

Big Buxton Conversation Two

Monday 8th November 2021

Following the inspirational Big Buxton Conversation (BBC1) in April 2021 (online) and the clear appetite to 'keep talking' Transition Buxton joined forces with three other active local groups; Buxton Town Team, Buxton Civic Association and Vision Buxton to organise Big Buxton Conversation Two (BBC2). Roughly 80 people gathered in the well-ventilated Methodist Church on Monday 8th November 2021 for 3 hours of animated discussions.

The objective for the afternoon was to look at the 12 themes and associated 'glorious ideas' and 'what if questions' that emerged from BBC1 and look at how some might develop into projects, get incorporated into existing work, and start to bring about the positive changes that our community wants and needs.

Two themes had tied for 'first place' in the priorities in BBC1:

Local Governance – a forum for community voices and collaboration

Public Transport

Following the April event we have collectively set up 'We Are Buxton' with representatives of 6 key community groups, 2 residents associations, and our Borough and County councils. This new forum had met once in September and had another in the diary for November. To give this experiment a chance to develop the Local Governance theme was not in the mix for BBC2, leaving us 11 themes to work with.

In addition to the 3 mentioned above the themes brought forward from April also included: Private Transport & Parking, Housing, Built Environment particularly Empty Buildings, Energy, Business, Waste & Resources, Nature, Food, and Provision for Young People.

Participants were asked to consider and choose a theme that they feel passionate about then to sit at the relevant table to take a deeper dive into that topic. Public Transport was so popular that we had two tables on that theme alongside a 3rd table discussing private transport, parking and pavements.



The themes that the participants wanted to discuss today were quite different: Nature & Food, Health & Well-being, Buildings including Housing, Tourism, and Business & Enterprise. The Energy theme that had been popular in BBC1 was not selected for discussion during BBC2, and the Waste & Resources theme attracted less attention than in April, despite the November event taking place during COP26.

Having discussed their themes, each table shared their aspirations within that theme with the room including why they feel it is a priority. Each participant was then asked to identify the ideas/topic/themes/projects that they would consider worth 'investing in'. The participants had three tokens (plastic bottle tops) each, one white (value 25), one green (value 10), and one blue (value 5), so 40 in total. They could 'invest' them all into one theme, or spread them across two or three.

Following a refreshment break during which the tokens were counted up, the results were announced as follows:

RESULTS OF PROJECTS POLL

THEME	Value of tokens	BBC1 Priority Score
Young People	475 (24%)	24%
Public Transport	455 (23%)	36%
Nature and Food	340 (17%)	Nature 29%, Food 13%
Health and well-being	275 (14%)	9%
Buildings	235 (12%)	Built Environment 33%, Housing 16%
Waste and Resources	125 (6%)	22%
Tourism	*100 (5%)	4.5%
Private Transport, pavements, parking	65 (3%)	18%
Business and Enterprise	10 (0.5%)	31%
Energy	Nil	31%

*The Tourism score is guesstimated due to the score and info sheet going astray.

Clearly the priorities of the BBC2 participants were somewhat different to those in BBC1 although there was roughly a 30% cross over of people who have now taken part in both Conversations. The different priorities reflect both the different demographic of those available to gather on a Monday afternoon (BBC2) compared with a Saturday afternoon (BBC1), and the fact that the 2nd

Conversation aims to start turning ideas into actions, so practical considerations come into play.

Fortified by the excellent refreshments provided by local Pig & Pepper Bakery participants could return to the same table, or choose a different one. The task now was to look at the projects and identify how to take them forward including what would be needed, who needed to be involved, and what the first steps might be.

The focus on practicalities lead participants to examine just 6 thematic projects in more detail, leaving 5 others aside for the time being. **The projects selected for more detailed planning were:**

Young People - A dedicated informal space for young people in the town centre.

Transport - A greatly improved bus service in terms of routes, frequency, quality and price

Nature - To conserve and enhance the existing wildlife habitats in town and to link them with wildlife corridors.

Health, Wellbeing and Leisure - An inclusive, accessible multi-use integrated facility, suitable for all ages and the whole community. This could be in a single location or dispersed.

Tourism 1 - Better Signposted Buxton

Tourism 2 - Toilets for visitors

Each of the working groups had an A3 sheet with a series of questions to consider including:

Who would or might support this?

Who might need to be involved?

Who might need to be persuaded?

Who could / should lead?

What might help this project on its way?

What are the immediate next steps?

What resources will be needed? Where might they come from?

The groups worked diligently and volunteer 'scribes' captured what they could onto the sheets which have been typed up to form an Appendix to these notes. Not every question was answered but the groups made some real progress in considering their chosen project and theme.

Next Steps:

Youth provision - to give young people a voice it is proposed to create a Youth Forum of some kind, to host a Youth specific Big Buxton Conversation, and to

link together existing provision for young people. No lead has come forward for this yet, but the gauntlet has been thrown down and young people are already responding with some ideas.

Public Transport – the information and priorities expressed by the two public transport tables have been taken on board by the Buxton Town Team Sustainable Transport Group who are already working with the commercial operators and local authorities to improve the offer and increase use including access to schools, smaller quieter buses, hop on / off services, and simplified ticketing.

Nature – the group focused on wildlife corridors and linking green spaces to support biodiversity. The first step is to map the existing provision which we understand HPBC have asked Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to work on. This work will be supported and progressed by Buxton Civic Association and others including ensuring that this is embedded in the developing Buxton Neighborhood Plan, and the High Peak Local Plan which is due to be updated next year.

Health, Well Being & Leisure – the group proposed a multi-functional facility that could be used and adapted for a wide range of local people and groups. This could combine well with the desire for an informal youth facility, aspirations for community workshops, pop up opportunities, space for classes and small community gatherings, maker spaces, and more. A key challenge is the need to fund the operation where there is limited income to cover the costs. HPBC are alert to the importance of the community interactions that such facilities would bring and the need to diversify the town centre. Buxton Town Team are in early stage discussion with our local authority about how and where to respond to these ideas.

Tourism and facilities for visitors focused on:

- Sign Posting
 - o Physical – HPBC aspire to replace and improve the directional signage for pedestrians. A ‘gold standard’ costed proposal was rejected by the Council a few years ago as being unaffordable. Could this be revisited / revised / re-costed / reconsidered?
 - o People – the group proposed that Vision Buxton work with Buxton College to create and deliver a training programme for customer facing personnel e.g. taxi drivers, shop and café staff. VB, who run the excellent ‘Human Signpost’ scheme in the summer, will consider the proposal.
- Toilets – the group proposed setting up a working group to liaise with businesses with toilets, a ‘You are welcome to use our toilets’ sign and publicity campaign. It was suggested that Vision Buxton, the Civic Assn and Town Team each discuss it at their next meetings in hope that one may be willing to take on the project. The group were pleased to learn that Parkwood Leisure are installing a Changing Places toilet, but also

expressed the ambition to see the existing public toilets (HPBC) improved or replaced.

Project ideas that were not selected for detailed consideration this time with additional information in brown text:

Buildings - Sustainably repurpose empty buildings for community, commercial and residential use - ensuring they are energy efficient. **Obvious link to the Youth and Well-being hub ideas above.**

Waste and Resources - Reduce waste through: education, events, involvement + expand repair, re-use and sharing (things & skills). **Transition Buxton and others are working in this area including the existing Repair Café and hopes to establish a Library of Things.**

Private Transport - Clear long term infrastructure planning for electric charging of vehicles which incorporates car parking areas, ideally with Park & Ride into town, whilst considering street and car parks in town (especially for residents and employees). **HPBC has installed 10 charge point across the Borough so far with plans and funding for a few more to come. A central government announcement is expected shortly on a new grant programme to support resident and employee charge points on private land. Viable Park & Ride sites on the approaches to Buxton are unavailable.**

Pavements - Many pavements are dangerous, including crossing points, street clutter needs considering, and there are gaps in the pedestrian routes within and from some newbuild areas forcing people to walk in the road. **Perhaps Buxton Town Team can include this in the Sustainable Travel work that they are doing with partners. Also HPBC Planners to take note.**

Business and Enterprise - Erect a glass canopy over Spring Gardens to facilitate all weather shopping. **Reinstating the Victorian canopy on the Terrace Road end of Spring Gardens and The Quadrant would cost more than the whole Heritage Action Zone grant, so will not be funded via this scheme. More extensive glass canopy is unlikely to be affordable and could be detrimental to the half of the town centre that is up the hill in Higher Buxton (the original town centre).**

Finally, participants were asked to share their parting thoughts on A5 sheets to gather any ideas or declarations that had arisen and not yet been shared. A selection of these include:

- ❖ *We need to do it with the people of Buxton, not to the people of Buxton.*
- ❖ *The future belongs to young people, we need their voices in everything.*
- ❖ *Young people need something to stay for – opportunities, a choice of career, decent housing, connections to the region.*
- ❖ *The traffic / transport system in Buxton needs sorting above all else.*
- ❖ *There are a lot of people in the town who have time, ability and contacts to call upon.*
- ❖ *It is no use just sitting back and waiting for other people to do something. Let's get on with it.*

- ❖ *We are only curators for those who come after us.*
- ❖ *If we don't take care of the environment there will be no Earth for humans in the future.*
- ❖ *Great to have this initiative to influence from the bottom up – we need to build on this so local voices are not ignored.*
- ❖ *Thank you for today.*
- ❖ *It is not just today that matters, its our tomorrows. Buxton is for everyone, today, tomorrow and the future.*

Participants were asked to keep us informed of any progress via a special email address: conversation@transitionbuxton.co.uk Some clusters seemed ready to meet independently to develop their proposals further.

The outcomes of BBC2 will be discussed and progressed where possible. 'We Are Buxton' the forum created following BBC1, will meet every 6 to 8 weeks and feedback through the constituent groups, and where appropriate, through the local press and social media.

The passion that people have for our lovely town and surrounding landscape came through loud and clear. The single loudest message to come from both these events so far is the value and importance of continuing to talk, ask questions, share ideas and working together for our shared benefit. So, the Big Buxton Conversations look set to become annual or twice yearly events. We need to endeavor to attract more and different people, of all ages, to take part in the Big Conversations and the projects and initiatives that come out of them. 'Watch this space' for further announcements and do share your ideas, progress and offers of support via conversation@transitionbuxton.co.uk

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