

Strategic Economic Plan – LEP Response to the Consultation

Background

The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for the Heart of the South West Local Economic Partnership (LEP) sets out the economic context of our area, our approach to growth and our strategic priorities for achieving economic growth over the next six years and beyond. It is one of 39 Strategic Economic Plans developed by LEPs throughout England and was submitted to Government in March 2014. Alongside these plans, each LEP made a case for a share of the Government's national Local Growth Fund, which will result in a Growth Deal for each area.

Our SEP will form the basis for our approach to investment and funding opportunities until its review in 2020, and will be delivered through a number of mechanisms over its lifetime. The Plymouth and Peninsula City Deal, the European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy and the Growth Deal 2015, submitted alongside our SEP, are key delivery frameworks that have been developed to secure and influence UK government and EU spending in our area. The LEP will be working on their implementation and pursuing other delivery routes over the next six years.

The Consultation Exercise

In developing the Strategic Economic Plan alongside our European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy, we have engaged with hundreds of businesses, representative bodies and individuals through meetings, events, working groups and feedback on drafts of both documents since July 2013. We have listened to a wide range of comments from business, education, the public and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, taking views in person, through consultation events and surveys.

Here are some of the ways in which the document changed from the previous draft issued in December.

Results of the Consultation

You told us there was too much jargon.

While the SEP has been developed in response to a request from Government, we do appreciate that it should be as accessible as possible. We have tried to improve its readability and avoid jargon where possible.

Some of you didn't like the mission statement.

We changed it to emphasise that we are trying to reposition the area nationally and globally in terms of perception of our area, our productivity and connectivity. Both the vision and mission statements have been rewritten to emphasise what we have and where we want to be.

You told us our objectives were not SMART.

We amended our objectives in light of recent economic projections, our ambition and current evidence, so that they are SMART (that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound) and there is now a clear outline for shorter and longer term objectives. Our objectives now clearly show how we want to reposition ourselves over time in comparison with the other LEP areas in England.

Some of you felt the document was too long and difficult to navigate.

We have split the document into two parts and separated the overarching multi-year SEP from the Growth Deal, which outlines our immediate asks of government.

Local Enterprise Partnership

Creating opportunities in Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay

You told us we hadn't fully explained our balanced approach to growth and the 'sector blind' approach we have taken.

We have tried to explain the concept better. We want to bring prosperity to the whole area and raise the productivity of all our sectors. We don't want to leave anyone behind and so, as far as possible, our interventions will benefit all.

In contrast, some of you told us to "pick winners" and make some tough decisions.

First and foremost we are a partnership that works for the best interests of our whole area. Where there is opportunity we will capture it but not at the expense of other parts of our area. We want to build upon what is unique to us and seize those opportunities that have potential for high growth but we also want to improve employment opportunities for all, including those with and without jobs. However, this does not mean we have not made some tough decisions. It is vital that we ensure we have the basic conditions for growth in place and to do this, we must focus on ensuring that our key infrastructure is fit for purpose.

Many of you told us that our key employment sectors of agriculture, tourism and food were not mentioned enough.

We have made their importance to our economy more explicit and have supplemented our aims to highlight our commitment to all sectors - including tourism, agriculture and food and drink - and ensure their place at the heart of our strategy. We have also highlighted the role of our distinctive environmental assets in our aims and made clearer the importance of our crosscutting principles of inclusivity and sustainability which will support all the businesses and people in our area. Our objectives remain sector blind and have been developed to support all businesses in our area, regardless of sector, geography or size.

In contrast some of you told us that cities are the main drivers of growth and we should give them more prominence. Some of you disputed the proportions of the urban/rural split in our area.

For clarity, 91% of our land is categorised as rural and over 40% of our population live in communities that have been classified as urban communities. Since 2009, the Office of National Statistics has classified large market towns as rural. However, the latest census data available via Nomisweb classifies any community of over 10,000 people as urban and under that classification, around 60% of our population is considered urban. Our LEP has a mixture of urban and rural areas that have been interdependent for centuries and we have a dispersed population. Our SEP tries to demonstrate an understanding of the needs and opportunities in all our areas and is underpinned by principles of social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Some of you thought our golden opportunities are the only projects we are backing.

We have tried to clarify that these opportunities have the potential to drive immediate, trans-formational growth at the same time as creating wide-reaching and lasting benefit for all the sectors in our area. We are using them to highlight opportunities our businesses or people can benefit from and basic areas - such as transport infrastructure - that need swift attention if we are to increase prosperity across the area. We fully expect there to be other important opportunities in the future.

Next Steps

We are now working with Government to progress the Strategic Economic Plan and take forward our proposals for a Growth Deal, and we welcome your feedback at all times.

We will be providing updates on our progress through our website and newsletter over the coming months.