



# Northumberland County Council

## Blyth Town Deal Board Meeting

**Wednesday 29 June 2022 14.00**  
(Microsoft Teams video conference)

### Present:

Alan Ferguson (AF) (CHAIR)	Fergusons Transport
Thom Bradley (TB)	Blyth Community Network
Kay Charlton (KC)	Jobcentre Plus
Robin Earl (RE)	Advance Northumberland
Ray Browning (RB)	North East LEP
April Gibbs-Thorn (AG-T) for Rt Hon Ian Levy MP	Member of Parliament for Blyth Valley Constituency
Grant Glendinning (GG)	Newcastle College
Rob Hamilton (RH)	North of Tyne Combined Authority
John Hildreth (JH)	Energy Central Steering Group
Matthew Murray (MM)	Tharsus
Cllr Wojciech Ploszaj (WP)	Northumberland County Council
Tony Quinn (TQ)	ORE - Catapult
Phil Soderquest (PS)	Blyth Safety Network
Rob Strettle (RS)	Energising Blyth Programme Team
Andrew Thelwell (AT)	Bede Academy

### In Attendance:

Lara Baker (LB)	Programme Manager, NCC
Jonathan Gilroy (JG)	BEIS
Carol Jameson (CJ)	Regeneration Programmes Investment Manager, NCC
Lee Paris (LP)	Senior Programme Officer
Steve Rutland (SR)	Director of Public Value Ltd
Helen Swinburn (HS)	Projects Officer, NCC
Jan Willis (JWi)	Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), NCC

### Notes of discussion:

1	<p><b>Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence</b>  AF welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions made by new members.</p> <p><b><u>Apologies x 9</u></b>  Helen Golightly, North East LEP  Bev Harrison, Regeneration Finance &amp; Performance Manager, NCC  Martin Lawlor, Port of Blyth  Rt Hon Ian Levy MP (IL), Member of Parliament for Blyth Valley Constituency  Rick O’Farrell, Northumberland County Council  Jane Robinson, Newcastle University  Glen Sanderson, Northumberland County Council  Wendy Scott, Cultural Network  Warren Taylor, Blyth Town Council  Richard Wearmouth, Northumberland County Council</p>	<b>Action:</b>
2	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b>  Advance Northumberland for Energy Central Campus Phase 1 &amp; 2  Catapult for Energy Central Campus Learning Hub  NCC as sponsor for the Culture and Placemaking Programme</p>	
3	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting</b>  These were accepted as true record.</p>	
4	<p><b>Programme Business Case Presentations/Recommendations</b></p>	
4a	<p>CJ reminded Board that an external appraisal panel is used at OBC stage.</p> <p><u>Culture &amp; Placemaking Programme</u>  OBC independent appraisal undertaken by Aecom. Feedback: 119,000 visitors pa to the Town may be ambitious when taking into account the current numbers and events. Need to carry out some sensitivity testing for a smaller output. Economic benefits are evidenced in the business case and social value has been considered well.</p> <p>Recommended to FBC subject to the conditions outlined in the paper circulated to Board members. The appraisal panel is happy to recommend progression to FBC to the Board.</p> <p>RE – do the additional visitor numbers relate to business or leisure? CJ - leisure, there will be business visitors, but overnight stays is the main information we are looking for. RE - how do we measure if we achieve those numbers? CJ – there are outputs and outcomes in both the project and programme. LB – these are still to be agreed as we’re still developing the required evidence base to justify the numbers. There was some initial testing on the Benefit: Cost ratio and even with a more conservative figure for visitors, the BCR is still healthy which is positive.</p> <p>RE - how do we integrate into the wider North East / North of Tyne offer? CJ – we can take that into consideration for the FBC stage.</p>	

	AF - are Board happy for this project to proceed to FBC? Board agreed.	
<b>4b</b>	<p><u>Energy Central Learning Hub</u>  OBC independent appraisal undertaken by Turling. Feedback: Sound Business Case overall. There is a mismatch in funding between main body of report and appendices – to be verified. Contingency is low and extra may be required; cost risks to be closely monitored and stakeholders updated; team structure with names and CV's are needed; more detail of milestones needed; subsidy control to be assessed by the Team at NCC.</p> <p>Recommended to FBC subject to the conditions outlined in the paper circulated to Board members.</p> <p>AF – the risks around funding, you said the contingency is low, what would you expect it to be? CJ - towards 10% based on current costs. It is a concern given the size and scale of the project as we know there is an increase on all capital projects, so this needs to be taken into account. LB - construction costs have escalated through the various design phases for a variety of reasons, obviously construction cost inflation is a big area, plus the changes to the designs to reflect the needs of strategic partners and some site/utility constraints. Cost has now been tested further as we have been out to tender. The tender report we hope to have today confirms two very good submissions and both are confident that they can deliver the facility within the budget envelope. The tender report will be brought back to Board in July. This is a two-stage tender so not all the financial details have come in yet but will come in in the second stage. 6.5% Contingency is quite low but inflationary pressures are already reflected in the price and planning, ground conditions, utility requirements, etc, have been quantified.</p> <p>AT – what about risk on the timeline and delivery as one of the recommendations in the paper was to produce a GANTT chart? CJ - when the construction costs come in the timeline will feed into the FBC. This project is much further on than expected but the recommendation does come with risks and specific conditions to be met. LB – it is a very challenging construction period as the business plan is predicated on opening the facility in September/October 23. SR – we are hopeful of a 52 week build programme as intended, the start date is delayed, but we anticipate the building to be complete by the end of October 23. AF – if the building is complete after the start of the school term does that give us a problem? SR – there will be some flexibility in the programme and we will adjust it accordingly as we will be in close discussion with strategic partners to ensure the right delivery model is in place at the right time</p> <p>AF - does this knock-on to Phase 2 of ECC based on the specific considerations or are they separate? LB – they are separate but it is part of the overall campus and which will provide end to end pathway of learning. There have been cost overruns in Phase 1 and there are concerns this will be similar in Phase 2, but Phase 2 is predicated on the success of Phase 1 and has a longer delivery window where additional funding might be available.</p>	

	<p>AF - are Board happy for this project to proceed to FBC? Board agreed. AT highlighted a potential conflict with him voting given his interest in this project. Board acknowledged the conflict but agreed his vote would not sway the numbers for or against the decision to proceed to FBC as all are for.</p> <p>LB - the appraisal team were very complimentary about both OBC's and felt they were extremely robust. Now both are approved to move forward, we need to present a report to the S151 Officer and Interim CEO for approval to submit the Summary Documents to the Towns Fund and a report will also go to NCC Cabinet for approval and delegation to the TD Board to approve the Full Business Case which will confirm the final construction costs. Once funding is approved by the DLUHC it will be reported to Capital Strategy Group and grant funding agreements finalised between all parties. We can then proceed to awarding the contract.</p>	
<p><b>4c</b></p>	<p><u>Beaside to Town Centre Cycling and Walking Corridor</u></p> <p>LB provided an update on Public Realm, Transport and Connectivity Projects including Bowes Street Improvements, Bridge St Improvements (The Link), Regent St Improvements (Northern Gateway Phase 2), Beside to Town Centre Cycling and Walking Corridor and confirmed the SOBC's have been submitted on these projects although some information is missing as they needed to meet the deadline to get the Summary Documents to DLUHC.</p> <p>RE – regarding the link to Beside station, what will be the onward connection? Would trains allow cycles on them, as improving cycle access is fantastic but are we being sure they have somewhere to go? LB – we will feed those comments back to our Highways colleagues but I believe there is bike parking at the station if required and an opportunity for Blyth electric bikes to get people from the station to the town centre. AF – I believe this is not an extension of the Metro and is a light rail connection which does allow cycles if they are booked in. I did note this week that the Secretary of State has advanced the planning for the Northumberland Line which is positive. RH – the TWAO was made by Government on Monday which is a welcome announcement.</p> <p>CJ advised that this project and the Regent St Improvements project are almost identical regarding the feedback and recommendations on the SOBC, following internal appraisal, so will be covered together.</p> <p>Appraisal Feedback: the projects are within the Town Deal area; information submitted was at a low level of detail which had not been worked up and was expected to be further advanced; match funding from NCC is unclear and needs to be confirmed; lots of work needed around the design costings.</p> <p>Recommended to OBC subject to the conditions outlined in the paper circulated to Board members.</p> <p>LB – we needed to receive the SOBC and report it to the Town Deal Board in readiness of the submission date set by Central Government to get them the information contained in a Summary Document to secure funding. However, in an ideal world we would have waited a few weeks to have more robust business cases. LP is heading this up now and there has been good</p>	

	<p>development in design and costings since the SOBC was submitted. As project sponsors we are optimistic that the OBC will be achieved in readiness for the DLUHC deadlines.</p> <p>LB – Regent St Improvements, there has been a review with Highways and the consultants regarding the movement strategy in the area and the conclusion is that the cycle route on Bowes St is probably not required as it doesn't serve a significant purpose and doesn't connect anything together, plus, there are a number of concerns at having a cycle contraflow going in the opposite direction to vehicles. All cycle lanes in Bridge St and Regent St that are connecting to the Bebside corridor are being reviewed to ensure that they are linked and are consistent but it's looking highly likely that Bowes St route won't go in now.</p> <p>AF - are Board happy for this project to proceed to OBC? Board agreed.</p>	
<p><b>4d</b></p>	<p><u>Regent Street Improvements (Northern Gateway Phase 2)</u> SOBC stage feedback, recommendations and comments – see Bebside to Town Centre Cycling and Walking Corridor above.</p> <p>AF - are Board happy for this project to proceed to OBC? Board agreed.</p>	
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Comms Update - RS</b> Town Forum Showcase at the end July to raise awareness and to involve and inform the community and businesses in Blyth with a focus on the key EB projects and there will be opportunities for others including the Northumberland Line, BRR, etc, to join. There will also be a Citizen Space questionnaire to collect feedback. It's hoped it will be held in the Keel Row with St Mary's Church being the backup venue, and to have a presence on the Market Place to encourage people to come in and see what's planned. The dates are confirmed as Tuesday 26 July [<i>now 21<sup>st</sup> July at Blyth Civic Centre</i>] for a Councillor briefing and a business/public drop-in on Thursday 28 July. The website will be updated soon and a flyer will be circulated on the Showcase.</p> <p>We are continuing to develop space in the Keel Row to host events, information, etc. The space is likely to be the old Shoe Zone unit which we will clarify once we have confirmation. [<i>now within the Atrium</i>]</p> <p>There is a second phase being developed of the programme on culture pilots which will include previous topics and new areas on Environment and Ecology and Living History. Environment and Ecology, Place Create are holding workshops around what playful spaces could look like to hopefully inform the design of the new Market Place. Living History, the Caravan Gallery are part of this who are an art organisation and are being commissioned to get involved in Blyth and will be here mid-July doing engagement. In September they return to put on an exhibition showcasing all the contributions collected in July/August. As an additional benefit to us their Photograph of Britain by the Caravan Gallery exhibition will be held at the RePUBLIC gallery. RS thanked The Port who have agreed to secure the Caravan on an evening.</p>	

	AF – there is a lot of work that has gone into preparing and holding these events, well done to everyone involved.	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Forward Plan</b></p> <p>LB – the key item for the July meeting is the OREC OBC which we’re hoping to submit in August. That means we will have 3 OBC’s ready for August which is really positive. The others will follow subject to progression over the next couple of months. LB will provide an overview of all projects at the next meeting.</p> <p><b><u>July 27th</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme Performance: Local Assurance change of sequence</li> <li>• Project Adjustments: NEP1 –Subsidy Control update</li> <li>• Project Performance: <u>Outline Business Case – Appraisal Panel Reports:</u></li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OREC – Technology and Innovation Centre</li> </ol> <p><b><u>August 19th</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme Performance: Showcase event, review and summary</li> <li>• Project Performance: <u>Strategic Outline Business Case - Internal Appraisal Report:</u></li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hotel and restaurant (TBC)</li> <li>2. The Link (TBC)</li> </ol>	
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>RS – JR has feedback that Newcastle University and a number of the ECC partners had a good positive workshop last week. TQ – it was really constructive and also included Newcastle College, Port Training Services and Bede Academy which is a broad cross section of organisations. Newcastle University have various bids in for funding and saw EB as an opportunity to be used as a platform to deliver future projects and one person has done a Thesis on EB the programme and presented their results which were interesting. AF – we are on the cusp of a very exciting period for Blyth with Catapult, British Volt and Green Energy which is a good time to educate youngsters to support those industries. Northumberland can take advantage of that and have a sense of real hope for the future which is what we need our youngsters to have.</p> <p>AF thanked everyone for their hard work to date.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Date and time of next meeting:</b> Wednesday 27th July 2022 14.00 - 15.30	