

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| To: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE | Subject: | |
| From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT | LANARKSHIRE ON-LINE BUSINESS DIRECTORY : UPDATE | |
| Date: 27th January 2000 | Ref: DR/REP639.DOC | |

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the Lanarkshire On-Line Business Directory Website and to seek approval for the Council to contribute to the future development of the on-line directory in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council and the Lanarkshire Development Agency.

2 Sustainability

- 2.1 This project meets the sustainable development criteria outlined within Local Agenda 21 and adopted by the Council, in the following areas :-
- Economy and Work :-
The on-line directory will help to generate quality job opportunities for local residents by encouraging trading between local companies and the sourcing of local products and supplies by external organisations, and, by encouraging new investment to locate within the local area.
- Waste, Resources and Energy :-
The on-line directory will help to conserve natural resources by providing information that can be regularly updated in an electronic format that does not require the production of printed materials.
- Partnership and Funding :-
The creation of the on-line directory shows an integrated approach to the provision of business information through being developed at each stage by the Council in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council and Lanarkshire Development Agency.

3 Background

- 3.1 Members will recall that both a published and digital version of the North Lanarkshire Business Directory have been produced to provide local company information in an accessible format to a wide audience of users both in the UK and overseas.
- 3.2 The creation of an Internet-based directory is a progressive step in the promotion of local company information that seeks to take advantage of the rapid growth of the Internet as a global communication medium amongst business users and the general public.
- 3.3 The development of an Internet -based business directory by the Council reflects the Government's initiatives on Modernising Government which have set a target to have 25% of all dealings between the public and Government deliverable electronically by 2002 and 100% by 2008.

3.4 The Lanarkshire On-Line Business Directory has been developed by a partnership of North and South Lanarkshire Councils and the Lanarkshire Development Agency to provide a Lanarkshire-wide listing of companies on the Internet. It has been based closely on the previous on-line version of the South Lanarkshire Business Directory.

3.5 The Lanarkshire On-Line Business Directory Internet Website has been produced by Hamilton company HMG Internet Services Ltd.

4 Lanarkshire On-Line Business Directory : Contents

4.1 The Lanarkshire On-Line Business Directory Website can be accessed at the following Internet address :-
<http://www.lanarkshirebusiness.org.uk>

4.2 The on-line directory provides essential information on over 5,000 Lanarkshire companies in all main industrial sectors, excluding retail and agriculture.

4.3 Advanced search facilities enable browsers to search for local companies by company sector, sub-sector categories and by key word. Users can also click on an interactive map of Lanarkshire, split into 23 areas, enabling fast, detailed searches of an area or town within the region. A visitor help file provides full guidance on the use of the search facilities.

4.4 The 23 areas featured on this interactive map of Lanarkshire include the 9 geographic areas identified on the previous North Lanarkshire Council Digital Directory map, which are : Airdrie ; Bellshill ; Coatbridge ; Cumbernauld ; Kilsyth and surrounding villages ; Moodiesburn (Northern Corridor) ; Motherwell ; Shotts and Harthill ; Wishaw and Newmains.

4.5 Local companies can update or add to their business details held on the on-line directory, while users can feedback any comments, by completing on-line forms which are then circulated to each Council.

5 Profile of On-line Directory Users

5.1 It is anticipated that the on-line directory will help stimulate wider interest in the North Lanarkshire economy and its business community by providing global access to Lanarkshire companies' details.

5.2 The on-line directory may assist in the growth of trading links between North Lanarkshire companies and companies throughout the UK and overseas by facilitating the sourcing of products and services from local businesses.

5.3 It may assist in attracting further inward investment to the local area by allowing companies searching for a business location to obtain an accurate picture of similar enterprises and potential customers/supply-side companies that are already located in Lanarkshire.

5.4 In order to track the performance of the on-line directory and to guide its future development, the project partners will receive a quarterly monitoring report from HMG Internet Services Ltd.

5.5 The initial report covering the period 26 July - 26 October 1999 profiles users by country of origin, average number of sessions and type of activity. During this period, the Website's home page attracted a total number of 1133 users with an average of 18 user sessions per day.

- 5.6 The on-line business directory was accessed by a global audience with 55% of users from the United Kingdom and 36% of users having their origins outside of the UK. Outlined below is a breakdown of top locations of the users of the Website by country.

5.7 Most Active Countries

| | Countries | User Sessions |
|---|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | United Kingdom | 941 |
| 2 | United States | 603 |
| 3 | Netherlands | 2 |
| 4 | Bulgaria | 1 |
| 5 | Germany | 1 |
| 6 | Canada | 1 |
| 7 | France | 1 |
| | Total | 1 550 |

6 Development Costs

- 6.1 The initial development costs for the on-line business directory - £7000 - were absorbed by South Lanarkshire Council as part of the development of their own Economic Development Website.
- 6.2 The total costs for the final development work for the on-line business directory - £5425 - have been shared equally by the other project partners - North Lanarkshire Council and the Lanarkshire Development Agency.
- 6.3 The total cost to North Lanarkshire Council in developing this on-line business directory in its present format is £2712.50 which can be met from within existing budgets.

7 Future Development of Website

- 7.1 The costs of the management of the Website - which includes Website hosting and domain name - by HMG Internet Services Ltd - is £200 per annum which will be shared equally by the project partners.
- 7.2 To ensure the accuracy of business details listed in the on-line directory, it will be necessary to update the Website in early 2000 with the business listings data researched and collected for the production of the new North Lanarkshire 2000 Business Directory. The costs to the Council of converting and uploading new data onto the Website will be approximately £45 per upload.
- 7.3 In addition, both Councils have access to Thomsons Directories' New Connections database service which provides data on new and moved businesses across the UK and is an important source of information in updating the Website.
- 7.4 To ensure the on-line directory accurately reflects the requirements of an increasingly Internet - literate population and the expectations of the local business community, it may be necessary to expand the range of facilities offered by the Website.

8 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of the report and :-

- (a) Approve the future development of the Lanarkshire On-Line Business Directory to be funded from existing resources.
- (b) Seek further reports in due course to provide an update on the project.



David M. Poch
Director of Planning and Environment

Date of Report : 23rd December 1999

For further information contact David Rodger, Marketing Officer, telephone 01236 616367.