

Minutes of The Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns Board Meeting**Friday 14th August, 12.30 – 14.15, Microsoft Teams****Attendees:**

David Land (<i>Chair</i>)	DL	Chair
David Maddan	DM	The Auckland Project, Chief Executive Officer
Susie Doyle (<i>Minutes</i>)	SD	The Auckland Project, Head of Development
Cllr Brian Stephens	BS	Portfolio Lead for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships
Graham Wood	GW	Economic Development Manager, DCC
Natalie Davison-Terranova	ND-T	Principle - Bishop Auckland College
Mike Matthews	MM	Private Sector Member
Cllr Shirley Quinn	SQ	Councillor
Cllr Joy Allen	JA	Councillor
Margaret Coates	MC	Cities and Local Growth Team
Graeme Collinge	GC	Director, Genecon
Nik Turner	NT	Believe Housing
Rob Yorke	RY	Private Sector Representative - Teescraft
Liz Fisher	LF	Director of Engagement and Curatorial

Apologies:

Helen Golightly	HG	CE, North East LEP
Paul Robson	PR	
Amy Harhoff	AH	Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth, DCC
Bishop Paul Butler	PB	Chair of the Brighter BA Partnership Board
Dehenna Davidson	DD	MP for Bishop Auckland
Jonathan Ruffer	JR	The Auckland Project

Item		Action
1.0	Welcome /Introductions	
1.1	DL: Meetings have been every two weeks – next meeting will be in four weeks' time in order to allow time for actions to take place. Agreed by all Liz Fisher (TAP) joining in attendance from the perspective of community consultation	
2.0	Minutes from last meeting/matters arising	
2.1	Request from MC to add small amendment to last minutes – DL to send through paragraph. MC also confirmed that the £750k is an advanced release of funding and the final submission would not be impacted by this release.	DL
2.2	JA notes that 7.8 – should be 14 th August rather than 14 th July	AG

2.3	<p>JA questions 4.2.9 – Question over where to send local case studies. Reference 7 market stall holders who have taken permanent residency in the town in Fore Bondgate/Market Place. Note that business holders are struggling to find the right size property for their needs in the Town (ref House of Smudge)</p> <p>GW: All examples go through to GW please.</p>	
3.0	Declarations of Interest	
3.1	JA: Declaration of interest over the Canny Hill Roundabout	
4.0	Quick Wins	
4.1	<p><i>Project 1: VMS signage</i></p> <p>Roadside Variable Message Signing. The intention is to maximise the usage of existing carparks while we bring new car park facilities online and can avoid obstruction. The proposal brought forward by DCC traffic team. Cost includes acquisition and all data connections through BT with a further element of Town Centre signage.</p> <p>This is phase 1, and we anticipate that with additional carparks there will be the potential to put further signage around the town. The cost is £375,000 for 4-5 signs. Ongoing maintenance to be picked up by the Council.</p>	
4.2	<p><i>Project 2: Canney Hill Statue</i></p> <p>DL comments that whilst everyone is supportive of the project, there is a level of concern around the current environment and other statues being pulled down. This is being put forward for approval with two caveats – the first is planning approval and the second is that we get a wider understanding of public perception.</p> <p>RY: Request for it to be recorded that RY does not support the scheme on the basis of objecting to public money being spent in this way, at this time, when many are losing jobs. Public perception is vital.</p> <p>JA responds that the project is about the heritage and history of the town. It's about working with schools, children and parents to connect people to the areas mining and ecclesiastical heritage. There will be a tie-in with art, design, engineering and career opportunities in STEM. Bob Olley (artist commissioned for the statue) has offered to go into schools to speak with year 6 students and secondary schools to gain experience of design and engineering. GC commented that Art was a really important tool in creating scale and place.</p>	

	<p>Note that local councillors are supportive. DL requested that that information is circulated to board so members can understand the level of support. The Churches and The Miner’s Association, a housing estate on Canny Hill and the businesses community have all been consulted.</p> <p>DM: A laudable project – provided testing is done in wider community and approval should be conditional on passing this test.</p> <p>MM: Supportive of the art element of the project. Notes that we need to be aware of public opinion of historical figures. Many priorities in the town.</p> <p>GW: Pictures of the statue shared. Notes that the allocation request is relatively low. The Board has been put together to represent public, community and business; DCC is comfortable with the project fit. One indicator on the pro forma is around upgraded prominent landmarks – so it does fit within an indicator.</p> <p>NT draws attention back to item three in the report from the last meeting, where new parks and green spaces, demolition, and that these projects were seen as the immediate challenges. We shouldn’t contradict ourselves in putting forward a completed different project.</p> <p>JA states that the roundabout is the gateway into BA and people have complained about how ugly the roundabout is. It’s low maintenance and low budget. The idea for the programme came from the public, and the statue is designed to be iconic and visible. The funding from stronger towns could be used for the infrastructure works and the art itself could be paid for by match funding.</p> <p>GW: Supported subject to planning consent. Should use the wider public consultation for further evidence.</p> <p>Show of hands against the project: 2.</p> <p>DL notes that the final decision as to whether to progress this project as part of the Quick Wins funding rests with The Board following public consultation and subject to planning consent.</p>	
4.3	<p>Project 3: No. 43 Market Place</p> <p>GW introduces the scheme as a pop-up shop concept trialled in Durham last year.</p> <p>DL: May be more partnership options available to support the scheme and businesses</p>	

	<p>JA notes there are a lot of students working in the design industry and there is an organisation in BA who are working with – partnership might be welcome</p> <p>RY notes there are 110 food producers in Durham. In favour of corralling as many as possible under one roof for good quality food and drink. In support of the scheme.</p> <p>GW notes that CLLD funding may be available for revenue match.</p> <p>ND-T notes that the output of the project is a good fit with the skills element of the Towns Fund.</p> <p>DL: Project approved.</p>	
4.4	<p>Project 4: College Digital skills</p> <p>GW introduces the scheme as a project to increase the digital capabilities at the College. There is a need for enhanced digital skills and this proposal is about providing laptops, specialist software and equipment which can tie in with the digital drive programme, supporting the enhanced digital needs of local businesses. Also appropriate for Covid recovery and opening digital sale and diversification. A modest ask, but a comfortable fit with what we are trying to achieve in the town.</p> <p>DL: Project approved. GC invited to comment.</p> <p>GC: In support of the projects recommended. They resonate with the challenges presented with the Strategic Case for the Future High Street bid. Is of the view that the Market Place pop up important. VMS signage good as chimes with infrastructure/capacity and how the town will respond to its future. Statue will be controversial. Overall a good balance.</p> <p>MC points out that the Quick Win funding is in addition to the ‘up to £25m in the STF’.</p>	
4.5	<p>Any further questions:</p>	
4.6	<p>DM questions whether there is an element of DCC budget substitution in the VMS signage project. A broader view concerning the capacity funding would be appreciated.</p> <p>GW responds that VMS signs are not a budget substitution.</p>	

5.0	Capacity Funding	
	<p>GW draw attention to chart in attachment (Item 5 report). Arcadis and Ryder have been approached. Ryder lines are split in two, which takes into account concerns raised in the previous meeting.</p> <p>DCC are in agreement concerning the need for a CGI interpretation once projects have been confirmed.</p> <p>GW notes that there might be other work needed (for example on traffic monitoring and planning, including the Eastern Access Road) and there will be the need for further work after the end of January. There is an expectation that the requirements for capacity work will exceed the budget</p> <p>RY notes he is in support of CGI; the vision is difficult to portray verbally. CGI would be used as a promotional tool as well as something that could be used in support of an application. Internal discussion needed at DCC to talk about extra requirement</p> <p>GW points out that looking to the guidance, capacity funding shouldn't be used for promotional tools. So internal discussion is required at DCC about how else that might be funded.</p> <p>LF notes that CGI is essential for Community consultation. We haven't taken the town with us since the masterplan consultation was commissioned.</p> <p>MM comments that consultation is key, and CGI for public consultation and keeping everyone on track is intrinsic to the project.</p> <p>DM: Need to speed up the decision-making process as CGI has been pending a decision for 3 meetings. Supportive of CGI.</p> <p>DL: Request for Officers to report back to the Board on the ability to pay for CGI within the capacity funding and if not, to suggest how else we might pay for it.</p>	GW
6.0	Stronger Town Vision / Priorities / Spatial strategy	
6.1	DL notes that we need an overarching vision on which to build our bid, and asks for contributions. Suggestions notes as:	
6.2	<p>ND-T points out that the vision needs to be forward looking, as well as about heritage and pride in the past.</p> <p>JA suggests 'energising entrepreneurs'; people who come into the town need to feel it. Being a sustainable tourist destination. Sustainability needs to go through all projects. World Host destination – there's an ambition there to build on the past, but that's our future.</p>	

	<p>LF: A canny place to work, rest and play.</p> <p>DM: BA – a town with a proud history and a bright future</p> <p>MM notes that we need to get the vision clear first, before the strapline. What do we want BA to be like? What is the effort we are going to result in? A place for the community, businesses and residents. BA, a place that makes a difference.</p> <p>SQ suggests ‘A place with a future – passionate about our people. A passion for our future.’</p> <p>BS suggests ‘BA – where dreams become reality.’</p> <p>NT suggests something about being an exemplar, leading from the front, and something about it being inviting. Also around the undiscovered, or yet to be discovered.</p> <p>MC suggests ‘A hidden jewel in Durham and the North East.’ Also notes the need for community consultation on this issue.</p> <p>RY points out that the strapline should be as short as possible.</p>	
6.3	<p>GW notes that vision is absolutely key. How will we know when we’ve achieved our aims? How bold is our vision going to be? We are invited to apply for £25m but we could go beyond, if we have a good vision. The working groups need to be able to reference back to the vision. We must aim to be regionally significant if we’re going for over £25m, if not nationally. Notes that we need to maximise opportunity from the visitor economy, but there’s a need beyond that.</p>	
6.4	<p>DL notes that projects need to be broad in reach and application.</p>	
6.5	<p>GC: Vision needs to be built before straplines. A vision is a statement, a couple of paragraphs, which define where everything is going. MHCLG have been clear that those going for more than 25m will have an additional layer of scrutiny. Very strong evidence base will be required. Although guidance talks about regional and national significance, you have to play to the national agenda if you want to achieve beyond £25m. MHCLG advise that if we’re going beyond £25m, the strategy and budget should be in line with that.</p> <p>5-7 key projects will come out of the long list. It is important that the narrative and vision is evidenced in those projects. The strapline comes at the very end of that process, and the narrative is kept in place.</p>	
6.6	<p>DL states that the vision statement shouldn’t be done outside this group – we need to buy in to it, create it and own it. We will need to engage with the current landlords in BA and from investors. This £25m is an initiator; it won’t achieve the full remit of what we need</p>	

	in the town. We need to get the contributing projects into a framework and substance.	
6.7	JA is working with the Bowes on public consultation and is happy to share evidence.	JA
6.8	LF points out that there is a difference between the Town Board vision, which is much broader and longer term, and the STF-specific vision.	
6.9	GW notes that there are now 5 groups: RY leading on economic regen. All projects need to align with a theory of change and the overall vision. We have the opportunity to engage with other groups (for eg Historic England) who can feed into the group.	
6.10	MM: Altringham voted the best Town Centre in the UK, when only 10 years ago they had the worst high street – could we look at how they did it?	
6.11	DL requests that GW and GC to start the working groups and start the project discussion.	GW/GC
6.12	DM notes that working groups are in various disciplines, but all theme leaders are asked to contribute to the central vision, not just ideas in silos.	
6.13	DL states that theme leaders are tasked to draw in others who they might need. Board members are not the only people who might be involved; others should be asked where appropriate.	
7.0	A.O.B	
7.1	DM: we have not discussed the geographical boundary. Would like to propose that the board work within the current designated boundary as dictated by MHCLG DL: No objections.	
7.2	RY: Could GW/GC send out bullet points/guidelines on format for feedback from each working group	GW/GC
7.3	DL: Group leaders to organise individual meetings/briefings.	Group leaders
7.4	DL will send out info as to who might be in each group. GW will coordinate central ideas and feedback from the group. DL will feed info through to group leaders where required.	DL
7.5	Date of next meeting will be four weeks from today. VH will be available for anyone who wants to physically attend. All participants thanked.	AG

	Meeting Closed.	
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