Monitoring the implementation of the projects within the Performance Plan.

- 2. Widnes Waterfront Steering Group -** Chaired by the *Operational Director: Employment, Economic Regeneration and Business Development*, controls the direction of the programme.

- 3. Project and Funding input** –3 sections: Council projects, private sector projects and funding bodies. Within each section are individual project management arrangements, which link together under the programme umbrella, mainly co-ordinated through the programme team.

**The programme team** supports all of the above tiers by ensuring clear and effective lines of communication between each level, co-ordination of the various activities, keeping everyone focused on programme targets and offering advice and guidance.

### **Strategic Objectives**

The overall strategic objectives expressed in the Masterplan are:-

1. Create a sustainable employment-led mixed-use gateway location of long term regional significance
2. Generate sustainable employment in key sub-regional priority sectors, including energy and environmental, advanced engineering and materials
3. Support improvement of the competitiveness of existing employers and manage issues relating to 'bad neighbour' uses
4. Create a sustainable mixed leisure and outdoor recreation destination
5. Create popular sustainable neighbourhoods satisfying local and future aspirations
6. Develop a strong sense of place, open up the area's assets and achieve a quality built and natural environment
7. Transform the convenience and quality of linkages through the area to both Widnes town centre and key neighbourhoods, particularly promoting sustainable modes of travel

Key projects for the forth coming year are listed in Section 3. The HIVE leisure development relates to objectives 1, 4 and 6 and the land acquisition relates to objectives 1, 2, 3 and 6.

These projects deliver outputs relating to 5(a) Private investment and 5(f) brownfield land reclaimed or developed for re-use.

## **SECTION 2**

### **Key Achievements for 2008/09**

Key successes over the last year of the programme (09/10) are listed below:

- ★ Year extension approved for the Widnes Waterfront EDZ NWDA programme allowing projects to proceed in 10/11 financial year. Scheme now completes in March 2011.
- ★ Turnstone Business Park – all six hybrid units are fully occupied and take up of office space has been good, with tenants including Aerelink, Edmundson Electrical, Connaught Partnerships, Headstart Academy (hairdressing training) and LTS Envirosafe joining the Boulting Group, IDT, OMG Plumbing, ABS Engineering and the Council's Mersey Gateway and Community Safety teams.
- ★ Heron Business Park Phase 2 completed.



- ★ Widnes Trade Park – all but one unit is now occupied, with Jelly Beans locating in the unit adjacent to the B&Q Warehouse. The Warrington centre attracts over 8,000 visitors a year and the Widnes centre is looking to build on this success.
- ★ Landmark public art piece the Widnes Future Flower completed with £187,000 NWDA funding (including £30,000 preapproval) combined with £22,000 funding from the Widnes Waterfront allocation of monies from the Local Strategic Partnership. The Flower is 13.5m high, 4m wide and made of galvanise steel with perforated petals which move in the wind. Turbines located on the 'stem' generate electricity to power the lights within the Flower creating various intensities of red providing a definite point on the horizon of the River Mersey. In support of this project an information leaflet has been produced and the Programme website updated to provide a dedicated section to this innovative landmark for the Waterfront area and the borough as a whole.
- ★ Carter House Bridge Replacement has also been completed utilising £210,000 NWDA funding (including £50,000 pre approval monies) and £140k Council money. This project has seen the previous static wooden bridge replaced with a swing bridge, returning the crossing to its original function pre the canal closure in the early 1960's. It is hoped this project will help towards the future reopening of this stretch of canal linking to the Spike Island marina.
- ★ *Joint launch event held for the Future Flower and the new Carter House Swing Bridge.*
- ★ Work to remove the Japanese Knotweed present on the HIVE leisure development site, utilising £41,885 NWDA funding has taken place. Discussion are on going with the NWDA regarding further funding towards the remediations costs. Full Council approval was received in December 2009 for the Hive leisure development.
- ★ A programme video has been finalised, documenting the changes to the programme area over the lifetime of ERDF funding. This video provides a visual synopsis of what the programme has achieved since it began in 2002 to the end of 2008 and details many of the projects which have received NWDA funding. This was funded by ERDF and NRF/WNF through the Widnes Waterfront marketing budget.
- ★ The second phase of the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan has been completed by Taylor Young, with advice received from BE Group and Faber Maunsell. Both the Masterplan and the Delivery Strategy were approved at Council's Executive Board on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009.
- ★ The Land Acquisition project has facilitated the purchase of the 3.97 acre (1.61ha) former Gyproc site on Dennis Road. This has secured future expansion space for the Widnes Waterfront (EDZ) programme and consolidated the Council's land holdings in the area. It is anticipated the whole area together will potentially provide over 13,000 sq m of new business space.
- ★ The new Widnes Waterfront branding rolled out across all forms of marketing media - newsletter, website and other promotional material including an information leaflet and display board. Marketing in regional publications continues with press releases made for any significant announcements.

- ★ The Business Steering Group continues to function. This continues to be a very successful forum for the local business community to network and is always well attended. It provides a regular opportunity for the programme team and other Council departments to keep the business community updated with progress reports and to receive regular feedback on activities in the programme area.
- ★ A successful NWDA health-check was carried out on the programme's NWDA files confirming they are well maintained and up to date.

All the 09/10 NWDA funded projects have now been completed apart from the going maintenance periods. Of the NWDA projects proposed in last years performance plan Carter House Bridge and the Landmark Public Art projects have been completed, with work continuing on the Hive and the Land Acquisition project.

Priority Sites phase 2 and the Utilities upgrade detailed in the 07/08 Performance Plan are still on hold. Due to the current economic situation there is currently no demand for further speculative development and the associated additional utility work in the Widnes Waterfront area.

## SECTION 3

### Priorities for 2010/11

#### **Key projects that support the programme's aims and objectives**

- The HIVE leisure development (£1.45m)
- Land acquisition (£110,000)
- Evaluation (£50,000)
- Project appraisal (£7,500)

#### **The HIVE**

This flag ship development consists of an ice-rink, 24-lane bowling alley and six screen cinema together with associated restaurants and retail. The timescales depend on agreeing the funding package including securing finance. The total project cost is currently being appraised and is approximately *£8 million with up to £1.45million of NWDA grant funding for the remediation of the contaminated land.* Subject to funding being secured it is expected that work will start on site in June 2010. This development relates to strategic objectives 1, 4 and 6 (see Section 1) creating a gateway mixed used leisure development providing new and sustainable employment opportunities for the Borough. This years activities include the NWDA appraisal, renegotiating the leases and the re-tender of the site works. This project will leave in approximately *£6.5 million of investment*, reclaimed 3.7hectares of land and also contributed a number of new full and part time jobs to the local area. The activities on offer and the sustainable transport options available to access the development will also promote a healthier Halton encouraging people exercise by walking/cycling on the greenways network to the development and participating in bowling and ice skating once they are there.

### **Land acquisitions**

This project relates to the key land acquisition within the Widnes Waterfront programme area of the former Gyproc site on Dennis Road. As the site was predominantly used as a storage facility it had fallen into disrepair with the previous owner not needing to invest in the premises in order for it to function. The site requires demolition and possible land remediation. The Council will also be looking to work with a development partner to redevelop the site coupled with the adjacent Council owned land. Together they provide circa 9.7 acres of developable space in a strategic location adjacent to the successful Turnstone Business Park and across the way from the equally successful Widnes Trade Park. There is potential for 13,400 sq m of business space which could lead to the creation of more jobs for local people. The cleared site will help improve the image of the area and subsequently should help improve land values. Through the goals of tidying up an unattractive strategic site, building new, sustainable business space, attracting businesses which fall in the key sectors and subsequently generating jobs for local people, the project will contribute to the programme objectives 1, 2, 3 and 6 as detailed in Section 1.

### **Evaluation**

The programme evaluation is an NWDA funding requirement and which will start this year with the award of the contract and completion. It will be funded from the NWDA programme. The brief for the work will be based on the NWDA specification for project evaluations and will be tendered and completed this year. It will be undertaken by an external consultant taken from the NWDA framework list.

### **Project appraisal**

The programme appraisal will continue to be undertaken by the appointed external consultant taken from the NWDA framework list, Taylor UDC. Work under this project will be related to the progression of the Hive leisure development and certifying the subsequent claims.

### **Proposed media/marketing to be undertaken at project and/or programme level**

HBC are proposing to continue funding the marketing project with Working Neighbourhoods Funds. HBC will continue with its PR support, quarterly programme newsletters and update of the web page. Every effort will also be made to continue the Business Steering Group to allow this successful networking forum between the local business community and the Council to function and give back to the Waterfront community.

## **SECTION 4 Delivery Structure & Management Arrangements**

A dedicated team of three full time employees has been established to oversee programme delivery.

The team is supported by a steering group comprising of officers from various Council departments including Highways, Planning, Finance, Open Space Services, Major Projects, Property Services, and is chaired by the Operational Director of the Council's Employment, Economic Regeneration and Business Development Department. The steering group meets once every 2-3 months to discuss project progress, resolve issues and to ensure that the programme is on target.

Regular discussion between the programme team and NWDA contract manager, Graham Sandham, take place to ensure the NWDA is kept up to date with the delivery of individual projects and the programme as a whole.

HBC also appoints external consultants when it requires expert advice. For example NWDA funded projects go through an NWDA appraisal process for which Halton Borough Council employs an external consultant Neil Taylor of Taylor UDC. The Council has also utilised DLA Piper for advice relating to State Aid issues and WM Law & Sons for external cost appraisal of NWDA claim and monitoring forms for the Heron Business Park Phase 2 project which completed during 09/10.

Several projects led by HBC, relating to the key strategic objectives listed in 1.3, have already been established. They include: Marketing; Phase 1 Landscaping Works; Infrastructure Improvements; Site Investigations; Heron Phase 1; Halton people into Jobs; and the Business Improvement Area Grant Scheme. Ongoing projects are discussed in detail in the Progress Report.

A number of projects will be delivered externally by developers and landowners.

## Section 5 Risk

This is a summary of the Widnes Waterfront Programme. Halton Borough Council have their own corporate risk register for the Widnes waterfront Programme which is update regularly.

Programme Level	Risk / Likely Impact	H/M/L	Risk Management
Economic Down turn	Slow down in economic development and issues relating to access to finance	M	Work with all partners to bring projects forward
Contaminated Land	Increased development costs, time delays	M	Advanced discussions with EA and environmental Health to resolve issues
Utilities	The lack of electricity/project delays and increased costs	M	Council in discussions with Utility providers and developers
The Hive	As the programme's flag ship project failure of this could undermine the progress of the programme	M	Working with the NWDA to ensure delivery

Project Level	Risk / Likely Impact	H/M/L	Risk Management
The Hive	Lack of take up and withdrawal of current tenants due to economic downturn and securing finance/ delay project delivery	M	Working with the NWDA to extend the their Widnes Waterfront funding agreement to ensure delivery  Risk ownership: HBC and St Modwens
Land Acquisition	Land owners unrealistic expectations/delay in acquisitions	M	HBC looking at implementing a partnership approach to bring a project forward at a reasonable cost  Risk Ownership: HBC
Evaluation	Time constraints	L	Start data capture  Risk Ownership: HBC

## Section 6 NWDA 2009/10 Expenditure Profile

Agreed Capital / Revenue Expenditure Profile in 2010/11												
Strategic Objective / Project	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		NWDA 2010/11		Match 2010/11	Total 2010/11
	Cap	Rev	Cap	Rev	Cap	Rev	Cap	Rev	Cap	Rev		
Project appraisal												
The HIVE												
Utilities/Land acquisition												
Evaluation												
Total												

**NWDA Lifetime Spend Profile**

Strategic Objective/Project	Previous Years (Actual)				Forecast Current Year		NWDA Total	Match Total*	Total
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10 (estimated)	2010/11				
Project appraisal	20,065	25,281	15,635.2	16,718.8	7,500		85,200	0	85,200
The HIVE				42,000	1,450,000		1,492,000	6,592,000	8,000,000
Future Flower			27,139.8	159,860.2 (including £2860.2 pre- approval)			187,000	22,000	209,000
Carterhouse Bridge			13,725	196,275 (including £36,275 pre- approval)			210,000	140,000	350,000
Utilities/Land acquisition				944,970	111,042		1,056,012	200,000	1,256,012
Linear Park (maintenance period)		178,187	152,208.47	30,264			360,660	288,015	648,675
Tan House Lane (maintenance period)	54,587	75,603	62,109.62	8225			200,525	204,455	404,980
Gateway landscaping (maintenance period)		64,356.92	267,687.73	0			332,044.65 Exceeded NWDA figure	330,500	662,544
Evaluation					50,000		50,000	0	50,000
Access Road	49,657	121,102	7,735.				178,494	170,759	349,253
Croda pre-approval		82,071					82,071	0	82,071
Gyratory		344,000	77,000				421,000	820,000	1,241,000
Heron Phase 2			905,716	37,069			942,785	4,974,266	5,917,051
<b>Total</b>	<b>124,309</b>	<b>890,601</b>	<b>1,528,957</b>	<b>1,435,382</b>	<b>1,618,542</b>		<b>5,597,792</b>	<b>13,941,995</b>	

\*Insert Total match figures detailed in table below.

## Lifetime Spend Profile for Other Sources of Funding

Strategic Objective/Project	Previous Years (Actual)				Current Year Forecast		Match Total*
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 (estimate)	2009/10 (estimate)	2011/12		
	Project appraisal	0	0	0	0		
The HIVE	0	0	0	0	6,592,000		6,592,000
Future Flower			0	22,000			22,000
Carterhouse Bridge			0	140,000			140,000
Utilities/Land acquisition			0	0	200,000		200,000
Linear Park (maintenance period)		133,187	147,828	35,000			316,015
Tan House Lane (maintenance period)	54,587	75,603	54,265	10,000			194,455
Gateway landscaping (maintenance period)		64,357	252,688	15,000			332,045
Evaluation			0	0			0
Access road		171,362	704	0			172,066
Gyratory		676,800	144,000	0			820,800
Heron Phase 2			4,974,266	0			4,974,266
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,587</b>	<b>1,121,309</b>	<b>5,573,751</b>	<b>222,000</b>	<b>6,792,000</b>		<b>13,763,647</b>





## Section 8

### Key Indicators of Performance / Milestones

This section outlines the key activities required to achieve the programme outcomes and the major milestones.

Key programme activities include: -

- Securing funding for the HIVE leisure development
- Progress the land acquisition project and move into a developer redevelopment partnership.
- Starting the evaluation project

Key Indicator / Milestone	April – June 2010	July – September 2010	October – December 2010	January – March 2011
The HIVE leisure development (Subject to confirmation of tenants)	Confirmation of NWDA funding  Retender work	Start site work	Continue construction	Continue construction
Land Acquisition	Secure site  Produce demolition tender document and tender work	Complete site demolition	Market the site for a development partner	
Evaluation	Work up NWDA brief go out for quotes  Appoint consultants Start evaluation data collection	Continue with data collection	Continue with data collection	Complete final report



## **SECTION 9**

### **Progress towards outcomes**

Due to the economic downturn this programme is unlikely to deliver the original outputs within the current timeframe of the programme. A number of speculative commercial projects are currently on hold these include:-

- Langtree - Managed Office space development
- Widnes Regeneration Limited - Croda redevelopment

These projects are only likely to come forward in the short term should there be a potential occupier for the site. However, these sites may offer an opportunity for development should there be an opportunity.

The interest in Priority Sites Phase office units remains strong and all the 6 Hybrid units are occupied. Priority Sites are in preliminary discussions with HBC regarding a Phase 2 development.

The acquisition of the Gyproc Site is now complete and HBC are concentrating on the demolition contract and securing a developer for the site.

The HIVE development programme is currently being reviewed with a start on site currently anticipated in June 2010. This start date is subject to a number of criteria being met. These include:-

- the NWDA funding agreement being in place for the land remediation costs;
- the St Modwens and HBC development agreement being in place
- retendering of the project
- revised planning permission in place

HBC is working closely with St Modwens to overcome these issues to ensure a June 2010 start on site.

## **SECTION 10**

### **Exit Strategy & Evaluation**

Subject to NWDA funding approval the Council intends to appoint consultants to carry out an evaluation of the NWDA Widnes Waterfront programme. A brief to carry out this work based on the NWDA specifications is currently being drawn up and consultants from their approved list will be selected to carry out the work. HBC aim to tender the work in May 2010 to complete the work by end of March 2011.

HBC assets such as Moss Bank Park (formerly known as the linear park), Widnes Future Flower and Carter House Bridge will be maintained by HBC.

The Heron Phase 2 units and Forward Point are currently being marketed.

The Widnes Waterfront team has secured Working Neighbourhood Funding until March 2011 which funds the teams salary's and therefore should allow the team to continue with its current project work.

Post March 2011 all HBC owned sites will be incorporated into a marketing strategy to be implemented by Property Services and Economic Regeneration.

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