



Newport Unlimited Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 22 November 2007

Present: Mr G Watson (in the Chair); Mr P Bisson, Mr D Bowler, Mr J Burrows, Mr C Freegard, Mr S Gibson, Councillor Mrs E Heath, Mr G Jackson, Mr M Noor, Mr J Norvill, Mr D Roberts and Ms K Thomas.

Apologies: Councillor R Bright and Mr G. Keighley.

Also in

Attendance: Ms K Evans, Mr P Tarling, Mr S Trythall and Mr R Jefferies

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2007 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Former Art College

Arising from the minutes, it was reported that the necessary materials for the roof had been ordered and received and that the scaffolding work was progressing. Progress would now be regularly monitored.

2. Ebbw Valley Rail Link

The Board received a presentation from Mr J Buxton, Managing Director of Cambrian Transport, together with a supporting report by the Chief Executive of Newport Unlimited in relation to the Ebbw Valley railway line.

Members were informed that Phase 1 of the Ebbw valley rail link was likely to open in December 2007 and Phase 2, which includes the link to Newport station, not until 2013.

The presentation and the report showed how the Phase 1 line passes close to the Mon Bank site which is planned to be developed as Newport's hospital district. It was suggested to the Board that if a station was constructed at this location on the 'Phase 1' development of the line, the station would be just 650 metres away from the hospital development. The presentation, supported by the report showed that the impact on journey times of a station stop at the site was likely to be minimal, owing to the speed of trains at this point.

The view was expressed that a station at this point would also attract passengers from the valleys, particularly staff, visitors and patients attending the hospital. A bus link from

the proposed station serving the city centre and the main railway station would open even greater possibilities for passengers.

The Board was informed that a new station was likely to cost in the region of £2.5 million. The Board considered that any new station in this area would not negate the need for the full development of phase 2 which would enhance opportunities for employment and shopping in the regenerated Newport City Centre. Development of Phase 2 in time for the Ryder Cup would be ideal, although it was recognised as difficult to achieve.

The Whiteheads/Mon Bank site is to be developed for a local general hospital of 350 beds and the case has been put to the Health Minister for co-locating the regional Specialist and Critical Care Centre which has 500 beds on this site next to the local general hospital. Development of a rail halt close to the site would enhance the advantage this site has over other potential sites in terms of sustainability. The sustainability argument for siting Gwent's major hospital in Newport was a powerful one as it accords with the Assembly Government's policies on sustainable development. The Healthcare Trust's preferred site has no such rail linkage with the valleys. It was considered that, as the public transport strategy for Newport develops, there could be a number of railway stations in Newport in which case the main station, currently known as Newport Station but officially it is Newport High Street Station should be renamed. The Board considered that the main station should be renamed 'Newport City Station' to distinguish our city from the other Newports in the UK and to promote Newport's city status.

IT WAS AGREED

1. To investigate further the possibility of providing a station on the Ebbw Valley Railway line at the Mon Bank site to serve the hospital or any other future developments at the site, together with a bus link to the City Centre and the main railway station, and west Newport business parks, to contribute to the integrated approach to public transport in the city and to promote sustainable transport options to the hospital site.
2. To continue to seek an press for development of phase 2 of the Ebbw valley line, including the link to Newport's main railway station as early as possible, ideally prior to the Ryder Cup
3. To press for the renaming of the main station in Newport High street as 'Newport City Station'.

3. Chief Executive's Progress Reports and Targets

The Chief Executive updated the Board on the issues that had arisen and the meetings or events held since the last Board meeting. Progress on key projects and target dates for the regeneration programme were reported. Board members were also presented with information on the timetable for projects on site, shown by district and by sector.

The main issues raised were:

City Centre Retail Scheme

There had been a decision by Planning Committee about replacing the murals. A start on site was likely to be made in March 2008. Lettings were progressing well.

University campus

It was considered some preliminary works could be under way early in 2008. Outline planning consent in relation to the Allt Yr Yn site was agreed in October.

Crindau

There were land transfer issues to be resolved before the scheme could progress. The City Council was putting pressure on National Grid to resolve the issues. Sainsbury were keen to move forward although the land transfer issues had slowed the process.

Rodney Parade

The Taylor / Wimpey housing scheme in the Rodney Parade area is now on site. This represents a major step in the regeneration of the east bank of the river and in the implementation of the City Centre Masterplan. Karen Thomas referred to the significance of this project and achievement, and Board commended all those involved in ensuring the project was on site in line with the programme.

Ryder Cup

The Board was informed that the new Clubhouse had now opened.

4. Gateway Strategy

The Board received a presentation from LTC Landscape Architects who had been developing a strategy for Newport's most significant entry points or 'gateways'. The Board was informed that the baseline work had been undertaken and that the Assembly Government's sustainable development tool had been implemented to develop action plans and an approach. Generic guidance was being developed which would apply to all gateways and spatial guidance would apply more particularly to specific road junctions and gateway areas. The Board was informed that work was now being done to finalise costings and to develop action plans.

Board members asked for more detailed information on what was planned for gateways and approaches to the city and asked that it be recognised that whilst there would be capital cost, maintenance costs should be no more of a burden on revenue budgets than at present. It was also important to consider features that would promote the city and change the image of Newport as you make your approach by road or rail

IT WAS AGREED

To receive a further presentation as the strategy develops.

5. Project Coordination Group

Minutes of the meetings held on 15 October and 12 November 2007 were circulated to members of the Board.

6. PR and Marketing

The Marketing Executive reported on recent, current and planned short term marketing activity for Newport Unlimited. The Board noted the current and planned activities.

7. Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 20 December 2007 at 9.30 am.