

# Kendal Futures Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020

3.00 pm - 5.00 pm

Video Meeting via Zoom



## Present:

Mark Cropper, Chair

Paula Scott, Kendal Futures

Susanne Long, Kendal Town Council

Robin Ashcroft, South Lakeland District Council

Matt Williams, SLDC

Mandy Dixon, K Village and Tourism

Cath Purdy, Housing

John Haley, Professional Services

Brian Harrison, Kendal BID

Graham Booth, Board Observer for Cumbria LEP

Kelvin Nash, Kendal College

Rhian Harris, Culture & Festivals

Nick Taylor, Kendal Futures

Geoff Cook, South Lakeland Local Committee

Jim Bland, NFU

Michael Barry, Cumbria County Council (items 4/5)

## Apologies:

Derek Armstrong, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

Miriam Randall, Creative Industries & Innovation

Jamie Allison, Young Professionals Group

## 1. Apologies and membership

Julian Rayner has resigned from the KFB. P Scott will continue to keep him up to date with developments and issues. Nick Taylor joined the meeting once again as a guest.

## 2. Declarations of interest

No declarations were made for the meeting agenda.

## 3. Minutes & matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> July were agreed as a true record. A general update to the minutes was circulated ahead of the meeting (see attached).

### Matters arising

- **Local Plan**

C Purdy said the KFB must understand the proposed current planning reforms which will affect the development of the Local Plan and the Vision. Short and long term proposed changes are particularly worrying for the future delivery of affordable housing. **ACTION: P SCOTT to invite Dan Hudson from SLDC to attend the next KFB meeting to discuss the next Local Plan and planning policy issues and reforms.**

P Scott has formally responded to the early engagement survey for the Local Plan outlining the ambitions of the Vision. **ACTION: P SCOTT to circulate the links and deadlines for the Call for Sites (18<sup>th</sup> September) and early engagement survey (16<sup>th</sup> October) for the Local Plan.**

- **Visit-kendal.co.uk**

P Scott reported that B Harrison's circulated update from Kendal BID wrongly stated that P Scott refused an independent audit of the site. She refused a request from the BID to share Google account/analytics passwords but did offer to share any Google Analytics reports. **ACTION: P SCOTT to discuss issues relating to Kendal BID funding with KTC and the content manager to agree a way forward.**

#### 4. Town Centre Traffic Study Proposal

Ahead of the meeting, P Scott shared the outline brief and proposal for a small, town centre traffic study to be conducted by Andrew Cameron, an independent traffic management consultant. The quoted cost is £7k + VAT. The public Vision sessions highlighted the one-way system and traffic in the town centre as one of the biggest concerns, and the consultants noted the number of unnecessary traffic journeys and extended distances it caused. They felt Kendal doesn't have a traffic problem but has a traffic system problem, and the needs of pedestrians and cyclists is now radically different to when the road network was developed. M Cropper stressed that this study will only be the start of a much bigger and longer conversation but would test some initial ideas at a relatively small cost. Private sector contributions have been agreed, from Ellergreen Hydro via M Cropper, Gilkes and a private individual (offered during the Vision process last year).

The KFB discussed the fact that traffic changes and ideas are generally controversial and challenging although 20mph zones are becoming more widely accepted. The KFB agreed to go ahead with the study. **ACTION: P SCOTT to let the KFB know the work timetable when agreed with Andrew Cameron.**

S Long reported that KTC are engaging consultants to research the benefits and possibilities of implementing a permanent 20 mph zone in Kendal and an integrated approach with potential changes from the Vision is needed. **ACTION: P SCOTT to discuss the KTC 20s Plenty research with Andrew Cameron when appointed to integrate both approaches.**

N Taylor highlighted that Poynton in Cheshire had seen a transformation through a radical change to their traffic system which included replacing a busy traffic light junction with roundabouts and a shared surface approach. *(See details of the Poynton scheme - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vzDDMzq7d0>)*

M Barry agreed to meet Andrew Cameron and share information to support the study but reminded the group that transport issues can't be looked at in isolation. CCC also need to progress a cycling and walking infrastructure plan for the town with DfT guidance which could bring in additional funding plus the Northern Access Route is still in a process of due diligence with Government. A joined-up approach to addressing the challenges of the network and its current constraints is required.

#### 5. How can we work effectively with CCC to achieve the Vision?

Michael Barry, CCC's Place and Enterprise Manager, described his new role which is focused on how CCC can support local economic growth. He will be working with partners to support drivers for economic growth with a strong focus on place and how place is developed rather than looking at transport and other schemes in isolation. He will be working closely with the District Councils across the county to develop funding proposals and integrate the needs of their Local Plans to ensure everyone is working together.

For the Kendal Vision, developing links to the Local Plan and Town Centre Strategy is important with everyone working together to combine a coherent set of priorities which ensure the best outcomes. There must be a good degree of conformity between all three documents.

To access LEP Capital Development Loan funds in Kendal projects need to be further developed. An understanding of how the Vision's outputs can create a pipeline of projects is now needed, and the Local Plan must reflect those projects and ambitions in its strategies. Integration with the Local Plan and any CCC schemes is essential. Kendal

Futures must increase the status of the Vision and ensure it is reflected in partners strategies to access funding to develop business cases.

M Cropper questioned why the Vision isn't being championed by stakeholders and ideas for projects submitted to programmes such as the Morecambe Bay Growth Deal for Government funding. R Ashcroft clarified that while several project ideas were submitted some time ago, the Vision and Town Centre Strategy aren't yet sufficiently developed. The LAs would be the applicants for any future LEP funding. G Booth attends KFB meetings as an observer but has communicated KF's ambition and some frustrations to LEP colleagues. Discussions about how to take steps towards delivery must continue.

The Vision has had a huge amount of input and KF must now concentrate on building relationships between the public and private sectors. While shovel ready infrastructure projects are discussed a lot, can KF think of projects that are nearer to delivery? What can be achieved in the next 1 – 3 years without losing sight of some of the much larger, longer term goals? For example, what does Kendal College need and Lakeland Arts has a ready to go project with planning permission. **ACTION: ALL to share ideas about potential projects which could be delivered relatively quickly.**

K Nash said the college refers to the Vision for their own strategic plan and is currently exploring whether the Beales store could be used as a skills or incubation centre, but LEP support is needed. **ACTION: K NASH to let M Cropper know how the KFB can assist this ambition.**

C Purdy reminded the KFB that the Housing Delivery Strategy is coming forward and will consider the numbers of homes delivered and quality of existing stock. While it won't specifically impact on the Vision it may help unlock future delivery. **ACTION: P SCOTT to include the Housing Delivery Strategy on a future meeting agenda.**

## 6. Kendal Vision funding

R Ashcroft updated the KFB about their funding request for £50k over 3 years to SLDC. The proposal is going to informal Cabinet in mid-September with a Cabinet decision expected on 28<sup>th</sup> October. This is a significant amount of money for SLDC and the decision-making process must be thorough and transparent. If successful, a legal funding agreement will then take some time to organise. SLDC see the delivery of the Vision and Town Centre Strategy as mutually complementary work. SLDC would also like to see KF provide advice and assistance for a similar approach in other towns if appropriate in future and the KFB agreed to help.

### Proposal for interim Vision Manager support

M Cropper said despite the current disruption of COVID-19 many people are keen to develop plans and not lose the momentum gained during the public event last October. He proposed that Ellergreen Hydro (Mark's business) lends £1000 to KF CIC to employ Nick Taylor for 4 days on Vision work, with £400 accessed from the existing CIC bank account. M Cropper said he accepted the loan is at risk if the SLDC funding isn't approved.

M Dixon asked whether Kendal BID was considering funding any Vision projects? B Harrison replied that the BIDs income has been affected by COVID-19 and they have received requests from national companies to suspend levy payments. P Scott reminded the KFB that discussions about the BID part funding visit-kendal.co.uk have been ongoing for some time. B Harrison stated the BID has specific requirements about what they want to see on the website in return for a funding contribution. P Scott requested more detail about those requirements so they can be

considered or for the BID to refuse the funding request so alternative arrangements can be explored. **ACTION: P SCOTT and B HARRISON to have a separate conversation about support for visit-kendal.co.uk.**

The KFB agreed the loan proposal to contract Nick Taylor for 4 days (one day a week) based on the job role outlined at an earlier meeting. The role will be reviewed at the end of October. **ACTION: P SCOTT to write to all the previous Vision funders to update them that Nick has been contracted to progress priorities for a limited period and that a funding request has been made to SLDC.**

At the last meeting, it was agreed that the CIC group would take on some of the more specific actions to speed up the decision-making process for the Vision. **ACTION: P SCOTT to organise a CIC Directors meeting in early October to agree the accounts.**

## **7. Development update**

The KFB were asked to share information about potential developments in Kendal, particularly anything that may block a longer-term project which would be more valuable to the town. Accepting that it can be subjective, the KFB agreed to take a more proactive view in this area and attempt to support positive project plans through the planning application process. Key questions should include 'is the project a fit with the Vision, drafted with the views of so many local people?' and 'will it make a large scale difference?'

### **Markets update**

R Ashcroft reported that SLDC arranged for tender bidders to present to a group of local stakeholders which included P Scott for KF, Kendal BID and market traders. The process is now going to best and final bids. **ACTION: P SCOTT to ask SLDC to share the markets presentation slides.**

## **8. Partner and project updates**

Dealt with by exception. An update paper from the BID was circulated ahead of the meeting.

P Scott shared footfall and shop vacancy data ahead of the meeting. Footfall levels are still considerably lower than the same time last year due to COVID-19 although they are increasing each month. SLDC's shop vacancy survey revealed that the number of empty shops went up from 44 in December 2019 to 64 at the end of August 2020. The town had gained a shop in this period with a total of 433. The vacancy rate of 14.78% (compared to 10.18% in December) is the highest since the data collection began in 2007.

The KFB agreed it was also useful to have awareness of employment issues. M Cropper said James Cropper is going through a restructuring programme with the loss of around 60 jobs. There was no awareness of other significant employment changes. C Purdy highlighted that the number of people accessing Universal Credit was increasing, and G Cook reported that the impact of future job losses in hospitality sector in the Lakes, once the furlough scheme comes to an end, will impact as many employees live in Kendal. M Dixon reminded the group that Travelodge is opening at the end of the year, and recruitment will begin soon. K Nash said the College is seeing an increase in adults attending for upskilling and retraining.

**ACTION: M Williams to share Universal Credit statistics with P Scott to circulate.**

## **9. Any other business**

There was no other business.

## **10. Date of next meeting**

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – 3 pm**

According to social distancing rules – meeting or video conference to be confirmed.