

Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 12 January 2024

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

Apologies: Matt Williams (WAF), Peter Marshall (Vice-Chair), Gillian Holmes (WAF), Debbie Wilson, Carol Moffat, Sarah Campbell, Tony Roberts, Francine Bult

1. Welcome and Actions

Correction – United Charities own the current library building (not Church) and the new lease will soon be renewed.

CEO visit feedback – Sam Plum, visited Sedbergh with Cllr Hodgson on 15/12. The visit involved discussion on the SEP key themes, meeting local businesses and a site visit to Baliol. It went well, thank you to all participants and a summary note has been circulated. John Barraclough stayed on afterwards to discuss Main Street with local businesses.

The Sedbergh KPIs / stats sheet was helpful for the visit. Please provide suggestions for any additional data to include. **ACTION: JG** to add demographics detail. **ACTION: HH/ JG/ SB** set up economic development meetings with businesses and council officers with a need to improve to WAF engagement.

Thanks to Libby for introducing Cllr Judith Derbyshire (Portfolio Holder for housing), would be useful to invite to Sedbergh to look at housing sites/ discuss issues. **ACTION: JG** to invite Cllr Derbyshire to future SEP.

Settlebeck academy status – The multi-trust academy decision has now gone to the Department of Education for approval. Noted that changes were afoot at the DfE and funding for academies and initiatives such as apprenticeships may be changing.

Section 215 notice – As discussed at last meeting, a letter has now gone to YDNPA regarding 37-39 Main St, thanks to Jim for drafting. There is an identified need for local staff accommodation plus the Booktown are looking for a unit and this key building could provide the answer. Planning authority confirmed that the building is on the risk register but is a low priority. **ACTION: JB** to ask traders to write in to help gain momentum. The situation could be further bolstered with parish council support, **ACTION: JA** to contact SPC and share s215 letter. The building is currently marketed more than estimated market value and Booktown may consider an independent valuation.

2. Election of Chair/Vice-Chair

Next steps – Decision taken to defer election of Chairman to future meeting. SEP is a collaboration of local organisations and individuals involved in the economic activity and prosperity of Sedbergh. It has identified the need to bring in more energy from business sector and an election could be better timed to work with new selection of members. It is important to continue to improve communication with businesses and the wider public through regular articles in the Lookaround magazine, growing social media audience and encouraging visits to the new SEP website. JB and JG will be on Main Street this next week visiting businesses to discuss ideas and new focus group.

Also discussed the need for continued collaboration with SPC, very important to clear the air and progress forward. JB suggested attending a future SPC meeting to provide overview of Main Street visits. Remains important for all institutions to work together to help avoid duplication, grow Sedbergh's economic prosperity and to speak with one voice in the best interests of the town.

SEP Co-ordinator – role discussed and asked to continue to look at the five key priorities over the coming months - providing that funding is secured for the post. Annual review meeting with co-ordinator will take place next week. Work will commence on funding applications, thanks to all for grant suggestions. JG now in Sedbergh on a weekly basis as important to be seen, not just heard.

3. Planning Update

Local Plan – Peter Stockton reported that the timetable has shifted slightly; preferred sites will go to the next advisory group (YDNPA members) for agreement before the maps are published. Information recently provided by WAF and Unites Utilities should aid members with their decision making. Publication of preferred sites maps now expected in March 2024, as part of Local Plan Consultation, 7. Expected to feedback to members at the June YDNPA meeting, aim is to submit Local Plan to the Secretary of State at the end of the year.

Awaiting news on the Government's permitted development rights consultation. Amendments to the national planning policy framework have been published and YDNPA reviewing how affects local planning.

YDNP Management plan - the review will commence shortly and will focus on issues for the next five years. Consultation to begin soon and will provide more place context and information. The new plan will include content from central government including targets for nature recovery.

SEP requested an appraisal of milestones, from a Sedbergh context, from the current management plan, useful to see what has been met before moving on to the next management plan. Specific projects benefiting Sedbergh (as part of the management plan) to be shared if possible. **ACTION: PS** to ask Gary Smith at YDNP if information available.

LEP links discussed as part of the National Park management plan review as some rural steering groups cover environmental issues. SB confirmed Cumbria LEP has funding for another 12 months and expected to be absorbed into the new local authorities. Lake District Park Authority key to sharing information from Cumbria LEP with YDNPA.

Planning Applications – Peter reported no new significant planning applications.

4. Local News

This item is to discuss Sedbergh news from across the various themes and to share information.

Main Street – JB and JG to begin conversations with traders next week and arrange focus group meeting. Issue of highways enforcement letters on street furniture and A-Boards was raised and all agreed it would be a shame to remove Sedbergh's cafe culture and hoped it wouldn't affect businesses such as Rycroft's or Powells. Hazel has investigated the issue following a request from SPC and confirmed that an access complaint was raised with the Council by a member of the public. The rules state 1.5m space between the shop front and the road edge which is to be kept clear for access. SEP hope there is a compromise solution available to WAF and traders. JA suggested revisiting the shared surface proposal for Main St and perhaps support could be offered to the SPC should they wish to pursue this. JG suggested revisiting the Kendal footway ruling (voluntary code) allowing A-Boards to be outside buildings on pavements provided they were against the buildings. **ACTION: HH** to talk to highways officers to see what solutions are available. Hazel recommended that permanent space be found to accommodate outdoor seating, other towns are looking at this.

New business – Work ongoing at Browns for the takeaway, it is expected that the other part of the former shop will return to the owner.

Tourism – SEP’s Cumbria Tourism membership has lapsed due to limited funds. However, the Tourist Information Centre receives CT newsletters which contain valuable business tips and sector information. **ACTION: CW** to forward newsletters on for JG for use on website, social media etc. The tourism season will be upon us shortly so next SEP meeting focus will be tourism, **ACTION: JG** to invite Yorkshire Dales tourism team to next meeting. Jim has carried out his signage audit to support a better-looking Main Street. **ACTION: JA** to share audit with SPC and WAF locality team.

No confirmation yet on tourist information funding, **ACTION: LB** to follow up. Important that any main street tourism outcomes (via JB & JA audit) feed into CIC tourism bid to Locality Board.

5. WAF Council News

Transport Contract – Hazel informed SEP that tenders went out at the beginning of the month and a contractor has been chosen. Discussions are ongoing on contract details, start date and timetable. Hazel hopes the council can publish details within next fortnight.

Locality Board – Hazel confirmed that the community grants pot still has some money available. Will discuss with Gill Holmes and Matt Williams the funding options to support coordinator role. **ACTION: All** to let local organisations know that monies are still available, prior to year-end.

Coach parking – No update to report on the coach parking project at New Bridge, **ACTION: JG** to contact SPC for update and see if need any help. Council CEO, Sam Plum, visited Joss Lane car park and did offer to discuss with locality team and waste team as visitor first impressions are important. Locality team have previously visited to assess reduction in the number of bins but also the need to increase the number of collections. **ACTION: HH** will ask GH, SPC and Locality teams for news.

6. Any other business

- Business support through the SPF Fund is now available. This is being run through the LEP, Cumbria Chamber, CAFS and others. Grants and support channels are now open to businesses. Scheme to be promoted by the council.
- The decision to allocate Toll Bar as additional employment land will need evidence and support from the Economic Development team at the Council. SEP encourages WAF to be proactive on this issue, explore joint venture ideas with the owners/ developer and prove to YDNP that it could be delivered before 2040. Allocating additional employment land may help reduce pressure on delivering employment land at Baliol and also support small businesses looking for unit rentals.

Next meeting 11am, Friday 8 March 2024 at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh