

Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 21 July 2023

Attending: Andrew Cobb (Chair), Joanne Golton, Sam Butcher (WAF), Janey Hassam (SPC), Cllr Hazel Hodgson, Cllr Kevin Lancaster, Debbie Richardson, Libby Bateman, Steve Ewence, Chris Woods, Ian MacPherson, Gillian Holmes (WAF), Debbie Wilson, Tony Reed-Screen, Peter Stockton (YDNP), Tony Roberts. **Apologies:** Matt Williams (WAF), John Barraclough, Jim Atkins, Peter Marshall

1. Welcome and Actions

- MyCumbria Card visit to Main St at end of June. 8 businesses signed up with 8 expected to follow. Sedbergh promotional newsletter to card holders (circa 2000) due out shortly, will feature as part of larger Cumbria Tourism visitor newsletter mailout in the future.
- SPC have signed a contract to deliver Electric Vehicle charging points. SPC hope the contractor can complete the work this financial year. Hazel will chase the Locality Officer to meet SPC on site to discuss the Joss Lane car park project and surface water run-off issue.
- Broadacres recently held an information event on the housing development at station road (Rawthey Meadows). Over 200 people attended to look at rental / shared ownership options, since confirmed that demand outweighing supply on all options inc open market. Cumbria Choice Lettings advertising rental properties, need to check regularly as 7-day window for applications. Open-market homes are being marketed via Broadacres website and reservations have been taken. Broadacres keen to deliver more homes in Sedbergh.
- Coach parking discussed at the recent Western Dales Forum, especially the need to have coach parking space. Further plans / information still required by the Local Plan team to investigate suitability for alternative use to green space at New Bridge.

2. Community Transport

Round table discussion on the need for public transport, seeking alternative solutions, collating signed petition papers and sharing feedback. The current bus service ends today. A previous request to the Council by Woofs for additional funding was turned down - with hindsight this was a forward-planning opportunity lost.

HH provided an overview. Woofs have been approached to continue to run the service but have declined. The local MP has met with Transport Minister to review funding options and had discussion with Stagecoach to secure extending the current provision but this has not progressed. Discussions underway with various local providers including the Little White Bus Company and Western Dales Bus and Cllrs due to meet with them soon. Mark Hodgkiss is the officer at WAF looking at options, including Govt grants.

DW has collected approximately 700 paper copies of the bus petition and sent these to the MP's office, thanks to Debbie for coordinating. The petition is now available online - dismay expressed that the petition did not feature in the MP's newsletter. Up to £400k could be needed for the service and WAF are exploring options in their Communities budget. Suggestions include a new loop running between Kirby Steven, Kendal, Penrith and Sedbergh.

£400k has been allocated to the South Lakes Locality Board for sustainable transport options but that money needs to extend across the patch. **ACTION: GH and HH** to meet to confirm latest developments and provide further update (for SEP members to feed back to representative organisations).

Tim Farron MP is in Sedbergh on 16 August for one of his summer surgeries. SEP to note that Ian MacPherson is a link into the Western Dales bus group and is newly appointed legal advisor to the Settle to Carlisle Railway Trust. **ACTION: AC** to invite TF to SEP meeting.

LB provided brief overview of the Penrith to Kendal 106 Bus - run by a charity on a gap-funded basis. It is operated professionally with fee-paying passengers and paid drivers; the bus service costs are gap funded by volunteers raising money. Although Councils cannot currently directly subsidize the service, they can support areas such as marketing, training and research. This type of bus project is fully portable to areas such as Sedbergh. The 106 Bus contracts with Cumbria Classic Coaches to run the service but have used Stagecoach in the past. Expected that WAF Cabinet will look at again at constitutional position preventing subsidizing bus services.

3. Planning Update

Local Plan - Consultation No.6, on potential sites for allocation, settlement boundaries and open space, finished in May. The summary of responses is available on the local plan page <https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/living-and-working/planning-policy/local-plan-2023-40/> There were many objections from across the park but that number was very low in Sedbergh. The Local Plan team are considering four sites for housing in Sedbergh, including one that the owner has asked for it to be reconsidered, having previously been dismissed. Cllr Ian Mitchell is the local representative on the YDNP board and all members have met recently to look at the various priorities and policies of YDNPA. Recommendations on the Local Plan will go to all members in autumn. YDNPA waiting on confirmation of infrastructure advisor from WAF.

New Bridge – The green space issue at New Bridge is still not clear, SPC needs to provide maps and plans for coach parking to the Local Plan team and Cllr Mitchell will hopefully be pressing the issue as the YDNP local representative.

Baliol – owners have submitted a request to have the site allocated for residential under the new Local Plan. Clarification sought on number of affordable units required for the site as may be eligible for ‘vacant building credit’ which, under Government guidance, changes obligation.

Census data – initial Census data published for YDNP area; projections seem to be coming true as the population has dropped / aged. All agreed Sedbergh could increase its population, especially younger generation, if more housing was delivered in this area. **ACTION: JG** to share ward/ parish level Census data on Sedbergh as and when published.

Housing supply – numbers in the Local Plan suggest 40 - 50 housing units across the park each year. Sedbergh is in the process of building 49 in just 1-year and these are oversubscribed. The allocation for the town is approx 100 houses over the lifetime of the 2023 - 2040 Local Plan. Kings’ Yard numbers likely to drop out as permission has already been granted and work commenced, other allocations from the last Local Plan may come forward earlier also.

Principal occupancy – the policy ruling on principal residence for new-builds is unlikely to change before Local Plan adopted. It could have helped local workers and families to secure housing. YDNPA will push for this policy as part of the next Local Plan, currently must be proposed by the landowner and can be used as an option to counteract some of the affordable housing percentage demands.

4. Shared Prosperity Fund

Local Projects – Farfield Mill have applied to SPF under the Rural Fund for capital refurbishment, the Rawthey Project have also applied - fingers crossed for both projects. 76 applications were

received by WAF and the assessment process is underway with decisions to be announced in September, (projects to start in autumn). Concern expressed about the tight deadlines to complete project spend and achieve outputs by the scheme deadlines.

Round 3 – call expected in October 2023, this will be for projects relating to adult skills and training for 2024 - 2025 delivery.

5. Reorganisation

Locality Boards – South Lakeland Locality Board (SLLB) is one of three local boards across the WAF area, each consisting of approx. 30 local elected members supported by community engagement officers. The SLLB has a budget of £758,000, which includes £400k for travel related projects. The area manager is Michael Comfrey and the Sedbergh link officer is Gill Holmes. The four Working Groups are Children and Young People, Building Community Assets and Addressing Inequalities, Climate Action and Increasing Biodiversity and Highways. There is an option for WAF Members to attend all the various working groups across the Locality Board/ Council. **ACTION: JG** to circulate key committees list to SEP members.

Small grants - each Locality Board has a small grants pot which requires an application, smaller applications can be approved without the need to go to committee. Each local Member has a budget of £1000 which they can use on max two projects. Grant applications do not have to fit the SLLB working group titles. **ACTION: GH** to share criteria for project applications.

Highways – KL sought clarification on highway scheme budgets/ priorities and HH advised schemes are carried forward for up to three years, assessed annually. Noted that Cllr Ian Mitchell is on the Highways working group. **ACTION: JG** to invite Victoria Upton to future SEP meetings.

6. Partner Updates

- MP Tim Farron attended an event at the Station Road development for Rural Housing Week.
- For more information on the SLLB and latest agendas/ minutes please visit <https://westmorlandandfurness.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=270>

7. Terms of Reference

JG circulated draft version of new SEP Terms of Reference following input from a small subgroup. Comment from representative organisations and individuals is now sought. The document is a draft so changes are expected. **ACTION: All** to share draft with groups/committees and send any feedback to JG. The plan is to amend, agree and adopt at a future SEP meeting. The draft list of SEP Members includes reference to a business organisation - there isn't one currently in Sedbergh – but should one materialise then they would be a key component of SEP.

8. Any other business

- **Funding** - SEP need to find funding to pay for the project officer. **ACTION: All** representatives to consider where they may help find funds. Documentation to support funding requests can be made available.
- **Community Plan Consultation** – SPC enquired about the Staveley community consultation, recently being promoted by WAF Council. HH confirmed Staveley residents had been active with community planning for a long period and WAF have helped them to promote the next consultation exercise using community plans budgets - the opportunity exists for support should SPC look to do similar in the future.

Next meeting 11am, Friday 15 Sept at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh, **TBC**