

Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 1 December 2023

Attending: Andrew Cobb (Chair), Debbie Richardson, Sarah Campbell, Joanne Golton, Cllr Hazel Hodgson, John Barraclough, Jim Atkins, Steve Ewence, Chris Woods, Tony Reed-Screen, Peter Stockton (YDNP), Jo Moffat

Apologies: Sam Butcher (WAF), Matt Williams (WAF), Peter Marshall (Vice-Chair), Gillian Holmes (WAF), Debbie Wilson, Libby Bateman, Carol Moffat, Tony Roberts.

1. Welcome and Actions

- Terms of Reference – approved, unanimous. A new Chairman will be elected at the next meeting. **ACTION: All** to send Chairman (independent) and Vice-Chair nominations to Joanne.
- Website – Joanne has completed the new SEP website, well received by all. This will improve transparency around SEP and provide better communication of SEP activities. **ACTION: JG** to add funding information to About Us section. **ACTION: CW** to update Sedbergh.org link page.
- Parish Council – Members informed of letter from SPC Chairman to SEP Chairman suspending membership (not circulated as permission not given). It is hoped that SPC will re-engage again as they are an important part of the future of Sedbergh. Cllr Hodgson said the Council is keen to work with all associations and organisations and that partnership working is the best route. AC reiterated that SEP is a collaboration and all groups, businesses, key players are welcome. Need to progress economic growth in Sedbergh - main focus area for SEP – AC noted the recent shop local message campaign from Sedbergh TIC, via Facebook, promoting local businesses (well done to Debbie W).

2. Updates

Tourist Information Centre Funding - Chris Wood advised that the YDNP Visitor Services review included a recommendation to continue to fund the TICs. Next week's full members meeting of the YDNP, will determine funding outcome.

With regards to funding application to the Locality Board from the CIC, the funding pot is now running low as it operates on a first come first serve basis. Gill advises that the bid be submitted in early April instead of at Christmas as originally suggested. A bid for tourism support to be done in two stages, the first one on 'building tourism' including PR support, publications etc and the second part would be a larger capital bid to 'support tourism' including helping the parish council provide resident car parking (helping to free up Joss Lane car parking) and potentially the coach park area. **ACTION: JG** to liaise with Gill and SPC.

Following the last SEP meeting JA reported that the Allotment Society submitted a grant application to WAF for £900 and were successful.

Main Street – John Barraclough provided an update on Main St and suggested that more interim work be done to improve communication with businesses generally. Businesses need to have confidence that we are a group to work with and this will help improve cooperation for any new potential plans. John reports that central issues for businesses include parking and Udales (37-39 Main St). Electric charging points going in at Joss Lane. Sedbergh School will provide electric charging places to book during school holidays etc.

The plan for SEP to improve communication with Sedbergh is underway. The social media communication has started, an article is going in Lookaround this month, the new website has been launched, the next action is to hold a focus group with businesses in January including Westwood Books and White Hart.

Udales remains a big issue, compulsory purchase unlikely due to length and cost. WAF Council could potentially fund as an economic development option, SEP could write to WAF requesting an economic development solution. JA suggested a Section 215 notice as an easier solution to make improvements rather than a long-drawn-out compulsory purchase option, **ACTION: JG/ JA** to draft letter to YDNP.

Housing – Broadacres report that the site has been hit by further delays as not able to get power to site until probably February - this is going to cause delays to the first handovers. Regarding sales, there are 6 open market reservations out of the 7 released and 6 shared ownership reservations out of the 10 released. No date set for the next release because of delays. Kings Yard scheme is seeking a new developer, JG has passed on contact information to Broadacres.

Key Performance Indicators - JG circulated the Sedbergh capacity table, highlighting areas for growth. Information includes healthy below-average vacancy rate (only one empty shop). The document also suggested performance targets for stakeholders across Sedbergh. **ACTION: All** to consider and suggest additions to JG. Discussion included the 10% increase in housing growth to refer to principal homes not just new build as policy changes could mean current second homes or holiday lets may come back into use as principal accommodation.

3. Planning Update

Local Plan – Peter S provided an overview. YDNP have agreed to look at a previously discounted site in Sedbergh for housing, this is in addition to the four sites being considered. Infrastructure information has been received from WAF Council. The Westmorland area working group to start looking and considering sites in the new year. The next consultation, to respond to the list of preferred sites, will be in late January.

Planning Applications – Birks Farm have put in an application for glamping pods and given notification of a 60-day use plan. Regulations were recently changed to 60 days but must notify planning authority. Baliol application was refused in June due to business/ housing balance together with insufficient public benefit, access, design and layout issues. Waiting on owners to advise next move.

YDNP Management plan - the Yorkshire Dales are renewing their 5yr management plan, which will include tourism, housing, use of land, nature recovery and be target driven for National Park partnerships delivery. Public consultation due in new year, opportunity to review at future SEP meeting and comments for content inclusion should be put forward to YDNP.

Other Park Authority areas to note include monies given to EV charging points in Sedbergh, plus dark skies monies to Sedbergh and Dent. Tom Harland has been working with Sykes Cottages holiday let company to consider usage of low-use cottages to try and increase their use/ economic impact in the areas, perhaps we can find out more at a future meeting. Climate Change funding of local projects ongoing from WAF, HH will keep us posted on progress.

4. Spotlight on Settlebeck School

Sarah Campbell, head of Settlebeck, provided an overview of the school, key issues and future plans. The school operates at 96% capacity but there is a falling demographic and the school is taking more from outside the catchment area. Currently a waiting list for Yrs, 8, 9 10. Sarah reports good partnership working with Sedbergh School, with fully funded day places for some sixth formers.

The number of children with SEN classification is 17.8% (national average is 4%) and the school is renowned for its specialist support. However, it is important that the school becomes known for progress and attainment too, this is above average compared to figures for England and

Westmorland Furness. As a small school, Settlebeck is doing very well - 99% of students go on to education and/ or employment. Noted that there is currently no access for children who live in the North Yorkshire authority area, who are at Settlebeck currently, to access transport to colleges in Kendal or sixth form in Kirby Lonsdale or Kirby Steven.

Settlebeck has healthy reserves to help keep staffing levels high (especially with requirements for SEN), currently seeking additional funding for capital projects across campus. Staffing numbers - no teaching vacancies currently but teaching assistant vacancies exist. Key barriers to recruitment are wages, transport and lack of local housing.

Multi-Academy Trust – consultation due 14 December 2023 on whether Settlebeck can join. Governors in all the affected schools have approved the move and the decision rests with the Department of Education. The multi-academy trust is the Changing Lives Learning Trust, a Cumbrian trust of 7 schools. It offers financial stability for the future and Settlebeck will join in September, if approved. Settlebeck can keep its own funding reserves as part of this deal.

5. WAF Council News

Transport Contract – The tender went live on 10 Nov 2023 for the Sedbergh bus service contract, running 3 x daily services, but limited interest. The tender is open until end of January. WAF Council need to consider whether to increase the funding or offer the funding for longer than an initial 12-month contract – such measures could increase chance of companies submitting a tender.

Library lease extension – Sedbergh Library building, owned by the church, has had its lease renewed by WAF Council for a further 10 years with a 5-year break clause. Making use of the upper floors as a space for co-working, meetings etc to be considered.

Locality Board – Numerous grant applications received from groups across South Lakeland and funding has mostly been allocated now. Gill advised submitting bids early into next financial year as funding given on a first come first served basis. The SL Locality Board next meets on 25 January 2024, the working groups (Children & Young People's, Communities and Equity and Climate Action & Increasing Biodiversity) are all meeting in early December. The next round of working group meetings will be in March 2024 with the next Locality Board meeting in April.

CEO visit 15/12/2023 – JG has put together a draft itinerary for Sam Plum's visit. Looking forward to showcasing Sedbergh opportunities and issues. **ACTION: JG** to circulate capacity table and key info ahead of visit.

6. Any other business

- Sedbergh School and Sedbergh Primary to be invited to update on intake and current projects at next SEP. At the primary there are 10 regular users now for daily wrap around care.
- The new Sedbergh and District History Society website has been launched. A very interesting site and well worth a visit.
- Cumbria Agricultural Chaplaincy still have some funding left to help the farming community with household items, utility bills or food if they are struggling with the increased cost of living. The contact is Amanda Gorton.

Next meeting 11am, Friday 12 January 2024 at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh