



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

**Growth Deal Executive Programme Board
3rd November 2022 @ 5:45pm**

Ulster University, Room: E206 / E207

Present Members: Alderman: Hillis (UUP), Knight-McQuillan (DUP)
Councillors: Anderson (DUP), Schenning (SDLP), McShane (SF)

Officers: R Baker, Director of Leisure & Development
N Harkness, SIB Project Manager
J Beggs, SIB Project Manager
L Mullan, Digital & Strategic Projects Officer

In Attendance: L Maguire, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Ulster University
M Higgins, Principal/Chief Executive Northern Regional College
P McKeown, Director of Finance and Economic Engagement North West Regional College

NO.		ACTIONS
1.	Welcome and Declaration of Interests	
	Chief Executive's apologies were extended by Director of Leisure & Development who deputised as Chair for remainder of the meeting	
	Chair welcome to the EPB, representatives from both North West Regional College (NWRC) and Northern Regional College (NRC).	
	No declaration of interests declared.	

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>Focus for today: Ulster University representatives to provide Members with an overview of the progress on the Centre for Drug Discovery (CFDD) business case and Members to tour the facilities.</p> <p>EPB to be updated on the progress made on individual projects, with Members to take decisions at clearly identified 'decision points' for certain projects.</p>	
2.	<p>Apologies</p>	
	<p>Councillors: Holmes (UUP), Callan (DUP), Bateson/K McGurk (SF)*</p> <p>Officers: D Jackson, Chief Executive</p> <p>*Councillor Bateson has been replaced on the EPB by Councillor K McGurk</p>	
3	<p>Approval of Minutes from Meeting held 16th June 2022</p>	
	<p>Minutes of previous meeting agreed.</p> <p>Proposed by Councillor Schenning Seconded by Councillor Anderson</p> <p>Minutes will now be brought to Leisure & Development Committee on 15th November 2022 for information.</p>	<p>Previous EPB minutes to be taken to L&D Committee</p>
4.	<p>Project Updates/ Project Risks</p>	
	<p>Chair briefly provided background to the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal for the new Members and reminded Members of the importance in getting business cases right, so that they don't get held up in reviews by the relevant Government Departments.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson queried if available funds could be drawn down separately or will progress be delayed by the slowest progressing business case.</p> <p>Councillor Schenning also queried if the lack of a NI Executive could impact upon the Growth Deal.</p>	

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>L Maguire stated that the UK Government funding (Innovation) will help to unlock the NI Executive funding (Tourism & Regeneration and Infrastructure).</p> <p>N Harkness advised that funds are linked until Deal Document is agreed for all the projects (after Outline Business Case (OBC) stage), at which point, projects can be separated and funding released at when required for each project.</p> <p>Chair confirmed that NI Government Departments have established a new Unit within Invest NI to assist project development and ensure an efficient review process.</p> <p>N Harkness provided Members with an update on the progress made on projects to date and associated risks identified – details previously circulated.</p> <p>Members had limited questions for PMO regarding majority of projects. Further discussion took place on the following projects:</p> <p><i>Mountsandel</i></p> <p>To make project viable (within Growth Deal context), a pedestrian bridge would be required to bring required levels of economic prosperity. Conservative projections for such as bridge are circa £15m to £20m.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson stated that a quote for £2m had been received for construction of a bridge, using existing structures.</p> <p>Councillor Schenning noted an email received which outlined the potential opportunities for a bridge and that Councillors need to be able to respond appropriately to it.</p> <p>Chair advised that structural engineers had been out to assess possibility of building a bridge on existing structures and they advised that this would not be possible, as structures are not strong enough to support a bridge. He noted that it would be impossible to build a bridge for £2m quoted.</p> <p>M Higgins provided context to Members on the costs associated with previous bridge building projects he has been involved with and concurred with the Chair on projected costs.</p>	<p>Process map to be provided to Members detailing approvals process (NH)</p>

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>Chair explained to Members that the SOC recently completed by Cogent Management Consulting has determined that the project would require circa £50m to make location, a compelling tourism attraction. Due to the need for a bridge and associated engineering complications, development of a 'tree-top' adventure experience and development of the visitors centre/educational hub.</p> <p>Recommendation: Project is removed from Growth Deal consideration.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson noted that he was not happy and did not think that Officers appreciated the vision for what Mountsandel could become. He queried if there was any movement in the allowance of £6.5m for the project, as the Masterplan states that tourism should be encouraged by using the River Bann. He expressed that Mountsandel needs someone to take the first step in the development and further investment would then follow.</p> <p>Councillor Schenning remarked that project could look into alternative funding opportunities (Peace Plus, Shared Ireland etc), given that it does not fit with the Growth Deal criteria and Members should ensure that their respective parties are well briefed on that point. Council Officers should continue to provide support in developing a 'shovel-ready' project for the site.</p> <p>Councillor Knight-McQuillan noted that project is restricted by the surroundings, but it was important that Council support this project to become 'shovel-ready', potentially through a phased development approach.</p> <p>Councillor Hillis agreed with Councillor Anderson that true vision for Mountsandel has not been fully realised and more could be done.</p> <p>Chair advised that Council is exhausting every potential option to bring the Mountsandel project to fruition but remained Members that tough decisions are being taken on which projects to prioritise, as a result of financial restrictions.</p> <p>Councillor McShane noted that the Friends of Mountsandel had previously explored North/South linkages which could help develop the project and support funding applications. Councillor McShane requested that Council should continue to monitor the funding environment for other potential funding pots.</p>	<p>Alternate funding opportunities for projects to be</p>

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>N Harkness advised Members that it would not be feasible to keep project within consideration for the Growth Deal and wait for alternate funding sources for this project to become available. He did acknowledge that there is definitely potential to develop a Greenway and Blueway incorporating the River Bann that could help promote access to and understanding of the Mountsandel site.</p> <p>J Beggs re-enforced findings from the SOC and recommended that it be removed from Growth Deal consideration, but that Council should continue to support the project for alternate funding opportunities, potentially a twinning application to Shared Ireland.</p> <p>L Maguire remarked that Council must demonstrate to the Government Department that they can have confidence that Council will only be submitting viable projects for Growth Deal funding.</p> <p>Chair confirmed that Mountsandel project will still remain a project for Council, but paper will be taken to L&D Committee on 15th November to request removal from Growth Deal consideration. Chair will contact relevant stakeholders following meeting to provide update.</p> <p>Greenways</p> <p>N Harkness updated Members on the progress of both proposed Greenway projects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Portrush to Bushmills</i> – Council approved AECOM to commence landowner engagement. 2. <i>Ballycastle to Ballymoney</i> – Initial engagement with landowners has been negative, therefore a phased approach should be adopted. Outline Business Case (OBC) would be developed for the entirety of the Greenway and then Full Business Cases (FBC) would be developed for each phase. <p>J Beggs outlined the role of the Department of Infrastructure (Dfi) in the development of Greenways, including match-funding for the projects. In addition, he noted that Dfi are adopting a new delivery approach for Greenways, acknowledging the difficulties around land ownership.</p> <p>Councillor McShane welcomed the proposal of a phased approach and expressed that former Dfi Minister felt Council was not moving fast enough in developing Greenways. Councillor McShane</p>	<p>kept under review. (NMcG)</p> <p>Paper to be taken to L&D requesting that Mountsandel be removed from Growth Deal consideration and update relevant stakeholders. (RB)</p>

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>questioned if there was going to be a web resource available for people to learn more about the proposals.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson questioned how long it would take for Dfl to develop their new delivery option.</p> <p>Councillor Schenning questioned if the phased approach would have any additional cost implications.</p> <p>J Beggs advised that Dfl are committed to developing Greenways and discussions have indicated that the new Dfl approach will simplify land issues for Council. He also noted that Council have prepared resources which have been shared as part of the landowner engagement.</p> <p>N Harkness advised that the funding would not be impacted through the adoption of a phased approach. However, he did acknowledge that if Council fails to secure agreement with landowners, some sections of the Greenway may not be delivered.</p> <p>Recommendation: Ballycastle to Ballymoney Greenway proceeds as a phased development.</p> <p>N Harkness advised Members on the additional programme risks, including seeking clarification of partnership funding requirements. If the requirement is over 10%, the entire Growth Deal could be threatened.</p> <p>L Maguire advised that all the other NI City/Growth Deals operate on a 10% partnership contribution requirement.</p> <p>P McKeown noted that increased costs are impacting the Strabane Regeneration project (Part of the Derry & Strabane City Deal) – costs have increased by as much as 50% – 70% to those calculated at the SOC stage, a significant proportion of which relates to construction inflation..</p> <p>N Harkness noted that there is only so much exposure Council can absorb and inflationary impacts may result in EPB needing to decide to jettison projects so that others can proceed. This was caveated by the acknowledgement that current figures for each project have yet to be fully scrutinised at OBC stage.</p> <p>M Higgins contributed to the discussion, his experience to date with the redevelopment of both Coleraine and Ballymena campuses including price increases.</p>	<p>Paper to be taken to L&D requesting that Ballycastle to Ballymoney Greenway proceed as a phased development. (RB)</p>

NO.		ACTIONS
	Councillor Anderson conceded that external factors may impact on the projects which the Growth Deal can deliver.	
5.	Financial Report	
	<p>J Beggs provided Members with an update on budgets associated with the Growth Deal. He noted that Members will need to make some tough decisions regarding projects going forward.</p> <p>In terms of the PMO's revenue budget, he noted that spend projections for this years are on track and next year's spend forecast at £160,000 (serviced by the remaining Levelling Up Fund Development Budget and Council's PMO budget). Levelling Up Fund Development Budget will be exhausted by next March 2024.</p> <p>Moving forward, projects will get to a stage where costs can start to be capitalised.</p>	
6.	Update on 'Critical Friend' Role	
	<p>N McGurk provided background on the previous visit to North Wales for the new Members and explained that further engagement has taken place to establish mutually beneficial links. As a consequence a formal 'critical friend' relationship has been established and a handbook developed to facilitate workshops.</p> <p>Ambition North Wales are slightly ahead with the development or their Growth Deal and CCG PMO has already started to adopt lessons learned. In particular, relating to skills gaps and interventions support by their Growth Deal.</p> <p>Ambition North Wales have confirmed visit to Causeway Coast and Glens in January 2023 (16th – 18th).</p> <p>Councillor Schenning noted that timetable for visit should be mindful that some Councillors will not be able to attend daytime functions.</p> <p>Chair advised that itinerary is still under development and Councillor availability will be a consideration throughout. He also noted that Ambition North Wales are not just bringing members of their PMO but Councillors will also be in attendance.</p>	<p>Critical Friend handbook to be issued to Members (NMCG)</p> <p>Skills discussion to be added to agenda of a future EPB meeting (NMCG)</p>

NO.		ACTIONS
	N McGurk concluded discussion by noting that this process is in addition to Gateway Reviews and is a proactive step.	
7.	Any Other Relevant Business	
	<p>Director of Leisure & Development proposed that future meetings of the EPB take place in-person.</p> <p>L Maguire queried why no government officials attended these meetings, as other Deals have this representation.</p> <p>J Beggs confirmed that DoF have an open invitation to provide oversight on these meetings.</p> <p>N Harkness advised PMO meet regularly with government officials via the Level 1 Growth Deal Government Department Engagement Group.</p>	
8.	Date of Next Meeting	
	Thursday 2 nd February 2023 – Location to be confirmed.	Meeting invites to be issued (RB)

Meeting closed at 9:15pm