

## Statement of Community Engagement

North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) aims to put the interests of local communities at the heart of everything it does and believes in local decisions and local actions for the benefit of local communities. The principles and ethos of this are strongly embedded within NNDC's new Corporate Plan.

It is our intention to adopt the principles of the 'Statement of Community Involvement' as established within the preparation documents of NNDC's emerging Local Plan (Appendix 1).

The core principles of NNDC's community engagement for the North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone programme will be:

- **Improve involvement**  
To make sure everyone knows why we are asking for involvement and when and how they can get involved.
- **Enable joint working**  
To try and link with existing groups and partnerships.
- **To be flexible**  
To make sure the ways we involve people are working, and to change them where necessary.
- **To inform**  
To make our information clear so people can make informed choices when replying to our consultations.
- **To make it easy for you to get involved**  
To make sure any public exercises are appropriate and accessible, whilst also making sure they are cost effective.
- **To let you know what decisions have been made and why**  
It is not always possible to make decisions that everyone agrees with and sometimes difficult decisions have to be made. The community engagement plan will ensure that open communication channels, through varying forms, enable the local community the opportunity to raise issues, proffer ideas and resolve concerns.

Community engagement will be at the heart of the programme and NNDC has established a strong collaborative approach with a range of community stakeholders. It has been of particular value that the programme has been developed in partnership with North Walsham Town Council (NWTC) and Regenerate North Walsham CIC (RNW CIC). It is of vital importance to the success of the project that the community's needs, aspirations and input are embedded in all aspects of the programme design.

The work carried out to date has meant that North Walsham has developed a strong community voice and recent schemes, such as the NNDC funded Market Town Initiative (MTI), have further engaged the community and established the foundations for clear and open engagement and participation.

In the initial development of the High Street Heritage Action Zone Expression of Interest, a number of methods were utilised to identify and better understand the socio-economic make-up of North Walsham's community and town centre users. These included:

- Norfolk Insights data – demographics, health and social care, employment and environment
- Index of multiple deprivation data
- Community Wellbeing Index
- Norfolk County Council Market Town Centre Report
- GIS data mapping was also utilised

Building on this foundation, additional outreach and engagement data have subsequently been collated through the support of our stakeholder partners, including:

- A town council survey carried out in 2019 to support the MTI application.
- Comments collected at a Town Strategy workshop and public survey
- 2019 North Walsham Youth Survey

A North Walsham High Street HAZ stakeholder group was assembled during the Expression of Interest phase. The group includes representatives of the Town Council, Regenerate North Walsham CIC, and Paston college. The group will meet regularly to discuss and inform the programme design, sharing insight and feedback from a wider range of community groups and organisations.

A consortium of groups and individuals came together to host a 'Big Bash' and 'community conversation' events in the town to explore interest in establishing a community hub for local groups and organisations to share information and services with the community. The information gathered at these events has been shared with the North Walsham HAZ stakeholder group and has provided invaluable insight and engagement opportunities for the local community.

Following on from the information and insight gathered, the North Walsham HSHAZ stakeholder group produced a town survey and engagement leaflet which was available online and at several key locations across the town centre.

In order to ensure the continued delivery of the programme's community engagement outcomes, a stakeholder scoping exercise has been undertaken to which key individuals and groups have been identified. Utilising the community engagement model provided, a wide and diverse range of groups have been identified. To varying degrees, they will continue to be informed and involved in the development, design and delivery of the programme and accompanying cultural planning. Notably several of the groups and organisations involved in

the programme are engaged in health and wellbeing activities. This will help to ensure that the programme will support the holistic delivery of a range of differing needs.

### Further Engagement activities

With the range and diversity of stakeholders identified, it is essential that clear and meaningful methods of communication and engagement are adopted. The Programme will need to engage a range of differing groups – from those seeking simple and clear communication on the progress of the programme, to groups or individuals interested in taking on a more proactive or leadership role. As such, the stakeholder map is seen as a living document, with areas of interest and levels of engagement developing and growing alongside the project. A comprehensive community engagement plan will be developed with stakeholders in the earlier stages of the programme delivery, however several engagement strategies have already been established:

- **Clear Communication**

Communicating the ambitions and delivery timescales of the key projects, offering critical opportunities for feedback and participation, is very important. NNDC's Communications team will work alongside the North Walsham Town Councils Media and Information Committee to deliver a Communication Plan. This will ensure clear and consistent messaging and encompass multiple channels for the sharing of information and the promotion of engagement opportunities.

- **Community-led Development**

The community survey has already produced some interesting baseline data which has been used to develop the proposed projects within this document. While some questions were purposely specific; people were also encouraged to field ideas. Here are a few examples:

"More community projects such as street cleaning, painting of bus stops, planting schemes in areas that need brightening up and more shops .... that promote community spirit"

"More youth engagement in the project"

In order to ensure the suitability and sustainability of the programme's outcomes, it is essential that the local community engage with and take ownership of the scheme and the projects developed. The development of programme elements, from inception to delivery, will be open to the whole community and not a select few. There a number of ways this can be achieved: through open engagement events; targeted workshops with the hard to reach groups such as students (both of the high school and college); ongoing outreach, such as a monthly stall at the towns market and interaction; and through the active use of social media channels.

- **Business Participation**

Town centre businesses will also be strongly engaged in the programme. The struggling North Walsham Chamber of Trade has already been engaged. Indeed, as a result of this programme, the Chamber of Trade are taking the opportunity to revive their somewhat struggling group, reforming as the North Walsham Business Forum and seeking to use the HAZ Programme as a vehicle for refreshing interest from local businesses.

More emphasis on keeping local business in the high street...wider contextual knowledge about how the Town worked with other surrounding villages, such as Worstead, in terms of wool trade etc. Better heritage signing in terms of Nelson and Church History needed.



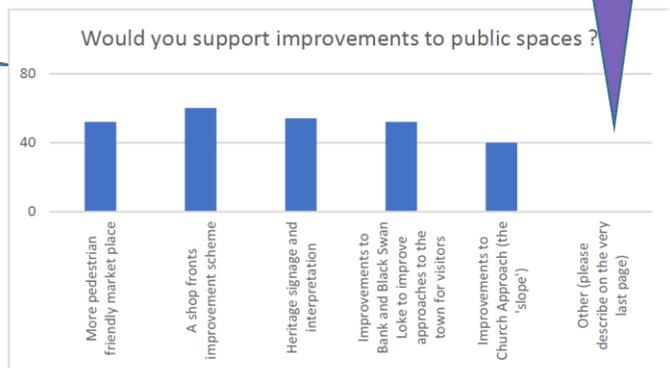
During the initial programme design business owners were asked to complete the same survey carried out on the market place (Appendix 7). Although this question has been framed relatively generally at this stage it has forged an awareness of the scheme and provides a useful insight as to

I think a lack of shop diversity puts a lot of people off but that is not something the grant would alter. Pedestrianisation of the market

“Improvements to shop fronts and other building repairs should be on a 50:50 basis, would be fairer and make the grant go further”

the initial

thoughts of the local businesses.



Reactions to the proposed scheme have been positive and further consultation and engagement will be carried out throughout programme to forge further links with businesses and raise awareness.

Through collaboration with the newly formed Business Forum, further work will now be carried out to explore the specific needs of both existing and potential new business in order to support the economic development of the town centre. It is essential the business owners, as well as the wider community, buy in to the regeneration, creating a greater understanding of the heritage and historic core and embedding a change in attitudes so that the regeneration is self-sustaining rather than a one off improvement.

- Legacy skills and training**

“Training grants for youngsters from the town looking to learn a conservation trade such as working with flint or wood”

We will seek to provide both hard and soft skills training and development opportunities. This will allow groups and individuals to engage and participate in a meaningful way and, in some cases, a progression from engagement or participation to partnership and leadership roles, both in this and future projects.

Paston College will be a key partner in developing this engagement. The already established relationship with key staff will be further developed and students given a more proactive voice in the programme through workshops, surveys and events.

“To get more students involved with the refurbishment.”

## Conclusion

Through this continual process of engagement and consultation it is anticipated that communities will feel a genuine sense of pride and ownership of the scheme and gain an emotional investment in the high street as a place to live, learn, work and visit. These skills,

knowledge and investment will ensure the long term sustainability and resilience of the programme creating a lasting legacy beyond the period of the project.

Working in this way, the programme will deliver value greater than the sum of its parts; serving as a catalyst for further regeneration and stimulating a renewed interest and sense of pride. The town will not only become visually more attractive and better showcase its historic character; the refreshed centre will provide the platform to stage social and cultural activities, supporting the local economy through increased footfall and dwell time as well as improving wellbeing and offering a higher quality of life.