

OPPORTUNITY PETERBOROUGH

OVERVIEW 2014

Introduction

There were four key areas of activity for Opportunity Peterborough ('OP') over the 2014 calendar year:

Economic Development: providing support to existing local businesses; attracting new investment; providing economic intelligence.

Marketing: delivering business to business (B2B) marketing of the city, through editorial and profile-raising.

Skills: delivering an independent brokerage scheme for business and schools, to introduce and support both areas to come together to increase work-readiness among our young people.

Peterborough DNA: having led the bid to secure £3M from the Technology Strategy Board, OP, in close partnership with PCC and other agencies, has led the delivery of this transformative programme to drive innovation and integration in the city.

Economic Development

The bedrock of Peterborough's economy, and OP's approach to economic growth, is its existing local companies. Not only do they account for the greatest growth in terms of job creation, but they are vital to the circulation of money in the local economy. It is on this basis, that OP founded the 'Bondholder' scheme: an opportunity for local businesses to network both physically and virtually to drive new business opportunities. The scheme has been hugely successful with almost 2,000 bondholders representing just over 900 local businesses. Attendances at the Bondholder breakfast events are just under the 200 mark: an amazing turnout on a consistently regular basis.

Through the Bondholder events, newsletters and other events, OP is able to push out vital information and intelligence on a range of business issues: from funding opportunities, to business support mechanisms, and other business leads.

OP would never claim to be solely responsible for delivering the jobs growth that we have seen in the city: that is down to business strength and ability of the businesses that are here. It does, however, drive and support the economic confidence in the city, and acts as the broker and sign-poster for new initiatives, which underpin growth.

The same applies to new inward investment, where a significant number of companies have moved and set up in Peterborough: from GeoPost at Peterborough Gateway, through to the new build for Access Prepaid at Cygnet Park, and the continued investment in the restaurant and retail sector in the heart of the city. As with existing business, OP's involvement can vary in extent: from basic intelligence provision, to site identification, and introduction and brokerage.

OP has established genuine credibility for its support in economic development, and in the provision of intelligence. It regularly provides reports to the city council and other partners, to new investors and intermediaries. As well as important intelligence on the local economy, through its Bondholder

newsletter it can also share intelligence from national partners and organisations, such as HMRC and BIS.

Marketing

It has not been possible to develop and deliver major new marketing campaigns similar to the one in Kings Cross in 2011, but significant marketing collateral has been developed and disseminated at a range of events and conferences that have certainly put Peterborough on the map. It is clear that the awareness of the city is increasing (as manifest by the number of enquiries coming to the city either directly or through intermediaries).

OP has worked collaboratively with a range of partners in the public, private and third sectors, to ensure that there is a consistent message for Peterborough and a sharing of resource to ensure that marketing opportunities are maximised.

OP's websites are also proving extremely popular, for new and existing businesses seeking local economic and city intelligence, with over 10,000 users for the 3 months up to the end of November for example. These are a vital tool in engaging with new enquiries and attracting the investment to the city.

Skills

The Skills Service was established in Peterborough in 2011 to act as an independent broker between local schools and businesses. In 2014, the programme was rolled out to the whole of the north LEP area (Rutland, Peterborough, Fenland and Kings Lynn & West Norfolk), with funding being attracted from GCGP Enterprise Partnership. This is a mark of the success of the programme as a ground-breaker and thought-leader, which was also demonstrated by its recognition as a world award winner for youth employability at an event in Amsterdam.

For Peterborough, all the local schools have now signed up to the Skills Service and over 1100 business people have pledged their support. Some other headline figures for the Skills Service in 2014 include (up to end October): 191 businesses engaging with young people, accounting for 1112 business hours; 3834 young people in business engagements, representing 23,000 young people hours. These figures do not include the Careers Festival on the Embankment in the summer, which had over 100 businesses, and 2000 young people engaging.

This programme is now attracting national scrutiny and there is the potential to roll it out beyond the Peterborough and North LEP area.

Peterborough DNA

In 2013, OP, in conjunction with PCC, successfully led a bid to the Technology Strategy Board for an award of £3M on how the city can tackle things differently: integrating services and fostering innovation to drive economic growth, environment sustainability and quality of life enhancements. The programme has been a tremendous success, with the following highlights:

Brainwave: an online portal and complementary challenge fund to help businesses and citizens develop solutions for local challenges – with major new technologies now coming to light.

Smart Fengate: encouraging a collaborative business network in Fengate for shared economies on resources, energy and business operations, and supporting a test-bed environment for solutions.

Skills for Our Future: driving local skills aspirations, through embedding graduates in local businesses, supporting bursaries for masters courses, and engaging schools through the Children’s University and Smart Supper programme.

Living Data: establishing an open online data portal, a local, collaborative hackathon to design content for an interactive screen, and encouraging young people to engage with data through 25 weather stations located on school buildings across Peterborough.

Through this work Peterborough is developing a national and international profile, for its integrated and holistic approach to delivering a ‘smart city’. Key government organisations are keen to work with the Peterborough team, and it is also attracting the interest of academic institutions and other industry leaders. Crucially, it is also delivering tangible benefit to local companies and citizens, through new skills and business opportunities.

Conclusion

OP has been able to continue to drive the economic growth of the city – through its own activities but, absolutely crucially, through its partnerships with other organisations. Peterborough rode the recession relatively well and is now experiencing that wider upturn in the economy through the range and extent of enquiries coming to the city. It is vital that we continue to keep Peterborough’s profile high, and ensure that it is seen as the place to do business.

Steve Bowyer
Acting Chief Executive
Opportunity Peterborough
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