

Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 July 2005

Present: Grant Watson (Chairman)
Nigel Campbell, Councillor Ken Critchley, Bob Macey, Graham Moore,
Professor James Lusty, Nic Neal, Karen Thomas and Andrew Wilkinson.

Apologies: David Bowler, Councillor Bob Bright, Chris Freegard, Gerry Keighley, and
Don Wilkes

Also in attendance: John Burrows, Leigh Donovan, Richard Jefferies, Steven
Slocombe and David Ward

1. Usk Footbridge Lighting Scheme

An amount of £250,000 has been allocated to the lighting scheme for the footbridge. A presentation was received from the Contractor and Design Team showing the proposals for the scheme within budget.

Board Members were impressed with the lighting proposals. At a previous meeting the Board had asked for:

- A breakdown of costs: It was reported that this was being worked up in detail and would be presented to the Board. It was confirmed that the design team and contractors were working within the allocated budget.
- Security and lighting levels on the bridge and footpath connections: It was reported that security issues were being discussed with Newport City Council's officers. The design would be such as to minimise opportunities for vandalism and the public realm proposals would include CCTV at either end of the bridge. The Chief Executive explained that footpath connections had been discussed previously with the Board.
- Maintenance of the lighting installations: The intended methods of maintenance were explained, including explanations of how maintenance would be carried out both above and below the deck. Particular reference was made to

maintenance of the masts. The use of LED would generally reduce maintenance requirements to a ten yearly cycle.

- Environmental impact of the proposals: It was reported that the Environment Agency and CCW were generally content with the proposals. It was considered that light pollution would not be an issue on the city centre side of the bridge whilst light pollution to housing on the opposite bank ought to be minimal as it will work alongside the proposed lighted walkway and generally lighting to the bridge would be focused on the structure.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting and the minutes of the meeting of the Board, both held on 8 June 2005, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Newport West Master Plan

The Board was informed that professional advice had been employed to examine the Development Appraisal. Currently the document was being redrafted and should be available for consideration at the next Board meeting.

Business Plan

The Business Plan had been considered by the City Council's Cabinet. The Cabinet had endorsed the Plan and approved in principle the proposed development programme, noting that individual projects will be the subject of detailed approval by the Council, as appropriate. The Cabinet had also approved Newport Unlimited's spending plans for 2005/6, and accepted in principle the forecast spending plans beyond 2005/6 set out in the Business Plan as a reasonable basis for planning the Company's work.

Filming in Newport.

Representatives of Newport Unlimited had met with the film makers who were intending to include Newport in a documentary programme on discovering Britain and its people. At the last Board meeting, members considered discussions needed to be held with the film makers to try to influence the tone of the programme. The film makers had agreed that they would be happy for Newport Unlimited to assist in the process and the Board confirmed their previous discussions to provide appropriate support to the film makers.

Flood Prevention Strategy

It was confirmed that the City Council's Cabinet had discussed and considered the importance of an acceptable strategy for protecting the East Bank of the River Usk. This would impact directly on opportunities for development, particularly residential development.

The Cabinet supported the intention to publish a policy document, for adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance in due course. A timetable of the next steps would be provided to the Board at its next meeting.

3. Chief Executive's Report

Merger

Board members were informed that the First Minister had been asked whether there were plans to merge the Newport URC into the Assembly Government. The First Minister had responded by explaining the URC was not an Assembly Sponsored Public Body in the same way as those being merged. Board Members were pleased to note there was no intention to make any changes in the light of the merger.

Retail Scheme

Excellent progress had been made in the past month in respect of the major retail schemes for John Frost Square/Kingsway Centre. A meeting had been held between Modus, UBS and the working group. The meeting specifically related to the interface between the two schemes and the external facilitating works. There is a positive working relationship and understanding between the two developers such that their respective design teams are now engaged in joint working on these aspects. UBS is likely to submit their planning application for the replacement of the Kingsway car park and the refurbishment of the Centre itself within the next few weeks. The current programme commences with the demolition of the Kingsway car park in November.

As to Modus, Heads of Terms were being discussed and a conditional Development Agreement was planned to be signed in September. The strategy for any CPO was being considered and marketing and letting issues were being discussed.

Highways issues remained complex and needed further consideration. Design and Planning issues were progressing well.

The Board was encouraged by the positive progress being made and considered that there was a need for a good working relationship between the various interested parties to provide a viable way forward. There was a need for a clear understanding to draw out any issues such as competition for tenants.

Pirelli Redevelopment

(Andrew Wilkinson declared an interest in this item)

The successful contractor for the construction of the employment units will be submitting a planning application by the end of July to the City Council. The joint venture between the WDA, the Council and Gwent Chamber of Commerce Enterprise and Industry is progressing well. The timescale for start on site is as programmed in September/October this year.

Cambrian Centre

The developers for the Cambrian Centre have advised they have secured satisfactory development finance for the scheme and they are now in the advance stage of negotiating a form of joint venture with a national developer. The Board reaffirmed the position that this was a key scheme and agreed to consider issues further when the developer had concluded negotiations with the joint venture partner.

The WDA would welcome advice from the Board before progressing to conclude on issues relating to grant.

Railway Station

A meeting had been held with Network Rail and their train operator together with Laing Rail/Arup chaired by the Assembly Government. Network Rail outlined their proposals for the redevelopment of the station. The outcome was for Network Rail to now evaluate their proposals with those of Laing Rail. The critical timing for this is to reach full agreement on both the detail and funding of a scheme by the end of the calendar year in order for the necessary signaling and track work to commence over the Christmas period.

There appeared to be commitment to the improvements to the operational side of the proposals. It would be important to ensure the redevelopment proposals for the station as the 'gateway' to the city were progressed enthusiastically and timely.

URC Conference 7-8 September

The Board was informed that officers of Newport Unlimited and the City Council would be attending this year's annual conference in Corby in September. Invitations to the conference were extended to Board Members

Key Targets

Progress on key targets was noted. An explanation was provided where there had been any change in circumstances.

4. University Merger

(Professor Lusty and Andrew Wilkinson declared an interest in this item)

The Board considered the proposed merger of UWIC and the University of Wales, Newport, and the possible new name for the merged institution.

The City Council's Cabinet had agreed to support the principle of the merger in the expectation that it will produce a stronger academic institution providing further impetus to the development and regeneration of the City. However, in relation to detailed arrangements for the merger, the Cabinet was concerned at the potential implications for Newport should a decision be taken to locate the prime administrative functions and main campus facilities within Cardiff. The Cabinet also seeks reassurance that the development of a new site for the School of Art, Media and Design on the Newport riverfront will be a high investment priority for the merged institution.

With reference to the name for the new institution, the Council's preferences were:-

- I. University of Wales, Newport
- II. University of Wales, Newport and Cardiff
- III. University of Wales, Metropolitan at Newport and Cardiff

Professor Lusty updated Board members and stated that there had been a positive tuition fee settlement for Wales.

The Assembly Government was experiencing difficulty in terms of long term funding and there was some move to consider a three –

way merger to also include the University of Glamorgan. The Governors at Newport would not seek to progress any proposals for a three way merger.

Members were pleased that Professor Lusty was able to report that the development of a new site for the School of Art, Media and Design on the Newport riverfront was the top investment priority for the merged institution.

Options for funding were being considered and further meetings being held.

As to the name, the Board would be keen to ensure that everything was done to ensure that Newport was recognised as a University City and that Newport should be included in any branding of the merged institution.

Members were also informed of the University of Wales, Newport's relationship with Shenzhen, a province of China undergoing significant economic growth, particularly in the area of new technology. Members were asked to consider whether this relationship could extend to wider involvement by other stakeholders.

5. Residential Development at Old Town Dock – Phase 1

The development strategy for Old Town Dock involves the early release of relatively small sites, with a strong emphasis on the quality of design. The rationale behind this strategy is that the delivery of early phases of high quality development will set the tone for the development of the remainder of Old Town Dock. The fundamental objective is to create a new residential market in Newport that can deliver a step change in residential values and increase the viability of future phases of development in Old Town Dock and Newport as a whole.

Following the preparation of the Old Town Dock Development Brief the Board approved the marketing of phase 1 south of Jacks Pill. Developers were also invited to consider a further phase 2 option for the area to the north of the Pill. Eight expressions of interest were received. A shortlist of six was agreed and after the tender process, this was reduced to four.

Following submission of the bids discussions have taken place with the City Council's Housing Department. It was agreed that the developers should re-submit their development appraisals on the

basis of a 15% affordable housing requirement with an assumption that social housing grant will be made available.

Each scheme has been evaluated against the criteria outlined in the development brief ie:

- Delivering a dynamic and commercially viable residential development
- Providing high quality integrated commercial uses
- Creating a network of high quality public spaces
- Delivering early phases of the Riverside Park
- Making new connections to the wider area
- Creating a step change in residential values in Newport

Board members endorsed the principles of selection on the basis of quality assessments, but requested that there be further explanation of the relative financial offers to ensure that they are considered on an explicit comparative basis taking into account potential average payments.

Agreed

1. To note that the City Council, as housing authority, will stipulate that 15% of the proposed development will be provided as affordable housing and the adverse impact that loss would have on financial implications.
2. To seek greater clarity in the financial comparisons and to undertake discussions with the City Council and WDA before concluding on a recommended preferred developer.
3. To follow up the discussions with the WDA and City Council with involvement of the Board members.
4. To ensure the best financial bid can be demonstrated clearly – within the constraint of achieving a step change.

6. Annual Review

At the Annual General Meeting last month Members were advised that an Annual Report for the year 2004/05 was being prepared.

The draft Report was circulated at the meeting. It would be used extensively to promote opportunities in Newport and has therefore been drafted in that context. Bob Macey considered further financial information needed to be included. Nigel Campbell considered the document was wordy and sought reassurance that appropriate graphics would be interspersed with the text. The Chief Executive confirmed that this would be the case.

Members were invited to comment on the draft before progressing to the next stage, which is to transpose the text into brochure format for release early in August

7. Project Coordination Group

Members noted the minutes of the meeting of the Coordination Group.

8. Next meeting

It was agreed to cancel the meeting planned for 10 August. The Board would now meet on 9 September at 9:30.