

# Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 25 November 2022

**Attending:** Andrew Cobb (Chair), Cllr Robin Ashcroft, Joanne Golton, Peter Marshall, Peter Stockton, Tony Reed-Screen, James Ratcliffe, Cllr Hazel Hodgson, Cllr Kevin Lancaster, Janey Hassam, Chris Woods, Tony Roberts, John Barraclough.

**Apologies:** Cllr Suzie Pye, Carol Moffat, Sam Butcher, Matt Williams, Sarah Campbell, Cllr Nick Cotton, Ian McPherson, Debbie Richardson, Gillian Holmes, Libby Bateman, Debbie Wilson.

## 1. Welcome and Actions

- Andy welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Libby Bateman is attending a Rural Prosperity Fund meeting and will provide more information to SEP at the next meeting.
- The Nursery project has been given the green light. Information obtained from the GP practice showed that there are 147 under-fives in Dent and Sedbergh. This level of potential supply gave confidence to a local nursery operator, Claire Robinson, who will now run the nursery. Work on the site will begin straight away and the Nursery will be at the Lodge opposite the Spar Shop from February next year. **ACTION: JG** to invite Spar area representative to a future meeting.
- Joanne compiled a list of current vacancies of Sedbergh vacancies for School to share with the office of the Slovenia ambassador following their discussion on work placements. **ACTION: JG** to share list with SEP.
- No new update on Rigmaden Bridge, suspect fixing it will be years away. **ACTION: KL** to raise with Cllr Brook on his visit to Sedbergh.
- Confusion remains over the application process for new housing at Station Lane. Joanne has written to the SLH chief exec for clarification but no response. Janey has written to Broadacres who are advising people to submit application directly. **ACTION: JG/ JH** to seek clarification with Cllr Brook. Once decision known will need to distribute news to key employers and community.
- Baliol - the Planning Officer and the agent met recently at the site. Application may be withdrawn and resubmitted to fit YDNP policy requirements. SEP will respond to new submission.
- Cllr Hodgson had requested a statement on social care provision from the portfolio holder and will share when received.
- Parking- JG, JH and HB met on Monday to start to develop new parking strategy for Sedbergh, following recent SPC meeting outcome.
- Late night opening in on 14 December, programme was circulated. CIC encouraged to promote further afield than just Sedbergh, use Cumbria Tourism PR machine, advertise in other towns etc.
- B4RN planning for phase two is well advanced, hunting for funds continues as more households sign up. Need everyone to keep spreading the word about a good value service.

## 2. Main Street – Vision 2025

Main Street business are facing significant challenges and businesses across the country are making difficult decisions on trading, staffing and pricing. JR talked through how the current economic situation was affecting his businesses - staffing, supply chain, costs of food and also

wages. RA reported that these were district wide issues, lots of businesses will be hit. The Main Street is a place of great possibility in a town that hasn't yet fully exploited its visitor potential. SEP needs to decide where to put its energy, recognise Sedbergh's best assets and utilise them. JG shared business feedback from Farfield Mill and Sleepy Elephant including marketing for more coach trips introducing a new Booktown festival. Other businesses have also given their input and suggestions for discussion.

JG distributed the recent Cumbria Tourism survey which provided useful statistics and analysis on hospitality in the region. All agreed that the visitor economy drives Sedbergh so need to encourage more footfall and overnight stays to help our shops and hospitality. JG shared Nick's e-mail on cycling tourism options and will share with local accommodation providers to see if any interested in extending season.

There are several empty shops and indication given from some local businesses that they would move in as part of a package of new stores rather than a singular unit, designed to help uplift the street and give a positive shopping offer.

Temporary pedestrianisation of Main Street was discussed to help improve hospitality trade and grow the visitor market during busy periods. Closures have been considered many times in the past but not delivered due to cost, feedback and Highways advice. Some accommodation operators would encourage a six-week closure in the summer holidays which would shift the emphasis to a more leisure use. Cllr Brook is visiting SEP on 6th of December and perhaps a temporary road closure could be raised.

PM listed several areas for action - a questionnaire for users with a focus on immediate and strategic reaction; a consideration of how to meet demand for an evening takeaway, perhaps engage with our hospitality businesses to see who may take up the cause; engage with different markets such as cycling, walking, employers, locals and finally the need to look at collective buying in areas of energy and food. JB and HH echoed the need for an improved evening economy especially over winter.

JB raised the issue of the threat to the Post Office in Sedbergh - additional revenue income may be needed to plug the gap and ensure the Post Office can continue should the sorting office go. JH reported a reduction in the Dent to Sedbergh bus services due to the lack of visitors using it. There was a consensus for more uniform hours, pop up shops and a café presence 7 days a week.

KL is keen to see an outdoor sports or adventure activity in the area that will bring in visitors. AC would like to see more on dark skies perhaps including a planetarium. CW supports more promotion of the Artisan Market and evening economy solutions - these could include street food options such as Chinese, Indian, Thai. **ACTION: JG** to find out why previous take away businesses left and approach mobile food caterers to discuss options.

**ACTION: JG** to set up small working group to gather information and ideas to draft a Strategy for Main Street to include infrastructure planning and financial support to move Sedbergh forward.

### **3. Cllr Brook Visit**

The new unitary authority will operate from 1 April and the Council Leader will be Cllr Jonathan Brook. He will visit Sedbergh on Tuesday 6 Dec and meet with SEP members. Itinerary includes a meet greet to talk through the Growth Framework, a coffee and chat with local businesses, a visit to Baliol to meet with Peter Stockton to hear about YDNP planning and housing issues and

then Farfield Mill to share visitor/ cultural aspects but this may be swapped to 72 Main Street if the Mill is closed. **ACTION: JG** to share visit summary.

#### 4. Planning Update

**Local Plan** – Local plan work continues, a policy development forum with Members is due next week to look at suggested sites for allocation. Site allocation maps due out in Spring 2023. The Local Plan team are writing to landowners regarding potential sites identified by officers. There was a recent appeal to note, regarding eight houses in the National Park on an allocated site. The applicant did not include an affordable housing element and the application was rejected at appeal - noteworthy as the planning inspector aligns with YDNP's affordable housing policy.

**Applications** – Sedbergh School's Tech Centre has been approved. Kings Yard housing development will go to next Planning meeting – recommended for approval. Baliol application expected to be withdrawn, changes made and resubmitted. The Astro turf development is to start the second week in January through until July and the School will keep locals informed.

**Tollbar** – additional land for employment at Toll Bar will be submitted to YNDP, along with a supportive note from Economic Development at SLDC. Letter needs to include planned uses and boundary and employment land in this area should help cover any lost as part of the Baliol scheme. **ACTION: JG** to work with landowner and SLDC to submit site for consideration.

**28-day rule** – discussion had on the 28 days per year rule which was increased to 56 days during Covid but now back down to 28. This was a national decision with very little movement locally but there is scope for a development order to grant permitted development rights beyond the 28 day use. To support accommodation providers in the area such as camping sites SEP feel that the National Park should consider this to help the visitor economy and encourage smaller site numbers by distributing staying visitors across a longer period of time.

#### 5. Any other business

- Browns is to go on the market for rental, number of interested parties already.
- **ACTION: ALL** to share any United Utilities concerns with Cllr Hodgson, meeting them shortly.
- The Business Portal draft was shared to SEP. Tony will populate to launch next week. It will be a useful communication tool for local businesses. Article on SEP and new business portal will go to the Lookaround for January. **ACTION: JG** to submit article.

**Next meeting**      11am, Friday 20 January at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh