

# Heart of SW LEP CIC Board meeting

## Paper 5.2 May 2018

**Report title: Rural Productivity Update**

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**Report theme:** Board

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### **Purpose of the report**

To update the board of the progress in progressing 'Rural' agendas since publication of the SW Rural Productivity Commission recommendations and agree next steps.

### **Recommendations**

The Board agrees to continue to support the development of activities at national, regional and HotSW level to take forward the recommendations of the Rural Productivity Commission. Comments on next steps are invited.

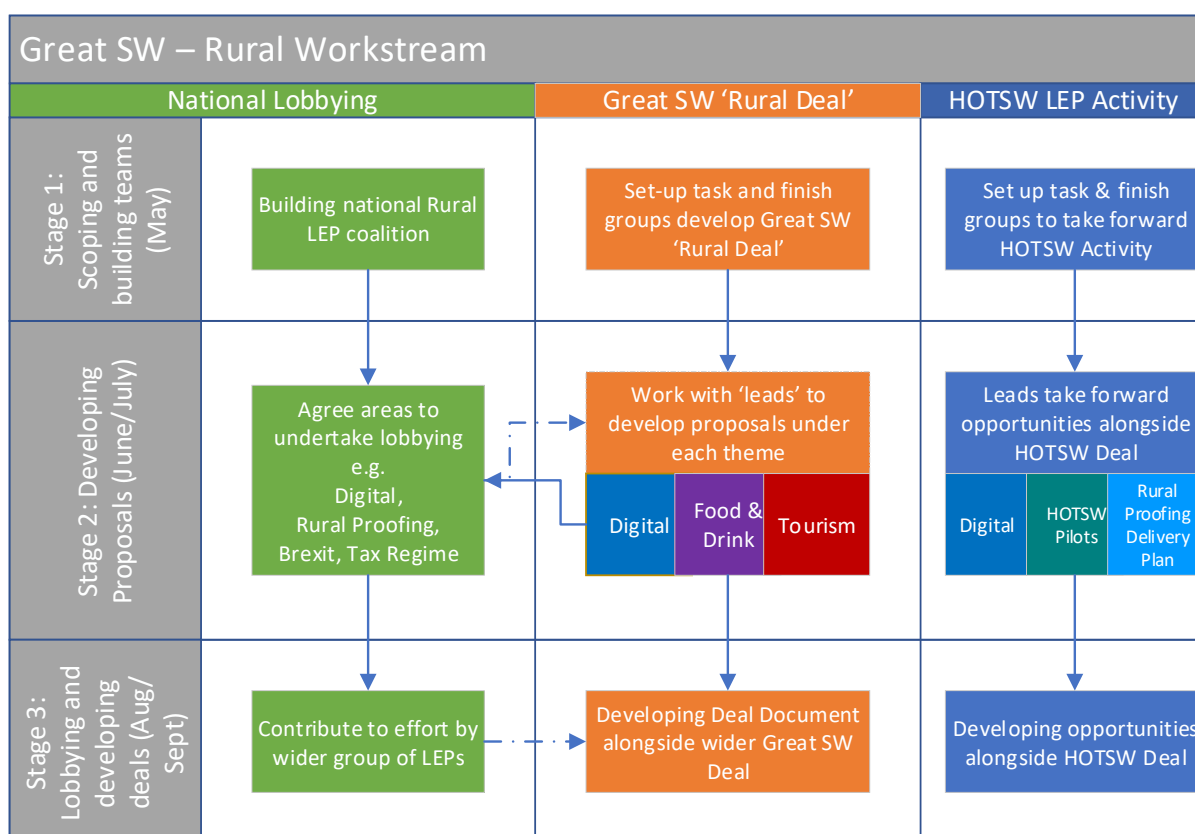
### **Background**

The SW Rural Productivity Commission report was published at the end of October 2017, receiving a positive response from both national and local stakeholders. Since the publication of the report, LEPs and their partners across the region have been reviewing its findings, discussing them with Government and local partners and considering the options for progressing recommendations in three spatial workstreams: nationally, regionally and locally.

The diagram below sets out the three element approach to developing each of the rural workstreams. The first phase involves refining the scope and building teams to develop the various workstreams. The three workstreams are:

- National issues - Where we will have to work with other LEPs across the country to lobby Government on issues that are of national significance. Key issues anticipated as being Broadband and Mobile investment, Rural proofing of national budgets, Brexit issues
- Regional issues – Where there are benefits to work collectively regionally in the SW - to develop a Great SW 'Rural Deal'. Key agendas being Broadband and Mobile investment and regional opportunities for productivity and prosperity arising from Tourism and Food and Drink
- Local issues – Where there are agendas specific to the Heart of the SW. These are under consideration with partners but likely to include Broadband and Mobile investment, and opportunities to Pilot post Brexit funding regimes (ie in lowland and upland areas) as well as rural proofing our initiatives in the HotSW LEP Productivity Strategy Delivery Plan (eg supply chains and skills and career development linked to our opportunities)

There will be some cross over between these three workstreams – which can be described as a golden thread.



## Our next Actions

### National

John Mortimer, the Chairman of Swindon and Wiltshire LEP is establishing a working group of all the Rurals LEPs in the country on the back of this work. The first meeting of this group is scheduled for later this month to consider the above plan and agree the key issues to focus our national lobbying. Business case development and lobbying activities will be the key next steps.

### Regional

In the last few weeks the 3 Great South West LEPs have each committed resources to provide a part-time resource (Emma Buckman) to take forward the work of the rural productivity commission at a regional level. We have also now been 'joined' by Swindon and Wiltshire LEP and Gfirst LEP. West of England have asked to be kept in touch with this work.

Emma Buckman will:

- Report to the chairs of the Great South West LEPs who will act as a steering group;
- Develop a set of asks/offers that could form part of a regional 'Rural Deal' with Government focused around digital, tourism and food and drink opportunities;
- Facilitate partnerships and virtual teams to take forward activity/develop detailed proposals to be included in the Deal';
- Feed in regional input into the national discussions with other rural areas across the UK;

- Act as a focal point for lobbying and cross-government influencing and advocacy, working with a wide-range of departments including DEFRA, BEIS, MHCLG, DFE and DWP; and
- Help to develop a 'golden thread' that connects rural economic policies at a local, LEP, regional and national level.

### HotSW

Our focus in HotSW will build on the work of the Joint Committee and other partners on rural and broader productivity strategy Delivery Plan priorities. Three areas of work are currently envisaged subject to discussion with partners:

- Digital – broad band and mobile connectivity is as much a priority for us, if not more, than in regional or other rural areas across the country. We envisage CDS continuing to be taking a lead on programme development on our Digital programmes
- HotSW pilots – our national parks have already forwarded to Defra suggestions for pilots to model the approach to upland funding streams post Brexit. The LEP is currently working with partners to develop a lowland pilot proposal to sit alongside these. In addition Kevin Bishop has been commissioned by BROG to explore how a broader Brexit devolution deal might be structured.
- HotSW Rural proofing – the development work underway on our Productivity Strategy is now focused on the 'opportunities' we should develop programmes for. Stephen Walford has commissioned some thinking on how we might include rural elements in these opportunities for consideration by the joint LEP / Joint Committee working group developing the delivery plan.

All three of these elements will feed into the 'Deal' being developed and in discussion with CLOG for any future potential devolution deal.

Chris Garcia

5 May 2018