

Notes of the Weardale Area Action Partnership Board Meeting

21st July 2022 – Eastgate Village Hall



ATTENDEES

Board Members

Public Representatives: Kevin Roddam (KR)
Adrian Holden (AH)
Richard Lawrie (RL)
Alison Humble (AHu)
Will Wearmouth (WW)

Partner Representatives: Damian Pearson (DP) – Believe Housing – **CHAIR**
PCSO Chris Davison (CD) – Durham Constabulary
Jeff Bell (JB) – Business Representative

Elected Members: Cllr Helen Barrass (HB) – Muggleswick Parish Council
Cllr Angela Hawkes (AHa) – Stanhope Parish Council
Cllr David Sugden (DS) – Wolsingham Parish Council

Officers

Angelina Maddison (AM)
Tracy Edwards (TE)
Fiona Barber (FB)

Presenters

Shaun Harrison (SH) – The Auckland Project
Wayne Dixon (WD) – The Weardale Railway

APOLOGIES

Public Representatives: Joan Warriner
Ian Hirst

Elected Representatives: Cllr Anita Savory
Cllr John Shuttleworth
Cllr Olive Wilson (OW) – Witton-le-Wear Parish Council

Partner Representatives: Dan Wootton – County Durham and Darlington Fire and
Rescue Service
Ian Conway - Durham County Council
Julian Haynes (JH) – Voluntary Sector Representative

BOARD MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. As everyone knows each other there was no need for formal introductions to be made.

The Chair welcomed new Board members Alison Humble who joins as a Public Representative and Parish Cllr Angela Hawkes who represents Stanhope Parish Council.

The Chair advised Board members that Trish Chapman who represented Hunstanworth Parish Meeting has resigned. AM advised that options are being explored to fill this vacancy.

Apologies are recorded above.

2. Declaration of Interest

The Chair asked that Board members declare any interests as they arise on the agenda.

3. Agreement of Notes from Board Meeting held on 9th June 2022 and Matters Arising

The notes of this meeting, as circulated, were **AGREED** and confirmed as a true record by those present. There were no matters arising.

4. Presentation:

Restore Your Railway, Weardale Railway & Bishop Line **Shaun Harrison, Project manager, The Auckland Project &** **Wayne Dixon, General Manager, The Weardale Railway**

SH gave a presentation to the Board. He explained that The Auckland Project is a charity which is based in Bishop Auckland who bought The Weardale Railway out of administration a few years ago. They now own the railway line from Bishop Auckland to Eastgate. He explained that they are looking to regenerate the railway and establish connections to Darlington, Teesside and the East Coast Main Line (ECML). He advised the Board that the UK government has pledged money to reopen lines which were previously closed and that they have been allocated funding to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). A copy of the presentation is held on file in the WAP office – contact the team at weardaleaap@durham.gov.uk to find out more.

Included in the proposal is the provision of a Greenway Active Travel Route which will provide walking and cycling routes along the entire length of the Weardale railway with future potentiality to extend to Darlington.

Anticipated start date - if given the go ahead - is in 2025 to coincide with the 200-year anniversary of the Stockton to Darlington railway.

The Chair invited questions from Board Members.

AH asked how the railway and active travel route will be separated for safety. SH advised that there will be a strip of land in between which will have a fence on it.

AHu queried the possibility of a 1 hour maximum journey time between Darlington and Eastgate. SH advised that previously Heritage Services had been limited to 25mph. This proposal includes a line speed increase to 50mph. It also looks at required passing loops and the number of different trains required to achieve this.

AHa asked what the train capacity will be. SH & WD advised that this will be dependent on the unit and stock available when the train services begin. Current thoughts are based on the use of the Sprinter / 158 fleet currently used by Northern which can carry 150/200 people per train.

CD asked whether the depot would remain in Wolsingham. WD confirmed that it would although trains would be moved prior to service beginning to allow the service to begin at Eastgate.

JB queried whether there will be a need to purchase any land to facilitate these proposals and asked what would happen if the current landowner refused to sell. SH advised that The Weardale Railway own all the affected land between Bishop Auckland and Eastgate. He confirmed that the Crook spur is not owned and nor is there any track remaining in situ.

DP asked whether the proposed Crook spur will follow the previous route. SH confirmed that a site visit has taken place with Network Rail and they have looked at a light rail provision from Wear Valley Junction following the original route. This would require a high level of development to achieve.

WW advised that support for this project from residents in Weardale will hinge on the provision of the Active Trail and this needs to remain integral to the project. He reminded those present that the history of The Weardale Railway is chequered and there remains some ill-feeling towards it. WD advised that they are fully aware of this opinion and stated that the Active Trail is the proposal's Unique Selling Point (USP). Its inclusion allows residents of Weardale to have the best of both worlds.

KR queried whether there is sufficient car parking identified, SH confirmed that the anticipated passenger numbers dictate that this is needs careful consideration. It will be looked at in greater detail in the next version of the proposal. Under consideration are upgrades to stations ebike parking provision, cafes, electric car charging, small business pods.

AH asked whether a viability study has been undertaken to ensure usage numbers. SH advised that as part of the study, information was obtained from Tourism UK. Potential linkage with other projects in development such as overnight cabins at Hamsterley has indicated that whilst trains may not be full, passenger demand is there.

AHa commented that the finances seem ambitious. SH advised that The Auckland Project has committed an investment of £200 million in the area – which includes the purchase of the railway as well as other projects currently in development. AHa asked whether this will lead to more tourist destinations or increased offer in Weardale or whether it is aimed at increasing development in Darlington. SH stated that the focus is very much on Weardale and is concerned with enhancing links to existing tourism provision rather than generating extra.

JB queried whether this would allow aggregate wagons to be taken off the roads. WD advised that there is an option to begin a freight service in Weardale. One train could replace 70 road wagons. He explained that the difficulty is in finding suitable opportunities within the train timetables to provide a path for the trains as they access and utilise the ECML.

RL asked if any socio-economic impact has been identified e.g. any effect on house prices/rents etc. SH advised that the study shows that there will be more opportunities for small businesses. He said that the impact on house prices has not been considered in this study. SH also shared that visitor numbers to Weardale are similar to Northumberland. However, Northumberland has 4 times as many overnight stays which impacts the local economy. A day tourist will spend on average £25 per person, whereas an overnight stay will be upwards of £100 per person.

The Chair asked Board members whether they would be minded to permit a letter of support to be drafted and provided to The Auckland Project in their development of The Weardale Railway. Board members felt that there are potentially a lot of rewards for Weardale from this project. They also asked that reference be made in the letter of how crucial it is that the Active Way remains an integral part of the plan.

The Board **APPROVED** that a letter of support be sent to The Auckland Project with the observations / caveats above included.

The Chair thanked SH & WD for their presentation.

5. Weardale Action Partnership Update

AAP Review

AM advised that the AAP review is now underway. She explained that this is being carried out by an organisation called ERS which has a background in Community Development. She also explained that Board members will be contacted to allow them an opportunity to share their views.

The Chair commented that it is his experience that groups in Weardale have to work harder due to there being no larger organisations operating in the area. He shared that he is familiar with the work of other AAPs and that the projects delivered by Weardale AAP are just as good if not better than other areas.

AM explained that a Focus Group will be convened with representatives from ERS which will allow Board members to share their experience of the AAPs.

Fun & Food – Summer Activities

AM explained that there are a number of activities organised over the summer holidays. These are advertised on our Facebook page and also will have posters distributed throughout Weardale.

AM reminded Board members that the budget we are allocated for these activities is calculated by the Free School Meal (FSM) allocation. She explained that as we are unable to know which families are in receipt of FSM due to GDPR restrictions, the team works with schools to encourage them to prioritise sharing the information with families who are eligible for FSM.

AM advised the Board that additional funding has become available for the October half term holiday. This has been advertised and we will work with groups to deliver activities during that holiday.

6. Towns & Villages Funding Update

AM gave a brief update on the various projects which are being considered for Towns and Villages funding.

Witton-le-Wear Community Centre

Project is currently in development.

Weardale Open Air Swimming Pool

AM advised that an understanding of need is being obtained. Still in development.

Weardale Museum

AM advised that the museum has secured some additional external match funding.

Ashcroft MUGA / Play Area Refurbishment

AM advised that there is a meeting next week to determine the way forward

St John's Chapel and Wearhead Play Areas

AM explained that these are 'back-up' projects which would be easy to deploy if needed.

Cameras – AS Declared an Interest

BL advised that an offer of grant was made on 8th March 2022. This funding comes from Cllr Anita Savory's Towns and Villages allocation within her Neighbourhood Budget (£10,000).

Champing in Muggleswick – HB declared an interest

AM reminded Board members that they are welcome to visit Muggleswick Church for themselves to help them to understand the nature and extent of the proposed project. RL confirmed that it makes much more sense when you see it for yourself.

AM showed the Board some photographs of the building and HB advised that the intention is to remove the pews to allow for overnight stays. AM advised that there are AONB walkways nearby and Visit County Durham walking routes as well as the Saints Trail.

TE advised that when she had visited there was a walker who happened to be present who stated that he would have made use of the overnight stay facility had it been available to him.

AHa asked how this works in practice given that the building is still in use as a church. HB advised that there is a monthly service which will continue. AM advised that this is a new model that is being used and other areas are looking into similar projects. Meetings have been held at higher levels within the diocese to ensure the church service aspect is not compromised within the repurposing of the building.

HB explained that buildings surrounding the church have listed status due to their historical importance and links with the history of Durham Cathedral. Thankfully the church itself is not listed.

RL commented that he thinks it will be a popular destination and is an ideal place to stop.

AM asked Board members whether they would be minded to ringfence some money for this project. This would be subject to a full application as usual but allows the applicant to approach other funders with the confidence of having already obtained funding in principle.

TE explained that the project has indicated that it requires £99,000 and has £12,000 match funding. She also explained that these estimates are subject to change.

AHu shared that this is a project that other funders would be keen to allocate funding towards.

WW queried the lack of Diocesan financial contribution given that the project has the potential to be of great use to the church. HB offered that the church doesn't seem to have any money available for this project. This is a new venture and it needs something to kickstart it in order to be able to attract other funders.

AHu stated that other trails are hugely popular – not just with pilgrims but with walkers in general.

WW suggested £20,000 to unlock other funding but would like to see a contribution from the church included.

AM reminded Board members that the £210,000 needs to be spent by the end of this year.

DS suggested ring-fencing £40-£50,000 to encourage the project. DP agreed with this and with leaving the option open to fund to a higher level if deemed necessary. AM agreed and stated that she would be reluctant to go to £99,000 preferring instead a figure of £50,000. AHa agreed with a figure of £50,000.

RL stated that he saw this project as a useful local resource which will be good for local families as well as visitors.

AHu stated that she thought the church might find it difficult to offer funding but that there are other funders who are sympathetic towards churches that could potentially help. AM advised that she would look for the church to support any other funding searches.

HB explained that bookings will be taken via an established website that specialises in champing. There will be options to book as a group or as a family and will house around 10 people in a dormitory fashion.

AH asked who would benefit financially once up and running. HB confirmed that the champing firm would take a fee but that all other money received would be needed to cover the running costs.

The Board **AGREED** to ringfence £50,000 of Towns & Villages funding for Champing In Muggleswick. Final allocation will be subject to a final application and contributions (financial or otherwise) from other funding bodies – including the church.

7. Area Budget Update

Stanhope Market Place – Installation of Infrastructure and Lights - £12,531

AM advised that Stanhope will be lit up this Christmas as this project will soon be underway.

Application for Approval – Killhope Tales - £13,500

TE explained that this previously came to the Board with a request for £15,000. Following comments from Board members, the WAP team have held further discussions with the applicant, and they have confirmed an additional contribution of £1,500 match funding which reduces the amount requested to £13,500.

AM confirmed that as Coordinator she supports this project.

The Board APPROVED the application.

Application for Approval – Small Grants Fund - £10,000

AM explained that the maximum available for a Small Grants Fund this year is £10,000. The WAP team have made the following recommendations to the Board:

- To RECOMMEND the allocation of £10,000 from Area Budget
- To RECOMMEND the introduction of a flat rate of £500 SGF allocation per application
- To RECOMMEND the prioritisation of applications from groups who have not previously received funding from our Small Grants Fund

AM confirmed that as Coordinator she supports this project.

The Board APPROVED the application with the RECOMMENDATIONS included above.

Expression of Interest – Wolsingham Wayfarers - £7,530 – DP declared an interest

RL queried the need for a laptop. TE explained that between them, the group don't have one that is adequate given the level of administration work they undertake with both the Wolsingham Wayfarers and Walkers are Welcome. AM suggested that an entry be made in the Ts and Cs that would allow the laptop to be passed to another community group should it not be used as anticipated.

Other Project Ideas

AM outlined any developments in the projects suggestions received by the WAP team.

- Wolsingham Christmas Celebrations
- Infrastructure & Lights
- Christmas Decoration Workshops for Primary Schools – AM clarified that this is intended to include all schools in Weardale
- Youth Work for Stanhope – AM advised that there are no spare youth workers in the County. Exploring an option to join with UTASS to get Youth Workers qualified – may take 2/3 years to train. Lack of Youth Worker provision is being looked at centrally by all AAPs.
- Norman Wright Pavilion
- Community Resilience Planning
- Play Areas – dependent on Towns & Villages application

Welfare Reform Funding - £10,000

AM asked whether the Board would be minded to fund the Citizens Advice Worker, Linda again. The Board were happy with this suggestion. TE advised that the current Weardale Accessible Advice Service programme was under review. She confirmed that the project can be tweaked in order to meet the needs of Weardale residents.

Action: WAP Team to work with Citizens Advice to develop a project bespoke to Weardale

Youth Fund

AM asked whether the Board would be minded to fund the Witton-le-Wear Youth Club again. The Board were happy with this suggestion.

Action: WAP Team to invite an Expression of Interest from the Youth Club

Older Peoples Social Isolation Fund

AM asked whether the Board would be minded to fund the Community Wellness Coordinator again. The Board were happy with this suggestion.

Action: WAP Team to invite an Expression of Interest to continue the CWC project for a further year.

Young Peoples Healthy Relationships

AM confirmed that this is still in the early development stages.

8. Neighbourhood Budget

AM shared some pictures with the Board of a bench dedicated to the Wolsingham Wayfarers which has been placed at the Demesne Mill. This was funded through Cllr Savory's Neighbourhood Budget.

She also shared some pictures of new clothing supplied to Wolsingham Football Academy via Cllr Shuttleworth's Neighbourhood Budget. TE shared that the group had were very grateful for the support

AM advised that all Neighbourhood Budget must be spent this year – no rollover is permitted.

Cllr Savory

Small Grant Fund

- Wolsingham Nursery – Repairs to Castle
- Eastgate Village Hall – Printer
- Weardale Flower & Garden Club – RHS event, Newby Hall

Cllr Shuttleworth

Small Grant Fund

- Stanhope Photographic Society
- High Pennine Horticultural Society

9. Neighbourhood Issues

None raised.

10. Countywide Partner Issues

Police

Nothing specific to report. Some minor issues with ASB and cars. CD advised it is a pleasure to police the Dale.

CD reported that the speedwatch van is doing well – they are always on the lookout for more community volunteers. If anyone would like the speedwatch van in their area please contact the Police to arrange.

AM advised that the speedwatch van is being hailed as a national model of good practice.

CD confirmed that the numbers of RTC in the Dale have decreased

JB asked about motorbikes in the Dale every Sunday. CD advised that motorbikes often appear and sound to be going faster than they actually are. He advised that the Police motorbike team is often in the area to assist in patrols. He confirmed that accidents relating to motorbikes are down in the Dale.

DP suggested that often the problem is not usually speed but rather the overtaking methods.

CD also advised the Board that the Police are focussing on identifying controlling behaviour especially in domestic relationships. He encouraged anyone with concerns to contact the Police.

TE advised that there is a project that we have funded as an AAP – Empowering People – that is looking at forms of domestic abuse. She stated that there will be an opportunity to feed into the police from this project.

11. Dates and Times of Future Meetings

AM stated that Board meetings are currently being held face-to-face. There has been a suggestion put forward of having either hybrid meetings or a mix of face-to-face and online meetings in the future. She asked the Board for their thoughts.

After some discussion, the Board suggested maintaining face-to-face meetings wherever possible and keep all Board meetings at 6:00pm going forward. Board members suggested that any meeting could be moved online should the weather forecast suggest it being dangerous to travel.

Appendix 1

Covid Recovery Funding - £100,000

Monitoring Complete

- Opportunities for Enrichment – Weardale Adventure Centre – £23,110
Note: (£1,530 underspend returned)

Projects Underway

- Weardale Sports Apprentices - £61,179
- Low Barns Volunteers - £10,800
- Durham Dales Hockey – Walking Hockey and Walking Netball - £7,049

Budget fully allocated with an overspend of £608

Area Budget Funding - £100,000

Monitoring Complete

- Eastgate Christmas Lights - £21,474

Projects Underway

- Weardale Accessible Support Service – Citizen’s Advice - £9,635
(Jointly funded with Welfare Reform budget + £10,000 = £19,635 Total)
- Witton-le-Wear Youth Club - £3,598
(Jointly Funded with Youth Fund budget +£9,902 = £13,500 Total)
- A Close Knit Community - £5,963
- Fire Cadets and Tri-Responder Training - £8,150

Projects Approved by WAP Board and currently with Appraisal Team

- Weardale WordFest - £7,000
- ‘HUB’ble Bubble Hopefully No Trouble - £5,300
- Music in the Durham Dales - £4,086
- Empowering People - £5,384

Projects requiring Board Approval (Granted 10/2/2022)

- Teesdale and Weardale Mountain Search and Rescue Team – £11,418

Area Budget Allocated £70,590

Area Budget Remaining £29,410

Welfare Reform - £10,000

Project Underway

Weardale Accessible Support Service – Citizen’s Advice - £10,000
(Jointly funded with Area Budget + £9,635 = £19,635 Total Project)

Budget fully allocated

Youth Fund - £9,902

Project Underway

Witton-le-Wear Youth Club - **£9,902**

(Jointly funded with Area Budget + £3,598 = £13,500 Total Project)

Budget fully allocated

Older People's Social Isolation Fund - £25,000

Project Underway

Community Wellness Coordinator – Weardale Community Partnership - **£25,000**

Budget fully allocated

Appendix 2.

Neighbourhood Budget

Neighbourhood Budget (NB) Allocation per councillor - £19,400

- **Capital £14,000; Revenue £5,400**
 - of which £3,000 can be used on NB small grants in 2021/22
- **Town & Villages -£10,000**

Cllr Anita Savory

Neighbourhood Budget

- Running Costs and Referee provision - Wolsingham Football Club
- Benches in Wolsingham – Durham County Council
- Rights of Way Improvements - Wolsingham Wayfarers
- Flower Festival – WRECASS **(DOI - Board Approved 10/02/2022)**

Small Grants Fund

- Transport to RHS Flower Show – Weardale Flower and Garden Club
- Senior Citizens Christmas Meal - Wolsingham School
- Keeping Fit and Active – Blind Life

Towns and Villages

- ANPR Cameras – Durham Police **(DOI - Board Approved 10/02/2022)**

Cllr John Shuttleworth

Neighbourhood Budget

- Wolsingham Football Academy
- Frosterley Newsletter – Frosterley Village Hall

Small Grants Fund

- Jubilee Celebration - Barrington Bites
- Wool – A Close Knit Community