



## **Grantown Initiative - Board Briefing**

### **Minutes of Briefing of Consultant for Grantown Forward on Tuesday 12 April 2016 – at Town House, Grantown-on-Spey**

Present: **Directors** – Dan Cottam (in the Chair), Stewart Dick, Jane Hope, Bill Sadler

**Advisers** – Jaci Douglas (Councillor), David Lyle, Company Secretary

Apologies: **Directors** – Melanie Dick, Basil Dunlop, Isla Game, Karen Martin

**Advisers** – Karen Derrick, VABS

**Key Partners** - Katie Crerar, Cairngorm National Park Authority (CNPA), David Fraser, Chairman of Strathspey Railway Charitable Trust (SRCT) / Rails to Grantown, Duncan Mackellar (Chair of Grantown Twinning Association and Chairman of former Grantown Initiative)

Apologies from Key Partners: Fiona Grant, Grantown & Vicinity Community Council (GVCC)

**Consultant** – Ian Clark, Director of Iconic Consulting

The Chair welcomed all to the Meeting.

### **Representatives**

Those represented were

Anagach Woods Trust – None

Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) – Katie Crerar

Co-operative Local Forum / Member Pioneer of Local Co-op – Bill Sadler

Former Grantown Initiative – Duncan Mackellar

Grantown 250 Co-ordinator – Bill Sadler, Jaci Douglas

Grantown Business Association – Stewart Dick

Grantown Initiative – Dan Cottam, Stewart Dick, Jane Hope, Bill Sadler

Grantown Society – Bill Sadler

Grantown Museum and Heritage Centre – Jane Hope, Dan Cottam

Grantown Twinning Association – Duncan Mackellar

Grantown and Vicinity Community Council (GVCC) – Bill Sadler

Highland Council – Jaci Douglas (Councillor)

Strathspey Railway Charitable Trust / Rails to Grantown – David Fraser

Totally Locally – Stewart Dick

YM Community Centre - None

### **Welcome / Introductions**

The Chair welcomed all to this Briefing Meeting and introduced Ian Clark, Director of Iconic Consulting, whose firm was now contracted to prepare for Grantown Initiative and their Key Partners: the Grantown Forward – Masterplan. The objective was for the Masterplan to be the basis for the implementation of projects for the development of Grantown to access major funding sources.

The need for the Masterplan had come from the Grantown-on-Spey Town Centre Pilot Project Consultation of February 2016, by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) and Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey (VABS) – copies of which document had been made available to all the Key Partners and had been widely distributed in the town.

The timescale for the Masterplan by Iconic Consulting was for it to be in place by end-July 2016, but it was expected that there would be a Workshop / Meeting of Ian Clark with the Key Stakeholders at Grantown around mid-June 2016 at the latest.

At this stage Katie Crerar for CNPA and VABS reported that the Pilot Project Consultation had been completed and the Final Report on the Grantown Town Centre would be available within two weeks (ie by 26 April 2016).

In opening up the Briefing, David Fraser (SRCT / Rails to Grantown – R2G) explained that to achieve R2G a TAWS (Transport and Works – Scotland) Order was needed to deal with the railway crossing of the Trunk Road A95. The road would go over the railway by a bridge, and the road works were costed by Transport Scotland at some £7 million plus the bridge works (to be paid by R2G) at some £1.7 million. In addition, there was the cost to R2G of laying the rails from Dulnain to Grantown (Dulicht Bridge) at some £2.5 million along with the new terminus station at some £1 million. R2G had also to produce an Economic Impact Assessment plus an

Environmental Impact Assessment – both of which were almost complete. It was likely that the R2G application for the TAWS Order would be submitted within 2 months with thereafter around 3 months for it to be approved (assuming that there was no local public inquiry).

David Fraser was very clear that there was no business case for the Strathspey Railway Company (SRC) to extend to Grantown-on-Spey, as the cost at some £5.5 million could never be recovered. R2G was wholly going forward for the economic benefit of the Grantown community. Although promoted by SRC, the project was in the ownership of the Grantown Community – so there was a real need for the community to participate in SRCT, for the community to participate in the management of R2G, for the community to participate in fund raising for the £5.5 million, for the community to own (and possibly name) the station. Accordingly there was a major need for Grantown to be the driving force for R2G – and how to achieve this was a task for Grantown Initiative and their Key Partners. The Iconic Masterplan would have to encompass this.

The Briefing moved on to discussion on the need for Grantown to have a big hall for the various cultural and social events and activities in the town. The YM Community Centre had a role to play – and there had been attempts over the years (notably the Jan Jemmet report of 2012) to upgrade the building, but nothing had been realised. There were 3 church halls plus the hotels' accommodation (principally the Grant Arms) plus the school halls and sundry others. On the plus side was the Craig Maclean Sports / Leisure Centre, which was very well supported, but it had no usage for cultural or social events. One thing that should be contained within a community hall was seen to be a Visitor Centre – as Grantown was deficient in such, needed particularly on inclement days.

Grantown was seen to be a vibrant town – with a great deal going on throughout the year – and the community had the capability to welcome and hold events, some of which have been fairly large. Capacity was, however, a pinch point. There was a plan to have events in The Square to be made easy to hold, with a proper plug-in PA system accessible for all, along with trained first aiders and food handlers as well as marshals. There were hopes for a Bandstand in The Square, possibly at the Fountain site.

The Black Parks Show Field was a major asset, but very under-used, and there were some hopes that the stakeholders (the Farmers and the Golf Club) might allow it to be opened up for diverse activities, especially for the young people, or including community storage.

Other assets for Grantown were obviously the Anagach Woods – purchased by the Grantown community for £1 million – which were being developed for recreational activities. The caravan site for Grantown was one of the best in Scotland and it brought very many visitors to the town. The Lochan was another high amenity spot – but steps were needed (and are going forward) for the reed problem to be tackled.

Castle Grant had a possible major place in the community, but care was needed in bringing it on board. There was also the River Spey, with its fishing and recreational uses, in addition to the Seafield and Revack Estates.

Tourism was a major industry for Grantown – and steps were needed to increase visitor numbers, both from nearby (the Aviemore visitors) as well as further afield. There were 3 industrial estates in the town, and Ian Clark had been earlier shown around them.

One constraint for Grantown was the car parking, as although there were restrictions (one hour maximum in the High Street) there was no enforcement and no plans to achieve enforcement. So car parking was essentially unregulated. As to how much that impacted adversely on residents and visitors was somewhat unknown. However there was traffic congestion, sometimes severe, at the Co-op corner (The Square / Seafield Avenue) and remedial action was very much needed.

Another constraint was the empty shops / retail outlets in the High Street which impacted badly on the visitors. It was thought that the empty shop fronts might be costumed (as had been successfully done in other towns), but that needed inputs to achieve since some of the shop owners were absent landlords. The flatted accommodation above the High Street shops also impacted adversely – but there were part-grants available to address the building upgrades, and the Iconic Masterplan might show the way forward for this. Totally Locally, which was supported – it was thought – by most of the High Street retailers was an important innovation for Grantown. It was developing a focus on marketing the shops.

There was discussion on the inadequacy of public transport, especially the bus services – and this was recognised as a difficult issue for Grantown, both for the visitors as well as the residents.

In conclusion, Ian Clark thanked everyone for their inputs which he had duly noted. He would proceed immediately with his work, and he planned to report updates on a fortnightly basis to Grantown Initiative (through Jane Hope).

**David A Lyle, Company Secretary**