



Northumberland County Council

Blyth Town Deal Board Meeting

Thursday 05 August 2021 14.30
(Microsoft Teams video conference)

Present:

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| Alan Ferguson (AF) | Chair: Fergusons Transport |
| Thom Bradley (TB) | Blyth Community Network |
| Robin Earl (RE) | Advance Northumberland |
| Ian Flintoft (IF) | Blyth Churches Together |
| Jonathan Gilroy (JG) | BEIS |
| Rob Hamilton (RH) | North of Tyne Combined Authority |
| Martin Lawlor (ML) | Port of Blyth |
| Matthew Murray (MM) | Tharsus |
| Rick O'Farrell (RO) | Northumberland County Council |
| Wojciech Ploszaj (WP) | Northumberland County Council |
| Tony Quinn (TQ) | ORE Catapult |
| Wendy Scott (WS) | Blyth Cultural Network |
| Phil Soderquest (PS) | Blyth Safety Network |
| Rob Strettle (RS) | Northumberland County Council |
| Lee Tennant (LT) | Newcastle College |
| Cllr Richard Wearmouth (RW) | Northumberland County Council |

In Attendance:

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| Karen Donaldson (KD) | NCC |
| Carol Johns-McLeod (CJM) | NCC |
| Neil Quinn (NQ) | NCC |
| Helen Swinburn (HS) | NCC |
| Peter Graham (PG) | New Skills Consulting |

Notes of discussion:

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| <p>1</p> | <p>Apologies for absence Lara Baker (LB), Advance Northumberland Greg Gavin (GG), Blyth Town Forum Helen Golightly (HG), North East LEP Cllr Kath Nisbet (KN), Northumberland County Council Jane Robinson (JR), Newcastle University Glen Sanderson (GS), Northumberland County Council Julia Smith (JS), Jobcentre Plus Andrew Thelwell (AT), Bede Academy (Emmanuel Teaching School Alliance) Jonathan Walker (JW), North East England Chamber of Commerce Mark Warnes (MW), Active Northumberland</p> | <p>Action:</p> |
| <p>2</p> | <p>Declarations of Interest The Board were reminded to update members accordingly regarding declarations of interest and any new members are required to complete the declaration of interest form.</p> | |
| <p>3</p> | <p>Minutes of the last meeting These were accepted as a true record.</p> <p>RS – an action from the last meeting was for the Heads of Terms to be signed and returned to MHCLG. RS confirmed this had been actioned.</p> | |
| <p>4</p> | <p>Town Deal Update Project Review Stage 1 Update PG provided an update and overview of the position:</p> <p>Blyth has been awarded £20.9m in the Heads of Terms which leaves a gap of £4.1m from the ‘ask’ in the Town Investment Plan of £25m. PG recapped that at the last meeting of the Board, members agreed on a 2 stage process – Stage 1: to either address the gap and be able to proceed with the programme’s development or Stage 2: potentially remove one or two projects from the programme by going through a re-prioritisation exercise. Stage 1 included a review of the latest status of all the projects around costs, funding, delivery plan, risk, etc. That stage has now concluded, and the updates show limited need to progress to Stage 2 as there is potential to finalise the programme as set out in the TIP. Key points from the project review much of which can be picked up as part of business case development included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blyth Bebside to Town Centre Connectivity – no change but there are additional outputs, costs require more detail • Northern Gateway (Phase 2) - no change, costs require more development • Energy Campus (Phase 1) – no change, costs require more development, in discussion with North of Tyne around match funding where the outcome will be known in October/November • Energy Central Campus (Phase 2) – no change | |

- **Bearing Technology and Innovation Centre (OREC)** – increase from £5m to £5.3m but the Town Deal request stays the same as OREC are funding the difference, we need to resolve the match funding contribution
- **NEP 1 & Battleship Wharf** – increase from £2.5 to £3m, LEP have offered match funding and the project ask has therefore reduced from £1.25m to £0.5m from Town Deal
- **Town Centre Living** – no change, subject to market and development appraisal and further information on match funding certainty, further discussion still required
- **Culture and Placemaking Programme** – no change

The outcome is that at this indicative stage all projects are desirable and deliverable, subject to securing match funding and more detailed project based discussions before the 5th October.

In parallel with the Stage 1 project reviews there have been discussions with NCC, NELEP and the North of Tyne Combined Authority regarding opportunities for funding which indicates that match funding can be identified to complete the package and allow the programme to be developed into Stage 2.

Following the review, (and subject to further clarification from sponsors) it is not currently proposed to proceed to Stage 2 and remove projects from the programme at this point. With the Board's agreement the next step will be to progress to the project confirmation stage.

RS confirmed that the deadline is 05 October to focus on the projects and to talk to sponsors before the projects are confirmed to Government.

RE – need to see if the Town Centre Living project is viable and sustainable following the market and development appraisal, what happens if it is less than expected or not viable, can be creative within the envelope available?
 PG – confirmed it will be important to review this and look at what options are available as part of the BC stage depending on the outcome.

RH – congratulations. From a North of Tyne point of view, the challenge is that funding is only confirmed up to March 23 so need to work around programming of potential allocations. At this stage it should be possible to proceed with confidence and endorsed keeping all the projects on the table and to develop the business cases as good match funding will attract others to the table.

TQ – regarding leveraging money from elsewhere, there are opportunities to leverage Innovate UKRI funding to support innovation activity including the Bearing Technology Centre. The deadline for submission is November. This emphasises that local commitment leverages national funding.

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| | <p>RS – the next Town Deal Board is the end of September where a report will be brought back with final recommendations on the project confirmation process. It would be helpful to have a Chair and Vice Chair meeting at the beginning of September to discuss any issues before the Board and before 05 October before going back to Government with the list of projects. Board members agreed this approach.</p> | <p>HS</p> |
| <p>5</p> | <p>Any Other Business</p> <p>WS – updated the group regarding the successful Shaping Places for Healthier Lives project application meaning that £300k has been awarded for a 3 year programme to engage communities in the town and address fear of crime through design thinking and culture activity including an opportunity to integrate and align this with the Energising Blyth Programme. The funding is through the Health Foundation and Local Government Association with Design Council support. 120 Councils applied but only 5 got through to the 3rd round which is fantastic. Congratulations were received from the Board.</p> <p>RS – noted that the Board have not yet had a presentation about Heart of Blyth which has been a fantastic development of projects, with its origins in the wider family of Energising Blyth, via the Town Forum’s response to concerns around ASB in the town. It would be worth bringing this back to the Board to highlight what the project is, how it will be developed and how it can be brought into the Board agenda going forward as it links particularly to the Culture programme. RS to ask Liz Robinson and Liz Morgan to come to a future meeting to discuss this activity.</p> <p>PG – flagged further work to come back to the Board on the Stage 2 process for Town Deal. The timescales for the business cases and project delivery, will need to be developed in parallel with the project confirmation table by 05 October. This means planning out the timescales for each project’s business case start, end and how that leads into the delivery stage. The Board will be involved in this and the process will be discussed at a future meeting. The Board will be briefed at the appropriate times as projects move through each of the stages.</p> <p>RS – updated that the Programme Manager for Energising Blyth has now been appointed. Lara Baker, who many Board members will know from Advance Northumberland and previous work on the programme’s development focused on Future High Streets Fund starts in the role in October. Other programme roles are to be advertised soon.</p> | <p>RS</p> |
| <p>6</p> | <p>Date and time of next meeting: Monday 27th September 2021, 10.00am</p> | |