

# Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone Advisory Group

## MS Teams Meeting

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020

### **Present:**

Dr Bob McManners (joined mtg at 11.15)	BA Civic Society
Nigel Bryson	BA Town Team
Jules Brown	Historic England
Alison Tweddle	The Auckland Project
Annalisa Ward	Durham County Council
Chris Myers	Durham County Council
Cllr Joy Allen	Durham County Council
Kathryn Watson	Durham County Council
Jamie Blackburn (Chair)	BA Town Council
Bryan Harris	Durham County Council

### **Apologies:**

Andrew Walker	BASH TAP
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1.0 Welcome & Introductions

1.1 The Chair (JBla deputizing for BMc) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies were received from AW. BMc would be joining the meeting at 11.15am.

1.3 The 2-minute silence was observed at 11.00am.

## **2.0 Minutes & Actions**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

### **2.2 Actions:**

2.3 There were no actions from the minutes.

## **3.0 Update from Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership**

3.1 BMc reported that the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020, was principally an update meeting so, there was nothing further to report.

## **4.0 Project Manager's Report**

4.1 AnnW talked through the key points of her report which had been circulated previously.

#### 4.0 Project Manager's Report (cont'd)

4.2 **Risk Log** – Castle Chare project delay been removed and now marked as closed. Vacancy rates trajectory was now decreasing. AnnW suggested the inclusion of closure of visitor attractions until June should be added to the issue section of the log (reduction in visitor numbers). Engagement issues due to Covid-19 could now be reduced from current score of 12 due to success of digital engagement activities.

4.3 **Project administration** - up to date; quarterly returns submitted, and payments received from Historic England.

4.4. **Monitoring Framework** – AnnW and Historic England had been working on the document, developing and updating where necessary and as a result initial 2018 target figures were now being re-forecasted on the latest return. An annual profile must now be completed. Key indicators were highlighted on the report and must continue to be monitored. Volunteering figures had been affected by Covid-19, so adjustments have been made. JBr said that changes to the monitoring framework are national changes and are not a reflection of targets not being met; in fact, it is due to the national success of the HAZ that more regular evaluation has become necessary to capture success in more detail. JBr explained that this work is necessary to inform Government of the public value of Historic England's work on the historic environment.

Events figures have been increased to reflect the substantial Community Engagement programme, delivering many events through the History & Heritage Festival. A footfall weekly target has been set at 25,000 and is being tracked on an ongoing basis. AnnW suggested that the Framework be re-examined by the group twice yearly to discuss progress.

4.5 **King James School toilet block/lodge house project** – AnnW was assisting the school with a repair grant funding bid to Historic England. Further project development work was complete and a brief prepared to appoint consultants to carry out survey and design work to RIBA Stage 4 (planning permission for conversion of toilet block into changing facilities and classroom and the lodge house for use by the Durham Amateur Football Trust. The funding bid would be considered by Historic England at the end of November.

4.7 **Town Centre Vacancy Map** – this had been updated following a town centre survey undertaken in Summer, and a copy circulated to members. The overall vacancy rate had dropped to 22%. DCC's Community Economic Development Team have appointed 4 temporary staff to undertake work to support businesses post lockdown and AnnW/KW were liaising with the team member working in Bishop Auckland. They are identifying business needs and looking at how directorates across DCC can respond. CM reported that there were planning applications to convert the former Argos store to a cinema and also proposals to convert the former McIntyre's building. Two positive news stories for the town centre.

4.8 **St Anne's Church** – Quinquennial report reviewed and HAZ PM has had further discussions with HE regarding moving this forward. Two-pronged approach agreed with KW speaking to the Archdeacon and AW/MC talking to Rev Keddily (Rev K). Some urgent repairs, including unblocking drainage and slipped roof tiles are identified in the report. These works need to be discussed as a matter of urgency and an update sought re planned internal works to remove pews.

- 4.9 **Castle Chare** - Work complete including installation of signs to Kingsway. Further package of work being considered, more limestone chippings laid to back of site and wall repairs. Remainder of money from Castle Chare to be invested in a small programme of works at the West Road Water Fountain. Award entry submitted for the DCC Environmental Awards 2020 – Community Partnership category.
- 4.10 **Castle Park and Assets** - Clock Tower – work is underway to restore the Clock and arch; community engagement activities include videos of clock repairs and paint analysis work to the clock face which were included in the Festival programme. Castle Curtilage – AT reported that the scheme had been prioritised during lockdown, and that whilst the Castle was closed until June 2021, work was taking place to progress castle gardens, curtilage and board walk redevelopment works. JBr was pleased to announce that the scheme had recently been awarded a grant of £212,644.00 from Historic England’s Cultural Recovery Fund, towards the first phase of the £2.3million project, to be defrayed this financial year.
- 4.11 JBr explained that the funding was aimed at Covid-19 recovery and keeping specialist craft people and building contractors in employment during restrictions and would be integral to supporting the future of the Conservation Area. JBr said it was important to note that this grant was in addition to existing BA HAZ funding and would not reduce it.
- 4.12 **Engagement** - News releases – several news releases have been issued: Hidden Project, Castle Chare completion, launch of Historic Building Story Map, feature on community engagement, festival 2020 and feature on the Conservation Area Grant Scheme. Further feature articles will appear over the next 6 months. Good coverage obtained including interviews on BBC Radio Tees.

The Historic Buildings Story Map was launched for the British Council for Archaeology Festival 2020 Part 1 in July and then extended with more buildings for part 2 of the BCA Festival and for our History and Heritage Festival. A further story map, covering the archaeology of Auckland Park was launched in October 2020.

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of Email News Update issued in July 2020.

Hidden Project – 5 projects ran over the summer and the results of these projects were also content in the Festival. Hidden Stories focused around uncovering the stories behind the town hall, in particular the building workers; Hidden Gems a photographic project to produce digital postcards, Places in Faces a project to produce a video artwork of people’s favourite places, Hidden words an oral history project with Sandringham Care Home, Hidden Crafts a series of online craft activities including Midsummer Cushion packs. An exhibition to showcase these projects and other HAZ work is planned for Autumn 2022 at the Town Hall Gallery.

- 4.13 JBr congratulated AnnW, on behalf of Historic England, on the success of the History & Heritage Festival and JA thanked AnnW for the excellent online activities she had arranged.
- 4.14 JBl said that Hewitt’s Solicitors were disposing of a collection of Will books which were interesting and would be worth saving. AnnW was to contact the County Durham Records Office.

## 5.0 Any Other Business

- 5.1 **Community WiFi Scheme** - KW reported that footfall had increased in August due to the ‘Eat Out to Help Out’ scheme and following this, figures had been around 2,000 per day, until the recent lockdown when numbers had halved to around 1,000. A social media advertising campaign was underway to promote use of the WiFi.

## **5.0 Any Other Business (cont'd)**

5.2 **Targeted Business Improvement Grant Scheme** - KW reported that although there had been a decrease in uptake recently, she had now received enquiries from two businesses in Newgate Street and one in Fore Bondgate.

5.3 **Fore Bondgate Signage** - KW reported that an Indemnity Licence had now been received from Mr. Grainger and signage installation was due to take place next week. Signs would be installed on the barrier in front of Cocksure Nook, on the wall of the Cocksure Nook alleyway and at the top of Fore Bondgate near the Auckland Cupcake Company.

### **5.4 Future High Streets Fund**

CM reported that Government had made a national request for clarification on all bids submitted in terms of business case and benefit cost ratio. This information was submitted to Government on the 12<sup>th</sup> October which reaffirmed that the business case had a cost benefit ratio of above 2.

### **5.5 Stronger Towns Fund**

The bid was to be submitted to Government by the end of January 2021 and work was progressing on which projects would come forward through the Town Investment Plan. An online consultation and engagement exercise on report content would be undertaken.

### **5.6 Visitor Accommodation**

KW had met with Lucy Wearne of Visit County Durham to discuss potential online workshops. KW/CM/AnnW had met to further discuss and agreed that these could take place early next year. Lucy was in discussion with the AONB and Steve Reed, DCC Planning to look at farm diversification workshops and suggested that Bishop Auckland workshops could be incorporated. CM referred to the Visitor Overnight Accommodation Study which highlighted the lack of supply of all types of accommodation. CM said that an element of funding for property re-use had been included in the FHSF bid and this would include conversion of upper floors to Air BnB, self-catering apartments etc. CM went on to say that if the bid for the full amount was successful, there would be £1million available for upper floor re-use.

## **6.0 Review of Actions**

6.1 AnnW to update Risk Log following review at meeting.

6.2 AnnW to contact Records Office re the Will books being disposed of by Hewitt's Solicitors

6.3 KW to progress arrangements with VCD for an accommodation workshop in Spring 2021.

6.4 AnnW was to contact LF to discuss potential town centre buildings for businesses.

## **7.0 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

7.1 Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021, 10.00am-12.00noon.