

Business Leadership Group

Tuesday 8th January 2019

1400 – 1600hrs

NFU, Agriculture House, Pynes Hill, Rydon Lane, Exeter. EX2 5ST

Present

Richard Stevens (RS) - Chairman / LEP Board member / Business Representative (Citybus)

Amanda Ratsey (AR) – LEP Theme Lead / Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Colin Bettison (CB) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Daniel Newman (DN) - Torbay Development Agency

Eifion Jones (EJ) – LEP Head of Strategy

Noel Stevens (NS) – ESIF Committee Representative / Business Representative (Alder King)

Julia Blaschke (JB) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Stewart Horne (SH) – Business Support Representative (Business Information Point)

Hedi Hallam (HH) – LEP Partnerships Manager

Linda Middleton-Jones (LMJ) – Business Representative (International Trade Matters)

James Gilgrist (JG) – Local Authority (Somerset County Council)

Sue Wilkinson (SW) – Business Body Representative (Federation of Small Businesses)

Richard Adams (RA) – University of Plymouth

Brendon Noble (BN) – Institute of Innovation & Knowledge Exchange

Dolores Riordan (DR) – Devon County Council

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Apologies

Robin Daniels (RD) – Business Body Representative (South West Business Council)

Alistair Handyside (AH) - Tourism Alliance

Robert Kathro – Environmental Futures & Big Data Impact Lab

Steve Warren Brown – Business Representative (YSL Landscapes)

Paul Thomas – Local Authority (Devon County Council)

Martha Wilkinson (MW) – Social Economy / LEP Board Member (Devon Community Foundation)

Cllr Harvey Siggs (CHS) - Councillor Mendip District Council

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1	Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
	The introductions and apologies were made for Robin Daniels, Martha Wilkinson, Hayley Wallbank, Robert Kathro, Councillor Harvey Siggs, Alistair Handyside and Steve Warren-Brown. Conflicts of interest were declared by the entire group in relation to the Growth Hub.
2	Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising
	LMJ requested a change in the minutes in relation to the incorrect spelling of her name. HH declared that following instruction from the group she had met with the Police Crime Commissioner for Devon and has set up a meeting with the Police Crime Commissioner for Somerset.
3	Future of the Growth Hub (Confidential)
4	Future High Streets Fund
	<p>RS gave a brief introduction to the fund stressing that the amount of money does not seem substantial when considering the proportion of high streets which would be eligible to bid. The LEP needs to be ready to bid in an innovative way.</p> <p>HH asked which leadership groups would be leading on this bid. A letter of support would need to come from the management team (which covers all the leadership groups), however the important part is the economic case for each high street.</p> <p>The group considered whether there was a role for the group in encouraging projects to come forward, or even ranking projects (however it was felt that the Growth Hub could instead add value). AR stressed that the fund is not just about public realm but also business support, technology, trails, events etc.</p> <p>NS asked who would be putting these bids together, the best bids would come from a consortium of stakeholders with a clear vision (e.g. Totnes). Although Business Improvement Districts were seen as a good mechanism to pull together all these ideas these are only present in cities and some of the small town high streets are facing serious issues as the banks are leaving (e.g. Crediton). It was felt that our changing behaviors requires a change in the use, e.g. Dartmoor trails going through small towns making them a walking destination. It is the social value of the high streets which is important and should be more than just shopping.</p> <p>Action: send message out through the Growth Hub and social media feeds to raise profile of the fund, asking them to contact their local authority. HH to work with the districts on this.</p> <p>RS felt that there was not much more that the group could do until further criteria was published. But that encouragement would be a good idea.</p> <p>EJ mentioned that there would be a management team meeting on Wednesday and he would raise the fund there. It is desirable to have strong applications.</p> <p>Action: circulate the link to the application form and guidance.</p>

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5	ERDF Inward Investment Soft Landing Project
	<p>AR gave a brief introduction into the history of inward investment in the LEP which started with the regional growth fund. Due to our historical low levels of inward investments, DIT now take our region more seriously. When the regional growth fund ended we had established an approach which worked. An Inward Investment Manager is now a core member of staff at the LEP.</p> <p>This is a £1m soft landing package available in our area to continue landing inward investments which could be given to a new or existing FDI (non-EU) SME. There will be 6 awards and approximately 20 businesses would be eligible to apply.</p> <p>ESIF have given the funding agreement with a series of conditions: a decision-making panel and a steering group. The ask of the group is to be the steering group, then either a sub-group or the entire group to act as a decision-making panel (working alongside technical appraisers). There would be a need to check back on the conflict of interests and the terms of reference. JB stated that there would be an added level of governance that we would need to comply with because it is ERDF. JB proposed that a smaller sub-group is needed for the decision making panel (smaller, more flexible and less issues with conflicts of interest).</p> <p>All of the group were in favour of this.</p> <p>Action: contact and update Hayley on the outcome.</p>
6	Brexit
	<p>RS informed the group that there has been an upsurge in government departments looking for feedback from business organisations. There appears to be a lot of sense-checking, had a long exchange with Defra in relation to food / drink / tourism. There have been a number of conversations with MPs for steer on no Brexit and implications of a second referendum. The businesses which RS have engaged with suggest that no Brexit is seen as better than Brexit at any cost.</p> <p>NS gave an insight into commercial development, a high risk sector, most businesses are biding their time.</p> <p>RS felt that recruitment was one of the biggest issues, not about EU migrants returning home, but a stop in the stream of EU migrants.</p> <p>RA informed the group on how universities will be hit on three levels. 1 is retaining talent, 2 is a fall in international students (this isn't seen as a massive issue as the university does not receive a high level of EU students). Thirdly is the impact of the loss of research grants, the university is now having to recalibrate their horizons on the source of funding, which has to an extent been positive in diversifying the university's outlook on funding. Recruitment is the biggest cause for concern.</p> <p>LMJ informed the group that HMRC now allow you to apply for free courses on filling out forms.</p> <p>Action: LMJ to send HH the link to the customs courses.</p> <p>SH highlighted how farmers voted to leave because they believe in the deregulation of the industry, they are now very concerned about a no-deal scenario and the new Agriculture Bill.</p>
8	AOBs
	<p>HH thanked the group for the feedback to the Board, and will share the paperwork with the group. SH asked whether there was any underspend at this point in time (there is not).</p>

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*Next Meeting:
Tuesday 5th March – 1400 – 1600.
NFU, Rosemoor Court, Pynes Hill, Exeter EX2 5TU.*

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