

**MINUTES OF BLACKPOOL, FYLDE AND WYRE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD MEETING -
THURSDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2020**

EPB members present:

Councillor Karen Buckley, Fylde Borough Council
Councillor Michael Vincent, Wyre Borough Council as substitute for Councillor David Henderson
Councillor Lynn Williams, Blackpool Council

Chief Executive Officers:

Allan Oldfield, Fylde Borough Council
Garry Payne, Wyre Borough Council

Co-opted private sector representatives present:

Neil Farley (Fylde), Martin Long (Blackpool), Peter Worthington (Wyre)

Other Attendees:

Nicole Billington, Marketing Officer, Blackpool Council
Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, Blackpool Council
Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council
Sarah Kemp, Chief Executive Officer, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (until Item 7)
Katherine O'Connor, Senior Planning Officer, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Andrea Wallace, Enterprise Zone Adviser, Wyre Borough Council
Paul Walker, Director of Development Services, Fylde Borough Council
Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Manager, Blackpool Council

Apologies:

Councillor David Henderson, Wyre Borough Council
Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities, Wyre Borough Council
Neil Jack, Chief Executive, Blackpool Council

No members of the public or press attending the meeting. The public parts of the meeting were broadcast via YouTube

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

Martin Long, Business Representative, declared that his company did legal work for companies based within the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone but that none of his clients were included in the update report at this meeting.

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2 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting whilst the agenda items 9,10 or 11 are considered, on the ground that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in category 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12(a) of the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Variation Order 2006 and, that in the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Board considered the appointment of a Vice-Chairman for the remainder of Municipal Year 2020/21.

Resolved:

That Councillor Lynn Williams be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of Municipal Year 2020/21.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on 16 September 2020.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5 MATTERS ARISING

Further to item 5, Full Fibre Network on the minutes of the 16 September 2020 meeting. The Board noted that Fylde Borough Council and Wyre Borough Council had now joined the Broadband Co-op. The Board noted that this would be beneficial for future connectivity and agreed to receive a further update on the progress made by the co-op at a suitable meeting in 2021.

6 LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Board received a presentation from Sarah Kemp, CEO of Lancashire Economic Partnership. She highlighted the following work being undertaken by that partnership. Ms Kemp gave a brief history of the partnership's creation and outlined what the Partnership saw as its four key roles: to understand local economic markets, to align with other key strategies, to advocate for business and influence future government policy.

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Ms Kemp highlighted the development of a strategic economic framework to align with the Local Industrial Strategy and the Greater Lancashire Plan. The plan included strategic actions and centred around pillars of growth namely: food and agriculture, tourism, culture and place, digital, advanced manufacturing, energy and low carbon and health. Each pillar of growth had a sub-group lead by a passionate business leader from the sector and there was also an Aerospace Sub-Group to emphasise that sector's importance. The initial focus of these sectors would be on the response to COVID with a subsequent focus on developing sector plans for long-term sustainable growth.

Members of the Board thanked Sarah for the presentation. The general view of the Board being that since her appointment the linkages between the Local Enterprise Partnership and local Councils had dramatically improved.

The Board agreed that it would be beneficial to have regular presentations and also to share workplans.

7 REVIEW OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD

The Board undertook an exercise to review its work since its creation May 2018.

Mr Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, presented the item. The report highlighted the four priorities agreed by the Board at its creation namely Accelerated Growth focusing on our Enterprise Zones, Connectivity, Marketing and Investment, and Housing Growth and Quality of Life.

The Board noted the agenda tracker and considered that these meant for the past three years the Board had focussed almost exclusively on the first three of these priorities. Members accepted that a large part of the workload of the Board had been the Enterprise Zones as they developed as this was part of its formal governance role through to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

Members of the Board considered that in the future the Board must continue to ensure good corporate governance for the Enterprise Zones but avoid repetition given the zones were now well-established. The Board should look to also focus further on connectivity, and marketing and investment. Further to Item 6 it agreed to ensure where possible that linkages were maintained and strengthened between the Board and partner organisations notably, but not limited to, the Department for International Trade, Marketing Lancashire and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

The Board considered the issue of housing. It agreed that whilst there had been little collective focus it did however consider that with changes in planning proposed by Government it may be that a further changes to the Duty to Cooperate Memorandum of Understanding were now required so that the three Councils could consider how where such issues were best to be considered.

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Resolved:

To note the progress made by the Economic Prosperity Board and agree that the relevant Councils review the Board's priorities.

8 HIGH SPEED 2 AND THE GOLBORNE LINK

The Board received a report which highlighted High Speed Rail 2's potential benefits and disbenefits for Fylde Coast Rail services.

The Board noted that the current proposal had been subject to considerable pressure not to include a phase2b spur from Manchester to the Wigan area (known as the Golborne Link). Without the Golborne link there would appear to be a much reduced chance of maintaining direct Fylde Coast to London Euston services. The Golborne link offered capacity that would allow the preservation of direct services and would enable journey times between the area and major centres to be reduced.

The Board also noted that the removal of direct train services might be a negative factor for inward investment and tourism with some travellers who preferred not to change trains.

The Board noted that removing the four a day direct Avanti departures from Blackpool North with stops at Poulton-Le-Fylde and Kirkham and Wesham would be a retrograde step, particularly following the lengthy campaign fought to restore these direct London services and the need for rail access to support post-pandemic economic recovery.

The Board agreed that it would support lobbying for the retention in plans for High Speed 2 of the Golborne Link and requested that the three Councils and partner organisations did likewise.

Resolved:

That the Economic Prosperity Board and the three Councils join Lancashire County Council and others, including the West Coast Rail 250 campaign, in supporting the High Speed Rail 2 Golborne link's construction, maximising opportunities for direct Fylde Coast – London services to be retained when High Speed Rail 2 HS2 is in operation.

9 FYLDE COAST RAIL LOOP

The Board noted that a key aspiration of three Councils and the Board itself since its formation had been since its formation to advocate for and propose substantial improvements to local rail networks as such improvements were considered essential to improve transportation and in support of the Climate Change agenda.

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The Board had received previously submitted or received information on bids that it had supported to the Transforming Cities fund and Future High Streets fund to support that strategic aim.

Mr Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Manager, highlighted the bid that had been submitted to the Restoring your Railways Fund for work on the Fleetwood to Poulton-Le-Fylde line reopening. The Board noted that a consultant had been appointed and key stakeholders engaged to consider the development of a Strategic Outline Business Case to identify whether tram, rail or a tram-train combination would be the best option for returning the line to use.

Mr Gerrard also highlighted to the Board that a further bid submitted by two local MP's to the Restoring your Railways Fund, titled 'Enhanced existing passenger services, Preston - Blackpool South (South Fylde Line Passing Loop)' had been successful. While it was acknowledged that specific details were not available yet about the bid it represented an opportunity to progress matters. The necessity to undertake a similar Strategic Outline Business Case and consult with all stakeholders had been noted.

The Board expressed its support for these bids and its commitment to seeking solutions to improve strategic transport connectivity. It further agreed that it would be beneficial to receive updates as to progress.

Resolved:

1. To reaffirm the Board's support for improving strategic transport connectivity on the Fylde Coast through a Fylde Coast rail loop
2. To recognise that the two successful Restoring Your Railway bids for Fleetwood to Poulton-le-Fylde and the South Fylde Line provide the opportunity for a Strategic Outline Business Cases to be prepared to establish the basis for further requests for funding to implement the preferred schemes in due course.
3. To note that a consultant for the Fleetwood to Poulton-le-Fylde study has now been appointed by Lancashire County Council and work should be completed by May 2021.
4. In respect of the South Fylde Line, to recommend that all key stakeholders are consulted in the development of the brief, namely Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council, as the two local transport authorities for the South Fylde Line, Fylde Borough Council, the local MP's, the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Northern Trains, together with others including town/parish councils and user groups.
5. To ensure that adequate funding is earmarked to undertake a Strategic Outline Business Case study for the South Fylde Line, similar to the one that is currently being undertaken for the Fleetwood - Poulton-le-Fylde disused railway line.
6. To receive the outcome of the two studies in due course and then identifies the best route for securing funding for the implementation of the preferred options.

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10 BLACKPOOL AIRPORT ENTERPRISE ZONE: PROGRESS REPORT

Mr Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, provided the board with an update on the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

The report started by highlighting the approval of the delayed updating of the Masterplan to reflect the substantial changes to the physical development around the eastern gateway access, sports field re-provision revised airport proposals and the change of direction for the future of the Squires Gate Industrial Estate (former Wellington Bomber Factory) this had previously been delayed. The revised interim delivery plan had been approved by the Executive of Blackpool Council as Accountable Body in 7 December 2021 and subsequently submitted to Fylde Borough Council, the Lancashire Local Economic Partnership and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Further to the last two meetings Mr Green emphasised that central to the Enterprise Zones would be a request that government extend the period in which the 5 year business rates relief would be available from the current expiry in March 2022 to financial year 2025/26. With full Local Enterprise Partners support officers had joined nationally with The Local Enterprise Partnership Network to put a proposal to HM Treasury. This would be to seek an extension of business rates relief to 2025/26 as a low cost focus and engine for post Covid-19 economic recovery and growth, and to recognise the delays in all Enterprise Zones being able to bring forward enabling infrastructure. This remained a high priority for the Board and partners to ensure that Enterprise Zones could play their key role in delivering post-COVID industrial and economic recovery.

Ms Nicole Billington, Marketing Officer, highlighted that the hosting of workshops to develop a Digital Strategy for each of the Enterprises Zone allowing linkages with the Local Full Fibre Network. A meeting had also been proposed with the digital lead at Department for International Trade to introduce Blackpool's new digital opportunities.

Resolved:

To note the update.

HILLHOUSE ENTERPRISE ZONE: PROGRESS REPORT

Mr Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zone presented an update on Hillhouse Enterprise Zone.

Mr Green spoke about the closure of the Vinnolit site and the opportunities presented by the purchase of the site by the majority landholder, NPL Estates releasing new sites for development and enabling the relocation of existing businesses.

The landowner had also reported the in- principle offer of funding from the Getting Building Fund toward the costs of essential infrastructure upgrades to enable the new development to progress and were now engaged in the preparation of detailed planning applications for the development together with a planning application to relocate the existing gatehouse.

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The Board noted that funding had been secured from the Getting Building Fund to address required upgrades to utilities and access roads. The project had been allocated some funding £630,000 from the Getting Building Fund, with additional match funding provided by Wyre Borough Council and NPL. Also included had been funding of £200,000 has also been approved by Wyre Borough Council to support the extension of the Local Full Fibre Network broadband fibre optic network.

Further to Item 10 Mr Green again emphasised that central to the Enterprise Zones would be a request that government extend the period in which the 5 year business rates relief would be available from the current expiry in March 2022 to financial year 2025/26. With full Local Enterprise Partners support officers had joined nationally with The Local Enterprise Partnership Network to put a proposal to HM Treasury. This would be to seek an extension of business rates relief to 2025/26 as a low cost focus and engine for post Covid-19 economic recovery and growth, and to recognise the delays in all Enterprise Zones being able to bring forward enabling infrastructure. This remained a high priority for the Board and partners to ensure that Enterprise Zones could play their key role in delivering post-COVID industrial and economic recovery.

Ms Nicole Billington, Marketing Officer, highlighted that the hosting of workshops to develop a Digital Strategy for each of the Enterprises Zone allowing linkages with the Local Full Fibre Network.

Resolved:

To note the update.

12 FUTURE DIRECTION AND PRIORITIES

Further to items 6 and 7, the Board considered future agenda items.

Further Item 6, the Board agreed that under a new priority of 'Levelling Up' to identify how to support and assist in developing the LEP priorities that could benefit the Fylde Coast - notably Greater Lancashire Plan, Industrial Strategy, Independent Economic Review, Green Industrial Revolution.

The Board agreed that under the priority of Marketing the Board should consider the development of a project to promote the region post-Covid particularly around supporting sectors most impacted by COVID such as hospitality and leisure but also around how to address new opportunities due to social changes such as increased agile and remote working or industries that had developed during the pandemic.

The Board also noted Fylde Borough Council was currently undertaking a review of the impact of flooding. The Board considered it may be useful for Board members to receive an update on this progress but the Board noted the need to ensure that this was directly relevant to the Board.

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 4.25pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Manager

Tel: 01253 477157

E-mail: lennox.beattie@blackpool.gov.uk