



Blyth Town Deal Board Meeting

Wednesday 27 April 2022 10.00
(Microsoft Teams video conference)

Present:

Alan Ferguson (AF) (CHAIR)	Fergusons Transport
Thom Bradley (TB)	Blyth Community Network
Kay Charlton (KC)	Jobcentre Plus
Robin Earl (RE)	Advance Northumberland
Ray Browning (RB)	North East LEP
Jonathan Gilroy (JG)	BEIS
Rt Hon Ian Levy MP (IL)	Member of Parliament for Blyth Valley Constituency
Matthew Murray (MM)	Tharsus
Rick O'Farrell (RO)	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Wojciech Ploszaj (WP)	Northumberland County Council
Tony Quinn (TQ)	ORE - Catapult
Jane Robinson (JR)	Newcastle University
Wendy Scott (WS)	Cultural Network
Rob Strettle (RS)	Energising Blyth Programme Team
Warren Taylor (WT)	Blyth Town Council
Andrew Thelwell (AT)	Bede Academy
Richard Wearmouth (RW)	Northumberland County Council

In Attendance:

Cristina Armstrong (CA)	Place Create
Lara Baker (LB)	Programme Manager, NCC
Darren Broderick (DB)	ORE Catapult
Graham Campbell (GC)	ORE Catapult
Helyn Douglas (HD)	Project Officer
Fiona Ford (FF)	Project Manager, NCC
Bev Harrison (BH)	Regeneration Finance & Performance Manager, NCC
Carol Jameson (CJ)	Regeneration Programmes Investment Manager, NCC
Lee Paris (LP)	Senior Programme Officer
Helen Swinburn (HS)	Projects Officer, NCC
Jan Willis (JWi)	Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), NCC

Notes of discussion:

1	<p>Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence AF welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions made by new members.</p> <p>Apologies Ian Flintoff, Blyth Churches Together Grant Glendinning, Newcastle College Helen Golightly, North East LEP Rob Hamilton, North of Tyne Combined Authority Martin Lawlor, Port of Blyth Mark Warnes, Active Northumberland</p>	Action:
2	<p>Declarations of Interest NCC for the Culture and Placemaking Programme and OREC - Technology & Subcomponent Innovation Demonstration Centre (T&SIDC) formerly known as the Bearing Technology Centre.</p>	
3	<p>Minutes of the last meeting These were accepted as true record.</p>	
4	<p>Programme Performance updates LB provided an update.</p> <p>Government have confirmed that each of the Summary Documents required for the Town Deal funded projects can be submitted by 02 December 22. The original deadline was 04 August 22 but this was revised to the new date to reflect when the Heads of Terms were signed by Government. The objective is to meet the original August deadline, but December helps for a number of the projects. This is still classed formally as an extension and we have to be clear with the Cities and Local Growth Team on the rationale. The NEP1/Battleship Wharf Link Project summary document was submitted on 22 April and has been received positively. The Culture & Placemaking Programme, OREC Technology & Subcomponent Innovation Demonstration Centre (T&SIDC) and Energy Central Campus (ECC) Phase 1 will be submitted in August, Northern Gateway P2 in October, Bebside Blyth Connectivity in November and ECC P2 also in November 22. This allows for the identified site to be confirmed as part of the process. Any outstanding information for ECC P2 will be completed after the Summary Documents in accordance with the Local Assurance Framework. DLUHC are aware of this and a rationale and timeframe will be submitted with the Summary Document.</p> <p>AF - what is the latest date they can be pushed back to? LB – they are not being pushed back as such and we are still aiming to submit as soon as we can. However, this small amount of additional time gives us some flexibility in the programme to ensure that the Outline Business Cases are as robust as they can be by the deadline. Our latest target submission date will be mid to late November to ensure they are received by DLUHC before 02 December. LB also clarified to members that Summary Documents are only required for Town Deal funded projects and not Future High Streets Fund projects, although all projects go through the same Local Assurance process.</p>	

	<p><u>Strategic Sites</u></p> <p><u>LB provided an update on progress with strategic sites in the town centre.</u></p> <p>Keel Row Shopping Centre and Car Park – NCC are engaging with Northumberland Estates regarding these sites.</p> <p>Arriva Bus Depot and Bus Station – Arriva are due to demolish the Depot shed for which they have received Conservation Area Consent. They also have a current planning application for boundary fencing, hard standing and maintenance buildings. They will be storing buses in the open air with security fencing around whole site. Work starts in May and they will temporarily be storing buses on the gasholder site. We will continue to engage with Arriva.</p> <p>IL - security fencing, can we influence how it looks as this will be a major visible part of the town centre and we don't want it to look industrial for example. I visited their site in Ashington which has nice green fencing and shrubbery and looks pleasant so I'm hoping this can be considered for Blyth. LB – the planning process would be the normal way to comment on the proposals. In the context of the Energising Blyth Programme it is important to have good quality aesthetic fencing as the site is major gateway into the town and should complement the 'The Link' project on Bridge St.</p> <p>AT – if Arriva are looking to proceed with their own development, what impact does it have on the other schemes within the Town Deal, is there any dependency on that site? LB – This site was identified as the potential location for the ECC P2, however there remain a number of options in the town centre which the team are continuing to positively explore noting that this is a complex process, involving third party landowners and so requires commercial in confidence discussions. All projects are subject to a robust business cases, funding and budgets and we are confident through various optioneering we can assemble suitable sites in that area.</p> <p>AF- I assume Arriva are keen to stay in the town centre? LB – yes, bus usage in Blyth is high and we need to support them.</p>	
5	<p>Programme and Project update LB provided an update.</p> <p><u>Project Performance</u> Culture Centre / Market Place and The Link – RIBA Stage 1 is complete and the SOBC for the project is coming back to Board at the next meeting, as with other construction projects currently the project is subject to cost pressures, and this is being monitored closely by the project team. The next stage will involve closer analysis and optioneering.</p> <p>RIBA Stage 2 will begin in early May allowing additional project development time to finalise key inputs for the business plan and operating model for the</p>	

	<p>facility with a focus on developing a fit for purpose and attractive building to the market.</p> <p>There has been positive 1:1 engagement with cultural and community providers in the town including Buffalo Community Centre, Silx Teen Bar, Phoenix Theatre and Headway Arts. They were all positive meetings with positive outcomes which were fed back following each session, and we have reassured stakeholders that the programme will support and enhance existing groups and events in the town and that we want people to be involved by co-creating a Blyth cultural programme. The Blyth Cultural Advisory Group will be meeting regularly to ensure partners are able to input and are up to date on progress.</p> <p>A bus circulation route was originally planned for the Market Place, but we are no longer planning to pursue this and this has been reported to the Cities and Local Growth Team. The reason being is that at the time of writing the Funding Business Case, we were in discussions with Arriva to acquire the bus station and the depot. This would present an opportunity to build a hotel on the site. Arriva would need to maintain a bus loop in the town for operational reasons and at the bidding stage the option to circulate around Market Place was put forward. Subsequently, concerns have also been raised on the impact of diesel buses operating around the Market Place in terms of noise, pollution, and safety.</p> <p>As the bus station will remain, there is no immediate need for a new area for buses to circulate in the town. However, we still want to work with Arriva and to explore opportunities to improve the bus station so this option can be explored going forward.</p> <p>The above change to the project will be discussed further with DHLUC regarding any funder requirements.</p> <p>The options report for the operator model is due this week and SOBC excluding The Link project will be presented to Board in May.</p> <p>IL – Culture Centre concerns have been raised by local cultural organisations i.e.: Headway, Silx, etc, around what it actually is. He suggested it could be helpful to organise a meeting with these partners. RS explained that the stakeholders mentioned may perceive they could be affected directly and/or are generally interested and want to know more. The 1:1 visits have been extremely positive but it also brought to light that there were some misconceptions about the projects. For example, colleagues at the Buffalo Community Centre were concerned the new Culture Centre could be a Community Centre like the Buffalo. We explained this is not the case as it is focused on being a new entertainment and leisure offer and funded differently to any Community Centre, which we talked through, and they were re-assured. In terms of Phoenix, we will work closely with their team on their offer to ensure anything the new centre focuses on will compliment and likewise with Headway on their offer. The opportunity to programme activities together is a key part of this. We also discussed opportunities to support Headway with improvement plans for the Artspace building. We have reassured them that there will be regular meetings like the Culture</p>	
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	<p>Advisory Group going forward which involves all those stakeholders. Overall, there is an opportunity to boost existing users and attract new audiences. RS agreed to liaise with IL office to discuss further engagement.</p> <p>IL – I have concerns around the bus circulation route as there is a hotel shortage in Blyth and with business coming in, there is a bigger need for hotel provision so if we leave the bus station where it is, what are the thoughts on the hotel that was due to be there? LB – as discussed earlier there will be further work on the potential for a hotel to come forward based on market demand alongside the potential for a site to be identified in the town centre. The future growth of industry in the area will hopefully support interest in this from the market.</p> <p>IL – we need to keep the public informed as I do receive comments and queries. LB – engagement and information will ramp up this Summer as the programme develops including having a temporary presence in the Keel Row shopping centre as part of the development of the Culture Pilots prior to the launch of the Culture and Placemaking Programme later this year and will display information and hold events there.</p> <p>JR – the Culture Centre is a potentially fantastic opportunity to add to the offer, but it is important that it is done in conjunction with existing organisations and the wider community. From a university perspective, we have colleagues both in this area of work and in educational/research and innovation projects in Blyth and are keen to support the Culture Centre and the further wider culture offer. RS noted that both Universities will be having a 1:1 in May regarding the projects.</p> <p>TQ – asked about cost pressures on the project, is that on the full scope of FHSF Cinema, Hotel, Culture Centre, ECC P2 and the public realm work? LB – for the other projects it is too early to fully establish what the impact might be, but this is being monitored closely. We are aware of this regarding the Culture Centre and Market Place which has been informed by the completed RIBA Stage 1 optioneering work by the Design Team. It reflects a general increase in constructions costs and materials, fees, as well as also considering the ambition and brief to create the most sustainable offer within the facility as the flagship project in the town centre.</p> <p>As part of establishing the Programme , NCC have identified a contingency budget at project and programme level. The Project Team will report to EB Programme Board in May the outcome of discussions with the Section 151 Officer on what the demands on contingency currently are and how this can be apportioned between projects at both development and construction stages. It should also be noted that whilst there is clear evidence across the sector of significant cost increases, the actual costs will not become evident until the works are tendered given the volatility of the market. Part of the process will be considering how the Culture Centre and Market Place and ECC P1 as the flagship EB projects can each achieve the stated ambition and objectives and set the standard to increase confidence in the town as the first major new uses delivered through the programme.</p>	<p>RS</p>
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	<p>TQ – it is important to draw this to the attention of Board the challenges around affordability to deliver the scheme for the outputs we are seeking. LB - prices are increasing by 10 - 20% and we need to think about this carefully as a Local Authority and a Programme Team.</p> <p>Culture and Placemaking Programme – this will be covered in item 6.</p> <p>Hotel and Restaurant – as discussed above.</p> <p>NEP1/Battleship Wharf – Summary Document has been submitted to DLUHC. Subsidy control approach is being considered with Legal which we hope to resolve soon and if there are any issues Board will be advised. Generally, on subsidy control it is critical to get advice early and ensure it is part of the business case.</p> <p>ECC (Learning Hub) Phase 1 – project is progressing well; cost challenges are being looked at and a planning application submitted is under consideration. A procurement route has been agreed with Procurement Services to ensure a competitive and robust tender process in light of a very buoyant construction sector. This will be a Compliant framework for a two-stage process. Delivery partner discussions continue with Further Education and T- level providers. The Project Team and Steering Group are working on value propositions to employers and apprenticeship models. OBC is due in May and will be shared with Board in June.</p> <p>ECC (Institute) Phase 2 – SOBC will be submitted for internal appraisal on 29 April and the outcome shared with Board on 17 May. This is heavily influenced by ECC Phase 1 particularly in the Strategic Case. The site is not yet agreed but hopefully we can use the upfront Town Deal Capital Development Fund for outline design works.</p> <p>OREC - Technology & Subcomponent Innovation Demonstration Centre (T&SIDC) – this will be covered in item 7.</p> <p>Northern Gateway Phase 1 – the project is on track and Phase 1 is almost complete. The whole area is open for pedestrians and with signage promoting that it is ‘business as usual’. There have been some business queries mainly around access which have been responded to and efforts made to facilitate access wherever possible. We are making some amends to the scheme design of Bowes St at the West end near to Wilko due to be delivered in Autumn 22 which follows engagement with Wilko regarding parking. This will result in additional parking overall.</p> <p>IL – will Phase 1 and 2 be complete by December 22 as businesses will obviously want their Christmas trade? RS – we can’t guarantee that date but the whole scheme is due for completion winter this year and December is the target. We are working with the Town Council on the Christmas lights going up, etc, and at that stage the majority of the street will be completed with pedestrian access although depending on progress restrictions may still be in place for vehicle access due to safety reasons on site.</p>	
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	<p>Northern Gateway Phase 2 and Bebside Blyth Connectivity – both are progressing well towards SOBC. The Technical Services and Strategic Transport Teams are working with Hatch, the business case consultants and have progressed Route Options analysis and the Strategic National Policy Case and are reviewing the design and costings from the Sustrans reports. The SOBCs will come to Board in May or June. Baseline data is complete regarding traffic movement so modelling work needs to be done on how the network could operate. There will also be a Town wide movement strategy in the next 2 months, data from which will feed into highway and all other town centre projects in terms of travel plans and transports assessments, to ensure all impacts are suitably mitigated and works planned to minimise impact of the highway network and access. Business case consultants have set out timeframes required to ensure OBC is received, independently appraised, and approved, ready for Summary Document submission in November.</p>	
6	<p>Culture and Placemaking Programme RS reminded Board of the origins of the project and Cristina Armstrong from Place Create presented an update on the project and recent activity.</p> <p><u>Strategic Outline Business Case Internal Appraisal</u> (Report and Recommendation circulated prior to the meeting for discussion) CJ – the SOBC clearly articulates the vision, theory of change, contributes towards the logic model and encourages job creation and cultural activities. Due diligence – there are slight concerns that the project needs to address before OBC which are the staffing structure, displacement regarding competition and events in the area, project support is needed, stakeholder interest is include in OBC, confirmation we have capacity for overnight stays and UK subsidy control advice. Strategic risks – increase in capital costs, the design fit within the overall budget, Covid 19 requirements, contractor availability, i.e.: do market testing, planning permission if required, lack of a Comms Strategy and a high-quality branding campaign is needed but there are no major risks.</p> <p>CJ - if there are no comments/questions by Friday 29 April, LB will circulate the SOBC for it to be virtually approved by Town Deal Board.</p> <p><i>Further to Town Deal Board on 27th April, no further comments were received on the Internal Appraisal Reports for both the Culture and Place Making Programme and OREC Strategic Outline Business Case's. As agreed, the recommendations from the reports are therefore deemed to have been approved by Board.</i></p>	AII / LB
7	<p>OREC - Technology & Subcomponent Innovation Demonstration Centre (T&SIDC) Dr Darren Broderick from OREC presented an update on the project covering - the 3 phases; visual of the site; facility location; project outcomes; expenditure; funding and progress.</p> <p>AF – is the land freehold or a long lease? GC – I believe it is freehold.</p>	

	<p>RS – we are trying to connect the town centre with the industry in the town and open up the focus of Catapult's industry. Could you open out the building in terms of access from the street or another way? The building is located directly opposite the Buffalo Community Centre. GC - we are looking at interactive visual displays on the side of the building to help with this. LB – that would be really positive and there are opportunities to link with the Culture and Placemaking Programme. As there is a flood defense wall in front of it, it will have its challenges in terms of opening up that area. AF – it is important to consider the overall look and effect on the town to ensure it is all inclusive.</p> <p><u>Strategic Outline Business Case Internal Appraisal</u> (Report and Recommendation circulated prior to the meeting for discussion) LB – apologies we have ran over our time for CJ to present this item. If members of the Board can read the OREC appraisal, particularly the accountable body and risk sections, and if there are any questions, please let me know.</p> <p>CJ - if there are no comments/questions by Friday 29 April, LB will circulate the SOBC for it to be virtually approved by Town Deal Board</p> <p><i>Further to Town Deal Board on 27th April, no further comments were received on the Internal Appraisal Reports for both the Culture and Place Making Programme and OREC Strategic Outline Business Case's. As agreed, the recommendations from the reports are therefore deemed to have been approved by Board.</i></p>	All / LB
8	<p>Comms Update</p> <p>RS gave a summary of activity which included 1:1 meetings held with organisations around culture, working with colleagues on the Comms Plan development in May then in June and July have social media and physical activities to share it with wider stakeholders and the public, looking into having a space in the Keel Row shopping centre and attending Town Council events. A more substantive update will be brought to the next Board.</p>	
9	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p><u>May 23rd</u></p> <p>Programme wide updates</p> <p>Project Highlight Reports</p> <p>Culture Centre and Market Place - Strategic Outline Business Case – Internal Appraisal Report</p> <p>Energy Central Campus – Phase 2 - Strategic Outline Business Case – Internal Appraisal Report</p> <p>Blyth Bebside Connectivity - Strategic Outline Business Case – Internal Appraisal Report (TBC)</p>	

	<p>Northern Gateway Phase 2 - Strategic Outline Business Case – Internal Appraisal Report (TBC)</p> <p>Cultural Workstream - Stakeholder Engagement update Report</p> <p>Communications Plan/Engagement Strategy</p>	
10	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>RE – inflationary pressures, could you summarise this at a programme level so we can understand what the risks maybe. LB – A report to the S 151 is being drafted covering inflationary pressure and the programme wide contingency and how we tackle these pressures.</p> <p>AF – branding, 2026 will be hundred years since Ferguson’s started in Blyth so it would be great if we could do something to celebrate this. We are in the 1911 census so are very much linked to the town. CA – we will add this to the events planner.</p> <p>LB confirmed that there are no immediate plans to have the meetings face to face as currently Teams is working well.</p> <p>All presentations given at the meeting today will be circulated via email.</p>	HS
11	Date and time of next meeting: Monday 23 rd May 2022 14.00 - 15.30	