



Bishop Auckland Town Team
17th August 2017

Notes and Actions

Present: Nigel Bryson (Chairman) and Alan Anderson, Rob Berry, Adrian Beswick, Lee Brownson, , Gillian Campbell, Leanda Chappell, Andrew Corry, Anne-Isabelle Daulon, Raj Devgan, Glen Dixon, Jeremy Edkin, Liz Fisher, Matt Gillibrand, Susan Graydon, Karin Hurlimann, Jill Leigh, Greta Longstaff, Ian Maddison, Julie Maddison, Stefa McManners, Andy Mitchell, Ann Pearson, Chris Percival, Bernadette Rush, Jacqui Rutherford, Clive S. Auld, Juliet Sanders, Neil Sanders, Ian Sanderson-Simpson, Sharon Stapleton, Charlie Walton, Kathryn Watson, Colin Wilkes, Karen Wilkes, Ann Williams-Maughan and David Anderson

Apologies Peter Daniels, Claire Gibbons, Helen Goodman MP, Dr Bob McManners, Steffa McManners, Chris Myers, Wendy Spooner, Dave Wilson and Sam Zair

1. Notes of meeting held on 15th June 2017

Notes of the meeting were agreed

2. Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership

Charlie Walton, Chairman of the Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership, gave a presentation about the Partnership and initiatives taking place to increase the number of passengers using the service and in particular links to Bishop Auckland and Kynren and other Auckland Projects.

It was noted that the new Northern Franchise had been awarded and many improvements had been introduced or were planned, including the introduction of an hourly service, replacement of the Pacer units with more modern rolling stock and hopefully for Arriva North Trains to connect better with the Arriva bus services.

The Partnership was helping to promote tourism in the area including Locomotion, Weardale railway and the reintroduction of steam and special services, as well as developments within Bishop Auckland.

3. Bishop Auckland Markets

Chris Wilkes, Managing Director, Durham Markets Company (DMC), gave an update on the progress in re-establishing Bishop Auckland market.

DMC took over running the market at the end of April 2017 from a very low base but had built the number of stalls up to around 15. This was encouraging, but everyone needed to do work together collaboratively to support the growth of the market.

Footfall was currently low as the Castle was currently closed but this would improve with the opening of the Mining Art Gallery and other attractions.

Two 'Full Moon' street food markets had been held which had been quite successful. More Full Moon markets were planned.

A celebration event was being organised to be held on the weekend of 22nd / 23rd September. Durham Markets were working with Andrew Corry, Auckland Castle and the Town Team to organise the event. The event would also coincide with the Town Council's horticultural show, which would work in everyone's benefit.

4. Auckland Castle Trust Update

It was noted that over £100M was to be invested in Bishop Auckland by Auckland Castle Trust.

An update was given of Auckland Castle projects including:-

Number 42 had been open for over 3 years. The shop and gallery supported local artists, offering them a place to display and sell their work. Incubator studios had been created on the upper levels to help new creative businesses.

Work was continuing on the Old Bank Chambers building to create the Mining Art Gallery which would open on 21st October 2017.

Construction of the Welcome Building was continuing and was due for completion early in 2018. It would be operational for the reopening of Auckland Castle.

Auckland Castle was being restored to its original Georgian Gothic opulence. All rooms would be open to the public when it reopened in summer 2018.

Work was continuing on the Walled Garden and Restaurant. The next phase would see tonnes of top soil brought into the site to re-create the gardens. The garden would open in spring 2019.

Faith Museum – Archaeology undertaken on the site had revealed many artefacts. The Faith Museum would cover all faith from pre-history to the present day. It was envisaged that the Museum would open in summer 2019.

Spanish Art Gallery and Research Centre - linked with the Prado Museum in Madrid the Gallery would house UK's largest collection of Spanish Art outside of London. The Spanish Gallery will be complemented by a separate research centre in partnership with Durham University, which would link new academic study to the gallery's exhibition programme. The Gallery would open in summer 2019.

Postchaise and Queens Hotel – surveys were being carried out within the two buildings with a view to creating a single boutique hotel.

Queries were raised with regard to the following:-

- Job Centre and Monaco's. It was confirmed the the Castle Trust owned the buildings. The Job Centre was being scaled down and moved to Vinovium House. The long term future use of the buildings had not yet been finalised.
- Castle's Bar. It was noted that a tearoom would be created in Castles Bar which would open in spring 2018.
- Sports Direct. Queries were raised about Sports Direct and rumours that it was relocating to Tindale Retail Park. No information was known.
- Cinema. No information was known on progress of the development of the cinema

5. Eleven Arches Update

Ann-Isabelle Daulon and Jacqui Rutherford gave an update on Kynren.

The challenge for 2017 was to deliver on the promise to improve on the previous year and produce a world class show which was bigger, brighter and even better than the previous year. Volunteers had grown in numbers and skills. Feedback on the shows was wonderful, achieving 95% highly recommended reviews on TripAdvisor. .

In terms of numbers for 2017, 50,000 had attended from the local area. Attendance from outside the area had increased from 23% in 2016 to 28% in 2017. International visitors had increased from 3% to 5%.

The show had enriched the lives of volunteers, created lasting friendships and developed new skills. Volunteers were passionate about Bishop Auckland and Kynren.

Looking to 2018, Eleven Arches (11A) objective was to for Bishop Auckland to become known as a destination town. 11A would therefore engage with businesses to work towards enriching the visitor experience.

The following queries were raised

It was suggested that one of the major obstacles was that tickets for Kynren could only be purchased online. This was particularly problematic for impulse purchases, e.g. if a visitor wanted to purchase tickets for the evening of their visit. No 42 would provide an ideal box office or a point where tickets could be printed.

In response Ann-Isabelle explained that tickets could be purchased on site or by phone. A box office was needed in the town and 11A were looking into the possibility of a pop-up box office being located in the Welcome Building.

It was queried whether the medieval village project was going ahead. The historical theme park remained an ambition. A feasibility study and ecological survey was to be undertaken. The immediate priority was for Kynren to be successful in its first three years, which was well underway to being attained. A further investment of £100M - £150M would be required to achieve the theme park.

It was queried whether facilities for caravans would be re-introduced in 2018, possibly at the Rugby Club. Contact details were to be forwarded to 11A for consideration.

6. Update on Core Team Projects

An order had been placed for the wayfinding signs with installation later in the summer. Interpretation boards would hopefully be installed in the autumn.

Planning application had been submitted for phase II of North Bondgate car park. Work on site was scheduled to commence later in the year.

18 expressions of interest had been received for Targeted Business Improvement scheme. 2 schemes were complete, 3 grant letters had been sent out and 2 applications were being considered.

A number of potential venues for the installation of Shop Wraps were being explored. Attempts were being made to contact and engage with landlords.

Business Booklets had been distributed to town centre businesses and had been very well received.

A meeting had been held with DCC web developers to build a new website for the Town Council. Within this work the developers would include web pages for the Town Team which would appear to users as a separate website.

6. Events Programme

Clive Auld (Chair of the Events Team) updated the meeting as to recent activities.

It was noted that the Events Team met regularly at the Park Head, Coundon and would always welcome new volunteers.

A 'Buskers Day' was held on Saturday 15th July and again on Saturday 12th August 2017. Local singers and bands performed in the Market Place and at locations along Newgate Street from 10.00am until 3.00 pm.

New Car Show was to be held on Friday 25th August 2017. This would be the sixth car show. Six car dealerships had signed up to the event. The Jaguar owners club would also be present.

Advent Window Project was being considered for the Christmas period. A funding application was to be made to County Durham Community Fund.

Anyone wishing to join the Events Team or wishing to help Bishop the Boar should contact Clive Auld.

It was suggested that businesses could support the Events Team by sponsoring leaflets. For a reasonable donation adverts could be included on leaflets promoting businesses that donated to printing cost.

7. Next Meetings

Thursday, 16th November 2017 at 6.00 p.m.

Thursday, 22nd February 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

Thursday, 17th May 2018 at 6.00 p.m. (AGM)