

## **Alnwick Town Team**

Minutes of the meeting of Alnwick Town Team meeting held on **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at 5.30pm** at The Cottage, Alnwick Garden.

**Present:** Cllr. Alan Symmonds (Chairman), Mark Brassell (MB) (Alnwick Garden), Carlo Biagioni (CB) (Chamber of Trade), Cllr. Gordon Castle (GC), Tim Kirton (TK) (Alnwick District Council)

### **1. Apologies for absence**

David Lovie (DL) (Civic Society), Elizabeth Jones (EJ) (Alnwick in Bloom) Philip Angier (Local Living),

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting, held Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

GC said that he had submitted his apologies for the December meeting which had not been recorded. TK to add these. With that change the minutes were approved as a true and correct record.

### **3. Matters Arising**

Banners: TK reported that Northumberland County Council Property have now advised that they are not prepared to allow the banners on Northumberland Hall. This is not a planning matter nor anything to do with penetrating the building but rather the NCC Property Dept. do not feel that pvc banners such as these are appropriate on their Grade One listed building. Consequently, the banners will not now be ordered. It was suggested that the £2500 budget could instead used to acquire new fingerpost signage to direct visitors into the town centre business district from the bus station for example.

Playhouse: GC reported that further to the Chairman's report at the last meeting the Alnwick Playhouse contracts have now been exchanged, the next stage is the submission of the planning application. Whilst building work is being undertaken Playhouse cultural activities will take place elsewhere within the town. MB offered the use of the Alnwick Garden for such activities as appropriate. GC advised that the income from the Playhouse café will be given to The Playhouse Trust.

### **4. Column Field (a) Arch and (b) Column Illumination**

(a) Arch: CB reported that there was considerable opposition from Barter Books to the design of the proposed arch into the Column Field because it looks similar to the Barter Books arch and the Manleys feel this may create the impression that Barter Books was responsible for the structure if it went up like that. CB advised that he is working with the Duchess High School with a view to students coming up with alternative, non-arch, designs. The Burns Night supper to be held in the Northumberland Hall on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January is expected to raise further funding towards the project.

(b) Column illumination; further to the last meeting. TK reported that the lights appear to be the responsibility of Northumberland Estates, although confirmation of this is awaited from Robin Smeaton at NE who has not so far responded to enquiries. Any repairs and reactivation are therefore down to NE at this stage. GC suggested allocating the money for the arch to the repairs of the column lighting instead.

### **5. Proposed Business Improvement District (BID)**

CB had requested that this item be placed on the agenda and suggested that a BID may be appropriate for Alnwick

To provide background TK had previously circulated links to websites explaining the BID concept and the performance of the Hexham BID.

A Business Improvement District sought to raise additional funds for improving a town's business district by applying a small additional levy to the businesses of the town. The BID process required a referendum of businesses with the result being binding on them.

The Hexham BID had run into problems because of resistance from edge of Hexham town businesses which had been served with compulsory BID levy invoices but felt that they were receiving none of the benefits of the BID projects, which tend to be focussed on Hexham town centre. In some cases, some businesses had been taken to court over non-payment their BID levy and bailiffs had been involved, creating resentment.

CB said that he had been in discussions with Morpeth Chamber of Trade regarding their proposals for a BID there; this would aim to avoid the problems encountered in the Hexham BID by not involving a compulsory BID levy on non-town centre businesses, although voluntary levies from edge of Morpeth businesses would always be welcomed.

CB felt that a BID could be appropriate to Alnwick; CB appreciated that the Hexham issues must be avoided and he suggested that payment of the businesses' BID levy in Alnwick could be voluntary. He suggested that the moneys raised could be used for projects such as town centre improvements, improving and lighting the Roxburgh Place car park and paving repairs.

It was agreed that this should be deferred to the next Town Team meeting to enable member groups of the Town Team to consider the concept of the BID with a view to discussing this further.

## **6. Updates**

### ***a) Town Council (Tim Kirton)***

**Fingerpost signage and Lectern map:** Installation of the new fingerposts at Pottergate and outside Boots the Opticians on Bondgate Within, and the map lectern outside Your Move is imminent.

### ***b) Alnwick in Bloom (Elizabeth Jones)***

Elizabeth had been unable to attend but had circulated a report to everyone at 12.56 that afternoon. Elizabeth's advice that she was stepping down as Chair of AiB in March was noted.

### ***c) The Alnwick Garden (Mark Brassell)***

The Alnwick Garden is planning for 2018 after a very successful 2017.

### ***(d) County Council***

GC advised that a briefing meeting on the findings of the car parking survey in Alnwick was scheduled for the following day. There is no intention of NCC re-imposing car parking charges during the life of the current NCC administration but if parish or town councils wish to impose charges in a specific car park they will be sympathetically heard. The Playhouse car park is expected to become short-term parking. Alnmouth station parking is not part of this survey and is the subject of a separate study. MB said that we are effectively throwing away money because tourists expect to have to pay.

GC advised that the present NCC offices in Greenwell Lane will become the new home for Alnwick Town Council; this will provide additional and much needed space for ATC and offer meeting room facilities.

### ***(e) Civic Society***

No report.

***(f) Chamber of Trade***

CB reported that there are issues for businesses within the Market Place where business loading and unloading is being hindered by parked cars. The Chairman replied that the police have been asked to tackle these issues and Sgt. Sharon Wilmore-Greaves is looking into this.

The Chamber of Trade is currently progressing its Food and Drink Leaflet; 28 Alnwick food and drink outlets are participating, including The Alnwick Garden Tree House.

CB advised that a Burns Night Haggis, Neeps and Tatties Supper and Ceilidh will be held at Northumberland Hall on Friday 26<sup>th</sup>; doors will be open from 6.30 for a 7pm start. Moneys raised will go toward Column Field projects.

CB advised that Paul Nichol, Tourism & Visitor Economy Manager at NCC, has flagged up a full application being put together by Aln Valley Railway for European EAFRD funding for the construction of a multi-user (walking and cycling) trail on the track bed between Alnwick Lionheart AVR station and Alnmouth railway station. Paul is encouraging local bodies to offer a letter of support. (PA had also mentioned this in his circulated report of 12.49 on January 8<sup>th</sup>) The funding would also assist the expansion of the rail function to Greenrigg. The multi-user path will create a potentially important strategic link between Alnmouth railway station and Alnwick and if successful, accompanying considerations and work will take place to create a waymarked link from Lionheart into Alnwick town centre. Letters of support should be sent to:

Richard McKenzie  
Senior Programmes Officer  
Technical Services  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth NE61 2EF

Alternatively an emailed note of support can be sent to [Richard.Mckenzie@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Mckenzie@northumberland.gov.uk); Paul Nichol would welcome being copied into these emails; [paul.nichol@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:paul.nichol@northumberland.gov.uk)

***(g) Local Living/Alnwick Markets***

PA had been unable to attend owing to a clashing meeting but had circulated a written report to all at 12.49 on the 8<sup>th</sup> January.

**5. Any Other Urgent Business**

None

**6. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017 at 5.30pm** at The Pavilion, Alnwick Garden.

The meeting closed at 6.25pm