

Heart of SW LEP CIC Board meeting

Paper 5.6 Jan 2018

Report title: Great South West Update

Report theme: Board

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Purpose of the report

To update the board of the progress in establishing cross LEP regional working.

Recommendations

The Board agrees to continue to support the establishment of Great South West and supports:

- An early meeting of a new Steering Group
- The appointment of a new Partnership Executive to facilitate progress

Background

Conversations between Great South West partners have been continuing over recent months. Cornwall County Council is keen that the next step should be the establishment of a more structured Steering Group with representatives from public and education stakeholders as well as business. The CEX of the Cornwall, Dorset and Solent LEPs have agreed to work with us on the establishment of this and to provide a resource (ie a part time Partnership Executive) to facilitate activity – as regional work has had to take a back seat to other day to day activities in recent weeks since the last SW Growth Summit.

The following core narrative has been developed by the four LEPs to inform these developments and set out their terms of reference.

Narrative

The South West of England is a great place. It is poised for a step change in prosperity and productivity. When the productivity in the South West of England matches that currently in the South East we will add over £18bn a year to the UK's economy.

Our economy is already bigger than that of Greater Manchester and more than two and a half times that of Birmingham – with the single largest infrastructure project in Europe already underway (generating billions of pounds of business opportunities) and the best natural capital in the country (attracting more visitors than anywhere else outside London).

The publication of the SW Growth Charter in 2016 and the two SW Growth Summits started our journey to promote our great region and we welcome the continuing support of stakeholders across the region to:

- help in shaping our opportunities
- build further momentum.

Our journey toward greater collaborative working across the SW to facilitate this step change will now involve a series of further increments over the coming year:

- Drawing up a core set of principles and plan of initial actions that partners all can work to
- Establishing a Steering Group of Leaders from business, education and local authorities to guide our work
- Forming a core (officer) team that draws on resources of the partners and specialists needed to take forward our agendas
- Making progress on an initial set of specific opportunities to benefit our region, its businesses, people and communities
- Attracting the interest of ministers and civil servants; for example our existing regional working is currently below the radar – and so not in receipt of support . Also in the current debate around the north:south divide we are seen in Whitehall as being in the ‘south’ – and so not considered a priority for rebalancing investments
- Developing and enhancing our knowledge base of the SW, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats so we can engage more actively with a consistent voice to facilitate turning policy into fresh delivery in our areas

Our Core Principles

We propose the following set of core principles that all stakeholders can utilise to provide a consistent voice to Government and investors so that we all can acclaim that we **‘Back the South West’!**

More specifically our core principles are that partners all agree on:

- The need to promote and take forward the South West’s great opportunities for increasing the prosperity of our businesses, our people and our communities and huge potential to contribute to the wealth of the country.
- We will achieve this by working collaboratively across our cities, towns and rural communities, developing shared propositions, attracting investment and tackling barriers to productivity; making the whole of the South West a prosperous region.
- This is not about a fixed geography, it’s about working on areas of common interest across the South West with a ‘coalition of the willing’ where our combined efforts can make a real difference.
- Our activities will be driven by our opportunities and our work will be directed by a steering group of leaders from business, education and local authorities who believe in this vision.

Our next Actions

Our focus over coming months should therefore be structured around two threads:

- A. **Establishing a strong partnership and core partnership activities** around the 'coalition of the willing' led by a Steering Group of Leaders. It is proposed that an interim part time programme lead will be appointed (resourced from one of our LEPs) to facilitate this partnership working and establish the numerous threads of activities needed. The programme lead will report to the Chair of the Steering Group (who ideally should be a business leader). Steve Hindley has indicated he is happy to continue as Chair.

LEPs, leading business groups, Local Authorities and Education institutions across the SW will be invited to send representatives who support our vision to join this Steering Group - this will take over from the current Business Leader Forum.

The intention is that each LEP area has at least five potential representatives from across the stakeholder spectrum on the Steering group. SW Councils will arbitrate on Local Authority representatives and LEP and or CBI on businesses and education representatives. Representatives should be either Chief Executive or Leader level within their particular organisations.

The Steering Group detailed terms of reference are yet to be developed but in summary the group will:

- a. Meet quarterly
- b. Facilitate the development of the above actions
- c. Enhance our knowledge base on commercial and economic data on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the SW to underpin work
- d. Prioritise and review opportunity business cases and plans
- e. Develop collateral and promotional activities to attract investment and support the vision and communicate what we are doing
- f. Establish task and finish groups and commissions of enquiry needed
- g. Focus on delivery(attracting funding and /or outcomes) as the key objective

All partners including Education, Business, LEPs and Local Authorities of HotSW, Solent, Dorset and Cornwall will be asked to contribute to the secretariat and resources for the Steering Group and its core activities.

As highlighted an initial priority will be to appoint an interim programme lead and draw up a budget and resources plan. The individual will report to the four LEP CEXs for this work – regular CEX meetings should be arranged, some face to face, some virtual. The objectives for this appointment will be to:

1. Commission our Universities to develop initial work on our knowledge base
2. Facilitate the commencement of programmes of work around our specific opportunities as outlined below
3. Establish the Steering Group and CEX Group outlined above with a programme of meetings for 12 months.

4. Arrange the issue of a (say) 1.5 page letter from the Steering Group / key stakeholder constituencies to Government ministers to mark the commencement of regional work to 'Back the South West'
5. Encourage communications and events that highlight the above work

B. Developing a small number of specific opportunities for increasing the prosperity of our businesses, our people and our communities. Each initiative will have to show to the Steering Group how they build on the assets already identified in our SW and S Wales Science and innovation Audit and how it 'Backs the South West'. That said, each must build on or consist of existing initiatives and programmes (we mustn't reinvent the wheel) and can use individual (existing) regional SW branding to maximise its impact and progress (if already established). Partners will need to be identified for each and an initial set of proposals are outlined below (lead partner in bold). It will be the responsibility of the lead partners to organise / source funding and resources needed for each of the following activities:

1) Prosperity for all in our Rural areas – following the recent South West Rural Productivity Commission report, this has confirmed that rural really matters if the country is to deliver the vision in the recently published Industrial Strategy. This work should be extended to embrace coastal agendas as well as rural. At a regional level we will take forward the following actions:

- (a) **National lobbying** for
 - (i) Broadband for all (based on a USO of 30mbps)
 - (ii) Effective Rural Proofing
 - (iii) Brexit policies fit for rural and coastal prosperity
- (b) Start the process of developing a '**Smart Rural Research Platform**' considering international good practice such as the Brainport model, through a coalition with the public, private and higher education sectors
- (c) Recognise the **higher cost of delivering public services in a rural context**, and support the development of possible pilot programmes in the South West to test innovative approaches to supporting older people in rural areas
- (d) Seek out 're-location' opportunities to **relocate government agencies or back-office functions** to the rural or coastal areas of the South West
- (e) Push for the **enterprise zone model** to be extended to rural / coastal areas, with a pilot within the Heart of the South West
- (f) Where relevant, work with the Higher Education Funding Council for England to address **Higher Education blackspots**.
- (g) Proactively plan the future of agricultural support, environmental stewardship and land management post CAP, potentially including a pilot within the Heart of the South West National Parks

Partners: **HotSW**, Cornwall, Dorset, Swindon & Wiltshire

2) Commercial Propositions – The SW Growth Summit identified a range of potential opportunities for the SW economy which would also contribute to the Govt's recent published Industrial Strategy. Work has already started on the commercial benefits

from these (see separate reports); our focus will now be to refine the business cases and benefits of each and to take forward promoting and attracting investment.

The following specific opportunities are to be progressed (Partners identified for each – lead partner in bold):

- i) Aerospace and Space – Partners: **WoE, Cornwall**, Dorset, HotSW, GFirst
 - ii) Agri-tech – Partners: **Dorset**, Cornwall, HotSW
 - iii) Creative / Digital – Partners: **Dorset**, Cornwall, HotSW
 - iv) Marine – Partners: **HotSW, Solent**, Cornwall, Dorset
 - v) Nuclear – Partners: **HotSW**, Dorset, Cornwall, WoE, GFirst
 - vi) Tourism – Partners: **Cornwall**, HotSW, Dorset
 - vii) Energy – Partners: **WoE**, GFirst, Swindon & Wiltshire, HotSW, Solent, Dorset, Cornwall
- 3) Cross cutting initiatives – The partners (through the Steering Group) will consider over time what support to give to other and cross cutting initiatives on a case by case basis. Each will require lead and other partners to be identified. For example:
- Sub-national **transport** body
 - Commission of enquiry / work to address **aging society**
 - Tackle the specific productivity challenges facing **primary production, food and drink and tourism**.
 - Work together to develop support programmes for **‘scale-up’ businesses**, helping them to access world class advice, including leadership and management training.
 - Explore and develop **alternative apprenticeships models** that overcome the challenges of taking an apprenticeship in a rural area
 - Work with the Transport Systems Catalyst to develop a challenge fund to find innovative solutions to improving **accessibility to rural employment and education opportunities**
 - Joint bids and joint responses to **consultations** as they arise where it makes sense to do so
 - Pursuing opportunities as highlighted in the two southern **science and innovation audits**
 - Requesting government work with us in phase two of the co-production of **local industrial strategies**

C Garcia
16 January 2018