

# **Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

Minutes of meeting held on  
Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012  
Council Chamber, 1 Clayport Street, Alnwick  
at 6:30pm

## **Present**

Cllr. Alan Symmonds (Mayor), Chairman  
Cllr. John Taylor, NCC and Denwick Parish Council  
Cllr. Gordon Castle, NCC  
Colin Barnes, Northumberland Estates  
David Lovie, Civic Society  
Rachael Roberts, Alnwick Friends of the Earth /Transition Alnwick  
Steven Temple, North Country Leisure  
Sue Patience, Gallery Youth  
Graeme Knox, Freemen of Alnwick

## **In Attendance**

Peter Biggers, Project Coordinator  
Bill Batey, Alnwick Town Council  
David English, Planning Officer, NCC  
Charlotte Colver, Planning Officer, NCC  
John Cooper, Localities Officer, NCC  
Sally Birkes, Student, Northumbria University

## **Apologies for absence**

Marc Johnson, Community Action Northumberland  
Richard Green, Chair of Denwick Parish Council  
Rachel Cooper, Student Planner, NCC

## **1.0 Minutes of Last Meeting**

1.1 The Steering Group agreed that the minutes from the last meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> February were a true record.

## **2.0 Matters arising not on the agenda**

- 2.1 The Chair welcomed Sally Birkes to the meeting. Sally is a Northumbria University student for whom the Steering Group had previously submitted a response to a questionnaire, which contributed to her dissertation.
- 2.2 PB explained that the Planning Aid training discussion that had been planned for the March meeting had been cancelled due to the resignation of North East Planning Aid Coordinator, Chris Anderson. However Chris, who resigned because of uncertainty about funding for his post, may be available for future training in a private capacity. It was noted that the Government has just announced its intention to continue funding the four bodies currently funded to provide Neighbourhood Planning support and guidance.

**Action: PB to obtain from Chris an indication of possible training costs**

### **3.0 Community engagement update**

- 3.1 PB reported back on the meeting with Denwick Parish Council, which was well attended. A lively discussion based on the Steering Group's display board information, brought the Denwick Parish representatives up to date on the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. It was noted that concerns were expressed about a perceived decline in Alnwick's services and viability, in particular transport. It seemed that Denwick residents were more concerned about infrequent bus services than the condition of Alnwick bus station. A side effect of the meeting was to prompt interest in more frequent meetings for Denwick Parish.
- 3.2 The next Steering Group meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012 will be a joint meeting with the Alnwick Community Partnership. BB confirmed that the Town Council had booked the Northumberland Hall for the event. A short section at the end of the meeting will be held for any necessary Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group business. GC suggested that Arriva might be asked to attend the meeting to support discussion about transport services.

**Action: from questionnaire returns JC to extract and send to BB a contact list of individuals wishing to be involved in the neighbourhood plan.**

**Action: BB to invite interested parties to join meeting on April 17<sup>th</sup> and check availability of Arriva representatives.**

- 3.3 It was noted that Carlo Biagoni had resigned from the Steering Group due to pressure of business commitments and it was agreed that alternative representation was needed from the Alnwick Chamber of Trade.

**Action: BB to contact the Alnwick Chamber of Trade to invite a representative to join the Steering Group.**

### **4.0 ADNP web page**

- 4.1 SP presented to the Steering Group an on-screen version of the new Steering Group website, which met with general approval and enthusiastic comment. It was suggested that the rolling strapline section could initially include extract comments from local people provided by the returned questionnaires. It was noted that maintenance of the web site needed to be kept as low key as possible. The Chair asked that his thanks be passed to Bill Grisdale for his hard work in setting up an excellent web site for the Group.

**Action: DE/CC to confirm whether the Steering Group can use the County**

**Council's OS Licence / copyright for ADNP maps on published documents and the web page.**

**5.0 Budget Update**

5.1 BB submitted to the Steering Group copies of the Budget Position at 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2012. Expenditure to date of £2,465.31 with an estimated / committed expenditure of £2,531.00 will result in a total expenditure of £4,996.31 by the end of the financial year. These figures do not take into account the Town Council being exempt from VAT payment and therefore the eventual expenditure will be marginally less than forecast.

5.2 It was noted that NCC had not charged for RC's work on organising the questionnaire responses by topic. The Chair asked that thanks be passed to RC for her hard work on the data.

**5.3 Issues and Options Stage- to consider Scoping reports from Topic Leads**

5.4 The majority of Topic Leads had attended a dedicated training evening held at the Council Chamber on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 and draft Scoping papers on most topics were submitted to the Group for discussion.

5.5 It was noted that Glossary of terms used would be useful in making the final documents more accessible.

5.6 It was agreed that the Topic leads should be addressing a potential plan period of ten years taking projections up to 2025.

**Action: All Topic leads to provide notes to contribute to Glossary**

5.7 Economy and employment paper by Colin Barnes – Several additional documents need to be added to the 'Background Papers' section including The Market Towns Welcome Report, ONE ; the Alnwick retail Study, White Young Green; and an Alnwick Retail Study by Newcastle University. There was also some discussion about the impact of current agricultural trading buoyancy on Alnwick's trading estates although there is also a decline in the agricultural machinery repair sector. It was agreed that more detail is required in relation to overlap with other topics and the balance between tourism and general services / manufacturing economy. Consideration is to be given to rolling the retail and economy and employment papers into one.

**Action: CB to add material**

5.8 Education paper by Maurice Hall – it was noted that this topic is particularly susceptible to change at the moment due to an imminent decision in relation to

potential funding for a new High School. The emphasis of the paper may have to be amended at a later stage. Potential areas of overlap discussed included: listed buildings and green spaces potentially to be vacated by current education uses; and potential for other uses for example additional youth facilities to be incorporated in a new programme of building.

**Action: MH to report back on funding outcome and make any necessary amendments to the topic paper**

5.9 Heritage and Culture paper by David Lovie and Alnwick Civic Society – this was noted for its active use of local people in researching the paper and the Civic Society had apparently expressed satisfaction at having the opportunity to be involved. It was agreed to add a reference to the Freeman of Alnwick in the key players section

**Action: DL to add NCC, the Freeman of Alnwick and a number of small culture based organisations to the list of key players**

**Action: BB to supply DL with Olympic Torch ceremony invitation list**

(Note: GC and GK left the meeting at 7:40pm)

5.10 Housing paper by Peter Biggers

**Action: PB to add material on re-use of upper floors above shops and on housing for an ageing population**

5.11 Transport paper by Martin Murphy – PB presented this paper in MM's absence. Discussion focused on a possible ambiguity in relation to 'function' and 'purpose'; that walking and cycling should be referred to as such rather than 'active transport'.

**Action: PB to discuss amendments with MM**

5.12 Sport and recreation paper by Bill Batey

**Action: CC to provide B with data from current County PPG17 Assessment**

5.13 Community facilities paper by Sue Patience and Mark Johnson – Discussion focused on difficulty in establishing difference between planning and non-planning issues.

**Action: SP/MJ to continue and allow input from PB/DE/CC on planning definitions**

5.14 The Chair, in summing up the section on Topic Papers, expressed thanks to all

the Topic Leads for their hard work. He also commented that further hard work lies ahead: having identified key partners Topic Leads will have to follow up with an interview process to identify issues to be taken forward in the plan. It was noted that consideration must be given to the fact that several Topic Leads are carrying this work out as volunteers in their own time and may not find it easy to comply with tight timescales for delivery.

**Action: DE/CC to set up discussions, in 2-3 weeks' time, between Topic Leads and NCC LDF staff working in the same areas on the Core Strategy**

## **6.0 Presentation: ADNP links with Alnwick bid to be a Portas Pilot**

6.1 The Chair introduced Katherine Williams who, that day, had taken up the Town Council's commission to submit a bid on their behalf by the end of March to the TV related Portas Pilot bid for revenue funding up to £100,000.

<http://www.maryportas.com/> KW reported that nationally 12 town teams are to be designated as pilots. The project is seeking:

- innovative town centre ideas
- vibrancy, local issues and events
- town and business area marketing
- info on who the town team is / what area is defined (discussed options)
- relationship of Neighbourhood Planning team to Portas Bid town team

...all in 300 words and a DVD by 30<sup>th</sup> March. The Town Council has also commissioned an independent consultant to create the DVD submission, which according to Grant Shapps MP must give a sense of energy, enthusiasm and dynamism from the town team.

Key issues to discuss:

- is the town 'thriving'; 'sickly'; 'on critical list'; or 'dead'?
- do we want to invest in social capital at the heart of the community?
- can we engage in alternative or optimistic visions of Alnwick's future?
- Is the ADNP Steering Group the town Team?
- Can we be forward looking and ready to embrace change?

6.2 The Pilot process is intended to determine if the town team approach is appropriate and to test the Mary Portas recommendations. A number of these recommendations were discussed by the Group. It was agreed that it would be

necessary to agree what the revenue funding would be sought for – perhaps town management or town / business area branding.

- 6.3 The Steering Group agreed to take part as needed and represent Alnwick as the town team for the purpose of the bid.

## **7.0 Any Other Urgent Business**

- 7.1 Sustainability Appraisal - DE noted that although up till last week he had been advised and advising that the County Council would be responsible for preparing a Sustainability Appraisal for the Neighbourhood Plan he had now been advised by DCLG at a training event that the responsibility lies with the qualifying body. This will have cost implications for the Steering Group and Alnwick Town Council.
- 7.2 Localities Act Community funding section – there is no further guidance on this section that refers to government funding (some £40-45 million pounds) that may be made available to communities for general organisation of neighbourhood planning. This might also be made available to carry out Sustainability Appraisals.
- 7.3 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations – these are due to come into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2012 with the implication that the steering Group will have to formally submit to the County Council a map and statement designating the plan area; confirming that Alnwick Town Council is the qualifying body; and confirming the participation of Denwick Parish Council. There is potential to carry this out speedily and achieve the status of ‘first’ in the county.

**Action: PB/BB to discuss preparation of map and statement with DE/CC**

## **8.0 Date of Next Meeting**

- 8.1 The meeting closed at 8:50. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2012 at 6:30pm in the Northumberland Hall, Market Place, Alnwick. The meeting will be a joint meeting with the Alnwick Community Partnership.