

# Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 29 April 2022

**Attending:** Andrew Cobb (Chair), Chris Wood, Francine Bult, Ian McPherson, Joanne Golton, Cllr Kevin Lancaster, Carol Moffat, Janey Hassam, Peter Marshall, Peter Stockton, Sam Butcher, Tony Reed Screen, Debbie Richardson, Debbie Wilson. **Invited guests:** Garth Steadman, David Smith

**Apologies:** Gillian Holmes, Matt Williams, Sarah Campbell, Cllr Nick Cotton, Cllr Robin Ashcroft, Cllr Suzie Pye, John Barraclough, James Ratcliffe

## 1. Welcome and Actions

Andy welcomed everybody to the meeting (in person and via Zoom) and introduced Garth and Dave Smith from the Sedbergh Town Twinning Group.

Most action items are covered under the agenda. Notes from last meeting accepted. The Tech Centre meeting with SLDC will be rescheduled.

## 2. Business and Economic Opportunities – Zrece connection

Representatives from the town twinning group attended to give an overview – Zrece is a town in Slovenia, the Slovenian ambassador is due to visit Sedbergh later this year. Noted that member Susan Garnett had recently passed and her contribution to town twinning will be sorely missed.

The town twinning group is suffering from the lack of volunteers, an issue common to many local groups. Volunteers are needed to help run student exchanges and organise cultural visits. Dave and Garth would like to see commitment from local institutions such as the schools, parish council and churches with volunteer time given. **Action: KL** to approach the new local authority and the Parish Council to request recognition and resource for town twinning partnerships.

There is a real opportunity for businesses to explore staff recruitment through the town twinning link. James Ratcliffe from The Black Bull provided an example of a Slovenian student who will do their work placement here in Sedbergh during the summer and then return to college in Slovenia in the autumn. Opportunities like this could help both towns. Other areas to be explored could include an artist exchange with Farfield Mill and opportunities for tourism/ hospitality support. Zrece tourism season is in the winter months so that could provide an opportunity for hospitality staff, subject to visa requirements, coming over to this part of Cumbria to work in our summer season. **ACTION: FB and Cumbria Tourism** to investigate staff exchange project. **PM to ask School HR Dept** to look at visa requirements to help solve staffing issues.

YDNP has a town twinning officer as the parks are twinned with National Parks elsewhere. **ACTION: JG/ SB** to approach Zrece Mayors office for links to help grow job links and to progress business and cultural ideas. **ACTION: ALL** need to make sure the ambassador visit worthwhile. **ACTION: Suggest TT Group** write to other local groups to support town twinning such as the YDNP Millennium Trust etc.

## 3. Actions and next steps from meeting with Tim Farron

TF's office keen to progress delivery of childcare and wraparound care for young people in Sedbergh. TF has also been in contact with the primary school and we understand that a questionnaire has now gone out to all parents (perhaps it should go wider) to consider wraparound care. AC has written to the Headteacher to press need for wraparound provision. **Action: AC** to arrange meeting with Headteacher.

SEP have established a small working group, chaired by TRS, to help find monetary and physical resources to help establish a Nursery and wraparound care project.

#### 4. Growth Framework Action Plan update

Joanne circulated the updated action plan for April and the current challenges facing delivery.

- Solving lack of collective business voice
- Deliver more housing/ accommodation choice
- Tourism/ marketing co-ordination
- Finding site/ provider for childcare demand
- No public electric charging points
- Maintaining momentum
- Baliol site redevelopment
- Reorganisation and effect on Sedbergh
- Recruitment issues for local employers
- Town offer across hospitality/ retail 7 days a week

**Childcare** The nursery site could be sited at several spots in Sedbergh, more work is to be done looking at Vicarage Lane, Baliol and other existing sites. The new Levelling Up Fund could help support to the project as it would deliver jobs and support the local economy. Local government reorganisation could also add much needed resource and support.

**Funding.** SEP has secured £10k towards the cost of programme delivery. A formal approach is to be made to the Parish Council, perhaps alongside some resource for town twinning delivery, plus the marketing element and the Business Network support. The local authorities need to be aware of (and act where possible to support) labour shortages/ recruitment difficulties which are affecting economic activity in the town. **Action: JG** to approach SPC for funds. **Action: JH** to invite SEP representative to future SPC mtg.

**EV Charging.** Other sites being explored to try and deliver EV charging points. The District Council has been approached for funding to support the application and the charges must be available for use by visitors and residents. Accommodation providers can source government grants for EV chargers with up to £350 available. **ACTION: FB** to send out information.

**Tourism.** The new dark skies festival for Cumbria will run on the 28th of October for 14 days. Any business/ group interested in promoting any dark skies events need to contact Cumbria Tourism, e.g. dinner and stargazing, talks on the night sky.

**Employment.** There is a jobs and careers fair in Kendal next week. Sedbergh School are attending alongside other local businesses. Reminder that Cumbria Tourism are still operating their Facebook channel and Website page advertising job vacancies locally. Any employer in Sedbergh is welcome to send in their job vacancies. The National Park website also hosts vacancies. **Action: PS** to send out details. There could be a plan, under the Business Network, to run a Sedbergh jobs stand at a future job fair, encouraging all local businesses with vacancies to take part.

**Housing.** More homes are needed to support jobs in the local economy; this includes rental accommodation and/ or shared houses. AC has drafted a note for Lookaround to encourage residents to think about offering lodgings which would support seasonal workers and young people in the town. Platforms such as Spareroom are available but a more local approach maybe more reassuring to residents. It could present a real opportunity for local older people to rent out rooms to help with household bills and perhaps help combat isolation or loneliness (HomeShare / Share and Care schemes exist across UK). Noted that Sedbergh School report that up to 50 of their staff have indicated that they would like to lessen the commute and buy a house here in Sedbergh but no availability.

**Sedbergh Business Network.** The portal is built (thanks to Tony Roberts) but needs content, JG providing. Will use it to advertise shared accommodation/ rental units for workers following reports from businesses on the lack of available housing inhibiting business growth. **Action: JG** to source list of available accommodation, including lodgings and share with employers.

**Marketing and Promotion.** The PR/ Marketing contract work has been on hold. The tourist group need to meet again, **ACTION: JG** to arrange.

## 5. Planning Matters

The start date for the Station Road housing development is imminent. The Baliol application has stalled with issues on access, viability, heritage, and use of former playing fields. The Tech Centre application is progressing and a meeting is being held between the School and YDNP on Tuesday.

Housing sites have been put forward for Local Plan land allocations and are still being surveyed. A list is expected to be published in September for consultation. Following the discussion at the last SEP meeting, the National Park are consulting with United Utilities on future capacity of sewerage and water for the town. The National Park are looking at estate master plans for rural estates across the park; including one for Sedbergh School - a meeting with Yorkshire Dales planning officers is planned.

## 6. Partner Updates

SEP will invite 3 member organisations to update each week and this item will be moved further up the agenda.

Farfield Mill report that visitor numbers have increased this year and are very pleased. Confirmed that they will continue to open Wednesdays to Sundays only.

SLDC discussed the new Levelling Up Programme. The new local authority will receive funds to support projects across the area. This could help deliver several SEP priorities. **ACTION: SB** to circulate information note.

**Next meeting** 11am, Fri 10 June at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh.