

# Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 9 June 2023

**Attending:** Andrew Cobb (Chair), Joanne Golton, Sam Butcher (WAF), Janey Hassam (SPC), John Barraclough, Jim Atkins, Jo Mowbray, Cllr Hazel Hodgson, Cllr Kevin Lancaster, Cllr Simon Arnold, Peter Marshall, Debbie Richardson, Libby Bateman, Steve Ewence

**Apologies:** Francine Bult, Matt Williams (WAF), James Ratcliffe, Tony Reed-Screen, Peter Stockton (YDNP), Chris Woods, Ian MacPherson, Gillian Holmes (WAF), Debbie Wilson

## 1. Welcome and Actions

- AC welcomed everyone to the meeting including those wishing to observe (John Capstick and Margaret Brooks from SPC).
- Potholes – major holes on Black Horse hill have been dealt with. Many thanks to HH for liaising with local highways engineers. There are still many more potholes to put right and Hazel is on the case.
- YDNP Local Plan Consultation – SEP responded to the latest Local Plan consultation as agreed. SEP also responded to the Birks Farm planning application; the project has since been approved.
- MyCumbria Town – following discussion at the last SEP, Ben Melling from Cumbria Tourism will visit local Main Street businesses on Friday to address interest. **ACTION: JG** to contact Main Street businesses in advance.
- Locality Boards – the new locality boards are being set up for each former district area. The South Lakeland one will have a small budget – may be worth considering what projects might be of interest to the board.
- Grey water – **ACTION: HH** to arrange locality officer visit to Joss Lane to meet with SPC to discuss net-zero funding and surface water drainage.
- Shared Prosperity Fund - Thanks to Sam for sharing SPF information, deadline dates and details on Q&A sessions.
- Station Road Housing – Broadacres are holding a public information event at People Hall on Wednesday 28 June. SPC will talk with Broadacres directly regarding funding support for potential projects.
- Vacancy rates – JG shared vacancy data and confirmed that Main Street vacancy rates will be collected and shared every quarter. There are 3 empty units in Sedbergh within the main shopping area.

## 2. Broadband in Sedbergh

Libby Bateman introduced the work of Fibus in Sedbergh, which is being delivered as part of Fibus own investment in broadband infrastructure in towns across Cumbria. The business is based in Northern Ireland, it is operating commercially in the area. Alongside this town investment, Fibus is also delivering the Government's Hyperfast GB project, connecting 60,000 remote properties to a full fibre network across Cumbria. This is a continuation of the Governments Project Gigabit funding and the rollout will come to Sedbergh but no timelines are available currently, for more information please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/project-gigabit-uk-gigabit-programme>

**ACTION: LB** to share Fibus contact information. Post-script - [enquiries@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@dcms.gov.uk) for any enquiries regarding Project Gigabit funding and [dean.jooste@fibus.com](mailto:dean.jooste@fibus.com) for any enquiries regarding Fibus commercial investment in the town. Fibus contract with a company called Viberoptix which may be seen operating in the area.

There are similarities to the B4RN broadband network as both are commercial operators working in the area. Businesses and residents have a choice of operator. The B4RN project to the west and south of Sedbergh looks to be nearing completion but there is still scope for them to deliver broadband across town too.

### 3. Planning

**Local Plan** - Consultation No.6 resulted in nearly 800 responses, dominated by objections to the 33 potential housing site allocations. Relatively little objection to sites in Sedbergh (6 objections across 4 sites with 12 letters of support). YDNP have been asked by the landowner and others to reconsider the site immediately west of the ongoing Station Road development. YDNP has been asked to consider re-allocating Baliol for mixed or residential-led development – any decision is deferred until a better picture of the availability of other sites for development. A report will go to next YDNP meeting in June and will recommend a working group to go through all the issues raised and take decisions. This with a view to bringing a report to the September meeting of the Authority to move the Local Plan on.

**New Bridge** – SEP and SPC comments noted by YDNP on the desire to see coach parking in this area and the removal of a 'green space' allocation. It will be considered by the working group as part of the next stage of the Local Plan. Nothing is set in stone yet. **ACTION: KL/ SA** to provide more detail to YDNP on the proposals for coach parking.

**Baliol** – the application remains live, but negotiations on alternative proposals are ongoing. We're expecting a new set of proposals soon that are likely to significantly alter what was originally submitted, so this will likely be a new application.

### 4. Community Transport

JG circulated the statement from Woofs of Sedbergh confirming cancellation of the weekday bus service from 21st of July. It is estimated that the bus service can cost up to £200k per annum to run. Cllr Mitchell met with Tim Farron MP today to discuss and a petition may be forthcoming. There was a good community attendance at SPC last night to discuss the issue.

Whilst important to keep the current daily service, the bus service timetable could be much improved. There is a need to cater for people living here so they can access hospital appointments, leisure activities, visit friends and family and going to work. Ideally a bus would run at least three times a day. There are over 40 vacancies in Sedbergh that need filling and many workers need to be able to access public transport. The issue of losing the daily service is also an economic one, not just a social one.

There could be an opportunity to link with other bus services travelling in and out of Kendal such as the College or Sedbergh School subject to correct insurances, types of bus, driver eligibility etc. Other schemes exist such as Wheels to Work and Sedbergh has been flagged as a place to consider should Cumbria Tourism's Barrow to Windermere staff travel pilot project expand. Libby Bateman is involved with a bus charity called the 106 between Penrith and Kendal, **ACTION: LB** to contact Cllrs Mitchell and Hughes, the portfolio holder for transport to discuss.

**ACTION: JG** to organise small subgroup (including Sedbergh School, Western Dales Bus) to capture any help, lead organisations, new ideas and share with local MP/ Cllr Mitchell/ existing community group who may be already championing this project.

### 5. Parking Strategy

SPC are focussed on three major projects linked to car parking over the next 12 months - coach parking; Joss Lane car park upgrade; residential parking and playground refresh at Peoples Hall.

**Coach Parking** – this item was covered under Local Plan. Ideally SPC would like to see coach parking at New Bridge with drop off and collection on Loftus Hill.

**Joss Lane car park upgrade** – Joss Lane car park is on a long lease to SPC from WAF. It is a busy space just off the Main Street, which accommodates property permits, coach parking, recycling, weekly market, police parking, Western Dales bus storage, contractor visits and shoppers. There are approx. 400 valid residents permits to park in this space. There is a need to improve this space. It caters for far too many different

types of use and it needs to be an easier space to use, a more attractive space to use and a positive arrival point for the town.

**Residential parking and playground refresh** - SPC are exploring the opportunity to improve the playground facilities adjacent to Peoples Hall and install a new car parking area for residents to use to alleviate demand on Joss Lane car park. Ideas include raising revenue from selling parking permits to directly keep the children's playground maintained. £52k has been allocated to the project but more funding will be required. **ACTION: SPC** to meet with SB and GH at WAF to discuss.

**Electric charging** – SPC has just approved a new contractor to supply electric vehicle points in both car parks. It is hoped the contractor will deliver this scheme by the end of the financial year. There will be one post with two charging points in each car park, but the work will be future-proofed should more electric vehicle charging points be required.

**Additional parking** - Sedbergh School confirmed a new 40 space car park by the Hirst Centre, with 4 charging points, from July. Staff and visitors will be encouraged to use this parking area. The school confirmed that its current leased spaces at Loftus Hill car park will be given up and that it will provide a cash contribution to SPC to help deliver electric vehicle points installation at the public car park on Loftus Hill.

## 6. Shared Prosperity Fund

WAF Council is running information sessions and 1:2:1 advice sessions to help anyone wanting to submit an application. SB has previously circulated the SPF guidance to all SEP members. The applications are now live and the deadline is at the end of the month. The interventions (project fields) are quite tight and large sums of money exist to support projects. The applications forms are very onerous.

Farfield Mill is considering an application, possible under two project areas. The Rawthey project is looking at SPF options and the Sedbergh History Society is also seeking funding to increase its online presence/ grow an electronic data library. Ideally, Sedbergh needs to develop more oven-ready projects for any future calls making it easier to approach and bid for funds.

## 7. Any other business

- Booktown - Steve Ewence provided an update on the Booktown. Steve is a new trustee and keen to bring new life to the project. The literary festival marks a new beginning this year and it is hoped to link with the music festival providing a longer summer festival idea with music every other year. Booktown would like to find a unit to call home, ideally a base with accommodation to help fund it. **ACTION: SE** to look to other literary festival links e.g. Barnes Children's Literary festival.
- Sheepfest – preparation for Sheepfest 2023 is progressing well. Sessions for sheep making workshops at Peoples Hall are available to book.

**Next meeting** 11am, Friday 21 July at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh