



29 May 2020

BLACKPOOL, FYLDE AND WYRE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD

Wednesday, 3 June 2020 at 2.00 pm
Zoom Meeting

A G E N D A

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

To appoint a Chairman for Municipal Year 2020/2021.

2 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman to welcome members to the meeting, lead introductions and receive any apologies.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

To consider the appointment of a Vice-Chairman for Municipal Year 2020/21

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Board Members are asked to declare any interests in the items under consideration and in doing so state the nature and extent of the interest.

If any Board member requires advice on declarations of interests, they are advised to contact the Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Manager, Blackpool Council in advance of the meeting.

5 MATTER ARISING FROM THE 7 JANUARY 2020 MEETING

To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2020.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE INFORMATION CIRCULATED INSTEAD OF THE 7 APRIL MEETING

To consider any matters arising from the information instead of the 7 April 2020 meeting.

Mr Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, Blackpool Council to provide a further update on the Future High Street Fund and Fylde Coast Tram Loop- you can see that report via this link [report on 7 April 2020](#)

7 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 7 JANUARY 2020 (Pages 1 - 4)

To agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 7 January 2020 as a true and correct record.

8 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

If the discussion during items 9, 10 and 11 of this agenda involves the disclosure of “exempt information”, as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Board wishes to move to confidential session, it may at any point pass the following resolution: “That the public and press be excluded from the meeting whilst the agenda item(s) is/ are considered, on the ground that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in category 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12(a) of the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Variation Order 2006 and, that in the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information”.

9 CORONAVIRUS AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

To hold a discussion on the Coronavirus situation and Economic Recovery including considering items for future Board meetings.

10 BLACKPOOL AIRPORT ENTERPRISE ZONE PROGRESS REPORT (Pages 5 - 12)

To receive a progress report on Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

11 HILLHOUSE ENTERPRISE ZONE PROGRESS REPORT (Pages 13 - 18)

To receive an update on the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone.

Blackpool Council



wyre
council

MINUTES OF BLACKPOOL, FYLDE AND WYRE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD MEETING - TUESDAY, 7 JANUARY 2020

The minutes of the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board (EPB) meeting held on Tuesday 7 January 2020 at the Town Hall, St Annes.

EPB members present:

Councillors Susan Fazackerley MBE and David Henderson

Chief Executive Officers present:

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, Fylde Council

Garry Payne, Chief Executive, Wyre Council

Allan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration, Blackpool Council
(substituting for Neil Jack)

Co-opted private sector representatives present:

Martin Long (Blackpool), Neil Farley (Fylde), Peter Worthington (Wyre)

Other Attendees:

Nick Gerrard, Rob Green, Marianne Hesketh, Mark Evans, Andrea Wallace and Katharine McDonnell

Observers:

Councillor Craig Armstrong (Wyre), Mr Fred Moor

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Simon Blackburn, Leader of Blackpool Council; Neil Jack, Chief Executive Blackpool Council; Katherine O'Connor and Paul Evans, BEIS.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2019 were confirmed as a correct record.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Nick Gerrard advised that in regards to the business investment marketing strategy, with the contract coming to an end, a review had been undertaken, the findings of which would be fed into the scope of the contract for the next phase.

5 FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND: FYLDE COAST TRAMWAY LOOP

Following the discussion at the last Board meeting Nick Gerrard presented a proposal for the three local authorities to include a funding request in their respective Future High Street Fund (FHSF) bids (by April 2020 for Wyre and June 2020 for Blackpool and Fylde) to support a business case study into a Fylde Coast tramway loop.

He advised that the FHSF delivery manager for Blackpool and Fylde had been approached regarding the idea, and it was considered to be an innovative collaboration which chimed with the themes of FHSF. It was advised that if all three bids could make similar references, when submitted, it would evidence the collaborative approach being taken. However, Nick Gerrard cautioned that the Department for Transport would also need to be approached for their views.

Garry Payne advised that Wyre FHSF bid, the interim business plan for which needed to be submitted by 15 January (and the final version by April 2020) would make reference to the connectivity issues, the collaborative approach of the authorities looking for a solution, and specifically, the exploration of the tramway loop idea.

Allan Oldfield advised that the Fylde FHSF was slightly different to the Blackpool and Wyre bids, as the FHSF bid had come from the Kirkham Business Group and Kirkham Town Council. Fylde Council were a supporting partner, not the lead. The views and support of the Kirkham Business Group and Kirkham Town Council were vital before the Fylde bid could be submitted with the addition of a funding request for the business case study. Additionally, it was advised that Kirkham Town Centre was not next to the train line, so the case for connectivity had to be made.

Nick Gerrard advised that at the first meeting of the Economic Prosperity Board, a decision had been made to support a passing loop for heavy rail on the South Fylde line as part of the Preston City Region Transforming Cities bid. Following the conclusion, in December 2019, of the detailed business case for that bid by Lancashire County Council, it had been decided owing to cost and value for money not to include the passing loop in the final submitted bid.

Mr Gerrard went on to advise that various studies had been undertaken over the last few years with the most recent looking specifically at a comparison of heavy rail options and a combination of trams utilising heavy rail lines, which required expensive specialised vehicles and was therefore considered not to be cost effective. He also pointed out that the large estimated costs of the study would be tested by tender but arose as a result of needing to get the agreed option sufficiently developed to establish a robust business case for funding its implementation.

It was agreed that it was essential that the brief for a study must build on the work of the existing studies and look at all the issues regarding connectivity between the three authority areas and the town centres, including connections to existing heavy rail, onward connections to the wider network, rail capacity within Greater Manchester, and to identify the best solution to those issues.

It was discussed that even if the bid for the study was unsuccessful through the FHSF, any work undertaken would stand all three authorities in good stead for future bids, and the issue of improving connectivity across the Fylde Coast was critical.

Decision:

- a) That the proposition was accepted.
- b) MHCLG are approached to secure endorsement for the approach being undertaken with a view to Future High Street Funding.
- c) Lancashire County Council, as transport authority for the vast majority of the study area, are formally approached for their support.
- d) Blackpool Transport, Network Rail and Northern Railway are briefed on the proposal and are given an opportunity to input.
- e) Community Rail Lancashire, Transport for the North, the DfT and the Poulton and Wyre Railway Society are consulted.
- f) Kirkham Business Group and Kirkham Town Council are consulted.

6 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Board decided that the public and press should be excluded for the remaining items on the agenda and passed the following resolution; “that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the meeting, on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in category 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Minutes – Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board – 7 January 2020 authority holding that information)) of Part 1 of Schedule 12(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Variation Order 2006 and, that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information”.

7 BLACKPOOL AIRPORT EZ PROGRESS REPORT (STANDING ITEM)

The Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council submitted a progress report on the Blackpool Enterprise Zone and provided a verbal update of additional information not contained within the report.

Decision: The Board noted the report and agreed that the risk register appeared as a separate agenda item for future meetings.

8 HILLHOUSE TECHNOLOGY EZ PROGRESS REPORT (STANDING ITEM)

The Senior Economic Development Officer, Wyre Council submitted a progress report on the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone and provided a verbal update of additional information not contained within the report.

Decision: The Board noted the report and agreed that the risk register appeared as a separate agenda item for future meetings.

9 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 7 April 2020. The meeting will be held in the Reception Room, St Annes Town Hall, to commence at 2pm. The meeting started at 2pm and finished at 2.41pm.



Report to: Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board
Report Author: Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council
Date of Meeting: 3 June 2020 (via Zoom)
Recommendation: To note the report.

Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone: Progress Report

a) Masterplan

Work to revise the Enterprise Zone masterplan and delivery plan is ongoing and will reflect some substantial changes to the physical development around the eastern gateway access, sports field re-provision revised airport proposals and the change of direction for the future of the Squires Gate Industrial Estate (former Wellington Bomber Factory). It is hoped the initial work will be complete by the end of May, but additional financial modelling will continue thereafter. The revised interim delivery plan will be presented to Blackpool Council as Accountable Body in July before submission to Fylde Borough Council, the Local Economic Partnership and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Early delays in being able to progress provision of enabling infrastructure and the change of direction in respect of the Squires Gate Industrial Estate may impact on some planned outputs particularly the timing of rates growth income, however uncertainty around the impact of Covid-19 makes it difficult to forecast with any level of accuracy at the present time, other than to raise the importance of having the Enterprise Zone as a driver for economic recovery. The approved marketing strategy will continue to be implemented for the Enterprise Zone and where appropriate will be updated upon completion of the masterplan update.

b) Fiscal Incentives

Work is progressing well in conjunction with the four Enterprise Zones which comprise Lancashire Advanced Manufacturing and Energy Cluster (LAMEC), to contact other Northern Enterprise Zones to formulate and promote a joint proposal for extension of Enterprise Zone fiscal incentives via the LEP network and the NP11 Group. Initial feedback has been extremely positive and the team have now joined forces with a national initiative steered by the LEP Network and the CEO of New Anglia LEP, which all Enterprise Zones contacted seem happy to support. Further detailed work is now underway led by Anglia Enterprise Zone to develop a detailed business case for presentation to Government, central to which will be a request to extend the period in which the 5 year business rates relief is available from expiry in March 2022 to financial year 2025/26.

Current Activity Phase One

The initial planning application for Phase One development submitted in April 2019, has now been withdrawn and the first of three new planning applications, submitted to Fylde Borough Council for the development of new grass playing pitches within the greenbelt on former airport land, was granted by Fylde Borough Council's Planning Committee on 20 May 2020. Subject to discharging planning conditions, work will start on site in the coming weeks to create the new playing pitches and drainage which will enable the new pitches to come into use in September 2021.

A second detailed application, including new changing rooms, car parking and two 3G artificial playing pitches, will be submitted to Blackpool Council in early June. A third outline application for commercial floor-space, the eastern gateway access road, a primary sub-station and works to existing Common Edge highway, will be submitted to Blackpool Council in July 2020 following resolution of three outstanding minor design issues.

A further informal public consultation, will take place either online or as a live event in line with current social distancing guidelines. The outline planning application, will be referred to the Secretary of State for his consideration as it is Green Belt land.

Work on the Phase One playing pitch relocation with provision of new airport fencing, the creation of new airport crash gates, and a security perimeter track to release 4.5ha of former airport Greenbelt land for the playing pitches, was completed in April.

d) Eastern Gateway Access Road

Highway and transportation studies undertaken to support the phase one planning applications have confirmed that the M55 link road is not critical to the ability to develop out phase one of the Enterprise Zone. Blackpool Highways team are currently refining the road design to ensure the local infrastructure can cope with forecast traffic levels, in light of potential delays with the delivery of the M55 link road.

The position of the access road, which will now be a traffic light junction rather than a roundabout, will be located to the north of South Shore Cricket Club. The existing highway at Common Edge Road will be upgraded with work undertaken via the existing Highways PFI. A separate design and build contract will be awarded for the new link between Common Edge Road and Amy Johnson Way, once the Phase One outline planning consent has been secured. The target date for opening the through route remains first quarter 2022.

f) Link Road

Work to progress the provision of the M55 link road has been paused temporarily by Lancashire County Council whilst funding issues are finalised, and it is hoped that a revised delivery timetable will be agreed shortly.

g) Initial Development

Full planning consent has been granted by Blackpool Council for the development of a speculative 4,000m² B1/B2 unit on a site at Amy Johnson Way. Full design work has now been commissioned with a view to a contractor commencing on site in summer. Heads of Terms with an occupier in the medical technologies sector has been signed and design costs on what was initially a speculative development will be underwritten by the proposed occupier. This will also raise an anticipated £75,000 business rates growth receipt annually.

h) Current Planning Applications

Three live planning applications are being considered by Blackpool Council, the first for a proposed development of a 20MW gas fired power generation facility, which continues to encounter problems related to impact upon aeronautical activity, and a retrospective application for construction of a cement batching plant at the Squires Gate Industrial Estate, which is attracting a degree of local objection. The latest application is for a fibre exchange facility to support a planned roll out of a further telecommunications network for the Fylde Coast.

Work is continuing apace on the construction of a 1400m² facility for exhibition designers Love Expo where planning consent was awarded in November 2019. Work is also continuing to bring vacant units at Squires Gate Industrial Estate into use with some 12 small units in an initial phase of conversion of circa 50,000 sq ft.

i) Squires Gate Industrial Estate (Former Wellington Bomber Factory)

The new owners of Squires Gate Industrial Estate continue to carry out improvement works on the property and have filled some of the vacant accommodation with new tenants. At the present time it is most unlikely that the owner would wish to explore the demolition and redevelopment of the property as initially proposed in the masterplan, although efforts continue to encourage appropriate development to come forward. A number of challenges remain in respect of the developer securing planning and building regulation consent which are being worked on. B&M Bargains who have for many years occupied in excess of 300,000 sq ft of accommodation at Squires Gate vacated at the end of March with the loss of 128 jobs.

j) Communications Infrastructure

Work has continued to support the installation of the new transatlantic fibre optic telecommunications cable, part of the North Atlantic loop from New York to Denmark, being developed by Aqua Comms. Cable ducting has been laid from the proposed landing point to the base station constructed at Blackpool Airport with a further expansion of the network under the Local Fast Fibre Network (LFFN) programme at the planning stage. The new transatlantic cable is due to come ashore in Q2 2020, with delays due to difficulties in resolving agreements with Marine Management Organisation, The Crown Estate and Duchy of Lancaster on the agreements to cross the sea bed and beach. A planning application has been made to Fylde BC for the crossing of the sand dunes owned by Blackpool Council which are a designated SSSI and has yet to be approved. Discussions are ongoing to

conclude agreements for the completion of the Local Fast Fibre Network link to Hillhouse Enterprise Zone via the tramway, but additional funding will be required from Hillhouse Enterprise Zone to enable this.

k) Fibre Blackpool

Fibre Blackpool is a project run by a co-operative group from the private and public sectors working together to roll out the extension of a local full fibre network (LFFN) that will give an improved, gigabit capable, broadband internet connection to residents and businesses on the Fylde Coast. Early enquiries have been very positive and the Internet Service Providers involved in the campaign are actively marketing to businesses across the Fylde. Case studies and press releases from ITS Group are awaited for phase 2 promotion and when received, the Enterprise Zone team will share on the various website and social media platforms. ITS Group are also planning to hold an open free event for Enterprise Zone businesses, but this will now be postponed until further notice during the current COVID-19 crisis.

l) Marketing

Marketing Lancashire has now engaged with Richard Barber & Co. to progress Phase 2 of the Enterprise Zone websites, phase 2 of the overarching Invest in Lancashire site and options around the integration of Evolutive. Marketing Lancashire will continue to chase confirmation of a meeting in Q2 2020 to discuss draft proposals and implementation of new website features. The EZ team will look to update brochures and marketing material in line with any new website design over the next 12 months where required and to ensure that all marketing literature is fully accessible and DDA compliant.

The Enterprise Zone Marketing Officer is currently researching key target sector UK-based events to either sponsor or attend throughout the next 12 month communications campaign 2020/2021, continuing to raise the profile of Blackpool to a wider regional and national audience as a place for business and investment. This will also include Covid-19 recovery activity and support for Enterprise Zone businesses.

The team is working with Lancashire County Council to appoint a joint international agent for all four LAMEC sites by Autumn 2020, with a procurement process likely to see an appointment by September 2020. However the four Enterprise Zone teams agree that the need for end product and individual development plots to bring to market will be key to any commercial property sales strategy.

A public consultation is planned in Q2 2020 as part of the planning application requirements for the detailed phase 1 application due for submission in June. The consultation will provide Enterprise Zone existing businesses and neighbouring residents with an opportunity to view and discuss the new plans with the team. This will be hosted online or as a live event depending on the government guidelines on social distancing at that time.

The Fibre Blackpool campaign continues to promote the roll out a local full fibre network for improved, gigabit capable, broadband internet connection to residents and businesses on the Fylde Coast. The dedicated website www.fibreblackpool.com has received over 230 enquiries registering interest in the scheme and a phase 2 communications campaign and an Enterprise Zone webinar event is planned by one of the co-op group's internet service providers, ITS Group, which the Enterprise Zone marketing officer will support for the benefit of Enterprise Zone businesses.

Regular Enterprise Zone newsletters continue to be circulated delivering up-to-date coronavirus business support information for Enterprise Zone businesses and work continues to engage more people to sign up to the newsletter. Newsletter information also refers back to business support on both the Enterprise Zone website and includes details of both Fylde and Blackpool Council's dedicated business support teams for local help and advice and to BOOST Lancashire resources.

The level of active enquiries for property and land during the current coronavirus crisis has been low with more enquiries coming in based on business rates relief and other associated government coronavirus packages. The team continue to support the economic development/business support team in this respect. Officers are in early stage discussions with an existing Enterprise Zone tenant who is exploring options for a design and build project for new offices c.10 – 15,000 sq ft, and from a party looking for a small scale data centre facility.

The Enterprise Zone Marketing Officer has also offered assistance to Blackpool Airport's operational team to create a LinkedIn company page and profile for the airport team and to bring the Twitter and Facebook accounts up to date to counteract any negative coverage received through local social media group pages e.g. Save Blackpool Airport. Tenants on the airport and Enterprise Zone will be invited to follow the accounts and to share good news stories with the Marketing Officer for publication.

m) Blackpool: The Place for Business

The online communications campaign has come to the end of the initial 12 months contract with external agency collaboration Clarity/Diva. A tender was advertised on the NW Chest portal for a new 12 month marketing campaign and bid documents are currently being evaluated. Interviews and presentations are due to take place in June with the contract to start soon after although the timing of this is currently being reviewed in light of the Covid-19 crisis.

n) Blackpool Airport

Work continues to replace worn out systems and upgrade the airports operational capabilities with the new Instrument landing System (ILS) now commissioned and a new RNAV system ordered to serve Runway 10.

Blackpool Airport Operations Limited, the Council-owned operating company, is continuing to review the tender submissions for the renewal of the air navigation (ANSP) and aerodrome management licenses, and has now entered a negotiation phase.

The airport has remained fully operational during the present Covid-19 crisis – primarily to support offshore operations whilst airfields at Barton, Warton and Carlisle have closed, but also hosts a flight of private aviators and BAE staff who are on standby to operate NHS support flights at short notice.

Appropriate short closures, approved by the Civil Aviation Authority have been implemented to minimise risk to Air Traffic Control and Fire service watches enabling overall operations to run from 7.00am and 9.00pm.

Architects Cassidy + Ashton are progressing the initial feasibility/option studies for the replacement of old aircraft hangars and associated aircraft parking aprons as a first step toward opening up the frontage of Squires Gate Lane for new business park development. Their work will also include studies on the provision of a new control tower, fire station and administration facility.

o) Third Party Development

The only construction presently underway is the development on land to the east of Seneca House off Amy Johnson Way.

To date:

- A total of 178 live enquiries are currently logged for Blackpool Enterprise Zone.
- Some 89 businesses have located to the Enterprise Zone since April 2016.
- A net total of 1476 jobs have located to the Enterprise Zone, this figure includes jobs to the area, safeguarded jobs within Blackpool and construction full time equivalent jobs. The net figure has been adversely affected this last quarter due to B&M Bargains vacating the Squires Gate Industrial Estate with the loss of 128 jobs.

p) Project Team

The tenth meeting of the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone Project Team took the form of a written report and was circulated to the group on 20 March 2020. The next meeting is due to take place on 5th June which will be an online meeting due to current social distancing guidelines.

r) Risk Register

The Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone risk register is currently under review with Blackpool Council's corporate risk team given recent events and will be available on request at the next meeting. It is also regularly reviewed by the accountable body's own project board.

Report Author

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Report to: Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board
Report Author: Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council
Date of Meeting: 3 June 2020 (via Zoom)
Recommendation: To note the report.

Hillhouse Enterprise Zone: Progress Report

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Further meetings have been held with the senior managers at NPL Estates to encourage them to bring forward proposals for an initial phase of speculative development totalling 6,100m² which would in part, assist the decanting of existing businesses from the old International business centre releasing that site for redevelopment. NPL are presently seeking investors and short term construction finance before committing to the project and would ideally like some form of public sector guarantee. Once the present Covid-19 issues have reduced it is anticipated that discussions to secure funding for the project and enabling infrastructure can recommence.

The project will also require some local enabling infrastructure, including site access road, all utilities and in particular an extension and repair to Hillhouse's water ring main, with an application for Growth Deal funding in preparation in anticipation of last minute resources becoming available. NPL are also exploring funding options to enable a relocation and replacement of the existing gate house and to extend the Local Fast Fibre broadband fibre optic network throughout the site.

Further clarification has also been obtained on the phasing and costings of the wider on and off site infrastructure costs and for individual development plots and modelling in a revised draft delivery plan will be completed by mid-June, work again having been delayed as a result of Covid-19 mitigation work diverting resource. This will be presented to Wyre Borough Council in July for approval as the accountable body and then to the EZGC. The implementation plan will inter-alia now reflect the impacts of the withdrawal of Vinnolit from the site, the release of additional development land and the abandonment of the large gas fired power station project, which releases a very large site for potential speculative B2 development which can compete for major DIT Inward Investment enquiries.

MARKETING

Newsletter

Regular Enterprise Zone newsletters continue to be circulated delivering up-to-date coronavirus business support information for Enterprise Zone businesses and work continues to engage more people to sign up to the newsletter. Newsletter information also refers back to business support on both the Enterprise Zone website and includes details of Wyre Council's dedicated business support team for local help and advice.

Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy has been prepared for inclusion in the Delivery Plan and a communications plan for 2020/2021 is being drafted.

Work continues with Lancashire County Council to appoint a joint international agent for all four LAMEC sites by Autumn 2020, however the team agrees that the need for end product and individual development plots to bring to market would be beneficial to any commercial property sales strategy.

Website

Marketing Lancashire have now engaged with Richard Barber & Co. to deliver phase 2 of the Enterprise Zone websites, phase 2 of the overarching Invest in Lancashire site and options around the integration of Evolutive. Officers continue to chase confirmation of a meeting in Q2 2020 to discuss draft proposals and implementation of new website features. The team will look to update any brochures and marketing material in line with any new website design over the next 12 months where required.

A news page on the website has now been created so there is a central point of reference for Hillhouse tenants needing access to COVID-19 business support:

www.hillhouseeez.com/news

Post-coronavirus crisis, the page will be used to promote good news stories and development milestones on the site.

Events & PR

The Enterprise Zone marketing officer is currently researching key target sector UK-based events to either sponsor or attend throughout the next 12 month communications campaign 2020/2021, continuing to raise the profile of Hillhouse Enterprise Zone to a wider regional and national audience as a place for business and investment.

The marketing team continues to support tenants on the site with any good news stories. An offer of PR support has been made to Forsa Energy when they are in a position to go public with their new power generation plant on Hillhouse which is now expected in June when construction work is scheduled to re-commence.

Hydrogen Steering Group

Following an initial request from NPL to explore the opportunities of utilising Hillhouse for the generation and storage of Hydrogen, a third meeting of the working group was due to take place on 30 March 2020 at Blackpool and The Fylde College. This will be rescheduled once social distancing restrictions are lifted. Individuals from both the public and private sectors will be in attendance and the invite list has been expanded to include additional key players in other Lancashire based hydrogen projects in order to fully understand the challenges and opportunities in the local region. Ultimately the intention is that the groups remit will expand to encompass all forms of renewable energy, particularly those with connection to Hillhouse, whilst linkages to similar projects on Merseyside and in Manchester will be strengthened.

The workshop will be steered by Halite Energy Group, a sister company of NPL Estates, with the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone team providing secretarial support.

SITE ACTIVITY

Vinnolit

Vinnolit ceased production on 31 August 2019 and the site is now in the process of decommissioning and with a large majority of staff having secured alternative employment. The majority of the buildings will be demolished, but some warehouse accommodation leased from NPL will be surrendered. NPL is undertaking feasibility studies to assess the options to refurbish to meet required EPC standards, with some initial interest having been registered from a PVC pipe manufacturer.

Biomass Energy facility

Heads of Terms have been agreed between a biomass operator and Le Fylde Estates (Landowner NPL Group) for a 150,000 tonne p/a EfW plant within the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone. Site investigations, ecological assessments and early site investigation and pre-planning survey work is ongoing but no definitive timeline for the development or submission of a planning application to Lancashire County Council has been confirmed.

Forsa Energy

Initial construction work will now re-commence in June on the development by Forsa Energy on a new 20MW Short Term Operating Reserve (STOR) gas turbines, planning consent having been granted in 2017. The Bluebell Energy battery storage project which had been granted planning consent at the same time will however not be proceeding and this large site is again available.

JOB CREATION

Officers expect a number of construction jobs to be created in this next quarter due to the start on site by Forsa Energy. The team continues to chase confirmation of how many construction full time equivalent jobs are currently on site and work will continue to make connections with Hillhouse tenants.

HILLHOUSE EZ BOARD AND PROJECT TEAM MEETINGS

The first meeting of a revamped Hillhouse Project team including wider representation from major businesses took place on the 6 March 2020 hosted by Victrex, with attendance impacted by the emerging social distancing requirements. Draft Terms of Reference were presented and approved in principle. A subsequent Project Team meeting will be arranged with a wider group of stakeholders including Hillhouse tenants and various local stakeholders once this can be achieved in compliance with social distancing measures, however should these continue beyond June a smaller virtual project team will be established to ensure some momentum is maintained.

COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

Existing ducting through a shared co-op network, Fibre Blackpool is being used to extend the full fibre to the premises (FTTP) connectivity throughout Blackpool and out towards Fleetwood using the tram network. Discussions are ongoing to conclude agreements for the completion of the Local Fast Fibre link to Hillhouse Enterprise Zone via the tramway, but an additional £200,000 funding will be required from the Hillhouse accountable body to enable this.

Enterprise Zone FISCAL BENEFITS

Work is progressing well in conjunction with the four Enterprise Zones which comprise LAMEC, to contact other Northern Enterprise Zones to formulate and promote a joint proposal for extension of Enterprise Zone fiscal incentives via the LEP network and the NP11 Group. Initial feedback has been extremely positive and the team have now joined forces with a national initiative steered by the LEP Network and the CEO of New Anglia LEP, which all Enterprise Zone contacted seem happy to support. Further detailed work is now underway led by Anglia Enterprise Zone to develop a detailed business case for presentation to Government, central to which will be a request to extend the period in which the 5 year business rates relief is available to financial year 2025/26.

RISK REGISTER

The Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone risk register is currently under review with Wyre Borough Council's Corporate Risk Team given recent events and will be available on request at the next meeting. It is also regularly reviewed by the accountable body's own project board.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITY

- i) Complete Delivery Plan by end June 2020
- ii) Procure specialist State Aid advice once IP completed
- iii) Complete updated Risk Register by September 2020 [delayed by COVID 19]
- iv) A flood risk assessment to be scoped and commissioned for the entire site
- v) A transport assessment be scoped and commissioned for the entire site
- vi) A utilities assessment to be scoped and commissioned for the whole site
- vii) An Environmental and Ecology study to be scoped and commissioned for the entire site

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