

**Business Leadership Group**

**Thursday 9th January 2020. 2pm – 4pm.**

**NFU Offices, Rosemoor Court, Pynes Hill, Exeter EX2 5TU**

**Present**

Richard Stevens (RS) - Chairman / LEP Board member / Business Representative (Citybus)

Amanda Ratsey (AR) – LEP Theme Lead / Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Julia Blaschke (JB) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Jason Buck (JBu) – Local Authority (Torbay Development Agency)

Heather Hillman (HH) – Local Authority (Devon County Council)

Stewart Horne (SH) - Business Support Representative (Business Information Point)

Robert Kathro (RK) – R&D and Innovation (University of Exeter)

Robin Daniels (RD) – Business Body Representative (South West Business Council)

David Ralph (DR) – Chief Executive of HOTSW LEP

Carl Wyard (CW) – TDA / Employment Land Survey

Corinne Matthews (CM) – HOTSW LEP / NSW

**Officers attending**

Heidi Coombe (HC) – LEP Partnerships Manager

Colin Bettison (CB) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Ester Curry (EC) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Hadelzein Elobeid (HE) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Helena Davidson (HD) – LEP Communications Manager

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## Apologies

Steve Warren Brown (SWB) – Business Representative (YSL Landscapes)

Linda Middleton-Jones (LMJ) – Business Representative (International Trade Matters)

Sue Wilkinson (SW) – Business Body Representative (Federation of Small Businesses)

Alistair Handyside (AH) - Tourism Alliance

Noel Stevens (NS) – ESIF Committee Representative / Business Representative (Alder King)

Martha Wilkinson (MW) – Social Economy / LEP Board Member (Devon Community Foundation).

James Gilgrist (JG) – Local Authority (Somerset County Council)

No.	Agenda Item
1	<b>Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</b>
	<p>The introductions were made and apologies were noted (see above). Martha Wilkinson had taken the decision to leave the group, the group noted their thanks for her many invaluable contributions.</p> <p>Conflicts of interest were declared for HH and DCC in relation to the Growth Hub.</p> <p>Declarations of Interest forms to be updated at end of the session.</p>
2	<b>Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising</b>
	<p>Minutes of last meeting to be amended to update the date.</p> <p>RS asked HC for the feedback received following the November LEP AGM. HC had received very favorable feedback on the location with some negative feedback on the amount of subsistence provided. Looking forward to the 2020 AGM the potential theme could see a joining up with the Digital Skills Partnership and a greater level of diversity.</p> <p>RS noted that the future position of the Business Leadership Group paper that was originally proposed for this agenda had been delayed. The new Chair of the LEP Board has begun a review of the Leadership</p>

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Groups. Following the conclusion of this review and a potential refresh of our proposal in light of their recommendations the proposal will be brought back to the group.

<b>3</b>	<b>Employment Land Survey</b>
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CW presented on the Employment Land Survey. CW noted how there was localised knowledge of issues in bringing forward employment sites, however there was little understanding of whether this was a HOTSW LEP-wide issues. This survey has looked at the current demand for employment land, the supply of employment land and where there are challenges what tools are needed to combat them – this information would be key in defending against potential housing development on employment land. CW drew attention to the fact that the represented only a snapshot in time and was supplied by individual local authorities, it was noted that those authorities with account management or after-care programmes were able to provide a greater picture of local conditions.

The survey noted that the strongest demand for employment land came from the industrial sectors. Geographically it was noted that East Devon and Mendip had the largest share of employment land supply, however with 85% of HOTSW-wide employment land under private ownership even this land is still at risk of housing development.

One key issue has also been the viability of the available and designated sites. With only a handful of sites actually viable the discord between what planners view as viable, and what Economic Development view as viable has been highlighted. The research has highlighted that where there are constraints in the deliverability of employment sites, they are unlikely to come forward without intervention.

Whilst being owned by the Place Leadership Group the report puts forward some recommendations which were felt to sit better with the Business Leadership Group. These were identified as:

1. Strengthening market intelligence
2. Strengthening planning policy
3. Strengthening LEP policy and lobbying
4. Strengthening delivery tools.

**Action: report and slides to be circulated to the group.**

It was felt that NS would contribute greatly to a stakeholder panel.

RS queried whether vacant sites were reflected in this data. These had not been considered as the scope of the survey constrained it to review where employment land had been allocated in local plans but had not yet been built on or was potentially unviable.

HC asked that if work was still underway on the survey that grid constraints be included in the viability assessments

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There were concerns that the tone of the report might appear inflammatory against planners however CW assured the group that it had been tested with planners and was well received. When planners are seen as one of the solutions to fix the issues, and this report is seen as being a useful piece of evidence to inform future local plans, it becomes a valuable piece of work.

RS felt that it was a very interesting piece of work and should inform any future work on Inclusive Growth. DR felt that it should only be used to inform on the issues, however the solutions had to be owned by ED and Planning departments.

**Action: CW to take the report be taken by CW to developers.**

<b>4</b>	<b>ERDF Soft Package Inward Investment Programme</b>
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DR speaking on behalf of Samantha Seddon informed the group that the new HOTSWS LEP Inward Investment Manager has just entered post and would attend the next Business Leadership Group meeting for a longer agenda item on the ERDF Inward Investment Programme. She has been funded for 3 years.

**Action: make Carla Modley a standing invitee of the Business Leadership Group.**

It was advised that the soft package programme be set up to coincide with JBU's trade mission to the USA.

<b>5</b>	<b>Nuclear South West Update</b>
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CM presented an update on the NSW as it comes to the end of its existing 3-year contract.

**Action: circulate the slides.**

The opportunity for NSW arose following a report conducted by established consultants Fraser Nash which highlighted a significant regional opportunity in nuclear, anchored by the Hinkley new build (and the soon to commence decommissioning of Hinkley B) but with hotspots of activity in Plymouth where the Devonport Naval Base and Dockyard conducts nuclear decommissioning and maintenance.

The project has been divided into three key deliverables:

I. Supply chain support

Funded by HOTSWS LEP, West of England LEP and the Welsh Government. This forms a unique funding landscape that is supported by the developers and delivered by SWMAS, Somerset Chamber and Business West. It was felt that a bespoke service was required due to the complexity and large size of the contracts offered, particularly due to the requirements imposed to become compliant with nuclear safety. Surveys conducted by the contractors revealed that two thirds of the companies currently working would not have been able to break into the market without the supply chain support programme.

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To date £400m worth of contracts have been won, or at preferred bidder status which has generated over £17.5m in GVA for the local economy. There have been 170 workshops, supporting 127 companies and 290 jobs.

## 2. Inward Investment and Trade

It was felt that the inward investment piece should be embedded within the supply chain activity and the promotion of the NSW brand which could be bought into by other LEPs as and when it suited them.

14 companies (FDIs) have so far landed in HOTSW with a slightly larger proportion in the WoE LEP. It was expected that these figures would change as current project performance suggests that more will land in HOTSW in the coming years due to the changing status in the build of Hinkley.

Under this theme NSW have been attending nuclear trade shows, DIT showcases and DSK coming to the South West.

CW recommended that attendees of the group watch footage of the SNW conference from the slides.

## 3. Skills

The significant skills shortages are well-known across the region and are not isolated to nuclear. One key example is high integrity welding. Mary Payne is acting as the Nuclear Skills Coordinator.

CW drew attention to the Nuclear Sector Deal. Published in 2018 it included a £10m business support programme with NSW pushing for a more localised approach to the funding.

HD asked for an update on the appointment of a communications manager. CM stated that in the current unpredictable funding landscape it has not been possible. Government funding is expected in June and should extend the project for another 3 years.

RS asked if there was a visual tool that could aid understanding of how NSW has contributed to the growth of the nuclear sector. CM stated that this could easily be done and directed RS to the annual report which highlights some of these issues.

AR asked if she could facilitate a meeting between CM and BAR Associates (Defence Mapping Consultants) so that they could learn best practice from the supply chain programme and inform the recommendations of their report accordingly.

**Action: AR to facilitate an introduction between CM and BAR Associates.**

<b>6</b>	<b>Growth Hub Update (Commercially Confidential)</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Brexit</b>

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RS introduced the agenda item noting that the risk has not gone away and that the general election results of December might foreshadow a political drag on government funding to the North.

AR announced that there have been 2 pots of money made available (1 for economic shocks and 1 for intelligence). TDA are currently conducting some work on tourism however there is approximately £10k remaining. There are some particular requirements attached to this fund, e.g. no speakers and no food. The work must be defrayed by March.

HD informed the group that following the election the HOTSW LEP had published a series of asks and were sending a delegation to Westminster to promote the GSW prospectus.

<b>9.</b>	<b>AOBs</b>
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HC thanked the wider business community for their engagement in the quarterly business bulletin and newsletter. Approximately 25k companies are included in the bulletin and is supported by both Adriana Curca of PCC and James Gilgrist of SCC.

**Action: once live could it be circulated to the group.**

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