

DERWENT VALLEY PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Held via Microsoft Teams on 27 January 2021 at 1pm



PRESENT:

Councillors

Derek Hicks, Ivan Jewell, Alan Shield, Owen Temple and Alex Watson

Partner Organisations

Mark Clelland - Derwentside Trust, Craig Farrage - Co Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Service, Paul Moralee - Karbon Homes, Rachel Rooney - County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Gary Scott (Vice Chair) - Do Business Network (DBN), Insp Dave Stewart - Durham Constabulary and Joanne Waller – Durham County Council (DCC)

Public Representatives

Marlene Boyles, Mike Clark, Jeanette Harold (Chair), Helen Marley, Susan Mellor and Shelley O'Brien

DVP:

Corinne Walton - AAP Co-ordinator, Pete Garrod and Kath Clements - Community Development / Project Officers and Lynn Dougal – Support Officer

PRESENTERS:

Richard Holden MP for North West Durham

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 7

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Rep: Watts Stelling (Vice Chair) and Partner Rep: Alison Lazazzera – DCC

1. Meeting opened by the Chair

Jeanette Harold welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished everyone a happy New Year. Before the meeting started Jeanette mentioned the appalling figures for deaths from Covid-19 and offered her condolences to those who may have lost anyone due to Covid-19. She also offered her thoughts and thanks to those who are working in the public domain.

Corinne Walton briefly went through the Teams functions such as the mute button, raising the hand icon and turning camera on/off. Board members were asked to write RTS (request to speak) in the chat facility.

Board members introduced themselves, apologies were noted as above and there were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of Previous Board Meeting (25 November 2020)

There were no comments/matters arising and the minutes were AGREED.

3. DVP Covid-19 Recovery Task Group Update

Corinne gave an update on the Covid-19 Recovery Task Group and shared a copy of the

report which she briefly went through.

Following on from the allocation of the 2020/21 Covid-19 Recovery budget, we feel there is still further work to do in helping to support the local community, voluntary and business sectors.

The Task Group met on 22 January to consider their role and how they move forward as we move into a new financial year. As the 3 priority task groups (Health and Wellbeing, Employment, Enterprise and Training and Environment) have been on hold, due to Covid-19, it is now time to engage with them to look at the issues locally albeit within the wider Covid-19 recovery theme.

The group discussed 4 options related to our existing Covid-19 Recovery themes and linking in with our current but 'on-hold' priorities:

- Option 1. Discuss the 3 priorities in the context of Covid-19 Recovery to devise actions that we can address (with and without financial resource), in preparation for the 2021/22 financial year.
- Option 2. Review the Covid-19 Recovery themes against the projects the group initially supported to identify the themes we still need to address/support.
- Option 3. The Task Group continue to meet but only in an information sharing/promotion/networking capacity until April 2021 to help disseminate information and good practice linked to Covid/priority themed related projects/support services.
- Option 4. The Task Group explore a time limited project linked to a specific Covid-19 Recovery theme that has yet to be supported (linked to option 2) or which may require more attention due to increased pressures locally.

Following on from their discussion, the Task Group would like to recommend to the Board the following:

- To reconvene the 3 priority Task Groups (Health and wellbeing (HWB), Employment, enterprise and training (EET) and Environment (Enviro)) from February 2021.
- The role of the 3 Task Groups would be to review (and potentially refresh) their current action plans (now two years old), to determine what actions relate to Covid-19 Recovery that they can take forward from the start of the new financial year.
- The Covid-19 Recovery Task Group will remain as a group and will act as a conduit between the 3 priority Task Groups and the Board. They will review the actions/proposals put forward by each Task Group to offer feedback, add value, avoid duplication, and ensure there is a strong Covid-Recovery emphasis.

Jeanette said the report was very succinct and covered what was discussed at the task group meeting. It was then opened up to the Board for comments.

Gary Scott commented in the chat facility that *'the business/skills environment is very different to where it was 2 years ago and will be updating the Employment/Skills Action Plan to reflect these changes and potential future trends/threats/opportunities'*. Gary also added that this sector, like so many, has been hugely impacted. For example, a year ago there was a lack of suitably trained people in the hospitality sector and now the market is flooded with experienced people looking for work.

Corinne mentioned that the Covid-19 Recovery Task Group were keen to pick up the Covid-19 recovery themes that may not be covered by the priority task groups. For example, food provision and support for the voluntary and community sector do not necessarily naturally fit with the current priority themes so will need to be picked up elsewhere potentially.

Cllr Temple said that since the current situation, people have become much more aware of the environment as we have all been out and about more. He would like to see environmental and planting schemes that involve young people and families.

Corinne said through our Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Fund (HAHF), Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) did some activities with children and families last summer and it was very well attended/received. DWT said they had seen an increase in interest in these kinds of activities and that the attendees did not realise that a lot of the trails and footpaths existed. Corinne said she would pass Cllr Temple's comments onto the Enviro Task Group.

John O'Connor (Chair of HWB Task Group/Forum) said Covid-19 restrictions have led to an increase in demand for mental health services and this is likely to get worse. Two years ago, the HWB Task Group's Action Plan focused on improving mental health including suicide prevention and he thinks this area should be the group's main objective, with a Covid-19 link. He also suggested that they look at how services can be coordinated to support those whose mental health has suffered as a result of Covid.

There were no further comments and the Board AGREED to the recommendations proposed by the Covid-19 Recovery Task Group.

4. North West Durham Update

Richard Holden MP gave an update on the Transport Survey he carried out in 2020 and answered questions from Board and Forum members.

Richard said the survey took place from mid-June to early July 2020 and had just under 1000 responses. He was particularly interested in the results regarding the proposed new cycling and walking route with a potential public transport link on the Derwent Walk to connect Consett with a rapid transit link to Gateshead and Newcastle. The responses were generally positive to at least look at the idea, with around 70% in favour of, 8% were undecided and 20% were opposed to it.

He highlighted some of the responses from the survey which included:

- There was a good level of bus services although journey times on some routes were an issue and would like a more rapid service.

- Improvements/enhancements on the Derwent Walk for walking and cycling, particularly on parts of the route where bridges have been removed and where the walk crosses over roads.
- Young people would like to live locally but felt there was not much of an opportunity to do so as employment and education opportunities were elsewhere and unless they had a car, they could not commute with ease.
- In Weardale/Crook there were issues with travelling to and from the area.
- Public transport between the Wear Valley and Derwent Valley areas is poor.
- The area could benefit if there were good public transport links i.e. people visiting to use facilities/walking and cycling routes.

Jeanette asked where this information goes and what happens next. She also said that encouraging young people to stay in the area is important and public transport should be an attractive and accessible option. Since deregulation of the buses, services have reduced and journeys are longer, car ownership has increased which brings environmental concerns.

Rosemary Morris (Forum) asked what the overall cost would be, bearing in mind parts of the infrastructure would need to be strengthened, which would be very costly. She also said there is a lack of electric charging points in the Derwent Valley and has approached DCC, but they do not appear keen to install any at the moment.

Richard said that unemployment in North West Durham is around the national average, but we will have to see what impact Covid-19 has had on the area. Young people have been hard hit by the pandemic and there will be government schemes targeted at young people who are at risk of long-term unemployment. He would like to see more people who live in the area working in good and local jobs, which will help drive the local economy.

Regarding regulation of the buses, Richard said he is neither for nor against it and is aware of discussions about this within the 7 North East Local Authorities.

Regarding roadside charging points, Richard said that DCC applied for 39 under the On-street Residential Charge Point Scheme (ORCS). He is very supportive in having far more charging points across the county and happy to work with the Council in helping to get more and said there is money available from central government for this. He has also enquired if parish and town councils could apply for charging points themselves and said if any local groups are pushing for these, he would work with them too.

Regarding the cost of any proposed transport link, he said that in the bid he submitted, any work on the Derwent Walk would have to enhance what was there already. He also said that to determine what would be suitable and the costs involved (e.g. heavy rail, light rail or a guided bus rail), a feasibility study would need to be carried out. The objective would be to make transport accessible, travel times significantly reduced and less cars on the road.

Cllr Shield asked how people living in outlying areas in Derwent Valley would be able to access points of entry to any rail or transport system.

Cllr Temple gave an update on the 39 charging points installed and said there are 100 in the pipeline. He thinks we should all be pushing the council for more and to make sure they are shared equally across the county.

Cllr Watson said when electric cars were introduced, residents could have charging points fitted free to their residential property and asked if this still applied or would they have to pay for these.

Helen Marley said access on the Derwent Walk should be accessible for everyone, i.e. wheelchair users, prams, the elderly. Richard agreed and said parts of the walk are very steep and would need to be levelled off to improve access for all.

Re Cllr Shields' question, Richard said the local bus company were supportive of a public transport scheme idea and if they could be part of an integrated system, they may run more services to rural areas to link into transport hubs along the route. Also, the access routes into those stops would be cycling and walking friendly and it would be ideal if there was a link within 1.5 miles/30 minutes' walk, for example.

Re Cllr Watson's question, Richard said he is not sure of the situation around residential charging points but will find out and see if there are any grants available.

He added that there are issues for those homes that do not have their own driveway, i.e. terraced housing. However, they could look at on street charging points such as using lampposts as a dual purpose, which is being done in some parts of the country. On new build properties, the government is looking at regulations around this and how new developments have charging points built in as standard. However, the issue is that some developers are not keen on this due to the extra costs involved.

Aidan Faherty (Forum) commented in the chat facility *'Can't see how a new train line could possibly be feasible on previous line given subsequent development of new housing estates, business centres etc in last 40 years on these locations and planning opposition from public in other constituencies in Swalwell/Blaydon etc impacted by noise, privacy etc.'*

Mike Clark commented in the chat facility *'It's probably worth people looking at the proposals and consultation document for the Northumberland line which shows how the transport infrastructure can be organised to benefit communities and provide accessibility.'*

Mike said that there is an obligation on developers to install charging points and Project Genesis Trust has made provision for charging points on the Derwent View site and is looking at a community charging point on Hownsgill Industrial Park. He said there are no charging points on the Hermiston Retail Park and suggested they should be approached to do something about that. He also mentioned that the electricity grid in the Consett area is overwhelmed and not capable of additional loads and asked if Richard could contact Northern Power to see if they can improve that infrastructure.

Richard said he would be happy to work with him regarding extra electricity capacity and for the grid.

Jeanette thanked Richard for his attendance and input at the meeting and offered him an open invitation to join a meeting again in the future.

5. DVP Project Update, HAHF Fund and Consultations

DVP Project Update

Corinne advised there were 2 projects from the Enviro Task Group, that were allocated money, that had not gone ahead for various reasons. The Board were asked for their thoughts on this and to make a decision on how they wish to proceed with them.

1. Footprint Climate Change Conference to be delivered by Durham Energy Institute. £1000 allocated from 2019/20 Area Budget (AB).

Due to lockdown and the restrictions around Covid-19 in 2020 the conference was postponed until 2021. As there is uncertainty whether current restrictions will be lifted this year, Durham University, who were hosting it, have cancelled the event.

Therefore £1k will go back into the AB for allocation to an existing project and cannot be used for a new project (as the minimum threshold for projects is £5k).

2. Greening Derwent Valley Competition. £1000 allocated from 2017/18 AB.

The competition was promoted in 2019 with judging to take place in 2020. Again, with lockdown and restrictions around Covid-19 in 2020 the competition could not go ahead. With current restrictions in place, it is not likely that this can take place this year due to the face to face elements of the competition judging.

Therefore £1k could be used to relaunch the competition albeit in a different format, e.g. entrants to send in photographs or hold a photography competition with winning entries used to produce a calendar.

Before the Board discussed the above, Corinne briefly outlined some of the comments in relation to the conference and competition, from the Enviro Task Group.

Although the task group were disappointed the Footprint Conference could not go ahead, the group suggested:

- allocating the money to a DVP Covid-19 Recovery project, with an environmental angle such as food/transport or energy related
- ask Durham University if they would consider hosting the conference online through Teams/Zoom for example
- reallocate the money locally to support a Covid-19 Recovery project

Gary said with the current situation, a virtual conference may not be a high priority for the University and holding it online does not make it accessible for everyone. He suggested the money could be put towards another environmental project and if the conference comes back in the future, we could look at supporting it again.

Gary commented in the chat facility '*could hold an environmental improvement activity with photos before and after*'.

Ann English (Chair of Enviro Task Group/Forum) suggested that the University be approached to see if they could hold the conference online in the first instance.

Mike suggested using the Visit Consett website and Facebook page to promote a photograph challenge. They both have a good reach with many people adding photos to them on a daily basis. There would be no cost to the DVP and the £1k could be allocated to something else. He said he is happy to work with the DVP to promote Consett and the Derwent Valley area.

Rosemary (Forum) thinks the photography competition is a good idea but feels it is not what the environment task group had in mind. She likes the idea of an environmental improvement project and any initiatives that raise awareness and tackle issues about the environment.

The Board agreed for Corinne to contact Durham University to enquire if they could hold the environmental conference online, and if not, it would come back to the Board to consider where else the £1k could be spent.

Corinne briefly highlighted the comments from the Enviro Task Group regarding the Greening Derwent Valley competition:

- like the idea of the calendar, content does not have to be about improvements, just about highlighting the beauty of the Derwent Valley
- the competition should be progressed, perhaps as a photography one and open to those who already expressed an interest
- allocating prizes on the basis of photographs can be problematic i.e. several photos of the same thing and how does that get judged
- still go ahead with it, could the prize money be increased using money from projects which have not been able to go ahead and concerns raised how prize money will be shared
- photography competition would be ideal at the moment and could include improvements for wildlife

Cllr Jewell likes the idea of a photography competition and thinks people are willing to share photos without having a financial incentive. Any photos have to be taken across the whole partnership area and feels we are moving to a Consett centric approach. He also suggested contacting a photography organisation to sponsor the competition.

After further discussion, the general consensus was that the Board liked the idea of a photography challenge but with no financial incentive. However, £1k from the Greening Derwent Valley competition needs to be reallocated. Corinne advised that other ideas included producing and selling a calendar with the proceeds being given to a local charity.

Mike suggested contacting DCC to enquire if they have any environmental improvement projects that require funding that the £1k could go towards.

Mike also said he could contact a photography company to see if they could supply prizes, e.g. camera equipment and other 'photography' related items, for the challenge.

Jeanette asked Corinne to contact DCC to enquire if they have any environmental schemes for the Derwent Valley area in the pipeline, that we could get involved in using our underspends.

Corinne said she would contact the relevant department within DCC and will update the Enviro Task Group on the outcome. As the Enviro Task Group will be reconvening, she advised that the group could look at exploring some of the ideas presented at the meeting today.

Corinne gave a brief update on the Derwent Valley News (DVN) and said the newsletter, which was postponed last summer, will be delivered to households in the DVP area in the spring. The spring edition will have a 'green' theme and a request for articles has been promoted via email and social media. The deadline for articles is 17 February.

Regarding the 10 projects funded from the 2020/21 Covid-19 Recovery budget, Corinne advised that these are currently progressing with the Funding Team.

Corinne advised that the majority of projects funded from 2019/20 budgets, prior to lockdown, are on hold due to the nature of them being face to face or school based. We are keeping in touch with the applicants on the status of their projects and have recently requested monitoring information for quarter 3 (Oct to Dec 2020). An update on the progression of the projects will be given to the Board in due course.

Holiday Activities with Healthy Food (HAHF) Fund

Corinne gave an update on the HAHF fund and said the DVP supported 6 projects in 2020:

Glenroyd House (Healthy Eating on a Budget) - Summer / Halloween
Durham Wildlife Trust (Family Wildlife Activity Days) - Summer
ATOMS Education CIC (Cooking and science workshops) - this was on hold due to Covid, however the format has changed and they will now be doing activities online
Eden Miners Centre (Fun crafts with food) - on hold due to Covid
Consett Rugby Club (Fun rugby sessions with food) - on hold due to Covid

A balance of £8,177 remains and will be allocated to February 2021 provision. To date there have been two applications returned for February half term. Any funds not used can be retained by the DVP to use on activities of a similar nature.

Corinne highlighted that further to a successful bid by DCC to the DfE, County Durham has now been allocated, provisionally, a further sum of £2.3 million towards the delivery of holiday activities with healthy food, on that basis, the current HAHF programme will be extended this year and all AAPs will receive a share of £2.3m to help support the delivery of projects during Easter, Summer and Christmas 2021. More information will be provided in due course on the programme delivery and allocation of funds for each AAP as it becomes available, but this is good news for our area.

Consultations

Corinne briefly mentioned the current online consultations and online engagement events, which are open to everyone, some of these details have been previously circulated to Board/Forum members:

PCVC Policing Precept. Closing date: 31 January 2021.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/967C3F9>

Shotley Bridge Community Hospital. Online engagement events to talk about future service provision. Closing date: 11 February 2021.

https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SBCH_Event_Registration

Safer Durham Partnership Plan 2021-25. Making County Durham a safer place to work, live and visit. Closing date: 21 February 2021.

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/consultation>

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25. How health and wellbeing services can be improved across County Durham. Closing date: 21 February 2021.

www.durham.gov.uk/consultation

Minerals and Waste Development Plan. Views are being sought on the Minerals and Waste Policies and Allocation Document. Closing date: 26 February 2021.

www.durham.gov.uk/consultation

Parking and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document. Sets out parking and accessibility requirements when assessing planning applications. Virtual public consultation events on 2 February and 10 February. Closing date for comments: 26 February 2021. www.durham.gov.uk/consultation

Article 4 Direction (HMOs). Proposal to make Houses in Multiple Occupancy require planning permission in parts of Durham City. Virtual public consultation events on 2 February and 10 February. Closing date for comments: 26 February 2021.

www.durham.gov.uk/consultation

6. Any Other Business

There was one item raised regarding a Neighbourhood Budget (NB) application for a Wellbeing Room at Glenroyd House. The application form was emailed to Board members for their perusal and comments and as there is a declaration of interest, it requires a quorate approval from the Board. Cllrs Hicks, Temple and Watson supported the application at a request of £9,100 from their NBs (total project cost £12,310). This has gone to the funding team for appraisal and there were no issues.

There were no additional comments raised and the Board AGREED to the NB application with a quorate representation.

7. Meeting Close and Date of Next Meeting

Jeanette thanked everyone for their attendance and confirmed that the next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 1pm via Microsoft Teams.

Signed as a correct record:

Date: