



Moving Thetford Forward
The Local Delivery Vehicle for Thetford
Growth Point

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD

Held on Thursday, 17 June 2010 at 10.00 a.m. at The Golf Club, Brandon Road, Thetford

Present (Voting Members)

Cllr William Nunn (JWN) (Chairman)
Cllr Ivor Andrew (IA) (sub for B King)
Martin Aust (MA)
Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen (SCA)
Cllr Paul Claussen (PDC)
John Connolly (JCo)
Cllr Daniel Cox (DC)
Mike Goulding (MG)
Sadie Harvey (SH) (sub for N Stott)
Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris (MK-M)
Cllr Bob King (BK)
Cllr Robert Kybird (RGK)
Cllr Tony Poulter (TP)
Jo Pearson (JP)
James Smith (JS)
Cllr Ann Steward (AS)
Alec Witton (AW)

Representing

Breckland Council
Croxtan Parish Council
Flagship Housing
Breckland Council
Breckland Council
Thetford Business Forum
Norfolk County Council
Homes & Communities Agency
Keystone Development Trust
Breckland Council
Croxtan Parish Council
Thetford Town Council
Brettenham & Kilverstone Parish Council
Local Business Representative
Forestry Commission
Norfolk County Council
Land Representative

Present (Non-Voting Members)

Margaret Bailey (MB)
Natalie Beal (NB)
Anita Brennan (AB)
Kevin Cooper (KC)
Phil Daines (PD)
Tim Edmunds (TE)
Susan Glossop (SG)
Ray Johnson (RJ)
Mark Stanton (MSta)
Mark Stokes (MS)
Steve Udberg (SU)
Kevin Ward (KW)

Breckland Council
Capita Symonds for Breckland Council
Breckland Council
Building Partnerships Ltd
Capita Symonds for Breckland Council
Norfolk County Council
Thetford Town Council
Consultant Surveyor
Breckland Council
Breckland Council
Breckland Council
Breckland Council

In attendance

John Balch (JB)
Graham Bygrave (GB)
Cllr Marion Chapman-Allen (MCA)

NWES
Norfolk County Council
Norfolk County, Breckland & Thetford Town Councils
Pigeon Investment
Breckland Council
Breckland Council
Savills
Alan Baxter Associates
Pigeon Investment
Breckland Council (Committee Services)

Vittorio Davico (VD)
Alison Gamble (AG)
Samantha Goodwin (SG)
David Henry (DH)
Gesine Junker (GJ)
Will Van Cutsem (WVC)
Julie Britton (JB)

Apologies for Absence Received

Neil Stott
David Potter

Keystone Development Trust
Inspire East (RICS East)

Apologies for Absence Received

Trevor Holden	Breckland Council
Rob Leigh	Breckland Council
Fiona McDiarmid	Norfolk County Council
Ed Chambers	Thetford Town Council
Tony Trotman	Thetford Healthy Town

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27/10	<u>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (AGENDA ITEM 1a)</u> The Chairman welcomed Kevin Ward, the new Growth Point Manager for Breckland Council, to the meeting.	
28/10	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 1b)</u> AS and RK declared a personal interest in Agenda item 3 in reference to the presentation being conducted by Pigeon Investments.	
29/10	<u>MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING OF 29 APRIL 2010 (AGENDA ITEM 2)</u> Subject to adding Mr A Witton to the attendance sheet and adding the title of Councillor against Bob King, the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2010 were confirmed. <u>Matters Arising</u> (a) <u>Minutes and Matters Arising (Minute ref. 21/10)</u> MS had met with the Thetford Society to explain where the Board was at with some of its key projects. The Press had also been updated. The outcome of the meeting had been a success. From now on the Thetford Society would be kept informed of the Board's activities and had been encouraged to take a more active role in the Bus Interchange. (b) <u>Academy/Thetford Forum (Minute ref. 23/10)</u> An update would be provided at Minute No. 30/10(b) below. (c) <u>Bus Interchange (Minute ref. 24/10)</u> Referring to the feedback that had been received during the Open Days in January which indicated that there were concerns regarding the turning space allocated for the Bus Interchange, BK, JP and JCo had requested that a diagram of the lay-by be provided. TE advised that a plan of the lay-by in question would be provided in the presentation (d) <u>Any Other Business (Minute ref. 26/10)</u> KW advised that a draft document of the Thetford Prospectus had been produced and would be presented to the next meeting of the Board. In terms of the status of the Thetford Area Action Plan, PD explained that he would be in a position to circulate a briefing note in the next few days.	KW

30/10 **PRESENTATION SLOT**

a) **Master Plan for Thetford - Pigeon and Alan Baxter Associates (Agenda item 3)**

Members were informed that this presentation would be very much an introductory session, as a workshop, where much more detail would be provided, would be held for Members in the afternoon.

Before the presentation commenced, the following concerns were raised.

BK questioned why the new extension to the town was still being called Thetford North particularly as it had been agreed at the previous Board meetings that it should be referred to as north of Thetford.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that this point could be highlighted during the presentation.

BK also asked why discussions had not been had with Croxton and Kilverstone & Brettenham Parish Councils as the new development fell within these parish boundaries.

Members were informed that land owners/parish councils would have the opportunity to put their views forward in the prospectus.

TP asked whose responsibility it was to liaise with the Parish Councils affected.

PD explained that nothing formal had been submitted to Breckland Council and if dialogue was required with the land owners this could be arranged.

The Chairman pointed out that the Board did not have any control over Pigeon's activities or of the land owners. Pigeon was a private company and could choose to call the new urban extension anything it liked; however, members would have the opportunity to put any suggestions forward during the presentation.

RK felt that the parish boundary was an issue and was worthy of discussion within this Board.

BK was worried about the public's perception of the Board if these matters were not *nipped in the bud* at the start.

Will Van Cutsem from Pigeon and Gesine Junker from Alan Baxter Associates provided the presentation.

A full professional team had been appointed to produce this scheme. Many organisations had been involved and a public consultation had been carried out.

The document summarised the design progression of the Thetford Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) masterplan. It presented the latest iterations of the masterplan and set out the design principles which defined the vision for the site.

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The vision for north of Thetford was a residentially led development characterised by the high quality of its masterplan and urban form. It would be a place which grew out of the town of Thetford as well as an integrated extension, supporting the regeneration and attraction of Thetford as a great place to live and do business. It would also be a place which would be well connected to the wider region and provide access to its cultural, economic and recreational assets and thus strengthening the region's position in the competition with neighbouring places.

The north of Thetford aimed to be a sustainable urban extension to the existing town which would address all three key aspects of social, economic and environment sustainability.

BK knew that there had been considerable consultation with various councils but pointed out that two main ones had been missed – Brettenham & Kilverstone and Croxton.

WVC advised that Thetford Town Council had seen the presentation but he would be willing to arrange a separate meeting for the said parish councils.

BK had concerns about the lack of consultation that had been carried out.

The terminology of the name Thetford North was highlighted.

WVC explained that Thetford North was more of a planning term, Pigeon and Alan Baxter Associates were open to suggestions.

It was agreed that this matter should be discussed at the workshop following the meeting.

In answer to questions the following points were noted:

- A bridge would be erected over the railway line.
- There would be higher density near the employment areas.
- The 103ha of green space included hedgerows, landscape buffers, green corridors, woodland and open landscape, formal avenue tree planting, formal open space and playing fields as well as allotments. A Trust might possibly be set up to maintain the green spaces.
- The new GP Practice would depend on funding – an interest had been expressed.
- A separate Biomass Power Station could be provided for the Urban extension.
- The new centre would have ground floor shops as bolt-on services to the main town. These would not be any threat to the main town centre.

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- A Breckland Retail Study for this area was being prepared and would be ready in the next couple of months.
- The residential and commercial areas would be led by the demands of the market and land would be brought forward accordingly.

Both representatives were thanked for their presentation.

b) **Academy/Thetford Forum/Anchor Site (Agenda item 4)**

TE presented a series of slides on behalf of Charles Everhard (CE). The Thetford Academy was now in its feasibility stage, the next would be the development stage which CE would be looking after.

The Academy's milestones were provided:

- Brief received May 2010
- School Closure decision June 2010
- Funding Agreement June 2010
- Design Group started June 2010
- Land Transfer September 2010
- Outline Business Case September 2010
- Procurement May 2011
- Site Development Winter 2011
- Completion September 2013

A booklet had been produced which provided all necessary information about the Academy, including timetables, contact nos. and a list of frequently asked questions.

The site assessment study was highlighted; this study demonstrated the amount of space available on the site.

The Chairman asked about the progress with Mr Wong, the owner of the Chinese restaurant on a smaller part of the proposed Academy site.

CE explained that discussions with Mr Wong were still on-going. All purchases would be subject to the District Valuer's valuation. Monies for the purchase of this piece of land had been allocated to prevent it being lost.

A Member pointed out that there had been anti-feelings from the Press with regard to the car parking issues on the site.

In response, Members were informed that most of the green space shown on the plan would be used for parking; however, spaces would be

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limited. It was agreed that the word car parking would be removed from the drawing.

CE was not able to answer a question about whether the booklet had been circulated to all residents in the town. However, PC pointed out that it was, at the moment, available to the main audiences only, such as existing schools and parents of the primary schools.

SG reported that a public consultation meeting by Place Management was to be held at Thetford Grammar School at 7.30pm on the 17th June regarding the Academy/Forum proposal where a detailed presentation would be provided. SG had concerns regarding the Forum presentation by Charles Everhard as it was presented as being an educational college when in fact all of the presentation to the Town Council by David Lawrence had included community facilities such as an auditorium, theatre, public function rooms and cafes. The Town Council had been advised that if they became a partner in the Forum project and provided funding these facilities could be enhanced. CE explained that these were all opportunities that needed to be added to the Business Plan if funding ever became available.

JCo felt that the doors to this iconic site should be open to the public more often rather than just in school terms. CE advised that the community aspirations and the opening times would be explored.

MStA asked Members to endorse the Academy site.

TE and CE were thanked for their presentation.

c) **Bus Interchange (Agenda item 5)**

TE and RJ provided Members with a presentation and an update on the Thetford Bus Interchange project.

- Former Minstergate Motors site purchased.
- Negotiations with owner of former Cosy Carpets site on-going – likely to require CPO.
- Land Assembly costs £124,560 above original budget.
- Next Board meeting in July to consider detailed proposal prior to planning submission.

The Project Team would be invited to the next meeting to discuss the planning application. The application, once agreed, would then be submitted to Norfolk County Council for consideration.

A Member knew that the Cosy Carpet building was listed and asked how much it would cost to re-instate. RJ explained that a valuation had been carried out by the District Valuer. The DV had been well aware of the building's condition but had also been aware of the planning permission on the site; however, a deficit had been recorded. Members were informed that a CPO could not be served until planning permission had been given. There was no intention to pay more than the District Valuers valuation.

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TE pointed out that there had been discussions at the MTF Programme Delivery Group meeting about cost pressures within the project. This was a committed project therefore the monies could not be taken away. TE felt that he should be able to keep this project within the agreed price; however, there was the unknown factor regarding Mr Gutherie's Cosy Carpets.

There were concerns raised about the layout of the site. A slide was shown with the proposed lay-by along London Road. It was explained that the lay-by could be built within the carriageway space as it would be a much cheaper exercise for NCC. SG pointed out that Member's of the Town Centre Residents Group meeting had urged NCC to re-consider the route that buses would have to take coming into the station.

TE reported that all coaches that were allowed on British roads would be able to access the site. The bay that would be supplied had been designed for the larger coaches. TE would be attending a Thetford Society meeting in the near future to explain the layout.

AW asked if the St Nicholas Street frontage was still being considered for taxi ranks etc for meet and greet purposes. JCo urged NCC to consider another area for this purpose as St Nicholas Street was not wide enough. TE informed Members that the Agents were considering utilising another car park for such purposes and discussions were still on-going.

31/10 **FINANCIAL REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

MB was pleased to announce that the audit carried out on how Breckland Council had handled the MTF Board's money had been good.

The two projects Haling Path and GBIC were discussed and a summary was provided of how they both fitted with CLG.

Haling Path would improve connectivity to the town but GBIC had land issues as well as the issue of timing with regard to the ERDF monies.

A financial summary was provided.

	<u>Capital</u>	<u>Revenue</u>
Funding yet to be allocated	1,201,276	73,264
Unconfirmed 10/11 allocation	(1,760,762)	
Projects that need to be put on hold	(559,486)	

- CLG Capital funding for 10/11 remains unconfirmed until after 22nd June.
- If we spend before it is confirmed it is at the Accountable Body's risk.
- This affects previous decisions – projects to the value of £559,486 cannot start until funding is confirmed. Projects can still be developed but they cannot start spending.

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- Whilst we can allocate remaining funding of £1,201,276 to the projects (G-Bic/Haling Path/Other) they cannot start until funding is confirmed.
- The balance of revenue available is subject to change whilst posts are being recruited to.

MB explained that Breckland Council had been asked to send a return to CLG to inform them that the full amount of funding had been committed. However, if a decision was not made on how the balance should be spent it would be harder to demonstrate to the CLG that the monies had indeed been committed. In other words, if the money was not spent it could be lost.

The Chairman felt that the Haling Path project would benefit the town and should be added to the return.

MB pointed out that if the £1.2m was allocated to GBIC it would leave nothing in the pot and if the £600k was allocated to Haling Path the remainder could be taken away.

Although both important for Thetford, the Chairman felt that a decision should be made on whether GBIC or Haling Path was the top priority.

Taking into account the other on-going projects such as the paving outside Boots the Chemist and the shop frontages in the town, it was felt that Haling Path was the most important.

MS pointed out that all projects met key strategic requirements. He asked Members when making their decision to be mindful of timescales.

AS felt that although GBIC was a great project, businesses would still have to be encouraged to move into the building. The Chairman asked Members to also bear in mind that there could still be issues with regard to the land side for GBIC.

SU explained the land issues and the discussions that had taken place with the Crown Estate.

MA agreed with the Chairman's comments above, GBIC would change Thetford in a positive way but the practical way forward would not be to put money into this project today but work with it, put the effort in and prioritise it.

The Chairman pointed out that the Board had £600k to spare if the GBIC project was to be put on hold and suggested that this money be allocated to the Academy/Forum site for community facilities.

Members agreed that the monies should be put into Haling Footpath and the effort be put into the GBIC project.

RESOLVED that the remaining balance of £601,276 be allocated for the provision of community facilities at the Academy/Forum site, subject to a proposal being worked up to assess whether this provision was indeed eligible for Capital Funding.

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32/10 **PROGRAMME PROJECT PROPOSALS (CAPITAL BUDGET
(AGENDA ITEM 7)**

a) **GBIC (NWES)**

John Balch (JB), a Director of NWES, was in attendance and provided Members with a verbal update of the GBIC project. NWES existed for enterprise not for profit making and most of its customers were from the public sector.

(A copy of the presentation which was unavailable at the meeting due to an IT problem is appended to the Minutes).

NWES's proposal was to install a green innovation centre on the new development site. The proposed 35,000 square foot flagship building would be to BREEAM (Build Research Establishment Environment Assessment Method) standards, reflecting its low environmental impact and zero carbon. Funding of £3.6m would be required and NWES was asking the Board for a contribution of £1.2 million toward the remaining £2.4m to enable this project to go ahead. The funding denominations were explained and the MTF contribution amounted to a third of the total costs with the other two thirds coming from ERDF and NWES.

Members were informed that the project would be split into two phases over a period of 3½ years; the funding from existing partners would also be phased in. ERDF would be contributing no more than 40% of the whole of project. It was highlighted that the total funding available did not include the cost of the land.

In response to a question as to what studies had been carried out, Members were informed that this was a regional offer for the low carbon economy. It was expected to get 20 residential companies inside a building of this size.

A Member asked about the rental rate for such a building. JB explained that NWES did not sell by the foot; however, current models were around £20/30 per foot. This would include everything from business advice, up-to-date technology and providing the perfect environment in which new and established businesses could flourish.

A Member asked if the land would have to be kept in abeyance for future build now that the project had been split into phases. Members were informed that NWES would need a certain size piece of land and be able to purchase half and keep the remainder in abeyance.

JB mentioned the very positive impact ORBIS had had on Lowestoft. OrbisEnergy was the flagship building for renewable wind, wave and tidal power across the East of England.

JB felt that GBIC would be a wonderful business opportunity for Thetford; it would rebalance the employment and make the town a more desirable place to live and work. MS recommended that Economic Development investigate alternative streams of funding that would enable BDC to deliver the project. As and MA agreed.

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The Chairman thanked JB for attending the meeting.

b) Haling Footpath

Graham Bygrave, the Capital Programme Manager for Norfolk County Council, presented the report. The report summarised the bid to the Board for £600,000 of funding to enable a partnership scheme to be progressed to ensure the long term availability of the existing traffic free Haling Path. In addition to the above funding, a further £250,000 had been allocated by Norfolk County Council so that the expected £850,000 scheme cost could be met; however, this sum was now under review.

The path formed a key part for the cycling network in Thetford and it was well used by cyclists and pedestrians alike. The path also provided access from the town centre to the leisure and recreational areas adjacent to the Little Ouse River.

A joint approach was needed on this matter. The proposed options were to do nothing which ultimately could lead to closure of the cycle path if the river retaining wall collapsed; or replace the existing wall. It had been proposed to construct a new sheet pile retaining wall (which had a design life of 125 years) with a concrete capping beam 500mm from the edge of the existing wall (into the river bed). The last hurdle was the on-going environment agency consent, the outcome of which should be provided within the next two months.

RK pointed out that this wall had been the centre of an historical argument over the years as to whose responsibility it was. He felt that this matter should be taken to arbitration particularly as the legal team who had been working on this project could not reach an agreement. He stated that the report in itself did not establish future ownership.

The Chairman, in jest, suggested a simple solution –get the wall up to a good standard and then donate it to the Town Council.

SCA asked if the wall would stand up to a great deal of ground works. He also felt confused about the two contractors named in the report. In response to the first question, GB assured Members that this had been taken into account, as far as the latter was concerned, it was explained that Norfolk County Council had a partnership with both contractors, using both would work out to be the most cost effective way to deliver the scheme.

AW highlighted the fact that there was another wall in Thetford in the same state of disrepair. He also highlighted an area of work that he felt should be added to the list (if funding was available), to install some steps down the grassy bank of the river from London/Norwich Road to Haling path in order to benefit such journeys as those to the Academy.

A Member asked if Norwich City Council could assist with some funding until the ownership problem had been finalised.

IA stated that the path was well used as it was the only walking route to the town without having to cross the road. He pointed out that many years ago 40ft of wall collapsed into the river and since then it had not

been well maintained. He fully supported anything that could be done.

Another Member asked why the Board was being asked to provide the remainder of the monies required. The Chairman stated that the legal arguments of ownership could go on forever, in the meantime the wall could collapse even more, thus making it much more expensive to repair.

RK pointed out that the design life of the proposed improvements had a 120 year life span.

BK felt that Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council should match fund the project and the Board should fund the remainder.

MCA drew Members' attention to the Vision for Thetford Town centre, one of the visions was to open up that stretch of waterway for boats etc. She felt that this would be a wonderful opportunity to repair the wall at this time.

RESOLVED that £600,000 be allocated to the Haling Footpath, subject to: MB/GB

- 1) a full appraisal and all options being explored;
- 2) a link from London Road/Norwich Road to Haling path;
- 3) the ownership of the path being resolved; and
- 4) the liabilities being explored.

33/10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

It was agreed that the following items be brought to the next meeting for discussion:

- Bus Interchange progress report
- Approved Revenue Projects progress report
- Development of Website
- Financial Report

The meeting closed at 12.35pm