



Northumberland County Council

Blyth Town Deal Board Meeting

Monday 27 September 2021 10.00

(Microsoft Teams video conference)

Present:

Thom Bradley (TB)	Blyth Community Network
Robin Earl (RE)	Advance Northumberland
Greg Gavin (GG)	Blyth Town Forum
Ian Flintoft (IF)	Blyth Churches Together
Jonathan Gilroy (JG)	BEIS
Helen Golightly (HG)	North East LEP
Rob Hamilton (RH)	North of Tyne Combined Authority
John Hildreth (JH)	Energy Central Steering Group
Rt Hon Ian Levy MP (IL)	Member of Parliament for Blyth Valley Constituency
Matthew Murray (MM)	Tharsus
Cllr Wojciech Ploszaj (WP)	Northumberland County Council
Tony Quinn (TQ) (Chair)	ORE Catapult
Cllr Glen Sanderson (GS)	Northumberland County Council
Wendy Scott (WS)	Blyth Cultural Network
Phil Soderquest (PS)	Blyth Safety Network
Rob Strettle (RS)	Energising Blyth Programme Team
Andrew Thelwell (AT)	Bede Academy (Emmanuel Teaching School Alliance)

In Attendance:

Karen Donaldson (KD)	Project Manager, NCC
Carol Johns-McLeod (CJM)	Regeneration Programmes Investment Manager, NCC
Neil Quinn (NQ)	Senior Programme Officer, NCC
Helen Swinburn (HS)	Administration Assistant, NCC
Peter Graham (PG)	Managing Director, New Skills Consulting
Jan Willis (JW)	Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), Northumberland County Council
Lara Baker (LB)	Advance Northumberland

Notes of discussion:

<p>1</p>	<p>Apologies for absence Alan Ferguson (AF), Fergusons Transport Martin Lawlor (ML), Port of Blyth Cllr Kath Nisbet (KN), Northumberland County Council Rick O’Farrell (RO), Northumberland County Council Jane Robinson (JR), Newcastle University Cllr Richard Wearmouth (RW), Northumberland County Council</p> <p>TQ, Vice Chair chaired the meeting in AF absence.</p>	<p>Action:</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Declarations of Interest RS confirmed NCC are waiting for documents from Julia Smith, DWP.</p> <p>RE declared that Advance Northumberland have an interest in the NEP 1 project as a beneficiary of the project.</p>	<p>JS / RS</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Minutes of the last meeting These were accepted as true record.</p> <p>Actions from the last meeting are covered under today’s agenda.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Town Deal Project Confirmation Stage RS gave a recap of the background and update on this stage setting out the recommended final project confirmation to Government. This includes the removal of the Town Centre Living project from the Town Deal programme at this stage as set out in the report. RS explained that Town Centre Living remains an important part of the Town Investment Plan and to the regeneration and future of the town.</p> <p>PG gave an update on the revised projects and total funding and asked the Board to approve the remaining 7 projects for inclusion in the Project Confirmation submission.</p> <p>Members commented that they were supportive of the programme and proposed strategy and that it will be important to revisit town centre living as part of future discussions.</p> <p>AT – the ECC budget amendments noted in the report, are we confident there will be no further growth in costs? He also queried when Board members will see the adjustments to the plans made? PG explained that ECC is one of the first projects and whilst we can’t say for certain there will be no further budget changes the current profile does reflect a new updated cost estimate identifying any significant changes anticipated at this stage, including building cost inflation, which we hope is temporary and will ease.</p>	

	<p>Regarding the design plans for the project, we expect the business case work to start in October with stakeholder workshops so they will be available then.</p> <p>IF - have we given some thought to Town Centre Living not going ahead through Town Deal and what it does to the shape of the programme as a whole and how will MHCLG respond? RS – we are aiming to gradually introduce different types of uses into the town centre to build confidence in the area. Town Centre Living was identified as being above shops and we are looking at potential sites and uses generally as well as the need to build market confidence in the centre as a place to invest in, so it is sensible for town centre living projects to be considered at a later stage in the programme.</p> <p>MHCLG have said we can redistribute funds across the agreed projects until 5th October. JG confirmed that funds can be distributed as per the Heads of Terms and added that the Town Centre Living was a project that did have conditions attached to it. PG added that as part of the review we looked at outcomes and Town Centre Living has the least impact on outcomes.</p> <p>The Board were asked to endorse the approach and recommendations as set out in the report (listed verbally):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegate the final preparation and approval of the Project Confirmation stage submission to the Town Deal Board Chair in liaison with the Council’s Executive Director of Regeneration and the Section 151 Officer, to be returned to MHCLG by 5th October 2021. • Note that Town Centre Living will be retained as a thematic priority for future NCC EB Programme funding. The Town Deal funding no longer required by the Town Centre Living Project will contribute towards the required saving needed to deliver the Programme within the £20.9m Town Deal offer. This means that the funding gap in the programme is resolved. • Note that NCC capital programme allocations are subject to endorsement in the Medium Term Financial Plan later this year. <p>Board members agreed to all of the recommendations.</p>	<p>RS</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Town Deal Fast Track Process: Battleship Wharf/ NEP 1 Infrastructure Project</p> <p>RS outlined the report providing a summary of the project. The Northumberland Energy Park (NEP1) and Battleship Wharf project is one of the eight projects included in the recent Town Deal Heads of Terms offer, issued by MHCLG to NCC and the Town Deal Board in July 2021. Town Deal funding has been earmarked by MHCLG for the project.</p>	

	<p>There is an opportunity to fast track the project, in accordance with the council's assurance process and meeting Town Deal requirements. The report seeks endorsement of this approach to fast track the project and agree that in October an appraisal report and recommendations on the project business case will come back to Board for approval. The benefits of this approach are outlined in the report.</p> <p>RE – noted the importance of the intersection with the existing NEP 1 project and the need to take that into account when planning and procuring going forward. Andrew Lovatt in Advance is the contact for this. RS – updated that NEP1 delivery has been taken account of in the project information received to date and that NCC will liaise with Andrew and share the information to date on early spend and match funding which particularly focuses on Battleship Wharf and de-risks NEP1 and the current works.</p> <p>RE - who will be the accountable body for this scheme? RS – Port of Blyth.</p> <p>RH – updated that this project was considered at the North of Tyne Combined Authority Cabinet and it is strongly supported overall with match funding now confirmed to the project applicant.</p> <p>TQ – confirmed that RS has previously advised that NCC have sought advice from MHCLG regarding fast tracking the project and it has been discussed with JW. JW confirmed this was the case.</p> <p>The Blyth Town Deal Board was asked to endorse the recommendations as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To agree the ‘fast tracking’ of this project as outlined. • A report seeking final approval of the Outline Business Case will then be provided at the next meeting of the Town Deal Board in October 2021 as noted above. <p>Board members agreed the recommendations.</p>	RS
6	<p>Accelerated Town Deal: Northern Gateway Phase 1 project update</p> <p>RS outlined that the report circulated provides an update for information on the cost and delivery of the project. The project is ready to progress to delivery in Winter 2021/22 and communication and engagement is being planned in advance of this.</p> <p>IL – emails are received regularly around Bowes St from the public and retailers, any engagement with them would be welcomed to reassure them. RS updated that a small number of complaints (3) had been received to date by NCC and responded to and that this would continue to be monitored. NCC has encouraged stakeholders to provide NCC contact details regarding the scheme should they receive any enquiries.</p>	

<p>7</p>	<p>Programme Governance & Assurance Framework</p> <p>JW introduced herself as the NCC Section 151 Officer who will provide sign off and assurance to MHCLG to ensure we are delivering the agreed outputs and value for money with contractors and the programme.</p> <p>The draft Framework was circulated prior to the meeting and PG gave an overview. The framework has been reviewed by ARUP and agreed by NCC EB Programme Board and endorsement is sought from Town Deal Board today.</p> <p>TQ – the relationship with the Energising Blyth Programme Board and the Town Deal Board is important and their responsibilities outlined in the slide is different. What is the process to reconcile any differences between the Energising Blyth and Town Deal Boards should they arise? PG – at every step both Boards see the same information so there are parallel discussions taking place. As the accountable body NCC need to be happy to sign off any final decisions, and for funding to be released, the accountable body and Town Deal Board both have to agree. JW - how we work together, comms, early visibility of any issues so we can head them off, etc, are crucial. My role is facilitator as well as formal assurance and as the Section 151 Officer will support the partnership in making decisions.</p> <p>LB - Stages 0 - 4 there will be expenditure on design teams, etc. How is the funding released for that and what level of comfort is needed at each stage? PG - OBC stage will give assurance to project sponsors that we will proceed subject to risks and issues. We have discussed with MHCLG how initial funding can be released to be used for design teams and other development costs. We are in conversation with the accountable body and MHCLG identify how to support this. LB – the scale and timelines, we need work in parallel for deliverability, this needs consideration. JW – We will be issued with 5% up front Town Deal funding and NCC is in discussion with MHCLG and other Section 151 Officers involved with Town Deal to clarify how upfront costs can be supported. I will share when information comes through.</p> <p>TQ – NEP 1 has passed Stage 0 and 1 given the scheme’s detailed work to MHCLG. Is this not the case for all the business cases or are they all starting at 0? PG - all the material used in the TIP goes towards the OBC so we can hopefully move to that stage quickly.</p> <p>TQ – this is a comprehensive process but we must remain agile throughout to ensure decisions are efficient and effective to minimise delays.</p> <p>TQ - are the Board happy to endorse the framework? Board members agreed.</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Energising Blyth Programme Workstream Update</p>	

Culture – update given on the Culture Centre feasibility study; Culture Centre, Market Place and The Link Design Team procurement; Culture and Placemaking Programme; and the Culture Pilots.

Strategic Sites and Commercial Development – update given on Strategic Sites Study; Town Centre Design Guide and updated visuals.

Transport and Infrastructure – update given on Transport Study; Northern Gateway Phase 2, The Link and Bebside corridor projects.

Energy Central – update given on Energy Central Campus; NEP 1 Battleship Wharf project; Bearing Technology Centre.

Recruitment – Programme Manager Lara Baker starts on 11 October and the other 3 posts have been approved and will be advertised.

Comms – a draft plan is being prepared and we will have external comms to support the programme.

Business Case Support – business case specialists have been appointed and support will be assigned to projects.

Town Deal Board Forward Plan

22/10:

- NEP 1 / Battleship Wharf fast track Business Case appraisal and recommendations - for decision
- Energising Blyth Delivery Programme Overview
- Culture and Placemaking Programme Pilot Projects
- Business Case Development Plan
- Communications and Engagement Plan
- Governance update

24/11:

- Programme update
- Strategic Outline Business Case Presentation
- Town Centre Strategic Sites and Design
- Culture theme focus
 - Culture Centre Feasibility Study, Business Plan and Design process
 - Culture and Placemaking Programme
 - Culture and Placemaking Programme Pilots
 - Aligned and complementary projects e.g Shaping Places for Healthier Lives
 - Governance update

26/01:

- Programme Update

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Outline Business Case Presentation• Energy Central theme focus<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Energy Central Campus Phase 1 and 2 - focus on phase 1 prior to BC coming through in Spring 2022.• OREC Bearing Technology Centre• Update on NEP 1 / Battleship Wharf• Wider strategic update related to Energy Central	
9	Any Other Business TQ - thank you for attendance and contribution to the meeting. There was no other business.	
10	Date and time of next meeting: Friday 22nd October 2021, 10.30am	