



Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 14 October 2005

Present: Grant Watson (Chairman)
Nigel Campbell, Councillor Ken Critchley, Chris Freegard, Gerry Keighley,
Graham Moore, David Bowler, Nic Neal and Karen Thomas.

Apologies: Councillor Bob Bright, Professor James Lusty, Don Wilkes, Bob Macey,
Philip Jardine and Richard Jefferies,

Also in

attendance: Councillor Mrs E Heath, John Burrows, Leigh Donovan, Steven
Slocombe, David Ward, Gareth Prosser and John Thomas.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2005 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Flood Prevention

It was reported that the EAW had asked for the Red Cross building on the George Street site to be at 9.4m AOD. This had implications for previously agreed areas and schemes underway, where the EAW had previously required a building level of 9.14m AOD. Discussions would now need to be reopened with the EAW and the City Council and Newport Unlimited would need to determine how to deal with changing advice from the EAW.

Merger at the Assembly Government

The new structures were likely to be announced by Christmas 2005. The merger would become effective from 1 April 2006, thereby reducing the number of founder members of the URC from three to two, following the making of the necessary Order by WAG on 1 November 2005. Concern was raised about the funding implications the reduction might have as there were currently three streams of funding, albeit, WAG and the WDA were reported as having acted as one entity for this purpose regarding Newport Unlimited. It was agreed to research the funding arrangements of other URC's in England.

University Merger

The proposed merger would not take place. The proposals for a riverfront campus would now involve a reduced configuration and would be discussed with the University.

(Gerry Keighley declared an interest in this matter)

The Board agreed to send their best wishes for a swift recovery to Professor James Lusty, following his recent illness.

Corporate Governance Audit

The draft response from the Auditors indicated there were no Category 1 actions required by Newport Unlimited. The final report was anticipated by the end of October and the resulting action plan would be prioritised with the Auditors.

Footbridge Opening

Time was of the essence in deciding arrangements for and securing the appropriate VIP to open the new River Usk footbridge. The Sub-Group for the bridge would meet shortly to discuss these matters.

The opening would coincide with the 100th anniversary of Newport's transporter bridge and it was important to maximise publicity from each event.

2. Position of Chief Executive

The issues associated with the retirement of Graham Moore and arrangements for his successor were discussed.

It was agreed to appoint John Burrows as Acting Chief Executive and to invite applications for the position of Chief Executive, on a secondee basis, from employees of the partner organisations.

(The Officers left the room during consideration of this matter)

3. Chief Executive's Progress Report

Andrew Wilkinson

The Board noted the resignation from the Board of Mr Andrew Wilkinson. The Chairman would convey the Board's appreciation for his services as Board member to Mr Wilkinson.

Pirelli Redevelopment

The planning application submitted would be considered by the Council's Planning Committee in November. Good progress had been achieved with WEFO regarding European funding and negotiations were underway regarding similar funding towards construction costs. The November start on site, had now been delayed.

Citywide Branding

Modus were progressing the development of a concept for an overarching brand for the City to underpin the marketing of the various development proposals. A draft proposition was being tested and it was hoped the details would be available for the November Board meeting. An effective marketing partnership was required with various organisations, using the resulting brand, incorporating the undiluted brandings of the partner members, to promote the City.

Cambrian Centre

Chris Freegard and Graham Moore were soon to meet with the owners/developers of the centre to discuss their proposals.

4. Review of Projects

Bus Box

The position was unchanged and the scheme would be delivered in two phases. The detailed design would be completed in January 2006. The location of Newport Transport's new base at the railway station had been tentatively agreed with Newport Transport. During phase 1, buses would move through Stow Hill during the day, instead of Bridge Street. This would be monitored before moving to phase 2.

Retail Scheme

UBS could demolish the Kingsway car park this year or early next year. Chris Freegard was meeting with consultants that afternoon to discuss the design of the road scheme for Kingsway. Negotiations regarding highways were proving difficult especially given the complexities and timetables involved.



Market Square and Old Green Slip Roads

Part of phase 1 of the bus box involved buses coming down Skinner Street and from the Old Green. Phase 2 could allow buses to directly access the Old Green from the bus facility near the market.

Railway Station

Network Rail announced earlier this week a significant investment into Newport Station (which would also involve the Welsh Assembly Government). It was intended to commence works over Christmas 2005 which would eventually lead to delivery of a new platform (platform 4). A new structure over the platforms was also proposed. The new platform would be open in June 2007 and completion of the entire scheme was anticipated between mid 2008 and early 2009.

The importance of utilising the station to promote Newport as a newly regenerated City was stressed.

Rodney Parade

A housing demand study was being undertaken which should be completed by Christmas 2005 and inform the disposal process for the Rodney Parade site where up to 400 apartments are planned. An appropriate mix of housing and other uses on the site was critical.

Art College

The position regarding the public sector acquisition of the former Art College building was being discussed with WDA.

George Street

The infrastructure work was complete and work on the first building on site of 35,000sq ft had commenced. The maximization of the publicity opportunity this provided was stressed.

Cattle Market

A planning application had been received from Asda for the site adjacent to George Street site. Highway implications were being discussed with the Council.

WISP

The WDA was to appoint a preferred developer next week to provide a statement building on the George Street site to provide a single-user, HQ-type building.

The contractor was undertaking three such buildings in Newport, Nantgarw and Swansea.

The package would be considered by the Minister shortly.

Bailey Building

Planning permission had been granted this week.

Old Town Dock

Reclamation works were complete. The Heads of Terms with the first developer had been agreed and a meeting with lawyers would take place next week with a view to signing them by the end of October.

Riverside Park

Negotiations with Black Clawson were underway to provide a riverside park. Tenders had been invited to progress matters regarding the planning application, the park and environmental works. Tenders for the design of the work would be invited shortly.

Old Town Dock Acquisitions

Ownership of one part of the site was still subject to consideration of using CPO powers, although there were indications that a developer had shown an interest. Discussions on how to promote the site would take place early next year with promotion of phase 2.

Hospital Site

The UDP Inspector's report had been received by the Council and legal advice was being sought. The UDP report did not support the hospital proposal.

East Newport

The growth strategy for East Newport had been reaffirmed in the UDP. Two meetings were planned, with Gallaghers to discuss the detailed plan for Llanwern and also with St Modwen to discuss the Masterplan for the Llanwern regeneration site.

Progress would be reported to the November Board meeting.

5. Newport West Development Strategy

A report updating the Board on the draft conclusions of the new M4 junction strategy was submitted.

The economic regeneration case supported providing two junctions on the New M4, to improve accessibility and support growth in the East, West and Central development areas.

In economic development terms, if a single junction was to be provided, a junction west of the River Usk was preferred given the short to long term employment opportunities available in West Newport.

The report also concluded that, purely on traffic grounds, improvements to Junction 28 of the existing M4 should proceed as soon as possible.

WAG was evaluating the line and junction strategy for the New M4 and firm proposals were anticipated around February/March 2006 regarding the location of junctions.

The draft report would be considered by the Council before making its representation to WAG.

It was agreed to endorse:

1. Two junctions East and West of the River Usk be promoted with the Welsh Assembly Government as the preferred option for the new M4.
2. In the event that only a single junction is allowed that a Western junction be promoted as the preferred alternative option.

6. Evaluation of the PR Consultancy and Strategy

A report was submitted updating the Board on the results of the first year of the PR contract with Freshwater.

The PR value of the coverage recorded to date, using the industry standard assessment where the column inches of the editorial achieved were compared with how much it would cost to buy the equivalent space in the publication or other medium, exceeded £422k. The actual cost of the PR contract for the same period was around £50k, giving a return on investment of at least 8:1.

Further, using the accepted industry standard method of estimating the number of people who could have read about activities in Newport resulting from the work of Freshwater over the period, i.e. by multiplying the circulation

of the publication by three, coverage achieved was 8,452,143 'opportunities to see'. Board was sceptical about the claims that local press coverage was attributable to the work of the PR agency and felt that the analysis would be clearer if it excluded the South Wales Argus articles from the PR agency's list of publicity achieved through their work.

It was agreed to note

1. The estimated value of the coverage obtained through the appointment of Freshwater acting as PR consultants.
2. That the option to terminate the appointment after twelve months has not been exercised.

7. Project Coordination Team

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

8. Retirement of Chief Executive

The Chairman referred to the retirement of Mr Graham Moore as Chief Executive of the Company and Board Member on 31 October 2005. The Chairman expressed his appreciation for Graham's hard work, dedication, and considerable success in establishing, managing and developing the Urban Regeneration Company over the past 3 years and bringing forward an exciting programme of development projects to transform the City. The Board agreed to meet in November for a lunch to celebrate Graham's contribution to the Board and the City.

Mr Moore responded and gave credit to his colleagues who had supported him during this time.

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 10 November 2005 at 9.30 am at Gold Tops.