

BUSINESS GATEWAY UPDATE

1. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Argyll and Bute Business Gateway is approaching its first anniversary in July 2010, and had a successful first year establishing the service. The following paper presents the results for 2009/2010, some recent developments and future plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Economy Thematic CPP Group is invited to note the contents of this report.

3. 2009/2010 RESULTS

The results for the Argyll and Bute Business Gateway's first financial year are:

Business start-ups:

- 352 start-up enquiries;
- 264 start-up adviser appointments;
- 72 business start ups supported, of which 6 were VAT+;
- 43 business start-up workshops/events delivered; and
- 37% of new starts in the area engaged with Business Gateway (target was 35% as we are a new service).

Existing businesses:

- 256 existing business enquiries;
- 206 existing businesses supported;
- 128 existing business adviser appointments; and
- 16 existing business workshops/events delivered.

Growth Pipeline businesses:

- 12 clients entered the Growth Pipeline although none have yet been accepted into Highlands and Islands Enterprise account management.

4. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Recent developments are as outlined below:

- March 2010 saw the launch of two new workshops; 'Build Your Own Business Website' and 'Make the Most of Online Trading'. Both were oversubscribed and have been repeated in May, with positive customer feedback;
- a new workshop was delivered late May in partnership with HM Revenue & Customs 'How to Reduce your Tax Bill'; and
- advisers have been on Mull, Bute and Islay in the last quarter, with visits to Jura booked for June.

5. FUTURE PLANS

The immediate future plans for the Argyll and Bute Business Gateway Team are as noted below:

- funding applications for the Competitive Business Growth Programme pilot have been submitted to both ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and LEADER. Business Gateway is awaiting a decision. If successful, the target date for the soft launch of the pilot is July 2010, with a promotional launch roadshow planned for September/October to include key towns and islands; and
- cross departmental linkages with Council colleagues will be strengthened via a series of internal briefings/meetings, to ensure alignment with the EDAP (Economic Development Action Plan).

6. CONCLUSION

The report provides an update of the activities of the Argyll and Bute Business Gateway over its first financial year, some recent developments and future plans.

7. IMPLICATIONS

Policy	Argyll and Bute Business Gateway integrates with existing national and local policy.
Financial	The Argyll and Bute Business Gateway Team will ensure that Argyll and Bute Council's resources are allocated efficiently and effectively.
Personnel	None
Equal Opportunities	The activities of the Argyll and Bute Business Gateway comply with all Equal Opportunities policies and obligations.
Legal	The Argyll and Bute Business Gateway Team take all legal implications associated with delivering their services into consideration.

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