



## Blyth Regeneration Framework (Draft for Public Consultation)

October 2020



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# I.0 Introduction

In autumn 2019 Blyth was announced as one of the 101 places selected to create a Town Deal to access up to £25 million through from the UK government's £3.6 billion Towns Fund. The fund aims to support urban regeneration in towns through investment, strengthening cultural assets, supporting skills and business development for local people and businesses, and improving local transport and digital connectivity.

The funding will complement other significant investments taking place in Blyth in the future, including the Future High Street Fund proposals for the town centre, North of Tyne and North East Local Enterprise Partnership

investment particularly in the towns energy and advanced manufacturing sectors.

Blyth Town Deal Board established earlier in 2020, is made up of representatives from key public, private and community sector organisations and its role is to steer Blyth's vision and objectives for the Town Deal. The first stage of agreeing a Town Deal is the creation of this Town Regeneration Framework, which sets a clear vision for Blyth's future, the aim is to capture existing investments in the town, generate new ideas and project concepts that can be developed and crucially to identify new transformational high impact projects to be taken forward

for Town Deal Funding.

Drawing on feedback provided from key stakeholders and previous public consultations for other projects, this Framework proposes a vision and objectives which will form the basis of Blyth's Town Investment Plan, which will set the strategy for our Town Deal and steer how the Town Deal Fund investments are used.

During October local people and businesses will be asked to have their say on these ideas and input their own ideas to ensure that our vision for Blyth's future is shaped and supported by the people who live here.



Image I - Blyth Town Centre, Quayside and Beach



# Blyth Spatial Plan

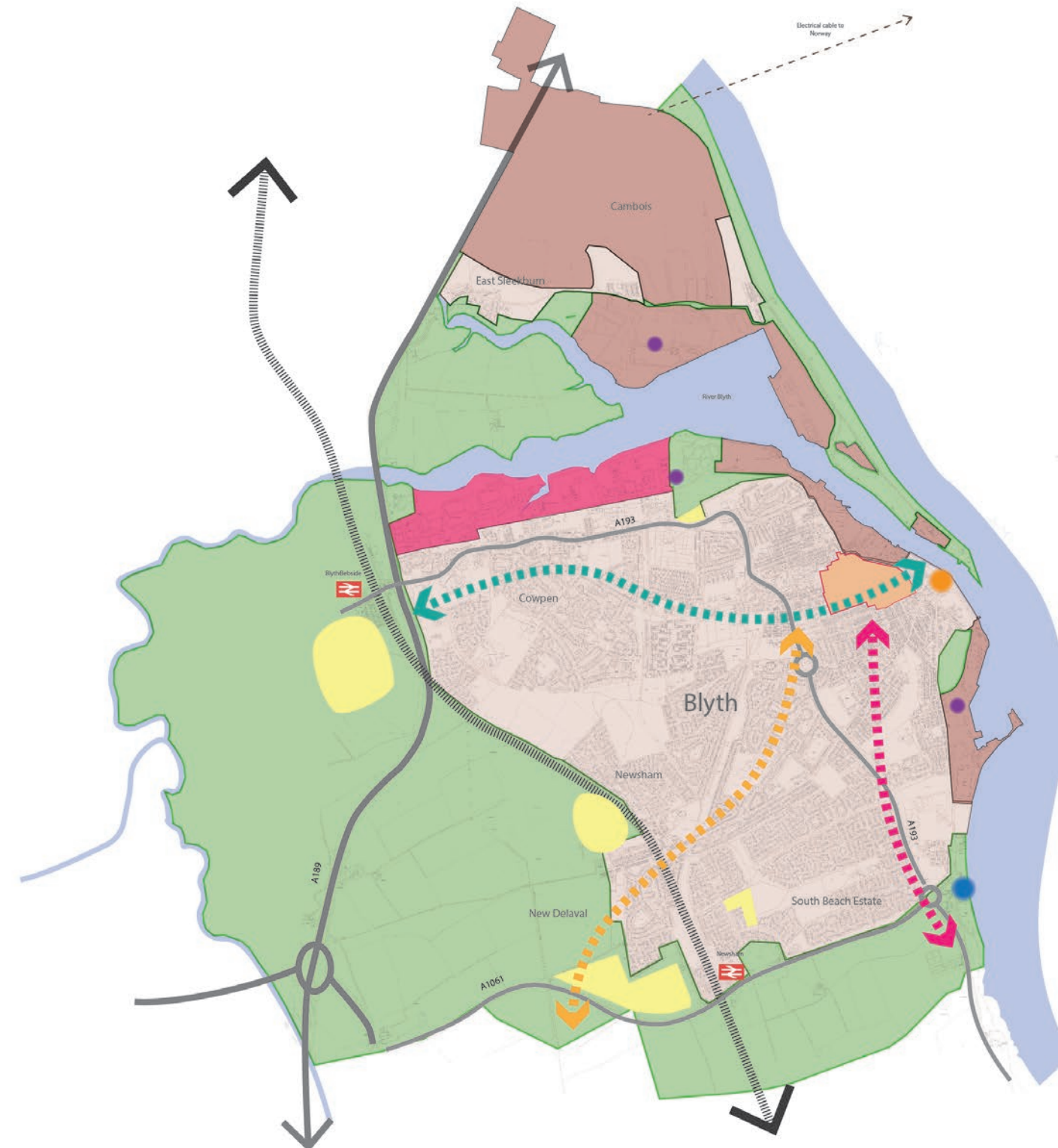
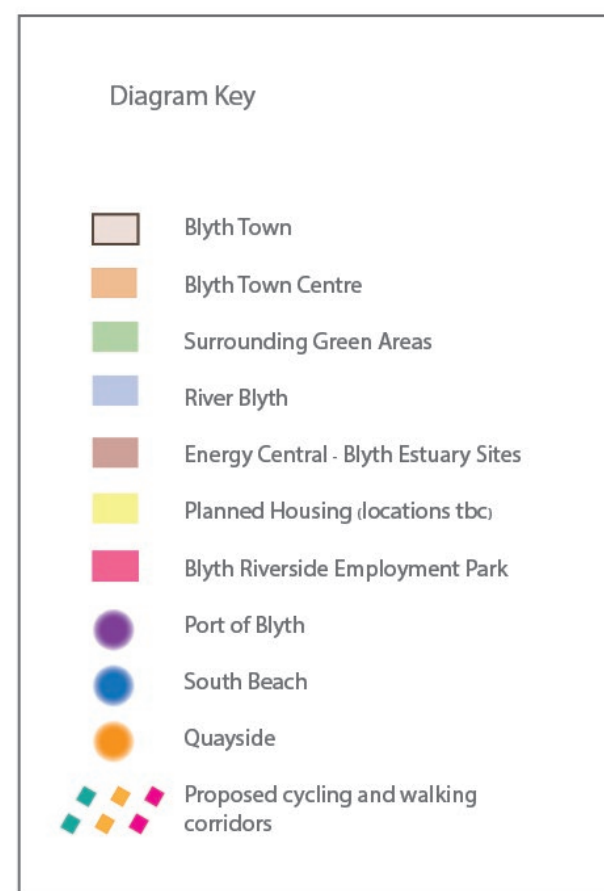


Image 2 - Blyth Spatial Plan



## 2.0 Vision

Our vision is that:

‘Blyth will be a culturally vibrant,  
inclusive and welcoming town, an  
international centre for clean energy  
industry, innovation and sustainability  
well connected to the regional and  
national economy’

To deliver this ambitious vision together requires transformational change within Blyth, building on the town’s industrial and community strengths. Blyth’s place in the world has traditionally been that of an important sea port with connections across the world, although the industry of the past has been lost, the Blyth of today is fantastically placed to play the same international role in the burgeoning energy sector of the future.

Positive and dramatic change on Blyth’s high street, quayside and other industrial zones and community areas will draw the community, visitors, industry and investors into the centre, fulfilling its considerable potential to renew, grow, and connect as an international hub for clean growth industry. Together, the interventions planned will make life better for people, communities and businesses and help Blyth reach its full potential.



Objective One



Objective Two



Objective Three



Objective Four

Objectives to help achieve the vision



## 2.0 Vision - Growing Town



The town of Blyth is an international centre for clean energy growth with a worldwide reputation for excellence including offshore wind and renewables technology specialisms. It will be a great place to work, with thriving businesses creating high quality, well paid jobs.

A key strength is the track record of significant investment and innovation in the existing offshore renewables and energy sector cluster within the Energy Central area on Blyth Quayside and the wider advanced manufacturing industry in the town. These significant sector strengths and a track record of major investment in offshore renewable energy and advanced manufacturing will drive productivity and earnings growth.

Blyth has key investment sites centred around the town centre including the major employment zone; Northumberland Energy Park phases 1,2 and 3. Together



Image 3 - Energy Central: National Offshore Renewable  
Catapult and Port of Blyth



these present clear opportunities to lever significant inward investment to the town, and act as a clean growth testbed, including a wide range of activities building from existing strengths in offshore wind and renewables. The Offshore Wind Demonstrator Project, forthcoming Robotics centre 'R-Core' and a potential minewater heat network through to energy systems and the decommissioning of offshore blade technology are all opportunities to showcase the towns leading role in the green economy.

The growth of this nationally significant clean energy cluster has the potential to anchor further regeneration of the town. The opportunity is to ensure the town has a supportive and attractive business environment, to

facilitate growth and provide a diverse employment base, providing resilience to future economic shocks such as Covid 19.

Home to major businesses and the national Offshore Renewables Catapult, Port of Blyth and Newcastle University research assets, Blyth has significant room to grow and diversify further. Delivering a full suite of clean energy industry, centring on the strategic employment zone; Northumberland Energy Park.

The town's industrial cluster provides the opportunity for Blyth to lead the way as a town wide, low carbon technology testbed, demonstrating how new technology

can be deployed at scale, in industry and community settings, with critical links to the workforce and innovation of tomorrow. With the creation of a town wide 'Energy Campus'.

To deliver the vision for Blyth, key transformational changes will be made, removing the constraints to growth. Driving a clean growth economy, based in the town, with new investment-ready infrastructure. The town centre will be a better place for everyone to spend time in. A new central cultural attractor and a welcoming experience will pave the way for increased private sector confidence in the area.



Image 4 - Indicative image showing Energy Central Institute, Bridge Street



## 2.0 Vision - Vibrant Town



Blyth will be a vibrant, welcoming and safe place with an attractive multi-functional town centre. Blyth will offer a range of high quality and affordable housing, a healthy environment, and an engaging leisure & cultural offer.

There are challenges and constraints to growth which are holding back the town's development and the potential of the community and businesses of Blyth to reach their full potential. The Regeneration Framework will help us to deliver culture, skills and energy led growth and renewal, to address the significant decline in the town centre. Market failure in the town centre has resulted in a lost sense of identity, with a lack of reasons to visit or invest. At the centre of plans for this renewal is the need to address the current lack of any significant attractor in the town centre. This will be transformed by the new Creative Culture Space at the Market Place which will be



Image 5 - Indicative image showing Proposed Culture Creative Centre and Market Place



a catalyst for economic growth in the town centre. It will be a landmark centre providing a cultural, arts and leisure experience and attraction in a welcoming, healthy, safe and sustainable high street environment. It will be a creative space for local people and visitors to experience and participate in music, film and the arts with facilities for play, café, classes and a cycle hub promoting active travel. The town centre is struggling, characterised by high vacancy rates and a leakage of spend out of the area. Blyth needs new attractors to drive vitality and diversify uses in the town centre attracting people into the area. The town's cultural and industrial heritage is an untapped

resource with significant potential to support renewal across the town.

The new Creative Culture Space at the Market Place will transform the town centre into a vibrant place for people of all ages to meet, mix and engage in cultural activities. Creating this focal point will bring more people into the centre, increasing footfall, encouraging people to spend time and money in the area, and delivering a much-needed buzz and vitality in the heart of the town. The opportunity is to change negative perceptions with sequenced intervention in the growth of industry. Creating renewal of

the town centre and better connectivity within and out of the town. Raising the aspirations of the whole community, businesses and investors and giving a vision of a future town which of which everyone can be proud.

Significant changes in use are identified through major acquisitions to repurpose and redevelop existing assets. This will broaden the range of facilities from a retail base to a wider range of developments including accommodation, leisure, R&D, learning and skills and town centre living. A new restaurant and hotel development will fulfil community demand for family-friendly food and drink provision.



Image 6 - Past and Present Photographs of  
Blyth Marketplace



## 2.0 Vision - Connected Town



Blyth will be a well connected town, with access transformed by major investment in all modes of travel, enabling residents and businesses to play a full and inclusive role in the regional, national and international economy.

As Northumberland's largest town, Blyth plays a distinct role as a Port town with a related industrial base, distinct from the wider rural Northumberland economy. Located close to North Tyneside and Newcastle its role as a major commuting hub provides skilled labour in the North of Tyne area making Blyth an increasingly popular place to live.

Despite its relative proximity to Tyneside, Blyth is currently constrained with ongoing concerns over congestion and journey times from commuters and businesses in the

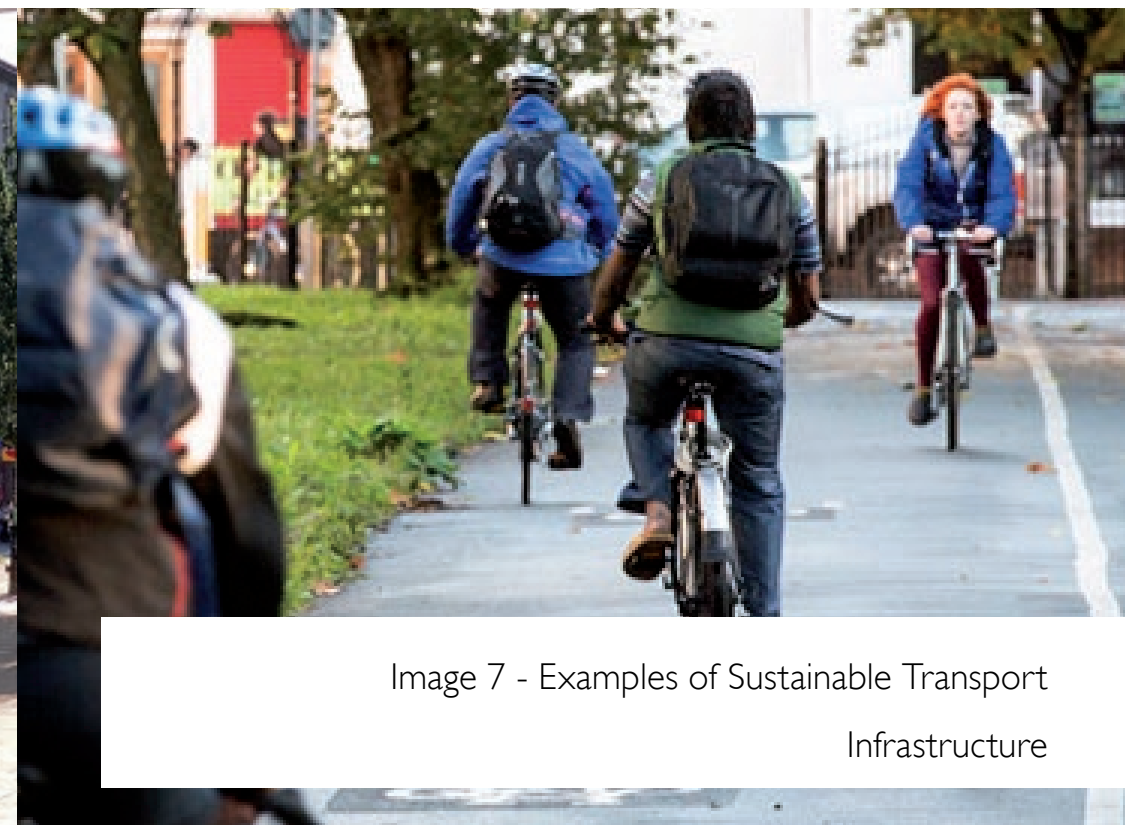
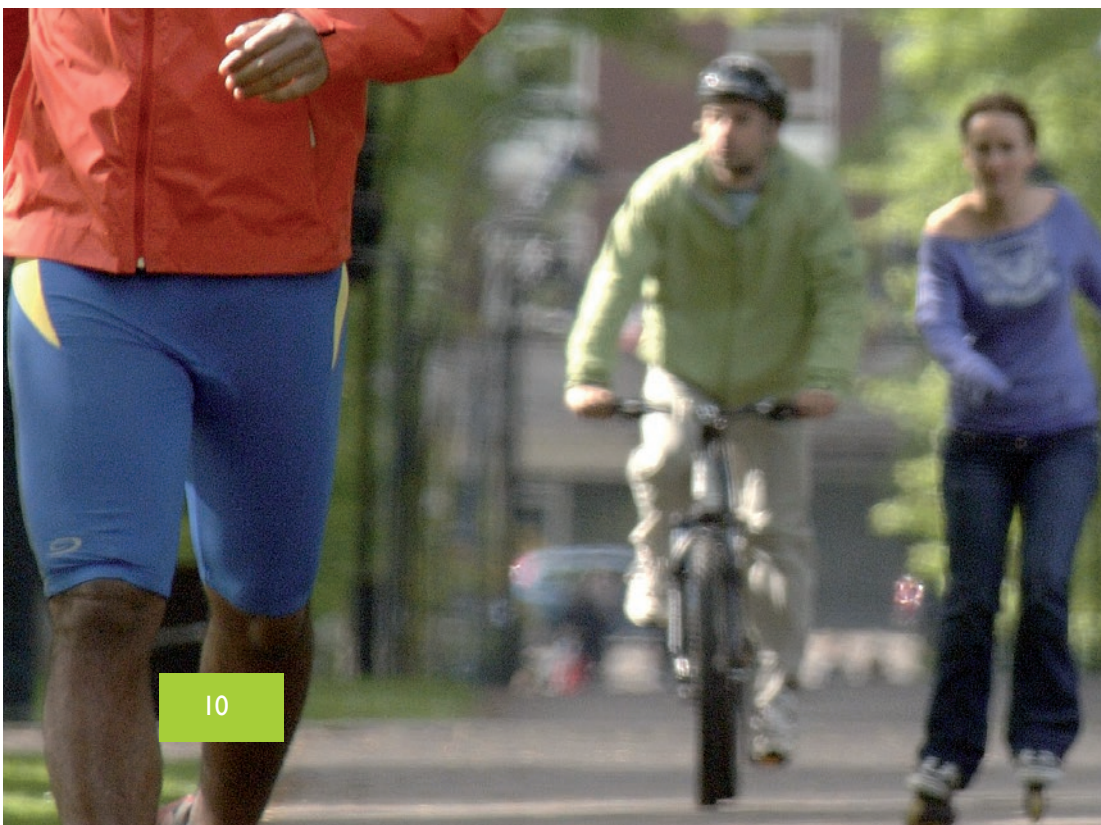


Image 7 - Examples of Sustainable Transport Infrastructure



town. Improved connectivity and digital infrastructure is therefore critical, alongside investment in skills infrastructure in the town. There's an affordable and increasingly popular market housing offer but the condition of stock is a concern in some areas. A programme of significant town centre renewal will support and underpin the creation of major new development sites across the town, new and improved housing provision and new sustainable transport connections.

All modes of transport will be easily accessed and

connected into Blyth from the region and internationally, with investment in the town's road, rail, public transport and cycling and walking infrastructure, creating inclusive integrated corridors throughout the town.

Being connected is also about people, organisations and partnership. The complexity of need and opportunity in Blyth requires a collaborative response by public services, to drive transformation and inclusive growth in the town. This involves collaboration between all stakeholders in the town and through important connections and partnerships

across the wider North of Tyne, North East and national economy, of which Blyth is an integral and interdependent asset.

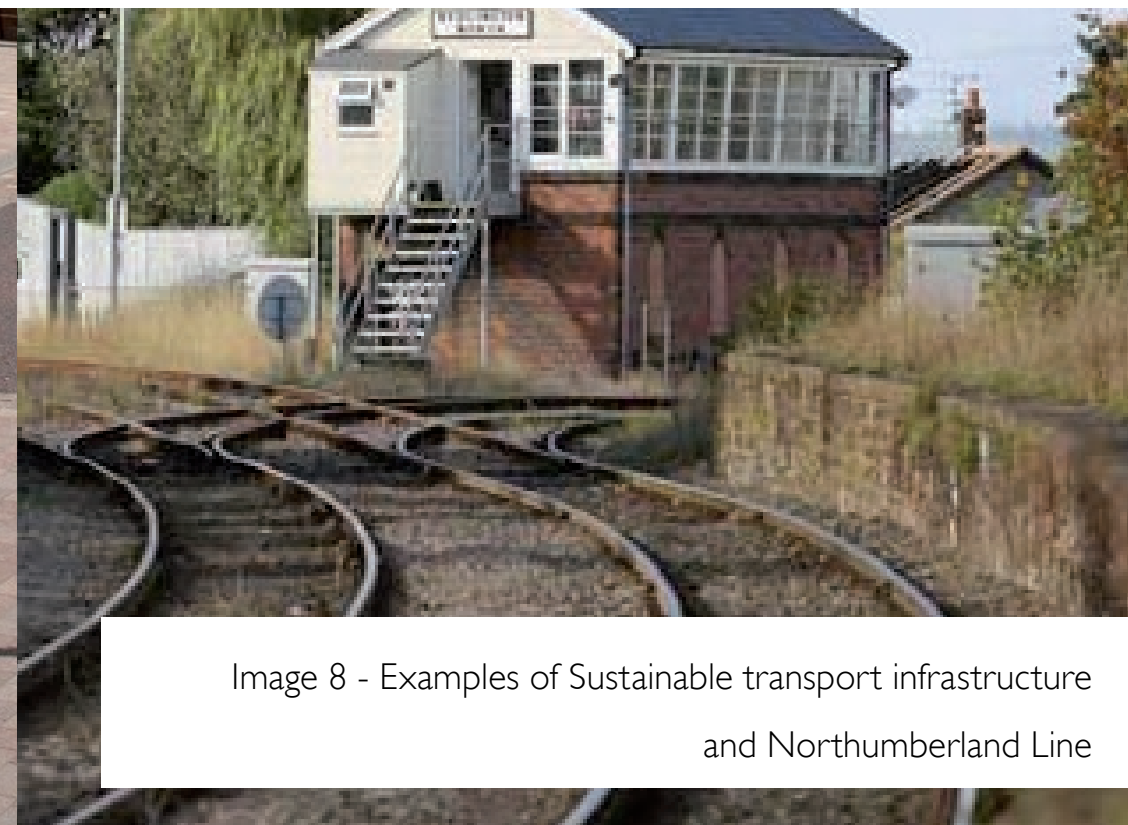


Image 8 - Examples of Sustainable transport infrastructure and Northumberland Line



## 2.0 Vision - Inclusive and Sustainable Town



Blyth will be a great place to learn, invest and live with access to excellent education and skills development in an outstanding learning environment for all ages that supports the towns reputation as a centre of excellence in clean growth industry and sustainability.

Blyth's industry will be supported with the facilities that ensure it is a great place to learn and innovate, with access to excellent education and skills development across all ages of learning from early years, primary, secondary to further and higher education in an outstanding learning environment alongside significant R&D facilities supporting Energy Central. This will inspire and enable Blyth's future workforce to play a full part in the growth of industry in the town.

Change in the high street's use base will connect its future to the town's industrial strengths, with a new Energy





Central Institute, which will provide a major new Research, Development and Skills facility located in the town centre as part of the 'Energy Central Campus'. This will build on the existing assets in and around the Port alongside the planned Energy Central Learning Hub, providing skills pathways into the industry through STEM learning and further education. This will catalyse Blyth's development as a place of significant opportunity, as a leading centre of renewable energy technology and as a central location for innovation and growth in the wider North of Tyne and North East economy.

There's a significant opportunity to capitalise on population

growth and the town's relatively young population, to retain and build a future workforce. However, currently there is a higher-level skills gap which is a barrier to inclusion for local people to access the jobs of the future. Strengthened progression pathways to education and employment within the town are needed to resolve this. There are stark levels of deprivation and inequalities which undermine quality of life and social mobility. Crime and safety are a significant concern, impacting on both the town centre and communities. In a post covid landscape, Blyth will have the necessary infrastructure, including a focus on green space to be able to respond better to demand from communities, with a focus on health,

meaningful connections and wellbeing. Investment will include measures to minimise the environmental impact of Blyth's development, making it a net zero town.

Blyth will be a safe and welcoming community. This requires joint work with communities, businesses and infrastructure organisations to be successful in tackling the root causes of crime and anti-social behaviour. This will provide the basis to create and attract high quality, well paid jobs by bringing more businesses to the area, both in the leading energy and advanced manufacturing sectors but also within a much improved, commercially attractive town centre environment.





## 3.0 Planned Investment

The Regeneration Framework acknowledges that there is a strong programme of delivery in place in Blyth and the opportunity exists to build on assets and address the challenges faced. Some key planned transformational investments include:

### 1. Energy Central Delivery Programme

Port of Blyth, the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Catapult, Advance Northumberland and Northumberland County Council are jointly leading major investment in the town including Northumberland Energy Park, Enterprise Zone sites, and new innovation projects such as the

Robotics 'R-Core' project.

### 2. Northumberland Line

Reopening of the line to passenger services connecting South East Northumberland to North Tyneside and Newcastle. There are two planned stations serving Blyth and the infrastructure development opportunity this provides will be a catalyst to connect the whole town effectively.

### 3. Blyth Town Centre Regeneration Programme (Future High Streets Fund) -

Major projects have been put forward to the Government in the town centre with renewal of the Market Place including a new culture centre, the 'Creative Culture Space', a new hotel and restaurant, the Energy Central Institute research, innovation and skills facility and associated improvements to public realm, transport, cycling and walking infrastructure. The outcome is expected this Autumn with delivery from 2021 onwards.

### 4. Northern Gateway Town Deal 2020-21 Project

MHCLG has awarded the town £750,000 to deliver a new gateway into the town centre from the North including



Image 11 - Energy Central Industrial Activity



phase I improvements focused on Bowes Street and adjacent locations. This project will be delivering in 2021.

## 5. Low Carbon Testbed - Blyth Minewater Heat Network Study

There is huge potential for demonstrator projects in community and industrial settings to show Blyth's credentials as a net zero town. This project could deliver demonstrator projects in key locations from 2022 onwards.

The Framework is identifying key funders' commitments to the town, such as the County Council, Town Council, regional and national partners who are supporting the town's growth, including the North of Tyne Combined Authority; North East Local Enterprise Partnership, Getting Britain Building Fund; Future High Streets Fund; other public funders and private investment.



Image I2 - Indicative image showing Proposed Northern Gateway Improvements



## 4.0 Objectives and Investment Priorities

To deliver the long term economic and productivity growth potential of Blyth, interventions will focus on developing a vibrant, growing, connected, inclusive and sustainable economy. The Regeneration Framework has four objectives to realise its vision for the future set out below with a range of investment priorities that will be focused upon as the Town Deal Investment Plan is developed.



Objective One



Objective Two



Objective Three



Objective Four

Objectives to help achieve the vision



Image I3 - Energy Central: Port of Blyth





*Creating economic growth, jobs and wealth, capitalising on our unique strengths in the clean energy sector*

- Grow Blyth's industrial base as an international centre for clean growth technology including offshore wind and renewables specialisms through jobs and investment through Northumberland Energy Park, Port of Blyth and across the Energy Central strategic employment area and the towns excellent advanced manufacturing offer.
- Bring more businesses into the Blyth using the new Blyth Energy Central Campus as a catalyst to provide the innovation and skills pipeline to attract companies working with the ORE Catapult and Newcastle University and other industry partners.
- Deliver Net Zero innovation programmes which demonstrate and embed low carbon in industrial and community settings
- Grow the local business base by providing workspaces and accommodation that meet the changing needs of businesses, including flexible offices and collaborative spaces, as well as incubation space for the clean growth economy
- Develop the town's advanced manufacturing specialisms including at Blyth Riverside Park; the towns other major business location adjacent to the A189.
- Actively promote and market Blyth as a great place to live and work, attracting people and businesses to the town



Image 14 - Energy Central: Port of Blyth and Blyth Workspace





*Revitalise the town centre experience through culture, skills and energy led renewal securing a welcoming, safe and vibrant destination*

- Develop a new attractive town centre with greater vibrancy and footfall in the centre, with arts and culture acting as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth and improved health and wellbeing.
- Connect the centre to the industrial growth on Blyth Quayside building higher-level skills, growing the local workforce and supporting business productivity and growth.
- Increase footfall and spending in Blyth bolstering and changing the existing retail offer by offering more and higher quality food, beverage and accommodation, a greater range of cultural and leisure activities, and improved transport connectivity.
- Provide new residential units in the town centre attracting more people to live there, helping to stimulate the leisure, culture, and retail sectors and the evening economy.
- Create additional workspace and business accommodation, helping to attract more business activity to underpin the towns sector strengths.
- Improve the public realm and gateways into the town, making the town centre a more attractive place that residents and visitors want to spend time in.
- Improve the facilities and offer for young people in Blyth to ensure it is a place they feel connected to and where they are more likely to stay.
- Diversify and strengthen the visitor and leisure offer in the town by investing in the development and improvement of key heritage and cultural assets, including revitalisation and easier access to Blyth's conservation areas.
- Improve the town's visitor accommodation offer, including high-quality hotel development.
- Offer new reasons for visitors to come to Blyth building on the towns reputation for hosting international events, including events and festivals that are distinctive to the towns cultural, industrial and maritime assets and heritage.



Image 15 - Indicative image of Culture Creative Space, Blyth Beach Huts and Ridley Park





*Improving connectivity into and around the town, making the place digitally enabled and more accessible for work, education and leisure*

- Improve access into and out of the Blyth, enhancing connectivity to Newcastle, North Tyneside, the North of Tyne and the wider UK by improving facilities including new infrastructure linked to the Northumberland Line stations and securing major improvements to the national road network including Moor Farm roundabout.
- Facilitate active travel, increase the number of journeys made by walking and cycling, and make it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to get around the Blyth through investment in walking and cycling routes connecting up key areas of the town.
- Build Blyth's low carbon transport provision including

expansion of electric vehicle infrastructure.

- Continually enhance the Blyth's digital infrastructure, providing outstanding connectivity to help attract creative and digital businesses, and to boost business productivity and growth.
- Address the challenge of digital exclusion by improving both digital skills and access to devices for residents, enabling them to access education, work and services online.

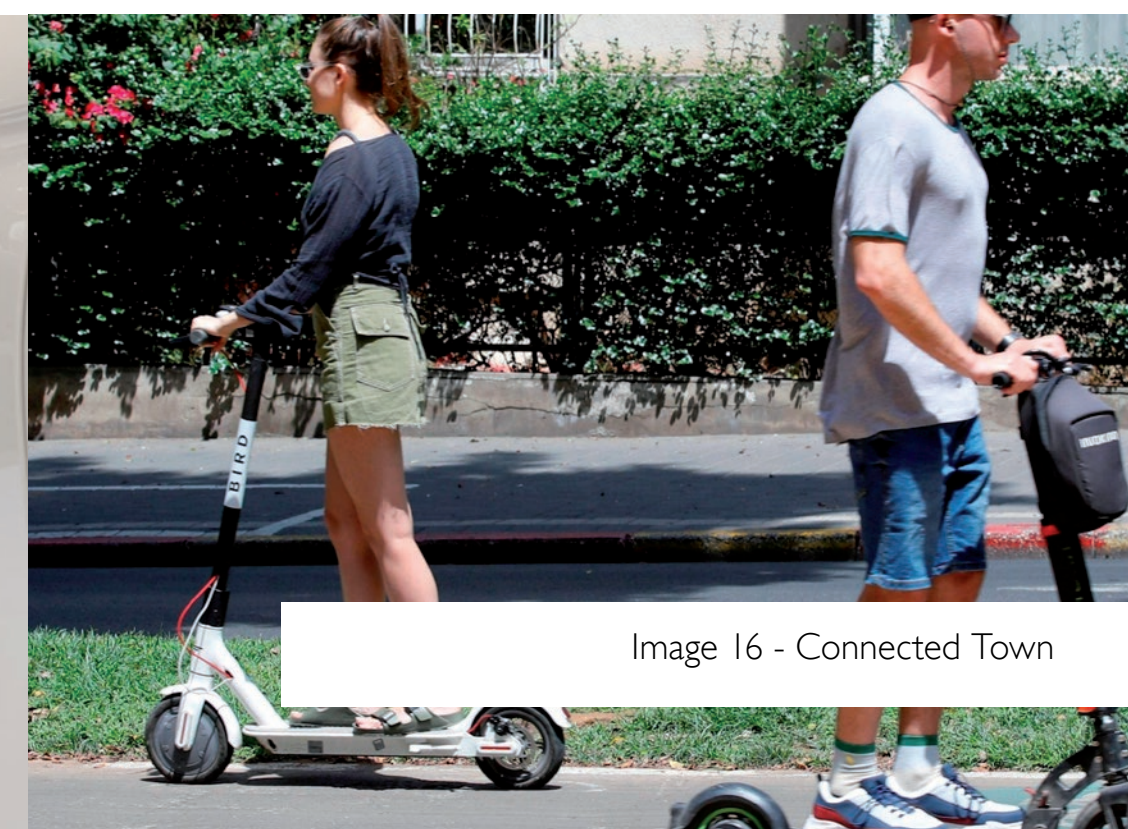


Image 16 - Connected Town





*Spreading the benefits of sustainable economic growth among residents from all backgrounds, and supporting the Town to recover from Covid 19*

- Attract and retain more young people in jobs in the Blyth economy, including equipping the population through the new Energy campus with a skills pipeline throughout the Blyth community from early years to adulthood,
- Grow the local skills base for our key sectors and boost business productivity by encouraging local residents to upskill and reskill so they can benefit from higher skilled, higher paid jobs, while ensuring businesses have access to the skills they need to thrive.
- Support businesses and communities to recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, including ensuring that viable businesses can access the funding they need to survive, maintain local jobs, and prepare

for a return to growth.

- Deliver inclusive growth by ensuring that residents from all backgrounds have the skills needed to access new jobs created in the Blyth, and the digital skills needed to participate in a digital economy.
- Build resilience in the local economy and retain wealth in the area by ensuring businesses have access to a skilled local labour force and encouraging the development of local business supply chains.
- Establish Blyth as an exemplar in clean growth, placing environmental sustainability at the heart of all investments and delivering on our commitment to be a net zero carbon county by 2030



Image 17 - Energy Central training, port facilities and Tharsus, Blyth Riverside Business Park



## Critical Success Factors

The Regeneration Framework provides the basis for project identification to support its objectives. For the purposes of this exercise, projects will need to meet a series of critical success factors considering the objectives of this framework and the expectations of Government in terms of the Town Deal, which is the focus of this process.

Critical Success Factors for project assessment:

1. Delivering on Government Town Deal objectives and outcomes.
2. Delivering on Local Objectives and outcomes - Blyth Regeneration Framework, Northumberland Local Plan (Draft) and Northumberland Economic Strategy objectives.
3. Leveraging the existing major strategic investments, amplifying and extending their benefits to communities and the town centre.
4. Providing additionality to other funding programmes (e.g. FHSF, NTCA, NELEP).
5. Engaging and empowering local communities to lead and shape the future of Blyth.
6. Adopting new and innovative approaches to addressing Blyth's opportunities and challenges.
7. Deliverability (funding, ownership, consent, constraints).
8. Building the resilience of Blyth to respond to current and future challenges (e.g. Covid-19, climate change).



Image 18 - Blyth Market Place, Frameworks Cafe and Commissioners Quay Inn



## 5.0 Interventions

Based on the Regeneration Framework objectives, some potential priorities have been identified for how the Town Deal funding could be used, to add value to the transformational projects planned for the town and to maximise the benefits of this investment for Blyth. The types of projects that could be supported by Blyth's Town Deal include:

- Deliver high quality investment and facilities to grow the clean energy sector
- New cultural and heritage projects giving communities and people access to learning, leisure and culture in

Blyth

- Improving skills and learning infrastructure to support local people and economic growth
- Flexible, future-proofed business accommodation, and investment ready business infrastructure linked to the existing assets and planned development in Energy Central
- Public realm, physical access, improving green spaces and sustainable transport investments, boosting housing delivery, spreading the increased vibrancy and footfall which will be started by FHSF (boosting F&B, leisure, retail, evening economy, culture)

- Investment in sustainable and active travel infrastructure (cycling and walking) connecting the strategic investment sites in the Town Centre and Quayside with key locations across the town, including the Northumberland Line stations.
- Potential to undertake high-quality, superfast digital infrastructure, data, innovation testbed projects building on sector strengths in the town.
- Supporting businesses and communities to recover from the impacts of Covid 19.



Image I9 - Energy Central: Blyth Workspace and Northumberland Energy Park



## 6.0 Next Steps

Your views and ideas on how we deliver growth and renewal in Blyth will help develop our Town Investment Plan. We want to ensure our proposals and vision reflect the needs and priorities of the people and businesses of Blyth and ensure that any investment provides a clear benefit to local communities.

We would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on the vision for Blyth and raise other issues and opportunities for development which are important to you that are not reflected in this document so far.

Please send us your responses before 1st November 2020.

For more information and to give your views via our online survey, visit: [www.northumberland.gov.uk/energisingblyth](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/energisingblyth)

Or email - [energisingblyth@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:energisingblyth@northumberland.gov.uk)

Post - Energising Blyth, Economy and Regeneration Team,  
Northumberland County Council, Morpeth. NE61 2EF

Following the end of this consultation the next steps are to:

- Analyse your responses and provide a summary of the key highlight messages
- Develop Blyth's Town Investment Plan, taking into consideration your views and suggestions
- Present and consult on investment proposals for the Town Deal, during November 2021.
- Submission of the Town Investment Plan to Government in January 2021.



Image 20 - Blyth Port, Quayside and Town Centre





Northumberland  
County Council