



## **West Wrexham Business Survey**

### **SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

‘To capture information regarding business support requirements and growth constraints’

#### **Categories covered:**

- (a) Background Information
- (b) Employment and the Local Labour Market
- (c) Business Opportunities
- (d) Sites and Premises
- (e) Business Support Services

## **Sample framework**

- Focus on those employing less than 50
- Led to c.385 businesses being included (c.440 in total in West Wrexham)
- Sample of 50 (face –to –face – 12.5% sample)
- Postal survey of other businesses
- In total 96 responses (25% of total businesses)
- Stratified by size (those employing 1-5 important), Sector (Manufacturing, Wholesale, and Retail and Construction important) and Community (5 Community Committee areas – Coedpoeth, Brymbo and Tanyfron, Broughton, Gwersyllt and Llay)

**(a) Background**

- Retail and Manufacturing sectors predominate – 45% of the Sample response – good when benchmarked
- 60% of responses are from Gwersyllt and Llay, followed by Broughton (20%), Coedpoeth and Brymbo – reflects businesses in each area
- Most companies are single site operations – nearly 80%
- Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  have been established in the last 30 years
- Nearly half of the businesses (45%) have operated for around 1 year elsewhere before moving to West Wrexham
- Most companies (c.85%) are not conducting business abroad - Those who are conduct business mainly in Europe

## **(b) Employment and the local labour market**

- 40% of companies sampled are employing 2-5 individuals
- 70% are employing less than 10 individuals
- 12% are employing 26-50 individuals
- Those employing 10-25 individuals are less apparent in West Wrexham - growth issues?
- 57% of employees employed in these firms reside in West Wrexham – nearly 70% are from Gwersyllt and Llay. It is interesting that there are more businesses in Broughton than in Brymbo and Coedpoeth (in the sample and generally) but less are employed in West Wrexham from this area
- c. 80% of those employed are Full-Time and 20% Part-Time. Of those Part-Time  $\frac{3}{4}$  are Female
- Employee skills important to the business operation:- Communication , understanding customer needs, team working
- Employee skills in short supply:- Job specific, I.T. Skills and showing initiative. No patterns apparent between different sized companies and the shortage of skills required
- Over 80% responding had provided ‘on the job training’ in the last 12 months – job specific was most common. Those employing 4-5 individuals were most likely to provide ‘on the job training’ but generally there were no real differences between different sized companies. ‘On the job training’ is customised to the needs of the company’s service or product which cannot currently be provided by outside establishments
- Over 40% of companies in the sample had not provided any ‘off the job training’, those that had provided such training - I.T. was the most important (11%). Similar patterns were identified for all-sized companies
- Main reasons for not supporting training:- Cost, staff time, availability of training locally
- Half the companies in the sample had experienced hard-to-fill vacancies due to lack of locally skilled people, lack of applicants, low pay and competition from other employers
- Over 65% of these companies gave no response as to how they have tried to fill these vacancies

### **(c) Business Opportunities**

- Main constraints to Business growth were identified as market conditions, competition, limitations of site or premises and access to finance
- Main constraints by **area** are as follows:

**Coedpoeth** – Competition, limitations of current site or premises

**Brymbo and Tanyfron**– Limitations of current site or premises

**Broughton** – Limitations of current site or premises

**Gwersyllt** – Market conditions, competition and access to finance

**Llay** – Market conditions, access to finance, limitations of current site or premises and legislation and bureaucracy

- **Neighbourhood specific constraints** are as follows:

**Coedpoeth** – Car parking and vandalism

**Brymbo and Tanyfron** – No pattern

**Broughton** – Vandalism

**Gwersyllt** – Vandalism and sign posting

**Llay** – Sign posting, vandalism, traffic congestion

- **Constraints by Sector** are as follows:

**Construction** – Competition

**Education** – Limitations of current site or premises

**Health** – Legislation

**Hotels** – Market conditions, Competition and access to finance

**Manufacturing** – Market conditions and legislation

**Real Estate** – Access to finance

**Retail** – Competition and limitations of current site or premises

**Transport** – Access to finance, competition and market conditions

- 30% stated vandalism as a neighbourhood specific constraint on business growth, followed by the lack of sign posting (20%) Business sectors where vandalism was particularly important - Construction, Education and Retail
- Over 50% of businesses sampled had not been involved with local community. 85% were not interested in becoming more involved in the future
- Business turnover, profit and employment change over the last three years has shown no change or a small increase of up to 10%. It is predicated in the survey to show the same trend for the future. The profit increase is not reflecting any additional creation of jobs

#### **(d) Sites and Premises**

- Most companies either owned or rented / leased their premises (over 50 per cent of companies responding owned freehold to their premises and over 40 per cent either rented or leased)
- Size (premises too small), condition (poor) and design (alternations required) were three key inadequacies of premises highlighted
- Over 70 per cent of companies interviewed were not likely to move from West Wrexham in the next three years. However about one-quarter (25 per cent) may consider moving
- By **area**, firms from **Broughton** (around half of those interviewed in this area) and from **Brymbo and Tanyfron** (around two-thirds) indicated that they were more likely to move than those in other areas (less than a third were considering a move in the areas of **Coedpoeth, Gwersyllt and Llay**)
- Companies who indicated a possibility of moving were unclear as to their potential new destination
- More suitable / affordable premises and grants for capital equipment were factors that would make such companies more likely to stay
- Limitations affecting their competitiveness were highlighted as cost and the local availability of suitable premises
- By **area**, issues limiting competitiveness were as follows:

**Coedpoeth** – Cost and availability of premises, congestion and problems of car parking

**Brymbo and Tanyfron** – Cost and availability of premises and car parking

**Broughton** – Cost and availability of premises

**Gwersyllt** – Quality of the environment and road congestion

**Llay** – Cost and availability of premises

- Main advantages of West Wrexham were identified as accessibility (35 per cent of respondents) and location (25 per cent of respondents)
- By **area**, advantages were specified as follows:

**Coedpoeth** – ‘Other’ (accessibility and location also important)

**Brymbo and Tanyfron** – No congestion

**Broughton** – Good location and accessibility

**Gwersyllt** – Accessibility and good location

**Llay** – Accessibility, good location and availability of employees

- Main disadvantages of West Wrexham were not specified to any significant degree, although safety and security issues were a concern for a number of businesses
- By area, disadvantages were specified as follows:

**Coedpoeth** – no response

**Brymbo and Tanyfron** – lack of amenities

**Broughton** – Safety and Security / poor appearance of environment

**Gwersyllt** – ‘Other’

**Llay** – ‘Other’

### **(e) Business Support Services**

- Over half (52 per cent) of the companies sampled had not sought any business advice or assistance in the last twelve months
- Those that had sought support (42 per cent) had received assistance in particular from WCBC (for grants), the Bank (for financial advice) and from an Accountant (for financial advice)

By **area**, those who had sought / not sought advice is as follows:

	<b>Sought</b>	<b>Not Sought</b>
<b>Coedpoeth</b>	33%	66%
<b>Brymbo and Tanyfron</b>	20%	80%
<b>Broughton</b>	45%	55%
<b>Gwersyllt</b>	40%	60%
<b>Llay</b>	64%	36%

- By sector those who had sought / not sought advice is as follows:

#### **Sought advice (% of total firms sampled from sector)**

<b>Education</b>	66%
<b>Construction</b>	57%
<b>Retail</b>	55%

#### **Not sought advice (% of total firms sampled from sector)**

<b>Real Estate</b>	80%
<b>Hotels</b>	66%
<b>Health</b>	63%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	63%

- Only three per cent of those who had sought support would not use these services again
- 46 per cent of those responding owned a Business Plan; 30 per cent owned a Training Plan and 26 per cent owned a Marketing Plan. By sector, those in the retail and manufacturing sectors were most likely to have Business and Marketing Plans, whilst such sectors as well as business in the Education sector were most likely to have a Training Plan
- Financial advice, training advice, property advice and employment and marketing advice would be most likely to be sought by companies in the next twelve months
- Businesses felt that the Business Support Network could best meet their needs by raising the awareness of services on offer, by offering grants and by offering business planning and training advice

- Nearly 40 per cent of businesses indicated that they made no use of I.T and nearly 60 per cent either made no use, or only partial use of I.T.
- By **area**, the results are as follows:

	<b>No use of I.T.</b>	<b>No / Partial use of I.T.</b>
<b>Coedpoeth</b>	33%	50%
<b>Brymbo and Tanyfron</b>	20%	40%
<b>Broughton</b>	57%	79%
<b>Gwersyllt</b>	54%	77%
<b>Llay</b>	50%	77%

- Businesses felt that URBAN II funding should be targeted on training and on grants, particularly for equipment and expansion

## **Conclusions**

- Expansionist policy to promote widening of business activity (both sourcing and marketing of products), perhaps through agglomeration / greater co-operation and networking between local companies to improve competitiveness
- Continuing support required to encourage self-employment (particularly amongst females working part-time), indigenous business growth and inward investment (particularly as 57 per cent of employees in businesses sampled were drawn from the West Wrexham community)
- Encouragement of 'off-job' training, particularly through tailored business development programmes (demand-led), financial support and the availability of localised training
- The need to target literacy and numeracy skills to improve communication and job-specific skills
- A greater focus on I.T. skills by employers and employees
- Marketing of benefits to business community becoming involved in community life / activities and vice-versa
- Marketing of West Wrexham as a highly accessible location with a locally-based workforce
- Support for smaller companies to expand – includes grants (capital equipment, renovation and refurbishment) and growth space. Targeting to encourage greater numbers of SME's employing between 10 and 25 employees
- Support for environmental improvements (particularly Industrial Estates and Broughton, Brymbo and Tanyfron and Gwersyllt areas), signposting (particularly Gwersyllt) and safety / security measures (CCTV?)
- Greater utilisation of I.T (where relevant) by businesses in West Wrexham
- Better publicity and marketing of current business support network and the up-take of existing programmes (sectoral targeting could be important)