



Blyth Town Deal Board Meeting

Wednesday 13 January 15.00
(Microsoft Teams video conference)

Present:

Alan Ferguson (AF)	Chair: Fergusons Transport
Thom Bradley (TB)	Blyth Community Network
Margaret Coates (MC)	BEIS
Ken Dunbar (KD)	Advance Northumberland
Ian Flintoft (IF)	Blyth Churches Together
Greg Gavin (GG)	Blyth Town Forum
Jonathan Gilroy (JG)	BEIS
Ray Browning for Helen Golightly	North East LEP
Trevor Gyllenspetz (TG)	Northumberland Estates
Rob Hamilton (RH)	North of Tyne Combined Authority
John Hildreth (JH)	Energy Central Steering Group
Martin Lawlor (ML)	Port of Blyth
Rt Hon Ian Levy MP (IL)	Member of Parliament for Blyth Valley constituency
Juliemma McLoughlin (JM)	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Kath Nisbet (KN)	Northumberland County Council
Vicky Potter (VP)	Jobcentre Plus
Tony Quinn (TQ)	ORE Catapult
Jane Robinson (JR)	Newcastle University
Wendy Scott (WS)	Blyth Cultural Network
Phil Soderquest (PS)	Blyth Safety Network
Rob Strettle (RS)	Northumberland County Council
Warren Taylor (WT)	Blyth Town Council
Lee Tennant (LT)	Newcastle College
Andrew Thelwell (AT)	Bede Academy (Emmanuel Teaching School Alliance)
Jonathan Walker (JW)	North East Chamber of Commerce
Cllr Richard Wearmouth (RW)	Northumberland County Council

In Attendance:

Karen Donaldson (KD)	NCC
Helyn Douglas (HD)	NCC
Anne Lawson (AL)	NCC
Elaine Maylin (EM)	NCC
Helen Swinburn (HS)	NCC
Peter Graham (PG)	New Skills Consulting

Notes of discussion:

1	<p>Apologies for absence Cllr Glen Sanderson, Northumberland County Council Matthew Murray, Tharsus</p>	Action:
2	<p>Declarations of Interest AL confirmed that all Board member declaration of interest forms have been submitted.</p> <p>The projects and sponsors are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTD1 - Blyth Bebside to Town Centre Connectivity - NCC • BTD2 - Blyth Town Centre Northern Gateway (Phase 2) - NCC • BTD3 - Energy Central Campus (Phases 1 & 2) – Advance Northumberland & NCC • BTD4 - Northumberland Energy Park (Phase 1) and Battleship Wharf – Port of Blyth • BTD5 - Bearing Technology Innovation Centre – ORE Catapult • BTD6 - Energising Blyth: Culture & Placemaking Programme - NCC • BTD7 - Blyth Town Centre Living – Advance Northumberland <p>New members Ian Flintoft and Jonathan Walker were welcomed to the meeting.</p>	
3	<p>Minutes of the last meeting WT - item 7 on cultural events, NCC should read BTC. HS to amend.</p> <p>With the exception of the amendment above, the minutes were accepted as a true record.</p>	HS
4	<p>Future High Street Fund (FHSF) RS provided the following update:</p> <p>There was an announcement over Christmas that we have been awarded £11.121m from Government to deliver FHSF in Blyth and we were fortunate enough to get what we asked for regarding our preferred option. FHSF Funding will be delivered during 2021-24 with the full delivery programme supported by significant NCC match funding beyond this period. The majority of the funds will support delivery of the new Creative Culture Space and revitalised Market Place. In total the programme will support 4 projects – Creative Culture Space and reconfigured marketplace, the Laurel Hotel and restaurant, Energy Campus Phase 2 (referred to in last year's application as Energy Central Institute), and the Link cycling and walking connectivity project along Bridge Street. The award supports the priorities set out in the TIP focusing on Town Centre Renewal and provides the rationale for the focus of intervention through the TIP adding value to FHSF support. The programme will be a driver for</p>	

	<p>activities to be undertaken to help the town centre come back to life and support growth overall.</p> <p>Over the next few months, a detailed implementation programme will be established with an implementation plan, staffing and back-office work such as commissioning of studies, etc. The work over the first 6-9months will concentrate on studies to inform project development site acquisition and development, engagement, discussion on the projects and how they will be delivered with on the ground delivery to follow. A substantive update will be provided at the February Board to outline the Programme Plan.</p> <p>RS reiterated his thanks to all those involved in preparing and supporting the application for the massive effort to pull the programme together, the partnership working on the application has been excellent. This was seconded by AF.</p> <p>IL queried if there are any delays in the delivery timescale because of Covid as people are still working from home? RS replied that we are continuing to develop the projects and the programme via Teams, etc, so no there is no delay from that perspective. The programme risk assessment includes consideration of the potential impact of Covid 19 on all phases of the programme and this will be mitigated as much as possible as the programme moves to implementation phase. This will be carefully monitored given the dynamic environment in relation to the current pandemic.</p>	
5	<p>Northern Gateway (Phase One) AL provided the following update:</p> <p>We have £750k Accelerated Town Deal Fund awarded last year, £18.5k from BTC, £95k from LTP plus the positive announcement of an increased allocation of £455k from NCC which means we can now deliver connectivity and public realm improvements to Church Street and Wanley Street linking to Bowes Street within the same project which will make that whole section better connected. Timescales, the £750k needs to be spent and visually active by the end of this financial year. We are carrying out surveys now as well as tendering work for materials, an architect, etc. It will be mid-February before there are 'spades in the ground' and the work is likely to last for approximately 6 months.</p>	
6	<p>Consultation on Projects AL – shared her report on screen with the Board.</p> <p>203 respondents - 42% Male, 58% Female, the majority of which were aged between 25 – 54, 95% were residents who responded and 89% were supportive overall of the projects. Different people responded as</p>	

	<p>65.5% said they did not respond to the October survey. 95 written comments were also received.</p> <p>BTD1 - Blyth Bebside to Town Centre Connectivity & BTD7 - Town Centre Living, received a lower positive response than the others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTD1; main concern raised was around the potential for additional congestion along Cowpen Road. This has been fed back to the project sponsor. • BTD7; there are concerns that the housing will be HMO and around Anti-Social Behaviour. These pre-conceptions will need to be tackled in both the delivery of high-quality housing and how we promote this project. <p>Other topics raised in the written comments included Retail, the Blyth Relief Road, FHSF Projects and the Cambois River crossing.</p> <p>RS – the TIP operates at 2 levels:</p> <p>1) TIP Submission - The ARUP feedback given on the TIP Strategy and programme development was around the cyclical engagement being excellent plus the linkage the Board has within the community. 92% positive consultation feedback on vision and objectives, and 89% from this consultation on the projects helps demonstrate that for the TIP submission.</p> <p>2) Project Development – post submission of the TIP the detailed project level comments are important and valuable and will form part of the business case stage of the deal that will respond specifically to those comments. AF endorsed this view and re-iterated how keen he is that we take on board the comments received where possible to show we are listening.</p> <p>IL added regarding the Cambois area connectivity, he is working with Britishvolt, who he is supportive of as they will increase jobs in the area and are working reducing the carbon footprint and would like explore options to connect the site to the town effectively in future involving a range of modes and route enhancement options. IL explained he had also had a first conversation with ML about this. ML commented he was keen to explore a range of options and would speak further with IL. AF commented that this could have a major impact on the town and recommended that this should all be considered to ensure easy connectivity for the community of Blyth with the employment opportunities on Northumberland Energy Park.</p>	
7	<p>Town Deal Investment Plan (TIP)</p> <p>PG gave a brief update. The deadline is 29 January to have the TIP to MHCLG. Since the TIP was last discussed on 02 December there has been significant work undertaken - Board comments have been included and 2 sessions with ARUP: 1) check and challenge - this was very</p>	

	<p>positive, the compelling vision came across well and 2) clean growth – this session captured the potential and uniqueness of Blyth. The TIP content is largely complete however there are too many words so he is currently editing it down to 10,000. One gap in the TIP is the sense of other investments in the town, ie; FHSF, Port, Catapult, University which are to be included so PG has contacted respective colleagues for further details.</p> <p>The main changes since the last version are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreword now talks about the projects earlier • Reference to skills has been enhanced, we needed to show from School to Further Education to Higher Education to PhD and then back into benefitting the people of Blyth • Strategy now includes Theory of Change in the document and not as an appendix • Objectives are well evidenced and justified we have just strengthened the golden thread re the opportunities, challenges and strategy of the projects • Section 2.4 needs the most work re other investments in the town • Projects now have a narrative summary on what, how, evidence of need, how we are delivering the Town Deal and outputs • Financial table will now be earlier in the document so it is easier to read alongside the projects • Consultation and Engagement, ARUP wanted more work on this section <p>Feedback from ARUP was positive and mainly about the structure and order of the content not the evidence and content itself. PG confirmed we will be asking for the full £25m.</p> <p>AF – the outputs and outcomes are not quantified yet and he would like more detail please. Would the Board see this information before it is submitted? PG advised that we are still doing project development work that gives rise to the numbers which should be resolved by end of this week after which he will populate the table and share it with the Board prior to submission.</p> <p>JR – the TIP is really coming together and the emphasis on innovation and skills reads well. It has a powerful narrative and picks up on the strength of the town and the benefits for the community, wider region and the country. Regarding the capital and revenue split for education and skills, can we build on the revenue moving forward? Is there any flex between capital and revenue or are we being steered? PG advised that the guidance from MHCLG is a maximum of 5% revenue funding. When it comes to the business case development, revenue and sustainability of assets we will develop plans that have already been drafted. JR added the more we can build a sense of how we align the existing revenue spending lines between Universities, Colleges and other partners the better to help make the programmes come alive. PG confirmed he can add in the financial alignment aspect into the TIP. MC advised that revenue is an ongoing issue that is understood by MHCLG.</p>	<p>PG</p>
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	<p>KD – great reference to the green credentials and net zero aspirations, but we should think about green characteristics on everything we do in design and development. Serious consideration should be given to this throughout the whole document.</p> <p>TQ – regarding the projects that scored less well, are we confident that they make a strong contribution to outputs and outcomes and can we accommodate the feedback without compromising output? PG is entirely confident about their contribution. There is a big focus in the Town Deal framework on walking and cycling so the route the project takes is important. Once we get into business case development there will be more discussion with locals around the cycle route. It aligns to the Town Deal objectives and what the town needs to do, and, although this is a Town Deal project, there is clear linkage to the Northumberland Line rail project. The Town Living Centre project is important as it is part of a mixed strategy for the town centre. The focus is on quality housing, which is desirable and with more people in the town there are lots of reasons to do this. Again, it is part of the business case to design the project to align with locals' views. The TIP is not the place to do design, that is the next stage. TQ – it is good to hear they retain a strong contribution. AL – it is important we listen to the community and respond to issues that arise to reassure them and ensure we feed the issues back to the project teams. In this case the team are already looking at the routes around connectivity and aware of community concerns around HMOs.</p> <p>KD – following on from TQ's point above, there should be more on green in Town Centre Living about delivering carbon neutral properties in a town centre, this project is a real opportunity to do this. PG confirmed that we are in discussions with Advance, and we have had a reminder from ARUP on what clean growth means and there are lots of way Blyth can respond and will be strengthened.</p> <p>AT – thank you for strengthening the wording around skills. The Local Authority are currently looking at Post 16 provision as 54% of young people undertake training outside of Northumberland. Have there been any discussions within Town Deal around the Energy Campus provision as a review at the LA could tap into both capital and revenue? RS – Audrey Kingham is getting involved in the Energy Campus group so there is an opportunity to align the thinking together moving forward. Everything in the TIP is more of a destination and that includes learning. AT would be happy to be involved in any of the discussions around Post 16. PG added that when the prep work for Energy Campus starts, we will be widening the group to include AT, etc.</p> <p>JR – other link initiatives such as the Freeport, should they be linked into the TIP as that bid will be submitted early February? PG advised that it will be in the final version of the TIP. ML added that the Freeport bid has</p>	
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	<p>a strong focus on skills and education and that the Blyth bid includes the site of the educational centre as we are trying to link it all together.</p> <p>RS - the TIP submission is Stage 1, there is lots more work in Stage 2 which is the development of the projects. PG reiterated once the TIP is submitted this is not the end of the journey, the Board is still needed to support implementation in the coming months and years. AF added that he was in a Town Deal Board Chairs meeting with ARUP yesterday and they want to see continuity going forward and a commitment to see the Town Deal through.</p> <p>AF - approval of the TIP is needed. What is the suggested process for this? RS requested that the TIP is endorsed as it stands with final comments submitted by the end of Friday 15 January. If the Board are comfortable to delegate approval to the Chair and Vice Chairs for final sign off, then the final version will be circulated to Board upon submission. It is also going through for final approval in NCC. AF added that the outputs need to be circulated prior to sign off, PG agreed to circulate an update on outputs and outcomes which will be available following completion of section 2 of the TIP which includes individual project information.</p> <p>JR requested that given the changes outlined by PG above, the latest version of the TIP should be circulated so comments are being made on the current version. PG agreed, HS will do this on Thursday.</p> <p>KD queried if final comments are being requested will that not add to the word count? PG responded he requires focused comments to improve the TIP not volumes of information to be added to it.</p> <p>A vote for the Chair and Vice Chairs to approve the TIP was agreed by the Board members.</p> <p>AF thanked those involved regarding the amount of work that has been done in preparing the TIP documents.</p>	<p>Board Members</p> <p>PG</p> <p>HS</p>
8	<p>TIP Appendices</p> <p>PG confirmed for information that when we submit the TIP there will be 4 appendices (previously circulated to the Board) that sit behind it:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Statistical Evidence Base 2) Theory of Change 3) Consultation and Engagement 4) Governance Management (Green Book business cases) <p>PG would welcome any comments on these appendices from the Board on the same timescale as above.</p>	<p>Board Members</p>

	<p>AL added that a 'glossy' version of the TIP with lots of visuals is also being produced. She showed a draft version of the 'glossy' and confirmed that the final version will be shared with partners and also placed on the website. RS commented that the maps within the TIP are important for people who are not familiar with Blyth as they highlight the spatial zones and show the concentration of the funding in the town.</p>	
9	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>WS – as part of the culture workstream we have setup steering group meetings for FHSF and Town Deal which include representatives from Universities, Blyth Town Council, Bede Academy, etc. The focus is in advance of the development of the new Culture Centre through FHSF to engage with communities around culture and arts and more detailed updates will be provided as the work progresses. This engagement will inform an arts and culture plan which is being developed to support this and will be presented to the Board as it is developed for input.</p> <p>The above work will inform the Town Deal focus which is to deliver a creative placemaking programme where we are looking to design and brand events that complement and enhance those already organised by BTC. We are looking at orientation and wayfinding for visitors and tourists to help them read the town and provide trails, routes, etc. We have a Creative Coordination Team which consists of a Lead Creative Producer, who is working on the documents mentioned, a Lead Artist and a Strategist and Fundraiser.</p> <p>RS reminded the Board that the Team is supported by the Town Deal development funding as agreed by the Board previously combined with NCC support. The Town Deal Project is a capital overall investment in local people helping to shape places and promote a healthier lifestyle. This project will work on integrating the community and engagement around culture is part of that. As part of the Culture Arts plan, at the next meeting of the workstream we are considering a series of projects around how we work with communities and different cultures. We want a programme that leads us up to the new culture centre opening, to grow audiences, to get people excited and take pride in what we deliver and feel they have ownership of it having been involved in the process.</p> <p>AT – what about engagement with the faith community and the role they play, are they engaging with culture? WS has St Mary's Church on her list and will be speaking to them and others across the network around how we engage with as many people as we can whilst ensuring that we compliment what is already happening and join up the funding opportunities to work towards the same goal. RS re-iterated to the Board that one of the benefits of the TD process is the community engagement plan prepared earlier in the process. As projects develop the Board can use this statement to ensure that key parts of the community are engaged fully across the programme.</p>	

	<p>IL met with DCMS, Caroline Dilage, where they discussed the potential opportunities for the old Commissioners Building which is owned by the Port. She was very supportive of turning it into a town/maritime museum. There are Covid and financial restriction difficulties which he will discuss with ML next week. RS advised that a jointly funded feasibility study on the Commissioners Building between the Port and NCC has been agreed and work is progressing.</p> <p>RS advised that over the Christmas period he has received positive feedback from Historic England on the TIP and they could be a strategic partner and another funding possibility.</p> <p>MC gave a brief overview of what happens to the TIP when it arrives to them. It is assessed and shared with other Government departments, including DCMS, responses collated, the TIP and the projects are scored which then leads to the Heads of Terms and the offer. Originally the timing of the assessment was 8-10 weeks pre Covid, but they are now looking to streamline their processes to provide a response as soon as possible. More detailed information on the assessment criteria can be found in the guidance.</p> <p>TG – the poor state of the vacant retail properties around Market Square, something needs to be done to safeguard the fact that we want to make the town centre vibrant and energised but it could still look the same if nothing is done with these vacant properties. AF acknowledged that it is a difficult time for retail with the Covid situation and also for business premises as changes have taken place around operations, ie; working from home does work. RS added that in the future new projects will be developed to change the use of these properties and we need to work together to look for the best solutions to best suit the town centre.</p> <p>AF thanked everyone for attending, it has been a positive meeting despite people dealing with difficult issues at this time.</p> <p>IL – really appreciate the work done so far, thank you everyone.</p>	
10	<p>Proposed dates and time of 2021 meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wed 24th Feb 3 – 5pm • Wed 7th April 3 - 5pm • Thurs 13th May 2 – 4pm • Wed 30th June 3 – 5pm • Wed 8th September 3 – 5pm • Wed 20th October 3 – 5pm • Wed 1st December 3 - 5pm 	