



Grantown Initiative - Board Meeting

Minutes of Meeting on Tuesday 9 August 2016 – at Town House, Grantown-on-Spey

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

Key Stakeholders - Cairngorms National Park Authority: Lee Haxton, Highland Council: Jaci Douglas (Councillor)

Advisers - Karen Derrick, VABS, David Lyle, Company Secretary

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

Welcome

1 The Chair welcomed all to the Meeting.

Quorum

2 In the absence of a Quorum (4 Directors), the Directors present agreed to continue with the Agenda and to request that the following quorate Board homologate and ratify the decisions taken.

Minutes of July 2016 Board

3 The Minutes of Board Meeting of 12 July 2016 would go forward to the following quorate Board.

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 Key Stakeholders.

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.

The Meeting gave a warm welcome 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 (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 would arrange to meet with the SRC Leaders to ascertain from them the SRC commitment to R2G and SRCT.

For Rails to Grantown with its visitors to the town there had to be a great experience for the tourists as well as those coming for other reasons. The focus had to be on the needs of the visitors and as to how those needs were best met. Evidence was needed.

It was seen as most helpful for the CNPA's Head of Visitor Services (Pete Crane) along with the Head of Rural Development (Sandra Middleton) to advise Grantown Initiative on visitor experiences. This would be progressed by Lee Haxton.

In his absence, Basil Dunlop had set down his understanding of what was needed for R2G and his email of 4 August 2016 was noted – 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.

Once the views of SRC had been obtained by the 4 Ward Councillors then the next steps for Rails to Grantown could be progressed and this might take the form of a CIC.

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 it was settled that, under the auspices of the CNPA's Lee Haxton, a fact-finding visit would be made there.

Grantown Initiative would send the Grantown Iconic Action Plan to the various community bodies which were likely to have the most interest and part to play in delivering the Plan –

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

Then a Meeting would be convened to find general agreement as to how the Action Plan should be taken forward which would lead to funding applications for the resources to make a real difference to Grantown. There was a determination that the Action Plan should not become another report gathering dust on the shelf.

The view was that the Action Plan needed a Project Co-ordinator or a Design Team or a Project Delivery Team as it was too large a project to rely on volunteers – but there

had to be a strong community leadership by (say) a Steering Group. The project delivery staff would be paid personnel, by way of the strict procurement rules of the public sector. They would also take on the marketing and tourism elements of the Action Plan.

There were some matters of the Action Plan that could be progressed independently, by other Key Stakeholders like Highland Council taking the lead in the parking issues for Grantown's High Street. Also the CNPA could provide guidance and assistance on tourism and events for Grantown – as envisaged for the planned meeting with Pete Crane and Sandra Middleton. The GI contact would be Dan Cottam.

Other Business

5 Consideration of the remaining items on the Agenda was continued to the next Board Meeting.

Further, Lee Haxton reported that a most useful seminar had been arranged by the Association of Cairngorm Communities on the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan consultation, at The Lecht on Tuesday 13 September 2016 at 2.00 pm.

Next Board

The next Board would be on Tuesday 13 September 2016.

David A Lyle

Company Secretary