

Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, July 16, 2013
Council Chamber, 1 Clayport Street, Alnwick at 6.30pm

Present

Bill Grisdale, Mayor Alnwick Town Council (Chair)
Susan Patience, Gallery Youth
David Lovie, Alnwick Civic Society
Martin Murphy, Transport topic lead
Cllr John Taylor, Denwick Parish Council
Philip Angier, Retail and business topic lead

In Attendance

Peter Biggers, Project Coordinator
Bill Batey, Alnwick Town Council
David English, NCC
Charlotte Colver, NCC
Kevin Bartlett, NCC
Neil Wilson, Glendale Gateway Trust

1.0 Apologies

Rachael Roberts, Alnwick Friends of the Earth/Transition Alnwick
Cllr. Gordon Castle, NCC

2.0 Minutes of Last Meeting

- 2.1 The last meeting had been a dry run for a workshop the following week and therefore no minutes had been taken.

3.0 Matters arising not on the agenda

- 3.1 Neil Wilson, from the Glendale Gateway Trust was invited by the Chairman to speak to the Steering Group on the potential of the Wooler Cycle Hub concept to be extended to Alnwick, following successful establishment in Haltwhistle. Neil provided copies of the excellent Wooler Cycle Hubs map, which is produced in tough waterproof format and based on OS Free to Use mapping by a company in Manchester.
- 3.2 While the project maps and waymarks cycle routes Neil emphasised that it is important for such projects to focus on expanding tourism rather than providing 'cycle tourism'. He explained that cycling tourists are interested in long distance and will cycle through without spending in the area. The success of the project lies in providing interesting activities that may appeal for example to families wanting to have an active day out; the maps (retail for £2.95) and online, downloadable maps and information focus on the heritage of the area and places to visit including places to eat and shop, for example on routes to Holy Island.
- 3.3 There is a dedicated mountain biking route but generally developing good routes relies on local knowledge about quieter roads and good places for tourists to spend. Public awareness has been raised significantly with annual large events for example mass participation event last year for 350 people on 100km or 50km routes at £15 a head. An event in May took people on a 1`60km route and was launched alongside 'Independent Spirit ' branding. These events have allowed large databases to be created for future publicity. The hope is that the Hub will

increase length of stay in the area and extend the tourism season throughout the year.

3.4 The Wooler events piggybacked onto other national events that were filled up quickly due to popularity but it is important not to clash with events within 2 hours travel from the proposed event. Noted that a new long distance route the Sandstone Way is being developed.

3.5 Requirements for a similar project in Alnwick would be:

- A hub starting point with accommodation, parking, toilets, retail and service facilities (eg. Market Place, Leisure Centre or Aln Valley Railway)
- A group needs to take on the concept and be able to host web, facebook etc
- Use the Wooler Hub 'how to set up a hub' guide
- Quality of the map and constantly updated data online is important.

4.0 Bid for Locality Assistance

4.1 Peter gave a verbal report about progress on this bid, which had to be put together with some speed through discussion with Bill G and Bill B. It was noted that the online application was not at all user friendly and did not allow for printing or exporting out for discussion during the process. An application was made for both direct support and grant aid.

4.2 The direct support application requesting Locality, once the draft plan has been written:

- to work with the Steering Group to provide a reality check for robust policies and realistic action proposals – to make sure plan can be delivered
- to assist with a meaningful round of engagement on the draft plan and
- to help with a basic conditions statement, which is a brief report on how the plan meets 5 basic conditions that the examiner will be testing and
- to provide a pre-submission plan check

4.3 The grant support application asks Locality for assistance up to £6,790 over two years. It was noted that NCC will fund the examination from the point at which the council receives the published plan. There are 3 main areas for the grant assistant application:

- Funding for one extra day a month for PB as Programme Coordinator to take the process forward
- To assist with plan preparation and graphics for engagement including display boards and questionnaires and graphics for the plan itself
- A small amount for data collection and analysis through next engagement.

4.4 An email today from Locality only had one small query to resolve and Locality hopes to give an initial indication as to whether the bids are successful within 3 weeks. David E noted that the Steering Group should be mindful that Locality had taken a long time to determine the Allendale bid, which had delayed plan progress. Also he noted that the Allendale bid had an 8-page contract with conditions that took a ring fencing approach to the funds.

5.0 Developing the Spatial Strategy for the plan

5.2 This was an opportunity for topic leads to feedback on their experience of the Workshop held on July 18, 2013 at St James Centre, Pottergate, Alnwick. The following points were raised:

- Martin suggested we needed to be more careful in using terms like 'older people' in documents as varied understanding of this had caused some confusion
- Bill B thought the workshop format worked well – presentations by topic leads and NCC staff were good and the publicity had attracted a number of additional members of the public to the event – voting worked well but perhaps the questions were too complex.
- Sue thought that it was good turnout – she has 50 signatures but some people went straight in without signing in – felt that it would have been good to have the press/press photographer there and suggested discussion with Editor Paul Larkin before the next event
- Philip thought that there was good level of engagement on the Town Centre theme throughout the event and that having the initial presentation and large maps available helped the process
- David L thought that the maps helped in identifying sites and overlapping issues.

Actions

- ❖ **Bill G/Bill B/Peter? to send press release on workshop event on July 18**
- ❖ **Sue will be producing a community engagement report page and topic leads are to provide bullet point list of key issues emerging from their tables at the workshop**

6.0 Drafting the plan

6.1 Peter tabled a first draft of the front end of the plan for consideration by the Steering Group. He noted that while some other examples set out what has already been done for communities he felt that the plan should be moving forward. However the draft suggests a front end that includes the setting and context.

6.2 Peter noted that while earlier templates that he provided for topic leads include an overview section for each topic it may be better to include all the overview in a front section and keep the topic pages simple – straight into objectives, policies and community actions. While some other examples have a characteristic short paragraph sized vision Peter based the suggested ADNP vision on the more detailed, and therefore more relevant, Alnwick Core Strategy style. David E commented that he liked the proposed ADNP style.

6.3 Martin's draft transport papers had been circulated, and he was commended on being the first to provide drafts for discussion. There much discussion about the approach and it was agreed that there should be a greater level of clarity to distinguish text, objectives, policies and community actions. Martin suggested that the Steering Group needs a dedicated session to provide guidance on wording policies. It was agreed that different topics would by their nature would have different policy numbers and lengths. The need for evidence to support polices in every case was agreed and using the example eof the need for a lorry

park it was noted that some policies may need to be geographically specific as it wouldn't be appropriate for all locations.

6.4 There was a brief discussion on what future assistance topic leads need to get to draft stage:

- Philip is still at the conceptual stage but if Peter can re-send the template he should be able to have a draft available for the next Steering Group meeting
- Sue, speaking on behalf of Mark Turnbull, was not entirely sure about progress but will attempt to provide draft for the next meeting. Sue will be joining forces with Gordon who has offered help on the topic.
- David L announced that he had two key assets in preparing the culture and heritage paper: the members of the Alnwick Civic Society and an offer of assistance from Alan Hunter, English heritage, who had attended the workshop. Alan has generously offered to help the Civic Society in preparing the paper, to make comments of a strategic nature and to attend the September Steering Group meeting (a formal invitation to Alan has been issued).
- Bill B will work on a draft for the next Steering Group meeting and
- Peter, during his two days a month will be busy editing the other topic papers and is due to have a meeting with NCC on housing data, so is not sure that he will manage a draft by the next meeting.

❖ **Topic leads to provide feedback on Peter's draft plan, front end, paper by next week (week starting July 22) Peter will send them on to Bill G for producing a mock-up for the layout.**

❖ **Peter to send draft plan topic template to Philip**

❖ **Peter to assist Martin with redrafting the transport papers**

7.0 Implications of current planning applications for the plan

7.1 Martin raised the issue of recent planning applications that are being made, which in his view may undermine the policies in the emerging plan. There was discussion about an application for residential care homes at the former bus depot on Lisburn Street, which has no transport plan, limited parking provision (17 spaces for an 80-bed residential unit) and include inaccurate data on bus stops for example. He read extracts from an NCC, presumably from Housing, which accompanied the application and referred to affordable housing. It was noted that residential care homes are not included in the affordable housing category.

7.2 Bill B stated that the Town Council had already responded to this application and, following discussion by the Steering Group, it was agreed that in future the Group might seek to be included in discussion with its parent body, the Town Council, so that issues relating to emerging policy could be raised for consideration in the Council's response to applications. It was agreed that it would not be appropriate for the Steering Group to make a response separate from the Town Council but that individual Steering Group members are free to make their own private comments on applications. Some concern was expressed about the potential for larger applications that may arise, such as a major housing site for Greensfield but it was agreed that the Steering Group should sit

down with the Town Council to inform them of any Plan related issues arising in such a case.

- ❖ **Bill B will send Martin a copy of the Town Council's response on the Lisburn Street application.**

8.0 Budget update

Bill provided a budget provision statement. Expenditure to date has been £570.00 from the budget of £12,000.

Expenditure included data entry and analysis costs; residual postal charges from the questionnaire; and room booking for two meetings, including the workshop, at the St James Centre.

9.0 AOB

There was no other business.

10.0 Dates of next meetings – please put these in your diaries

Next meetings will be held as agreed on the **third Tuesday of each month** at the Council Chamber, Alnwick on:

- Tuesday, **August 20**, 2013 at 6:30pm
- Tuesday, **September 17**, 2013 at 6:30pm
- Tuesday, **October 15**, 2013 at 6:30pm