



Northumberland County Council

Minutes (draft) Blyth Town Deal Board

10am on Thursday, 06 March 2020
Conference Room, Blyth Workspace, NE24 3AF

Present:

Active Northumberland - Paul Metcalfe (PM)
Advance Northumberland - Ken Dunbar (KD)
Bede Academy (Emmanuel Teaching School Alliance) - Andrew Thelwell (AT)
BEIS - Adrian Coates (AC), Tom Frater (TM)
Blyth Community Network - Thom Bradley (TB)
Blyth Town Council - Cllr Warren Taylor (WT)
NCC Cultural Development Manager - Wendy Scott (WS)
Energy Central Steering Group - John Hildreth (JH)
JobCentre Plus - Debbie Draper (DD)
Local independent business - Frameworks - Angela Cosimini (AC) and John Wilson (JW)
Newcastle College - Lee Tennant (LT)
Newcastle University - Jane Richardson (JR)
North of Tyne Combined Authority - Rob Hamilton (RH) Northumberland County Council Councillors - Cllr Peter Jackson, Leader (PJ); Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development (RW)
Rt Hon Ian Levy MP Blyth Valley Constituency Office - Maureen Levy (ML)
ORE Catapult - Tony Quinn (TQ)
Port of Blyth - Martin Lawlor (ML)
Tharsus - Matthew Murray (MM)

In Attendance: Energising Blyth Working Group: Rob Strettle (RS), Anne Lawson (AL), Helyn Douglas (HD), Jennifer Cooper (JC)

Apologies: Rt Hon Ian Levy MP
Ferguson's Transport - Alan Ferguson
Blyth Churches Together - Dave Richardson
Newcastle University - Dr Ben Whigham
North East England Chamber of Commerce - Jonathan Walker
Northumberland County Council Councillors - Cllr Kath Nisbet
Northumberland County Council Officers - Juliemma McLoughlin
Tharsus - Brian Palmer
Blyth Safety Network - Phil Soderquest
Blyth Town Forum - Greg Gavin
Northumberland Estates - Colin Davidson
North East LEP - Helen Golightly

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies are listed above.

2 INTRODUCTIONS

Round table introductions.

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) requires members to adhere to NCC policies and practices. A 'Declaration of Interests' form will be circulated for members to state their interests. An item for Declarations will be added to future agendas. Contact Anne Lawson in the meantime with any queries - anne.lawson@northumberland.gov.uk

4 Appointment of Chair

This item was deferred until after item 6.

- The Town Deal Fund requires a private sector Chair, and Alan Ferguson (of Fergusons Transport) has been approached.
- RW proposed Alan Ferguson as Chair, this was seconded by PJ and after a show of hands was agreed by a majority.

5 Blyth Town Deal Presentation

5.1 [Blyth Town Deal presentation - copy of slides](#) (Anne Lawson)

Background

- The Town Deal bid builds on Blyth's history related to energy industries (mining and the port) and considers opportunities to reinvent itself as an energy town using modern energy technologies (wind or mine water)
- As the largest town in the county Blyth has regional importance - and it does require investment.
- Blyth is one of 30 towns across the country eligible for both Future High Street Funds (up to c£25m) and Town Deal (up to further £25m) (national pot £3.6bn).
- The Town Deal objective: to drive the economic regeneration of towns to deliver long-term economic and productivity growth through urban regeneration, planning and land use; skills and enterprise infrastructure; and connectivity.
- Capacity funding of £162k has been secured along with support from Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).
- Role of board
 - Develop and agree an evidenced based Town Investment Plan
 - Develop a clear programme of interventions
 - Coordinate resources and influence stakeholders
- Role of NCC is to convene the Board, and

- Align with the governance standards and policies of NCC, inc (whistle blowing, conflicts of interest, complaints).
- Make governance and decision-making structures public.
- Set out how capacity funding will be spent, and how that will support the process of developing a good Town Investment Plan.
- The Town Deal map shows the extent of the areas being supported. As well as the Residential footprint of Blyth the areas covers the Energy Central sites (inc Northumberland Energy Park), key strategic transport sites and South Beach.
- Representation must include all tiers of local government, MP, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) communities, local businesses and investors. Where appropriate it can also include wider partners (such as Jobcentre Plus, Universities and Further Education Colleges, Hospitals, Sports, Culture and Housing.)
- To function it requires a code of conduct, adherence to the Nolan Principles, terms of reference, a chair (preferably private sector), relevant documents in draft form will be circulated to all in due course for comment. **Action AL**
- Town Investment Plan: sets out the evidence base, the assets available, opportunities, challenges and investment priorities. Further detailed guidance from Government is awaited - please note this is predominantly a capital fund. Once written the plan must be agreed by this Board.

Vision & Themes

- An outline emerging vision and themes was presented as follows:
- Vision: to deliver the economic potential of Blyth, resulting in an inclusive, connected and growing economy.
- Theme 1 - Renewing and transforming the Town Centre (this includes FHSF activities of up to £25m grant, supported by £7m NCC capital). FHSF focuses on the Market Place, Arriva Bus Station & Depot, Keel Row Car Park, conversion / use of space above the shops in the town centre.
- Theme 2 - Delivering industrial growth by focusing on green energy technology (Port of Blyth, ORE Catapult). Lots of opportunities for private investment & jobs.
- Theme 3 - Supporting inclusive employment (examples included proposals for the Energy Central Learning Hub and Energy Campus concept, investment to develop FE and HE facilities, and other training opportunities).
- Theme 4 - Connecting the town (the re-introduction of the passenger railway service, proposed new relief road, and improvements to nearby Moor Farm Roundabout).
- Other themes will also feature: culture / tourism / public health / crime reduction / housing and low carbon.

Timelines

- FHSF: Outline Business Case submitted 16 Mar; Final Business Case submitted 30 June; with a view to delivery taking place 2021-2024
- Town Deal: Investment Plan to be submitted Summer / Autumn this year, with a view to grant funded delivery starting in 2021/22 and continuing over a 5 year

span (though other investment plan activities funded by partners can go on beyond that). Additional guidance is due out shortly.

5.2 Discussion

Timescales

- (PJ) Timescales are challenging so there is a need to focus on those activities that are transformative.

Shaping Places

- (RH) Agreed with the themes, asked how to balance / integrate a capital programme with social issues such as anti-social behaviour? PJ: It is a challenge but there may be revenue funding available through 'Shaping Places' fund. This could take a wider view on how to influence and change behaviours, and improve the support networks, not just on enforcement. There is potentially £100k/yr over 3 yrs - if used correctly Blyth could become a national exemplar.
- (KD) Noted that it will be very important to integrate the industrial and economic activities with benefits for the retailers and residents of the town centre.
- (PJ) Some work has started on this type of activity through Blyth Town Council and a Framework with Northumbria Police.
- (WT) Northumbria Police has begun to engage more in the Town Centre by providing useful reports and statistics. It may be useful to invite the new Inspector to this meeting?
- (RS) Noted a number of parallels with Grimsby Town Deal (worth looking at their plans online) using capital and revenue interventions for a 'whole town' approach to regeneration.

Role of the Board

- What will be the role of this Board during the delivery stages? We expect the Board to continue with a strategic leadership role.

Next Steps

- (JR) Recognises the value of bringing people together from different backgrounds, and that it is useful to discuss opportunities for points of common interest. How will the plans be worked up in more detail? A wider town investment strategy is required, this could be done using external consultants or via working groups from this Board.

Education / Training

- (AT) Make Blyth the place that young people want to stay or come back to. Focus on 14-18 yrs and pathways from school to encourage this, not just University level.
- (RS) There is a need to make explicit the educational opportunities available through this initiative. Consider ways to create a 'skills pipeline' as part of the Investment Plan and reflect on how the Town Deal can help with that.
- (AL) it will also be important to involve young people in those discussions.
- (PJ) There is an urgent need to develop the education hub and energy campus ideas - these are key to the Future High Streets Fund application. - it is a key

part of the Future urgency - key part of fh - ed hub / energy campus - theme group from this group and wider - to plan that and report back

- (ML) Suggested 16-18 activities are centred on the Port of Blyth's Energy Learning Hub, and keeping Town Centre developments for the University? RW agreed it is important not to do anything in the town centre that conflicts with the PoB's well developed plans, but hoped to have some flexibility.

Business Engagement

- (TQ & JW) Whilst skills are important, engagement with businesses is critically important, particularly as there is no formal network/forum for businesses in the town.
- (KD) Advance are engaging with the Energy Central Hub already, and working on how to reach out to the wider business community.

Culture / Heritage

- (WT) What opportunities are there for cross-funding with Heritage or Sport funding? In principle that can be done but the timescales for both FHSF and Town Deal are tight, this can be developed over time. There is however work ongoing on accessing funding for the development of the Commissioner's Building into a maritime archive / heritage visitor centre through Blyth Tall Ships.

6 Energising Blyth - Future High Street Fund update

This was covered above under item 5.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No items were raised.

8 NEXT MEETING

10am - 12pm on Friday, 24 April 2020 - venue tbc

AGREED ACTIONS

1. Circulate all required governance documents in draft format for agreement at the next meeting. **AL**
2. A 'Declaration of Interests' form will be circulated for members to state their interests. An item for Declarations will be added to future agendas. **AL**
3. As a priority arrange a workshop under the Education theme to map out ideas (with a view to setting up a Working Group after, using members of the Board and others). **RS / AL**
4. Agree working groups for other activity areas. **RS / AL**
5. Follow this meeting ask members for some feedback (both structured and ad hoc) and consider a process for how to incorporate this into the work of the Board. **RS / AL**
6. Set KPIs and consider ways to monitor these and feedback on progress to the Board. **RS / AL**

7. Invitees to check the proposed membership list and confirm we have the correct named contact and direct email. **ALL**
8. [Link to Energising Blyth website](#) - **ALL**