

## Minutes of the Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone Advisory Group

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021, 10.00am-12.00noon, Microsoft Teams

### Attendees:

Bob McManners	BM	Chair
Chris Myers	CM	Durham County Council
Kathryn Watson	KW	Durham County Council
Jules Brown	JB	Historic England
Anne Allen	AA	Durham County Council
Bryan Harris	BH	Durham County Council
Cllr Sam Zair	SZ	Bishop Auckland Town Council

### Apologies:

Cllr Andrew Jackson	AJ	Durham County Council
Liz Fisher	LF	The Auckland Project

### ITEM

### ACTION

#### 1.0 Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced new members Cllr Sam Zair, Bishop Auckland Town Council and Dr Anne Allen, HAZ Project Manager.

#### 2.0 Review of Minutes and Actions last meeting

- 2.1 BM highlighted an error under Item no. 3.5.3. The wording should read '*NDT said that the pandemic had highlighted **inequalities** in health, lifestyle and equalities, however the main issue was digital exclusion*'. With this correction, the minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### 2.2 Actions:

- 2.2.1 Item 4.1.2 – AA was to arrange a meeting of the Research Group, led by John Castling. **AA**

- 2.2.2 Item 4.1.3 – JB confirmed that an application for the de-listing of the former King James School building should be submitted. **CM**

#### 3.0 Update from Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership

- 3.1 BM gave an update from the Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership (BBAP) Board meeting which took place on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

#### 3.2 Future High Streets Fund (FHSF)

DCC's GW had confirmed that a Government grant funding offer letter had now been received.

### **3.0 Update from Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership (cont'd)**

#### **3.3 Property Re-Use Fund**

CM had reported on recent discussions with colleagues at Historic England (HE) around the property re-use fund. DCC would be responsible for the administration liability with applicants applying for one grant, with DCC, HE and the HAZ PM making the decision as to which elements of grant support could be given from the Conservation Area Grant Scheme, DCC's Targeted Business Improvement Scheme and FHSF. The scheme would be launched by the end of June.

#### **3.4 Stronger Towns Fund (STF)**

GW had reported that an award of £33.2 million had been received.

#### **3.5**

CM had reported that the Stockton & Darlington Railway HAZ and Bishop Auckland HAZ were involved in the economic impact assessment work being undertaken for the line and a stakeholder engagement session with consultants had taken place.

#### **3.6 11Arches**

Kynren planned to stage 6 evening shows over the summer (each Saturday from 7<sup>th</sup> August to 11<sup>th</sup> September). The new visitor experience 11Arches Park had been launched.

#### **3.7 Community WiFi**

CM had reported that town centre visitor numbers were returning to those of pre-Covid 19 lockdowns, with dwell time currently averaging 1 hour. The programme was now being rolled out county-wide; currently live in Seaham and Barnard Castle, then Chester-le-Street and Durham. This would provide valuable data of visitor movement between the towns and assist with future event planning.

#### **3.8 Bishop Auckland College**

The college's Spennymoor campus was to re-open in September for 80 students aged 14-16 years old.

#### **3.9 The Auckland Project**

Attractions would be re-opening from the beginning of July, with restricted numbers initially. Staff would be returning to the office following the Government's announcement on 17<sup>th</sup> May. Current works included: The Bishop Auckland Community Strategy; Bar Mondo survey work, with a long-term plan to create a community hub; plans for change of use of No. 42 to a 'test' community hub; progressing gardens and Deer Park works.

#### **3.10 Durham Diocese**

The Rt. Reverend PB had given an update on four of the walks which were part of the Northern Saints Trail; The Way of Life Trail, The Way of Love Trail, The Way of Learning Trail and The Way of Light Trail. DCC had been approached by the organisers of the Camino Inglis to discuss proposals to install a fountain in Bishop Auckland (the Water of Life fountain) to mark the end of a section of the Northern Saints trail.

#### **3.11 CM gave an update on progress since the BBAP meeting:**

- Water of Life Fountain – DCC and Visit County Durham (VCD) had met to discuss options for location and future management and maintenance and a follow up meeting was to be arranged.

### 3.0 Update from Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership (cont'd)

- Re-opening Railways – outcome of funding bid due in a couple of weeks

### 4.0 Project Manager's Report

#### 4.1 Management –

AA reported that the Raid Log had been updated. Significant issues for discussion were around the ongoing impact of Covid-19, in particular its effect on the History & Heritage Festival in September, delivery of community engagement activities and work with schools. AA proposed a blended approach to the Festival with a mix of outdoor and online events and a limited number of indoor events. Community engagement activities and work with schools would take place online. CM said that this approach was the correct way to proceed. AA highlighted another flagged issue which was the decrease in visitor numbers which may be a national trend. KW reported that Community WiFi data showed that footfall figures through the town had remained consistent at around 2,500 visits per day

#### 4.2 Research -

Both of the recent Historic England Bishop Auckland research reports had been published and could be downloaded direct from the database as PDFs (details below).

- Howard, C, Pullen, R, and Rimmer, J 2021 'Bishop Auckland, County Durham: Historic Area Assessment', *Historic England Research Report Series 22-2021* [[access RRS 22-2021 here](#)]
- Jecock, M 2021 'The Road, Rail and Parkland Bridges of Bishop Auckland, Co Durham: an assessment of the historical and archaeological evidence', *Historic England Research Report Series 4-2021* [[access RRS 4-2021 here](#)]

AA reported that the full Gazetteer of Sites was still being finalised.

#### 4.3 Designation -

AA reported that Listings for some bridges had been updated and one bridge had been de-listed. AA reported that an additional 4 entries had been added to Enriching the List. BH reported that DCC had recruited a Local Listing Engagement Officer and a Project Delivery Officer and would be introducing them to AA.

**Action: BH to introduce Local Listing Engagement Officer and Project Delivery Officer to AA.**

**BH**

#### 4.4 Town Building Re-Use

##### 4.4.1 Conservation Area Grant Scheme –

KW gave an update on current applications.

4.4.2 Kings James 1 Academy Ancillary Buildings – AA reported that the Ecology Survey had been carried out last week and submission of a planning application was imminent. AA reported that a drain survey would be completed during the Summer.

4.4.3 St Anne's Church – AA was waiting for a response regarding engagement around the History & Heritage Festival and Heritage Skills training.

- 4.4.4 Mechanics Institute - AA was liaising with Mr Natrass of Hewitts Solicitors who acted for Mr Outhwaite, the former Secretary of the Institute.
- 4.5 Castle Park & Assets – JB explained that the HAZ planned to review the designation of Auckland Park as a registered park and garden (Grade II \* listed). This had not yet been timetabled as waiting for output from archaeological investigations and research which have taken place over the last 10 years. JB said that due to time constraints and development pressure the review may have to be undertaken without the research results. AA said that she would be facilitating a meeting with David Ronn, TAP and HE's Listing Team to discuss the remit for the review, , but that this would likely be after DCC had released the results of the initial impact study work currently being completed by consultants.
- 4.6 Public Realm – High Bondgate interpretation panel to be installed shortly. Repainting of Market Place railings and street furniture planned.
- 4.7 Engagement –
- 4.7.1 The Festival of Archaeology was taking place until 1<sup>st</sup> August. A Story Map compiled by Historic England could be accessed online, together with a Town Walk and various other activities. With regards to school engagement, Archaeologist David Mason had published a book 'Roman County Durham' and had agreed to produce an online talk. AA was currently talking to David about producing school packs to tie in with the school curriculum and make a relationship between the Roman past and the town today.
- 4.7.2 Heritage Skills Training – final version of procurement document agreed and tender document would be out at the beginning of September. Delivery should be commenced before the end of the year. CLLD funding had not been pursued as this would delay delivery. Bat Conservation Trust proposal for bat training course has been received and AA had approached TAP and St Anne's Church as training venues.

AA thanked everyone involved in assisting her during her induction.

## **5.0 Any Other Business**

- 5.1 Regeneration Update
- 5.1.1 Targeted Business Improvement Scheme (TBI) - KW reported that two businesses had been supported this financial year. There were now 3 grant schemes in operation in the town centre; TBI, CAGS and Property Re-Use Fund and KW continued to engage with town centre businesses to promote the funding schemes. CM said that a Property Re-Use Fund press release was imminent and explained that DCC would be responsible for the administration liability with applicants applying for one grant, with DCC, HE and the HAZ PM making the decision as to which elements of grant support could be given from the 3 schemes. KW reported that as part of the Property Reuse Fund, the grant scheme running under the Future High Streets Programme, she was in the process of procuring a building surveyor to survey up to 35 vacant buildings in the town centre and produce a concise outline condition survey with an itemised outline costed schedule of repairs for each property. The surveyor should be in post at the beginning of August.

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

5.1.2 Visitor Accommodation – CM reported that DCC was continuing to promote the former Co-op building to developers as a potential hotel business and was working with consultants to look at the financial feasibility of bringing the building back into use. JBR confirmed that HE's listing review on the building was complete.

Visitor Accommodation Workshops - KW said that VCD believed that it would be prudent to wait for the outcome of building surveys so that information could be relayed to the potential developers in the workshop(s), KW would then re-engage with VCD to progress the workshops. KW anticipated that the preferred bidder would be commencing work early August which would allow these workshop(s) to potentially run in October/November.

## **6.0 Date and Time of next meeting**

6.1 Wednesday, 21st July, 10.00am