

Bognor Regis Regeneration Board Members Meeting

WEDNESDAY 1ST FEBRUARY 2023, 6.00PM

Venue: The_Track, Station Road, Bognor Regis, PO21 1QF

Present:

Board Members

Prof David Cooper, Rampion Consulting [DC][Chair]
Heather Allen, BID [HA]
Prof Stuart Harmer, Uni of Chichester [SH]
David Wride, BRRB Director [DW]

Cllr Jacky Pendleton, ADC [JP]
Cllr Steve Waight, WSCC [SW]
Cllr John Erskine, BRTC [JE]

Officers

Rebecca White, Advisor [RW]
Denise Vine, ADC [DV]

Glenna Frost, BRTC [GF]

Guests

Nick Everington, Crown Estate [NE]

Richard Wolfstrome, Consultant [RWO]

Apologies

Henry Green, Covers [HG]
Nick Laurence, Metamorph [NL]
Nikki Ratcliffe, Butlins [NR]

Raof Daud, Dicentra Developments [RD]
Andrew Tice, Landlink Estates [AT]
Matt Smith, Regis Group [MS]
David Wride, BRRB Director [DW]

MINUTES

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

RW noted that following the resignation in October 2022 of Cllr D Edwards as Chair of the Board and Arun District Council's representative to BRRB, the Management Committee had been pleased to welcome Cllr Jacky Pendleton, Deputy Leader, as ADC's new rep. Dave Cooper, as Deputy Chair, had been asked to 'act up' as Chair until the AGM in July 2023. It was recognised that having an individual from the private sector in the Chair during the local elections in May would reinforce the Board's apolitical and independent status.

DC then welcomed those present, explaining that he had been involved in placemaking and regeneration in Bognor Regis for over 15 years, currently as representative for his own business, Rampion Consulting Ltd but formerly as Head of the Business School at the University of Chichester. Introductions were made by all. RW noted that emerging local concerns and projects, including kelp restoration, offshore windfarms and sustainable fishing all made the seafloor an area of economic & environmental interest for Bognor Regis, hence the invitation for NE, Minerals Portfolio Manager for The Crown Estate, to attend as a guest.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & PROXY ARRANGEMENTS

No declarations of interest were raised.

3. MINUTES OF 19TH OCTOBER 2022/MATTERS ARISING

RW noted minutes had been previously circulated with no member queries. There being no matters arising the minutes were proposed for signature by DC as a true record and unanimously approved.

4. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/DIRECTORS ACTION FOR NOTING

RW gave a verbal report of the last Management Committee meeting to the BRRB as follows:

- a) The financial position to the 31st December 2022 was noted as £50,605.48.

- b) The proposed budget for 2023/24 had been approved and a summary circulated to members. RW noted that, as part of the budget examination, a robust discussion regarding the Board's financial sustainability and the necessity of recruiting further funding members had taken place with the MC recognising their role in support of this objective. RW welcomed WSCC's ongoing support, which included an inflationary uplift for 2022/23.
- c) The Executive Director's quarterly report on activities had been circulated in advance and was noted.
- d) DC reminded members that an agreement to re-examine the Board's corporate objectives had been made at the AGM in July 2022. Given the forthcoming local elections which herald the start of a new administrative term at both the District and Town Councils, the MC had recommended that the objectives should remain as stated for the foreseeable future, as whilst some progress for the town centre has been achieved, an ongoing focus was required to ensure continued momentum and delivery. This approach was supported by the membership.

5. MEMBERSHIP ITEMS FOR RESOLUTION

5a. BRRB Position on BRBID Re-ballot

The BR Business Improvement District, an Associate Member of the Board, had completed its first five year term and the ballot for re-election was scheduled to take place on 14th February 2023. The Management Committee had discussed the re-ballot at their meeting of 9th January 2023 and agreed that the BRRB should determine their position regarding the BID's Term 2 proposals through the BRRB Membership vote. Heather Allen, BR BID COO, gave a brief overview of the proposals, noting that these were available to view via <https://www.brbid.org/term2>

RW had conducted an objective assessment of the BID's impact on the town centre since its original election in 2018, noting that while BRRB were not a BID levy payer, the Board was the original instigator of formal town centre management in Bognor Regis, coordinating funding of the Town Centre Manager role which was instrumental in setting up the BID. Examining the original objectives – Welcoming Town, Well-Known Town, Active Night-time Town Centre and Better Parking – RW noted the myriad initiatives that the BID had introduced over its first five year term, including the setting up of the Bognor Regis Crime Reduction Partnership; year-on-year installation of festoon lighting, public art and brightly coloured signage along key routes; promotion of the town pre- and post-Covid; working in partnership with local government to secure improvements to the town centre area; promotion of the town and its businesses through events and social and print media campaigns and the support, advice and training offered to its members. Working in partnership, the BID had also enabled the continuation of the popular two hour parking disc scheme for the town. In addition, the BID had played an important strategic role in providing place leadership, securing grant funding to implement and enhance projects which benefit the town centre and advocating for local businesses, ensuring its members needs were strongly represented to local stakeholders. The existence of a BID in Bognor Regis, as a non-profit limited company which is paid for and led by town centre businesses, had also provided a route for direct engagement and consultation with business owners, which would not otherwise have been possible. In summary, it was considered that the BID has been successful in achieving tangible outcomes against its original business plan, providing good value for money to its members and making a measurable and positive difference to Bognor Regis town centre.

The BID's proposals for Term 2 2023-2038, were agreed to be sound, building on the achievements made to date. In considering their position on the BID's re-election, the Board's members also assessed the potential alternatives for Bognor Regis in the event that the BID was unsuccessful in securing a further term. It was noted that there was no informal or voluntary group in place which could deliver the activities, existing or proposed, which are currently undertaken by BR BID. In addition, removal of the BID levy funding system would mean that there would be no responsibility or imperative, on the part of landlords or larger businesses such as Butlin's, to make any kind of contribution to future town centre development. It was also recognised that local councils are already under significant financial pressure and considered extremely unlikely that they would be willing to ask local residents to fund a similar proposition through the council tax demand. In summary, it was concluded that the abandonment of a BID-led approach to town centre management in these challenging economic times, with the resulting loss of activities, support and access to grant funding, was likely to set the town

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centre and its businesses back approximately ten years to a time when there was no formal avenue for local business owners to engage with and influence local stakeholders.

As Chair of the Board, DC proposed that the BRRB take a position of support for the BID's re-election and that this should be published via a press release; this was unanimously approved.

6. PRESENTATION OF BOGNOR REGIS WAYFINDING STRATEGY

RW introduced the Wayfinding Strategy presentation by giving some context to its development, noting that the Board hosts and facilitates the Town Centre Forum, an informal discussion group of partners comprising the Board's reps to WSCC, ADC, BR Town Council and BR BID, which was set up to support the BR BID in its focus, post-Covid, on improving the viability and vitality of the town centre through its work with the UK High Streets Task Force. Using the shared town values (the result of the placebranding work commissioned from Hemingway Design in 2017) as a starting point, the Forum had identified shared priorities for Bognor Regis including perception, welcome and security, accessibility and connectivity. It was these priorities which led to the focus on a wayfinding scheme as an intervention which could deliver against multiple priorities as well as local policy objectives. The whole scheme had been broken down into three stages: 1. Strategy, 2. Design and 3. Implementation.

Richard Wolfstrome (<https://richardwolfstrome.com/about>) is an award winning holistic wayfinding and cultural placemaking professional of 35 years' experience with a specialist interest in the development of narrative wayfaring. He has extensive experience and understanding of working in coastal locations, which has included various commissions with local partners including Adur & Worthing Council and the Coast to Capital LEP, and particularly his report as part of the Selsey Haven project, a joint initiative between Chichester District Council & Selsey Town Council and his work on the Underground Sussex project commissioned by the Coastal West Sussex Partnership.

Stage 1 has been delivered through partnership funding and support from the Board's members, including an award from the Economy Recovery Fund (a WSCC fund administered by ADC), and contributions from Butlin's, Bognor Regis Town Council, BR BID, ADC and the BRRB itself. Consultation was a key part of the original brief and in addition, the commission included a specific request to feature the Bognor Regis place values and cultural brand, developed through a placebranding exercise over 2017-20 which included community consultation, as central to the scheme's development & design. This cultural branding for the town has already been deployed by partners in key locations including the town centre, University campus and via various web and social media platforms.

The consultant, Richard Wolfstrome, presented the strategy advising how he had spent six months working with local partners, including workshop sessions which were hosted by the Board for local councillors and town centre businesses. He also engaged with a wide range of town centre stakeholders including the University, Butlins, community groups and key individuals to ensure that the resulting strategy was 'by Bognor Regis, for Bognor Regis'. RW noted that this approach has paid dividends; initial presentation of the strategy, which identifies strategic gateway points, routes and concepts, has garnered positive feedback and support with presentations completed or pending to all funding partners.

Richard highlighted that a successful wayfinding strategy would, in developing wayfaring design, align the strategy and approach to help initiate greater ambition which supports stakeholders to:

- Build an active community
- Connect the town centre and surrounding places
- Re-imagine the town centre and routes around the town
- Build economic strength
- Make Bognor Regis a destination.

He further noted that wayfaring can be seen as the 'glue' that can connect many narratives and initiatives through physical interventions that reflect place narrative – heritage, culture, wellbeing,

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community, information, and so on – and by engaging with stakeholders, residents and community it can bring a sense of pride and ownership to the works.

The presentation was well received with members agreeing that the initial map of key sites and trails was encouraging and that the design representations, whilst not final, reflected a bright, positive, ambitious view of Bognor Regis. RW advised that on the back of the development of the strategy, the BRRB had, in association with BRBID, submitted a funding application to ADC to be drawn from their allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This application included a 12-18 month consultative design stage and subsequent implementation of the flagship route, identified through the Strategy, which links the gateway points of Bognor Regis Station and the Butlins resort via London Road (core town centre retail) and the seafront. Success would ensure tangible delivery within the town centre. Notification of the results of the funding application was pending.

DC thanked Richard for his presentation and highlighted to members that the Wayfinding project was a placemaking initiative which had been driven by the BRRB in partnership with town centre stakeholders, noting that this was a good thing for the Board and for Bognor Regis. He advised that should the application to UKSPF be successful the Board would be engaged, through RW, in effectively project managing the next stage through collaboration and co-ordination with the relevant statutory agencies. This would require an ongoing time commitment to the project which the Board would need to agree. The partnership approach to the scheme was welcomed by members and the Board's ongoing involvement supported.

7. MEMBERSHIP UPDATES & FORWARD PLANS

Denise Vine, Group Head of Economy for ADC, gave members an updated overview of ADC's activities within Bognor Regis, noting that with final designs for the Alexandra Theatre refurbishment in hand and the land swap deal with Whitbread's delivering control of the whole Regis Centre building back to the District Council and securing provision of a seafront hotel were progressing, the Council was now considering options for the whole site with councillors engaging in visioning work to develop a site-wide masterplan. ADC were also progressing options for the upper floor of The Arcade. With recent work to Place St Maur complete and the WSCC plans for improvements for The Esplanade, DV noted that there was a real sense of momentum and ambition for Bognor Regis.

Glenna Frost, Clerk/RFO to Bognor Regis Town Council, reported that the Council had spent several months developing its vision for the town. This work had been facilitated by DC and resulted in the identification of ten objectives which would be presented to BRRB and other local stakeholders in due course.

Cllr Steve Waight, WSCC Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Support Services, gave an update on the planned improvement works to The Esplanade, designed to enhance the link between the seafront and town centre from a pedestrian perspective. This £1.8 million investment by the County Council was considered to complement the £15 million Alexandra Theatre project being run by ADC and therefore ongoing collaboration was anticipated. The work was expected to start in Autumn 2023, having been rescheduled to avoid disruption during the summer holiday period.

8. AOB

The next meeting date was noted as 26th April 2023, with a venue to be confirmed in due course.

DC closed the meeting, thanking the members and those presenting for their contributions to an interesting and stimulating discussion.