

Heading in the right direction

By **JANE BROWN**

Director, Sheffield First Partnership

IT'S A year on from the launch of the City Strategy 2005-2010 and Sheffield is fast becoming the city we all want it to be. Much has been achieved since the launch and there are many planned strategic improvements to come in the city's future.

Sheffield has recently been praised by Ruth Kelly MP, Minister for Communities and Local Government for establishing the first city development company in England - Creative Sheffield. Creative Sheffield will be driving the transformation of the economy and be responsible for the development within a wider remit of the new Economic Masterplan. This will provide a framework for the economic and physical development of Sheffield over the next 10-15 years. Activity will be focussed on enhancing inward investment, developing the city's physical infrastructure, accelerating the growth of knowledge-based businesses and strategic city marketing.

Overall the city has performed well and continues to demonstrate clear



signs of revival, however it still has some way to go to compete with the best of the core cities, and more so to bring its economy up to a level that compares with the best cities in Europe. Sheffield will need to continue its positive trends with inward investment and growth in GVA, but needs to focus on increasing average levels of earnings whilst reducing the level on unemployment.

Key to this will be to ensure that the city's workforce has the skills and

the capacity that new businesses require. Over the past year the city has submitted a successful bid to the Department of Work and Pensions on behalf of the employment consortium for Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster and is in the process of establishing a high level, employer led Work and Skills Board.

This success enables resources to be aligned and deployed to provide new and innovative ways to tackle employment issues. The aim is

twofold: to meet the skills and workforce needs of employers; and to get local people back into work or into better jobs. The city will need at least 17,000 unemployed or economically inactive people to join the workforce by 2010 to meet the potential labour market deficit. The benefits to the individual of gaining employment or higher skilled work are well documented and impact on every aspect of their life, their community as well as the local economy.

Membership for the new Work and Skills board will be drawn primarily from those sectors with the most employment potential, and those most likely without intervention, to encounter skills and recruitment problems. John Bradley, a national director of the Kier construction group, will be the chair of the new board and Kier is the first business to commit to a three-year employment plan providing access to jobs for target groups.

Finally with environment being at the forefront of our minds at present, Sheffield is well placed to develop itself as a centre of excellence on environmental sustainability. Sheffield First Environment Partnership is the championing board

for environmental excellence and has been working on the development of a revised environment strategy over the past twelve months. Four main themes have emerged: Climate Change, Carbon Reduction and Energy; Transport and Mobility; Sustainable Production and Consumption; and Environmental Design, Quality and Management. A detailed action plan is currently being developed to ensure that the strategy is embedded in the plans and activities of all the partnerships work.

Businesses are once again seeing Sheffield as the place to set up, expand and thrive in. Unlike many other cities, there is a clear sense that the best is still to come for Sheffield but we are well on our way. Both the hard facts and the feel good factor are testimony to this. Issues of the environment, culture, inclusion, work and skills and the economy effect us all and business can play its part.

Sheffield First Partnership will continue to be a leading Local Strategic Partnership and I am confident our work in partnership with business will ensure our ambitions for the city are achieved in the years to come.

Where else would you want to live and work?

GORDON BROWN may be keener on the Arctic Circle than on the Arctic Monkeys, but both will prove key factors in Sheffield's blossoming economy in the near future.

While the Arctic Monkeys continue their Sheffield-based drive for world domination the corporate world's realisation that environmental problems need addressing urgently presents business opportunities that see the city taking the lead in all things green.

Low carbon and renewable energy technologies will play a major part in Sheffield's fast-approaching high value economy, as will the research into improving manufacturing techniques to reduce their impact on the environment

The public and private sectors in Sheffield are increasingly committing to reducing their carbon footprints and companies in the region are set to play a leading part in not only the UK's growing 'green' technology market but also the worldwide boom.

Phil Roberts,
Chief
Executive
of Sheffield
First for
Investment,
says Sheffield's growing
reputation as a
boomtown for new
energy is well deserved



Sitting at the heart of many of these developments is Sheffield's low-carbon business incubator, LIFE which helps new businesses to reach their potential through the right funding, management, marketing and business guidance.

LIFE is so highly regarded in the

renewable energy sector that it has attracted support from the Government's Carbon Trust.

Major power companies such as Powergen are also entering the renewable energy market and again Sheffield is increasingly in their sights.

Powergen's EnergyLab, a nationwide search to find Britain's next big product in energy efficiency, will see the winning inventor benefit from up to £50,000 worth of advice and consultancy from the LIFE team.

Energy giant E.ON has also joined forces with the LIFE incubator in the shape of a major sponsorship programme, forging a relationship that will see E.ON work with the companies benefiting from LIFE's advice and guidance.

Part of the remit for the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre is to research and develop better ways of manufacturing including the development of lighter and stronger materials; innovations that will provide a wide

range of benefits and cost savings, including helping to reduce emissions and increase fuel efficiency.

The new AMRC "Factory of The Future" has also been designed as a national exemplar of sustainable building development.

This world-class global research facility has already forged partnerships with major corporate players such as Boeing, Smith Industries, Messier Dowty and Rolls Royce not least because of the excellent reputation the University of Sheffield has in the world of advanced materials and engineering

A tangible demonstration of how academia, government and industry can develop cutting-edge technologies, the AMRC enables some of the world's leading scientists and engineers to deliver solutions with real financial and environmental benefits.

LIFE and the AMRC are just two examples of how Sheffield's economy is transforming into one of high value

with a firm focus on green business issues.

We operate in a globally competitive business environment. It is becoming increasingly clear that companies relocate to where they can employ the best people. Our ability to attract and retain the best people in Sheffield is greatly enhanced by both our green and cultural credentials.

The Arctic Monkeys are helping to spread the word that Sheffield is a creative powerhouse. We are already the greenest and safest city in the country and projects like LIFE and AMRC demonstrate that the city is leading the world into a greener future.

Those of us who live in the city know it is a great place to live, work and play. Where else would you want to live? As Sheffield First for Investment and Sheffield One become part of the new Creative Sheffield, our remit widens to attract and retain the best but also to spread the word that Sheffield is the place to be.



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7th December, Ponds Forge

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