

BELLINGHAM PLACE PLAN 2024-2034



**BELLINGHAM
PARISH COUNCIL**



Foreword

Our Place Plan for Bellingham sets out our 10-year vision for the town's future as a vibrant, growing, connected and inclusive place to live, learn, work, and invest in. It has been shaped with input from the local community and partners and sets out our priorities to deliver investment and sustainable economic growth in the town.

The Place Plan for Bellingham sets out a future strategic direction for the town to ensure its relevance and growth well into the 21st century. The development of this Plan and its focus has been determined by drawing upon local stakeholders' experience, knowledge and data illustrating the current performance of the town, its assets, opportunities and also the direction it needs to move in if it is to keep ahead. It is this compelling evidence which will attract future funders to invest in Bellingham and bring about meaningful and sustained change. The Place Plan begins by defining a shared vision for Bellingham, which has a number of strategic objectives attached to ensure its successful delivery over the following ten years.

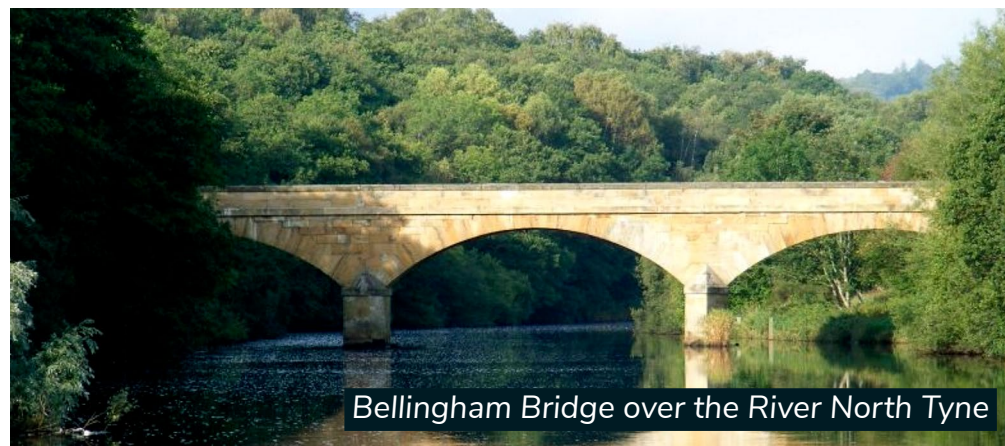
This plan has been developed following community engagement and consultation and the sharing of knowledge and resources of partners and stakeholders in the town. For Bellingham, a Place Partnership Group has been formed which is made up of representation from private, public and community sectors. Together they are working on behalf of the community to develop opportunities which can build on the town's distinctive and quality offer.

The Plan draws on various locally prepared action plans, the Bellingham Neighbourhood Plan and other Northumberland and regional strategies, as well as the overarching ambitions of the Borderlands Inclusive

Growth Deal. Importantly, the Bellingham Place Plan has considered a great deal of statistical data including the outcome of the Bellingham Borderlands consultation and underpinning socio-economic data which sets out the current performance of the town. This data informed the selection of Bellingham as a place which would be suitable for Borderlands investment under the Place Programme and also informed the headline "Themes" which emerged from the community consultation as a way of articulating Bellingham's story.

We look forward to working with the community, businesses and stakeholders to implement the Bellingham Place Plan.

Bellingham Place Partnership Group

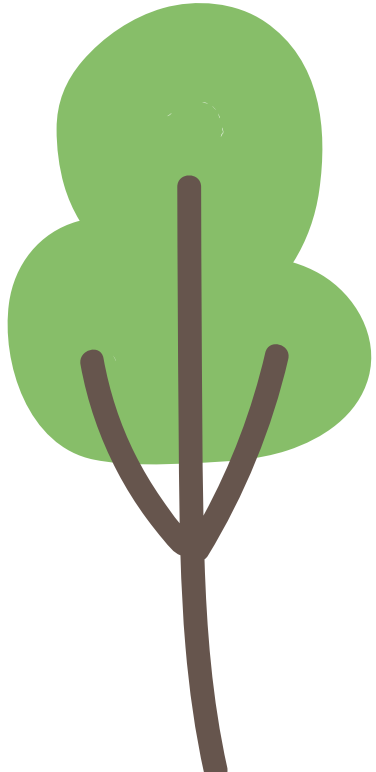


Bellingham Bridge over the River North Tyne

The vision for our town is:

Capitalising on Bellingham's strong retail offer and rich heritage, the town environment will be improved, and parking arrangements made fit for purpose. Cycling and public transport connectivity will be reviewed and developed while recreational, fitness and wellbeing facilities for both residents and visitors will be enhanced.

Bellingham will be a thriving environment for business startup, growth and retention across all sectors with access to local mentoring and skills development. Bellingham will have grown its visitor economy, increasing high quality jobs in the sector and the economic impact of visitors on the village.



Bellingham Town Hall



Gingall Gun

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Part 1: A Vision for change for Bellingham

Introduction

The Bellingham Place Plan sets out a 10-year vision for the town. It has been developed in association with the local community, stakeholders and businesses and focuses on three investment themes - Vibrant, Working and Inclusive Town. These themes will drive the 10-year plan forward, ensuring that Bellingham becomes a place of opportunity for residents, an attraction for visitors and a place of prosperity for businesses.

A series of project proposals have been identified in the process of developing this Place Plan with the aim of achieving the town's vision through a combination of funding sources including, but not limited to, the Borderlands inclusive Growth Deal.

It has been prepared in the context of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal which commits fresh investment into our region and is being jointly funded by the UK Government and Scottish Government from 2021 to 2031. The Deal is focused on four strategic themes of improving places; enabling infrastructure; encouraging green growth and supporting business, innovation and skills. The Growth Deal includes the Borderlands Place Programme which identified seven towns in Northumberland to benefit from investment, including Bellingham.

The Place Plan has been prepared collaboratively by the Bellingham Place Partnership Group working with the local community. Engagement with the community has been key to developing the plan, and it is the community's engagement which captures the spirit and energy of the town. It is vital to ensure that this enthusiasm and determination to drive improvement over the coming ten years is represented fully and appropriately.

This plan details the desire for change within the local community, aligning with, and contributing to, the objectives of the Borderlands Growth Deal and its three BIG Challenges - inclusive growth; narrowing the productivity gap; and increasing the working age population.

The Bellingham Place Partnership Group aim to demonstrate that the Plan represents a vision of Bellingham both in the next ten years and beyond. The community has engaged throughout the process, through stakeholder mapping sessions, business focus groups and public consultations. It is from these discussions that our ambitious vision has been created, building upon the engagement so far to create a meaningful change for the better.



The plan is framed around five key development themes, which taken together, offer a balanced approach to a 10-year vision for the future area.

- **Place-Based:** Assessing what assets are already in place and what investment needs and solutions for each place on its own terms: what the place wants to be in 20 years, what it needs, and what it offers. This should make the most of what makes the place distinctive using local heritage and culture.
- **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.
- **Prevention and Future Proofing:** Investment and action directed towards preventing further deterioration in our towns and town centres, and ensuring they are equipped to respond to future change, including recovery from the impact of Covid-19 and Climate Change.

With inclusive growth at its heart, the **Borderlands Place Programme**, which forms a key component of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, aims to create and sustain economically vibrant towns and town centres where people and communities see the direct benefits of economic growth. This means investing in infrastructure in a way that supports the sustainability and growth of local businesses, stimulates business investment, attracts visitors and spending, safeguards and creates secure, well-paid jobs for local people, and provides opportunities for people from all backgrounds to engage

in employment, skills development and beneficial cultural and social activities.

The plan considers Bellingham's economic context, its unique needs and challenges as well as identifying the town's assets, strengths and opportunities to embrace and build on. With significant community and stakeholder input a new vision has been established to set out the aspirations and objectives to deliver sustainable growth in our town. Potential interventions and project ideas have also been developed to create a pipeline of investments that will meet this ambition for growth and may be eligible, once developed, for Borderlands, UK Shared Prosperity Funding and a wide number of other funding streams.

Funding through Borderlands will be limited to economic growth capital projects that contribute to addressing the three challenges of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal: growing the working age population; boosting productivity; and delivering inclusive economic growth.



Our vision for Bellingham

We have worked with stakeholders and the community to develop a vision incorporating the key ingredients that will combine to secure economic growth for Bellingham. It reflects the current role of the town in terms of its geographic and strategic context, the performance of the town centre, the socio-economic opportunities and challenges and the wider strategic developments that will generate jobs and investment.

Capitalising on Bellingham's strong retail offer and rich heritage, the town environment will be improved, and parking arrangements made fit for purpose. Cycling and public transport connectivity will be reviewed and developed while recreational, fitness and wellbeing facilities for both residents and visitors will be enhanced.

Bellingham will be a thriving environment for business startup, growth and retention across all sectors with access to local mentoring and skills development. Bellingham will have grown its visitor economy, increasing high quality jobs in the sector and the economic impact of visitors on the village.

Strategic Objectives

Underpinning the Vision and the identified Themes, are the strategic objectives which for Bellingham have been identified as:

1. **Working Town** - Enhance existing businesses and attract new businesses into Bellingham.
2. **Inclusive Town** - Support existing employment and deliver quality new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for Bellingham residents.
3. **Vibrant Town** - Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Bellingham and Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in Bellingham.



Introducing Bellingham

Location

Bellingham is a village and civil parish in Northumberland, 34 miles to the north-west of Newcastle upon Tyne and 16 miles north-west of Hexham. It is situated on the Hareshaw Burn at its confluence with the River North Tyne on the border of the Northumberland National Park.

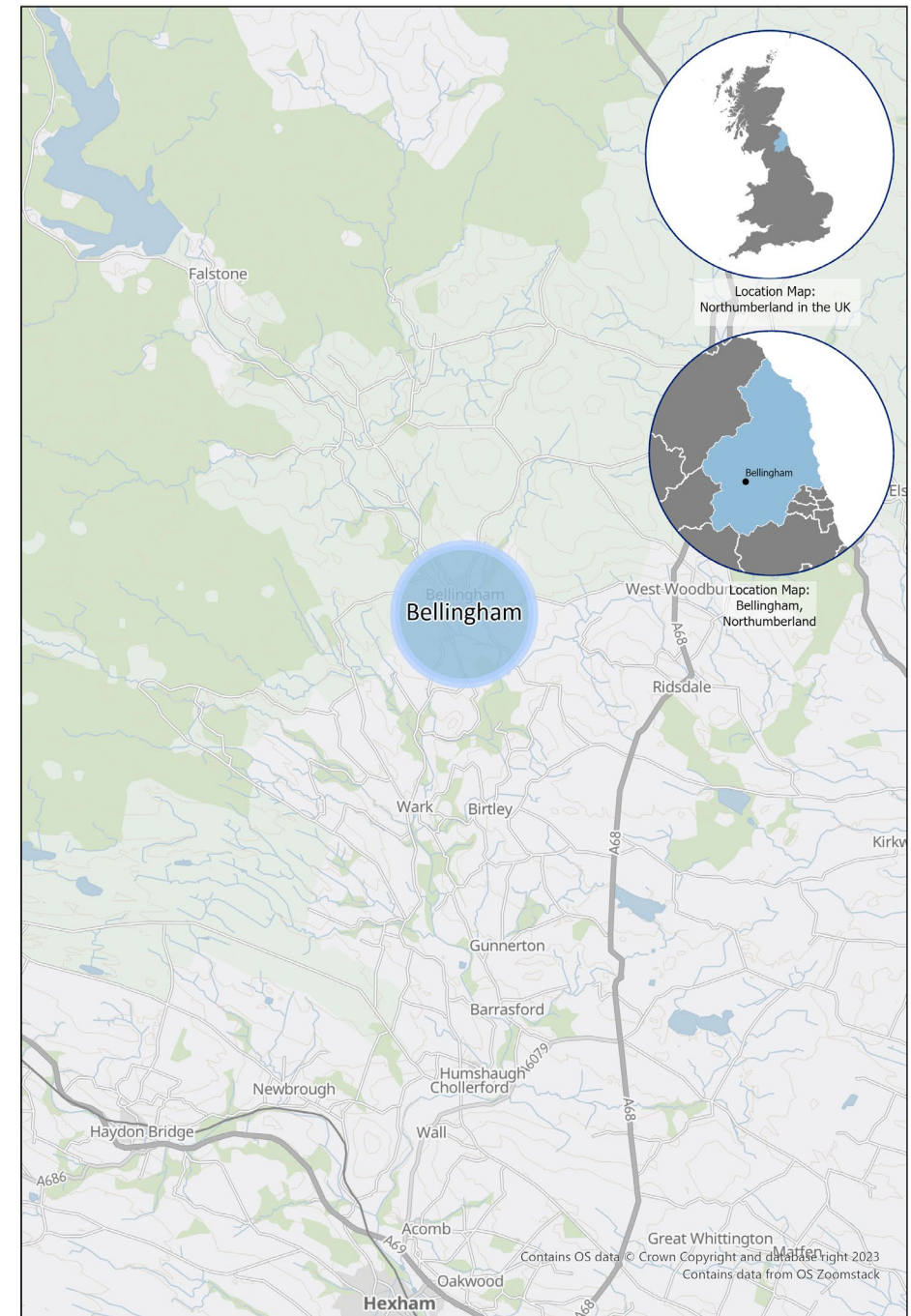
A Brief History of Bellingham

Within two or three miles of Bellingham are several settlements dating to the Roman period, but the town itself appears to be no earlier than the 12th century – although the ending ‘ham’ could indicate an early medieval origin.

The early settlement seems to have been divided by the Hareshaw Burn: on the west was the Church of St Cuthbert, and on the east settlement focused around the probable manorial seat, possibly a castle with a demesne farm.

The North Tyne was fordable near the town and during the medieval period there also appears to have been a bridge. The present bridge was only built in 1834, reflecting the relative unimportance of the crossing of the North Tyne at this point, with the main north-south route from Edinburgh to Newcastle, via Jedburgh, running through neighbouring Redesdale.

During much of the medieval period, an extensive tract of Tynedale, including Bellingham, was administered as an independent liberty owned by the Kings of Scotland and known as the Lordship of Tynedale. It was not fully integrated into the rest of Northumberland until the very end of the 15th century.



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A manorial seat over the medieval and post-medieval periods, Bellingham also functioned as a service and market centre for the surrounding rural economy.

However, over a ten-year period between 1838 and 1848, the town also became an industrial centre based around the Hareshaw Ironworks. Major iron working was a short-lived expansion in the area, and its contraction even speedier. The ironworks encouraged the railway to come to Bellingham in 1861, although by then this was too late to save the mines from economic closure. The railway lasted until 1956 for passengers and goods and excursions until 1963, closing pre-Beeching.

The town survived the closure of the Hareshaw works and, to this day, remains a service centre for its rural hinterland, its economy supported by forestry, echoing medieval times when the de Bellingham family held the manor by virtue of their service as foresters to the king of Scotland.

Bellingham today

Bellingham is a historic market town full of village charm, in a riverside setting, surrounded by spectacular countryside.

It is home to a vibrant community that celebrates its heritage through cultural events and festivals. The town is home to a heritage centre and a number of historical landmarks including the 12th century St Cuthbert's church.

It is a popular destination for nature lovers, history enthusiasts, hikers and cyclists travelling the Pennine Way and the Reivers Coast to Coast cycle route.



Our community

Population

The most recent population estimate for Bellingham in 2022 was 1,050, of whom 53% were working age. The population has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years or so, although it has contracted by 2% since the 2011 census. The 65+ age group is higher than the county average at 29% which is significantly higher than the average for England (18.6%).



Employment

The number of residents recorded as working in managerial or professional roles in the 2021 Census, 26%, is below the county average of 30%.

The average commute to work by Bellingham residents is 29km, reflecting the limited number of job opportunities in and around the town. All businesses in Bellingham are micro or small businesses with the forestry industry surrounding the town offering the most opportunities locally.



Overall deprivation

No households in Bellingham are recorded as being deprived in all four dimensions of disadvantage, although 38% of households fall into one or more dimensions.

Median household income in 2023 was reported as £38,937 which is £2.5K higher than the county average and has increased by just over 40% since 2011 (county average has increased by 27.5% over the same period).



Home ownership

The average price of houses sold in the 12 months to August 2024, as reported by Zoopla, was £253.5k, close to the county average of £231.7K. Home ownership is 5.5% below the county average at 60.2%, both social rented and private rented tenures are higher than the county average (20.5% and 19.3% respectively).



Education

Bellingham Primary School, Reception to Year Four, was graded 'Good' in its most recent Ofsted inspection (2023) when it had 71 pupils on role. Bellingham Middle School, years five to eight, was also graded 'Good' in its most recent Ofsted inspection (2019) when it had 86 pupils on role.

High School aged pupils travel to Haydon Bridge High School, a 16-mile journey that takes, on average, 30 minutes. The high school was adjudged by Ofsted as 'Requires Improvement' in February 2024. An increasing number of high school aged students are choosing to attend the Queen Elizabeth High School in Hexham since it qualified for free school transport for students from Haydon Bridge.



Crime and anti-social behaviour

The crime rate in Bellingham appears much lower than average. In the year to March 2024, the police.UK crime map listed 53 crimes in the area, a crime rate of 50.5 per 1,000 population compared with the official County figure of 76.8 over the same period.

Assets, strengths and opportunities

Visitor and tourist economy

Bellingham provides accommodation and facilities for tourists to use the town as a base to explore the Northumberland National Park, with its wide-open spaces and dark skies, home to hidden waterfalls and walking routes in abundance including the Pennine Way which passes directly through Bellingham. Of the four large waterfalls in Northumberland, Hareshaw Linn is relatively accessible via a 45 minute walk from the town. The idyllic town offers pubs and cafes as well as historic places of interest.

Bellingham Heritage Centre celebrates Bellingham's rich industrial and cultural past, or for those who prefer more active pursuits there is also an excellent 18-hole golf course. Fitness activities are held in the Town Hall.

The village is a recognised staging point on cycling and walking routes and caters for transient visitors, day trippers and vacationers.

Natural environment

There can be few places blessed with a more beautiful natural environment than Bellingham, sitting as it does within the Northumberland National Park, the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park and neighbouring the Kielder Forest and Hadrian's Wall.

Kielder Water



Waterfall on Hareshaw Burn

Community and leisure

The Bellingham Parish Council, consisting of nine councillors, manages the Jubilee Field and play areas in the Jubilee Field and Briar Hill.

A Community Orchard is run by a local community organisation.

North Tyne & Redesdale Community Partnership is a rural development trust, working to improve the quality of life for people living & working in the North Tyne & Rede Valley's. For example, the Bellingham Community Pantry is a local, volunteer run food sharing store which has the aim of reducing food waste in the community. Local food businesses and residents can share good quality food that would otherwise be wasted at the end of the day.

Bellingham Golf Club offers a well-respected 18-hole course and a cafe open to all.

The Heritage Centre offers exhibitions, collections and events, a cafe located in a first class 125 train carriage and school holiday activities.

Bellingham Town Hall provides a main hall, a meeting room and the library. The Hall is used for public consultations, church and community fundraising events, plays by the local Dramatic Society, social events and private parties.

The annual Bellingham Show and Country Festival celebrates local farming and agriculture as well as providing fun activities for all ages.

A wide range of clubs and societies are run in Bellingham and the surrounding villages including a Leek Club, a Dramatic Society, W.I., Community Orchard, History and Natural History Societies, Young Farmers and a Youth Club.

The Bellingham Family Hub offers support, services and activities for families of children aged 0-19 or 25 with additional needs.



Tea on the Train, Station Yard, Bellingham

Challenges and issues facing Bellingham

Industry and employment

Retail, hospitality and care roles account for the majority of job opportunities in the town and many of the employed residents commute to larger settlements such as Hexham and Newcastle. There are no industrial businesses in Bellingham and its surrounding area except for forestry and countryside management, neither of which provides numerous job opportunities.

Seasonal economy/over reliance on tourism

The natural environment that attracts thousands of visitors to Bellingham and its surrounds is 'open' year-round of course. However, the climate in north-east England sees the vast majority of tourists arriving between April and September. The retail and hospitality sectors encounter a significant drop in income between October and March.



Lack of activities for young people

There are few activities for young people.

There are two play parks for younger children and a North Tyne Youth offers youth club sessions in the Reed Hall for school years 4-5, 6-8 and 7-11 once a week.

Variety in retail offer

The town centre contains 18 units including a hotel, two pubs, two cafes and a takeaway. The remaining retail units offer necessities such as meat and vegetables as well as a gift shop and a Country Store. The village is served by a Co-op Food convenience store.



Connectivity – public transport

The town is not served by rail. Bus services run to Hexham eight times per day leaving Bellingham between 06:30 and 19:40. The last bus from Hexham arrives at 19:37.

Lack of parking

Parking in and around the town centre is at a premium, particularly during the tourist season. Visitors, particularly those setting off from Bellingham on walks and occupying parking places needed for short stay visits to the shops and facilities, are encouraged to park in parking areas managed by the Parish Council at the Jubilee Field and Fairsteads slightly outside the centre and at the Station Yard car park.



River North Tyne

Overview of the public consultation

A public consultation was carried out using Citizen Space and a total of 179 responses were received of which 68 were from residents aged 15 and under. The Place Plan vision and objectives received strong support, 83% and 94% respectively.

The most common responses to the question ‘what is the BEST thing about Bellingham?’ were:

- Local business/traders
- Community spirit
- Local facilities and amenities
- Natural environment

The most common responses to the question ‘what is the WORST thing about Bellingham?’ were:

- Lack of parking
- Lack of leisure facilities
- Lack of activities/facilities for young people

The most COMMON priorities for change were:

- Enhanced leisure offer
- Improved parking
- Activities and facilities for young people

Summary

Bellingham has much to offer both residents and visitors but is in danger of becoming ‘a victim of its own success’. The natural environment is attracting growing numbers of short and long-stay visitors and the town benefits from this tourist economy, however, the infrastructure, facilities and amenities need to grow accordingly.

Local employment opportunities are sparse and the average commute for the working population is comparatively high.

A strong community spirit is reflected in the number of community activities available, although these are predominantly for adults and activities for young people could be improved.



Investment Themes

The investment themes establish a focus in terms of how we will aim to deliver the vision and objectives of the Place Plan. A strength of the Borderlands Place Plan process has been the 'whole-town planning' approach, which has informed our investment themes. The themes reflect the feedback given by community members and stakeholders throughout the process; from stakeholder mapping exercises to public consultation, we have developed the themes around the key topics identified by the people and businesses of Bellingham.

Two Themes have been identified from the four strategic objectives which have informed the consideration of potential projects, interventions and investments. It is critical for this plan that these contribute to the achievement of the overall vision and work together with each other to form a coherent Plan which knits together and drives the change needed.

Investment Theme 1 - Vibrant Town

Theme 1 aims to invest in increasing spend and activity in the town and improve the resident and visitor experience, bolstering activity and encouraging increased footfall and spend by:

- Building upon Bellingham's natural assets and driving growth in the tourism economy.
- Spreading the benefits of tourism to local people.
- Offering additionality to the daytime and night time offer.
- Enhancements to public realm spaces.
- Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage.
- Increase footfall and spending by providing new reasons for people and businesses to use the town centre.
- Improving facilities for young people so they feel more connected to Bellingham and are more likely to stay in the town.



Investment Theme 2 - Working town

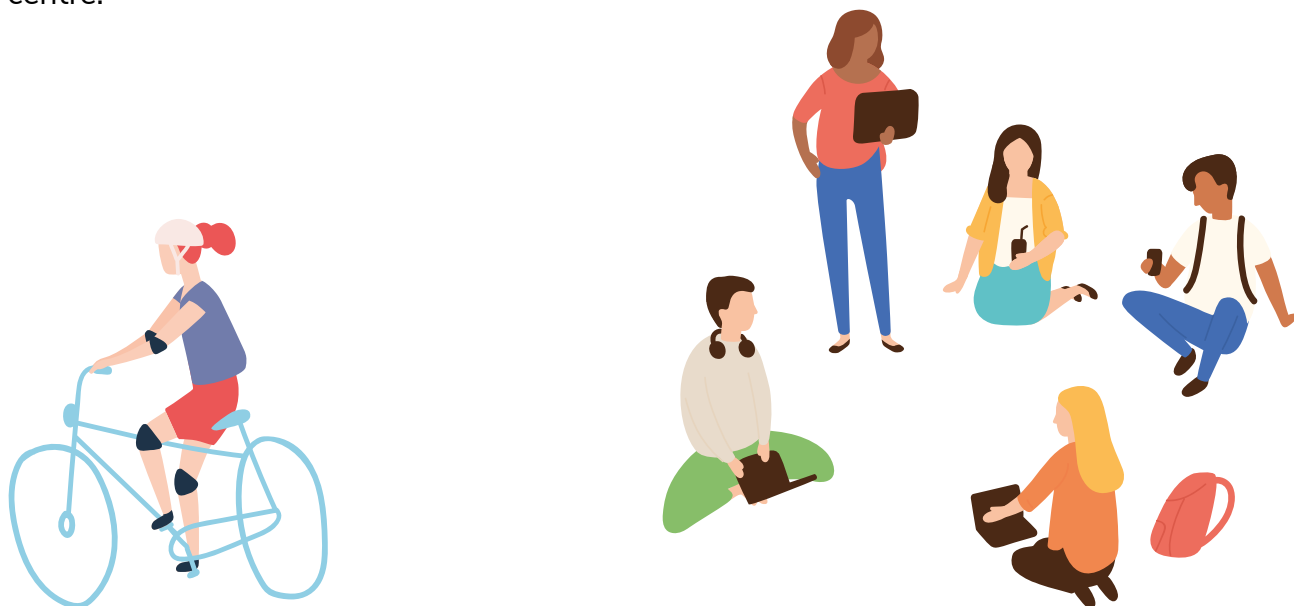
Theme 2 aims to retain and increase the working age population in Bellingham by creating and safeguard employment in the town and to provide residents, particularly young people, with the opportunity to be part of a skilled workforce with a sustainable future in the town and North East economy by:

- Investing in flexible commercial space to encourage businesses to base in Bellingham.
- Promoting equitable access to quality education, training, employment, entrepreneurship, and community participation.
- Fostering entrepreneurship as a mindset and a livelihood.
- Seeking out new opportunities for business operations to train young people in the community through hands-on mentorships and apprenticeships. Providing excellent opportunities to prepare tomorrow's workforce while also identifying and nurturing potential young talent for existing businesses in Bellingham.

Investment Theme 3 - Inclusive town

Theme 3 aims to work together to develop the economic and social opportunities of Bellingham's people and communities by:

- Attracting people to live, work and visit Bellingham.
- Providing an energy and vibrancy to the town centre.
- Creating a sense of enthusiasm towards the town centre.
- Adding to the cultural offer of the town centre.
- Offering residents and visitors a unique experience.



Part 2: Development and implementation

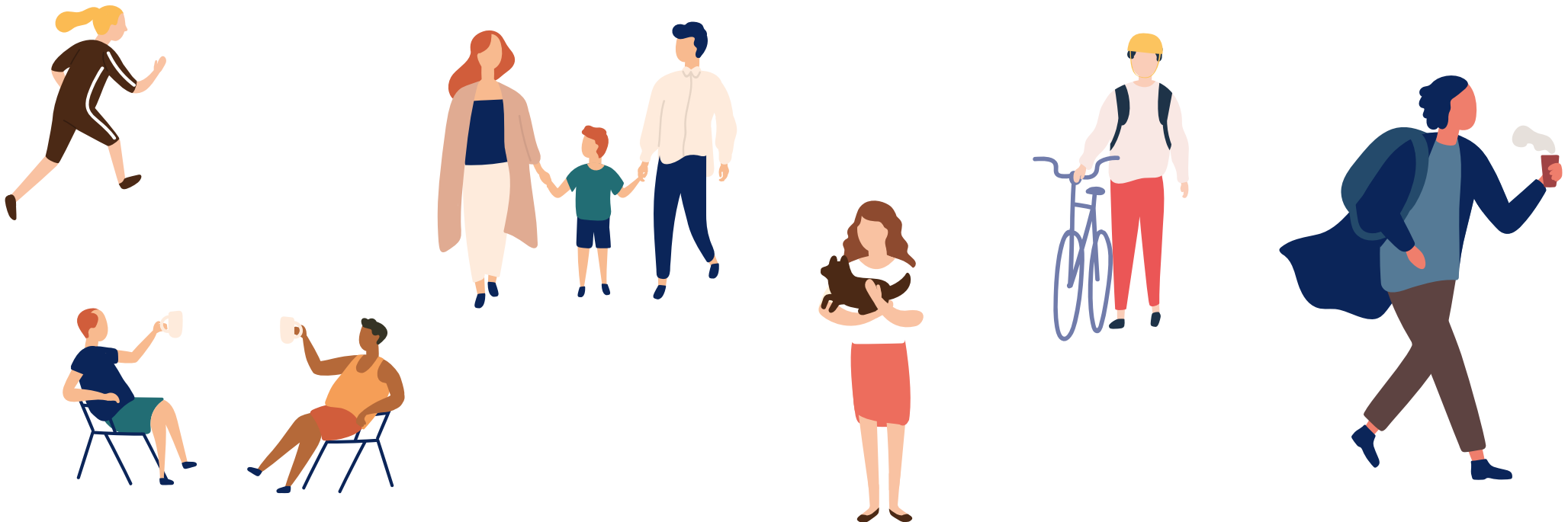
Development of the Place Plan

There are more than 100 towns across the Borderlands area with different and distinct characteristics. Bellingham's inclusion as one of Northumberland's seven towns on the Borderlands Place Programme was assessed using the Unified Borderlands Town Index, developed to facilitate the town prioritisation process. It was critical that the framework was:

- evidence based
- robust in its justification
- transparent for our stakeholders and communities

The index was based on a two-stage gateway process:

- A quantitative assessment of a generic range of published indicators that defined the relative “economic health” of the towns in scope.
- The progressive application of a range of qualitative factors that correlated to the broader “levelling up” aims of the Programme.



The local Place Partnership Group in Bellingham was created following a stakeholder mapping exercise with local councillors and consists of public, private and community sector representatives. The group is facilitated and managed by the County Council's Regeneration Service. The purpose of the group in the first instance is to support and advise on the development of this document for the town, working with local community stakeholders in Bellingham and providing a 'whole town approach'.

Place Partnership Group	Organisation
Cllr John Riddle	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Martin Dickson-Green	Bellingham Parish Council
Cllr Anthony Kirkbride	Bellingham Parish Council
Ben Dickson-Green	North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership
Brian Tilley	Bellingham Town Hall
Steve Gibbon	Bellingham Heritage Centre
Peter Loyd	Churches Together
Duncan Wise	Northumberland National Park Authority



Kielder Water, looking across the dam from Mouseyhaugh

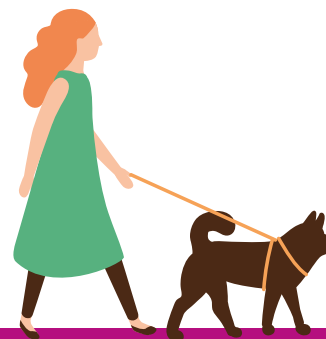


Aerial image of Bellingham

Interventions and investments

Central to the development of the Place Plan are the five core principles underpinning the design and delivery of the wider 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.



Through consultation the community has been pivotal in shaping the Place Plan. Their thoughts and ideas have been central to our strategic objectives and ensure that they align accordingly with all seven Borderlands Place Programme strategic objectives:

Borderlands Place Programme Investment Objectives	Bellingham Place Plan Strategic Objectives
SO1: Empower local communities to imagine and then build a long-term future for the towns they live in.	<p>Working Town - Enhance existing businesses and attract new businesses into Bellingham.</p> <p>Inclusive Town - Support existing employment and deliver quality new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for Bellingham residents.</p> <p>Vibrant Town - Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Bellingham and Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in Bellingham.</p>
SO2: Safeguard existing businesses and attract new businesses to our towns and town centres.	Working Town - Enhance existing businesses and attract new businesses into Bellingham.
SO3: Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in our towns and town centres.	Vibrant Town - Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Bellingham and Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in Bellingham.
SO4: Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation.	Working Town - Enhance existing businesses and attract new businesses into Bellingham.
SO5: Maintain and increase the number of people living in our towns and town centres.	Vibrant Town - Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Bellingham and Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in Bellingham.
SO6: Retain and increase the working age population in towns.	<p>Working Town - Enhance existing businesses and attract new businesses into Bellingham.</p> <p>Inclusive Town - Support existing employment and deliver quality new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for Bellingham residents.</p>
SO7: Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in our towns and town centres.	Vibrant Town - Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Bellingham and Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in Bellingham.

The Place Plan's Key Objectives

The Bellingham Place Partnership Group agreed to prioritise 4 Borderlands Place Programme strategic objectives based upon their experience of the town and feedback from residents, visitors and businesses.

- Enhance existing businesses and attract new businesses into Bellingham.
- Support existing employment and deliver quality new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for Bellingham residents.
- Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Bellingham.
- Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in Bellingham.

These four strategic objectives were then collated to become Working Town, Vibrant Town and Inclusive Town.

These 3 strategic objectives, as applied to Bellingham, and the wider Borderlands Place Programme strategic objectives created the matrix and criteria required to appraise the expressions of interest received from project sponsors. A range of nine critical success factors (CSFs) were used to assess the EOIs.

- Priority investment themes.
- Opportunities and challenges facing the town.
- National and regional strategic / funding objectives.
- Priorities of local people, communities, businesses.
- Additionality to the town's major strategic investments.
- Need for funding and evidence of market failure.

- New and innovative approaches.
- Deliverability.
- Value for money.

Our Place Plan delivers on the Government's economic growth agenda, aimed at tackling geographical disparities across the UK. The Place Plan will help Bellingham to close the prosperity gap with other parts of the UK by creating new, skilled jobs, boosting household incomes, improving public transport connectivity and boosting pride in place, including improved satisfaction with the town centre.

Clean growth is at the heart of our plans, in line with Government net zero carbon reduction goals identified in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, the Energy White Paper, and Sixth Carbon Budget. These plans highlight significant clean energy investment in the coming years (including wind, carbon capture, and hydrogen), quadrupling the UK's offshore wind capacity by 2030, bringing jobs and growth to ports and coastal towns. Our Place Plan demonstrates how Bellingham will play a significant role in the clean growth agenda, attracting new jobs and investment, and supporting the UK's net zero carbon goals.

Covid-19 economic recovery is at the forefront of our investment planning. We will deliver new jobs and education places, creating new opportunities to stimulate economic recovery.

Complementary initiatives – economic development

The following table illustrates several key investments already underway in Bellingham which are linked both directly and indirectly to the proposals received under the core investment themes. It is intended that the projects below will complement and align with the place plan proposals.

Project and Lead Sponsor	Description	How it supports the Place Plan investment themes
Reiver Trails – Northumberland National Park Authority	A partnership between Northumberland National Park Authority, Forestry England and Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust and funded by Northumberland County Council. The project is delivering nine new waymarked cycling and walking routes connecting Hadrian's Wall with Kielder Water & Forest Park. Bellingham Heritage Centre is one of the 'gateway' hubs to the network, and currently being equipped with cycling infrastructure and equipment.	Increasing footfall through improved connectivity.
Hareshaw Linn - Northumberland National Park Authority	A project funded by the Rural Asset Multiplier Pilot programme, which is delivering the following outputs before March 2025: Extension of the Hareshaw Linn Car Park with an additional 14 car park places Installation of 4x EV charging points Installation of bike racks in the Car Park at Hareshaw Lin	Increasing footfall and dwell time.
Active Travel Network Plan – Northumberland National Park Authority	Consultants are being commissioned to produce an Active Travel Network Plan (also known as a Rural Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) for Northumberland National Park, identifying where future investment should be prioritised to enable more people to participate in active travel between four gateway towns, including Bellingham.	Attracting more visitors seeking active leisure opportunities.

Project and Lead Sponsor	Description	How it supports the Place Plan investment themes
Healthy Park, Healthy People - Northumberland National Park Authority	A project funded by the Rural Asset Multiplier Pilot programme, which is to establish and promote Northumberland National Park's role as a Natural Health Service for the communities and people it serves, including Bellingham and its proximity to green space as a key health and wellbeing resource for local communities and visitors.	Attracting more visitors.
Green Pathways to Employment - Northumberland National Park Authority	A project funded by the Rural Asset Multiplier Pilot programme, which will help address the green skills gap by creating entry level green jobs and training opportunities for young people from Bellingham and other communities.	Creating job opportunities for young people.

Building our future

As described earlier in the Vision section, three key themes have been identified and agreed locally which have informed the consideration of potential projects, interventions and investments. As a result, the Place Plan will focus investment on where it is really needed in Bellingham, drawing upon on all of the feedback received at public consultation, throughout the showcase events and recognising the importance of the whole stakeholder engagement process.



Proposal submission process

Proposals were invited through an Expression of Interest process to identify potential projects that would help Bellingham achieve its vision, objectives and investment themes outlined within this Place Plan. It was emphasised that a small number of larger capital projects which would have significant impact on the town were being sought for Borderlands Place Programme funding.

Additionally, projects which were considered to have potential to have a large impact and meet the vision and objectives of the Place Plan, but which were not eligible for Borderlands funding, would be included in the town's place plan and developed separately to the Place Programme process.

Projects were assessed against the criteria on the Project Proposal Proforma, and eligible projects then formed a 'long-list' to be considered by the Bellingham Place Partnership Group for inclusion in the Bellingham Borderlands Place Plan.

The completed Place Plan would then be assessed by the accountable body before being submitted to the Borderlands Place Programme Board.

Project sponsors were reminded that this was a two-stage application process; If the Bellingham Place Plan was endorsed at this first stage by the Borderlands Place Programme Board, officers would work with the sponsor to develop the project further to enable the project proposal to be considered for inclusion in the Borderlands Town Investment Plan (BTIP) for the town. The final BTIP and individual project applications will form the basis of the final application to the Borderlands Programme Board and forms a second stage in the application process. The timeline for Bellingham's EOI process is detailed below.

This Place Plan includes a pipeline of potential schemes to support its delivery and also a prioritised list of potential schemes which, at this stage, may be eligible for Borderlands funding.

Bellingham's EOI timeline



Proposal summary

The following section details the six proposals received throughout the call-out process for expressions of interest to the Borderlands Place Plan. Not all proposals fit strategically with the aims of the Borderlands Place programme however may complement key Borderlands capital investments. On that basis, alternative support and sources of funding will be sought.

This Place Plan has taken a whole of town approach to identifying the key priorities which are important to the creation of a thriving community over the next 10 years – these come in the form of the infrastructure, assets, economic activity, community services and connections needed to sustain and nourish the population, support their aspirations and ensure a cohesive community with a strong sense of civic pride and community spirit. The table below sets out a monitoring framework for the Place Plan, identifying under each theme and strategic objective, the key activities which will be delivered (outputs) to initiate the positive changes and developments (outcomes) we want to bring about in the community, together with some of the key metrics which will be used to evidence the impact of the Plan. These outputs and outcomes are consistent with those detailed within the Borderlands Place Plan Guidance.

However, the guidance recognises that this is not an exhaustive list, and that additional project specific outputs and outcomes may be agreed as appropriate. In addition, as some of the priority projects identified within the Place Plan will not be funded through the Borderlands Place Programme, we have included additional measures where appropriate to capture the potential contribution of projects of this nature. All of these are defined at Place Plan level – however, as part of the management and governance arrangements for the delivery of the Plan, each prioritised project will have its own project specific outputs and outcomes which demonstrate their intended and agreed contribution to these higher-level objectives and against which they will be required to measure and report progress on a regular basis.

Project proposals

Investment Theme One – Vibrant Town

Project Title/ Sponsor Sector	Initiative	Strategic Objectives	Potential outputs/Outcomes
Public Realm and Wayfinding	Improvements to the public realm and way markers.	Vibrant Town	Public realm improved Increased visitor number
Heritage Centre Improvements	Expansion of the Heritage Centre. Additional carriage for Tea on the Train. Facade improvement. Restoration of old signal box.	Vibrant Town Working Town Inclusive Town	Jobs created Increased visitor numbers
Golf Club	Developing sustainable facilities for the whole community through improvements to the club house and ancillary facilities.	Vibrant Town Working Town Inclusive Town	Jobs created

Investment Theme Two – Working Town

Project Title/ Sponsor Sector	Initiative	Strategic Objectives	Potential outputs/Outcomes
Station Yard Redevelopment	Redevelopment of the old Station Yard area into a community asset and business units.	Vibrant Town Working Town Inclusive Town	Business unit floor space created Jobs secured/created

Investment Theme Three – Inclusive Town

Project Title/ Sponsor Sector	Initiative	Strategic Objectives	Potential outputs/Outcomes
Magistrates' Court	Renovation of derelict building to provide affordable business and/or residential units.	Inclusive Town Working Town	Derelict building brought back into use Businesses created Affordable housing provided
Community Wellbeing Centre	Redevelopment of unused parts of the Primary School to provide community wellbeing and leisure services to residents and visitors.	Inclusive Town Vibrant Town	Unused land and buildings utilised Increased visitor numbers

Project Proposals Prioritised for Development Support Towards Borderlands Town Investment Plan (BTIP)

The Place Partnership Group have also considered which of the Place Plan project proposals may be in scope for BTIP development. This is based on available information at this EOI stage in the project development process and considering the following criteria:

- Strategic fit with Place Plan
- Strategic fit with Borderlands eligible activity and key drivers e.g. town centre regeneration
- Value for Money and Deliverability
- Suitability for this funding stream versus other known options in terms of additionality of Borderlands funding.

The proposals in the table below were identified as being those that best fit the criteria at this stage. It is important to note that the final projects to be included in a BTIP may be amended as further project development is undertaken to support the delivery of this Place Plan:

Project Title	Project Description
Station Yard Redevelopment	Redevelopment of the old Station Yard area into a community asset, with support for local businesses.
Gateway to the History and Heritage of the North Tyne and Redesdale	Expansion of the Heritage Centre. Additional carriage for Tea on the Train. Facade improvement. Restoration of old signal box.
Magistrates Court	Renovation of derelict building to provide business units and affordable rental properties.
Community Wellbeing	Redevelopment of unused buildings/land at the Primary School to create a wellbeing centre for residents and visitors.
Public Realm and Way Finding	Improvements to the public realm and way finding.

The proposals in the wider pipeline will be added to the local authority's project pipeline and their development monitored regularly by the PPG. NCC will discuss in liaison with sponsors how project development and delivery can be supported further utilising available resources and funding opportunities.

Performance monitoring

The Bellingham Place Plan has been developed to meet evidenced local needs and a clear baseline has been set to enable monitoring of progress and achievement of outputs, outcomes and other benefits. Any gaps in data or baselines will be progressed during the Borderland Town Investment Plan (BTIP) development process to underpin the prioritised projects and the programme overall.

The lead authority, Northumberland County Council will undertake monitoring of the overall investment programme as outlined in the Place Plan and the subsequent BTIP in conjunction with the Bellingham Place Partnership Group in line with the approach used for other place-based programmes as set out below:

- Demonstrate clearly how the scheme objectives will be achieved including intended changes and demonstrating the links between the interventions and benefits & outcomes within the community.
- Agree the baseline (current context and data both quantitative and qualitative) and progress stages to keep the Place Plan and the BTIP focussed and resources aligned.
- Identify gaps in data, baselines, comparators and collection methodology and create solutions, this will lead to refinement of what will be monitored, why and how.
- Enable accurate reporting generating confidence with funders, setting out monitoring of KPI's and change milestones throughout, supporting dynamic risk management.
- Create clear messages about the outputs and outcomes for a range of audiences to widen understanding about the scope and ambitious impact of the Bellingham Place Plan.
- Assess the additionality of activities (and impacts) and demonstrate VFM.

Once the Borderlands Partnership Board and the Programme Board approve the Bellingham Place Plan, the Place Partnership Group and NCC will be invited to create a Bellingham Borderlands Town Investment Plan. The monitoring and evaluation approach will be a key component of this as it will be fully incorporated into the overarching business case for the Bellingham interventions and the individual projects that will combine to deliver the vision and strategic objectives.

NCC as lead authority will be responsible for monitoring project and programme delivery and reporting to the Borderlands PMO. Grant funding agreements will be issued to individual project sponsors once the BTIP Part 1 has been approved and a BTIP Part 2 for an individual project has been approved, which will incorporate all monitoring and reporting requirements and any special conditions that might apply such as compliance with subsidy control.

Appropriate systems, processes and records will be established to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements such as eligibility, record keeping, document retention, financial output and milestone monitoring and reporting requirements, publicity requirements, subsidy control, procurement and audit purposes.

The Place Partnership Group will receive regular updates on the progress of BTIP projects and provide ongoing community oversight of these and the wider package of interventions that are not Borderlands eligible but continue to meet the vision and investment priorities outlined in this Place Plan.

Management and governance

The Bellingham Place Plan has been developed with the local community and it represents their vision and aspirations for the town. The Place Partnership Group will continue to meet regularly to develop the Town Investment Plan and the prioritised projects and will support the wider pipeline of interventions that may be eligible for a range of other funding.

The remit of the Place Partnership Group will be reviewed regularly to ensure that representation is diverse and inclusive to provide strategic oversight, influence and direction to implementation of the Place Plan. This group is vital as the interventions are shaped to ensure strong community engagement and consultation and to encourage maximum collaboration with project sponsors across the investment themes.

In terms of approvals and assurance, the role of the group is to guide, input to and endorse the projects that are identified as priority for Borderlands funding during the BTIP process from a collective community perspective. The group will provide local endorsement for the final BTIP, which will then require approval from NCC prior to submitting to the Borderlands PMO and being subject to full appraisal.

With the support of NCC the group will fully consider any queries that result from this process and respond through regular meetings to ensuring that the final BTIP is ambitious and deliverable.

Subject to BTIP approval, it is anticipated that the Bellingham Place Partnership Group will become an active champion of the investment plan and support ongoing communication and engagement activities as projects develop using their local connections and collective voice.

There has been significant momentum gained and the group will continue to be supported by council officers with meeting co-ordination, progress reporting and advice for members and project sponsors on external funding opportunities. This will ensure that the

Place Plan has the widest impact possible and will incorporate best practice through the network of Borderlands place programme officers and the Borderlands PMO.

The role of NCC as lead authority is established through guidance from the Borderlands Place Programme and includes formally approving the BTIP for submission to the Borderlands PMO. NCC will implement an internal assurance process prior to submission to ensure the plan is compliant with guidance and the business case for the Bellingham programme and the local package of projects are viable, deliverable and will lead to delivery of the vision, objectives and intended outputs and outcomes.

Once the BTIP is approved and a BTIP Part 2 for an individual project is approved, NCC will be responsible as accountable body for issuing grant funding agreements to individual projects as well as monitoring spend, progress and performance. The council's Economy & Regeneration Service will support co-ordination of the Place Partnership Group keeping them updated with progress.



Appendices

Appendix 1 – Consultation report

This document is also available in an accessible format.

Contact us

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Gingall Gun, Bellingham Town Hall (©AdobeStock)