



## **Grantown Initiative - Board Meeting**

### **Minutes of Meeting on Tuesday 13 September 2016 – at Town House, Grantown-on-Spey**

Present: **Directors** – Dan Cottam (in the Chair), Melanie Dick, Stewart Dick, Basil Dunlop, Jane Hope

**Stakeholders** Highland Council: Jaci Douglas (Councillor), Gregor Rimmel (Councillor), Grantown Business Association (GBA): Neil Martin, Stewart Dick, Grantown Museum and Heritage Trust: Dan Cottam, Jane Hope, Totally Locally: Melanie Dick, Grantown Twinning Association: Jane Hope, Grantown YM Community Centre: Jaci Douglas (Councillor), Strathspey Railway Charitable Trust (SRCT): David Fraser

**Advisers** - David Lyle, Company Secretary

Apologies: **Directors** – Isla Game, Karen Martin, Bill Sadler

**Stakeholders** – Grantown & Vicinity Community Council (GVCC): Barry Main, Bill Sadler, - Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA): Lee Haxton, Grantown Society: Bill Sadler

**Advisers** – Karen Derrick, VABS

### **Welcome**

**1** The Chair welcomed all to the Meeting.

### **Grantown Forward – The Grantown Iconic Action Plan**

**4** Following the Briefing Meeting with the Grantown Initiative Board on 6 June 2016 Ian Clark, Director of Iconic Consulting, had prepared 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 Grantown.

The Grantown Iconic Action Plan had now been submitted to Grantown Initiative and the Stakeholders –

Grantown & Vicinity Community Council  
Grantown Initiative / Grantown Business Association  
Anagach Woods Trust  
Grantown Grammar School  
Grantown Museum and Heritage Trust  
Grantown Society  
Grantown Twinning Association  
Strathspey Railway Company  
YM Community Centre

There were 3 main Themes – Town Centre; Tourism; Community.

The focus for the Town Centre was on the built environment – with funding sources being Historic Environment Scotland (HES) with its CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) plus the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

For Tourism, the objective was the delivery of R2G / Rails to Grantown project of Strathspey Steam Railway – with a co-ordinated tourism package seen as vital.

On the Community, the need was the development of the capacity of the local Grantown community – for the people to put in effort, work and thought, especially for demonstrating that the community was behind and supporting Rails to Grantown.

In detail the Overview was:

Theme: Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting Grantown's Town Centre

#### Proposed Actions

1 Develop Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and Townscape Heritage Programme (THP) applications including comprehensive capital works and a detailed engagement and learning programme.

2 Address parking issues in High Street and The Square.

3 Finalise plans to improve the appearance of the roundabouts.

4 Develop plans to construct a wall at the cemetery entrance.

## Theme: Developing Tourism and Events in Grantown

### Proposed Actions

- 1 Undertake research on Grantown tourists and the potential tourism market.
- 2 Develop high quality, co-ordinated marketing and communications for Grantown.
- 3 Develop visitor experience training programme.
- 4 Progress plans to enhance existing visitor attractions.
- 5 Provide practical support for Rails to Grantown (R2G) and Grantown East Railway Station developments.
- 6 Upgrade equipment for public events, where appropriate.
- 7 Develop plans for events / concert venue.

## Theme: Strengthening Community Action in Grantown

### Proposed Actions

- 1 Provide funding masterclasses and ongoing support for community organisations.
- 2 Encourage additional volunteers.
- 3 Develop co-ordinated implementation project.

At a GI Meeting with the Key Stakeholders on 9 August 2016, a warm welcome had been given to Grantown's Iconic Action Plan. The Plan gave a comprehensive assessment of the options open for Grantown along with information about sources of grant. It was seen as a very fine starting point, but to turn the Action Plan into reality there was a strong need for the community to work together and for all to play a part in delivering the Plan. The community needed to think carefully about the priorities of the Plan, as there was a limited capacity for the Grantown community and thus a need to focus efforts on the priorities.

The ambition for the Action Plan was to go forward for grant funding from the available sources – especially as there had been the fullest public consultation to reach this stage. Although, if needed, an Appendix could go on the Action Plan featuring all the public consultations undertaken.

There were new funds available – for Heritage, the Economy, Education / Learning – and these would be considered. VABS was also involved in Town Centre Health Checks and a Visitor Survey for Badenoch & Strathspey as part of the Cairngorms National Park.

A key proposal from the Action Plan was the extension of the Strathspey Steam Railway from Broomhill to Grantown, as this had the potential to change the nature of tourism in the town. However, it was noted that the Strathspey Railway Company Ltd (SRC) was currently in a state of structural change which might impinge on the Rails to Grantown (R2G) element under the Strathspey Railway Charitable Trust (SRCT). While R2G was very important for Grantown it was also seen as wider than Grantown and vital that the Heritage Railway be considered holistically – and there was a proposal by the 4 Councillors for Badenoch & Strathspey that the Steam Railway from Aviemore to Grantown should be a priority for the Ward. To progress on this the 4 Ward Councillors planned to meet with the SRC Leaders to ascertain from them the SRC commitment to R2G and SRCT.

It was now reported that the 4 B&S Ward Councillors were still to have the meeting with the SRC Leaders – principally Douglas Norris, SRC Chairman. However it was reported by Basil Dunlop that he was authorised on behalf of SRC to advise that indeed SRC was very much wanting the Rails to Grantown (R2G) project to be accomplished. But SRC did not have the funds to undertake the project by SRC itself.

For GBA, Neil Martin endorsed the Action Plan for Grantown and the emphasis on the R2G (Rails to Grantown) which was fundamental to the immediate development of visitors to Grantown – with the other important schemes for the town being influenced by that development.

For SRCT, David Fraser brought out the present finance requirements for R2G – some £7 million for the A95 trunk road realignment, to be done by Transport Scotland; some £1.7 million for the bridge for the A95 over the railway line, to be paid by a department of the Scottish Government; some £3.5 million for the railway track from the River Dulnain into Grantown plus the new station there, to be met by R2G.

Further, David Fraser explained that the TAWS (Transport and Works Scotland) Application by SRC was on the point of finalisation and would be submitted to the Scottish Government within 4 to 6 weeks (from 13/9/16). The TAWS Application was in two parts – Part 1 being relative to the trunk road A95, and Part 2 being the new station and the rails into Grantown. It was a very substantial submission. Transport Scotland were excited by the SRC TAWS and, as there was no obvious objection, it was hoped that TAWS approval would be gained by the end of 2016 – albeit nothing should be taken for granted. SRCT would be the Lead Promoter for delivery of the TAWS.

While this was very positive news for Grantown, it was seen that there were other substantial development needs for Grantown to complement the R2G project – like suitable eating and refreshment venues in the town, adequate toilets, good car parking arrangements, plus other visitor attractions – like walks and interests.

The SRCT Business Plan for R2G had brought out that the Grantown area economy would benefit by some £3 million annually, and thus it was vital to have the local businesses (principally the retail sector) involved in and with R2G. The visitors to the town had to have a great experience, with the focus on the needs of the visitors and as to how those needs were best met.

After full discussion the meeting was clear that Grantown needed the R2G project as its priority for action and that the community's efforts should be directed to

accomplish R2G. This was seen as a big decision – and R2G would set the scene for the other community efforts needed, principally the marketing and promotion of Grantown.

However, SRC/SRCT were unable to finance or raise funds for R2G, so the community would need to be involved through public ownership, in line with the views of the Scottish Government. It had already been suggested to Grantown & Vicinity Community Council (GVCC) and Grantown Initiative that Scottish Government funding might best be achieved through a Community Interest Company (CIC) incorporating a Special Purpose Vehicle with a Public Service Obligation: to build, own and operate the railway, as a community initiative. For that, a Railway Sub-Group should be established by Grantown Initiative, to take forward to GVCC the promotion of a CIC by GVCC.

To progress – GI established a Railway Sub-Group, with Basil Dunlop of Grantown Initiative supported by Melanie Dick (GI and Totally Locally) and Neil Martin (GBA). In any absence of Neil Martin, Stewart Dick would stand in. Further, Jane Hope (GI) would be available to join the Railway Sub-Group at a later stage.

In addition, it was seen as essential that the Grantown community should be involved / motivated / inspired with the Rails to Grantown project – as there was a substantial need for more people to take on work on the whole range of issues fundamental to R2G. A public event was suggested – for which GI, rather than SRCT, should take the lead. While GVCC needed to be the starter for the CIC, this would lead into a Steering Group for the CIC, involving other bodies like Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Highland Council, and others. And it would be the CIC per the Steering Group that would take on the task for grant funding for R2G. But it was not just for the local media, the R2G project was a national media story and GI needed to take the lead in marketing and promotion of Grantown. One aspect might be on Grantown's green credentials by way of offering the greenest new railway station in Britain. There was an absolute need for good communication with and for the local community and organisations. Involvement by the Younger generation was seen as a key and contact should be made with Grantown Grammar School - for instance in the assistance by sixth formers in aspects of R2G.

But, of course, bringing the Steam Railway to Grantown would mean that the Town Centre would have to be enhanced and promoted in line with the Action Plan. A Comprehensive Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) was proposed along with a Townscape Heritage Programme (THP) – but there were serious difficulties seen in taking this forward in view of the number and nature of the property owners involved. It was noted that other towns in Scotland similar to Grantown, like Callendar, had been successful with CARS and arrangements had been made, under the auspices of the CNPA, for a fact-finding visit there on 20 September 2016.

There were some matters of the Action Plan that were being progressed independently, by other Key Stakeholders like Highland Council taking the lead in the parking issues for Grantown's High Street, and Jaci Douglas outlined the position on this. The yellow double lining for certain streets in Grantown would be a 6 month pilot.

Also, the vacant shop windows in Grantown's High Street would be considered for use in the promotion of R2G.

At this stage the Stakeholder Representatives withdrew from the GI Board, which went on to consider the GI Board Minutes of July and August 2016

### **Minutes of July 2016 Board**

**3** The Minutes of Board Meeting of 12 July 2016, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved.

### **Minutes of August 2016 Board**

**4** At the last Board there had not been a Quorum (4 Directors), so the Directors present had agreed to continue with the meeting and to request that the following quorate Board homologate and ratify the decisions taken. This the now quorate Board duly did, and the Minutes of Board Meeting of 9 August 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were approved.

### **Next Board**

The next Board would be on Tuesday 11 October 2016.

**David A Lyle**

**Company Secretary**