



## Bridgwater Town Deal Board

21<sup>st</sup> October 2022

12:00pm – 1:30pm

Teams Meeting

### AGENDA

#### 1) Introduction and Apologies

Attendees:

- Paul Moore
- Doug Bamsey
- Councillor Mick Lerry
- Gavin Roberts
- Paul Edwards
- Keith Thomas
- Councillor Gill Slocombe
- Julie Wooler
- Nathaniel Lucas
- Elizabeth Spence
- Ruth Lambert
- David Mears
- Julie Cooper

Apologies:

- David Ralph
- Haf e Morris
- Jonica Walkinshaw

Apologies were given and board was welcomed to the meeting.

#### 2) Progress & Updates

- There are two business cases left to prepare.
  - Although there are three projects left, Docks and Walking and Cycling have been merged into one business case.
- Carnival scheme design and costing has benefitted from Community Renewal Fund
- Due to significant infrastructure cost increases Town Deal will be able to fund Phase 1 .
- Carnival's technical team are progressing to put together planning application in order to submit by end of November
  - The planning application will be a submission for the scheme as a whole rather than in phases.

- Will continue to update at the next board meeting.
- The Cultural Venues business case has past the first stage of Government approval and now waiting for financial checks.
  - A meeting was held with project partners to agree next steps for each project, so once the funding is received, projects can proceed as soon as possible.
  - A draft grant funding agreement has been shared with the project partners to allow them to familiarise themselves with the agreement.
  - NL is currently in the process of drafting each individual grant funding agreement with the legal team.
  - Once the grant funding agreement is signed by all parties, project partners can then access the 5% drawdown allocation.
- The Senior Town Warden has met the board and since then a further two Town Wardens have been appointed.
  - The final Town Warden role has gone back out to recruitment.
- Currently exploring alternative properties for the Bridgwater Step-Up after the preferred building was leased to a local company.
  - Currently 3 options available;
    - One being using the old market space on Eastover.
    - Second being another property on Eastover.
    - Third being to repurpose a part of Bridgwater House.
  - NL is prepping an option paper for Sedgemoor District Council to review and consider.
  - Looking to have an outlook on next steps for this project by Christmas.
- Cllr ML mentioned that there was a suggestion of using the Town Hall for some operations.
  - KT added that outputs have been decided for both separate projects, if we were to merge the projects, it would dilute the outputs.
  - Due to both schemes already being measured, it wouldn't be a favoured output.
- The grant funding agreement for Dunball Junction has been shared with Somerset County Council for reviewing and signing.
- As part of the Celebration Mile – Eastover, Angel Crescent and Clare Street have all been delivered to RIBA Stage 4.
  - All three parts of the Celebration Mile are being considered on procurement options.
  - Looking to appoint a contractor by March 2023, ready for delivery for Spring 2023.
- Cllr ML raised that the Comms and PR was raised at the last meeting and the possibility of using the same PR company as the Northgate Yard.
  - NL added that procurement went out recently and are expecting to receive completed tenders in a couple of weeks – it has been sent out to three or four companies, including the PR company that has managed the Northgate Yard build and delivery.
- JE to produce a financial project tracker, similar to the project progress update, by the end of the year.

### 3) Animating Town Centre – Event Co-ordinator

- Animating the Town Centre is part of the Celebration Mile.
  - It is funded through the revenue aspect (£500k).
  - The new job role will help highlight events within the town centre to increase footfall within the town centre and look to celebrate the recent town centre investments.
- The job role has been completed – Events Outreach Manager – of which the Bridgwater Town Council will host.
- The Animating the Town Centre sub-group will help support the role.
  - The sub-group is chaired by Councillor Gill Slocombe.

- The sub-group will work closely with the Bridgwater Culture Partnership.
- The sub-group will also be reporting to the board regularly.
- The allocation has already been part committed to specific projects and promotions like; the Bridgwater heritage trail, a Town Deal film, further Bridgwater Carnival events and the continuation of Bridgwater Quayside Festival with a remaining £30k for other events within the area.
- DM confirmed that the advertising will be going live in the next couple of weeks in order for the role to start in January.
  - Likely to go live for recruitment in the first week of November.
- JC confirmed that consultants have been appointed to deliver on a culture strategy to be adopted by Somerset Council, post April 2023.
  - This has just gone out to public consultation.
  - It creates a link to the Bridgwater Marketing Strategy.
- JC is currently working on the Terms of Reference for the sub-group and is currently developing the grants programme to be disseminated by Sedgemoor's Economic Development team.
- The Marketing & PR aspect of the Celebration Mile has gone out to procurement and will be helped to promote the Celebration Mile.
  - In addition, it will be a further support network for the Events Outreach Manager.
- Cllr ML enquired about the structure of the sub-group, he understood that it would involve the Bridgwater Culture Partnership but would like to seek the opportunity to involve SEED Sedgemoor who manage lots of events and activity within the area.
  - JC confirmed that they are currently liaising with SEED Sedgemoor and will revisit the sub-group structure as the funding has been confirmed.
  - Cllr ML added that SEED Sedgemoor are looking to carry out major survey about the arts sector and are looking for Sedgemoor to help deliver the survey.

#### 4) Bridgwater Docks Cycle Link & Options

- Technical feasibility work has been completed for the Docks.
- A demand analysis was completed by Planning Solutions Consulting and Blue Sail which clearly showed demand for a refreshed marina and water-based activities.
- From demand analysis, the project ambition is to restore the heritage of the Docks and create a new attraction/tourism hotspot for the town centre.
  - This will broaden the appeal for Bridgwater as a tourist destination.
  - It will re-establish the Docks as a marina for residential boats and leisure craft.
  - Unite the Docks with the Town Centre.
  - It will enhance visitor and community facilities.
  - Stimulate private sector investment through the commercial regeneration of the Bowerings Mill.
- As a long-term aspiration, Inland Waterways Association can see it connecting in with the river into wider network.
  - This ambition comes with additional risks/costs which are beyond the current Town Deal allocation
- There is clear demand and interest for water-based activity.
- There is also scope for further innovative options for floating visiting B&B accommodation, living waterscapes and community facilities.
- The Docks itself is a Grade 2 listed heritage asset which is all in a state of disrepair, so will need replacing rather than repairing.
- Divers have been in the Docks and have investigated the area.
- New moorings will need to be installed.
- The Bascule Bridge currently doesn't operate and is a huge heritage asset to the area.

- Bridgwater Sea Cadets are a key stakeholder within the project as they hold recreational activity within the Docks.
- WSP, who specialise in walking and cycling, have reviewed the Docks plans to see if the Walking and Cycling within the facility can be improved.  
They have concluded with improvements for walking & cycling, separating walking and cycling paths and a new bridge.
  - The bridge can be either;
    - A cycle only option, which would be cheaper in costs.
    - A dual option, which comes with additional costs.
  - It was concluded that the dual bridge would be chosen on the basis that it would not be possible to stop people using the bridge.
- The Conservation Officer at Sedgemoor has been consulted on these plans and he is confident as the conversations progress.
- Discussions have involved the improvements to Russel Place and to connect this with the improvements to the river.
- All walking and cycling improvements come to about £1.1m – £100k over the £1m allocation from the Towns Fund.  
Currently exploring match funding opportunities to make up for the £100k shortfall. Alternatively, there is scope to reduce the scheme (removal of the improvements to Russel Place) in order to bring the overall total amount down.
- The improvement to the Docks enhances the accessibility and connectivity to the Town Centre.
- The Dock improvements itself will consist of:
  - Replacement of the moorings – 40 residential berths and 26 leisure moorings totally 66 serviced moorings.
  - A refurbished toilet block at the site.
  - An enhanced sea cadets slipway (which is included in the walking and cycling scheme costs).
  - Waste pumping is being looked into, with two options, both coming at a cost.
  - A floating pontoon for leisure use.
  - Floating B&B accommodation for visitors/tourists.
  - Container units (to enhance the heritage appearance) for leisure hire/café use.
- Cllr ML enquired about the demand for floating B&B accommodation, would there be more traction for a floating café/restaurant.  
KT addressed that floating B&B accommodations would be the most profitable and are becoming more popular. Would want to encourage visitors to the Bowerings Mill and Admirals Landing may have concerns and objections to floating restaurants and bars.
- RL added that there is a floating B&B in Bristol Harbour which sleeps 30 and attracts groups and it appears to be continually busy. It sounds like an exciting plan for the area and should bring a more family friendly vibe to the area and will be a good opportunity for small businesses.
- The Docks Regeneration has been costed under the following:
  - A full regenerated Docks would cost £6m-£7m+, which replaces everything within the Docks site area, this is currently unaffordable with the budget available, and it excludes the costs of safety moorings in the river. There is a management risk and liability of use.
  - Restoration of the Docks (without the Barge Lock) which would cost £5m-£6m which is nearly affordable but does not include the land side improvements. Risk and liability are contained and there is enhanced capacity of the tidal basin.
  - Restoration of the Docks (without the Inner Locks) which would cost £3m-£4m which is affordable and there is scope for the additional landside investment for between

£200k-£350k. The further savings allows investments in landside activity as income generators.

- The cycling link creates enhanced public realm improvements and accessible space within the facility.
- There are further options to attract match funding toward the cycling provision.
- Negotiations are also continuing between SCC as owner of the Docks and Canals & Rivers Trust as part of their lease liability for dilapidations/restoration.
- On completion, the project will require active management to promote activity and generate the necessary income.
- Bridgwater Town Council are considering their approach to future management later in October.
- Given the scale of the capital project and sensitive heritage infrastructure it may be more appropriate for SDC / SCC to manage the capital restoration work.
- The next steps for the project are as follows:
  - The project will be put through Town Council Governance at the end of October 2022.
  - The business case will be brought to board for approval in November 2022.
  - If approved, funding will be released from Spring 2023.
  - The detailed planning & design will take around 6 months.
  - Once completed, draining and clearing of the basins and removal and replacement of locks will happen.
  - All for completion by Spring/Summer 2025.
- Planning applications will be put in for both schemes, which will both be put through extensive consultation.
- Slides from today's board meeting will be circulated but board members are reminded to keep them confidential.
- DM confirmed that he is preparing the paper to send to Councillors on the governance of the docks.
  - Previous meetings have been had with County, District and Ward Councillors, SDC to arrange another meeting with all Councillors to update on progress.
- Cllr ML enquired about the replacement of the lock gates and if this refers to the newtown lock gates. What about repair of the Bascule Bridge and Inner/Tidal Basin?
  - KT addressed that the full restoration replaces them all.
  - Second option replaces everything apart from the Barge Lock.
  - Final option is currently in discussion about which lock needs to be replaced, discussing about tidying up the inner lock instead of replacing it – however, it will be left open.
  - There will be a need for at least one of the lock gates to be replaced.
- DB re-iterated that there is a need for communication with the residents, ensuring they are kept up to date with the progress on the project at each stage.
  - KT added that there hasn't been any direct engagement with the residents as of yet.
  - Ward Councillors had been liaised with back in June regarding the ambitions for the Docks – this was before costings were finalised and the Walking & Cycling plans were proposed.
  - A meeting was held in April 2022 with previous boat tenants and the landlords at the Admirals Landing to outline the complexity of the project.
  - There is a fair degree of management needed for the facilities which will be factored in on the operations plan and there is recognition that there will be ongoing maintenance costs.
- RL enquired that with the reduced plan is the tidal basin level of water set or will it be based on the tide.

- KT confirmed that the water level will always remain at constant level.
- RL enquired if there is further funding to be secured to avoid having the additional phasing costs.
  - KT confirmed it will cost more in the future but the current costings of the Docks are unaffordable at this point in time.
- PE suggested to see if the Bridgwater Step-Up could be considered as a floating location.
  - NL had not considered this as an option and will make a note of the consideration.
  - This could incur further footfall to the Docks.
- PM enquired if the basin is big enough to do the water sports?  
KT confirmed that water sports will be concentrated in the basin but will include the space on the land side and can incorporate the wider docks and canal.
- The board need to be confident and certain about the outcome for the docks.
  - KT added that there needs to be a monetised outcome for the project in order to get a return – this is the justification of hosting the leisure and activities at the Docks.
  - Restoration on the heritage aspect may not be strong enough to get a completed return.

## 5) AOB

- The official opening for the Northgate Yard is on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October and open to members of the public on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October.
- The next board meeting is on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November which is crucial as there will be two business cases to review and sign off.
  - It has been recognised that it is also England's first world cup game, board were reminded of the importance of their attendance to the board meeting.

Everyone was thanked and the board meeting was closed.