

Notes of the Weardale Area Action Partnership Board Meeting – 19th September 2024

St Thomas Centre, Wolsingham



ATTENDEES

Board Members

Public Representatives: Richard Lawrie (RL)
Will Wearmouth (WW)
Alison Humble (AHu)
Stephen Thomas (ST)

Partner Representatives: Damian Pearson (DP) – Believe Housing
David Welsh (DW) – Fire & Rescue Service
Julian Haynes (JH) – Voluntary Sector
Michael Laing (ML) - Durham County Council

Elected Members: Cllr Anita Savory (AS) – **CHAIR**
Cllr Helen Barrass (HB) – Muggleswick Parish Council
Cllr David Sugden (DS) – Wolsingham Parish Council
Cllr Joan Carrick (JC) (Stanhope Parish Council)
Cllr Olive Wilson (OW) – Witton-le-Wear Parish Council

Officers Angelina Maddison (AM)
Fiona Barber (FB)

APOLOGIES

Public Representatives: Kevin Roddam
Caroline Ford
Adrian Holden

Elected Representatives: Cllr John Shuttleworth

Partner Representatives: Sarah Lee - Health
Insp. Michael Sammut – Durham Constabulary
Jeff Bell – Business Representative

Officers: Tracy Edwards

BOARD MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Declaration of Interest

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

3. Presentations:

- **Advice Service Consultation – Durham County Council**
 - Scott McNally gave a presentation regarding a consultation into Welfare Rights, Welfare Benefit and Debt management information, Advice and Guidance. The consultation is live until 20th September and can be found at [Advice service consultation - Durham County Council](#)
 - The Chair referenced our Rural Advice Worker, Linda Pearson, who helps people to overcome the shame often experienced by those in need of help. She reflected on how Linda builds a rapport with clients which has enabled her to carry out some sterling work in Weardale.
 - The Chair encouraged Board members to complete the consultation and thanked Scott for attending the meeting.

- **Community Safety – Dawn Knight**
 - Dawn's role is funded by Safer Streets government funding and has a remit of trying to help people to feel more connected to their community.
 - Don't Suffer In Silence initiative - a project designed to triage the issue experienced and direct it to the correct service for action.
 - Victims will be offered peer mentor support to ensure their voice is heard.
 - DK reminded the Board that anonymous reports can be made via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.
 - Keep In The Know - a free messaging service by Durham Constabulary designed to keep you updated with what your local Neighbourhood policing team is doing. <https://www.keepintheknow.co.uk/Content/Pages/Sign-Up>
 - Operation Snap – an initiative where members of the public can share doorbell or dashcam footage or photos of criminal behaviour which is then used as evidence to issue fines or lead to further investigation.
 - DK explained the new complaints procedure.
 - The Chair thanked DK for attending and for an informative presentation. She stated that crime is everyone's responsibility and encouraged everyone to play their part in getting the message across.

- **B4RN – Stan Jenkins**
 - Broadband for the Rural North started in Lancashire when farmers desired decent broadband. The scheme is spreading across the North of England.
 - Working with Digital Durham and Durham County Council. Starting in Weardale from Frosterley to the Cumbrian border.
 - Some communities e.g. Wearhead, Eastgate, Frosterley, Stanhope and Wolsingham already have fibre so are ineligible for grants.
 - 450 properties fall into the area of work of which 179 are already interested.

- B4RN works with local volunteers who know local landowners. Quite good progress has been made in the last two months.

Questions were invited

- The Chair noted stated such projects often have a snowball effect as people feel / see the benefit. SJ stated that the average sign up is usually 50% as not everybody needs or wants Broadband.
- DP queried whether Rookhope was included. SJ confirmed that it was.
- SJ clarified that is it £33per month for 1000MB per second.
- DS stated that he had a slight concern that this is an out-of-date approach. He suggested that there is adequate coverage with the mobile network using 4G/5G. and this is a huge investment into bits of wire that may soon be obsolete. SJ acknowledged that there are areas where mobile coverage works however it is not always reliable. He also mentioned that providing 1GB is overkill but that data usage doubles year on year and this enables them to deliver a future-proofed service.
- SJ confirmed that 70-75% of the funding comes from government grants with the remainder raised through community investment. Members buy shares in the not-for-profit co-operative. After 3 years members can sell their shares back for the original cost plus 5%,
- SJ confirmed that B4RN carry out all the work from start to finish although it is possible for some work to be undertaken by local residents. There is also a community fund to benefit individual communities.
- AM asked how close they were to securing 25% from the community. SJ advised that they are not yet at that stage of the process. Currently people are being asked not to buy shares but to pledge to buy them in an attempt to eliminate risk. Some of those already signed up may be ineligible.
- As the project develops, there will be more ideas which can then be shared with the community once needs are known.
- The Chair thanked Stan for attending. She noted the great response with the number of volunteers and interested community members.

4. Agreement of Notes from Board Meeting held on 11th July 2024 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.

5. Weardale Action Partnership Update

- Weardale Show
 - AM advised that she had attended the Weardale Show with ML and AS. She told Board members that she had asked people the question ‘How do we make Weardale better for you?’
 - She advised that there had been a commonality of themes and noted that there had been a lot of strong feeling regarding motorbikes.
 - Any Policing issues were signposted on the day to the Police and Crime Commissioners stall and she sees the potential for a future joint project.
 - ML shared that transport was an issue across all age groups. Access to GP surgeries was a notable theme as well as being able to see a GP and

not just a practice nurse. He stated that he has already raised this with Kati Makepeace the practice manager.

- ML also shared that he had spoken with people who felt a strong sense of community. There are great activities for kids and people like living here. He noted that educational attainment and aspiration could be higher as few had heard of the schemes at both Durham and Newcastle universities to encourage local residents to attend university. The reality of student debt was acknowledged, this can be off-putting but the talent is out there.
 - AM advised she is developing a report as she is working on the Local Network Plan. She stated that she had 'test-run' some community concerns and looked at how the Local Networks may work in the future.
 - AM also advised that she was 'blown away' by the number of people who said thank you to the Weardale Action Partnership. Some commented on the fantastic job of bringing a skate park to Wolsingham. Some had concerns over the future of Weardale Open Air Swimming Pool. People love to live in Weardale – both locals and those who have recently moved in – wanted to keep it a secret.
 - A lack of commercialism was noted but it was also recognised that a large number of people are running businesses in and from Weardale.
 - Reflection on how small amounts of WAP investment has had huge impact on local communities - little amounts get stuff going.
 - Consultation – get grass roots moving forwards. Acknowledge voluntary work and the unsung heroes.
 - The Chair noted that the engagement at the Weardale Show had been across the board with all ages being consulted. She offered her thanks to AM and ML for giving up their Saturday to undertake this work,
- **AAP Boundary Review**
 - The Chair noted that the consultation closes tomorrow. She asked if any Board member would like to make any comments.
 - RL raised a concern. He noted that at the last meeting, Board members had been asked to comment on the consultation on the basis that WAP would be losing Witton-le-Wear and gaining Tow Law due to economic constraints under MTFP. He noted that the Board had understood the need for change and had seen the sense in the approach suggested. However, he had since heard on the 'grapevine' that a counter proposal has been made to take Weardale into the 3 Towns AAP area and that this is now being actively considered. He suggested that this is not within the remit of the original consultation.
 - The Chair reminded Board members again that as the consultation closes tomorrow it is important that everyone completes it.
 - DP commented on how diluted any funding would become if Weardale was incorporated into 3 Towns. The Chair agreed and questioned whether Weardale would receive the current level of funding in that scenario.
 - RL suggested that this move to proceed with a counterproposal was unfair and that it should be properly consulted on again. The Chair noted that any extension to the consultation was extremely unlikely.
 - JH queried whether the consultation was invalidated because this counter-proposal was not a suggestion in the original consultation.

- WW asked whether Teesdale was being left alone. AM confirmed that it was largely staying the same with a few tweaks around West Auckland.
- AM confirmed that there is a black hole in the government budget which is being cascaded down. She advised that she hasn't been told what this will mean. The Board understands the challenges faced by the council.
- DW suggested that Willington alone could absorb all funding as an area of social deprivation.
- The Chair stated that Weardale has a reputation for creating and piloting projects which are subsequently picked up at county level. WAP projects have been developed specifically for Weardale.
- AM shared that although Weardale does have the lowest number of elected councillors aligned to it, it also has no infrastructure which has led to bespoke projects being required and created for the WAP.

6. 2024/25 Area Budget Update

Area Budget Projects

Frosterley Play Area - £50,000

Status: Application undergoing appraisal

Westgate Village Hall – Kitchen Refurbishment - £5,000

Status: Offer letter sent 06/09/24. Work to commence 05/11/24

Renovation – Stanhope Silver Band - £5,000

Status: Application undergoing appraisal

Weardale Warblers - £5,005

Status: Offer letter sent 30/08/24. Press and publicity to start next week.

Westgate Youth Club - £5,000 (+ £5,000 Youth Fund)

WW – Declaration of Interest

Status: Application undergoing appraisal

Save Our Sandwich - £10,000

Status: Offer letter sent 05/08/24

Weardale Show - £5,000

Status: Offer letter sent 28/08/24

Frosterley Youth Club - £6,310 (+ £5,000 Youth Fund)

Status: Offer letter sent 30/07/24

7. Update on Other WAP funding streams:

Poverty Action Fund - £10,000

Weardale Rural Training 2024 – UTASS - £10,000

Status: Offer letter sent 26/07/24. Training underway.

Youth Fund - £10,000

Westgate Youth Club & Frosterley Youth Club – £5,000 each

Status: See AB information above.

Big Arts Fund - £10,000

Double U: The Wood, Willow, Wool, Whittling and Weaving Project - £9,760

Status: Project underway. Board Ambassador required.

Fun & Food - £9,725

Fun & Food Christmas 2024

Applications are open. Deadline for completed applications – 12noon Wednesday 9th October 2024.

8. Neighbourhood Budget 2024/25 Overview

Cllr Savory - Neighbourhood Budget

- Lydgate Lane Educational Aspect (in development) – AS advised Board members that the 20mph speed limit is now in operation and it is already making a difference.

Cllr Shuttleworth - Neighbourhood Budget

- Stanhope Agricultural Society – Bandstand Renewal
- The Weardale Show
- Stanhope Town Sports & Social Club FC

Small Grants

- Cowshill Village Hall Leek Show
- Rookhope Village Hall Leek Show

9. Neighbourhood Issues

AM advised that several complaints regarding speeding motorbikes had been brought to her attention at the Weardale Show. Although these were mostly signposted on the day to the stall manned by members of the police she had also sent the comments to Insp. Sammut for his consideration. He provided the following information:

Speedwatch Van

Frosterley and Westgate:

123 vehicles passed the van

85th percentile speed 27.9 mph

50th percentile speed 23.4mph

Max speed recorded 40mph (ambulance on Blue lights)

Average speed 23.3mph

Stanhope (deployed 12/09).

156 vehicles passed

85th percentile speed 24.8

50th percentile speed 20.00

Max speed 30mph

Data taken from speed watch volunteers and PCSOs.

Dates and Times not always recorded.

Data shown taken from most recent deployments in Frosterley, Westgate and Stanhope.

Speeding Motorbikes

Work undertaken this year by the Motorcycle section of Durham Police:

Project Apex (National motorcycle casualty reduction campaign)

- 4 days of action on Bank Holiday weekends – 23/03, 01/04, 06/05 & 27/05.
- 4-6 Police bikers each day with full shift being dedicated to Weardale/Teesdale.
- Main aim of the campaign - engagement with bikers and education.
- Stopped and spoke with numerous bikers over the 4 days - overwhelming majority were well behaved. A small number of riders were stopped and given words of advice regarding their speed. Area was heavily saturated, so word got around.

Bike Safe (running since mid-2023)

- Bikers spend a day with the motorcycle section to improve their riding using classroom delivery followed by being taken out in pairs on their bikes to offer advice and coaching.
- Main objective: to improve skills and reduce chances of being in a collision.
- This year, the BikeSafe programme has been delivered to 260 riders over 22 workshops (mainly weekends) between March-October this year with participants driving through Teesdale and Weardale almost every time.
- During these workshops, the police bikes are highly visible and frequently stop in villages / towns. Consequently, Biker Facebook forums become flooded with posts and comments warning others about Police bikes in the Dales.
- The motorcycle section frequently patrols the Dales on an informal basis and attend collisions/incidents etc.
- The vast majority of attendees already have a positive attitude towards biking as they have paid to come to the workshop.
- The ones causing most trouble probably won't engage with the police motorcycle section, so maybe the solution will have to be enforcement

Board members commented that speeding bikes is a national issue – people believe the bikes are going fast because it sounds fast – matter of perception. Dangerous driving e.g. weaving can be a safety issue. Adapted bikes can sound excessively loud particularly in the valley areas. The size of some number plates is also a concern.

Police don't want to discourage sensible bikers but tackle the irresponsible ones.

Perception especially of noise makes them sound very fast. There is some kit available that can monitor the noise.

10. Countywide Partner Issues

Durham County Council – County Durham News now online. Visit [Durham County News - Durham County Council](#) to subscribe. Hard copies are still available at Libraries and Leisure Centres.

St John's Chapel Playground - AHu asked if the St Johns Chapel play area had been funded by WAP. AM confirmed that it was. AHu stated that the play area looks brilliant and that the children think that it is fantastic. She noted that there is a lot of equipment in a very small space.

Wolsingham Skate Park - The Chair advised Board members that she had had a conversation with a resident of Wolsingham whose property overlooks the skate park. They shared that initially they had been negative about the skate park proposal but stated that they now have a completely different point of view. They stated that families come and use it and it is an absolute pleasure to see this happening and there had not been the noise that they had expected from it.

General – The Chair reminded Board members that they all represent the community and that the job of the Board member is to do their best for them. To this end, she encouraged people to take part in consultations and to encourage others that they know to do the same.

11. Dates and Times of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Weardale Action Partnership Board will take place on **Thursday 17th October at the St Thomas Centre, Wolsingham**

The Chair thanked AM and FB for their effort in pulling together the Board meeting and she asked that Tracy be informed that the Board wishes her well. She thanked everyone for their attendance and wished everyone a safe journey home.