

Scrutiny Bulletin: April 2021

Title of Update: Skills Update

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1. What is the update about?

This update is about the skills work that is currently being undertaken within the Growth and Commercialisation Team. This will include; Skills Strategy 2021-22, Exeter Works, Kickstart and Building Greater Exeter.

2. Background

Skills Strategy 2021-22

The Skills Strategy was approved by Executive and Full Council in March/April 2020. Over the past 12 months some of the proposed work has continued, but due to the circumstances resulting from the pandemic the strategy was reviewed in early 2021, with evidence being reviewed during summer 2021 to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the city, its residents and business community.

Exeter Works

The Exeter Works initiative was conceived as part of the recovery planning activity that was undertaken across the council, and with a wide range of partners and stakeholder organisations in summer 2020. The Skills Advisory Group concluded that providing support to those people who would be/have been made redundant as a result of the pandemic would be incredibly important, particularly with the use and eventual termination of the furlough scheme. The Council has been working in partnership with Exeter Chamber since summer 2020 to develop Exeter Works.

Kickstart

The Council successfully became a Kickstart Gateway in 2020.

The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to employers to create new 6-month job placements for young people ages 16-24, who are currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Specifically, within the sphere of wider employment schemes, Kickstart focusses on employability enhancement for young people, with wraparound skills training to be significant parts of all placements.

As a Gateway our role is to support local businesses at every stage of their application, through to their working with a young person in a Kickstart placement.

Not only is the ECC supporting many local businesses in applying for placements, but is also currently recruiting for 11 Kickstart positions within the Council.

Building Greater Exeter

Building Greater Exeter was set up in October 2018 to support the local construction sector. The area covered includes: Exeter, East Devon and Teignbridge. The City Council employ, on a temporary contract, a Project Manager to lead on Building Greater Exeter activity.

There are three main areas of focus:

- 1) Inspire the future workforce through an effective engagement programme with schools and young people
- 2) Support employers with recruitment and upskilling
- 3) 'Employment and Skills Plans' on all major developments

3. Current position

Skills Strategy 2021-22

A paper was presented to Executive in March 2021 to set out a revised action plan to support the delivery of the Skills Strategy for the period January 2021 – March 2022. This action plan provides a re-focus to the activity that has been identified as priority. It has highlighted the areas where a review of evidence base is required – particularly in light of changes in the economic conditions as a result of the pandemic.

All of the actions link to the 'Building Exeter Back Better' Recovery Plan, and will support the delivery of at least one of the identified actions in this plan. They also all link to the City's ambition to achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2030.

Exeter Works

The Exeter Works initiative launched its website www.exeterworks.org in late October 2020. Since then content has been added regularly and the project has 4 sponsors on board. Work has also been progressing to develop a physical space in the city centre, a 'Hub' to provide advice, guidance and support to those who need it most. This is being done in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions and Devon County Council. The Hub will be located in the old Tourist Information Centre building, with works currently being finalised and the space being fitted out. The Hub is due to open week commencing 19 April 2021.

Kickstart

We are currently managing 135 Kickstart placements, all of which are at various stages of recruitment. We have our first young person who started with a local business in March, and expect to see regular placements secured over the coming weeks & months.

As a Gateway we are working hand in hand with both National and Local DWP departments to streamline the process, to ensure as many young people are placed with our employers by summer 2021 and beyond. The City Council has employed a temporary Project Co-Ordinator to engage with the business community and to manage the City Council being a Gateway to Kickstart.

Building Greater Exeter

Since the last Scrutiny update in January 2021, Building Greater Exeter has attended the SW Virtual Apprenticeship Expo to promote apprenticeships in construction.

In addition we have created new video assets to promote the different apprenticeships available using case studies of young apprentices taken from the project partners and promoted throughout National Apprenticeship Week (8-14 February).

The Construction Job Shop continues by telephone and all the latest vacancies for jobs, training and apprenticeship opportunities are listed on the website, consistently one of the most visited pages <https://buildinggreaterexeter.co.uk/construction-job-shop-vacancies/>

Other virtual events include promoting careers in construction to service leavers and we are working with DWP to support young people into jobs and access training.

One of our most major projects is currently working with partners to map out the major construction projects in Greater Exeter to determine the number of traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities in order to help connect employers to the right people to participate in them. This will support the commitment in the recovery plan to ensure that an Employment and Skills Plan is in place for every major development (over £1m) taking place in Exeter and the surrounding area.

4. Future position

Skills Strategy

Working with the Skills Advisory Group, the Skills and Business Manager will lead on the actions identified in the plan. In the short term this will include a refresh of the evidence base, to truly assess the impact of the pandemic on the workforce and residents of Exeter in relation to employment and skills.

There are also a number of projects and initiatives identified in the action plan that are under development, or being delivered.

The action plan and strategy are available to anyone who wants to read more. Please email rosie.bates@Exeter.gov.uk

Exeter Works

Once open, the 'Hub' will operate on an appointment only basis to provide support and guidance to those people who need it most. In the first instance, the space will be able to accommodate approximately 6 advisors from different organisations, and as restrictions ease, it is expected that this number will rise, and that the mezzanine floor will be used for workshops and other events.

A comprehensive communications campaign will be launch imminently that will promote the Hub to all the audiences identified.

To keep up to date with Exeter Works, you can follow our relevant social media;

Twitter https://twitter.com/Exeter_Works

Facebook [Exeter Works - Home | Facebook](#)

LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/exeter-works/>

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/exeterworks/>

If you would like to be added to the partner newsletter, please email hello@exeterworks.org

Kickstart

The next stages of Kickstart for ECC will be to:

- Increase our proactive recruitment of businesses to the scheme, via marketing & communications as well as business networks
- Work with Partner organisations, such as Exeter Works, to maximise exposure to young people
- Develop a portfolio of materials that ensure ECC is a leading Gateway, offering our local business employers the best, most supported experience while engaging with Kickstart

Building Greater Exeter

The focus for the next 3-4 months will be to organise and prepare for a range of events to support young people leaving education to understand the opportunities available to them in Construction. This includes a job fair to specifically target those leaving construction course at Exeter College.

The Construction Job Shop will also move to a being a face to face service in the Exeter Works Hub.

We will also continue to work with the planning teams at the local authorities engaged in the project to ensure there is an employment and skills plan in place on all major developments.

5. Are there any other options?

These have been explored as part of the work around the Skills Strategy.

6. Conclusion

There is a great deal of work currently underway to support the workforce and residents of Exeter to ensure that they have the best possible access to all the opportunities for employment and skills development in the city.

The team continue to work with a wide range of partners to ensure that this work continues, that the economy can flourish and everyone can play their part.