

## Annex D. Acomb Community Economic Development Project

### EIF Ambition

Sustainable Economy and Economic Inclusion

**Proposal Summary:** Outline the proposal for investment from the Economic Infrastructure Fund. Please outline the intended investment and the economic growth and employment benefits that this will provide.

### Proposal summary (up to 2 sides A4)

#### Background

Front Street in Acomb is suffering the same challenges of many high streets throughout the United Kingdom – within the parade of shops there are empty units, some businesses are currently occupied by charitable organisations and other businesses are licensed betting premises rather than retail or other businesses.

The retail world has changed rapidly over the past thirty years – we have seen the rise of supermarkets, hypermarkets and out-of-town retail parks. Added to that more recently has been the phenomenon of the Internet – an unseen competitor whose businesses never close and where technology has provided ever-wider and easier means of accessing its goods 24-hours a day to suit every customer. Multi-channel shopping, click and collect, a ‘millennium generation’ which turns naturally to the internet whenever it seeks goods and services, are all challenges which must be met. The traditional high street retail model is being challenged and tested.

#### The Portas Report

Faced with firstly the ‘Credit Crunch’ and later full-blown Recession in the economy, the government commissioned Mary Portas to report on retailing in the UK, and Ms Portas reported her findings in late 2011. Within her 28 recommendations was a basic message, the high street must adapt to survive - and it must embrace alternative uses to thrive again.

#### The Acomb Front Street

Acomb Village has long been an area of under performance economically which has been linked in part to a decreasing catchment and attraction of consumers to the Acomb business base. Appendix 1 shows full detail of the economic situation/performance of the area.

The case of Acomb is ultimately one of missed opportunities as wards surrounding and near to it are relatively affluent, with most residents of these areas simply opting to shop elsewhere rather than frequenting the closer offer

of Acomb.

This underperformance has led to the development of a several initiatives, which have culminated in this EIF bid. The Acomb Alive network has been set up by Acomb businesses and traders with the aim of kickstarting activities in the high street to attract new and retain existing footfall in the area. The subsequent development of Acomb Business Team in February of 2013 has seen the Council come together with the traders in Acomb, along with community representatives to define a model and action plan for creating new dynamism in the village and to create a more sustainable footing for what otherwise might become a simple case of a one-off programme of activity. Instead, traders and Council have agreed that core infrastructure to the high street for the staging of events and the provision of a higher quality public realm are a basic starting point for this sustainable activity.

This infrastructure will then unlock a variety of events and activities intended to draw people to the centre of the area, to act as a focus and to increase footfall, as set out in the Annex to this proposal.

### **Strategic Need**

The need for this project is based on the economic conditions of the area, and the challenges facing the high street in the form of vacancy rates on the rise and a structural shift in the local economy toward a rise in charity and betting shops.

Without intervention, there is likely to be a domino effect as vacancies lead more local residents to shopping elsewhere whilst the sustainability of maintaining local businesses in conditions of falling footfall becomes an increasing problem.

### **Strategic Fit**

The project provides a strong strategic fit with the Council's priority for Creating Jobs Growing the Economy, as well as Building Stronger Communities.

### **Proposal**

#### ***The model***

The project will develop a model of community economic development whereby the public sector co-invests in generating demand for the economic outputs of an economically underperforming area. Specifically, the Council will use DIF funding to provide the **hard infrastructure** in the neighbourhood, which will consequently create the necessary environment for the area's private and third sectors to provide a new more active events and cultural programme, which in turn will **generate footfall in the village** – that will in turn generate the confidence and demand needed to stimulate new business investment in the area.

The model will enable a more sustainable model of development, whereby the

public sector agrees to invest in the “place” elements, and the traders invest in time and money to bring forward events that will generate footfall in the area.

### ***The pilot***

The model will be established in Acomb initially, with the aim of rolling out to other wards where economic underperformance is apparent. Since February 2013 City Councillors and officers from CYC Economic Development have joined *Acomb Alive!* (Acomb business owners) with church and community groups from the local area to identify ways of rejuvenating and developing the Acomb economy under the title of the *Acomb Business Team*. This team has developed a plan to increase footfall in the local area via a range of activities which will generate higher footfall and bring renewed life and vigour to the shopping and business area of Acomb. This plan is attached as Annex to this EOI. Within this plan, the proposed DIF investment is c. £24K; it is also proposed that an additional £6K is invested to help kickstart the events programme with traders – coming to a **total of £30K**.

However, as is the case in many similar neighbourhoods, these activities can be brought forward only if the necessary infrastructure can be provided within the pedestrianised section of Front Street to enable the staging of markets and other events. Currently, there is no provision for electricity supply for stalls, and the existing public realm (including seating, small trees, signage, salt bins and decorative flower tubs) has suffered significant deterioration without repair for a number of years. The generally poor condition of such street furniture is adding to the generally poor impression given by the area and is not conducive to generating higher footfall nor developing business confidence.

To match the Council’s investment, the Acomb traders of Acomb Alive! (see Annex 1) are developing a 12 month programme of events and activities that will attract increased levels of footfall to the area, making the most of the new hard infrastructure as and when it is installed. The programme will create a modern mixed retail/community focus for the High Street.

The result, should the DIF investment and subsequent traders’ activities come forward, will be a model in Acomb that could potentially be ‘rolled out’ to other neighbourhood shopping parades and local centres around the city

The measures of success will be increased footfall, the taking of some of the empty business units and an increased participation and interest shown in community events in the area. These are all indicators of increased economic activity, the retention of resources within the local economy and the greater potential for increased job numbers and business growth.

**Outcomes/outputs:** Outline the proposed outcomes and outputs, detailing contribution to CYC economic, social and environmental targets.

<b>Outcomes</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance and ideally growth in footfall over the 12 month programme of events</li> <li>• A fall in vacancy rates and an introduction of more diverse businesses</li> </ul>	
<b>Contribution to economic targets</b>	
<b>Direct Economic Growth</b>	Indirect economic growth
<b>Indirect Economic Growth</b>	
<b>Direct jobs created</b>	Jobs safeguarded in short term, and over medium term, jobs created
<b>Indirect jobs created</b>	
<b>Contribution to social targets</b>	
By contributing to the reinvigoration of one of York's areas most affected by issues of unemployment and a rise in business vacancies, the project will have an impact on the social health of the local area by contributing to the area's ability to sustain and ideally grow the number of jobs available, and connection of residents and shop owners/operators to economic opportunity.	
<b>Contribution to environmental targets</b>	
The project contributes directly to the creation of a healthier and more vibrant public realm in Acomb's Front Street.	

**Timetable:** Outline the proposed project timetable for the investment, including key milestones in the development, implementation and return stages.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Planning	Development of Acomb Programme	Feb – Aug 2013
Implementation	Infrastructure installation	Oct – Dec 2013
	Roll out of events	Autumn 2013 – Autumn 2014
Evaluation	Monitoring reporting	Oct 2014

**Financial Projection:** Clarify the level of investment required along with the budget, per year, for the life of the proposal. Additional investment and income forecasts should be detailed, along with the amount of the investment that will be returned to the Fund.

<b>Financial Projection</b>	
<b>Investment sought</b>	£30,000
<b>Additional investments/income/funding</b>	In kind from traders and community organisations
<b>Recycled return on investment if any</b>	Maintenance and ideally growth of business rates locally
<b>Breakdown of funding required</b>	
Public realm infrastructure	£24,000
Kick-start funding for events	6,000
<p><b>Leverage:</b> There is a keen interest from traders via the Acomb Alive! network to bring forward a series of events and a programme of activity, outlined in Appendix 2 to this report – this programme of activities will see traders and community groups investing in kind support and raising funding from the local community to support these activities, utilising the infrastructure invested by the Council.</p>	

**Other funding sought:** Outline other funding options explored and whether there is potential for matching EIF funding with other sources.

<b>Other Funding sources</b>
<p>There are external pots of funding that would be available if the authority is to invest initially in kick-starting economic regeneration of the area. New European programme funding is likely to be available in the post-2014 round of European funding that could be brought forward by matching local investment of the kind proposed in this report. Pursuit of this European funding will be sought should the EIF funding above be approved by members.</p>

**Project Team:** Please provide basic information about partner organisations and key project team members. Indicate whether partners are contributing investment, staffing or other resources to the proposal and how they will benefit from the investment (if at all) relating this back to the anticipated benefits of the proposal.

<b>Project Team</b> (up to 500 words)
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The Project Team would be made up of the Acomb Business Team supported by Council officers from Economic Development Unit.

**Lead project manager details:** Please provide a named contact person for communication with regards to the proposal.

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<b>Organisation: City of York Council</b>
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**Confidentiality:** Administration of the Fund will be carried out in an open and transparent fashion. Please indicate any aspects of your proposal that you believe to be commercially confidential.

<b>Confidentiality statement</b>
N/A