

## Town Board Meeting

**Tuesday 18 March 2025 13:30**

(Blyth Town Council Offices and via Microsoft Teams video conference)

Member Name	Representing	18/03/25
Alan Ferguson (AF) - <b>CHAIR</b>	Fergusons Transport	Attended
Dr Jonathan Aust (JA)	Health Representative	<i>Apologies</i>
Thom Bradley (TB)	Blyth Valley Community Voluntary Action	Attended
Dale Cartie (DC)	Community Representative	<i>Apologies</i>
Fran Castle (FC)	Blyth Culture Advisory Group	Attended
Debbie Draper (DD)	Jobcentre Plus	<i>Apologies</i>
Sharron Fawcett (SF)	Community Representative	Attended
Rev Canon Ian Flintoff (IF)	Blyth Churches Together	<i>Apologies</i>
Clive Gray (CG)	Blyth Culture Advisory Group	<i>Apologies</i>
Stephen Harrison (SH)	Advance Northumberland	<i>Apologies – Andrew Mowbray attended</i>
Stephen Hume (SHU)	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Northumbria	Attended
Martin Lawlor (ML)	Port of Blyth	Attended
Rt Hon Ian Lavery MP (ILa)	Member of Parliament for Blyth and Ashington Constituency	<i>Apologies – Mark Fitton attended</i>
Mags Margetts (MMA)	Small Business Representative	<i>Apologies</i>
Sarah McMillan (SM)	Director of Economic Development & Growth, NCC	<i>Apologies</i>
Cllr Kath Nisbet (KN)	Blyth Town Council	
Heather Orton (HO)	North East Combined Authority	Attended
Cllr Wojciech Ploszaj (WP)	Northumberland County Council	
Tony Quinn (TQ)	ORE - Catapult	Attended
Jon Ridley (JR)	Newcastle College	<i>Apologies – Ian Gaskill attended</i>
Jane Robinson (JR)	Newcastle University	<i>Apologies</i>
Wendy Scott (WS)	Blyth Culture Advisory Group	<i>Apologies</i>
Cllr Warren Taylor (WT)	Blyth Town Council	Attended
Andrew Thelwell (AT)	Bede Academy	Attended
Cllr Richard Wearmouth (RW)	Northumberland County Council	Attended
Jan Willis (JW)	Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), NCC	<i>Apologies</i>
Claire Young (CY)	Community Representative	Attended

In Attendance	Organisation	18/03/25
Cristina Armstrong (CA)	Project Manager, NCC	
Lara Baker (LB)	Programme Manager, NCC	Attended
Bethany Gorman (BG)	Cities and Local Growth Unit, UK Government	
James Hayton (JH)	Senior Finance & Claims Officer, NCC	Apologies
Carol Jameson (CJ)	Regeneration Programmes Investment Manager, NCC	Apologies
Elaine Maylin (EM)	Regeneration Investment Funding Manager, NCC	Attended
Lee Paris (LP)	Project Manager, NCC	Attended
Jenny Robertson (JR)	Project Manager, NCC	
Taylor Sharp (TS)	Cities and Local Growth Unit, UK Government	
Rob Strettle (RS)	Economic Growth & Regeneration Manager, NCC	Attended
Helen Swinburn (HS)	Projects Officer, NCC	Attended
David Warburton (DW)	Head of Regeneration, NCC	Attended
Stuart McNaughton (SMcN)	Head of Strategic Transport and Climate Change, NCC	Attended

#### Notes of discussion:

1	<b>Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b> AF welcomed everyone to the meeting.  Apologies are noted in the list above.  No new declarations to record.	Action:
2	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b> These were accepted as true record.	
3	<b>Strategic Transport Update</b> SMcN shared a presentation covering: Northumberland line; Active Travel; Blyth Relief Road (BRR).  SF - where will the BRR be? SMcN - effectively we are dualling the A1061 and there will be an extension of Chase Farm Drive. AF – the congestion on Cowpen Road, the feedback is that this will ease that. SMcN – the BRR will give options and give some benefit to Cowpen Road.  CY – I welcome the train, it's fantastic, and I welcome the bus connectivity to the stations. I don't underestimate how difficult it has been to deliver the line so congratulations to all of the team.  ML – I welcome the chosen route of dualling Laverock Road towards the Port but in terms of the number of traffic lights, has there been any thought as to whether any	

	<p>traffic lights will be removed or additional lights installed to make the dual carriageway safe? SMcN – I need to check but I think there is possibly one more set to be installed but because it will be dual carriageway there will be more straight through traffic that can get through on green which is positive, and traffic lights are more intelligent now so they can get people through in green waves which we will look to apply.</p> <p>AF – whether cars, trucks, etc, if there are traffic lights close to the roundabout at the east end I would have no concerns if there was a left turn that forced you around the roundabout instead of lights as that might give a better flow of the traffic. SMcN – if we have people doing a U Turn on the roundabout we'll get feedback as it will impact on the people who have to give way before they can join the roundabout so that would need some thought.</p> <p>CY – safe cycle lanes and connectivity to the stations, I'm glad a route is being considered as I think long term we want less single people in cars so they more we can do to make cycling accessible is good, but that is a long term plan. SMcN – the target audience is a person who would like to cycle and not be on the road in a vehicle.</p> <p>TB - capacity for bicycles on the trains, has that been monitored around current use and will it be extended with the opening of Newsham? SMcN – Northern will monitor that as the Operator, I can find out, but my observations are that it hasn't been heavily used.</p>	
4	<p><b>Energising Blyth Town Centre Works Update</b> LB/LP shared a presentation covering:</p> <p><u>Market Pavilion and Market Place</u> CY - when will the landscaping be done and is there seating within it? LB – target by 4 July, and yes there is seating.</p> <p>WT – the market traders have been asking what is going on as they didn't know, and what is the role of the Market Manager regarding keeping people informed? RS – we work with the Market Manager to advise the traders and have visited them directly. The Market Place has remained open for business with access maintained for all shops and the markets have operated throughout. At each stage of the programme we have issued regular updates that have been hand delivered to businesses and market traders in the town centre, social media updates so we are doing our best to keep everyone informed of the staged plans and have taken action wherever possible to address issues and act on feedback – for example in adding more lighting in the area.</p> <p>FC – there is an assumption that the Keel Row car park will not be open when the building opens so where will people be parking? LB – This is not the case there are no plans to close Keel Row Car Park. There is a car park study that is ongoing with regards to supply and demand across the town centre but the intention is to improve the overall parking arrangements in the town considering demand for and use of</p>	

	<p>current parking. RS – there have been some unfounded rumours online including this and also another saying that a road is being built around the Market Pavilion building for through traffic which is also not the case, there is a service road but that is not open to the public. LB – the service road will bollarded to stop the public accessing it.</p> <p>WT – Bakersfield St regarding events held at Phoenix and Masonic Lodge, the parking is spilling over into the residential areas despite Phoenix signposting to the car parks. RS – perhaps we can promote the parking options afresh across all comms channels in the summer to help with that alongside other venues as part of encouraging visitors to the town. LB – the wayfinding strategy will also help promote parking.</p> <p><u>Bridge St Improvements</u> CY – the area around Frameworks and the library looks really nice now.</p> <p><u>Quay Road (Eastern Gateway) &amp; Energy Central Institute</u> No comments or questions.</p> <p>AF – ML are you happy with the road design? ML – I have mentioned this before about HGVs and wide loads getting across the junction without any interference from street furniture, so as long as they can do that it should be fine. LP – we did look into that and that is the case so should be fine.</p>	RS/CA
5	<p><b>Plan for Neighbourhoods Update and Next Steps</b> RS shared a presentation covering:</p> <p>A recap on developing Long Term Plan For Towns (LTPFT) bid work to date; refreshed Town Vision and strategic narrative – 10 Year Vision for Blyth; Engagement - Partnership and Reach Out activities; Prioritised Projects – 1) Blyth Community Investment fund, 2) Boosting Blyth Business Programme, 3) Blyth CPP, 4) Blyth Town Centre Vacant Property Investment Fund, 5) Blyth Town Centre Infrastructure and Connectivity Programme; updated Town Investment Plan Map; Outputs and Outcomes and how we'll measure success; LTPFT draft budget.</p> <p><u>Plan for Neighbourhoods</u> Guidance; new language guide; key steps in process; updated MHCLG budget – to note there is not as much as in the original bid for 2026/27 so we need to manage expectations; Capacity Fund update; Governance Return; Governance Return Checklist; proposal submission window - Spring to Winter 25; next steps</p> <p><b>To agree today</b> – agree to update all documents, website, comms, etc, with the new language, and the Governance Return to be submitted as per the requirements stated and a copy will be shared with Board prior to submission.</p> <p>TB – I have read some of the guidance, but in terms of the return I'm not sure how strong we are as a Board as it talks about Board transferring to alternative community led models which might add more bureaucracy and more delays and will that be required to be reflected in the return as a future development of Board? If so the</p>	

	<p>support and development of Board needs to be structured towards that if that's what we are required to be and we need to be comfortable with that. RS – it's a good point and if you go back a year we had same the debate on the previous guidance where the view of Board at that time was that creating something like that would likely divert resource from a range of community based organisations in the town despite it having some benefits. If Board want to have some flexibility and wording for the need for further development of the Board looking at longer term options then I would recommend that is included, but, the guidance has the flexibility to look at such options but also emphasises continuity at this stage and not changing arrangements only just put in place. We have effectively been advised to repeat and lightly update from the last time and as I say continuity is key. AF – there is limited resource so we did say we would build on the existing plans. RS – just for information, when I've looked at governance across plans in other areas in the country, some don't have anything in place so its worth remembering that we have a well established partnership in Blyth – some of the towns in this programme have not had any funding before. CY – I don't underestimate the amount of work for the team to do especially when the goalposts keep changing, ie: a change of Government. RS – the governance return is just a point in time to satisfy the Govt we have all the right arrangements in place and move to the next stage of resubmitting the plan. The recommendation is to get this in and as a Board we can consider what resource to put in to support Board development which we don't have to do via this return - we can do it locally later this year.</p> <p>TB – I'm happy with regards to submitting the return in April but for the summer meeting I'd be looking to refresh the points around engagement on what's happened what's and changed. RS – the suggestion it to go away and update the documents, bring them back and have a thorough discussion then we can move onto programme development but we are not wanting a host of consultation and drop ins, etc, as we don't have the resource to do that and there was a really good process last year building on previous work. The recommendation is to focus engagement resource on developing and mobilising the programme with our partners and the community at large. FC - will we have access to the papers before Board? RS – there is an 80 page submission already prepared which we will refresh and will circulate prior to the next meetings then go through it at the meeting. The technical guidance today's presentation is based on only came out last week.</p> <p>RS – are Board in agreement with the recommendations on the language and return? Board agreed.</p>	
6	<p><b>Partner Updates</b></p> <p>SF – are new members getting guidance on their Board role? RS – that is part of the proposal we need to work up. After the last meeting I did look into some 'strategy day' support for the Board as a way to do this (a lot of social enterprises use this method with their Boards to plan for the future and there development needs) however this is not available in the short term so we're happy to have the discussion on how we approach this as there are lots of different ways we can do it. RS will send some information round on ideas to seek feedback.</p>	RS



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	HO – the Mayor and NECA will be sharing something hopefully this week as we're seeking views on the Local Growth Plan that relates to Blyth around the ambitions on offshore wind for example. I will share the details with HS to circulate to the group. RS noted that will be excellent timing to line up the refreshed P4N with the regional plan and agreed that NECA/NCC will liaise on this as was the case last summer.	RS/HO
7	<b>Forward Plan</b> <b>Summer Meeting:</b> 17 June 2025 @1330, VTBC Culture Theme focus and Programme Updates Plan for Neighbourhoods – updated draft submission QTS – Date Centre presentation by Jim Kirkby / Stephanie Taylor	
8	<b>Any Other Business</b> Non reported.	