

## July Board Summary

There was a presentation update on digital connectivity; a key aim of the LEP; which is funded at different phases by various LEP packages. The Connecting Devon and Somerset initiative is a partnership covering the HotSW area plus North Somerset, Bath and East Somerset. It's the largest such project in England and has achieved successful results. Its ambition is to provide superfast broadband speeds of over 24Mbps to all premises in the CDS area by 2020. This means targeting hard to reach places which are prone to "market failure" through not being viable for commercial connection. The full presentation is available [here](#).

The Chief Executive's report outlines a number of strategic updates, including programme management of the LEP projects and how the pipeline should be prioritised in the event of any project becoming unviable to proceed. It was agreed that re-allocation of any funding that becomes available would be tested against the Productivity Plan.

An update on the Productivity Plan was given with the revised timescale. A draft Plan is targeted for LEP Board review on 19th September and Leaders' review on 22nd September. Following these dates the plan will be consulted on more widely with a final Plan by end 2017. The model illustrating the outline of the Plan has been amended to take into account comments made at the May Board, to make it outcome-oriented and ensuring knowledge is shared. The board agreed the need to find out why businesses of all sizes are not investing at the same level as other areas of the country, and what barriers might be affecting this lack of growth, such as skills, labour, housing, connectivity, and lifestyle.

Pending the finalisation of the Productivity Plan, an interim LEP Business Plan was presented, with priorities being the Productivity Plan itself, effective delivery of current live projects, and preparing for future funding opportunities.

Following a presentation update on the Great South West campaign - a joint branding initiative to badge the south west in a similar branding exercise to that of the Northern Power House and Midlands Engine - the Board broadly welcomed the branding initiative, recognising that more needed to be done to engage all partners in this business-led initiative. Members recognise the benefits of cross-boundary collaboration for destination marketing and securing investment from government at a strategic level. Consultation with the board will continue

Some points to address in improving the campaign were:

- Re-emphasise the need to include Bristol and the West of England LEP area into the south west product, to give it validity and relevance to the national and global market. (Businesses in the West of England area have already expressed support).
- Consult with board thoroughly over priorities, branding and scope of Great South West, and ensure that the Pennon Group-led #BackTheSouthWest campaign is not a rival but complementary to Great South West.

- Include the education sector.
- Increase communication with MPs and relevant Ministers.

Reporting from the recent Annual Strategic Review and Process Review, the LEP is working well across partners and geographies and is seen as well-led with a lean team that achieves a lot. It is recognised that the Heart of the SW area is a relatively new construct so there has been a period of 'institution building' to enable the geography to work cohesively as a whole. More focus is to be given on improving linkages, productivity, governance and partnership between the private and public sector.

In an update on the European Structural Investment Fund, options are being considered on how to strongly support the Department for Work and Pensions in investing the remaining European Social Funds in the HotSW area. HotSW has the highest level European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in the country - take up has been slow but is beginning to improve. The LEP Network is working with DCLG and the Local Government Association to explore what funds will be in place to support local growth post-Brexit.

The HotSW LEP Conference & AGM event is to be held in Taunton on 10 November as part of Global Entrepreneurship Week / Social Enterprise Week, and an annual report will be published outlining the LEP's budgets and achievements to date.

Under Growth Deal, the recommendation was approved to issue a funding agreement for £1.5m for Tiverton East Urban Extension - using the proposed funding option to cover risk by balances from the Growing Places Fund - therefore enabling the Growth Deal 2 project to proceed.

Concern from a Board member about the lack of geographical spread of the private sector directors was responded to by explaining that the governance structure doesn't set geographical criteria on private sector members, only local authority ones who are elected to represent their area. Private sector members are appointed on their expertise and are expected to represent the LEP area as a whole, in line with the setting of LEP strategic priorities.