

Town Board Meeting

Wednesday 25 June 2024 10:30
(Microsoft Teams video conference)

Member Name	Organisation	25/06/2024
Alan Ferguson (AF) - CHAIR	Fergusons Transport	Attended
Thom Bradley (TB)	Blyth Community Network	Attended
Lesleyanne Cassie (LC) – Debbie Draper (DD) attended	Jobcentre Plus	<i>Apologies</i>
Rev Canon Ian Flintoff (IF)	Blyth Churches Together	Attended
Steven Harrison (SH)	Advance Northumberland	Attended
Steven Hume (SH)	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Northumbria	Attended
Martin Lawlor (ML)	Port of Blyth	Attended
Rt Hon Ian Levy MP (IL)	Member of Parliament for Blyth Valley Constituency	
Sarah McMillan (SM)	Director of Economic Development & Growth, NCC	
Matthew Murray (MM)	Tharsus	
Cllr Kath Nisbet (KN)	Northumberland County Council	Attended
Heather Orton (HO)	North East Combined Authority	Attended
Cllr Wojciech Ploszaj (WP)	Northumberland County Council	Attended
Tony Quinn (TQ)	ORE - Catapult	Attended
Jon Ridley (JR)	Newcastle College	
Jane Robinson (JR)	Newcastle University	<i>Apologies</i>
Wendy Scott (WS)	Cultural Advisory Group	Attended
Cllr Warren Taylor (WT)	Blyth Town Council	Attended
Andrew Thelwell (AT)	Bede Academy	Attended
Cllr Richard Wearmouth (RW)	Northumberland County Council	<i>Apologies</i>
Jan Willis (JW)	Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), NCC	<i>Apologies</i>

In Attendance	Organisation	25/06/2024
Cristina Armstrong (CA)	Project Manager, NCC	<i>Apologies</i>
Reemer Bailey (RB)	Project Manager, NCC	Attended
Lara Baker (LB)	Programme Manager, NCC	Attended
Joanne Burn (JB)	Finance & Claims Manager, NCC	<i>Apologies</i>
Peter Graham (PG)	New Skills	Attended
Bev Harrison, (BH)	Regeneration Finance & Performance Manager, NCC	<i>Apologies</i>
Carol Jameson (CJ)	Regeneration Programmes Investment Manager, NCC	Attended



Elaine Maylin (EM)	Regeneration Investment Funding Manager, NCC	<i>Apologies</i>
Lee Paris (LP)	Project Manager, NCC	<i>Apologies</i>
Taylor Sharp (TS)	Business & Trade	<i>Apologies</i>
Rob Strettle (RS)	Economic Growth & Regeneration Manager, NCC	Attended
Helen Swinburn (HS)	Projects Officer, NCC	Attended

Notes of discussion:

1	Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence AF welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies are noted in the list above.	Action:
2	Declarations of Interest RS – for Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPFT) NCC have prepared the proposed projects so are effectively the sponsors at this stage although a number of the projects would lead to a range of project sponsors coming forward to deliver activities such as through the proposed community fund, and we've had support from Advance's business support team to develop the business network proposal too.	
3	Minutes of the last meeting These were accepted as true record.	
4	Items 4, 5 and 6 are covered in the slide pack which will be shared with Board after the meeting. RS did a recap on the development of the LTPFT bid. Governance - RS Working on securing reps for Town Board in Culture, Health, Community, Small Business/Property and County wide leisure provider. Are Board happy to support the nomination for the Health rep Dr Jonathan Oust? Board agreed to support the nomination. A) Terms of Reference - RS The Terms of Reference and the Conflict of Interest form are being redrafted. These will be circulated prior to the next meeting for sign off at the meeting in July.	
5	LTPFT submission progress to date: A) Engagement update - RB	



<p>There has been a range of engagement with partners to check if our approach was correct, to see if they agreed with our project suggestions, get their project suggestions and to ask if any categories were missing. All the data has been collated.</p> <p>AT – when will feedback come out to those who took part so the students for example can see the outcomes of their input? RB – likely September but I will be in touch before that regarding a panel of some sort. RS – we had a successful event at Bede and have discussed previously engagement with Blyth Academy so if we can widen this out that would be welcomed in the next phase. AF – it's important to have a younger input as they are the future.</p> <p>WS – it was heartwarming to see how well culture did through this process so can it be reflected more in the vision looking at design, creative thinking and creativity generally as something that reflects this engagement? RB – absolutely and I noticed how ignited they became when discussing the possibility of creative industries in their future, but it was the same across the older groups too as a lot of those people are participating in cultural activities.</p> <p>ML – the bid submission, what will be required and will it be at a high level? RS – we will cover that later in the pack.</p> <p>B) Vision and Investment Plan – PG</p> <p>Our 10 year Vision for Blyth, we are refreshing the Town Vision and strategic narrative. AT – given the investment already in the skills sector, do we add the word skills to the narrative? PG to make that change. We are also refreshing the supporting narrative and the next phase of activity to focus on will be: local community-led projects; local business-led projects and local placemaking.</p> <p>3 year Investment Plan. The original Town Investment Plan (TIP) will be updated to become this 3 year plan. 5 projects are proposed for the LTPFT bid: 1) Blyth Community Investment Fund; 2) Boosting Blyth Business Programme; 3) Blyth Culture and Placemaking Programme (CPP); 4) Blyth Town Centre Vacant Property Investment Fund; 5) Blyth Town Centre Infrastructure and Connectivity Programme. The investment already taking place will also be included in the bid.</p> <p>WS – we seem to have lost culture in the first project as this is also looking at culture groups and organisations. PG – culture is in the description it's just not in the title, but the intention is that culture will be a focus.</p> <p>ML – regarding the funding split, how will it be split across the 5 projects? PG – there is definitely a focus on the Community Investment Fund so it is not split evenly which we will come on to later in the pack.</p>	<p>PG</p>
---	-----------



AT – projects 2 and 4, given the feedback earlier around engagement, one of the key concerns was a lack of reason for visiting the town centre. Does 4 include improving a mix of shops to provide more of a reason or footfall or is it a makeover of the current shops? PG – it's a new mix as well as refurbishment of existing and repurposing for community and cultural uses. LB – the priority is the ground floor to get that back into economical use as hopefully there will be the demand then revitalise the first and second 2 floors for artist studios. We have taken lessons from Hexham and as there is limited funding we need to be focused in terms of the properties we are looking at. RS – 2, 3 and 4 I see together around the vitality of the town centre and the offer and perception of the town. The legacy perception of the town combined with the town centre right now whilst building work is underway, there will be lots to sing about over the next few years. WS your point on the name of the first project, I appreciate what you're saying and I can give assurances that this is just an outline bid to Government as there is still lots of work to do on the project itself.

IF – I recognise project 1 will include projects across the town but we need to keep in focus the whole town and include those communities who are not in the centre. LB – we're trying to fit a programme into the LTPFT criteria but also be creative as we need as much flex as possible to respond to the demands and needs of the community and this project has had to develop very quickly. The message to Government is these are the areas we're looking at but we need as much flex as possible to respond to local need.

The updated town investment plan map shows the geographic coverage.

Outputs and outcomes and how we measure success, some of these were in the TiP previously but some are new, ie: local business growth and reducing antisocial behaviour and crime.

Funding allocation – the caveats with this are that £20m over 10 years is spread over multiple years and activities and that the submission this summer is for the first 3 years to March 27 which is approximately £5,072,999.00. Given the need to maximise the use of the funds we will be saying in the submission that we see the LTPFT money as a catalyst as we will be looking to stimulate investment from other funders. The funding is predominantly capital and there will be a phasing of the projects with the first ones likely to start between January – March 25 to spread the funding resources.

C)Next Steps - Approval process update/timings - RS

The next steps are: partnership check in – Town Forum, repeat partner workshops; final draft bid – circulate to Board early July; bid sign off – Town Board planned for



w/c: 15 July; government position – bid process continues as stated; bid submission – target is mid-July for 01 August deadline; Autumn 24 - bid approval and programme establishment; Winter 24 – onwards programme launch and move to delivery; Ongoing – continue delivery of existing programme delivery.

RS – we are looking today for Board’s endorsement that they are happy with the outline bid, the packages and the investment packages for the first 3 years of activity before we come back for final approval in July and to note that we are not looking to change the bid, packages, etc, before that final approval.

IF via meeting chat “is it possible to tweak the capital / revenue split especially project 1 as the infrastructure project costs look high especially given the message we are trying to give that this is about the community”. LB – the reason why it is heavy on the capital is that’s what infrastructure works cost so the scale is appropriate to what we are getting but we can look at why and provide the detail if that would be helpful.

RS – it is important to note that the packages brought forward have been reduced already, ie: the masterplan is 3 / 4 times bigger than project 5 on the list so we’re trying to get to a balanced programme around the need and opportunity to deliver. ML regarding ideas from an Energy Central perspective, we’ve discussed this previously as the focus is community centred but it doesn’t mean that Energy Central and the Campus aren’t a driver so we’ve tried to ensure there are ‘hooks’ in the projects, ie: town centre to South Beach being developed is likely to have projects that can be funded from these ‘buckets’.

TB – I’m broadly fine with the proposal but the large capital sum for the Community Investment Fund, it’s the support needed by those groups to pull those projects together and manage those investment programme that can be considerable if people don’t have the expertise locally themselves. We need to do that well and affordably as there is a lot of work there that could eat up a lot of money.

RB – there will be opportunities at the next partnership event to explore ways the sector could support and also to look at opportunities for match funding. In respect of IF’s comment on the revenue / capital split, I’m wondering if he is talking about infrastructure or maybe he doesn’t realise that transport and connectivity are included in that? RS – I would hope the high allocation in the Community Investment Fund would alleviate those concerns. In project 5 for example there are ideas for testing activities such as bus tours which you can’t see here so there are lots of ideas to be developed in the next stage. Government are expecting a balanced programme and we need to deliver that.



	<p>AF – with a potential change of Government do you think there will be a change to this programme as there are bound to be different drivers? RS – we have kept in touch with Government and have been advised to continue to work as we have been. Yes something might change but I'd like to think that the work we're doing won't be lost and there would be some investment in the town but we don't have an indication it will change in anyway at the moment.</p> <p>HO – thank you for the overview, I am broadly comfortable with the 'buckets' and am interested to see the detail. I am keen to pass on the slide pack to other NECA colleagues and put you in touch with them. RS – if you can sense check funding with your colleagues that would be extremely helpful. CJ – we do have hooks in the 'buckets' that align with NECA priorities going forward so it is part of the discussion as to what investment could align.</p> <p>HO – the outputs/outcomes are they flexible? RS – yes usually and just to remind Board that this is very different to the way we've dealt with these before as they are being assured locally by the County Council not centrally so there is more flexibility. CJ – re NECA and their outputs they are very much aligned as there are standard outputs and outcomes. RS – we're looking at the design to ensure the right levels of assurance are in place for the activities as there have been comments in the partnership events about this.</p> <p>RS – are Board happy to endorse with the caveat that there are around 2 weeks of development work to do before we come back for final approval in July? Board agreed.</p>	
6	<p>Project Updates - LB</p> <p>Regent St / Quay Gateway Improvements, Programme Board and DLUHC have now approved the proposed scheme. It has been agreed that we can submit the business case for Quay Road in order that we can maintain a presence on site as there are significant cost savings to doing that so essentially it will look like a continuation of Bridge St. Traffic modelling has been done on the implications of the proposed scheme which we need to review and do consultations on the Bridge Street / B1329 signalisation where we are trying to improve that area for pedestrians and cyclist and improve flows to the quayside.</p> <p>ML – in terms of waiting times, I'm comfortable with those if we are monitoring them and with regards to HGV traffic we do have abnormal loads so will there be any liaison with the Port on the improvements? LB – I think we have spoken to the Port but will include Alan in a future comms. RS – Energy Campus and the town centre, there is a lot of people who care about that area so we need to in time think about how that can be improved over time to make it more pedestrian and cyclist friendly. AF – I am keen for the consultation to be carried out with the Port on the through</p>	



	<p>traffic with the impacts identified. RS – we will be reengaging everybody on Kings St, etc, just to give assurances. TQ via meeting chat “OREC also have quite a few large loads and use that route too. If the Port’s needs are met then it’s likely ours will be too but in the interest of consultation it’s probably worth liaising with us too”.</p> <p>AF – have we had any feedback from businesses effected by the works being done? LB – we have had some complaints that businesses are effected but it is very difficult to prove. We’ve done our best to mitigate and to negate the impact but in terms of turnover, etc, we would have to gather that evidence and it’s difficult to assess that impact. RS – the streets we’ve done public realm on businesses have been directed to at different points but business frontages have been accessible and open on Bowes St and Bridge St. Market Place is slightly different as that has hoardings around but throughout the period there has been concern over impact but it is difficult to quantify. We’ve had signs, done promotion etc and appreciate businesses support while the works are underway, which we hope has helped and have updated and had regular comms with the town centre business community.</p>	
7	Any Other Business None reported.	
8	Date and time of next meeting – Wed 17 th July, date to be confirmed.	