

1. Overview

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to note the proposed programme for the next steps of work for the Orkney Towns Board.
- 1.2. The UK Government published Guidance during 2024 which was intended to provide support to the work of Towns Boards across the UK. The Guidance includes specific direction to Boards to ensure that the Government's intended outcomes are achieved. The original Guidance is currently under review, with a revised edition expected from the UK Government during the first quarter of 2025. This will be essential information to direct the next phases of work for the Board and will include clarification on the eligibility of project outcomes, and process arrangements. The information from UK Government officials to date suggests that this is not likely to vary significantly from previous Guidance. However, it is important that the drafting of the Strategic Vision and Delivery Plan can be informed by this new Guidance.
- 1.3. An outline programme of steps for moving forward the work of the Board has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 1. This outline programme seeks to build on the engagement work which was completed during 2024 in order to establish a robust but accessible methodology for the Board to manage future project development and engagement activities. There is provision for this work to respond to the new UK Government Guidance when this is published.
- 1.4. Appendix 1 includes the following activities:
 - i. **Development of a Strategic Vision and Delivery Plan.** This will require to be submitted to both Orkney Islands Council and the UK Government for endorsement.
 - ii. **Stress testing project ideas.** Over 800 ideas were generated through the engagement during 2024. Further work is required to test the viability and deliverability of ideas in terms of tangible project proposals.
 - iii. **Maintaining an open dialogue.** Maintaining accessibility to the public and other Orkney agencies including Community Planning Partners for example exploring further project ideas generation and delivery opportunities.

- iv. **Managing feasibility development work.** Establishing a process for formally awarding project development funding and monitoring the development phases of projects.
- 1.5. Delivery of this programme of work is dependent on the availability of staff resources to support the work of the Board. Recruitment for a dedicated Towns Board Economic Development Officer is currently underway, and if successful should be in place before 1 April 2025.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that Orkney Towns Board:
 - i. Note the proposed programme for the next steps of work for Orkney Towns Board, detailed in Appendix 1.

3. Appendix

Appendix 1 – Programme for next steps of work of Orkney Towns Board.

Appendix 1

Phase 1 Engagement

Complete

• Summer-autumn '24

OTB Programme Framework

Pillars and Sub-themesBoard meet to approve

7 February '25

Towns Board Officer Recruitment

• February-March '25

Ideas review – sense check credibility

Ideas with a lead/agent
Ideas which match/deliver OTB Pillars and subthemes
February-March '25



EOI Assessment

- Identify "preferred project" list for feasibility testing
- Board meet to approve
- September 2025

"Expression of Interest" process

Direct approach to "known" leads from Ideas review stage
Open process/ EOI invitation
June-September '25

Project assessment methodology - develop

- Impact measures
- Assessment criteria
- Establish "sub-theme" groups
- March May '25

Develop Strategic Vision & delivery plan

Board meet to approve
Issue to OIC/UK Gov for endorsement
March-June '25



Project feasibility testing/development work

3rd Party project awards

- OTB direct commissioning
- September '25 February '26

FY 26-27 "Year 1" Project approvals

- Board meet to approve
- March '26

Orkney Town Board High Level Process steps/activity plan

- Time-frames dependant on staff recruitment February 2025
- In addition ongoing engagement with partners (eg Community Planning) and open dialogue and information exchange with the public