

Bedlington

Borderlands Place Programme Board

Meeting Report

26th January 2022

17:00

Virtual Meeting – MS Teams

Attendees

Board Members	Organisation
Tony Kirsop (Chair)	NCC
Alex Wallace	County Councillor
Rebecca Wilczek	County Councillor
Malcolm Robinson	County Councillor
Christine Taylor	County Councillor
Bill Crosby	Parish Council
Keith Grimes	Parish Council
Victoria Thompson	Town Council
Adam Hogg	Town Council
Dennis Fancett	Senrug
Tracy Machnicki	BV FutureGen Foundation
Michael Black	Advance Northumberland
Chris Johnson	Leading Link
David Fellows	TT Electronics
Officers	Role
Anne Lawson	Senior Programme Officer (Town Regeneration)
Peter Mawer (Town Lead)	Community Regeneration Officer
Chris Walker	Community Regeneration Officer

Apologies

Board Member	



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Officers	Role

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Governance

Pen portrait documents have been returned by all board members and have been placed on the publicly available Borderland Place Programme [webpage for the town](#).

Declaration of Interests have been completed by each board member and are held at NCC.

The board may refer to NCC Policies, links to these are available on the Place Programme webpage for the town.

- Whistle blowing
- GDPR
- Complaints



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Vision for the town

The board was asked in the first board meeting to consider the elements that might be incorporated into a Borderlands Place Plan Vision for the town. They were reminded of the Borderlands overall programme core principles when they did this:

The five core principles that underpin the Place Programme:

- **Place-based:** Assessing investment needs and solutions for each place on its own terms: what the place wants to be in the future, what it needs, and what it offers.
- **Collective:** Looking at the contribution of each part to the whole: the added value to the place, the area, the region, and the country.
- **Systemic:** Bringing public, private, third sector, and community assets together as part of a single, integrated system supporting communities, services and the economy.
- **Community-led:** Putting communities at the heart of decisions about the solutions that the Place Programme brings to the challenges facing their towns and town centres.
- **Prevention and future proofing:** Investment and action directed towards preventing further deterioration in our towns and town centres.

The group used time in the previous meeting to brainstorm ideas. These are summarised below:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
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Job opportunities (green jobs)	Improved quality of life	Connectivity within the town	Build on community spirit
Joining the two halves of the town together (one Bedlington)	Increased jobs	Transport	Pride in the town and its heritage
Promoting Bedlington's industrial/railway heritage	Health	Connecting 'strengths'	New developments
Capitalising on the strength of community	Reduction in ASB	Connectivity to wider area	Make town relevant to now
Encourage independent businesses and a variety of businesses	A vibrant, safe community	USP for Bedlington – a reason for people to come	Improved parks and open spaces
Further education	A destination	Put Bedlington on the map – arts, education, business	More accessible
Leisure offering	Accessibility to transport for employment	Futureproofing	A destination
Footpaths connecting parks and cycle routes	Improvement to the environment – green economy	Leveraging assets	Activities for young people
Connectivity to other settlements	Retention/attraction of high paid jobs	Attracting businesses	Attract visitors
Youth leisure opportunities inc mother & toddler groups, soft play etc	Housing meeting the demographic needs		Service provision for growing workforce
Affordable housing	Improved infrastructure links		Infrastructure for growing businesses
	Improved retail offer – more varied choice		Build skills base
	Develop our unique heritage		

From the ideas, a draft vision was completed by the NCC officer team and presented to the board.



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Proposed (draft) Bedlington Borderlands Place Programme Vision

By 2031 Bedlington will **continue to** be a cohesive and thriving centre for **residents**, businesses and learners. Providing quality jobs in ~~local~~ **low carbon clean growth industries** supported by outstanding skills and education opportunities for young people and adults alike, Bedlington **will continue to** be a growing town **with housing options services** to meet the local need. Bedlington will find innovative ways to celebrate the town's ~~rail and~~ **industrial** heritage, whilst delivering a new and vibrant **leisure, cultural and low carbon** offer for all ages, which attracts residents and visitors alike, ~~making~~ **promoting** Bedlington **as** a destination and an attractive town to live, work and learn in.

*The board discussed the vision for the town which was agreed in draft form. The words highlighted in red are those which have been added after discussion with the board. Additionally, words and sentences with strike-through are those rejected by the board and replaced by the officer team following the meeting. A number of points were also raised, including consideration of:

Increased housing options being included without the necessary infrastructure to support them. Although the word 'infrastructure' was considered too expansive, it was agreed that 'housing options' was removed from the vision and replaced with the more accurate 'services to meet the local need'.

The vision was also amended to ensure that visitors would come to Bedlington not just for its industrial heritage but because it is a great place to be. The word 'rail' was removed, and the line replaced with 'Bedlington will find innovative ways to celebrate the town's industrial heritage, whilst delivering a new and vibrant leisure and culture offer for all ages'.

There is, and will be, a fantastic cultural offer for Bedlington however this wasn't evident in the vision. This has been addressed with the line 'whilst delivering a new and vibrant leisure and culture offer for all ages,'

The vision was considered too corporate; the re-drafted vision needed to be less formal and more inclusive for the community.

The original vision suggested that there was nothing good in Bedlington now. The redrafted vision addresses this in the first sentence - 'Building on solid foundations, Bedlington will be a more cohesive and thriving centre for residents, businesses and learners.'



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A discussion also took place around the use of 'Bedlington & Bedlington Station' at the consultation stage. It was agreed by the board that Bedlington would be the sole place name for the programme to avoid risking division.

Revised (draft) Bedlington Borderlands Place Programme Vision

Bedlington will continue to be a cohesive and thriving centre for residents, businesses and learners. Providing quality jobs supported by outstanding skills and education opportunities for young people and adults alike, Bedlington will continue to be a growing town with services to meet the local need. Bedlington will find innovative ways to celebrate the town's industrial heritage, whilst delivering a new and vibrant leisure, cultural and low carbon offer for all ages. Bedlington will attract residents and visitors alike, promoting itself as both a destination and an attractive town to live, work and learn in.



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Bedlington Borderlands Place Programme Strategic Objectives

During the previous meeting, the board was asked to consider the overall Borderlands Place Programme.

Reviewing the seven overall Borderlands Programme Strategic Objectives, the board selected four that it felt most reflected the needs of the town. The Bedlington priority objectives chosen in the first board meeting are highlighted in red:

SO1: Empower local communities to imagine and then build a long-term future for the towns they live in.

SO2: Safeguard existing businesses and attract new businesses to our towns and town centres.

SO3: Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in our towns and town centres.

SO4: Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation.

SO5: Maintain and increase the number of people living in our towns and town centres.

SO6: Retain and increase the working age population in towns.

SO7: Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in our towns and town centres.

The officer team then drafted bespoke versions for the town, and these were discussed by the board. The following draft strategic objectives for the Borderlands Place Programme in the town were identified, for further consideration following community consultation.

Proposed (draft) Bedlington Borderlands Place Programme Strategic Objectives

1. ~~Maintain and~~ increase the number of visitors spending money in ~~to~~ Bedlington ~~on~~ **for its** retail, leisure and culture **offers**.
2. **Collaborate with** ~~Empower, through consultation,~~ the local residents and ~~the~~ business community to imagine and then build a long-term future for Bedlington.
3. Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for residents of Bedlington
4. ~~Maintain and~~ **Raise** the quality of the physical environment in Bedlington



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The word 'empower' was changed following discussion between the project officers to 'collaborate with', an amendment which would ensure that the ongoing Borderlands process was fully inclusive to stakeholders. This final draft of the strategic objectives was then shared and agreed with the board prior to consultation.

The word 'maintain' was also removed from SO 1&4. The aim of the programme is to increase levels; therefore, a maintenance of the visitor numbers and quality of physical environment was implicit.

The re-drafted strategic objectives are presented below:

Revised (draft) Bedlington Borderlands Place Programme Strategic Objectives

1. Increase the number of visitors to Bedlington accessing its retail, leisure and culture offers
2. Collaborate with local residents and the business community to imagine and then realise a long-term prosperous future for Bedlington
3. Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for residents of Bedlington
4. Raise the quality of the physical environment in Bedlington

Public Consultation & Citizen Space Survey

The board discussed the methods used to let the community know about the Bedlington Borderlands Place Programme. The drafted Vision and Strategic Objectives would be presented, and the community would be asked for their views on them. Similar consultations had been completed by the delivery team at NCC for both Blyth and Ashington using online survey software Citizen Space as well as through hard copies of questionnaires in strategic locations. The aims are to:

- Ask respondents about how they feel about living / working / running a business / studying in Bedlington:
 - What are the best things?



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- What are the worst things?
- What would you like to change?
- Gather demographic data from the respondents to ensure a representative view

Citizen Space will be used in conjunction with specific focus groups and a targeted social media campaign to reach the largest audience possible. Emails will also be sent to stakeholder groups to inform them of the consultation - **Action AL / CW**

A series of focus groups (centred on specific stakeholders such as businesses and young people) will be held throughout the consultation period. The officer team will contact the Bedlington Town Clerk for support to contact the remaining stakeholders. The board's recommendation to perform three separate consultations in three separate locations was noted. It was also noted that there were historically low levels of interest and engagement for a trader's association in Bedlington - **Action CW**

The proposed programme was presented to the board, with work on a draft survey to begin immediately after the board meeting - **Action CW/AL**

Add the local area map to the front page of the survey, demonstrating the footprint of the project within Bedlington/Bedlington Station - **Action CW/AL**

TM shared the positive experiences she has had working with education providers in and around Bedlington. Similar to the business group forms, a young people's focus group(s) will be arranged with the support of Leading Link and Britishvolt - **Action PM/TM/CJ**



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Proposed programme ahead of next Bedlington BPP board

Activity / week com	31/1	7/2	14/2	21/2	28/2	7/3	14/3	21/3	28/3
Draft survey									
Board review draft & focus group prep									
Survey Live									
Focus groups									
Officer Analysis									
Board meeting									30th March

It was agreed that the survey, when drafted, would be shared with all board members for review with a view to going live on the 21st of February 2022. This date was agreed (with a one-week extension) to ensure that school half-term would not affect respondents and focus groups.

Next meeting (proposed) – 30th March 2022 @ 17:30