

## **Blandford Area Development Trust Proposal (BADT)**

**Brief to BFTC - 27 March 2017 by:**

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& **Martin (Nic) Nicol MBE** Chair DT11 Community Partnership

### **Introduction**

There is no shortage of folk in and around Blandford who will knock the town as a poor relation to its neighbours. They will say there are only a few shops worth visiting, it's a place inhabited by druggies and social drop outs at night, and it's not a nice place to be. There is little recognition of the great work done by this town council, the individual commitment made by councillors to the community and community groups in the town or the great civic pride that we all share in this wonderful town.

That may not matter on a personal level as an opinion, but it matters enormously in terms of the future of the town and how it's perceived by government and the wider Dorset community. The town council can't do everything, you are busily occupied with statutory responsibilities, I imagine you don't have the time or the powers to correct the perception or the reality. We are dependent on the levels of government above the town council - not just for the delivery of services, but also critically for the planning needed to secure Blandford's future vitality as a place in which to live, work and do business.

Much of the second part of this doesn't seem to work in our favour. Meanwhile more responsibilities are being devolved to town and parish councils – without the necessary resources to ensure their delivery. More than that, central government's policy of 'localism' requires local government to involve the 'community' in all aspects of planning. They say projects will not be supported unless they demonstrate strong support from community, civic and businesses groups.

Other towns in the area secure income focused on improvement and development through a Business Improvement District (BID). This is unlikely work in Blandford because it requires a levy on top of business rates that our mainly small independent retailers could not afford.

The DT11 Forum Community Partnership provided a variety of support to Blandford and surrounding rural villages. The group was core funded by NDDC, and used grants obtained from various sources – including sources not available to local government - to support a wide range of community projects. NDDC declined to core fund and the group is ending on 31<sup>st</sup> March. Its time is over, but its role needs to continue in an up to date format.

With these two factors foremost in our minds, Alison and I have developed the proposal to set-up an independent CIC Development Trust – the **Blandford Area Development Trust**. Similar sized towns have created Development Trusts, with a formal structure (CIC or similar), and constitution. So, what will it set out to do?

## **BADT Pillars – what we want to do**

1. **Economy.** Help attract new businesses into the area, especially innovative start-ups, small businesses and a large employer. Help provide the skills needed by small and large businesses. Attract investment in business infrastructure.
2. **Environment.** Encourage an innovative approach to improving and sustaining a healthy environment, and a safe and pleasant place to live and work.
3. **Culture and Heritage.** Promote cultural advantage, protect heritage and encourage new attractions.
4. **Infrastructure.** Attract inward Investment to build suitable business premises. Provide digital advantage. Help secure central government and other funding to transform through route road infrastructure, and county investment to improve road and pavement surfaces in the area.
5. **Youth.** Ensure access to further education, training and employment for young people. Mitigate the impact of reduction in funding for youth services. Give priority to youth culture and activities. Train and retain young people through employment opportunities and suitable housing.
6. **Community.** Provide a structure that encourages the activities of community groups to thrive. Represent and support business and community groups to attract grant funding and inward investment. Build on the legacy of the DT11 Forum Community Partnership.

## **Summary**

Our high-level objectives for Blandford and the DT11 area can be summarised as:

1. Sustaining a good place to live and work;
2. Building on civic pride and commitment to community
3. Promoting our Heritage - a unique Georgian town, river Stour, villages and countryside
4. Giving priority to youth - a high percentage of young people and young families in the town.

## **Next Steps**

We have ascertained funds from the DT11 group to support formation of a trust by September 2017.

We are talking with local business, civic groups and cultural groups.

We will hold a Public meeting to present our detailed research and analysis, as well as our proposal for the Trust. We aim to involve Hall and Woodhouse, and other large businesses and have a meeting arranged with our MP.

We are looking for 'Patrons' and directors to support our endeavour, including town council representation

Thank you for your attention are there any question?