

Minutes of the Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone Advisory Group

Wednesday 21st April 2021, 2.00pm-4.00pm, Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Bob McManners	BMc	Chair
Chris Myers	CM	Durham County Council
Kathryn Watson	KW	Durham County Council
Jules Brown	JBr	Historic England
Annalisa Ward	AnW	Durham County Council
Bryan Harris	BH	Durham County Council

Apologies:

Liz Fisher	LF	The Auckland Project
Nigel Bryson	NB	Bishop Auckland Town Team

ITEM

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

1.1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2.0 Review of Minutes and Actions last meeting – 20th January 2021

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

2.2 Actions:

2.2.1 CM reported that he had been unable to advise Clare Howard (Historic England) of the official date for the closure of the Durham History Centre to public access for archive material. He estimated closure could be in November 2021, for 18 months, re-opening in Spring 2023. ANW said that Clare had accessed some information required for the Research Report.

2.2.2 KW reported that she would be meeting with Lucy Wearne of Visit County Durham once the results of the Visitor Accommodation Strategy were available, to discuss the progression of a visitor accommodation workshop. **KW to circulate a progress update to the group via email.**

3.0 Update from Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership

3.1 BMC gave an update from the Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership (BBAP) Board meeting which took place on 5th February 2021.

3.4 Railways Re-opening

A funding opportunity had been identified for feasibility work on reopening railway lines nationally. DCC's Transport Team was currently liaising with The Auckland Partnership (TAP) looking at the rail line linking Bishop Auckland, Darlington, and the dale. CM confirmed that a feasibility report had been submitted.

3.5 **Member Reports**

3.5.1 **The Auckland Project**

The Auckland Project (TAP) was focusing on Covid safe plans for re-opening attractions including The Weardale Railway, Spanish Gallery, Faith Museum, and gardens.

LF had reported that TAP's community food support programme, "Closed Doors, Open Heart", set up in response to Covid-19, was continuing to help those in need in the local community.

3.5.2 **Visit County Durham**

MG had reported that activity around marketing was currently on hold due to Covid-19 and the organisation was focusing on virtual visits.

3.5.3 **Bishop Auckland College**

NDT had reported that the College's continuing priority was to keep students learning through the pandemic. The majority of students were home studying online, however fifty students were on site. Covid-19 testing of staff and students was being carried out on site twice a week. NDT said that the pandemic had highlighted inequalities in health, lifestyle and equalities, however the main issue was digital exclusion. Results of a recent survey had revealed that over a quarter of students had no access to technology and in response the college had distributed over 160 laptops to students to date.

3.5.4 **Eleven Arches**

Although events could not go ahead due to the pandemic, the organisation had been working to produce a Covid compliant version of Kynren. A new visitor experience had been created, Eleven Arches Park, a daytime version of Kynren with brand new shows and attractions.

3.5.5 **South Durham Enterprise Agency**

The agency was looking at Covid-19 recovery support for businesses and reported that Durham County Council had launched a funding scheme of £5million to support businesses. The agency was continuing to give assistance to new business start-ups and reported on a new Job Centre initiative 'Community Spaces' which was a national pilot de-risking small start-up business taking town centre retail space, by working directly with landlords.

3.5.6 **Durham University**

Professor Claudia Hopkins joined Durham University in October 2020 on secondment from the University of Edinburgh as Professor and Director of the Zurbarán Centre for Spanish and Latin American Art.

3.5.7 **Durham County Council**

DCC had developed a business recovery support package, including a £5million business recovery grant programme.

4.0 **Project Manager's Report**

4.1 ANW gave an overview of Year 3 achievements:

4.1.1 Management:

- Year 3 monitoring returns and claims had been submitted, including forecasted outputs for the next two years.

4.1.2 Research:

- The Historic Area Assessment (HAA) had been reviewed and was due for publication in May, and could be accessed via the HE Research Portal.
- Research group consisting of DCC, TAP, HE and Durham University had not met in 2020 but planned to meet in Summer. **ANW to arrange follow up on meeting date.**
- Horticultural & Music event had been removed from both Research and Community Engagement agendas due to Covid-19 restrictions. TAP may revisit event in the future.

4.1.3 Designation:

- An update to the listing records for 5 structures in the Auckland Deer Park had been submitted for approval. Listing review update for 80 Newgate in progress. JBR confirmed that the priority for designation review in years 4 and 5 of the programme would be the Auckland Deer Park.
JBR was to discuss the possibility of de-listing the former King James School with HE colleagues, at DCC's request, and report back.

4.1.4 Town Building Re-use:

- Conservation Area Grant Scheme (CAGS) - several enquiries/applications currently in progress.
- St. Anne's – increased on Risk Register, however it was hoped that progress could be made in Years 4 and 5
- Masonic Hall – the owner had been identified and contacted re future uses, however, further contact had been unsuccessful. JBR said a decision was needed on when the building becomes an enforcement issue. ANW confirmed that it was currently on the DCC enforcement list and could be instigated when appropriate.
- Ancillary buildings King James 1 Academy – additional £22k funding secured to support project development which was progressing well.

4.1.4 Castle Park & Assets:

- TAP was progressing Clock Tower and Castle Curtilage works following successful HE funding bid.

4.1.6 Public Realm:

- Castle Chare project Highly Commended in the DCC Environmental Awards. The West Road Fountain project would be completed with installation of new interpretation board signage.

4.2 Work Plan:

- Enriching the List campaign project had been launched and to date 7 listings had been enriched.
- A Local List project was to be launched to develop local lists across County Durham with funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- The Conservation Area Appraisal was to be updated, and a Conservation Area Management Plan drawn up. BH explained that the Plan would involve all partners working together to ensure a co-ordinated approach and would include the identification of risks, enforcement monitoring and statutory undertakings, in effect a safeguarding document for the future. JBR said he was reassured that the Management Plan would be adopted by various DCC departments and suggested that HE advice note No.1 be included.
BH to include HE Advice Note No.1 in the Management Plan

4.2 Workplan (cont'd)

- Former Mechanics Institute project to be progressed in Years 4 and 5.
- Public Realm works to be carried out in Year 4 around Market Place through FHSF.
- Heritage Skills activities courses (joinery, masonry, historic building repair) – procurement of suppliers to deliver courses was being progressed.
- Support for apprenticeship with TAP maintenance team.

4.3 Delivery Plan:

- Legacy objective had been added. Further discussion required.
- DCC objectives updated to new Durham Vision text.
- Project list updated with some projects removed and some amalgamated; E3, R9 and R10 removed and T4 and T6 moved to T2.
- Gant Chart updated. JBR had added an additional tab with spreadsheet tracking all projects which he would keep up to date over the next two years.
- JBR referred to Project N1, recruitment of a Project Manager, and highlighted a risk of the workplan not being delivered as projected this year due to the interlude between the resignation of the current Project Manager and the appointment of a replacement. CM explained that KW would be managing the CAGS and himself and BH would manage delivery of the Kings James and Mechanics Institute projects.

4.4 Raid Log:

- The register had been updated, with some items added, some removed and some scores changed and ANW explained the changes.
- CM explained that the title of item No. 21 would need to be changed from State Aid Regulations to Subsidy Control.
- ANW suggested that the Monitoring Framework be tabled at the next meeting in July.

4.5 ANW thanked everyone for their support during her time as Project Manager.

4.6 The Chair BMC thanked ANW for her achievements in the success of the programme to date.

4.7 JBR said it had been a pleasure to work with ANW and her efficiency and conscientiousness had been a great help to him and his colleagues at Historic England.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Regeneration Update

5.1.1 Future High Street Fund - CM reported that as the accountable body for the programme, DCC was currently developing governance procedures.

5.1.2 Property Re-Use Fund – a grant application pack was being developed by KW/ANW. A procurement exercise was to be undertaken to commission property surveys, looking at how vacant properties could be brought forward for redevelopment. A chartered surveyor was to be appointed with an option to appoint a conservation area accredited architect, if required.

5.1 Regeneration Update (cont'd)

- 5.1.3 Targeted Business Improvement Grants – KW reported that enquiries had increased post lockdown, with two completed awards, one offer letter sent and a further five expressions of interest received in the last week.
- 5.1.4 Community WiFi – KW reported that footfall figures had increased to 2,000 on the 12th and 13th April, following the re-opening of shops, however, figures had now dropped to half this figure. KW said she would continue to monitor footfall figures.

5.2 Town Centre

ANW reported that businesses Bon Marche and Peacock were under threat of closure which would leave two large empty properties and the former Burtons store was now back on the market.

6.0 Review of Actions

- 6.1 KW to circulate a progress update on proposed visitor accommodation workshop to the group via email.
- 6.2 ANW to follow up meeting date for Research Group
- 6.3 JBr to circulate feedback on Designation Review, following discussions with the Designation Team at Historic England.
- 6.4 BH to include Historic England Advice Note No. 1 within the Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan.
- 6.5 KW to contact the owner of 47 Newgate Street for an update on progress.

7.0 Date and Time of next meeting

- 7.1 Wednesday 21st July 2021, 2.00pm, MS Teams.