



Bishop Auckland Town Team

16th November 2017

Notes and Actions

Present: Nigel Bryson (Chairman) and Alan Anderson, Clive Auld, Rob Berry, Adrian Beswick, Maureen Davison, Raj Devgan, Steve Hadden, Peter Heslop, Jill Leach, Chris Percival, Bernadette Rush, Jacqui Rutherford, Ian Sanderson-Simpson, Dave Stephenson, Charlie Walton, Deniece Wanley, Ali Wild, Ann Williams-Maughan, Jean Wombwell and David Anderson

Apologies Cllr Joy Allen, Cllr Lee Brownson, Fiona Ewing, Gary Ewing, Liz Fisher, Claire Gibbons, Dr Bob McManners, Stefa McManners, Chris Myers, Kathryn Watson, Dave Wilson and Sam Zair

1. Notes of meeting held on 17th August 2017

Notes of the meeting were agreed

2. Eleven Arches Update

Jacqui Rutherford and Deniece Wanley gave an update on Kynren.

Deniece had recently taken up the position of Head of Business Development and Communications at the Eleven Arches Trust (11A). Jacqui Rutherford was Operations Director.

Noted that Kynren was being recognised as a world class show. Feedback on TripAdvisor for the 2017 season had been excellent achieving 95% highly recommended reviews.

11A had made improvements to egress arrangements during 2017. All visitors and vehicles had been off site within 45 minutes of the end of the show. Further improvements were to be made in 2018.

A new marketing team had been established. Along with marketing Kynren the Team would be engaging with local retailers and business with the aim of creating a destination town.

Dates for the 2018 shows had been announced. These would be marketed regionally and nationally. Also looking at the international market. The team was also working with the travel trade to encourage coach trips and excursions, including SuperBreak the market lead for travel packages.

Content of Kynren would change so that there was a reason for people to return year on year.

11A was looking to enhance the food and beverage offer on site by including some local producers and traders.

The focus of the first 2 seasons had been to establish the Kynren product. Further enhancements would be ongoing, but it was felt that 11A could now work with other stakeholders to help achieve benefits for the town.

The following queries were raised

It was queried whether the Kynren site could be used for additional events during off season.

It was explained that Kynren operated under strict licensing conditions and therefore any other potential use would require careful consideration before Durham County Council was approached. Any additional activities would be subject to further consultation.

Focus so far had been on creating a world class show and therefore additional events had not been considered.

It was queried whether there were plans for activities prior to the show

11A were looking to increase the visitor experience. Characters mingling with visitors had been tested, however costumes were designed to be seen from a distance and didn't stand up to close scrutiny. There were also logistical difficulties given that the costumes were required to be on site and cast members had to prepare for the show.

It was suggested that volunteers could provide the presence in the town rather than cast members. It was explained that interaction with visitors needed careful consideration given that Kynren was seeking to maintain a world class offer. This would involve detailed instructions and preparation for volunteers carrying out that role and an upgrading of costumes

Further consideration would be given to Kynren having a presence in the town.

The number of tickets sold for season 2 was queried.

It was noted that not every show was sold out, however numbers were as expected for the second season. 11A were confident that the success of Kynren would continue to grow.

Gillian Campbell (Bishop FM) offered assistance in getting the message out within the local community.

Queried whether volunteers could wear glasses. It was explained that the show needed to be as authentic as possible, but there were many roles and opportunities for people to become involved.

Queried whether behind the scene tours would be on offer. It was noted that opportunities for this were being considered.

3. Guest WiFi Bishop Auckland

It was noted that the Town Council and Durham County Council (DCC) had been investigating the feasibility of introducing a guest wifi system in the town centre. The Auckland Project, Brighter Bishop Auckland and the Core Team had been consulted and were in favour of the project.

YouGov research had revealed that 43% of visitors were frustrated by the lack of free public wifi networks and 24% would be more likely stay longer in a town which offered free wifi. In accessing free wifi users give permission for the provider to collect and retain a degree of information which in turn could be used support town centre regeneration in terms of engaging with visitors, marketing investment opportunities based on numbers and demographic of visitors.

DCC were offering to fund the cost of the capital infrastructure together with digital media training for businesses. The Town Council had agreed to fund part of the revenue costs, It was proposed that the Town Team support the project by funding the remainder of the revenue costs from the Mary Portas grant. It was anticipated that revenue costs for each party would be approximately £3,000 per annum for a minimum of 3 years.

It was hoped that the system would be installed before Auckland Castle reopened so that the increase in visitors could be recorded.

DCC's procurement team were leading the process so that all necessary regulations could be complied with and a competitive cost achieved.

The consensus was that the Town Team assist with the project by helping to fund revenue costs from the Mary Portas grant.

4. Update on Core Team Projects

Wayfinding Signs The contract had been let for the manufacture and installation of the wayfinding sign which would be located in the bus station. Scheduled to be installed w/c 11th December.

Car Parking North Bondgate – Phase II – Site was in the process of being cleared. Noted that there was potential for a coach drop off point to be incorporated into the design.

Targeted Business Improvements – 6 schemes had been completed. 2 applications were being consideration. 6 further expressions of interest had been received.

Brighter Bishop Auckland Noted that the first round of consultation on the masterplan had concluded. Over 750 responses had been received. Next round of consultation was planned for January 2018.

The Board had approved a bid to Historic England (HE) for Bishop Auckland to become a Heritage Action Zone (HAZ).

HAZs provide a range of HE resource and expertise to achieve sustainable economic growth in historic places. Each HAZ would be tailored to local circumstances and would be delivered in partnership with the local authority, HE and other relevant organisations. The bidding process was competitive and therefore success was not guaranteed.

The initial response for the HAZ bid submitted by DCC for Bishop Auckland had been positive. A decision was expected later that month

5. 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.

Monster Saturday was held on 28th October. There had been a great turnout for this event.

Advent Window Project was to be held during December and would turn the town centre into an advent calendar. Participating retailers would be partnered with local schools to dress a shop window in the theme of a carol or Christmas song. A window would be unveiled each day in December with pupils from the school singing the carol or Christmas song. The first window, located at the Town Hall, would be unveiled at the Town Council's Christmas event to be held on 1st December.

Small Business Saturday businesses were encouraged to join in this national campaign aimed at people supporting local businesses, which would take place on 2nd December 2017

Christmas Events – The Events Team would be arranging various events in the town centre on Saturdays running up to Christmas. Events would include photos with Santa, Bishop the Boar, carol singing.

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

It had been noticed that the banners in Newgate Street had been taken down. Queried where they were and would they be replaced. It was explained that the banners had been taken down to make way for the Christmas lights which would be installed later in the month. The banners were in storage and would be reinstalled in March 2018.

It was queried whether local traders would be invited to the Christmas event being held on Friday 1st December. It was explained that the event was not being held on a licensed market day and therefore regular market stalls could not be in attendance. Strict regulations prohibited this. Enquiries had been made with the Full Moon Market, however the operator was heavily involved with the Christmas event in Durham City which was being held on the same evening and therefore it was not available.

It was noted that a calendar of events was being developed for 2018. The Events Team would again be working with various organisations to support the town centre. 11A was also considering how it could support the town centre.

It was noted that a calendar of events was available on Bishop FM's website. Organisers of events were encouraged to use the facility so that it became a definitive record of events taking place in Bishop Auckland and surrounding area.

6. Other Business

Community Interest Company Cycling Hub for Bishop Auckland

A letter had been received from Fiona and Gary Ewing (Inspirational Cycles), were unable to attend the meeting, but wanted to inform the Town Team that they had devised some ambitious plans to develop a Community Interest Company Cycling Hub for Bishop Auckland, including building a safe cycle track linking the town centre and old railway lines. They aimed to have a central location for cycle hire and cycle skills coaching plus supporting a community workshop renovating second hand bikes.

Plans were in their very early stages, but they had shared some proposals with the Town Team and local councillors Joy Allen and Charlie Kay.

They had a meeting arranged with representatives of Durham County Council and The Auckland Project on 5th December 2017 and requested that if anyone could offer support or had any ideas to contribute they contact them prior to the meeting.

7. Next Meetings

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

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