

# North Tyneside Council

## Report to Cabinet

### Date: 19 September 2022

#### Title: Wallsend Town and High Street Innovation Programme: North of Tyne Combined Authority Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme - Acceptance of Grant

Portfolio(s):	Deputy Mayor	Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Carl Johnson
Report from Service Area:	Regeneration and Economic Development		
Responsible Officer:	John Sparkes, Director of Regeneration and Economic Development	Tel: (0191)643 6091	
Wards affected:	Wallsend		

#### PART 1

##### 1.1 Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development to accept £1.94m of grant funding from the North of Tyne Combined Authority's (NTCA) Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme.

On 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 Cabinet agreed the following policy priorities for Wallsend:

*“The overall aim is to create a vision and a plan to implement it, that provides a vibrant and connected place. As part of this work, three key themes have been identified as policy priorities for inclusion within the plan: These are:*

- ***Improve the quality of the housing offer in Wallsend; in particular making the area a focus of the Mayor and Cabinet’s plans for 5000 affordable homes and tackling some of the poor quality privately rented housing in the masterplan area***
- ***Make the town centre and the nearby neighbourhoods great places to visit and live; improving the street scene, public spaces and working with partners to make sure people feel safe; and***
- ***Make sure Wallsend residents are connected to good jobs; using the full range of tools, including adult education, apprenticeships and the capabilities plus the transport infrastructure around the town to make sure people in the community, who need it, are supported to improve their life chances.***

*In addition to the above and recognising the contribution Wallsend Town Centre and its environs make to the region’s economy, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) and North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) have both agreed to fund business case development work to inform master planning and research on the*

*economic opportunities in the area. In parallel, the Government has announced further rounds of the Levelling Up Fund which may be of benefit to Wallsend.”*

Since Cabinet approval in March 2022, work has continued to secure funding for Wallsend, as set out below;

- Officers have continued work on the draft Wallsend Masterplan, using £80,000 secured through the North East Local Enterprise Partnership Accelerator Development Fund (ADF)
- Developed and submitted a £20m Levelling Up Fund round two application to Revitalise the Heart of Wallsend, this proposal includes complementary activity around the High Street and Segedunum and adds value to the activity proposed through the Wallsend Town and High Street Innovation Programme.
- Secured £1.94m funding from North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) for the Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme.

NTCA Investment Panel approved a £6m Business Case for the Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme, that incorporated the High Streets Challenge Fund and the Recovery Innovation Programme.

This programme supports the transformation of key town centres and high streets in the North of Tyne area, in response to both the pandemic and longer-term changes impacting on these local centres. It will unlock future investment, with interventions targeting the development of strategic projects (e.g. the permanent re-purposing of buildings and public spaces for new uses, such as culture, leisure, residential), as well as supporting interim uses to enliven local centres in the short-term while longer-term proposals are being developed (e.g. pop-up markets; cultural events).

The £1.94m funding secured will be used to deliver capital public realm works such as improving links between Segedunum and the town centre and public transport facilities (Metro and buses) and revenue activity including events, shop front grants, business support and resource to be based within Wallsend town centre to support businesses to start-up and grow.

The policy priorities set out above and the emerging draft masterplan have informed NTC's Delivery Plan for the Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme. The proposals identified will add value to other programmes of activity in Wallsend as well as the submitted Levelling Up Fund bid.

## **1.2 Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) Authorises the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development to accept the £1,940,000 grant funding from the North of Tyne Combined Authority in relation to the Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme for Wallsend;
- (2) Authorises the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Resources to enter into the Grant Funding Agreement and any other documentation as required to facilitate recommendation (1); and

- (3) Authorises the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development to procure any goods, works or services to deliver the outcomes set out below:
- i. prepare designs up to Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 4 for public realm improvements and a new cultural, walking, cycling and wheeling route between Segedunum and Hadrian's cycleway/C2C/National Trail routes and the Metro and Wallsend High Street
  - ii. appoint a delivery partner to undertake construction work on the public realm walking and cycle route
  - iii. carry out a tender process to appoint a delivery organisation to provide bespoke business support to Wallsend businesses
- (4) Authorises the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development in consultation with the Director of Resources and the Assistant Chief Executive to take all necessary steps to enter into contracts with the successful bidders on completion of the procurement processes highlighted in 1.2 (3) (ii) and 1.2 (3) (iii)
- (5) Authorises the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development in consultation with the Director of Resources to take all necessary steps to recruit and appoint a Town Centre Advisor on an 18-month fixed term contract.

### **1.3 Forward Plan:**

Twenty-eight days' notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

### **1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework**

This report relates to the following priority in the 2021-2025 Our North Tyneside Plan:

#### **A thriving North Tyneside**

Our North Tyneside Plan outlines plans to create a thriving location to live and work. A key to delivering this vision is the regeneration of town centres such as Wallsend and North Shields and we are keen to invest here and in the surrounding areas to develop the opportunities and infrastructure along the North Bank of the Tyne. This also contributes to building a better North Tyneside and will deliver a step change providing more good quality jobs, apprenticeships, investment in roads and infrastructure and investing in our vibrant cultural offer.

We will support the regeneration of Wallsend Town Centre, by investing in activity as set out in the draft Masterplan which clearly identifies the opportunities these improvements will have on the local area. This will not only support the local economy and the visitor offer, it will encourage people to stay longer and spend more, but also improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

#### **A green North Tyneside**

The delivery plan has been developed to contribute towards our net zero target, this includes design considerations that reduce energy usage, increase energy independence, increase active travel, enhance the public transport offer and create offsetting opportunities i.e. tree planting.

## **A caring North Tyneside**

Throughout the development of the emerging draft Wallsend Masterplan we have engaged with Healthy Happy Places, funded through the Academic Health Sciences Network for the North-East and North Cumbria to support the integrated Care System mental health workstream in its aim to create healthy, sustainable places; as well as the wider public health agenda around inequalities and prevention.

The network brings together people from planning, design, health, public health, the third sector and communities to act as a connecting point to stimulate ideas; understand gaps and barriers; to celebrate and promote existing best practice and to provide a mechanism for planners, developers and designers to access expertise from mental health and wellbeing services.

Working in partnership we have explored how mental health and wellbeing can be considered at the heart of urban development to tackle challenges around inequalities. Acting as a platform for participatory, community led approaches and other methods for co-creation with communities to test tactical interventions for wellbeing. Designs seek to address some of the underlying health and accessibility challenges experienced in Wallsend.

## **“North Tyneside on the move” – The transport strategy for North Tyneside**

The North Tyneside Transport Strategy sets out the Council’s aspirations for transport in the Borough. The vision for the strategy is “Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North Tyneside”, supported by 5 key principles:

- Reduce carbon emissions from transport; to seek to make North Tyneside carbon net-zero by 2030
- Improve health outcomes; in relation to people, communities and the local environment
- Support inclusive economic growth; through effective movement for people, businesses and goods and to support the regional aim of “more and better jobs”
- Improve connectivity; with all parts of the Borough, the region, the rest of the country and the world
- Manage demand and enable smart choices for all; ensuring a focus on demand management on transport networks and assets and addressing current and future transport challenges

## **1.5 Information:**

### **1.5.1 Background**

The Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme investment will be concentrated in a small number of town centres and high streets, with a focus on achieving lasting transformational change in each place by planning long term investment proposals and testing new approaches to high street re-purposing at scale within focused areas.

The programme has been co-designed between the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) and its Local Authority stakeholders. It draws upon the NTCA’s Covid Recovery Work and other research work which informed the development of a ‘Future High Streets Challenge’ technical capacity fund approved by NTCA’s Cabinet in November 2021.

The Programme is built upon three pillars, each of which is essential in achieving long-term transformation in high streets and town centres. It is essential that these pillars are the bedrock upon which the proposals to transform high streets are based:

- Leadership and partnership - Each target high street must develop a compelling shared vision for the future, with strong strategic leadership to make the vision a reality. This will mean establishing a focused Partnership structure in each target high street comprising the key organisations and individuals with a genuine stake in the place and the vision, powers, resources, and energy needed to develop and deliver a compelling plan for change. This is likely to include public agencies, private investors, businesses, and the local community. The Partnership will provide the essential focal point for a joined-up approach to high street transformation, harnessing all the resources and skills available towards the achievement of the shared vision.
- Investing in a model for change - The Programme will develop and test new models for high street transformation, learning from evidence of what is working in other areas, while capitalising on the distinctive strengths and opportunities of each individual high street. It is not about spending funds on small-scale, ad-hoc, or disconnected interventions that will not deliver genuine change. It is about investing in a model for long-term change that re-imagines the function and form of high streets and attracts investment in a combination of new end uses (live, work, leisure) capable of providing a sustainable future for high streets.
- Stimulating long-term investment - Transformational change in high streets requires very substantial investment, with the private and public sectors working closely in tandem to provide the resources needed to deliver the future vision in each target high street. The NTCA investment will enable high streets to develop Strategic Investment Plans to deliver the vision, create compelling new projects and investment propositions to introduce new end uses, and implement pilots to test and refine new approaches to high street transformation. These plans and propositions will prepare the ground to stimulate and attract the long-term investment needed to achieve genuine change.

The UK's high streets and town centres have undergone dramatic change over recent decades - many in line with the shifting ways in which we live, work, shop and socialise. COVID-19 has further intensified some of these trends including:

- Declining footfall and a struggling retail sector - fewer people shopping and many retail outlets struggling to survive, leading to a consequential shift in the way our high streets look and feel.
- The growth of online and 'out of town' alternatives - more people using shopping centres, online shopping (now c20% of sales) and a de-linking of 'experience' and retail.
- Shifting expectations of places through generations - such that we need and expect different things (e.g. Apple Store and 'town squares'). There is increasing emphasis on the town centre experience. Whilst centres may continue to be underpinned by a more focused or bespoke retailing offer, there is increasing customer/visitor expectation around leisure and culture uses which provide an enhanced 'experience'.
- Financial challenges for local authorities and places - which has made it difficult to improve public realm and proactively invest in transformation.
- Financial challenges for businesses - including business rates and post-pandemic trading challenges.
- COVID-19 safety and citizen wellbeing - which poses cost and adaptation challenges, but also creates a real opportunity (and is already re-shaping patterns of footfall between cities and towns).

- The increasing need to 're-think' the functionality of our towns - and to create outdoor spaces to host events and activities safely that bring variety to an expanded town centre offer but also provide the drama/theatre for the visitor experience.

Much of this emerging evidence provides opportunities for new thinking and approaches on the role of high streets in the longer term. These opportunities include:

- Leadership - strong collaboration and cross-sector partnerships to deliver change
- A rounded offer - recognising that high streets are not just about shopping; and therefore, future plans need to blend retail, community and public sector hubs, culture, leisure, digital and public realm.
- Innovation and creativity - both in 're-thinking' the meaning of high streets, but also in the development of new financial vehicles and bold investments.
- New uses for buildings and spaces - a particular focus of the Government strategy; and especially relevant to generating new footfall to support post-pandemic recovery.
- A focus on entrepreneurial thinking and working - including creating new spaces for start-ups and clusters of businesses, and new business and management models for our assets.
- Better joining up local supply with local demand across our economy - including in food and drink, hospitality, retail and leisure.
- Community ownership – communities taking on the ownership of assets and amenities to deliver services that meet their needs, creating sustainable solutions.
- Tackling the climate emergency - proactively working towards low carbon high street buildings, supply chains and transport routes, and ensuring our high streets are accessible by walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport.
- Town centre living - including the densification of town centre housing and attracting new residents to our centres where they can help support local shops and services.
- Town centre management - Establishing clear plans for the ongoing management of our places and spaces to ensure the offer remains vibrant and resonates with residents and visitors.

The Programme is a joint initiative between NTCA and its three constituent local authorities, involving an overarching framework setting out common objectives, eligible activities, and a consistent approach to management and governance. In total, circa £1.9 million will be devolved to each Local Authority subject to each Local Authority producing a Delivery Plan which is subject to external appraisal and approval by NTCA's Technical Officers Group (TOG).

£1.94 million of funding has been approved for the Authority to deliver a programme of activity that delivers against the objectives identified in the draft Wallsend Masterplan developed in partnership with CAPITA using £80,000 of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership Accelerator Development Funding.

The vision for Wallsend will be for it to be a thriving, diverse town providing a choice of good quality homes, community facilities, green spaces, retail and an evening economy that builds on the heritage, culture and unique setting of the area.

The strategy for the town must deliver and bring other workspace, employment, cultural, leisure and educational uses into the centre, celebrating and breathing new life into the historic fabric of the town and providing a diverse offer that resonates with residents and visitors alike.

Connecting it all together, will be Wallsend's network of high-quality streets and public spaces which will encourage people to walk, wheel, cycle, explore and stay longer resulting in greater spend in the local economy.

The funding from the Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme will be used to:

- Create a new active travel route incorporating artwork and installations between the town centre and Segedunum linking the World Heritage Site with the core retail and leisure offer
- Provide 1:1 support to businesses with a dedicated town centre business advisor
- Include a shop front improvement grant scheme with specific design standards to enhance the look of the High Street
- Develop and support a programme of events and festivals that will drive footfall and promote Wallsend as a destination of choice
- Create a higher profile for Segedunum by establishing a retail/exhibition offer within the town centre.

The programme duration is a maximum of two full financial years, with eligible spend starting from April 2022, and all expenditure completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, with outputs to be achieved by March 2025. The end date is fixed, regardless of when local delivery activities begin.

1.5.2 The bid for funding was based on the Cabinet's agreed policy priorities and developed by colleagues in Regeneration and Economic Development in partnership with the Head of Culture, Senior Manager Business and Enterprise and key stakeholders. The activity proposed meets the key objectives, outcomes and criteria set out in the NTCA programme framework.

1.5.3 The project is broken down into 5 work packages that fit with the following Wallsend policy priorities 'Making the town centre and nearby neighbourhoods great places to visit and live' and 'Make sure Wallsend residents are connected to good jobs' set out below:

**WP1: Bespoke Business Support for Wallsend High Street & NW Economic Area (£350,000 Revenue)** - Package of bespoke support for start-ups & SMEs including pop up shops & markets, start-up incubators, advice & signposting and digital business support; Promotion & Delivery of 3 x incubator programmes; Appoint a Town Centre Business Advisor and in Year 2 trial some of the successful activities in the shopping streets in the North West of the borough.

**WP2: Shop Front Grant Scheme (£120,000 Capital)** - A grant scheme to upgrade shop fronts, windows, shutters etc to enhance the look of the High Streets. This will include appointment of a design team to provide a suite of design options for shop fronts that are in keeping with the overall Wallsend Masterplan design standards.

**WP3: Wallsend Animation Programme (£100,000 Revenue)** - Funding to encourage movement of visitors between attractions and the high street, to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more. Develop accessible augmented reality trails between Segedunum, the town centre and Richardson Dees Park, exploring Geo Caching activities and other events. Engage active travellers and encourage them into town from Route 72/Hadrian's Way Cycle route/Hadrian's Wall National Trail.

**WP4: Active Travel and Place Making (£1,280,000 Capital)** - Address the lack of connectivity between Segedunum and other parts of the town by creating a new route for both pedestrians, cyclists and wheelers. The position of this route is key as it enables

those using Route 72 Hadrian's Way, quick and easy access to the Metro station, the high street and links to a circular route taking in Richardson Dees Park. Route will include art works and installations commissioned with local artists, virtual reality on the route (e.g. Roman trail), geo-caching, enhanced public realm and seating areas.

**WP5: Segedunum High Street Presence (£50,000 Capital)** - Develop a retail offer specifically for Segedunum in the town centre. Providing an opportunity to showcase the events and offers at the World Heritage Site and to engage visitors and residents through a variety of exhibits, virtual reality and souvenirs. Encouraging movement between these two areas, increasing footfall and really bringing Segedunum alive in the Town Centre.

1.5.4 The programme of activity will deliver the following Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound (SMART) objectives;

- SO1: Grow jobs and productivity in and around Wallsend town centre, supporting businesses to grow, through investment in the area, bespoke business support and access to new businesses opportunities.
- SO2: Provide an attractive environment for businesses to thrive by investing in new workspaces and capital works in and around the high street to improve the look and feel of the area, breathing new life into the town and contributing to the transformation of Wallsend and the wider Borough of North Tyneside.
- SO3: Establish a thriving 'High Street', with a strong identity and opportunities that can kick start investment in the wider area. Using a programme of animation including 4 large-scale events to showcase products and services and attract visitors, in turn increasing footfall within the area.
- SO4: Create a strong sense of place, Segedunum, as a key part of Hadrian's Wall, is one of the UK's 31 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and yet from the town centre you would not know it was nearby. Using signage, art installations and public realm improvements we will improve the connectivity and identity of Wallsend.
- SO5: Empower local communities and businesses to re-imagine and build a long-term future for Wallsend high streets by establishing a new High Street Transformation Board.

## 1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

### Option 1

To approve the recommendation set out in paragraph 1.2 of this report

### Option 2

To approve and/or reject some, or all, of the recommendations set out at paragraphs 1.2 (1) (2) (3) (4) and (5) of this report.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

## 1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

Accepting this funding will enable the delivery of the proposed activity in Wallsend Town Centre, in line with the policy priorities enshrined in the emerging Wallsend draft Masterplan and Our North Tyneside Plan.



## 1.8 Appendices:

None.

## 1.9 Contact officers:

Paul Dowling, Head of Regeneration & Transport, Tel: 0191 643 6428  
Julie Dodds, Head of Inclusive Economy and Economic Growth, Tel: 0191 643 1441  
Graham Sword, Senior Manager - Regeneration, Tel:0191 643 6421  
Steve Bishop, Head of Culture, Tel: 0191 643 7410  
Amar Hassan, Principal Accountant, Tel: 0191 643 5747

## 1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report:

- (1) An Ambition for Wallsend, Report to Cabinet 28 March 2022, link to report and minutes:

<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s8209/An%20Ambition%20for%20Wallsend.pdf>

## PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

### 2.1 Finance and other resources

As stated in section 1.2 above, £1.94m of funding has been secured from the North of Tyne Combined Authority's Towns and High Streets Innovation Programme to support the work package activity in Wallsend Town Centre. Once the Grant Funding Agreement is signed work will begin on the work packages set out in paragraph 1.5.3 above.

Funding is a mixture of Capital and Revenue as set out below;

<b>Funding Profile</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>Total</b>
NTCA Investment	162,500	287,500	450,000
Fund Revenue			
NTCA Investment	130,000	1,360,000	1,490,000
Fund Capital			
<b>Total</b>	<b>292,500</b>	<b>1,647,500</b>	<b>1,940,000</b>

There was no requirement for match funding from NTCA.

### 2.2 Legal

#### 2.2.1 Grant award to NTC

The grant from NTCA to the Authority can be viewed as public to public with no anticipation of economic activity and, as such, no subsidy arises.

## 2.2.2 Public Realm

To the extent that part of the grant will be expended for the benefit of the public in providing improved public realm areas no subsidy will arise.

## 2.2.3 Procurement

Design and Construction works will be provided through the Authority's existing Partnership contract with Capita Local Government Services (LGS).

Once the project Grant Funding Agreement is signed the revenue elements of the project will be procured through the Authority's procurement processes to ensure best value and avoid the provision of any unlawful subsidy.

## 2.2.4 Third Party Grant Funding

Funding will only be provided to third party applicants who can declare that the funding constitutes part of their special drawing rights for the preceding three-year period and, accordingly, is exempt from being considered an unlawful subsidy.

## **2.3 Consultation/community engagement**

### 2.3.1 Internal Consultation

Lead Cabinet Members have been briefed and finance, legal and procurement have provided advice on this project and the background to this report.

### 2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

Key stakeholders in Wallsend have been engaged in the development of the delivery plan submitted to NTCA for appraisal. Further engagement will take place over the three months as the draft Wallsend Masterplan goes out to public consultation.

## **2.4 Human rights**

2.4.1 There are no Human Rights issues arising from this report.

## **2.5 Equalities and diversity**

2.5.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues arising from this report. As the work progresses inclusive design principles will be central to the development of the proposals. In practical terms this will mean taking into consideration the needs of all people with protected characteristics, addressing physical access where feasible and also ensuring appropriate signage is in place. This will include carrying out Equality Impact Assessments of the individual projects and work packages.

## **2.6 Risk management**

2.6.1 A risk register will be developed for each of the work packages and will be reviewed monthly by the relevant delivery teams.

## 2.7 Crime and disorder

2.7.1 There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report. As the Wallsend work packages progresses, consideration of crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour will be incorporated into the development of the proposals specifically in relation to the cycle/walking route around Wallsend metro station.

## 2.8 Environment and sustainability

2.8.1 The transition to Carbon Net-Zero is a key priority and cross cutting theme for both NTCA and NTC and is embedded within all policies and programmes. As part of the development work on the project delivery plan colleagues have considered what is required to support this transition.

2.8.2 The capital elements of the project, refurbishing the vacant and underused spaces and enhancing the public realm will be carried out within the context of our Carbon Net-Zero ambition, using sustainably sourced building materials, planting and implementing improvements that place as little additional impact on the planet as possible. Reducing energy and water consumption will be a key consideration for each proposal. Where appropriate, micro-renewables, such as solar PVs will be considered.

## PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive  X
- Director(s) of Service  X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)  X
- Chief Finance Officer  X
- Monitoring Officer  X
- Assistant Chief Executive  X