

Yorkshire Forward

Evaluation of the Renaissance Market Towns Programme

Executive Summary

March 2010



Joseph's Well, Hanover Walk, Leeds LS3 1AB

Tel 0113 2452200 Fax 0113 2450110

www.genecon.co.uk

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Reviewed and approved by:

Signature(s): Mark Reynolds

Name(s): Mark Reynolds

Job Title(s): Partner

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Author: Mark Reynolds, Matt Wilton, David Potts

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

In February 2010 Yorkshire Forward (YF) commissioned GENECON to undertake an evaluation of the Renaissance Market Towns Programme (RMT). The overall aim of the evaluation was to build upon an interim impact evaluation undertaken in mid-2008 and to focus in particular on the following:

- a detailed evaluation of the impact that a collection of strategic support measures including specialist support and regional co-ordination (901357) and Partnership Skills (901134) have had on the delivery of the RMT programme through individual market towns projects; and
- the additionality of the RMT programme, based on metrics derived from a sample of project case studies.

1.2 Impact of the RMT support strands

The two support programmes together consist of a number of different components. In assessing impact we have divided this collection of components into two groups. The first identifies those interventions that have been *specific and targeted* at particular issues or aimed at addressing organisational matters to directly enhance delivery of RMT. The second group consists of *wide ranging support measures* that were offered primarily to Town Teams and key stakeholders but were in effect optional – with take up dependent upon the individual or collective will.

Specific and targeted interventions include:

- The five research projects:
 - Market Towns of the Future;
 - Economic Assessment of Rural Capitals;
 - Rural Capitals Business Space study;
 - Low Carbon Rural Capitals Scoping study; and the
 - Car Parking study.
- Yorkshire in Bloom
- Mentoring support for Fraser Teal Bursary winners
- Interim project management support in North Yorkshire

Optional support measures included:

- Partnership Skills Programme (901134)
- The RMT Specialist Support Panel of experts ((901357)
- Action for Market Towns Regional Co-ordinator (901134)
- Study Tours and seminars (901134)
- Publicity materials and events (901357 and 901134)
- North Yorkshire Delivery Team

The diversity of the support measures reviewed recognises the broad range of activity that needs to go on ‘behind the scenes’ if objectives relating to local ownership and

delivery were to be achieved. With such a programme, the support needs and opportunities have emerged over time, been identified and responded to, then reviewed and adapted – as the programme progressed and developed. This is a mature approach to an evolving programme.

We consider that the ‘specific targeted’ interventions, as we have classified them, have contributed well to the RMT process. This is in part because YF had control over these interventions in terms of their application and consequent likely impact on RMT, and also because of the relative sophistication in targeting the measures on individuals, groups, and projects where return was potentially high. Where support measures were largely optional it is hard to quantify impact, but our view is that this has not been as great, although still of value.

In terms of ‘lessons learnt’ we can offer some guidance, based on the findings of the evaluation, for the future implementation and/or development of support measures for similar programmes.

The issue of the focus and timing of external, professional support is a key consideration. The ‘ground conditions’, that is the readiness of either the town team, or key partners, or intended projects themselves, need to be established and ready for that support in order for it to have optimal impact. That calls for a level of sophistication in understanding support requirements, and then developing and targeting an appropriate scale and nature of support interventions, which can be a challenge.

In our view, the greater success, that is – impact on projects and the renaissance agenda, has come through specific targeted interventions. This is not to deny that non-specific, broader interventions such as the PSP are not valuable in their impact on delivery of RMT projects and objectives, just that evidence is challenging to identify with real clarity. Moving forward, we recommend that the potential impact of support like the PSP needs to be more clearly quantified, and resources invested in light of this understanding. Gathering useful feedback from events such as seminars is also something to consider, although this must be balanced against the potential burden of administering such a process.

Further support activity should therefore bear these distinctions in mind. We would advise that support will be most effective where it is targeted at individuals, or the direct facilitation/enhancement of delivering specific projects and activities. This might, in any case, be a more practical and cost-effective method of delivering support in the short to medium term funding climate.

1.3 Programme additionality

In addition to the evaluation of the RMT support strands, we also considered the performance of the RMT programme in terms of additionality and value for money.

The total YF investment through the RMT Programme as at March 2010 (actual and forecast), amounts to £34,201,615. Forecasting that 941 net additional jobs will be created by the programme, this results in a YF cost per job figure of £36,346. Comparing the YF cost per job figures for the RMT Programme with the cost per job figures achieved by RDAs (as established by the impact of RDA spending study), we see that the figure of compares very favourably to the average costs per net job for physical regeneration (£63,271)¹.

The ratio of Yorkshire Forward to private sector investment levered is (presuming the successful achievement of forecast leverage for the Copley Valley project) 1:1.42. In relating to total leverage (public and private sector), the ratio is in excess of 1:2.

¹ DBERR Impact of RDA Spending, National Report, Volume One - p.47

Using a GVA per head factor of £32,013², we estimate that on an annual basis, once all the forecast outputs for the Programme have been achieved, £30,124,336 of net GVA could be created through the Programme.

Taking this into account, we have used the RDA impact report derived persistence of benefit factor of 5.30³, which gives a persistence of benefit figure of £159.65 (subject to the forecast outputs being achieved), which based on our 'achieved' and 'cautious' results realises estimates of £159.65m. This represents, for every £1 of YF money invested in the RMT Programme, £159.65m of cumulative GVA (including persistence of benefits) could be yielded, a ratio of 1:4.7.

The RMT programme sought to achieve many things, including the creation and safeguarding of jobs that are the traditional measures of additionality and value for money. However, much of the focus of the programme has been on creating the conditions for improved economic performance, through public realm investment, for example. Indeed, sixteen projects did not target job creation as an output at all.

It is a well-rehearsed issue that the economic value of public realm investment is hard to quantify, although Yorkshire Forward and its RDA partners is currently testing potential methodologies for doing so. This could be of fundamental importance in helping the RMT programme, and others like it, draw a more rounded and developed understanding of impact in quantifiable terms.

² Figure for 2008, provided by YF ONS Regional Analyst

³ DBERR Impact of RDA Spending, National Report, Volume One, Annex B, p.90