

## Newport Unlimited

### Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 February 2005

**Present:** Grant Watson (Chairman)  
Nigel Campbell, Councillor Ken Critchley, Chris Freegard, Bob Macey,  
Graham Moore, Nic Neal, Andrew Wilkinson, Don Wilkes

**Apologies:** David Bowler, Councillor Bob Bright, Gerry Keighley and Professor James  
Lusty, Karen Thomas

**In Attendance:** John Burrows, David Ward, Steve Slocombe, Leigh Donovan,  
Jenny Heal and Phil Jardine

#### 1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 12 January 2005 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of John Burrows to the list of attendees.

##### George Street

The Board was concerned that the Development Agreement was still outstanding. The matter needed to be concluded in the near future.

##### University

There was to be a meeting with the First Minister and other Ministers on 16 March and the University would be supported by representatives of both the City Council and Newport Unlimited.

A document was being prepared making the University's case for increased numbers and relocation to the City Centre

#### 2. Chief Executive's Report

##### HM Prison Service

**CONFIDENTIAL ITEM**

A delegation from HM Prison Service had visited Newport in relation to the possible establishment in the city of a major facility to support the Service nationally. Interest had focused on premises at Celtic Springs.

The data and information provided to them was well received and it was confirmed that HMPS had short listed three locations, including Newport and that it was anticipated that a decision would be made by the end of March for occupation in early autumn. Both the Western Mail and the South Wales Argus ran articles revealing the interest which has caused concern with HMPS as to the confidential nature of its interest. At this stage it was not considered that this would prejudice the Newport case, however, it had caused some embarrassment.

### City Centre Retail Development

The submissions for the City Centre Retail Development were received on 28 January. All five invited developers responded. Each response was being evaluated.

A considerable amount of work has been undertaken and proposed developers were keen to progress with implementation.

A comparative statement will form the basis of a recommendation to Newport City Council regarding the selection of a preferred development partner.

A working group was evaluating the submissions and interviews have been set for 24 and 25 February. It is still proposed that the Board meet with the Council's Cabinet on 14 April to fully discuss the schemes and assist the Council in selecting a referred developer. It has been confirmed that the City Council has let a contract for the detailed design of the Bus Box, a crucial project that will release land for the construction of the retail scheme.

### Merger of the WDA into the Assembly

A consultation paper in respect of the merger was published in mid January. A productive meeting had been held with the Director of Economic Development & Transportation. At the meeting many aspects of policy were discussed and the Director was alerted to potential implications that need to be addressed as part of the merger process. Categorical assurance was given that there was no intention to diminish the role of the URC and that every assistance would be given to ensure that its future would be fully supported. Bob Macey was also of the view that base line funding was secure.

### Master plan for West Newport

The proposals for the Master plan for West Newport together with a separate and parallel exercise, in respect of the M4 Relief Road would

be reported to a future Board meeting. In the meantime the City Council was meeting with the Assembly Government to the implications of the siting of junctions of the M4RR. The original announcement was for one junction in the east. The preferred option for the City would be two junctions (one east and one west) or if there is to be only one junction , it be sited in the West. Discussions were ongoing.

#### Urban Summit 2005

The Chief Executive and other members of staff had attended the Urban Summit 2005: Delivering Sustainable Communities. In England the urban agenda is a high Government priority and many initiatives have been introduced to address both urban decay and deprived communities. *Delete last sentence.*

#### Cambrian Centre

**CONFIDENTIAL ITEM**

Negotiations are still ongoing in respect of the Cambrian Centre development. A formal application for grant assistance had been received and this is being processed by the WDA. At this stage it is intended to bring a detailed report to the March Board seeking approval for a way forward.

#### Pirelli site

Tenders have been received for the construction of the employment units at the former Pirelli site off Corporation Road. This joint venture between the WDA and Newport and Gwent Enterprise will provide some 35k sq ft of accommodation in small workshops. It is proposed that the scheme will attract EU funding and a fuller paper on the scheme and its implications will be brought to the March meeting.

#### Newport Unitary Development

The Newport Unitary Development Plan Inquiry is currently in session. Issues surrounding the Growth Strategy and the proposals for the Eastern Expansion Area were considered at Round Table Sessions held on 12 and 13 January. Whilst the sessions appeared to be generally positive regarding the principle of growth and eastern expansion, the Inspector directly questioned the validity of the housing allocation south of Pencoed Reen in West Newport. It is possible the Inspector will recommend the deletion of this housing allocation on the grounds of flood risk. This will have implications for the West Newport Strategic Master Plan as the site is currently regarded as a significant value generator for the wider development area. The Monbank sidings and Whiteheads sites were considered at formal sessions on

25 January and 4 February respectively. The position of the NHS was set out in an unhelpful letter from Bob Hudson, Regional Director of the Health and Social Care Department dated 3 February. The letter stated that the NHS would not be in a position to offer any formal commitment to the site until the end of 2005 and would not be prepared to consider a purchase until all options had been fully appraised and consulted upon. This position means that there is a significant risk that the Inspector will recommend allocating the sites for housing. Corus has requested an early recommendation on this issue.

### Development Programme – Key Target Dates

The Board noted the position on all key projects.

### **3. Welsh Investment Strategic Partnership**

The WDA has been considering how it can best procure the provision of the modern business premises that are identified as being needed in its Property Strategy for Employment in Wales.

The WDA specialist Funding Team have developed two new initiatives to secure private investment in Welsh property that will complement the established property support mechanisms, though one of these is limited to the objective one area of Wales. The initiative that can apply in Newport is Welsh Investment Strategic Partnership (WISP).

WISP will be used in the delivery of high quality modern office accommodation of a quality and size that has historically only been available in Cardiff. The launch and advertising of the scheme is still awaiting Ministerial consent

It was proposed to promote a new speculative office scheme at the site on George Street as one of three “benchmark” schemes that form the first phase of WISP. It was also recommended that DTZ is commissioned to prepare a market demand report which will help the Agency define an initial letting void as well as market risk over the 20/25 years of the WDA head lease.

A maximum budget of £20,000 has been allocated for project development work including the marketing report, valuation and any further site investigations if required. Newport City Council's position as landowner will be protected through a full valuation of the site which will feed into the development agreement with receipts being recycled into the regeneration strategy.

**Agreed**

- a) To include the George Street site in the WISP pilot programme
- b) To appoint DTZ to prepare a marketing report.

**4. Freedom of Information Act 2000**

Board Members were advised of the implications of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and considered a way forward.

**Agreed**

- I. To note the implications of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 on Newport Unlimited;
- II. To adopt the main principles of both pieces of legislation;
- III. That implementation should be in accordance with the programme of activity proposed in the paper considered by the Board

**5. Usk Footbridge CONFIDENTIAL ITEM**

Board Members were asked to consider changes to the approved Business Plan budget to accommodate cost increases of up to £750,000 on the Usk Footbridge Project and to incorporate £250,000 for bridge lighting into the project budget line.

It was noted that the landscaping costs for the bridge footings on both sides of the river are contained within separate landscaping budgets.

A decision on proposals relating to the increasing costs of the Footbridge was deferred until the next Board meeting. The report is to include the implications of any additional costs on this project on the overall programme and how best to mitigate against rising steel costs. The report should also include information in relation to whether the CPO is contested.

**6. Revenue Budget**

Board Members were advised of spend on the revenue budget following the third quarter of the current financial year and provided with a forecast of spend to the end of the financial year.

It was noted that overall, an under spend of about £30k against the original budget of £999k is still projected.

**Agreed**

To note the position.

**7. Community Strategy**

Chris Freegard provided a presentation on the Community Strategy which had been established through partnership working and in particular work by the Local Strategic partnership which included a wide range of agencies and providers representing the various communities within the City.

The strategy produced included a vision and priorities for the future with the aim that Newport would build on its success and in 2014 would be

- An attractive city
- An enterprising city
- A learning city
- An accessible city
- A safer city
- A healthy city and
- An inclusive city

Newport Unlimited would have an important role in promoting the city and assisting in its regeneration. Whilst Newport Unlimited would have an obvious role in terms of enterprise, growth, infrastructure and regeneration, there was no doubt that the work of the URC would impact on each of the identified visions and priorities.

**8. Project Coordination Group CONFIDENTIAL ITEM**

The minutes of the most recent meeting of the Project Coordination Group were noted.

**9. Assessment Process**

Nigel Campbell asked that in line with the possible requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and in line with the requirements of the Board, that information is presented as to the assessment process applied in any tender selection. All project reports ought to carry information on the assessment methodology being used.

**10. Next Meeting**

To be held on 16 March 2005.

A coach visit to key sites commencing at 10 am will be followed by the formal Board meeting at 11.30 am.