

Town Board Meeting

Tuesday 15 October 2024 13:30
 (Microsoft Teams video conference)

Member Name	Representing	15/10/2024
Alan Ferguson (AF) - CHAIR	Fergusons Transport	Attended
Dr Jonathan Aust (JA)	Health Representative	Attended
Thom Bradley (TB)	Blyth Valley Community Voluntary Action	Attended
Dale Cartie (DC)	Community Representative	Attended
Fran Castle (FC)	Blyth Culture Advisory Group	Attended
Lesleyanne Cassie (LC)	Jobcentre Plus	
Sharron Fawcett (SF)	Community Representative	Attended
Rev Canon Ian Flintoff (IF)	Blyth Churches Together	Attended
Clive Gray (CG)	Blyth Culture Advisory Group	Attended
Stephen Harrison (SH)	Advance Northumberland	Andrew Mowbray (AM) attending
Stephen Hume (SHU)	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Northumbria	Rachel Lawson (RL) Attended
Martin Lawlor (ML)	Port of Blyth	Attended
Rt Hon Ian Lavery MP (ILa)	Member of Parliament for Blyth and Ashington Constituency	Mark Fitton (MF) attended
Mags Margetts (MMA)	Small Business Representative	Attended
Sarah McMillan (SM)	Director of Economic Development & Growth, NCC	
Cllr Kath Nisbet (KN)	Blyth Town Council	Attended
Heather Orton (HO)	North East Combined Authority	
Cllr Wojciech Ploszaj (WP)	Northumberland County Council	
Tony Quinn (TQ)	ORE - Catapult	<i>Apologies</i>
Jon Ridley (JR)	Newcastle College	Attended
Jane Robinson (JR)	Newcastle University	<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	15/10/2024
Cristina Armstrong (CA)	Project Manager, NCC	Attended
Reemer Bailey (RB)	Project Manager, NCC	Attended

Lara Baker (LB)	Programme Manager, NCC	Attended
Joanne Burn (JB)	Finance & Claims Manager, NCC	<i>Apologies</i>
Bethany Gorman (BG)	Cities and Local Growth Unit, UK Government	Attended
Bev Harrison, (BH)	Regeneration Finance & Performance Manager, NCC	Attended
James Hayton (JH)	Senior Finance & Claims Officer, NCC	Attended
Carol Jameson (CJ)	Regeneration Programmes Investment Manager, NCC	Attended
Elaine Maylin (EM)	Regeneration Investment Funding Manager, NCC	Attended
Lee Paris (LP)	Project Manager, NCC	Attended
Taylor Sharp (TS)	Cities and Local Growth Unit, UK Government	Attended
Rob Strettle (RS)	Economic Growth & Regeneration Manager, NCC	Attended
Helen Swinburn (HS)	Projects Officer, NCC	Attended
Darren Broderick	ORE Catapult	Attended

Notes of discussion:

1	Welcome, introductions including new members and apologies for absence AF welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies are noted in the list above.	Action:
2	Minutes of the last meeting These were accepted as true record.	
3	Declarations of Interest Noted MMA is attending as a new member and also with regard to Item 6 as he is presenting the Wayfinding Strategy as part of the CPP project. MMA architects firm commissioned by NCC to undertake the development of the strategy being presented. The Chair noted that all new members will be returning new declaration of interest forms.	
4	Programme Recap, Governance updating including Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct RS provided a presentation which covered: Town Investment Plan – recap; town wide map; project map; delivery and funding timescales. Governance – refreshed board; refreshed Town Investment Plan; thematic reps; updated membership; summary of key amends to TOR and COI policies; EB Governance diagram; membership - still to appoint business network, leisure rep, community vice chair.	

	<p>Outlined the process for appointing a Community Vice Chair approach was agreed. Nominations are to be made and a recommendation brought back to Board or approval. The EB team will circulate a request in this regard prior to the next meeting. A community member can nominate themselves or others can nominate them.</p>	ALL
5	<p>Flood Resilience Update RS provided a presentation.</p> <p>Event Summary – number of locations affected by major surface flooding in the town centre; months rainfall fell in short space of time compounded by high tide overwhelming drainage capacity; various organisations supporting cleanup operation and looking at support for recovery.</p> <p>Business Support – NCC have provided dedicated resource to support businesses during the clean up / recovery period; Business Northumberland visited the town on 11 October and provided information and signposting to available support and the Team are assessing support and assistance on a case by case basis.</p> <p>EB Investment – developments had had no negative impact nor increased the effect of the recent surface flooding caused by an extreme weather event; the projects being delivered included a range of new flood mitigation measures which have and will improve the towns flood resilience.</p> <p>KN raised the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it had been difficult on the day/night of the flooding to find out who to contact and has written to the CEX • Croft Road did anyone visit there as they were affected, are you supporting residents as well as businesses. • mentioned Kerry's Cherub's nursery - have we visited her (a business outside of the TC) • have emailed NCC CEO, drains being blamed, some people saying not seen NCC officer. • Havelock St was really flooded and where the new drain is it's higher than the ground so there is no water going into the drain. <p>RS explained that there was information promoted on NCC socials and that he expected there is a resilience/emergency plan in place but will check and feedback KN enquiries to emergency resilience planning teams in NCC and to Business Northumberland re the enquiry re Kerry's Cherubs. (the presentation highlighted that teams had been out and about supporting the cleanup and visiting businesses).</p>	<p>RS</p> <p>LP</p>

	<p>LP explained re Havelock St the reason for the road surface being higher is because the road still needs to be resurfaced, he doesn't think this will have been a factor but will check the query out with the team on site.</p> <p>AF – is our board the right place to be dealing with this given the emergency response teams involved e.g. blue light services, etc? RS thought that AF is correct to ask this and the role on this is those agencies but we felt important give the board an opportunity to reflect on the events and discuss it together with the Boards role and remit in mind re economic regeneration. RS highlighted that there have been various comments made on socials and via feedback from elected reps that there is a perception that EB investment had a negative impact as part of the flooding. As such the purpose of the slides is to recap the event and highlight that EB investment in the town centre is addressing flood resilience and not having a negative impact, in the context of wider response from NCC and other partners.</p> <p>MMA – I saw comments on social media about NCC spending on other things and not what's actually needed. RS reiterated that we wanted to get facts and info out there as comments that new investment affecting town centre but the EB projects are having no negative effects as this was an extreme weather event. The investment projects and their role in flood resilience include Bowes St, Bridge St and Market Place and the ECI proposal will have a 45% allowance for climate change and are considering permeable paving, filter drains, etc. There may be a perception that we are not spending money on flood resilience but in fact it is a major part of the town centre investment.</p> <p>TB - I contacted NCC some time ago about their disaster planning for SE Northumberland and whilst I don't think it's this Board's responsibility, I think NCC should advise on emergency contact details and where support is available for such events. RS – as per KN comments earlier we will check this out feeding back to NCC.</p>	RS
6	<p>Programme Updates</p> <p>Energising Byth Team members provided updates on progress.</p> <p><u>Vibrant Town – CA & RB</u></p> <p>Market Pavilion and Market Place – on programme; on budget; opening summer 2025; Market Pavilion website is now live; #Blyth2025 events programme launch summer 2025.</p> <p>Culture & Placemaking Programme – supports wider investment across town; Blyth Celebrates dedicated branding; #Blyth2025 campaign; business engagement with events and programmes; community celebrations in partnership with Heart of Blyth; capital projects including festoon lighting, public art commissions, wayfinding and connectivity.</p>	

<p>ML – the Port will have a campaign next year as we are celebrating 25 years of offshore wind but we are conscious that the town may also be celebrating that so some coordination would be good. CA/ML to follow up and explore.</p> <p>WT – the power supply in the Market Place did have an old supply underground but there were issues with water getting in and it didn't work so I assume that's been taken out now? CA – Advance have looked at that and the new supply will be kept above ground.</p> <p>Housing Renewal and Welcoming Safe Blyth – Empty Homes Team; 4 properties back into use aiming for another 26 by 2026. Bowes Court Improvement Scheme is to improve 72 properties; engagement event 30 September; pre-works assessment starting now and aiming for late spring 25 completion. Extra Care provision is developing as a proposal for 85 properties in partnership between NCC, NHS and 3rd party registered providers. Welcoming & Safe Blyth is partly developed and on hold as it is included in the LTPFT proposals for a 'Community Fund'. Town Centre Living, Richard Stannard House is proposed to be refurbished and converted into 16 apartments for the private rental market to be owned and operated by Advance.</p> <p>RS – just to clarify that the Extra Care Facility discussions with the NHS are about expanding and improving the hospital offer with integrated/ adjacent extra care facilities not replacing one with the other.</p>	<p>CA/ML</p>
<p>FC – Headway arts are involved in a University project starting November about capital investment and community involvement. RB and FC to discuss opportunities to partner on this.</p> <p>FC asked about the health benefits of the Bowes Court project. RB – there are a range of outcomes linked to health and well being in the business case some of which will be tracked to tie in the capital outcomes with the people involved.</p> <p><u>Growing and Inclusive Town - LP</u></p> <p>ECLH – ECC Ltd appointed and they are now operating the building; first learners were on site 09 September; conference space to be handed over in December 2024; site tour organised next week ahead of the grand opening for Town Board and Town Forum members.</p> <p>Energy Campus – Technical Training Kit – immersive learning classroom installation underway; broadband infrastructure substantially delivered; audio visual equipment installed; Bede Academy milling machines/lathes installed; Northumberland Skills workshop fit out ongoing; visitor centre concept design has been developed.</p> <p>ECI – Design Team appointed January 2024; demolition of former Keel Row shopping centre underway from 30 September; community consultation event to take place before Planning Application in November/December 2024; OBC</p>	<p>FC/RB</p>

	<p>currently being developed for submission later this year; construction starts summer 2025 for delivery 2027.</p> <p>OREC – update provided by Darren Broderick, OREC on Technology Development Centre (TDC). Background; aim of project; project location; layout of facility; what TDC will do; renovation due to complete November 2024; operational early 2025.</p> <p>DC – the Buffalo Centre is across the road from the TDC and a few years ago when the wind test facility was built the power in the area went out when it was turned on. Is it assured that the power will not be turned off with this facility? Darren – yes, the requirement is small for power and testing and we are conscious of being a good neighbour so part of the upgrade is looking at our side of the grid so to speak so it doesn't affect Blyth as a whole.</p> <p>DC – I know the Port has put an echo in and we get complaints of seagull noise, is that coming for the TDC too? Darren – no. ML – It's meant to be birds of prey noise to reduce the seagulls, we have reduced the sound level and frequency following those complaints.</p> <p>AT – ECLH thank you for the work the Team have done on developing the TDC, it's amazing to see our students there benefiting from this incredible facility. Once we're past the November 2024 renovation deadline could we meet to discuss the pathways and throughputs for learners out of TDC and into ECI so were making it easy for students to move seamlessly between the two? ML – ECC Board and staff are happy to have those discussions and also how the T levels integrate. LB – that is an important process for the ECI business case and those discussions are ongoing ready for the OBC in December.</p> <p><u>Connected Town - LP</u></p> <p>Bridge St Improvements – P1, P2, P3 are substantially complete; P4 expected to complete November 2024; completion spring 2025.</p> <p>Quay Gateway – FBC expected October 2024; stakeholder engagement late 2024; works commence spring 2025; complete late summer 2025.</p> <p>Regent St – detailed designs and costs to be developed; works expected to commence late summer 2025; complete late summer 2026.</p> <p>Bebside to Blyth Cycling and Walking Corridor – OBC submitted to secure funding but there is still work to do and we are a long way off design and costs, etc, and we need to consider the Blyth Relief Road. Noted that comms are important as it will be perceived to cause a lot of disruption. AF – have we got a definitive date of when the railway station will open? RS – no date but I can share the article from the Chronicle which gives an update on the 6 stations from the Northumberland Line Team and the target continues to be opening before Xmas of the first services/stations including Newsham.</p>	<p>RS</p>
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7	<p>TD & FHSF Performance return (for approval) – LB</p> <p>Capital budgets and expenditure shared; we will have spent approx. half by the end of the year; some spend has been pushed back to 2027, ie: Bebside to Blyth Cycling and Walking Corridor; we need sanction from Board to submit the figures but the figures are draft as they need to be agreed by Corporate Finance first.</p> <p>Top 4 Key risks/mitigations include the hotel for which we have asked for an extension regarding the spend date as we need to go out to the market again. The location being considered for the hotel is to the east of the town behind ECI.</p> <p>RS – explained that the figure of £73m on this slide is for FHSF & Town Deal only as Deep Dive and Bowes St are reported separately so are not included here.</p> <p>Board are invited to support the submission and LB will take AF through it once it is finalised. Board agreed to support the submission.</p>	
8	<p>LTPFT Update – RS</p> <p>We have the proposals and investment plan ready but we don't know what will happen at this stage, There may possibly be a decision in October 24 with the budget or at least an updated process/direction of travel. We will keep the Board updated on any news.</p>	
9	<p>Comms and PR</p> <p>Slides cover this item.</p>	
10	<p>Energising Blyth Wayfinding Strategy - MMA</p> <p>This is a strategy and as such hasn't been costed in detail.</p> <p>The presentation covered - CPP brief; project themes; project outcomes; what is wayfinding; wayfinding benefits; place branding; tourism; public realm; engagement; opportunities; destinations; design strategies; phased approach 1 – 6, character areas; joining the dots; welcome to Blyth; icons, beacons, gaps and gables.</p> <p>WT – Marina Old Gaffer Association who tour the coast, around 50 yachts came in so that can be a destination itself and we should be looking at that to bring people into the town. MMA – that has been flagged as a question to think about as the arrival by boat could be an opportunity for the town. ML – we have been talking about an area of the Dun Cow Quay and putting high fencing around it for use with the tall ships as a security area for example but the community berth could be something to add into that as an important attraction which is in the LTPFT proposal. RS – the hard infrastructure we can deliver the first phase as part of CPP but the strategy is a 10 year strategy and lots of people in this Board have a role in the whole strategy. The project ML refers to is in the pipeline for the LTPFT.</p>	
11	<p>Partner Updates</p>	



Funded by
UK Government



Northumberland
County Council

NE North East
Combined
Authority



	Not covered.	
12	Any Other Business None reported. Slide pack to be shared.	HS
13	Date and time of next meeting To be confirmed.	