



## Bridgwater Town Deal Board

21<sup>st</sup> November 2022

1:00pm to 2:30pm

Teams Meeting

### MINUTES

#### 1) Introduction and Apologies

##### Attendees:

- Paul Moore
- Haf E Morris
- Cllr Mick Lerry
- David Ralph
- David Mears
- Ruth Lambert
- Julie Wooler
- Paul Edwards
- Gavin Roberts

##### Supporting the board:

- Nathaniel Lucas,
- Keith Thomas,
- Jaycee Ellis

Chris Hocking – Bridgwater Carnival Project Director

Erin Davey – Government Contact

##### Apologies:

- Cllr Gill Slocombe

#### 2) Progress & Updates

Monitoring Paper Attached

- Monitoring paper was presented to board.
- It was questioned as to what the Town Wardens uniform badge would be?
  - The Town Wardens plan to be out and presentable in town centre before unitary branding is confirmed, NL will take away as an action.
  - It will likely be the Sedgemoor branding initially but then will transfer over to the new Somerset Council logo from April 2023.

### 3) Carnival – Business Case

- for Approval

- Bridgwater has celebrated being the 'Home of Carnival' since 1881.
- Carnival attracts around 150'000 visitors during the annual procession and around 4'000 during the two weeks of concerts.
- Raises around £20'000 per annum for local charities with the active membership from 2'000 but recently dropping to 1'700 due to Covid.
- The ambition is to replace the current poor-quality workshops and improve accessibility, visibility, and diversity on site.
- The current site is dilapidated, and volunteers have had to make do with the existing environment.
- Improvements will include the build of new industrial sheds.
- The improvements will look to improve member traction and will endeavour to protect the future of Carnival for Bridgwater, ensuring long-term sustainability and longevity of a community-based hobby.
- The £265k from the Community Renewal Fund has been utilised to undertake design and feasibility work to RIBA stage 3 and the submission of a full planning application.
- It has uncovered concerns that would not have been discovered until a much later date if the Community Renewal Fund was not utilised.
- At the initial outset, the main concern was the impact of movements to and from the site and how that would be mitigated due to increased activity. This has been addressed though through the majority of the traffic attending site at off peak times, evenings and weekends.
- Due to the site having a high-water table and the overall site being relatively flat, there will be a need for the site to accommodate attenuation ponds which will hold the water and drain the site naturally into the sewers on the A38.
- Because of these constraints, even with the additional site acquired from the Bridgwater Town Council, capacity on the site has reduced meaning 14 units are planned for delivery rather than the original 16.
- This will deliver 6'900m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace rather than the 7'200m<sup>2</sup> as originally proposed.
- As part of the design and feasibility work the scheme has been fully costed and in its current form there is not enough funding to deliver full scheme.
- The proposal is now to deliver the first phase of the project, which will deliver improved access to the whole site, drainage, 5 sheds (2'500m<sup>2</sup> of units), ecology improvements and long-term land purchase.
- The majority of existing units can remain in use to complement the delivery of the 5 new sheds.
- Phase 1 is costed at £4.25m, made up of £3m Town Deal funding and £1.25m of match funding.
- Carnival Committee are actively exploring additional funding options to support the delivery of the additional 2 phases.
- SDC in its role as accountable body will need to make a project adjustment request to Government due to the change in floorspace output.
- An early conversation with Government on this matter garnered support, however it should be noted that the project must be evaluated via the project adjustment request process..
- KT confirmed that the project still meets the TIP objectives and shows evidence of need.
- Delivery risks are manageable and spend can be achieved by 2025/2026.
- The project will be financially viable upon completion.

- The project provides value for money and the outputs and outcomes can be monitored throughout the life of the project.
- The business case shows a return on public investment with a BCR of 1.59 – for every £1 of public money that is invested, £1.59 is returned.
- Sensitivity tests have been undertaken on the project and it still shows a robust positive BCR of 1.25.
- Figures that are produced are for the reduced scheme.
- The full scheme has further land value uplift, with a positive BCR and a wider economic benefit of £7.1m
- The delivery of the project is broken down as follows:
  - Aiming to submit a planning application for entire development in November 2022,
  - Plan to submit business case to Government in December 2022,
  - Anticipate funding approval in March 2023,
  - Anticipate planning consent in March 2023,
  - Will then look to contract tender in June 2023,
  - Technical design to be completed for September 2023/October 2023,
  - Carnival Procession 2023 will take place,
  - Works start on site in December 2023.
  - With works to be completed in September 2024.
- The current delivery risks are confirmation of the match funding and ensuring that the new unitary authority will continue supporting Carnival for delivery. Match funding has been agreed subject to the detailed business case being produced.
- It should be noted that the project will need to work around Carnival season.
- Currently seeking approval and endorsement of the business case from the Town Deal Board subject to the match funding and planning approval of the Carnival Project.
  - It is currently planned to go to Executive on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, with a decision on the match funding expected that day as well..
  - The final cut off for completed business cases for the Town Deal is January 2023.
- DM enquired if the remaining funding gap is a concern due to the uncertainty of the current economy and inflation?
  - KT added that the £265k from the Community Renewal Fund has unlocked the schemes capital funding. The project is still compliant with the Town Investment Plan, and is deliverable. The first phase of the scheme being delivered allows for the unlocking of further site development which will enhance the Carnival offer within the town.
  - It was also confirmed that other Town Deals locations are seeing projects being cancelled due to inflation/undeliverability. Government in some circumstances are allowing funds to be reallocated to other projects.
  - It would be harder at this stage to create a new project, therefore there is potential for funding to be recycling into other projects.
- A board member questioned if another site had been considered that would be better suited for drainage and therefore being able to deliver more sheds?
  - It was confirmed that there were no further investigations into other sites due to the tight timescales of the Community Renewal Fund and Town Deal business case submissions to Government.
  - SDC were able to procure Stantec through the SCAPE Framework to proceed the technical design of the site – this helped speed up the procurement process and allow for deadlines across the Town Deal and Community Renewal Fund to be met.
  - Carnival have been able to secure additional land from the Bridgwater Town Council in order to deliver as much as possible.

- There were also discussions about further land acquisition from Bridgwater Town Council, but this was not feasible at the time of discussion.
- PE questioned the specification of the sheds. As the sheds will need to have building regulations approval.
  - KT added that there will need to be further investigations to outline the specifications of the sheds, Stantec are planning to send SDC draft submission of the planning application, which should include further details about specifications. SDC expect that building regulation specifications/requirement would be reflected in the planning design. KT will confirm as soon as this is confirmed. NL also added that Stantec have been liaising with SDC planning team whilst the designs have been proposed.
  - Happy to share planning documents with PE to gain thoughts on the specification of the buildings.
- PE also enquired if any offsite biodiversity improvements have been considered to offset the project.
  - KT added that it had not been investigated but reassured that ecological pressures have been identified through the design and feasibility and are looking to maintain as much ecology as possible. The open drainage channel that is proposed will add to the biodiversity of the site and are the most cost effective.
- DM is happy to share the water testing data that was undertaken as part of the Cemetery Extension plans.
- As of April 2023, Sedgemoor will be merged into the new Somerset Council – Sedgemoor have been supporting Carnival through the design and technical processes and going forward would look to continue supporting Carnival on the operational management of the project and wider scheme. It would help Carnival continue through each stage of what is a complex project.
  - There is currently an in-principal agreement regarding the continued support through to the new authority.
  - NL also added that there will be a project management service within the new authority which will enable this project to have access to a wide range of resources.
- Cllr ML recognises the importance of this project through the town deal and would support the endorsement of the project. PE seconded this, subject to the longevity of the buildings and satisfactory level of delivery assurance.

**The board have endorsed this business case subject to match funding confirmation, receiving planning permission for the scheme and for the finer details of the specifications of the sheds to be defined.**

#### 4) Bridgwater Docks and Walking & Cycling Link – Business Case

- for Approval

- The full restoration of the Docks has been costed to be more than £7m.
- Due to the costings of the project being significantly over the Town Deal allocation – the Town Deal proposal will not look to replace the Old Barge Lock.
- The Town Deal proposal will look to restore a range of infrastructure within the Docks including the Bascule Bridge and the Newton Lock. It will also include the replacement of the Mooring facilities and bring opportunities for on-land and water-based businesses – all of which is affordable within the available budget.
- SCC are currently the freehold owners of the Docks and there are plans for Sedgemoor and Somerset County Council to lead on the restoration/delivery of the project – once complete, ownership would then be handed over to Bridgwater Town Council who would manage and operate the usage of the Docks.

- Alongside the Docks Regeneration – there will be delivery of the Town Deal Walking & Cycling scheme, which will look at enhancing walking and cycling infrastructure around the Docks.
  - There is £1m allocated from the Town deal to help deliver this, along with £40k match funding from Sedgemoor District Council and £100k from HPC S106 mitigation funding to help deliver the full walking & cycling scheme.
- **Both Schemes** are fundable and deliverable.
- The Docks produces a positive BCR of 1.79 – for every £1 of public money invested, £1.79 is returned.
  - It also provides Bridgwater with an economic benefit of £8.4m.
  - The Docks Regeneration proposal allows for a heritage asset in Bridgwater to be preserved, allows for wider land value uplift and employment and volunteering opportunities.
- The walking & cycling scheme provides a positive BCR of 1.32 – for every £1 of public money invested, £1.32 is returned.
  - The walking and cycling scheme provide £1.8m of economic benefits and promotes positive active travel.
  - By reducing the land value uplift and increasing the optimism bias, walking and cycling still gives a positive BCR of 1.15.
- The risks for the project consist of the following, all of which are manageable:
  - Listed building consent/consultation – SDC Conservation Officer has been very involved in the current discussions and is currently content with the proposals.
  - Uncertain on the site conditions below the water level and unsure on silt levels – all the facilities on site will need replacing, they are not in a position to be repaired.
- Looking to seek endorsement from the board to continue with governance process through to a submission of the summary business case to Government.
- It was stated that Bridgwater Town Council will need to consider the income generation and demand for the site.
  - Bridgwater Town Council's other concern would be the need for more pontoons on other side of the Docks and a management company will be created to look at liabilities.
- The Bascule Bridge and Inner Lock need to be replaced otherwise there will be a loss of water.
- The provision of water sports, leisure and activities provides an opportunity to create a public attraction.
- KT added that any works done now wouldn't prevent future investment.
- The residential pontoons cover half of the revenue that is anticipated to be generated – the other half is covered from the B&B activity.
- DM would like to clarify the position of the Inland Waterways Association as they are keen to have access to the River Parrett through the regeneration of the Docks
  - KT added that there is currently no demand or economic benefit for there to be access to the River Parrett through the Docks. Inland Waterways Association are not in opposition for Bridgwater Town Council to have ownership of the Docks. There isn't a huge demand for Bascule Bridge to be operational as boats are able to go underneath - DM added that if the project is to become financially challenging, will need to look to prioritise elements for delivery.
- Consultation for the Docks is planning to take place in one of the new units at the Northgate Complex.
- When completing consultation with residents, there will need to be a clear strategy on the implementation and phasing.

→ In the Summer 2022, there was consultation with local ward members to brief them on initial plans for regeneration of the Docks.

**The board endorsed the business case, subject to a successful conclusions of ongoing dilapidation discussions.**

## 5) AOB

- KT was thanked for all his work on delivering the business cases on behalf of the Bridgwater Town Board.
- NL advised the board that a PR/Marketing company – Dome Marketing – have been appointed through the Celebration Mile revenue funding – Dome Marketing have had lots of experience with supporting the Glastonbury Town Deal.
  - Dome Marketing will be invited to the board in December.
  - Dome Marketing are also attending a meeting at Bridgwater House to meet the officer leads and project partners to be introduced to the wider Bridgwater Town Deal programme.
- JE made board members aware that there will be a Monitoring and Evaluation form circulated before the next board meeting – board members must have sight of this before the M&E deadline at the end of December.