

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT

To: REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: Future Jobs Fund – update	
From: HEAD OF REGENERATION SERVICES		
Date: 17 February 2010	Ref: 1500	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee on North Lanarkshire Partnership's progress in implementing the Future Jobs Fund.

2. Background

- 2.1 The £1 billion Future Jobs Fund was announced as part of the UK Government's 2009 budget. It is a major new initiative designed to create 150,000 jobs across the UK between October 2009 and April 2011. The fund is focused on young people aged 18 – 24 who have been on Job Seekers Allowance for nearly a year, however it will also support some long-term unemployed people who have barriers to employment or live in areas with high concentrations of unemployment.
- 2.2 Committee was informed in September 2009 of the approval received by North Lanarkshire Partnership under the Future Jobs Fund. North Lanarkshire Partnership received approval to deliver 390 work placements between October 2009 and March 2010. This approval provided funding to a maximum of £2,535,000 to deliver these placements. Committee was subsequently informed of the detail of opportunities that were likely to be available through the fund and how the partnership was developing and managing the programme.

3. NLP implementation of the Future Jobs Fund

- 3.1 While approval for the North Lanarkshire Partnership Future Jobs Fund Programme was granted in July 2009, it was not until September 2009 that the formal grant offer from the Department of Work and Pension (DWP) was received. A further period of discussion with DWP around the legal implications of the grant offer, resulted in the grant offer being formally accepted in October. This delayed the programme in North Lanarkshire slightly, however due to forward planning and preparations by partners, the programme was able to commence in week beginning October 5th 2009.
- 3.2 In October 2009, North Lanarkshire Council as lead body for the programme received an advance payment from DWP of £507,000 based on 20% of the October 2009 – March 2010 grant award. This advance is designed to support partnerships in implementing the programme. The rest of the grant award will be claimed each month, based on the numbers of opportunities created and filled through the programme.
- 3.2 Since commencement of the programme in October 2009, the following performance has been achieved by January 2010:
- 243 vacancies created and supplied to JobCentre Plus (62% of six month target).
 - 459 applications received from unemployed residents.
 - 77 people have commenced employment under the programme to date, with hundreds more set to commence employment during February and March 2010.
- 3.3 Across the UK, there has been a slow start to the Future Jobs Fund programme. A significant issue has been the low numbers of applications being made by JobCentre Plus customers. Ideally employers should receive at least five applications for each post

advertised as the programme operates a competitive recruitment approach. The low number of applications received to date has resulted in some employers receiving no applications and subsequently have not filled their post. In these cases vacancies will be re-advertised at a later date. The FJF project team monitor applications and where an individual is unsuccessful on several occasions, that person will be offered intensive support in order to increase their chances of success. JobCentre Plus has attempted to raise awareness of the programme among staff and customers and have worked with the council's project team to seek practical solutions to increase the number of applications. Nationally DWP has relaxed some eligibility criteria to increase the numbers applying. The number of applications to the North Lanarkshire programme has steadily increased, however falls short of previous expectations around the programme. As a result the North Lanarkshire Partnership is continuing to lobby for further relaxation of eligibility criteria in order to open the programme to more unemployed residents.

- 3.4 With significant activity planned for January - March 2010, the North Lanarkshire Partnership remain confident that the target of creating and filling 390 opportunities to end March 2010 is achievable. This is despite the low number of applications received which the partnership has little influence on as it is managed by DWP and JobCentre Plus.
- 3.5 Despite the difficulties outlined above, the programme is beginning to deliver real benefits for unemployed North Lanarkshire residents. Case studies on two of the first residents to benefit from the programme are attached as Annex 1.
- 3.6 As residents begin employment under the programme, a package of support is also being implemented to ensure that the Future Jobs Fund makes a long term difference to their ongoing prospects of sustainable employment. Routes to Work Ltd staff will deliver an average of two hours per week employability support to all participants in the programme. This support will involve support preparing a CV, support with job search activities and also some groupwork sessions to motivate participants to look to the future positively. A key ongoing measure of the North Lanarkshire programme's effectiveness will be whether participants in the programme are able to sustain employment following the six month FJF opportunity.

4. Phase 2 of Future Jobs Fund

- 4.1 North Lanarkshire Partnership has an existing approval to create a further 690 opportunities through the FJF between April 2010 and March 2011. In light of this the development of this phase is taking place. Many of the opportunities that will be available will be repeated opportunities from Phase 1. However in order to ensure that a good range of opportunities exist, the project team will re-engage and market the programme to employers who may be able to provide new opportunities.

4. Corporate Considerations

- 4.1 A key part of delivering North Lanarkshire's Future Jobs Fund programme will be the council opportunities which have been committed to and reported previously to Committee. North Lanarkshire Council has committed to providing 134 opportunities between November 2009 and March 2010. The first of these placements were advertised in November 2009 and some appointments made in early January. The majority of council placements will be filled during February and March 2010.

4. Sustainability implications

- 4.1 All eligible costs associated with delivery of the Future Jobs Fund will be claimed from DWP, to a maximum of £6,500 per placement.
- 4.2 The Future Jobs Fund will be closely managed to ensure that associated financial risks are minimised and that revenue is maximised for the delivery of the supporting infrastructure.

5. Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- i) Note the significant progress being made in delivering the North Lanarkshire Partnership Future Jobs Fund.
- ii) Note the intention to deliver Phase 2 of the programme from April 2010 in line with the existing approval.



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Local Government Access to Information Act: for further information about this report, please contact Greig Robson 01698 302363.

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Annex 1 – Future Jobs Fund Case Studies

Case Study 1

A young Motherwell man is back in work after receiving support from the Government's Future Jobs Fund.

Graham Boyd recently took up a six-month post as a landscaper with training company MI Technologies, ending an 11-month period of unemployment.

Graham, 19, said: "I worked as an apprentice greenkeeper on a local golf course for over a year after leaving school, but I was made redundant in early 2009 as part of a series of cutbacks.

"It was a big disappointment to lose my job, but I really enjoy working outdoors and I was keen to find similar work elsewhere as soon as I could. I spent a lot of time applying for positions without any success before I heard about the opportunities available through the Future Jobs Fund."

The Future Jobs Fund was created in 2009 to create job opportunities specifically for young people in deprived areas. North Lanarkshire Council has led a partnership of local agencies to create over 1000 job opportunities over the next 18 months. Operating under the North Lanarkshire's Working banner, these local agencies will provide opportunities and Routes to Work Ltd will provide the support required to ensure participants in the programme can sustain employment. With the help of his Routes to Work key worker, Graham filled in the Future Jobs Fund application form and was soon called for an interview with MI Technologies, which holds a contract to maintain Summerlee Heritage Park in Coatbridge.

Graham was offered a position as a landscaper at Summerlee and became one of the many North Lanarkshire young people who have already found work through the Future Jobs Fund.

Graham added: "I really enjoy working for MI Technologies. I get on well with the other guys I work with and the work is quite varied. We keep Summerlee tidy by raking leaves sweeping rubbish, and trimming grass and shrubs, but we're also starting work on bigger projects like laying new slabs around the site.

"It's great to be working again, and it feels good to be earning a wage. It's also given me the chance to pick up some new skills, which I'm really pleased about.

"My greenkeeping work had already given me a really solid set of skills, but I'm learning some new things and I'm sure they will increase my chances of finding permanent work once this position comes to an end."

Case Study 2

A Motherwell man has returned to the workforce as a painter after being offered a position through the Government's Future Jobs Fund.

Jaimie Robertson worked in a wide range of trades after leaving school, including time as a roofer, a tyre-fitter at a local garage, and an engineer. Most recently, he worked for six months as an apprentice bricklayer before his employer went out of business in 2008, leading to nearly a year of unemployment.

Jaimie, 23, said: "I'd worked continuously since I left high school, so it was a real shock to be out of work and have nothing to do all day. I really missed having a regular wage.

"I heard about the Future Job Fund at the local Jobcentre Plus, and it seemed like a really good way to start working and earning money again. I also liked the thought of being able to pick up some new skills which could help me in the future. "

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He was offered a six-month position towards the end of 2009 and is now working to help MI Technologies maintain Summerlee Heritage Park in Coatbridge.

Jaimie added: "I've worked in a variety of trade jobs before but I've never been employed as a painter before, so I'm finding it really interesting to be doing something new.

"Summerlee is a big site, about 27 acres, and there's a lot of work to be done, from decorating the interiors and exteriors of buildings to freshening the paintwork on machinery for display in the park's exhibits.

"It's great to be doing something useful with my time, and I'm so glad to be earning money again. Having these new skills will definitely help to broaden the range of jobs I can apply for once the six-month contract is over, and I hope to be back in permanent employment as soon as possible."