

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Bishop Auckland Stronger Town Board** held in The Elgar Room - Bishop Auckland Town Hall on **Wednesday 28 September 2022 at 3.30 pm**

Present:

D Land (Chair)

Board Members

Councillor Elizabeth Scott	Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships
Rob Yorke	SDEA and Teescraft
Natalie Davison-Terranova	Bishop Auckland College
Stephen Bowyer	The Auckland Project (for Jonathan Ruffer)
Liz Fisher	The Auckland Project
Chris Knights	(for Bishop Paul Butler)
Councillor Michael Siddle	Mayor, Bishop Auckland Town Council
Jack Bell	(for Dehenna Davison MP)
Geoff Paul	Strategic and Technical Support Consultant, DCC

Officers

Graham Wood	Economic Development Manager, DCC
Susan Robinson	Head of Corporate Property and Land, DCC
Craig MacLennan	Transport and Infrastructure Manager, DCC
Tom Smyth	CLGU
Sarah Harris	Clerk to Bishop Auckland Town Council

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Amy Harhoff, Dehenna Davison MP, Bishop Paul Butler, Jonathan Ruffer, David Madden, Mike Matthews, Nik Turner, Jonathan Gilroy, Mark Jackson and Andrew Walker.

2 Declarations of interest

Natalie Davison-Terranova declared an interest in the Springboard to Employment Project. The Board member noted she was employed by Bishop Auckland College, a delivery partner in the initiative.

On behalf of The Auckland Project (TAP) Stephen Bowyer declared an interest in the Durham Dales Gateway and the Town Centre Diversification Artists Hub projects which were at the land acquisition stage.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

4 Stronger Towns Funding Project: Walking and Cycling

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided a summary of the Stronger Town Funding Walking and Cycling Business Case within Bishop Auckland.

A copy of the full Business Case for submission by the end of September 2022 had been circulated to Members.

Geoff Paul re-capped that the Board had agreed to submit a proposal centred on the original proposals within the TIP after discounting a further option known as Heritage Walk primarily due to cost and economic issues. The Board had agreed that discussions with Active Travel England would be advanced for alternative costing and delivery opportunities. DCC were arranging a meeting with Active Travel England to review opportunities and would continue to work up a detailed design in order that it could be oven-ready for any future funding opportunity.

The Board had agreed a £2.5 million allocation from the STF for the original proposals with £0.5 million match funding from Durham County Council.

Currently walking and cycling routes were fragmented in Bishop Auckland, particularly in the town centre and local communities were disconnected from key services.

The report outlined the proposals which had been developed in 12 individual sections. All were compliant with DfT design standards, and with the exception of Section 12 could all be accommodated within the £3m budget. At a cost of circa £1.1m, the Section 12 proposal was not affordable within the budget allocation and would require Environment Agency approval. It could however be considered for any remaining STF funding.

The route would offer Very High Value for Money, with a benefit cost ratio (BCR) estimate of 12. This was well above the STF threshold of 1.2, and the Very High Value for Money threshold of 4.

The Board discussed the proposals.

Rob Yorke noted the excellent work carried out in presenting the proposals and hoped that £1.1m could be secured at some point from other funding opportunities to bring forward Section 12.

Following comments regarding Coundon and Bracks Farm schemes, Craig MacLennan confirmed that although not included in the final proposals both schemes had been shortlisted as reserves.

Councillor Scott asked about delivery timescales and was informed that work was due to start on site in the Summer of 2023 for a period of 10 months.

The Board welcomed the proposals for Cockton Hill Road which would improve safety for cyclists and walkers.

Following discussion the Board **AGREED** to

- (a) proceed with the proposals (Routes 1-11) set out in paragraph 16 of the report;
- (b) endorse the signature of the associated Walking & Cycling Business Case Summary document;
- (c) note the proposals for further discussions with Active Travel England over the Bishop Auckland Heritage Route.

The Board then discussed progress with other Stronger Town Board projects. The Springboard to Employment and South Church Enterprise Park projects were progressing following the Business Case Summary sign-off.

Durham Dales Gateway was on target for the submission of the Business Case by the end of November 2022.

Work to finalise the costs associated with the Tindale Triangle proposals were almost completed. Natalie Davison-Terranova noted that at the last meeting it had been agreed that a report be presented discussing budget re-allocation to meet the funding gap required to deliver the longer-term network solution. Geoff Paul confirmed that the Team were now in a position to commence this piece of work.

Rob Yorke referred to mitigation works at the three roundabouts and was informed that six design models had been prepared and costed.

Geoff Paul stated that the Team were mindful of the current market volatility and the challenges facing the projects due for Business Case submission by the end of the year.

Graham Wood advised that monitoring and evaluation of the two projects already signed-off was being addressed and that the Walking and Cycling project would also be included.

Tom Smyth urged the Board to spend on the two projects already signed off and to be mindful of the timetable for Business Case submission for the remaining projects. He was pleased to note that the Walking and Cycling Project had achieved a BCR of 12 which was very unusual and demonstrated the work that had been put into the design. The project would provide an effective corridor which would be very well-used.

5 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 20 October 2022 at 1.00pm.