

Flintshire County Council - Levelling Up Fund Bid Strategy

1. LUF bid strategy: One vision, two bids; a focus on coastal communities

The intention is for the Council to submit two LUF bids during the round 2 application window (one per constituency; Delyn and Alyn & Deeside). Work undertaken to this point has included the development of a strategic narrative to inform the structure and focus of both bids.

In summary, the intention is for the LUF funded interventions *to assist in establishing the physical, economic, social and environmental conditions required to address the economic decline, disconnections and acute deprivation experienced by coastal communities.*

To achieve these required conditions, the focus of both bids will be *to implement interventions that establish linkages and balance between the area's communities, businesses, industrial heritage and natural environment.*

As such, both bids will be informed by a single vision for coastal communities; each bid will demonstrate how the vision will be delivered separately across each constituency, involving different (place specific) interventions. The vision for coastal communities (currently in draft) includes the following:

- Retaining existing businesses based in the area.
- Encouraging further external investment (e.g. clean manufacturing) and promoting traditional industries.
- Strengthening the entrepreneurial and business start-up culture amongst residents, providing 'stepping stone' employment for people with low skills.
- Connecting pockets of deprivation with world class economic assets and jobs. Emphasis on skills and employability; ensuring local residents have the skills that employers require. Partnerships involving the Council, university, colleges, adult education, employers etc. will be established or strengthened.
- Increasing civic pride, led by improved perception of place and celebration of local heritage, natural assets and traditional industries.
- Reducing deprivation, anti-social behaviour ('ASB') and crime levels.

Each bid will focus on ensuring alignment between capital investment, inclusive economic growth and the creation of social capital. The LUF funding will be viewed as a catalyst that enables social, economic and health inequalities to be addressed in coastal community wards where communities are experiencing acute deprivation.

Proposals within both LUF bids will align with existing ambitions, strategies and investments designed to improve the infrastructure and outcomes for the identified communities. Delivering the LUF interventions should therefore be seen as a continuation of existing work to improve outcomes for coastal communities.

2. The problem we are trying to solve

2.1 Defining the challenge

A detailed data analysis was undertaken to scope the precise issues and challenges that coastal communities face and feed into the development of the bid strategy. The following paragraphs provide a high-level summary of the picture that emerges. More detail is provided in Appendix 1.

Socio-economic deprivation: Compared to the UK as a whole, income levels in Flintshire are below the national average and a greater number of households are in poverty with high levels of child poverty too. WIMD 2019 data highlights that coastal communities in Flintshire experience high levels of deprivation (4% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in 10% most deprived; 14% in 20% most deprived in Wales), particularly when it comes to the employment, income, education and community safety dimensions. In spite of a strong economy in the area, these communities do not partake in the benefits. Retaining existing employment and generating new 'stepping stone' employment that helps enhance skills and employability is a key levelling up opportunity in Flintshire.

Health: A review of health-related data, including on health deprivation (15% of Flintshire LSOAs in top 20% most deprived; concentrated in coastal strip), comparative life expectancy figures (gap of 11.6 years for men and 13.7 years for women between most and least deprived areas) and substance misuse, again suggests that health and wellbeing is an area that would benefit from a particular focus for the same deprived coastal communities in Flintshire. A focus on the accessibility of the coastal strip and physical activity to maximise the benefits from the Dee Estuary's visitor and outdoor appeal can help address these challenges.

Crime: Data specifically on 'acquisitive crime' linked to substance misuse illustrates that opening up the coastal strip in this way needs to be complemented by investments in positive uses of the natural beauty, heritage assets and an improved public realm.

Commercial constraints (industry): A lack of investment in commercial premises in town centres and industrial parks, particularly Greenfield Business Park and Flint Castle Park, acts as a challenge to the retention of existing businesses (with a total rateable value of £2,517,950) and the creation or attraction of new ones. Many units are not fit for purpose any longer or even beyond economic repair. In the face of renewed high demand following the pandemic (occupancy rates ranging from 78% in Greenfield to 95% in Deeside and particularly demand for industrial space having increased considerably compared to January 2019) this creates a risk that important local employers could be unable to secure the desired size of appropriate space and will look further afield into Wrexham, Cheshire and the Wirral.

Commercial opportunity (tourism): With a large potential catchment for the visitor economy (of 4.7m people living within a 60-minute drive) (prior to Covid 19) the economic impact of the sector has experienced a steady growth and strong employment performance since 2009. As highlighted in commitments in the Destination Management Strategy, the area's commercial potential for tourism in the widest sense (including leisure, recreation and tourism uses) remains largely untapped. Levelling Up investment can be a catalyst to access this market for the benefit of coastal communities in Deeside.

Place based issues (heritage): The built heritage across the coastline and town centres is under threat and a lack of ownership and civic pride means that a lot more could be done to realise the ample opportunities to secure greater benefits from place-building through targeted investment in the natural and built environment.

Place based issues (public realm): The public realm in the coastal communities is shaped by the legacy created by heavy industry activities (34.8% of Flintshire LSOAs in 10% most deprived for physical environment in 2014, prior to inclusion of the green space sub-domain prompting a considerable improvement in Flintshire's position in the 2019 index). Reconciling industrial spaces with the natural environment, ensuring better connectivity and reducing inequality and inequity of access to heritage and natural assets can help equip coastal communities to take advantage of the promise key assets hold for the area.

2.2 Market failures and their impact

The LUF application process requires applicants to identify market failures that are creating the challenges as outlined above and are negatively impacting communities and local stakeholders. The purpose of the interventions proposed within an applicant's LUF bid should be designed to correct these failures, and in doing so realise benefits to communities.

Informed by the above, a visioning and Theory of Change exercise has been undertaken to identify the market failures and their impact, as well as identifying the intended long-term impact and outcomes that would be realised (to inform the economic analysis of both bids).

A summary of the market failures and their impact on coastal communities is provided below:

Market failure 1 - A lack of investment in commercial premises (town and industrial parks) along the coastline.

- These premises are in need of investment or they will not be fit for purpose and may soon be vacated by current business occupants, risking current jobs and local supply chains.
- The areas in which these commercial premises are located are in need of upgrade, with their current condition negatively impacting perceptions (residents, communities, visitors and businesses).
- Given their age and current condition, the energy inefficiency of these buildings.
- A lack of suitable premises for local SMEs and incubator businesses; this may restrict their growth and/or result in them relocating out of area.

Market failure 2 - The built heritage across coastline and town centres is falling into disrepair and disappearing

- ASB and criminality in certain locations (e.g. Shotton).
- Lack of ownership and civic pride, given the cycle of decline.
- Built heritage is potentially a detractor from the area, rather than people having any awareness of the heritage and these buildings/structures being seen as relevant. This adds to the disconnect between communities and their heritage assets.
- Voids and vacant buildings suppressing economic activity, as interest and footfall/spend is reduced.

Market failure 3 - Decline of traditional industries linked to the area's maritime heritage (i.e. cockle fishing & processing/dock management).

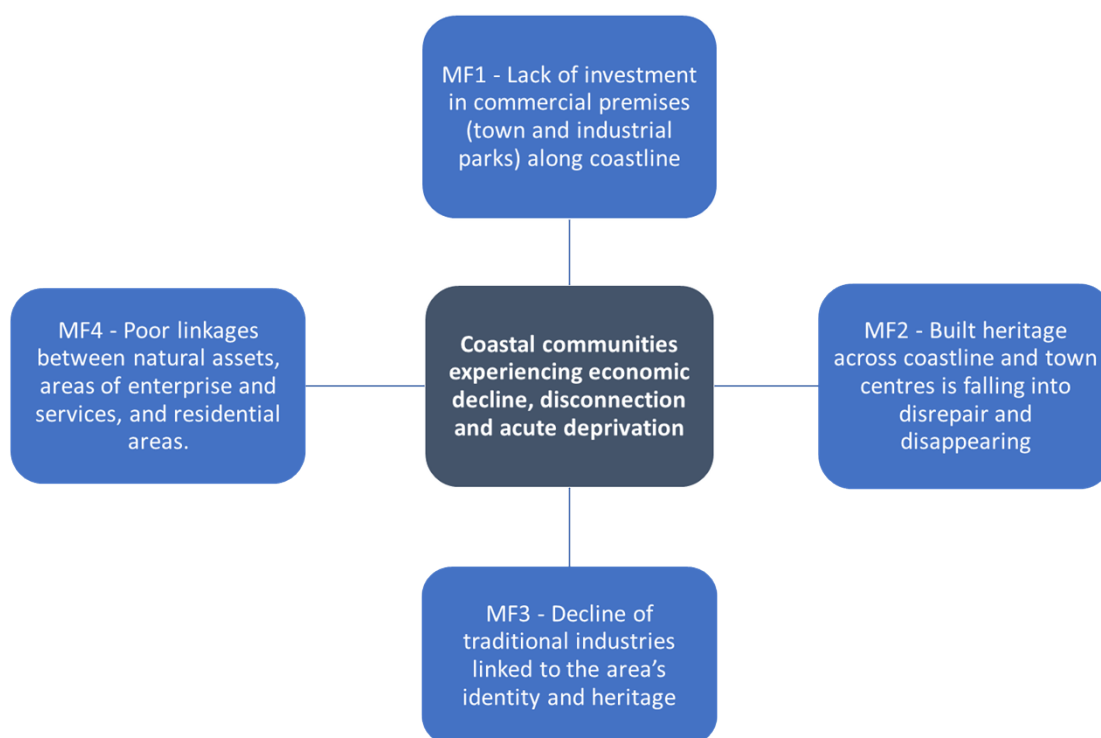
- Lost commercial and employment opportunities, threatening the future sustainability of industries (and associated jobs) currently struggling with the impact of Brexit.
- Loss of skills associated with these traditional industries.
- Disconnect between communities and their local heritage/natural environment; industries seen as dirty and local resources contaminated. Low level of awareness of the quality of water and fishing stock etc.
- This disconnect and misconception impacts on ability to promote heritage and natural environment to visitors.

Market failure 4 - Poor linkages between natural assets, areas of enterprise and services, and residential areas. Residents and visitors making limited use of linkages (paths etc.) due to poor condition, fear of crime and negative perceptions of the areas connected by said linkages.

- Adding to the disconnect between communities, their heritage assets and natural environment.
- ASB, criminality and fear of crime reducing use of public spaces and linkages, contributing to social isolation and/or increased use of private transport.

In summary, these market failures can be linked to the economic decline, disconnection and acute deprivation experienced by coastal communities:

- Visible decline of the area (physical).
- High levels of deprivation and decline in social outcomes, linked to unemployment, low skills and poor-quality housing.
- Negative perceptions held by residents, potential investors and visitors, resulting in lost opportunities for inclusive wealth building.
- Disconnect between local communities and their natural environment, heritage and local employers (exception: Greenfield - 400 local employees).
- Rise in anti-social behaviour and crime.



3. LUF bids - 'Connecting Coastal Communities 2024'

The intention is to develop two LUF bids that demonstrate the Council's commitment to supporting coastal communities, and in particular those wards identified as experiencing acute deprivation. The LUF bids will demonstrate how the proposed interventions align with existing strategies and priorities associated with supporting coastal communities, while also demonstrating how the funding will be spent by April 2024 (as per LUF requirements). Through the LUF interventions detailed within our 'Connecting Coastal Communities 2024' LUF bids, we will demonstrate that these investments form one element of a wider and longer-term programme designed to address the experience of social, economic and health inequalities in these communities.

The intention is that the interventions funded through LUF establish the physical, economic, social and environmental conditions required to address the economic decline, disconnections and acute deprivation experienced by coastal communities.

This will be achieved by implementing interventions that establish linkages and balance between the area's communities, businesses, industrial heritage and natural environment:

- Encouraging inclusive economic growth that realises social capital for communities (skills & employability, employment, wage levels, health & wellbeing, quality of life); establishing a

sustainable relationship between local SMEs, traditional industries, large anchor employers and local communities.

- Establishing the conditions and infrastructure to encourage net-zero commercial growth.
- Celebrating the area’s heritage, traditional industries and natural assets through a modern, accessible and sustainable offer to residents and tourists.
- Creating and maintaining a public realm that provides the physical linkages between communities, businesses, heritage and the natural environment.

In summary, our long-term ambitions for coastal communities rely on the successful implementation of ‘Connecting Coastal Communities 2024’.

4. LUF interventions - current shortlists

The following shortlisted options have been identified for each bid/constituency:

Delyn constituency

LUF intervention	Market failure	Rationale for inclusion
Business unit regeneration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flint Castle Park • Greenfield Business Park 	MF 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current units are left from heavy industry uses that have disappeared • Current units to some extent accommodate business expansion & reduction flexibly – important to retain to avoid businesses/ employers locating elsewhere • Additional diversity in size of units will improve business productivity (because no longer need to spread over several units with associated time management issues) • Offer of modern, light units will help reduce HGV traffic in the area • Investment required in underutilised/ underused land and some empty (because uninhabitable units) – development of modern business units offers good returns • Refurb/ redevelopment will deliver carbon reduction • First impressions count for tourism (in adjacent area along coastal strip)
Greenfield Valley Heritage Park	MF 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCC working with GV Trust on two zones highlighted in their strategy: Basingwerk and Heritage ad Museum • Investment in Heritage Museum (within paid for boundary of Park) would strengthen commercial viability • Investment in listed buildings vital to sustain viability of Park operations (precise need/ opportunity to be established in current feasibility study) • Connectivity with coast is being considered, but otherwise not relevant for focus on public realm to improve linkages
Flint and Bagillt track and docks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flint and Bagillt cycle track and trails • Flint Dock Enhancements 	MF 2 MF 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section of coastal path is one of most attractive parts of the area with viewpoints over Estuary, but currently not accessible (narrow path) • Coherent package offer important for tourism – linkages quite good already and could be completed with additional investment (including facilities linked to cycle track) • Good fit with existing activities/ investments (e.g. Flint Visitor Centre as active piece of work funded by RNLI & WG) • Physical environment more generally incl. public realm, green infrastructure, parking provision (rather than purely buildings) shapes visitor experience - opportunity to:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ provide access to the natural environment in urban area ○ capitalise on landscape to create recreational use for local community (who rediscovered area in lockdown) ○ renovate an important heritage asset for the long-term future ○ incorporate 'backwater land' into overall impression ○ address current generational gap in usage i.e. de facto use as cycle path etc. by younger generation with (more formalised) positive use ○ Use supporting signage, seating etc. to enhance attractiveness of the area and encourage linger and dwell • Walking/ cycling will deliver carbon reduction
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Alyn & Deeside Constituency

LUF intervention	Market failure	Rationale for inclusion
Connah's Quay Dock: Modern Dock <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern Dock Slipways • Introduction of CCTV to Connah's Quay Docks - Modern and Historic 	MF 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used by boat community for recreational uses • Improved access for boats would support recreational/ tourism use - business consultation re additional uses/ benefits and potential catalyst role of modern dock & slipways (incl. public realm) ongoing (but dock integrity yet to be confirmed) • Better linkages, security and H&S on the water (CCTV), improved public realm needed to enable recreational use to full potential
Connah's Quay: Historic Dock & public realm	MF 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intrinsic part of visitor offer (e.g. adjacent to heritage centre) • Improved footpath and signage will help pull visitors to coast path (and address current barrier created by train line and unattractive terraced housing)
John Summer Clocktower John Summers (former Corus) sports and social club site	MF 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derelict buildings attract ASB and crime. Enbarr Foundation wish to restore the site and bring a historic building back to use in order to reduce crime and to create a community facility. • Former Social Club site managed by Care & Repair; proposals designed to reduce crime and ASB and increase access to, and provide facilities for, the nearby coastal path.
Sea Cadets	MF 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a purpose built centre for the Sea Cadets at Connah's Quay Docks to increase positive uses of the Docks and enable greater use of the marine infrastructure.
Business Premises Grant	MF1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To incentivise businesses to invest in commercial property in the target area to: improve the appearance of the built environment; bring vacant commercial space back into use; and to renovate commercial units to make them fit for long term future use in accommodating employment. • The grant will operate in all communities adjacent to the coast from Connah's Quay to Saltney.
Saltney Coast Path Gateway	MF4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access and visitor facilities,

Further work is required to refine the shortlist for each constituency, creating a final list of interventions to be included within the respective LUF bids. This refinement will reflect the following

LUF framework requirements (relating to round 1, although requirements are anticipated to be the same for round 2):

- The requirement for all LUF funding to be spent by 31st March 2024; as such we are required to assess the likelihood of LUF funds being spent by that point.
- The total required for LUF funding for each bid is not to exceed £20 million; as such we are required to assess the total cost of the identified LUF interventions, which must not exceed £20 million per bid once the total value of identified match funding is accounted for.

5. Next steps

The current planning assumption is that round 2 of the LUF will open on 1st March 2022 and close on 10th May 2022. This has yet to be confirmed, with the only guidance provided by government indicating that the window will open in 'Spring 2022'.

Informed by the above assumption, the project plans for the development of both bids include the following main stages:

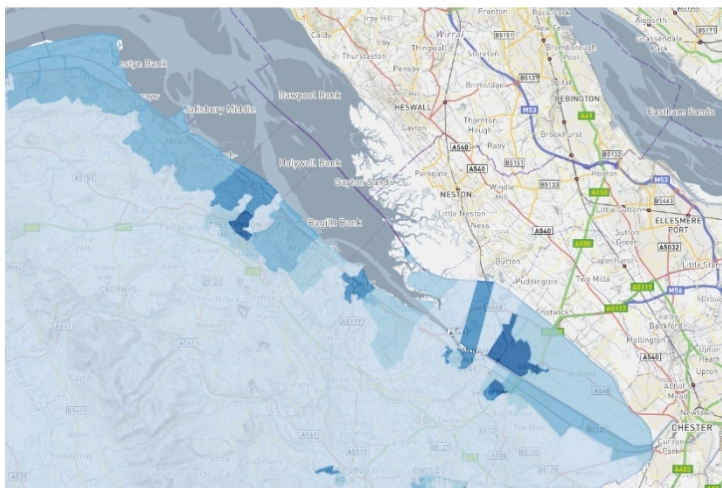
- **Stage 1** - confirm shortlist of propositions to be included within both bids (December 2021-January 2022)
- **Stage 2** - confirm designs and costings for all interventions to be included within both bids (December 2021-January 2022)
- **Stage 3** - undertake consultation exercises in relation to shortlisted interventions (January 2022)
- **Stage 4** - develop financial and economic models for both bids (January-February 2022)
- **Stage 5** - develop two LUF bids, one for each constituency, including gathering letters of support from stakeholders (including MPs) - (March-April 2022)
- **Stage 6** - Council review and approvals (end of April 2022)
- **Stage 7** - Submission of bids and letters of support (early May 2022)

Appendix 1 - Defining the Challenge

Socio-economic deprivation

Compared to the UK as a whole, income levels in Flintshire are below the national average, a greater number of households is in poverty and 2015 data suggests that 17.7% of all children in families which are eligible for child benefit were living in povertyⁱ.

In comparison to other Welsh counties Flintshire as a whole performs relatively well. In September 2019 at 79.7% it had the highest employment rate and at 2.3 the lowest unemployment rate as well as at £17,064 the third highest disposable income (after Monmouthshire and Newport) and at £23,086 the fourth highest GVA per head (after Cardiff, Newport and Wrexham) of all Welsh authoritiesⁱⁱ. In other words, Flintshire has a strong economic base. And yet, some parts of Flintshire suffer from high levels of socio-economic deprivation.



Source: Welsh Government, [DataMap Wales](#)

An analysis of WIMD 2019 dataⁱⁱⁱ shows that 3 LSOAs (or 4%) in Flintshire are in the 10% most deprived in Wales, rising to 10 (or 14%) for the 20% most deprived. As illustrated in the map (the darker the shade of blue the higher the deprivation), these are strongly concentrated in Deeside.

A total of 7 LSOAs (or 10%) in the county are in the top 20% most deprived in terms of employment and 11 LSOAs (or 15%) feature in this group in terms of income deprivation. This leads to the conclusion that in spite of a strong economy and high quality employment being available, some communities do not partake in the benefits from this.

Education and community safety are particular areas of concern in an otherwise relatively affluent county, with 9 LSOAs (or 13%) for education and 8 LSOAs (or 11%) for community safety being in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales (rising to 17 or 24% and 12 or 17% for the 20% most deprived respectively). This would suggest that considerable barriers to accessing good employment exist for these communities that are again strongly concentrated in Deeside with LSOAs in Shotton, Flint, Connah's Quay, Sealand and Mostyn all featuring strongly in the 10% most deprived groups for education (Shotton Higher 2 is even in the top 1% most deprived in this respect) and/ or community safety.

The Levelling Up funding can therefore play an important role in enabling investment that can retain existing employment and help create new 'stepping stone' employment opportunities (i.e. relatively low skill roles) in sectors such as tourism and heritage in close proximity to these communities experiencing high levels of income and employment deprivation.

Health

Considering health, the overall picture is less stark, with 5 LSOAs (or 7%) in the top 10% most deprived and 11 LSOAs (or 15%) in the 20% most deprived. However, as the 2019 WIMD results report points out, the only area to move from outside the 30% most deprived into the 10% most deprived group was Flint Coleshill 2 in Flintshire^{iv} and the same Deeside LSOAs again feature strongly in this group.

This would suggest that health and wellbeing is an area that would benefit from a particular focus for deprived communities in Flintshire.

This picture is borne out by a look at the inequality gap in life expectancy as measured by the Slope Index of Inequality. This suggests that the absolute gap in years of healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in Flintshire amounted to 11.6 for men and 13.7 for women for the most recent period for which data is available (2010-14)^v. Taking data for 2001-05 and 2005-09 into account, it appears that the trend is for this gap to narrow for men, but grow wider for women^{vi}.

Finally, the 2017 Well-being Assessment^{vii} identifies psychoactive substances and new novel drugs as well as addiction to prescription drugs as concerns for health and wider community well-being in the county. It also points out that 25.5% of 4-5 year old children and 57.5% of adults in Flintshire were found to be obese or over weight. A focus on higher physical activity levels therefore appears appropriate.

A focus on physical activity through encouraging and enabling active travel options and making the coastal strip with its outdoor appeal more accessible and safer for Deeside communities therefore responds directly to the concerns raised by this data analysis.

Crime

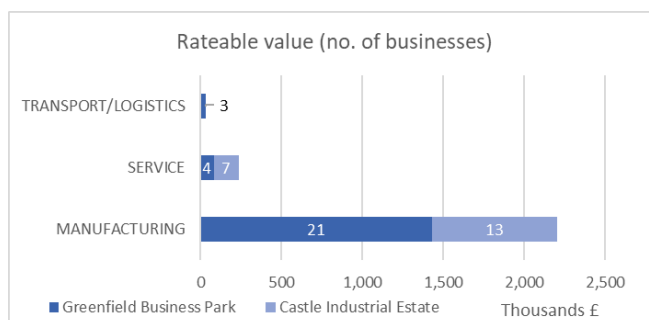
The 2017 Well-being Assessment for Flintshire stated that “Drug abuse is sometimes very visible in public places and is of concern to the public, and has an impact on reported acquisitive crime”, even though the actual “number of crimes committed and the people involved is quite small”^{viii}.

While a focus on enabling physical activity will go some way in opening up the coastal strip to local communities, an emphasis on ‘crowding out’ negative uses by investing in positive uses drawing on the natural beauty, heritage assets and an improved public realm will be key to delivering levelling up results.

Commercial constraints (industry)

In view of these socio-economic issues, it is desirable for vibrant economic activity to create new opportunities in the area, the Flintshire coastal strip. However, commercial constraints act as an obstacle in this respect. A lack of investment in commercial premises in town centres and industrial parks acts as a challenge to the retention of existing businesses and the creation or attraction of new ones.

A number of industrial estates/ business parks is located in the area, including the Greenfield Business Park and Flint Castle Park. Many of the existing units in both business parks are beyond economic repair at the end of their life and in many instances not fit for purpose any longer. However, adding up to a total rateable value of £2,517,950, the businesses accommodated in the units are important to the local economy.

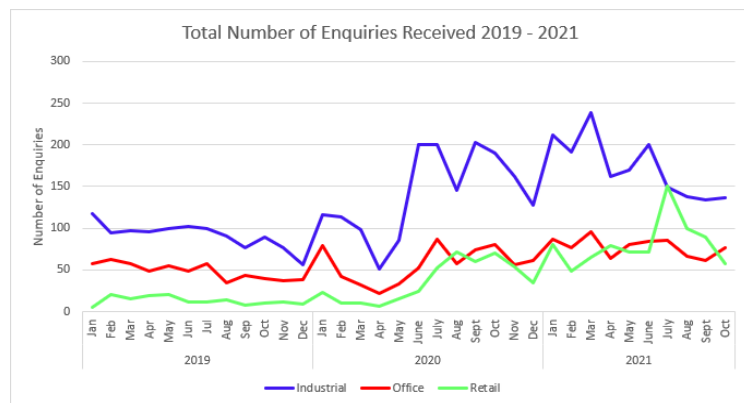


Source: own analysis of FCC data

While detailed Condition survey information is not available, the Greenfield feasibility study^{ix}, for instance, concluded from a visual review that many units were “legacy buildings” from previous uses and that “improvements have appeared to have been made within the last 20 years to many of the units but on an ad hoc basis”. It further states that “a number of units are coming to the end of their

life and will require significant investment within the next 5 years” and identified issues arising from key employers having outgrown their units and resorting to the (highly disruptive) use of shipping containers; issues arising from a lack of space for articulated HGVs. The Castle Park feasibility study echoes these findings, including stating that the current light weight structures may not be suited for “Building Regulation compliant overcladding or offer sufficient fire protection for future uses”^x.

Moreover, in the face of high demand, supply of suitable business premises is low. According to Council-collated data, as of October 2019 (reflecting pre-Corona levels) Council-managed business



Source: Data obtained from commercial agent

centres catering for start-ups and small businesses, had high occupancy rates ranging from 78% in Greenfield to 95% in Deeside. Following a drop in activity during the pandemic period, demand is now building again as evidenced by data from a local commercial agent, Legat Owen, regarding business accommodation enquiries. This suggests that the number of enquiries for commercial accommodation across all sectors

(industrial, office and retail) has increased significantly since April 2020, exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Increased take up of vacant space is leading to companies within Flintshire being unable to secure the desired size of space and having to look further afield into Wrexham, Cheshire and the Wirral.

It is therefore essential for the employment and prosperity prospects of local communities in Deeside to invest in business premises designed to retain and attract small local employers.

Commercial opportunity (tourism)

A total of 4.7m people live within a 60-minute drive time of Flintshire giving a large potential catchment for the visitor economy^{xi}. Considering income from tourism, a trend of steady growth in the economic impact from day visitors to the area was recorded from £63.93 million 2009 to £112.06 million in 2019^{xii}. Following a decreasing trend from 2009 to 2014, since 2015 employment has also displayed an increasing trend (from 2,920 FTEs in 2014 to 3,418 in 2019)^{xiii}. Read in conjunction with the Flintshire Destination Management Strategy^{xiv} it is clear that the area’s commercial potential of tourism in the widest sense (including leisure, recreation and tourism uses) remains largely untapped. Under the heading of ‘product development’ the strategy has a strong focus on supporting the development of a Flintshire Coast Park including the creation of small scale visitor infrastructure along the Dee coastline, and plans for wider place building activities (e.g. enhancing linkages between Greenfield Valley, Greenfield Docks and the coast or maximising the potential of Flint Castle). Similarly, the dockside area of Connah’s Quay has been identified as “a key hidden asset” and “a strategic investment opportunity”^{xv}.

And yet, a decline of traditional industries and a poor tourism infrastructure constrain the extent to which coastal communities can benefit from these opportunities. Levelling Up funding can enable the investment required to maximise the benefits from Deeside’s natural beauty, heritage assets and good opportunities to tap into a sizeable visitor economy market for these communities.

Place based issues (heritage)

As a result of limited benefits and investment from the high value-added economic activity clustered elsewhere in Deeside (e.g. advanced manufacturing, energy generation) reaching coastal communities in Deeside, the built heritage across the coastline and town centres too is falling into disrepair and disappearing. A lack of ownership and civic pride in both natural and heritage assets and a lack of positive engagement means that negative connotations and uses of these spaces prevail: the historic dock in Connah's Quay and leisure provision at Flint Dock don't receive the attention they deserve; the catch from the Dee is seen as contaminated, leading to limited engagement with fishery as a key traditional industry; and the coastal path and industrial heritage assets are disconnected from town centres; This multi-faceted disconnect and misconception impacts on the county's ability to promote its heritage and natural environment to visitors.

The conclusion that there is scope to achieve more in Flintshire is borne out by data from the RSA Heritage Index, which maps and monitors the extent to which heritage assets contribute to the prosperity and wellbeing of residents throughout the UK. The '2016' Opportunity Index provided as part of this initiative identified Flintshire as one of three places in Wales with "the largest gap when comparing heritage activities to assets"^{xvi} (the others being Cardiff and Newport). In the 2020 ranking, Flintshire still features as number seven in the top ten ranking for heritage potential (no. 17/22 for its overall performance). The strongest movement in Flintshire's ranking between 2016 and 2020 is evident for the domain of parks and open space, which saw a 12 point improvement in the county's heritage index ranking.

While the Index is a relative measure, it provides a useful quantitative dimension to Flintshire's potential to maximise the benefits from investment in place. Of particular interest is that, while Flintshire ranks at number 3 for assets in the domain of landscape and natural environment, the overall ranking is brought down by a rank of 16 when it comes to activities in this domain. When it comes to industrial heritage, at rank 22 for assets and 20 for activities, both dimensions would benefit from additional investment. In other words, for both of these domains, there is considerable scope to capitalise better on the natural and built environment.

Place based issues (public realm)

Beyond specific assets themselves, the nature, quality and connectivity of the physical environment more generally is a key determinant of the success of places.

WIMD 2019 data again provides a useful starting point for a more detailed consideration of the issues arising with regard to the physical environment in Flintshire, particularly as they relate to the Deeside coastal communities. In the 2014 WIMD analysis, Flintshire had the highest proportion of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% in Wales for the physical environment domain (34.8%) and Queensferry was the most deprived LSOA in this domain in Wales^{xvii}. In the 2019 assessment nearly a third of the 99 areas that had moved out of the 10% most deprived group for this domain between 2014 and 2019 were located in Flintshire. The report explains this movement with reference to the inclusion of the green space sub-domain in the WIMD indicator and the exclusion of the proximity to waste disposal and industrial site sub-domain^{xviii}. The improved position of LSOAs in Flintshire therefore suggests that green space is an asset in the county while industrial sites affect the attractiveness and economic and health benefits that can be derived from it.

And yet, a 2020 Natural Resources Wales report assessing the state of natural resources in Wales suggests that "in the more deprived communities of Wales particularly, more still needs to be done to reduce inequality and inequity of access to, and benefit from, natural resources"^{xix}. Places to focus on are identified as: Coast and rivers; Woodlands; Urban areas and Other green and blue spaces, including coastal and marine areas.

In this context the Master Plan for Connah’s Quay Waterfront^{xx} identifies a number of commercial lessons from successful waterfront developments elsewhere that provide pointers for investments to create a destination in Deeside. These include “Creating strong pedestrian and cycling circuits along the waterfront linking a large number of attractions of different type and interest points; Enabling people to get near to the water; Providing opportunities for people to eat and drink overlooking the water; Animating the water and the dockside; Using both events of many types, small scale and large scale, to attract visits and enhance awareness of the destination.”

Improving connectivity is therefore a priority for the public realm. In this context, green infrastructure with a particular focus on the coastal strip itself and its linkages with the town centres of Flint, Connah’s Quay and Shotton has been identified as a key opportunity for Flintshire. The Flintshire Active Travel Integrated Network Map was developed to increase the currently limited levels of walking and cycling in Flint for everyday journeys and to encourage the use of Green Infrastructure and open space for leisure and Active Travel^{xxi}.

In line with this, the 2015 Flintshire Coast Park Prospectus developed a vision for “an accessible coast park which celebrates the natural environment and heritage of the Welsh coast”. It identified the “huge potential for tourism, recreation and wildlife appreciation”^{xxii} along the 25 mile stretch of coast with over half of the county’s population living within 2 miles of the coast and the Wales Coastal Path connecting into the North West of England. The same study suggests, however, that “access to the shore remains constrained and poorly presented in places”.

Addressing the current lack of services (from public toilets to a tourism or visitor offer) and providing much better connectivity between natural and heritage assets on the coast and in town centres is therefore essential to create a strong public realm in the coastal communities that are the subject of the Levelling Up bids and ensure that they are equipped to take advantage of the promise these assets hold.

ⁱ Flintshire Public Services Board (2017), Assessment of Local Well-being for Flintshire

ⁱⁱ Welsh Government (2020), Regional economic and labour market profiles, January 2020 URL: <https://gov.wales/regional-economic-and-labour-market-profiles-january-2020>

ⁱⁱⁱ Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 by rank, decile and quintile, Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA), <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/WIMD-2019/welshindexofmultipledeprivation2019-by-rank-decileandquintile-lowerlayersuperoutputarea> [accessed 16/11/2021]

^{iv} Welsh Government (2019), Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, (WIMD) 2019, Results report, URL: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-11/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation-2019-results-report-024.pdf>

^v Welsh Government, Inequality gap in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy at birth (Slope Index of Inequality) in years by Local Health Board and Local Authority, URL: <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Life-Expectancy/inequalitygapinlifeexpectancyandhealthylifeexpectancyatbirthslopeindexofinequalityinyears-by-localhealthboard-localauthority>, [accessed 16/11/2021]

^{vi} Public Health Wales (2011), Measuring inequalities, Trends in mortality and life expectancy in Flintshire

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