

**REPORT FROM: HEAD OF ECONOMIC GROWTH**

**TO: NELSON TOWN DEAL BOARD**

**DATE: 16<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024**

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## **LONG-TERM PLAN FOR TOWNS PROGRAMME AND BOARD ADAPTATION**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To inform Town Deal Board Members on the guidance and arrangements for the Long-Term Plan for Towns Fund.
2. To agree to the repurposing of the existing Town Deal Board to meet the requirements of the Long-Term Plan for Towns Fund.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the guidance be noted.
2. That the existing Town Deal Board be repurposed in line with the proposal set out in this report.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1 To support the development of a Long-Term Investment Plan, in order to unlock the funds for Nelson.
- 2 It is a requirement that the Fund be led by a Town Board, and existing Boards can be repurposed for this.
- 3 The Long-Term Plan must be submitted to Government by 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024.

### **Introduction**

1. The Long-Term Plan for Towns was formally announced by Central Government on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023, with Fund guidance following just before Christmas. The detailed guidance

can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/long-term-plan-for-towns-guidance-for-local-authorities-and-town-boards>

2. The Long-Term Plan for Towns takes an endowment-style approach. This means that funding, of £20million, will be released over a 7-year period and Local Authorities have the flexibility to spend it over 10 years. The full funding profile will be provided in early 2024.
3. The Fund will be a mixture of capital and revenue, including capacity funding to support the set-up and ongoing management of the fund by the council, as well as support provided centrally from Government.

## **Background**

4. The Fund is an acknowledgement by Government that towns across the country (as opposed to cities) are struggling as a result of a number of factors. In practical terms, as this Fund is allocated to Nelson town only, this will allow the work of the Nelson Town Deal programme to be built upon.
5. To access their allocation, each Town is being asked submit a Long-Term Plan to Government, for approval. This will comprise of a 10-year vision and 3-year investment plan.
6. The funding is directed at three investment themes, with each focussing on creating a resilient town for people and investment. The themes are:
  - Safety and Security
  - High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration
  - Transport and Connectivity
7. Within each theme are a number of 'interventions' the Town Board is expected to select for investment. Each Council will have flexibility to invest across a range of activities that represent the right solutions for its town, but must involve local people in the shaping of these decisions.

## **Geography**

8. The Fund is limited in its scope to Nelson only. The boundary for this will be determined in discussion with Government as part of the investment planning process. As a default, it should use the boundary defined by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Built Up Area 2022 (BUA) for Nelson but a change to this can be requested as long as the change includes the town that was originally selected and is contiguous.
9. At present the Nelson Town Deal uses an expanded boundary, to include the important adjacent employment sites of Lomeshaye and Whitewalls. This was agreed by the Nelson Town Deal Board in July 2020, and confirmed by Government.
10. See appendices.

## **Preparing the Long-Term Plan**

11. An initial £50,000 in capacity funding has been made available to each Local Authority, with a further £200,000 to be made available from 1<sup>st</sup> April, subject to a Long-Term Plan Board

being in place, in order to prepare the Long-Term Plan. This should include community engagement activity.

12. The first step towards the Plan is to have a Town Board. If a town already has a Town Deal Board in place, or a similar such structure, then the guidance strongly encourages the utilisation of that forum to act as the Town Board, to avoid unnecessary duplication and allow towns to move quickly to draw up their Long-Term Plan.
13. If an existing forum is to be repurposed, it is incumbent on the Chair, supported by the Local Authority, to ensure the right people are around the table to fully reflect the priorities of the town - this may require further appointments, if deemed appropriate.
14. As the new Fund is for a continuation of funding for Nelson, then it is recommended that the existing Nelson Town Board be used as the basis for the Fund.
15. In repurposing the Board, it also provides an opportunity to review and re-establish its governance arrangements.
16. Pendle Borough Council (PBC) Officers are at present considering the interventions and beginning discussions on the necessary governance arrangements so that a Long-Term Plan can be formed for Nelson. Advice on this process has been sought from the Local Government Association (LGA), and is currently awaited. This Plan can be submitted to Government at any time between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2024. The quicker a Plan is submitted and approved, the quicker investment funds are released.
17. In order to assist with this process, and to do so within the short timescales available, it is proposed that specialist consultants will be engaged to help produce the Plan utilising the capacity support available.

## IMPLICATIONS

**Policy:** The Fund provides for further long-term financial support to Nelson.

**Financial:** PBC will be the accountable body for the Fund. The procurement of consultants will be financed by the Fund made available to support the investment plan development.

**Legal:** Subsidy Control regulations will need to be adhered to. External advice can be sought and funded through the capacity support being made available.

**Risk Management:** The risks are that not producing the investment plan in time would result in a significant loss of funding for Nelson.

**Health and Safety:** None arising directly from this report.

**Sustainability:** The Long-Term Plan provides an opportunity to consider sustainability within any investments ultimately selected for investment.

**Community Safety:** The Long-Term Plan provides an opportunity to consider the improvement of community safety within.

**Equality and Diversity:** None arising directly from this report.

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Long-Term Plan for Towns: guidance for local authorities and Town Boards:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/long-term-plan-for-towns-guidance-for-local-authorities-and-town-boards/long-term-plan-for-towns-guidance-for-local-authorities-and-town-boards>

## **APPENDICES:**

### **Appendix 1 – Nelson. Built Up Area (BUA 2022, ONS)**

The first appendix shows the boundary of Nelson using the BUA 2022 designation, as required by default for the Long Term Plan for Towns fund. This should be similar to the originally designated Town Deal boundary which was also based on a BUA designation.

### **Appendix 2. Nelson Town Deal - Final boundary plan Oct 2020**

The second appendix shows the whole of the Town Deal boundary which was adopted, following an agreed expansion to the boundary to include key employment areas. This is the current boundary for Nelson Town Deal.