



**Blyth Town Deal Board Meeting**  
**Wednesday 02 December 09.00**  
(Microsoft Teams video conference)

**Present:**

<b>Alan Ferguson (AF)</b> Thom Bradley (TB) Margaret Coates (MC) Ken Dunbar (KD) Greg Gavin (GG) Jonathan Gilroy (JG) Trevor Gyllenspetz (TG) Rob Hamilton (RH) John Hildreth (JH) Martin Lawlor (ML) Matthew Murray (MM) Tony Quinn (TQ) Jane Robinson (JR) Cllr Glen Sanderson (GS) Wendy Scott (WS) Phil Soderquest (PS) Rob Strettle (RS) Warren Taylor (WT) Lee Tennant (LT) Andrew Thelwell (AT) Cllr Richard Wearmouth (RW)	<b>Chair: Fergusons Transport</b> Blyth Community Network BEIS Advance Northumberland Blyth Town Forum BEIS Northumberland Estates North of Tyne Combined Authority Energy Central Steering Group Port of Blyth Tharsus ORE Catapult Newcastle University Northumberland County Council Cultural Network Blyth Safety Network Northumberland County Council Blyth Town Council Newcastle College Bede Academy (Emmanuel Teaching School Alliance) Northumberland County Council
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**In Attendance:**

Helyn Douglas (HD) Anne Lawson (AL) Carol Johns-McLeod (CJM) Elaine Maylin (EM) Peter Graham (PG)	NCC NCC NCC NCC New Skills Consulting
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**Notes of discussion:**

<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b> Rt Hon Ian Levy MP, Member of Parliament for Blyth Valley Juliemma McLoughlin, Northumberland County Council Tony Quinn, Martin Lawlor and Jane Robinson left the meeting early.	<b>Action:</b>
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<b>2</b>	<p><b>Declarations of interest</b></p> <p>AL asked if there was anything to be declared by the Board Members. Project sponsors should declare interest in their projects – John Hildreth, Hassan Asheg, Tony Quinn, Martin Lawlor, NCC colleagues and Glen Sanderson as Leader of the Council.</p> <p>Declaration of Interest forms have all been returned except one which is to be returned as soon as possible.</p>	<b>PS</b>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting</b></p> <p>The minutes were accepted as a true record.</p>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>06 Nov Project Review Subcommittee feedback</b></p> <p>The Chair reported that AF/TQ/RW and the officer Town Deal working group met on the 6<sup>th</sup> November to discuss and review the feedback from the full board on the recommended project options as presented at the board meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> November.</p> <p>The information presented was ratified and recommended for progression by the subcommittee to the next full board meeting.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Consultation with businesses</b></p> <p>AL reported that generally the consultation is going well, all the results are available online.</p> <p>Two focus groups were held last week; 1) industry businesses and 2) town centre based businesses. There was lots of positive feedback, the 9 projects were shared and the main message from industry was they were keen to have Blyth promoted within the town as place to work with the aim of increasing the number of applications from the local community for jobs they are advertising.</p> <p>Friday 04 December another community consultation survey on the final project list for inclusion in the TIP, starts online and is open until January, we will be making social media and press announcements soon.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Town Deal Investment Plan (TIP)</b></p> <p>RS advised that PG has produced this document and that IDP Architecture will be preparing the final glossy version when it has been completed and agreed.</p> <p>PG commented that the document overall will need to be refined following feedback, etc. It needs to be specific to Blyth and this is hopefully coming through in the document. He gave a brief overview of the contents.</p> <p>The Foreword, from the Chair of the Board will set out the focus of the document. Context relates to the strengths, weaknesses and</p>	

	<p>the current position of Blyth. There are sections on the Challenges facing Blyth, Opportunities and Assets including the local sense of pride in Blyth sense of community. The Strategy is around how we tackle the issues and what the Vision is for the town. Each strategic objective has actions and priorities identified and there is the possibility of a 5<sup>th</sup> cross cutting objective - Sustainable Town which is being discussed. Alignment with other strategies, programmes and investment such as FHSF is outlined. A summary of the projects and how they contribute to delivering the strategy and how they connect together has been provided. Engagement and Delivery plans are identified and the Town Deal ask re costs and how it relates to the £25m that is available. There will also be appendices to the main document – evidence base, consultation, logic model and governance.</p> <p>Feedback to be emailed by 5pm on 09 December to RS, AL and PG.</p> <p>RS highlighted that ARUP have been appointed by Government to help with Town Deal applications so we need input from the Board so we can present the TIP to them with final approval being sought from the Board on 13 January.</p> <p>AF suggested it was important that we added the fact that the Port is the safest all weather Port into the TIP.</p> <p>RH commented that the TIP is looking good and thanked colleagues involved. He suggested that we swap over the sequence of the Challenges and Opportunities sections so we start the document on a positive note and also to capture more of a sense of the journey Blyth is on around what's happening now like the Port, Catapult, Schools, etc, that we are not at the beginning of the journey we are on it. Also to highlight that we should not present Blyth as an island, connectivity is important for businesses and residents. PG responded that the distinction has been made for Blyth as the home of North East renewable energy growth - what would RH be comfortable with regarding wording to incorporate the rest of the region to show connectivity? RH will check for sensitivities and commented that a link to other places could alleviate any concerns around this. RS commented that it is worth noting that we could link the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor to the region using the assets in Blyth. AF added that the rail route is from Ashington to Newcastle so there will be wider regional connectivity re workers, businesses, etc.</p> <p>PG asked if the general feel from the Board is that we are on the right lines with the TIP? AT and AF commented that they are happy it is on the right lines and reflects the previous conversations from the Board. KD is also supportive of the direction the TIP is taking.</p>	<p><b>All Board Members</b></p> <p><b>PG</b></p>
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	<p>PG asked AT if he was happy regarding the skills agenda within the TIP which AT advised he will comment further on via email but that the focus appears to be on skills for energy and we could add Post-16 provision to strengthen this section slightly.</p> <p>TQ is supportive of rebalancing the energy projects and asked during the consultation have we engaged with existing businesses and their needs as well as new businesses? PG advised that the feedback from the business consultation sessions were very positive, no impression given that non energy businesses were feeling left out. They did raise the possibility of direct investment such as grants, loans, etc, which we are unlikely to be able to reflect within the TIP as they are not part of the Town Deal so they have been directed separately to those funds.</p> <p>KD queried if within the feedback from the town centre businesses, if anything had come out around retail. PG replied that there was general acceptance that retail does need to change and they understand how and why it needs to change. There was enthusiasm for the culture centre to help attract visitors in as well as more workers and residents into the centre. AL talked to the businesses about Northern Gateway Phase 1 and FHSF happening either ahead or concurrently with the Town Deal and they were very interested in those schemes as well as being keen on the Northumberland Line. On the whole the businesses were overwhelmingly positive.</p>	
7	<p><b>Project Shortlisting</b></p> <p>PG gave an overview. We have been working with the sponsors to develop the projects in more detail and we have a proposal to adjust the 9 projects slightly which we need to get agreement on today re what the final project list will be.</p> <p>We have compared the 21 investments to see if they do address the issues in Blyth. A mapping exercise has been done which has shown 2 areas that are under developed and could be strengthened - Arts, Culture &amp; Heritage and Inclusive Town.</p> <p>The 9 projects have been appraised to get better understanding of their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities which showed an emphasis on a range of energy projects which is a key strength so it was proposed to rebalance the project package slightly with a focus on projects addressing the above gaps.</p> <p>The proposal is - ECLH and ECI projects combine to be presented as the Blyth Energy Campus, Battleship NEP1, either Bearings or Test Turbine project to provide an innovation focus, Cycle Corridor and Northern Gateway Phase 2 which totals £22m. £25m is available so we are considering 2 additional projects. 1) Cultural Events Programme - to attract visitors and give locals a reason to come in to the centre; addresses the cultural heritage gap in the Town Deal; it compliments the FHSF; is a visible</p>	

	<p>change; helps to relaunch Blyth. 2) Town Centre Residential Living - new uses for buildings in the town centre.</p> <p>Those projects no longer in the town deal funding ask but ongoing priority projects in the town are: low carbon network - this still remains a priority for NCC, it could be funded from elsewhere and will still be included in the TIP. NEP3 – the funding package for this priority site within Energy Central will be progressed alongside the Town Deal. One project from the Bearings Centre or Test Turbine project will be removed – discussions taking place with ORE catapult regarding which one. TQ added that there is a degree of objectivity needed around the decision making to ensure a robust process for rationalising down to one project which the TD working group will support.</p> <p>PG advised that we need to work up the newly proposed projects re outputs, etc, so a decision is needed today to be able to meet the Town Deal deadlines. AF invited comments.</p> <p>WT – commented that he supports the vision for Blyth. The Cultural Events Programme, how will it dovetail with what BTC does currently? Should it be part of what happens already in Blyth around cultural events as these are big and well supported? Who and how will they be implemented? RS responded – he explained that the project will build on what's already happening in the town through its existing offer and their successes. As part of the Town Deal development funding it was agreed it would support a Creative Coordinator post to work with partners, including the Town Council, to develop the cultural programme. WS added that the post will work with NCC Culture Team and Mel Jackson as part of a culture workstream programme and will look at an culture and arts strategy for the whole town which partners will be involved in so it is co-created. There will be a team of people to support projects and there could be other opportunities identified as part of the strategy. The focus will be on engaging with local communities, bringing them on the journey to the new culture centre opening and we will start next year once the outcome of the FHSF is known. WT added that there are cultural aspects of sport in Blyth that could get involved in the events programme and he is happy to work together with NCC on this.</p> <p>WT asked if the Residential project could be expanded on. PG replied that the project would seek to support the introduction of high quality accommodation in the town centre. We are looking to repurpose existing buildings and are considering alternative uses for them. This is based on the programme developed for FHSF.</p> <p>RS commented that the energy and transport projects will contribute to the town centre in different ways such as supporting change in the use base. We need flexibility after Covid to respond and react to help it bounce back as the town centre changes.</p>	
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	<p>TQ queried re the cycle corridor project, what it is the money actually going towards as this is a big project in terms of ask? Is the benefit purely to connect from the railway to the town centre? Is the cycle route the main access route from the railway to the centre? RS stated that it is one of 3 main cycling and walking routes proposed to improve the towns connectivity and is part of the wider ambitions of NCC looking at the infrastructure around movement, connectivity and future proofing for pedestrian and cycle access. If we get FHSF this will really improve cycle, pedestrian and road links which adds to the Town Deal. The Bowes Street improvement and the market place plus this project will link town and industry to key transport nodes. The NCC contribution to the funding for this project will be advised at the next meeting. AF added that cycle storage would be needed at the stations which RS advised he believes this is proposed to be part of the new railway station provision identified in the current consultation documentation on the Northumberland Line.</p> <p>RH suggested connecting the language in the first part of the TIP. Energy will create jobs and connect people. There are a diverse and broad range of projects identified to meet the objectives.</p> <p>AT – what is the likely impact on footfall in the high street? What will the uplift be for businesses from the cultural events? What are the success outputs and how will we know they have had the impact we want them to have? He is in favour of merging skills under one broad banner of a skills centre. RS responded - Figures for BCR (benefit cost ratio) will be added later as they are being worked on now. FHSF culture and connectivity projects are a key driver that will help drive footfall and use of the town centre. The cycle hub will bring different people in and they will use the town. PG advised the next stage of TIP development will involve the finalization of project outputs as mentioned earlier.</p> <p>GS stated that he was impressed by the range of projects and expertise within them and thanked all involved. AF acknowledged and echoed these comments.</p> <p>RS advised the next steps were to ratify the recommendations in the paper namely;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Endorse the revised list of projects</li> <li>2) Authorise the project team to further refine and develop the final projects</li> <li>3) Chair and Vice Chairs to work with project team between Board meetings</li> </ol> <p>KD proposed all 3 recommendations and AT seconded. All other members raised their hands in support.</p> <p>RS updated the Board re the pending outcome of the FHSF application, Rs explained that whilst we expect a positive outcome, it was noted at the last meeting to reflect on the FHSF</p>	
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	<p>outcome in relation to the town deal bid. Given that the outcome is still pending the following is a recommendation to the Board as a back up as we have not yet had the result of the FHSF application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That should the outcome of the FHSF application not be announced by 16th December or if the bid is only partially successful e.g. less than the preferred option. - The project team will undertake the town deal assessment on the full FHSF project package in early January.</li> <li>• This will provide an objective assessment of the projects put forward to FHSF in the context of Town Deal and allow them to be compared to the existing pipeline.</li> <li>• This will then enable the Board to take a view on how we address any additional FHSF projects in the Town Deal, this may be in addition to, rather than instead of our core Town Deal projects and we will need to consider the approach and presentation of this in the TIP – other towns have taken different approaches to this. If we don't do it this way, there's a danger that we take two or three projects out of TD to make space for FHSF, then the FHSF is approved subsequently anyway, and we end up losing some projects out of the TD package and we can't get them back.</li> <li>• Should it be necessary this assessment can then underpin any recommendation to the Board at its meeting on 13th January concerning any amendment to the project shortlist set out in today's report to include existing FHSF projects in the bid.</li> </ul> <p>AF asked if Board members were happy with these recommendations. The Board agreed the above recommendations</p>	
8	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>AL raised that 3 organisations that are listed on the website as being members of the Town Deal are not responding to meeting invites, papers, etc, so proposed they are removed from the Board at this stage to maintain good governance. They are Blyth Academy, Blyth Churches Together and the North East Chamber of Commerce – are there any objections? AT has connections with Blyth Academy and Churches Together so he will contact them to see if they want to be involved and AF will speak to the Chamber of Commerce. It was agreed if there is no response within a week of further contact they will be removed from the Board.</p> <p>RS thanked the project sponsors for collating the detailed project information.</p>	AT & AF

	AF thanked colleagues for their efforts to date and the Board for their input today.	
<b>9</b>	<b><u>Date and time of next meeting:</u></b> 13 January 2021, 3-4.30pm	