

**Minutes of the LEP Place Leadership Group
05 December 2016
Caddsdawn Business Support Centre, Bideford**

Attendees

Barbara Shaw (BS)	-	Westward Housing
Chris Garcia (CG)	-	Hot SW LEP
David Northey (DN)	-	Network Rail
David Scott (DS)	-	Federation of Small Businesses
Doug Bamsey (DB)	-	Somerset District Councils
Joe Keech (JK)	-	Devon County Council
John Dixon (JD)	-	Plymouth City Council
Mark Worsfold (MWO)	-	South West Water
Mike O’Dowd Jones (MODJ)	-	Somerset County Council
Pat Steward (PS)	-	Torbay Council
Paul Hickson (PH)	-	Somerset County Council/HotSW LEP
Tim Jones (TJ)	-	HotSW LEP Board

Supporting Officers

Heidi Hallam (HH)	-	HotSW LEP
Rob Hensley (RH)	-	HotSW LEP Place Secretariat/Somerset County Council

Guests

Kevin Bishop (KB)	-	Dartmoor National Park Authority
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Apologies

Derek Phillips (DP)	-	South West Chambers of Commerce
Eifion Jones (EJ)	-	HotSW LEP
Ian Harrison (IH)	-	HotSW LEP Local Transport Board
Judith Gannon (JG)	-	LEP Business Forum
Kathryn Deeney (KD)	-	Plymouth City Council
Mark Beard (MB)	-	Knightstone Housing
Mark Williams (MW)	-	Devon District Councils
Mel Sealey (MS)	-	HotSW LEP
Stephen Bird (SB)	-	South West Water/ HotSW LEP Board
Sue Wilkinson (SW)	-	Federation of Small Businesses

	Agenda item	Lead
1	Welcome, introductions and apologies BS welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited attendees to introduce themselves. Apologies are noted above.	
2	Rural Productivity Networks for Dartmoor and Exmoor KB provided delegates with a copy of the National Parks’ proposal to Defra “Rural Productivity Networks for Dartmoor and Exmoor” as well as the “Economic Prospectus Summary” for Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks. KB described the National Parks as an international brand that was an important	

driver for inward investment into the HotSW area. For example, the parks attract approximately 5 million visitors per year which represents an economic value of £237 million. The Parks are home to over 3000 businesses with a total annual turnover of approximately £770 million. The Parks are also important environmentally, for example as sources of drinking water and environmental management in the Parks contributes to flood protection.

A Rural Productivity Plan was published by the Treasury and Defra in August 2015. Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks responded to this by developing, with local stakeholders and support from the LEP and two County Councils, a Rural Productivity Network Proposal which was submitted to Defra in May 2016. The proposal is for a pilot programme that provides a demonstration scheme for the Defra and Treasury proposals. The document sets out a number of “Offers” and “Asks” for each of five themes. KB explained that at its heart, the document emphasises place based facilitated innovation.

Key points for each theme included:

- **Connections**

The aim is for 96% broadband coverage across both Parks by mid-2017. The need for good public transport links and effective brown signage to inform visitors.

- **Skills**

A focus on skills development to meet the needs of current and future businesses. One example given to develop the next generation was Moorskills Ltd, a company established by farmers on Dartmoor to run apprenticeship and training programmes.

- **Growth**

The vision is to develop the environment as an engine for growth, for example by developing business centres that can make the most of the heritage of the Parks, such as areas of archaeological interest and provide facilities during periods of inclement weather.

- **Living**

Affordable housing is a key issue and the National Parks feel that a flexible planning policy framework offers the opportunity to help meet the needs of local communities. The document sets out specific asks around affordable and local needs housing and these have been supplemented by a proposal (submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government) for funding for a revolving land bank to facilitate affordable housing.

- **Devolution**

There is an opportunity to use the National Parks as delivery agents,

particularly through more effective engagement with key sectors such as agriculture and environment. Investment is needed to provide a “kick start” – helping place based initiatives to link producers and supply chains which could deliver big benefits.

The subsequent discussion highlighted the following:

- **Environmental Opportunities**

BS and PH asked about the links between the National Parks and water management. KB explained that the National Parks could play an important role in natural flood defence particularly through engagement with local farmers and the Environment Agency. This is something that has already been developed through the Mires partnerships for both National Parks.

- **Strategic Investment in the Environment**

PS asked about how growth elsewhere could help to fund growth in the National Parks? KB explained that adjacent urban areas were expanding with the National Parks representing recreational areas for the urban populations. Dartmoor is looking to commission some work to calculate the costs of increasing visitor numbers, the outcome of which will be used to inform the planning process and bids for funding. CG queried EAFRD as a possible funding route, perhaps with all National Parks working on a joint submission. PH clarified that national policy cover would be needed to get support via the EAFRD route.

- **Scenario Planning Post 2020**

TJ flagged early engagement in education as key to the skills agenda to support productivity improvement alongside the observation that success of the National Parks is predicated on their external relationships. KB explained that planning was being done around future funding streams and agreed that for skills, engagement with the secondary and primary sectors was important, particularly with regard to an environmental agenda. He also stressed that the National Parks rely on partnership working with constituent authorities.

- **Connectivity and Infrastructure**

KB explained that early take up of new superfast broadband networks was disappointing. He believed that this was due to costs and the fact that the wireless network is new technology. For example, with the wireless broadband network to make ‘economic sense’ for domestic households they would need to consider doing away with their landline and making calls using VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol). This is something that the National parks hope to address through the Connecting Devon and Somerset Programme and their contract with Cosmic. DS commented that there is interest in faster broadband across Devon but that mobile

	<p>coverage and roads are also key concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Parks “USP” Following the discussion about connectivity, DB observed that being isolated was part of the National Parks’ USP. Other destinations have their own environmental USPs, how do they reach out to wider communities? KB explained that they have engaged with youth workers and other initiatives to promote health and wellbeing such as “Green Prescriptions” in Devon and with deprived communities in Buckfastleigh in order to broaden the demographic that uses the National Parks. The experience of one young person was encapsulated in the following quote: “At home problems bounce back off the walls. On the moor they fly away.” <p>PH summarised the discussion by emphasising that National Parks were on the agenda and that two actions had emerged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect KB into the ongoing environmental resilience work. • Link at national level the National Parks with the EAFRD programme 	<p><i>PH/RH – Ensure that KB is engaged with resilience work</i></p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Productivity Plan PH provided the context for this item by explaining that the aim of the devolution prospectus was to drive up productivity and performance. Steps to achieve this included establishing governance arrangements and the offer to develop a productivity plan.</p> <p>The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) is a key policy document for the LEP but needs updating. The Productivity Plan provides for this.</p> <p>The timescale to sign off by June 2017 is ambitious.</p> <p>The process will entail a review of evidence (a “Green Paper”) and a review of strategy (a “White Paper”), the latter being the Production Plan.</p> <p>Involvement of the Leadership Groups will be an important mechanism to engage with stakeholders.</p> <p>The intention is to hold the next Place Leadership Group meeting on the 18th of January with the Productivity Plan as the single agenda item.</p> <p>CG emphasised that this will be the area’s Production Plan and therefore needs to be well informed locally and nationally, including for example MPs as an interest group. PS felt that it was important that the agenda was business led.</p> <p>DB stressed the need for clarity given the short timeframe and need to engage widely. JK noted the need to be clear on scope so as to complement not</p>	

	<p>duplicate other plans. PH agreed underlining that the process must be transparent and involve effective private and public sector cooperation.</p> <p>Noting that productivity outputs are low by national standards, TJ suggested looking for “quick wins” such as a best practice toolkit for small businesses and to ensure that the partnership checklist for the process should involve educational institutions (including primary schools) to make sure that local needs not just generic requirements are on the agenda. PH confirmed that universities are engaged in the process.</p> <p>CG emphasised that this will be the area’s plan not the LEP’s, the question being what will make a difference to local prosperity? The forthcoming work therefore represents an opportunity to re-check the key factors e.g. roads, broadband and skills.</p> <p>BS concluded the discussion by emphasising the need for honesty about what we can solve.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Declarations of interest It was agreed that Local Authority representatives had an interest in Growth Deal 3.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record and should be forwarded to be published on the Place Leadership Group pages of the HotSW LEP website.</p>	<p>RH – <i>To forward minutes for publication.</i></p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Growth Deal 1, 2 and 3 Update</p> <p>GD1&2 CG explained that there was nothing new to report although there are some concerns about projects that are not spending money. A paper will be taken at the Strategic Investment Panel (SIP) in January that will identify projects that have yet to sign funding agreements, particularly as others could be using those funds in the short-term. CG stressed that the LEP did not want any projects not to happen and was pleased that none had fallen by the wayside to date.</p> <p>GD3 CG advised that it would be unwise to speculate on the final Government decision/award and that there is a need to be realistic. The scheme was three times oversubscribed and therefore there is a great deal of competition.</p> <p>There will be no further Growth Deal rounds but other funding opportunities were identified in the Autumn Statement (November 2016) such as funding for infrastructure and the challenge fund (supporting the Government’s industrial strategy). Given the balance of allocation for rural versus urban (i.e. higher return) areas, the challenge going forward will be to secure funding. Therefore</p>	

	<p>stakeholders such as MPs will have a key role.</p> <p>CG confirmed that capital cannot be converted to revenue unless a partner is spending revenue on a capital project. However, this needs to be carefully managed and there is a financial process to follow.</p> <p>LEP Updates</p> <p>Non-Executive Director Recruitment</p> <p>CG advised that the recruitment process starts in January 2017 for new Non-Executive Directors to replace those that are due to step down later in 2017. Candidate specifications will be produced with particular scrutiny on what expertise candidates can bring to the roles.</p> <p>Media Coverage</p> <p>Although the HotSW LEP was not mentioned directly, CG ensured that the group was aware of recent coverage in the media which had questioned the transparency of LEPs and the robustness of the rules governing them. CG stressed that all LEP spending goes through the local authority governance and assurance framework.</p> <p>Media enquiries should be referred to Helena Davison as the LEP secretariat coordinates responses via the accountable bodies.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>‘Good to Know’ - Updates</p> <p>a. Enterprise Zones</p> <p>PH – There are two EZs - Oceansgate (Plymouth) and Huntspill Energy Park (Bridgwater). The memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between partners and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for the Huntspill Energy Park was submitted on time (end of September 2016).</p> <p>DCLG is making capacity funding available to support legal/commercial aspects (e.g. State Aid advice and marketing support) to help bring the MoU into operation. The next milestones will be addressing infrastructure issues, for which GD3 is key; Huntspill requires road access and Oceansgate is a brownfield site that requires work.</p> <p>TJ noted that the management of the EZs was very important, particularly as there could be a negative impact on adjacent areas (that are not subject to the same beneficial arrangements as the EZ). PH advised that mitigation for this is available in the form of business rate flexibility (case by case) and that the EZs are often specialist sites, with a focus on specific business areas.</p> <p>b. LEP Conference Outcomes</p> <p>HH – Expressed thanks for all who helped with the LEP Conference in October 2016. Good feedback was received and there was a good engagement with stakeholders. HH felt that the conference had perhaps been too ambitious in terms of the amount of content for a half day event.</p>	

	<p>Key concerns expressed by delegates were, skills, finance, infrastructure and uncertainty around BREXIT. For future events, broader engagement with wider stakeholders and a “festival” approach of activities spread over 1 – 2 weeks are being considered.</p> <p>During the discussion the need to keep businesses informed was stressed.</p> <p>c. Representatives on other LEP Groups (Including: Unlocking Growth Fund; ESIF; Construction Labour & Skills Steering Group)</p> <p>European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) PH – The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) is the rural component of ESIF. This is an EU programme with the national approach in the UK followed by Defra. The HotSW has the largest LEP allocation.</p> <p>There will be three calls for funding after Christmas 2016, led by the Rural Payments Agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business Development - Tourism Cooperation - Food and Drink Processing <p>The RPA will organise a promotional campaign including a workshop per LEP area. The view of the meeting was that more workshops would be needed along with help from partners to aid communication.</p> <p>The Government will commit to contracts up to the point of leaving the EU in or around 2022 and this is a “good news story”.</p> <p>This prompted a brief discussion about the local authorities BREXIT Group and how to interact/engage with it effectively. DB is part of the group.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>AOB – PS - Bids for Homes and Community Association (HCA) capacity funds were to be submitted from 5th December 2016. PS felt that the LEP has skills that could usefully contribute to this, particularly with discussions on how to join up across the whole area not just locally. PH suggested that we should undertake some capacity funding mapping.</p> <p>JD – The Plymouth Local Plan will be ready for submission early next year.</p> <p>TJ – Proposed a subject for Future Topics; the investigation of inward investment and retention of existing companies. This to include an assessment of any initiatives that are being run elsewhere.</p>	<p>PH – <i>Consider capacity funding mapping</i></p>

	PH – Emphasised the importance of the work programme to develop the Productivity Plan for the first half of 2017 and the engagement needed to support the work.	
9.	Next meeting: 18 th January. Venue and details to be confirmed.	

Actions Log Summary	Meeting Date	Owner	Status Update	Next Steps
Ensure that National Parks are engaged with resilience work.	05/12/2016	Paul Hickson/Rob Hensley		
To forward Place minutes for publication on HotSW LEP website.	05/12/2016	Rob Hensley	Completed 06/12/2016	N/A
Consider capacity funding mapping exercise	05/12/2016	Paul Hickson		