

# Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 2 September 2022

**Attending:** Andrew Cobb (Chair), Ian McPherson, Joanne Golton, Peter Marshall, Peter Stockton, Sam Butcher, Matt Williams, Tony Reed-Screen, Debbie Richardson, Chris Woods, Sarah Campbell, Cllr Hazel Hodgson, Cllr Nick Cotton, Cllr Kevin Lancaster, Janey Hassam, Cllr Robin Ashcroft, Gillian Holmes, Libby Bateman

**Apologies:**, Cllr Suzie Pye, Debbie Wilson, John Barraclough, Carol Moffat, James Ratcliffe

## 1. Welcome and Actions

- The visit of the ambassador on 17 October will include the planting of a Linden tree, plaque unveiling, and the gifting of a beehive. **ACTION: AC** to circulate final programme.
- A productive parking meeting was held with SPC representatives, KL will keep the group informed on progress and JG will help with a parking strategy.
- The YDNP Local Plan consultation response was submitted. Thanks to everyone for their input and to JG for pulling it together.
- Tony confirmed a Community Trust grant of £5000 to the primary school for their wraparound care programme.
- Nursery preferred location is Browns, having considered all other sites including URC (work to start shortly) and Udales. It would be on a temporary basis for up to 2 years but SEP would like to see support from organisations before progressing a planning application for change of use. The shop building is owned by Sedbergh School and must be for retail or hospitality longer term. Intention remains for the nursery to relocate into a different building or Baliol. Potential operator writing business plan, some capital investment may be needed. **ACTION: SP** to update survey of demand to help business case.

## 2. Partner Updates

**B4RN** – the broadband project is coming into town, starting October, with a hard dig option. One of the first areas to be first connected will be St Andrews Church. B4RN currently undertaking hard dig in Kirkby Lonsdale and site management reported to be effective and efficient.

**Current issues for SEP organisations** – a request was made for project news from partners around the table to see if any advice sought and to keep in the spirit of collaboration.

- St Andrews will shortly be hosting a public meeting to help finalise plans to renovate rooms and facilities inside the Church - changes include improved toilets and expansion of the parish room.
- Sedbergh School reported 578 pupils on roll this year, a record entry. However, there are severe business concerns over escalating costs, specifically fuel and energy, contractor shortages and unfilled jobs. Examples provided of increased costs to food and energy bills were very concerning. Looking to proceed with investment in both campuses on reducing energy consumption levels through upgrading lighting to LED bulbs; going green and saving on energy costs. The School has commissioned Arup to look at energy consumption and fuel sources - this may include recommendations for biomass, solar and even own food growth. Opportunities may arise for local collaboration and this will be shared with SEP and Business Network portal.
- There was a good discussion on businesses working together to reduce costs via group purchase options. The School will share the type of LED units they are looking to buy and see if there is an opportunity cost benefit to local businesses. **ACTION: PM** to provide details to SEP members.
- The employee transportation route into Sedbergh is open, **ACTION: PM and JG** to talk with other employers to spread the word. Accommodation meeting regarding lodgings to also organise.

- Settlebeck School is about to start work on its boiler and roof. Concern expressed about schools not having energy caps and costs could spiral. Sarah reported need to look at food bills and other savings to minimise costs that are passed to parents. Settlebeck numbers up at 95% occupancy.
- A recent meeting of the economy / rural strategy LEP group reported issues with the changing demographic, COVID recovery and energy costs for businesses. Cumbria LEP are seeking innovative experiences to share with other businesses. One aspect highlighted was the crucial need to keep young people in Cumbria and SEP all agreed that housing was key element to this.
- Next week the Sedbergh Environmental Network will be promoting green initiatives week. There will be a stall at Wednesday's market highlighting the need for local nature recovery sites and awareness raising of protecting green spaces and tackling climate change.

### 3. Sedbergh Business Network

Joanne introduced plans for the new Business Network, the initial phase is the information portal. Time has lapsed to consider the old chamber closing and the need to leave a gap. The new portal will direct Sedbergh businesses to current business and local information, to work together, to be better informed, and to share ideas.

The layout is being styled similar to the Sedbergh School intranet and the project is being kindly supported by Tony Roberts. The site will be used to inform and enhance collaboration and will hopefully be run alongside a series of business networking events and meetings in the town.

The domain [www.sedberghbusinessnetwork.co.uk](http://www.sedberghbusinessnetwork.co.uk) is registered. The web pages are being populated by Joanne with help from additional sources. There will be an ongoing requirement of admin for the site/ business meetings etc of approx. 8-10 hours per month, which will be funded by the monies left over from the old Chamber for up to 2 years. We hope it will provide a useful resource to business and welcome input. **ACTION: All** to provide JG with suggested sections/ areas of interest etc.

JG reported a recent meeting with Bath House, they now employ 42 staff and operate from Sedbergh and Dent. They are keen to be kept informed of SEP activity. The meeting highlighted the need to meet with key employers in the town to find out and feedback on key issues and opportunities for collaboration. **ACTION: JG** to set up meeting with larger employers.

One area raised by Bath House was developing a situation where the introduction of 3-4 key retailers could help turn Sedbergh into a shopping destination, similar to Kirkby Lonsdale. This resonated with an earlier mention of the need to consider how Main Street may look in the future. **ACTION: All** to consider how the high street could/ should be operating in 2030 for future agenda. This is a priority area highlighted in the Sedbergh Framework for Growth.

### 4. Projects Update

**Shared Prosperity Fund** – Matt provided the latest update and SLDC appreciated the coordinated response from Sedbergh; it was nice to get a cohesive plan rather than individual requests. SLDC have submitted their investment plan and sign-off is expected soon, with funding released later this year. In-house application process still being considered but SEP advised to look at projects for year two and three. Applications expected to open shortly with a deadline in November, with February decision and an April 2023 payment. SLDC will provide a supportive role with applications. Main takeaways - need to ensure there are no competing bids, show collaboration, the key is supporting business.

Cllr Ashcroft thanked the Chair for his invitation to the Leader of the new unitary council. Cabinet members are supportive of all areas in the new patch and assured SEP there was no location bias. The leader of the new council, Cllr Jonathan Brook, is looking to visit in October.

**Other Framework priority areas** – Joanne highlighted the range of priority areas in the Growth Framework and the need for project champions to lead and keep SEP informed of any progress/ issues. One area includes cycling and Cllr Cotton cited the potential advantage for Sedbergh with the old railway line converting to a cycle route and linking to Settle to Carlisle. Sedbergh is an excellent cycling destination but it can be improved by better public transport links and connections. Another area considered in the Framework is an extra-care facility but no organisation currently taking the lead on facilitating delivery. **ACTION: JG** to write to South Lakes Housing about the issue.

## 5. Planning Update

**Local Plan** – Peter reported 77 responses to the latest Local Plan consultation on policy. YDNP will be publishing proposed sites and undertaking landowner engagement in November. The permanent occupancy policy seems well received. Every housing boundary in the park is currently being reviewed. The affordable housing target will be 30% in this area which should help meet demand and development viability needs. The proposed settlement strategy, which supports growth in certain locations such as Sedbergh, seems to have received a good reaction. There was no objection to housing growth in Sedbergh and work is needed to determine preferred housing numbers across each main settlement. **ACTION: JG** to add proposed sites for allocation to future SEP agenda.

One of the proposed policy areas that may change is around farm buildings re intensification of farming and scrutiny of buildings. Good points made on the need to recognise the importance of the role that small family farms play in the local landscape and the need to have supportive development management policies.

YDNP recognise the need to look again at energy production policy, will become more important over the next 6-12 months. This covers renewable sources such as wind turbines, solar farms and biomass production sites.

**Station Road** - update from Mark Dutton at South Lakes Housing to advise the new homes will be coming on stream from April 23 onwards until late 2023/early 2024. SLH have not yet identified an agent to assist with marketing homes for sale and shared ownership but will keep SEP informed.

**Tollbar** - this could be a key site for further employment use which could support local industry and jobs. YDNP reported no employment land put forward for allocation in Sedbergh. Phase one of the tollbar was not completed and phase two involves land to the rear which the landowner is open to develop. This could be an important alternative option to the Baliol site and deliver employment on an existing site. **ACTION: JG** to invite Baliol agent to the next SEP meeting for update.

## 6. Any other business

**Christmas Late Night Opening** confirmed for 14 December, **ACTION: JG** to send on old Chamber businesses list to CW.

**Settlebeck School** would like representatives for the Trust Board, preferably SEP members or local businesspeople. This is to help shape the strategic direction of Settlebeck. **ACTION: All** to speak with contacts and help spread the word.

**A683 Engineering works** area due to start in mid-Sept to address road underpinning. The road will be closed but some restricted access may be possible for local farmers. Expected closure of 4 weeks with long diversion.

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