



# Blyth Town Board Terms of Reference

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## 1. Background

The Blyth Town Deal Board, established as part of the Town Deal process evolved to become the Blyth Town Board from April 2024 in order to continue to support the existing delivery of the Town Investment Plan and oversee the development of the Long-Term Plan for Blyth based on guidance issued by UK Government.

This Terms of Reference document reflects the governance requirements as set out in the Long-Term Plan for Towns [Guidance for Local Authorities and Town Boards](#). This document should be read alongside the Blyth Town Board **Code of Conduct**..

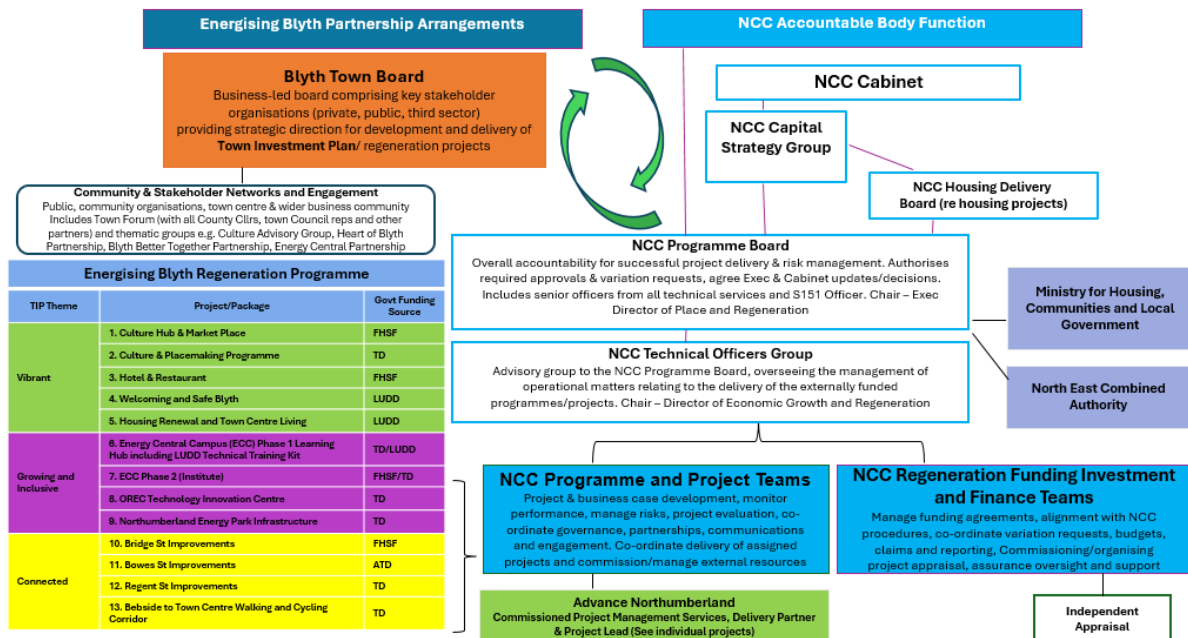
While the local authority remains the accountable body for funding and executing plans, Town Boards are a key advisory body bringing leaders from the private, public and community sectors together responsible for developing a Long-Term Plan for the town, working closely with local people.

The core role of the Blyth Town Board is therefore to act as a partnership vehicle to grow, renew and connect the town, and through collective action champion the town providing leadership and advice to support the delivery of the Towns Investment Plan. The Board will oversee the Town Investment Plan providing a ten-year vision and strategy for the town. This Long-Term Plan, includes a vision and a three-year Investment Plan. The Plan sets out the ambition of the partnership for the future, commitments related to delivery including the use of Long Term Plan for Towns funding alongside and in the context of building on the existing Energising Blyth programme and other major interventions to improve the town.

The Town Investment Plan, and plans for its implementation is a long term process which can be reviewed, refreshed and signed off by the Board, to respond to government guidance and any timescales required.

The Energising Blyth Governance Organogram is shown below:

Energising Blyth Governance Diagram Oct 2024



## 1.1 Board Responsibilities

- Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life ([the Nolan Principles](#)) and ensuring the operations of the Town Board are transparent.
- Developing and agreeing an evidence-based long term Town Investment Plan - establishing a clear programme of interventions.
- Fostering Partnership working, collaboration, co-ordinating resources and engaging stakeholders.
- Ensuring communities' voices are involved in shaping design and decision making throughout the development and delivery of the Town Investment Plan and the associated Energising Blyth programme's development and delivery stages.
- Ensuring diversity in its engagement with local communities and support the development of business cases, bids and case making to support delivery of the Town Investment Plan where required.
- Oversee the existing Energising Blyth Programme's development and delivery including specific roles in relation to specific funded elements as indicated by UK Government guidance, alongside development of the Long Term Plan ensuring

compliance with specific Heads of Terms Agreement with UK Government where applicable.

## **1.2 Board Functions**

In carrying out its responsibilities Board members will have due regard to the following:

- Acting solely in the public interest in line with the Nolan principles; making decisions purely on merit, in accordance with agreed processes and acting with regularity and propriety in regard to the management of public money.
- Keeping records which demonstrate that the Board meets all legal obligations and compliance requirements placed on it ensuring these are published on the Lead Council's website.
- Actively cooperating with stakeholders. This involves engaging deliberately and constructively with the private sector and public sector including national and local partners such as: Government Departments, third sector representatives, community interest groups, education institutions in order to develop and deliver the long term Town Investment Plan.
- The Board will oversee the publication, on the Lead Authority's website, of key documentation and communication source making sure that it is:
  - Prominent, accessible and easy to navigate.
  - Updated regularly to ensure that information remains current.
  - Repository of information on the Town Board meetings within required timescales (including minutes of meetings and decision logs).
- An interface that caters to the public, interested parties.
- The Town Board will normally meet quarterly and oversee that the County Council publish papers in line with the latest UK Government guidance.
- The Town Board will follow the Lead Council's governance and finance arrangements when considering private reports including any issues of commercial confidentiality, with the default position being that all papers are open to the public.
- The Board will be responsible for making recommendations to the Lead Council with respect to the Town Investment Plan projects, programmes and allocation of funding where specified in Guidance including the Long Term Plan for Towns.
- Procure support and delivery services in line with the Lead Council's procurement procedures.
- Oversee the progression of the overall programme as it moves into project delivery. Receive, acknowledge and discuss regular project progress updates as part of the overall monitoring process.
- Work closely with the Lead Council to develop the ongoing engagement and communications plans

- The Chair of the Town Board will continue to receive and sign off performance reports prior to submission to UK Government where required by Government Guidance.

### **1.3 Blyth Town Investment Plan Geographical Area**

The Blyth Town Investment Plan Eligibility Map has been updated and agreed by UK Government as part of the submission of the Long Term Plan for Towns process in Spring 2024. The updated map is at Appendix 1. This covers the eligible geography within which LTPFT funded activity can take place.

## **2. Northumberland County Council (the Lead Council)**

### **2.1 Role of Northumberland County Council**

The Town Board will act in an advisory capacity to the Lead Council (Northumberland County Council).

### **2.2 Responsibilities of the Lead Council**

- Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).
- Manage the Town Investment Plan and the 'Energising Blyth' programme - its delivery team, delivery arrangements and related agreements.
- Ensure that decisions are made by the board in accordance with good governance principles.
- Ensure transparency requirements are met – through publication of information on their website.
- Develop agreed projects in detail and undertaking any necessary feasibility studies.
- Undertake any required Environmental Impact Assessments or Public Sector Equalities Duties and embed arrangements in local plans where appropriate
- Develop business cases where necessary.
- Liaise with potential private investors in identified local projects and schemes.
- Sign the Head of Terms Agreement with UK Government.
- Monitor and evaluate the delivery of individual Long Term Plan for Towns projects.
- Submit regular monitoring reports where required.
- Receive and account for funded elements of the delivery Programme including Future High Streets Fund, Town Deal, Deep Dive, Long Term Plan for Towns allocations and any match funding contributions that may apply.
- Keep a record of actions taken in response to any declared interest.

### **2.3 Northumberland County Council Policy Alignment**

Blyth Town Board is convened by NCC as the Lead Council, who make the governance structure and decision-making structures available to the public online on its website.

As set out in the Council's Assurance Framework it will be aligned with the governance standards and policies of Northumberland County Council including those around whistle blowing, conflicts of interest, complaints and compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

- *Complaints Policy* - Complaints received from stakeholders and members of the public will be considered and responded to, in line with the Northumberland County Council's complaints procedure.
- *Whistleblowing* - Where it is alleged that the Board is acting in breach of the law or failing to safeguard public funds the whistleblowing procedure of Northumberland County Council will be applied.
- *Data Protection* - To ensure the highest standards when collecting and using personal information, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy and procedure of Northumberland County Council will be applied in all cases.
- *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* - The Board is fully committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of its work. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out, as appropriate, when developing plans, policies and projects.
- *Freedom of Information (FOI)* - All Freedom of Information requests will be dealt with in accordance with the Lead Council's policy and procedure.
- *Gifts and hospitality* - A register of gifts and/or hospitality provided to individual Town Board members or the Town Board as a whole must be maintained by the Lead Council. Board members have a responsibility for reporting gifts or hospitality received whilst delivering their role so that they can be recorded on the register held by the council.

## 2.4 Assurance

The Blyth Town Board is supported by Northumberland County Council in its role as accountable body underpinned by the Council's Assurance Framework. The Council's internal Programme Board offers support and advice to the Town Board on all processes, governance and project delivery across the Energising Blyth Programme including Town Deal and the Long Term Plan for Towns development where the Town Board plays a specific role.

## 2.5 Support and admin arrangements

Support is provided to Blyth Town Board by the Lead Council; Northumberland County Council who act as the accountable body for funding and executing plans.

As the Accountable Body, it provides a secretariat function which involves organising meetings, preparing and circulating agendas and producing minutes.

All Board Papers shall be published in advance of the meeting within 5 working days.

Minutes and Decision Logs will be published on the Council's website unless it is agreed by the Chair that these items are of a confidential nature and need to be dealt with away from the public domain in line with the Lead Councils policies as stated above.

## **2.6 Transparency**

In line with the principles of public life, the operations of the Blyth Town Board must be transparent.

The Blyth Town Board should publish membership and governance arrangements (including minutes of meetings and decision logs) on the Lead Council's website.

Commercially sensitive or personal information is removed before publication.

The following will be published on the Northumberland County Council's Energising Blyth Town Board web page in line with government guidance:

- Minutes and a decision log.
- A documented decision-making process outlining the voting rights of the Board.
- Profiles of Board Members. Board membership is refreshed every two years.
- All Board papers in advance of the meeting (within 5 working days).
- Draft minutes of meetings following the meeting (within 10 working days).
- Final minutes, once approved by the Board (within 10 working days).
- Any conflicts of interest reported are formally noted within the published minutes, along with actions taken as a consequence of the declaration (such as absenting the meeting and/or decision making process).
- Publish this Blyth Town Board's governance structure and ways of working including it's statement for how the board will engage stakeholders and agree decisions over time (this document).

## **3. Membership**

### **3.1 Membership of the Town Board**

Membership of the original Blyth Town Board has been reviewed and further developed by the accountable body, Northumberland County Council, in line with the government's Town Deal and the Long Term Plan for Towns [Guidance](#). Membership encompasses wide representation across town and will continue to drive forward a community-led vision for change. This was agreed in Spring 2024 by UK Government.

A full list of those organisations and individuals included on the Blyth Town Board are listed in Appendix 2. This has been refreshed in line with the Long Term Plan for Towns guidance.

Membership is by invitation only.



### **3.2 Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest**

Conduct of the Board shall be by the usual conventions of public authorities. All members must adhere to the Blyth Town Board Code of Conduct.

Each Board Member is under an obligation to act in accordance with the Town Board governing documents. This includes each Board Member signing up to abide by the Nolan Principles of public life.

Conflicts of interest may arise where an individual's personal, family, business or organisations interests and/or loyalties conflict with those of the group or meeting that Board members are attending.

Northumberland County Council provides guidance on:

- The financial and non-financial interests individuals must declare.
- The process Town Board Members must follow for declaring interests.
- The process for requesting an exemption.

Town Board Members are responsible for declaring their interests before the Town Board considers any decisions. Northumberland County Council record:

- Actions taken in response to any declared interest.
- Any gifts or hospitality given to the Town Board or individual Members.

### **3.3 Period of Membership**

Membership of the Board will be for an initial two year period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

Members are eligible for reappointment in subsequent terms.

All members of the Board will be appointed or re-appointed at the next meeting after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 and subsequently every two years.

### **3.4 Amendments to Board Membership**

The accountable body may propose amendments to board membership at any time:

- To ensure that representation is maintained in line with UK Government guidance throughout the scheme.
- To best support the evolving nature of the programme, provided the core membership remains in line with government guidance.
- The decision to appoint or alter the membership of the Board rests with the Lead Council.



### **3.5 Attendance of meetings**

Only named Board Members may attend the meetings as a 'board member' unless a replacement is previously agreed in writing with the accountable body's board administrator and chair.

Board members may not attend a board meeting, nor vote on board matters unless they have first completed and submitted a declaration of interest form.

The accountable body may remove a board member who is deemed not to have declared a registrable interest.

External Advisors from Northumberland County Council, UK Government Cities and Local Growth Unit, Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and elsewhere as required will be invited to attend meetings but will not have a vote.

## **4. Chair and Vice Chair**

### **4.1 Nomination and election**

As per the guidance, Northumberland County Council as the Lead Council, nominated a Chair for the Blyth Town Board and this was ratified by the Blyth Town Board.

The Board may nominate and elect three vice chairs from its board membership; one from the private sector, one from the public sector and one from the community sector.

### **4.2 Term of Office**

All posts will be reviewed every two years or at the request of the post holder.

A post holder is eligible for re-election in subsequent terms.

### **4.3 Casting Vote**

The Chair has a casting vote in the instance of a hung vote of the board.

If the Chair of the meeting has a conflict of interest in a matter to be voted on in the meeting, the vice chair(s) in attendance will take on the role of determining the casting vote.

### **4.4 Responsibilities of the Town Board Chair**

- *Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).*
- *Leading the Board in achieving its objectives and maintaining an overview of activity and championing and supporting partnership working.*
- *Ensuring the Blyth Town Board is community-led and embedded within the local area.*
- *Act as a champion for the town and provide leadership to the Blyth Town Board*

- *Ensuring that decisions are made by the Board in accordance with good governance principles.*
- *Signing the Head of Terms Agreement with Government.*
- *Receiving and signing off monitoring returns to MHCLG in conjunction with the NCC Section 151 Officer.*

## **5. Committees and Subcommittees**

The Blyth Town Board may establish committees and subcommittees in the course of its work.

Each committee and subcommittee must adhere to all of the same principles as the main board, with published papers, agendas and minutes available on the Energising Blyth Town Deal web page.

All committees and subcommittees must report in full to the main board at its next meeting.

## **6. Meetings**

### **6.1 Frequency of meetings**

The Board will normally meet at least quarterly.

A forward programme of scheduled meetings will be established which will be supplemented, as necessary, with meetings convened with the agreement of the Chair of the Board.

### **6.2 Non-member attendance of meetings**

In consultation and with the agreement of the Chair and Lead Council, members of the Board may nominate substitutes to attend to provide the same nominated group or organisations Board membership they provide if they are not able to attend a meeting.

In consultation and with the agreement of the Chair and Lead Council, Board members may invite colleagues to Board meetings to observe and provide technical support, as required. Colleagues and observers do not have voting rights.

The Board secretariat provided by the Regeneration Service and other NCC officers not in a Board member role attend the Board to support depending on the agenda and in the Council's role as accountable body, however those officers do not have a vote.

Other Officers, representatives and external consultants as advised by the Lead Council may be required to attend to provide updates on projects or support the work of the Board or an item under discussion but do not have a vote.

### **6.3 Meeting Papers**

All Board papers will be circulated, electronically, to Board members 5 days before a meeting.

### **6.4 Quorum**

The quorum for any meeting of the Board shall be 25% of its membership or ten members, whichever is the greatest, including the Chair.

The quorum must include at least one Board member representative from the Lead Council accountable body.

### **6.5 Chairing the Meeting**

Meetings will be chaired by the accountable body nominated Chair.

In the absence of the Chair, the meeting will be chaired by one of the three Vice Chairs (Private, Public and Community Sector Vice Chairs), on rotation.

In the absence of a Chair and Vice Chairs, members of the meeting will elect a meeting chair from their number.

### **6.6 Decision Making**

The Blyth Town Board acts in an advisory capacity to Northumberland County Council which is the Lead Council and accountable body for the Energising Blyth Programme.

Within the context of determining this advice to the Accountable Body (NCC), the Board members may from time to time be called upon to make decisions.

Decisions may be made by consensus.

Where a consensus view cannot be reached, decisions will be made on a 'one member, one vote' premise. Voting shall be by a show of hands of Board members and shall be by simple majority.

All board members will be required to adhere to the Code of Conduct Policy including its Conflict of Interest clauses whilst voting.

All decisions, whether consensus or voted, are minuted and all minutes are published on the Northumberland County Council's Energising Blyth Town Deal web page; unless an item/s are deemed to be commercially sensitive or confidential, in which case they will not be published in line with council procedures.

If a member is unable to attend the meeting, they may send a named representative of the same representative role or organisation by prior agreement with the chair, who may vote in their stead.

In the situation of a hung vote, the chair of the meeting will have a casting vote.

If the chair has a declared interest in the vote then the vice chair (s) in attendance will take on the role of determining the casting vote.

The Board may take decisions off line as appropriate, as agreed by the chair of the Board.

The rulings of the Chair shall be final.

## **7. Engagement with the Community**

It is intended that the broad membership of the Blyth Town Board will bring about strong engagement with the business, community and public sectors of the community of Blyth and its wider stakeholders.

A number of successful pre-existing and emerging partnerships exist in the town. The Blyth Town Board works in close partnership with existing networks through its diverse board membership.

The work of the Board is subject, on occasion to consultation or engagement more widely with the community. For example this could relate to a refresh of the Town Investment Plan or on a project by project basis as part of the programme of interventions to support it delivery.

The Blyth Town Board, where appropriate, will also engage with the following:

- Local sports teams.
- Housing sector including housing developers and housing associations.
- Arms-length bodies and other non-departmental government agencies: such as Homes England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England who have expertise in delivering interventions, and existing place-based networks across the country, which can bring local expertise, as well as the ability to engage with issues at a regional level.
- Other private investors and developers: national or international private investors and developers will be engaged early to understand their requirements for investment and identify the best use of public and private funding.
- As the delivery of the Town Investment Plan and Energising Blyth programme develops - NCC will ensure residents, businesses and all interested groups are kept up to date with the work being undertaken through the programme.



Funded by  
UK Government



Northumberland  
County Council

**NE** North East  
Combined  
Authority



## Appendix 1 - Boundary Map

The ONS boundary of Blyth covers most of Blyth's existing built up area geography and settlement boundary. The Long Term Plan for Blyth boundary was agreed by UK Government in March 2024 and includes the ONS boundary of Blyth plus the following:

- Northumberland Energy Park, a strategic economic development site to the North of the town across the River Blyth. This land is part of Blyth's energy sector focused development and is part of the nationally designated Enterprise Zone in Blyth.
- Area to the South of Blyth encompassing South Beach and Newsham, including the Northumberland line.
- Area to the West of Blyth identifying additional area impacted by the strategic transport sites of the Northumberland Line and Blyth relief road.



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## Appendix 2 - Summary of Board Membership

Organisation / Representative of	Name
Advance Northumberland	Steven Harrison
Bede Academy	Andrew Thelwell
Blyth Churches Together	Rev Ian Flintoft
Blyth Valley Community Voluntary Action	Thom Bradley
Blyth Town Council	Cllr Warren Taylor
Blyth Town Council	Cllr Kath Nisbet
Fergusons Transport	Alan Ferguson (Chair)
Jobcentre Plus	Lesleyanne Cassie
Blyth and Ashington Constituency MP	Ian Lavery
Newcastle College	Jon Ridley
Newcastle University	Jane Robinson
North East Combined Authority	Heather Orton
Northumberland County Council County Councillor	Cllr Richard Wearmouth (Vice Chair)
Northumberland County Council County Councillor	Cllr Wojciech Ploszaj
ORE Catapult	Tony Quinn (Vice Chair)
Port of Blyth	Martin Lawlor
Tharsus	TBC
Leisure	People and Places (Countywide Leisure Provider) TBC
Director of Economic Development and Growth, Northumberland County Council	Sarah McMillan
Executive Director of Finance, Northumberland County Council	Jan Willis
Office of Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner	Steven Hume
Small Business Representative	Mags Margetts
Property / Landlord Representative	TBC
Health Representative	Dr Jonathan Oust
Community Representative	Dale Cartie
Community Representative	Sharon Fawcett
Community Representative	Claire Young
Culture Advisory Group	Fran Castle
Culture Advisory Group	Clive Gray