

Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership

Finance & Resources Meeting

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Report theme: LEP Annual Conference

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Summary

Purpose of the report – to set out a framework for the Enabling Fund line in the 19/20 budget

Recommendations – that F & R agree to the revised suggested approach for this year's conference

Background

Further to various discussions - F & R, Conference Task & Finish Group, Management and Core Teams - it has been suggested that this year's Conference and AGM will be held on the 4th November (am) and focussed around the LIS and on the basis of the following approach.

The aims of the Conference & AGM are to:

- Help us to achieve and show transparent working / practices
- Provide an opportunity for our stakeholders to meet the LEP and for networking
- Showcase our work - explaining what the LEP does and what has been achieved with the public funds
- Share our aims and plans for the future - to increase Productivity and Prosperity in our area, e.g. the LIS
- Enhance the LEP's reputation and decrease potential future problems that arise when stakeholders do not have an opportunity to engage with the LEP / are not informed.

The event will be:

- A. Focussed around the LIS, particularly the Clean Growth agenda and the three areas outlined in the command paper.**
- B. A half-day event, held in Torquay at the Riviera Centre (confirmed and contracted).
- C. Include - an opening speech from the Chair; an impact update from the CEO (possibly showing a video); an extended period for networking and engagement with the stands (providers / key stakeholders); the three Leadership Groups each leading on a plenary session covering the three foci of the LIS; ideally with a "guest" speaker on Clean Growth; and the AGM.
- D. Each of the three Leadership Groups will lead on one of the thematic LIS areas. The aim is to provide a platform for and to show how the LEP's investments benefit the

wider LEP areas / communities LEP, whilst at the same time providing a link with the priorities identified through our LIS and thus enabling our stakeholders to understand / “buy into” our approach for the future:

- Business leading on High-tech engineering: marine, aerospace & photonics
 - Place leading on Clean energy: nuclear & offshore renewables
 - People leading on Digital futures: big data, environmental & health tech.
- E. These 3 plenary sessions will be made engaging through use of a mix of industry and officer speakers, case studies utilised, panel sessions (where appropriate) and showcasing leading technologies where relevant (e.g. live showing on screen of a digital VR experience). The aim is to bring to life some of the projects that the LEP has invested in and showing how they link with proposed future activity related to LIS priorities.
- F. The aim for the Sponsorship will be to work with an organisation aligned with the Clean Growth agenda.
- G. An event company procured to work with the LEP (as in previous years) and they will also be tasked with achieving enough sponsorship to cover their costs and ideally those of the conference.**
- H. The “physical” delegate pack will be minimal (corporate literature – Annual Impact Report etc.) and the “virtual” pack will include the delegate list, agenda, stand profiles, AGM materials etc. and will be available on-line and in advance.

Draft Agenda

When	What
8.30 - 9.15 45 mins	Registration / Networking (need at least 30 mins to register 200 plus delegates)
40 mins 9.15 - 9.55	Welcome, Opening Introductions (SH) LEP Updates and Impacts - where we have been, what we are doing and why, and how much impact has been achieved (DR) (Chair & CEX)
20 mins 10.00 - 10.20	Guest speaker – what is clean growth and what could it mean for the SW?
40 mins 10.20 - 11.00	Refreshment Break and Extended Networking / Stands
30 Mins 11.00 - 11.30	Business Leadership Group leading on their LIS thematic area
30 mins 11.30 - 12.00	People Leadership Group leading on their LIS thematic area
30 mins 12.00 - 12.30	Place Leadership Group leading on their LIS thematic area
10 mins 12.30 - 12.40	Closing remarks (before AGM)
20 mins 12.40 – 13.00 Closes 1pm	AGM (SH) (10 mins plus, 10 mins Q & A)

Costings

The costings for this event (before sponsorship is achieved) would be in the region of £12.5k and this would include the venue (inc. external AV / IT support on the day £508)) and an external event management company to provide the necessary administrative / event support to the LEP team and achieve sponsorship.

Utilising this option of a half day conference; without lunch or breakout rooms, will lead to a venue charge of £5,025 (£16.75+vat per delegate x 300).

For the last two years the costs have been around £18/19k net (£23k inc VAT) for the complete event and this included the venue, catering / lunch, sound / IT technicians, delegate pack printing, event company, photography and voting devices.

Approximate breakdown of costs

- Venue / refreshments for 300 delegates = £5k
- IT / AV support on the day (no voting devices) = £0.5k
- Event company support – general = £5k
- Event company support – for sponsorship = £2

[The event company will be tasked with raising between £7k (their expected fees) and the total conference cost of £12.5k, which includes their fees].

Total in the region of = £12.5k

Example of how a Leadership Group session could be delivered around their LIS themes

(with thanks to Rob Hensley and Corinne Matthews for sharing their example)

Example of how the Leadership Group led sessions can be translated into 'telling the story' of how investments to date are delivering against the areas' priorities from the original SEP and continue to shape economic prosperity against the Govts. Industrial Strategy and our Local Industrial Strategy visions.

Clean Growth

Now / To-date

- Experience of Development of Hinkley and associated infrastructure – a major investment project in the SW
- Supply Chain development and initiatives to promote and coordinate (business)
- Energy Innovation Centres / Enterprise Zones (Place)
- Skills development opportunities with liaison and partnerships between Local Authorities, Government, Academia, and skills providers (People)

Using that experience when looking to future activity

- The experience of this can / will be brought to bear with the development of other regional low carbon energy resources e.g. innovation / new technologies, short supply chains, inward investment and export potential – coordination and partnerships – a voice for the region?
- Links to marine, hi-tech and AI / digital as clean growth industries – cutting across to other sectors?
- Seek opportunities for clean energy solutions and green infrastructure e.g. for the new garden settlements
- Aim to secure solutions to enable and promote business development – e.g. Energy Innovation Zones?
- Seek opportunities to harness natural capital as part of the above – green infrastructure (health and well-being) carbon sequestration in conjunction with agri-tech (e.g. the innovative use of hi-tech and big data for land management efficiency) – perhaps explore via a project with the North Devon Biosphere?
- Overall = opportunities for sustainable productivity growth based upon regional assets.

Extracts from Previous Papers as an Aide Memoir

The Basic Principles Behind Having an Annual LEP Conference

- It is now a requirement from our funders that we hold an annual event.
- We choose to combine our Conference and AGM at the same event / time - saving costs and resources.
- We have led on good practice (since 2015) by holding an annual stakeholder event. By doing this, it has saved the LEP extra work and potential “problems” that would occur because stakeholders don’t have easy routes to engage with the LEP – owing to the cost effective model the HotSW is based upon regarding premises and staffing. So for most of our stakeholders this is the only opportunity for them to hear from the LEP or to meet us.
- As we are publicly funded, the Conference & AGM are free for stakeholders to attend.
- We typically get around 350 or more bookings to attend with around 300 delegates on the day. Thus, the size of the venue is a critical issue as there are a limited number of venues with easy transport access and the ability to host our size in the area.

Different Approaches to an event and Options Tried in the Past

Activity	Comments
a) Half, $\frac{3}{4}$ or whole day	$\frac{3}{4}$ and whole days are costly owing to providing lunch to 300
b) Voting devices used	Delegates like the interaction, it provides LEP with live data from stakeholders. But costly to rent / tech support needed
c) Digital used more / live webinars etc. on the day	Seems like a great idea to enable those who can’t attend to engage. However, LEP doesn’t have the technical support and knowledge / resources in house to be able to do this. Extra costs / resources needed to deliver this, as well as potential high risk issues over content control for LEP. Use of local colleges / universities is often cited, but in reality (when tried) the timing doesn’t work well with academic year / curriculum - which needs to be planned a year in advance
d) Have two different locations to enable more venue choice	Having separate Devon and Somerset events has been ruled out in the past
e) Limit the number of delegates on the day to 200 to enable cheaper venue	The conference could turn into a significant negative issue for many stakeholders and the LEP could be seen as trying work in a non transparent manner – if stakeholders were not able to book a place
f) Have an event company to undertake most of the admin work	The LEP’s first conference (150 or so delegates) did not have any external help and led to major staff stress and had significant operational impacts. Various models have been trialled and the most cost / resource efficient is having a modest event company work with us / carry out most of admin
g) Do not have an event company - member of staff allocates 50% of	Although not tried before, we could allocate a member of staff to undertake this work by freeing them up for 2 and half months (end August to early Nov) for 50% of their working week

their week for 2 and half months	
h) Get a sponsor for the event	If the sponsor was carefully chosen and the sponsorship achieved through the event company, this year could be the test bed for this approach
i) The LEP covers the cost of a very moderate conference	This year is a very moderate, half day affair, while still allowing for the large delegate numbers
j) Try different venues	Both the Partnerships Manager and Executive Assistant have been involved in organising events for over 20 years and have used most of the venues across the area, including in FE / HE. Instead of using a conference venue and using a “flat” space that has not yet been fitted out or is a large hall, can seem appealing. But you have to hire in every table, chair, carpet, catering, stage, sound equipment / IT needed and often this is a false economy – we did this for the conference at the Somerset Cricket club and the workload was phenomenal and ultimately a similar cost. However, we are enquiring into the availability of SD College’s new building and the SEIC phase 2
k) Timings – could we hold it at a different time of the year	FE / HE venues can be great out of term time. The AGM is held to coincide with the Board signing off of our accounts / year end for Companies House etc. thus AGM is needed in early November. Few dates are usually available to choose from once the Chair and Management Team availability is factored in. Venues the size we need get booked up sometimes years in advance and availability is often difficult as there is little choice across our area for a large conference space
l) Business support stands / our ESIF funded projects (40 or so stands)	We presently have stands on the day (for free) - the providers of our publicly funded services for business, and other key business support organisations in our area - and this creates a great Buzz on the day and a LOT of good will with partners
m) LEP surgery sessions	If we wanted to offer stakeholders the opportunity to come and meet with the LEP on a one-to-one basis – a surgery type approach – we would need additional rooms to do this

Some feedback over the years:

- A good mix of stakeholder / partners and with over 50% from the private and third sectors
- Too rushed - tried to do too much in a half day event (but ½ days avoid lunch costs)
- Would like an opportunity for a lot more stakeholders to meet with / engage with the LEP
- Good mix of speakers (28) and topics - with no speaker charges to the LEP
- Sessions run by the Leadership Groups, were highly valued & provided a link to them e.g. Q&As - can we have more of this please
- A venue large enough to accommodate a mix of stakeholders at the same time and at same event
- Good to have the Growth Hub and other business support stands there

- Great having Board Directors involved on the day - raising their profile & providing access to them
- Specific IT support is needed for an event of this size
- Having a p/t subcontractor as project support – invaluable as LEP core team has no “spare” capacity
- Could we include virtual / web based engagement next time e.g. webinar?
- Does the AGM work as part of the Annual Conference / event?