

To Northumberland Line Economic Corridor Working Group

Memo

From Caitriona Lacy

Date 09 December 2020

Project Northumberland Economic Corridor

Project No. 23735801

Northumberland Line Economic Corridor: Consultancy Support

Introduction

1. The development of an Economic Corridor Strategy, to accompany the Northumberland Line's physical transportation delivery was commissioned by Northumberland County Council (NCC) and part funded by North of Tyne Combined Authority in November 2019. The work was commissioned to Steer Economic Development (Steer-ED) and is expected to be finalised in early 2021. This note relates to the Steer-ED's work thus far and next steps.

Work to date

Scoping consultations and case study development

2. Steer-ED completed an initial set of "Insight Calls/" consultations with local stakeholders, developed an economic baseline, and case study work that drew parallels to similar corridor initiatives, e.g., the Borders Line, that similarly promised economic change alongside the (re)introduction of a rail line.
3. The important underlying message across this work was that infrastructure delivery is catalytic but not sufficient for economic change. What is required is a package of initiatives, developed and delivered collectively, alongside the infrastructure development, to deliver the Line's transformative potential.

Initial Engagement Sessions with Economic and Transportation Leads

4. An initial project meeting was held with local government Economic and Transportation leads. The meeting underpinned the importance of the Economic Corridor, the collective commitment to its delivery, and areas for focus. Takeaways included:
 - Economic growth is critical across the corridor and opportunities exist to elevate and knit together initiatives both within and across sectors. It is critical that the Line delivers for business, as thriving enterprise fuels a virtuous cycle of job growth, productivity and local opportunity. There are significant opportunities to leverage in Energy, Data and Advanced Manufacturing, among others;
 - There is already strong momentum behind the redevelopment of Ashington and Blyth. Other stations and areas should be reviewed strategically, and in anticipation of future Local Plan discussions. Placemaking initiatives provide the opportunity for a transformative shift in perception and the way people view areas along the line. Creating destinations, sponsoring art and heritage projects all have a role;
 - Delivering an integrated transport network that can seamlessly connect assets and residents not immediately adjacent to the Line needs to be a priority.
 - The line needs to deliver for people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, and existing strengths and relationships should be leveraged to ensure this e.g. NICA on ageing;
 - There is a need to address some of the area's greatest challenges and the 'levelling-up' agenda in education and skills. There are clear opportunities to build upon existing work with schools and training providers on STEM learning; and

- Engaging with communities effectively will be critical in achieving inclusive growth and ensuring programme buy-in. Existing programmes should be reviewed and extended to support the Line, leveraging networks to develop new collaborative initiatives.

Engagement Sessions with thematic areas

- Steer Economic Development then facilitated a series of engagement sessions around three thematic areas relevant to developing the Economic Corridor; Business and Innovation (19th October), Infrastructure and Place (21st October) and Inclusion and Skills (22nd October).
- The purpose of the engagement sessions was to establish a set of initiatives and delivery partners to capitalise on the transformative potential and investment being made in the transportation corridor. This package of initiatives could be put forward for subsequent area funding, as opportunities emerge. These sessions provide an opportunity to collectively define the initiatives needed and establish the scaffolding for future project delivery.
- The three workshops unearthed many ideas, planned and potential projects. These are captured in aggregate in Appendix A. Projects are structured by the three objectives of the proposals for an Economic Corridor Catalyst programme and the thematic areas that sit beneath them. These are summarised in the table below alongside the number of projects that have been identified for each.

Table 1: Catalyst programme Objectives

Objective	Theme	No. projects identified
Creating prosperous and connected places	Regenerating town centres	1
	Developing stations for the future	4
	Connecting stations to economic assets and housing growth	6
Building productive and resilient economies	Supporting businesses in priority sectors	4
	Ensuring skills provision meets business need	8
	Strengthening inward investment offer	1
Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Targeting employment and skills opportunities	2
	Driving net zero ambition	0
	Building social value and community ownership	9

Source: Steer-ED

Next Steps

Strategy Development

- Steer-ED is now working to draft the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor Strategy, to be delivered in late January 2021. Expectations for the strategy are:
 - Tone:** A technical case-making document that is ‘practical rather than promotional’
 - Audience:** Internal stakeholders i.e. not a sales pitch for wider stakeholders or government
 - Framing:** Organised by the objective and thematic areas set out in Table 1 and the levelling-up agenda. Vision and objectives will need to be flexible to government priorities e.g. greater housing emphasis?
 - Content:** Agreed content includes brief evidence overview including deprivation analysis, an updated Logic Model, the need for establishing a governance structure and monitoring and evaluation framework in the next phase of work
 - Length:** 20-30 pages. It should be a concise document that is easily digestible and with the Baseline Report appended

9. This document will signify the end of Steer-ED’s current commission and first phase of work.

Action Plan

10. The input provided by stakeholders during engagement provides a firm basis to begin the development of a project portfolio to deliver the potential of the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor. The portfolio will constitute the Northumberland Line’s Action Plan.
11. The precise scope of the action planning work requires further discussion, development and refinement in order to establish the scale of resource that partners are going to be able to commit to the process (both in terms of inputting and leading on works stream and also in procuring consultancy support). We envisage that Steer ED’s support will likely be required in setting up and co-ordinating the process, alongside providing flexible project development capacity and support. In some instances, this will mean advancing with sponsors/partners a well-developed concept to a concrete project initiation document, and in other instances, teasing out discrete projects from earlier-stage concepts. There will undoubtedly be a focus on working with projects that have both the greatest catalytic potential, and the feasibility to deliver (or significantly progress) in the near-term.
12. Steer-ED has prepared an indicative task list that sets out what involvement in a second stage may look like. *NB. At this stage, resource for supporting this next stage of work has not yet been finalised, so this breakdown is currently only indicative and may vary considerably.*

Table 2: Developing an Action Plan: Initial Task Breakdown

Task
Inception
Client launch (Review work areas, desired results, client leads for areas)
Revise as needed/sign-off agreed commission plan
Developing the workstreams and identifying associated projects
Catalogue initiatives underway in physical delivery remit (e.g. station innovation) under three workstreams
Catalogue next phase amplifiers (e.g. Newcastle Station, Cobalt Metro Extension) under three workstreams
Workstream One: Creating Prosperous & Connected Places
Create master map of economic assets, housing allocations, industrial sites and town centres
Arrange/convene working group on 15-minute stations
Identify discrete 15-minute projects, sponsors & partners
Identify priority areas for Connectivity Pilot ; arrange/convene working group
Convene working group to identify Housing Allocation/Economic Corridor alignment project(s)
Client review of potential projects given feasibility, timing, priority (allocate to Action Plan or Next Wave)
Document programme-level plans and projects for Creating Prosperous & Connected Places
Workstream Two: Building a Productive & Resilient Economy
Convene LEP, LAs and businesses to discuss ways to Elevate Sectors/Area Offer
Survey (1) large priority sector businesses and (2) SMEs to determine needed Support Infrastructure
Map existing Skills Initiatives
Arrange/convene Working Group on Skills to identify opportunities to scale, combine, fill gaps
Client review of potential projects, given feasibility, timing, priority (allocate to Action Plan or Next Wave)
Document programme-level plans and projects for Productive & Resilient Economy
Workstream Three: Ensuring Inclusive & Sustainable Growth
Arrange/convene working group to deliver Opportunity for Youth
Arrange/convene group to deliver opportunities/projects to Ensure Benefit for the Unemployed

Task

Arrange/convene group to deliver opportunities/projects to Enhance Local Community Ownership of the Line

Client review of potential projects, given feasibility, timing, priority (allocate to Action Plan or Next Wave)

Document programme-level plans and projects for Productive & Resilient Economy

Mobilising Individual Projects

Kickstart meeting on Inclusive & Sustainable Growth (facilitated by Steer-ED)

Incorporate and kickstart projects (x8?) as developed/prioritised from Prosperous & Connected Places and Productive & Resilient Economies workstreams

Creating an Action Plan

Draft Action Plan Document, capturing links to prior documents, purpose, projects, delivery plan and high-level outcomes

Socialise, circulate with the Steering Group, present to Boards as required

Revise, edit, iterate document to incorporate comments and submit Final Document.

Source: Steer-ED

Appendix A – Economic Corridor Projects Identified

Table 3: Project Overview

Name	Status	Description	Objective	Theme
Ashington Station Development	Planned/ in development	Continue to build Ashington as a destination as much as an origin station through improving the station and the surrounding offer. This includes the redevelopment of the Wilco site into a destination with different shops and services.	Creating prosperous and connected places	Regenerating town centres
Social distancing	New/gap	Ensure new/updated station are designed to comply with social distancing	Creating prosperous and connected places	Developing stations for the future
Stations of the Future	New/gap	Development of stations as more than just transport hubs and instead destinations, supporting small businesses with premises and footfall and reducing car journeys	Creating prosperous and connected places	Developing stations for the future
Central Gateway 2	New/gap	Improvements to Newcastle Central Station to improve access and connectivity and to increase capacity to accommodate additional numbers of train services, passengers and station users.	Creating prosperous and connected places	Developing stations for the future
Sustainable Station Drainage	New/gap	Some stations will have Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, which could be designed and developed through working with the local schools and communities.	Creating prosperous and connected places	Developing stations for the future
Cobalt Park Travel Pilot	Existing/ scale	Cobalt is interested in sponsoring a pilot that understands the travel patterns of staff and introduces ways to connect to The Line.	Creating prosperous and connected places	Connecting stations to economic assets and housing growth
Beaside Industrial Area	New/gap	Industrial and office space is needed within easy reach of the proposed new stations.	Creating prosperous and connected places	Connecting stations to economic assets and housing growth
Enablement of key employment sites	New/gap	Enable of key employment sites (including EZ site Round 1 sites) including Northumberland Energy Park, Ashwood Business Park in Ashington for Advance manufacturing - latest promotional video https://twitter.com/i/status/1316320273172439040 through better connection to The Line and the introduction of public transport linkages (eBikes, etc.) and appropriate cycling storage on trains	Creating prosperous and connected places	Connecting stations to economic assets and housing growth
Strategic housing sites	Planned/In Development	Release of strategic housing land at stations/along the corridor, driven by the opportunity presented by the Northumberland Line and supported by evidence of market failure and the corresponding need for public sector intervention, potentially as part of NTCA housing delivery pipeline work with Homes England).	Creating prosperous and connected places	Connecting stations to economic assets and housing growth
Cobalt Metro Extension	Planned/In Development	Re-opening of the short branch line between Northumberland Park and Percy Main Metro stations. This would provide direct access to/from Cobalt Business Park and the North Bank of the Tyne Development area allowing further economic agglomeration benefits. This link would also remove/reduce the need for	Creating prosperous and connected places	Connecting stations to economic assets and housing growth

Name	Status	Description	Objective	Theme
		prohibitively expensive investment in the A19 (SRN) by Highways England and deliver a more sustainable, lower cost option.		
Connecting stations to economic assets	New/gap	Ensure there is an integrated transport network to connect relevant sector and business innovation assets along the Line with 'seamless' public transport links beyond the line e.g. connecting the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult in Blyth and the National Innovation Centre for Data (NICD) in Newcastle.	Creating prosperous and connected places	Connecting stations to economic assets and housing growth
Innovation Testbed	New/gap	The line could to act as a testbed for addressing the industrial strategy grand challenges by incorporating innovative operating practices, focussed on new and low carbon energy, future mobility, data and 5G etc.	Building productive and resilient economies	Supporting businesses in priority sectors
Opportunities in Hydrogen	New/gap	Capitalise on opportunities in (i) hydrogen power, (ii) National Renewable Energy Centre (based in Blyth); and (iii) the likely upcoming opportunity for Tees Valley if it gets chosen to be the place for Hydrogen Power Trials	Building productive and resilient economies	Supporting businesses in priority sectors
A more distributed Energy System	New/gap	Demand side response from a more distributed energy system, e.g., smart grids to help businesses along the corridor (smaller businesses could collaborate)	Building productive and resilient economies	Supporting businesses in priority sectors
Innovation Zone	New/gap	Creating a common framework/brand e.g. "Industrial [Clean Growth] Innovation Zone" for a broader area that encompasses the triangle bounded by the Northumberland line, the Tyne and coast, to leverage inward investment	Building productive and resilient economies	Supporting businesses in priority sectors
Up- Cross- and Re-skilling into Offshore Wind	Existing/ scale	Energy Central is an emerging hub for Offshore Wind within the NE Offshore Wind Cluster under the Offshore Wind Sector Deal. The NLEC could play a key role locally and nationally given projected employment growth, supported by the local expertise at Newcastle College Energy Academy and Port Training Services,	Building productive and resilient economies	Ensuring skills provision meets business need
Creating a talent pipeline	New/gap	A skills project to coordinate existing initiatives that link education providers and employers by; - bringing together key business and education providers (colleges, Universities to employers); - mapping out (what skills are needed by their workforce assessed against the education/training currently provided); - establishing skills gaps which education providers can fill through training, thereby filling the workforce needs of Northumberland and North of Tyne.	Building productive and resilient economies	Ensuring skills provision meets business need
Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs)	New/gap	SWAPs provide a mechanism for training providers to co-design a pre-employment routeway with employers for future vacancies across various sectors e.g. construction, retail, customer service etc.	Building productive and resilient economies	Ensuring skills provision meets business need

Name	Status	Description	Objective	Theme
Primary to PhD through sectoral inspiration	New/gap	Projects to engage at all stages of the learner's journey. Deliver curricular projects/experiences to inspire and provide sightlines for learners into 'smart spec' industrial sectors can enrich existing curricula by delivering project-based modules of applied learning, in partnership with employers. There are models to follow regionally and internationally.	Building productive and resilient economies	Ensuring skills provision meets business need
Scaling activity at the Port of Blyth	Existing/scale	The Blyth STEM Hub hosts schools from across the North East to showcase business, enable students to touch and feel the technology, and meet people who you would never usually get to meet, including those currently working on a train project with Blythdale. <i>NB. Port of Training Services and Julian Sindall are due to meet regarding opportunities for scaling.</i> Currently working with partners on developing Traineeship programmes with offshore energy businesses that will lead to Blyth apprenticeship vacancies	Building productive and resilient economies	Ensuring skills provision meets business need
Northumberland Line Education Business Partnership	New/gap	The development of a corridor specific Education Business Partnership (EBP) to introduce students, from primary through to further education, to a wide variety of workplaces and to be tailored to local work opportunities. This could be used as a forum to bridge employer/educator providers at local levels	Building productive and resilient economies	Ensuring skills provision meets business need
Degree apprenticeships	Planned/In Development	Working with university partners to develop degree apprenticeships in related areas (being delivered in Northumberland for Northumberland) as well expanding existing work, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding existing Higher Apprenticeships in Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing being delivered from Tyne Met campus within the regional economy for employers; The Port of Blyth have applied for 4 Kickstart placements starting in November. They will be trained in operative skills, again with the aim to potentially progress them to an apprenticeship	Building productive and resilient economies	Ensuring skills provision meets business need
Changing student perceptions of Blyth as a place to work	New/gap	Set up schemes that provide travel money and small stipends for student placements accessed by the Line (they generally do not have cars). Students may be more likely to apply for a job once they see the area as an employment destination.	Building productive and resilient economies	Ensuring skills provision meets business need
Industry Cluster Support	New/gap	Strategic lobbying and/or development of facilities to attract inward investment	Building productive and resilient economies	Strengthening inward investment offer
Employing Local Communities	New/Gap	Any tender for work on The Line could include a % of people to be employed from local communities, e.g. within 3 miles of the corridor. Also use section 106 to support local procurement and opportunities for the unemployed.	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Targeting employment and skills opportunities
Reducing local unemployment	Existing/Scale	Targeting employment opportunities at unemployed residents. Including through:	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Targeting employment and skills opportunities

Name	Status	Description	Objective	Theme
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working closely with the colleges on upskilling benefit claimants, looking at transferable skills and preparing people to undertake new roles; Working with local school advisors to arrange mentor sessions for employers to deliver sessions in schools and gain buy in from the students; Employers to run virtual sessions to give a large group of local unemployed an overview of job opportunities, skills needed, the application processes etc. e.g. the successful NHS programme to staff large Covid-19 testing centre recruitment in Gateshead; Running programmes to upskill claimants into employment. Blyth Tall Ships Level 1 or Level 2 in Marine Engineering (with links to employment within the Port of Blyth) and Maersk certificates for claimants and interviews in the renewable energy (wind) industry. 		
The Golden Ticket and an Interactive Trail	New/gap	Create a Golden Ticket of fun places to visit/things to do using The Line —free when the line first opens for free travel for children. This would give people more reasons for travel inbound and outbound, including on a weekend if it was linked to clearly defined fun things for kids to do.	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Building social value and community ownership
Marketing campaign	New/gap	Run marketing campaigns around what the line will offer e.g. access to green and blue space at stations along the line, culture/heritage venues and events; encouraging travel for health, experiences and fun.	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Building social value and community ownership
Mobility as a Service Alliance (MaaS) initiative	Planned/in development	Northumberland Line, when opened, should form part of a Mobility as a Service Alliance (MaaS) initiative to address perceptions regarding access challenges. A North of Tyne trial is currently being scoped for the corridor between Cobalt and Newcastle and SE Northumberland and Newcastle.	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Building social value and community ownership
Scaling the Bait project	Existing/scale	The Bait Project has been active for several years, working with local communities and people in South East Northumberland to create and take part in inspiring and high-quality arts experiences. This activity could be also be harnessed for any engagement activity.	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Building social value and community ownership
Ensuring the line works for older people	Existing/scale	Harness existing work that the National Innovation Centre for Ageing (NICA) is doing with ‘transport and mobility’ companies on new innovations to ensure the line works for older people.	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Building social value and community ownership
Arts Community Engagement Plan	Planned/ In Development	An open source history project leading to a TV documentary, book, website supported through a walking/cycling sculpture trail connecting the stations and highlighting the historical symbiotic relationship of the community and its railway	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Building social value and community ownership
Academic Community Engagement Plan	Planned/ In Development	A combination of engagement in: -schools (open history project; STEM events; safety on the railway)	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Building social value and community ownership

Name	Status	Description	Objective	Theme
		<p>- Colleges/Universities (Apprentices; and Masters/PhD research e.g., with Gateshead rail academy and Newcastle University (with a focus on PhD students).</p> <p>Note: Public consultation is going live in November 2020, and the development of an education communication strategy is profiled for September 2021.</p>		
Local Business Engagement Plan	Planned/ In Development	A combination of specialist advice to help local businesses maximise the value of the railway to them	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Building social value and community ownership
Energy in place and cultural identity	New/gap	A research project to evaluate the issues of place and cultural identity, and the role of energy within that from a heritage and futures viewpoint. To work with a range of community groups, and public and private sector stakeholders to develop a framework for the evaluation of place and cultural identity. To undertake a baseline evaluation, and then subsequent evaluations, to evaluate the impact of the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor development on place and cultural identity, with particular reference to energy.	Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth	Building social value and community ownership

Source: Steer-ED consultant for the development of the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor Strategy including Thematic Leads Workshops, October 2020