

Business Leadership Group Minutes

Friday 3rd July. 2pm – 4pm.

Microsoft Teams Meeting: [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

No.	Agenda Item
1	Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
	<p>The introductions were made and apologies noted for: David Ralph, Eifion Jones, Karl Tucker, Susan Wilkinson, Robert Kathro and Steve Warren Brown. No conflicts of interest were noted.</p>
2	Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising
	<p>The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate representation of the previous meeting. HC provided an update on the LEP's annual conference and AGM. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic it was planned that there would only be an AGM, and no conference due to financial constraints. It is now likely that that AGM will be held online in the late morning of the 18th of September, following an existing Board meeting. Details are being finalised but the AGM should be an hour long, cover a little background detail of LEP activity over the previous year, but will primarily be an AGM.</p>
3	Update on HotSW Covid-19 Response
	<p>AR provided a brief overview of the response to Covid-19 thus far with the main source of support being the discretionary grants being dispensed by local authorities. Initially all work was dropped to accommodate this work stream, however work is now beginning around the economic recovery with the preparations for <i>Super Saturday</i> and the opening of the High Street currently taking precedence. At this point in time the region has currently 10% unemployment, a level that has not been seen since the 1980s when there was rioting on the street. In addition to this there is some modelling for the region showing that 20-30% unemployment is possible if the recovery is poorly managed.</p> <p>How recovery plans are put together is difficult, however the key focus must be agility. The response from government, and the support programmes they have been pumping out, are unprecedented. The LEP were recently asked to rank their top priority programmes, a piece of work which would usually take months. This, however, was completed within 5 working days. Off the back of that the government has awarded our LEP £35.4m. In addition to this, as the furlough scheme ends at the end of October the region will be faced with a second severe economic shock which will coincide with leaving the EU.</p> <p>RS echoed the need for speed of response and agility. As apolitical bodies the private sector and the LEP needs to keep advocating for speed of response.</p> <p>JaB noted the opportunity that would come from this and brought the Group's attention to Torbay's recent work with the College to develop a photonics and electronics training programme, with papers coming to the Group soon.</p>

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This was developed in the view to bring those people who might have lost their jobs due to the pandemic into that sector.

KL similarly highlighted key infrastructure programmes such as Connecting Devon and Somerset that will both provide opportunity and need more resource going forward.

LMJ stressed the importance of retraining and highlighted a recent DIT £50m fund that looks to train people in international trade careers.

4	HotSW Inward Investment Programme
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CM provided an update to the Group on the 5 key priority areas:

1. **Inward Investment Support Project**
This is the area that the BLG will be heavily involved in. Currently background work in ongoing to ensure that ERDF and MCHLG requirements are met whilst the programme is getting ready to launch. The grant scheme support provider has been provided (The DR Company) with an inception meeting scheduled for next week. The DR Company will be responsible for putting together all application material, carrying out the technical appraisals and handling the monitoring and evaluation process. In addition to this the team are looking at producing marketing materials which will promote the grant scheme, these materials can be shared with partners. In terms of the involvement of the Business Leadership Group, the DR Company will carry out the technical appraisals and come to the Group with a recommendation report upon which the Group will make the decision which will then go back to SCC as the accountable body.
2. **High Potential Opportunities – Round 2**
Following a successful first round which was focused around Photonics, 2 applications have been put in for Marine Autonomy and Smart Aviation. The Marine Autonomy proposition covered the GSW region. The decision for these is due at the end of July. This HPO model might be used to develop further propositions at a local level which are aligned to the LIS priorities.
3. **Account Management**
There is a renewed focus on account management. Currently pulling together a database of FDIs across the LEP geography. In addition to this there is work underway to identify the most strategically important businesses within the LEP area, once these have been identified a programme of engagement will be devised.
4. **Communications and Engagement**
The Inward Investment site has now been taken down with the Corporate website and branding being used for all inward investment activity going forward. In addition to this the team are looking to improve digital communications, pull together a social media plan and newsletter and improve partner engagement.
5. **Trade**
DIT have recently secured approx. £1m of funding for the South West which will support 6 new International Trade Advisors. The remaining money will support one new post per LEP. Following conversations with DIT and other LEPs it has been decided that the GSW will share 3 posts (a marine specialist, a clean growth specialist and a Growth Hub connector). Funding will be for 12 months initially.

JuB asked what the geography of the Growth Hub connector post would be. This would be across GSW so the three LEP.

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RS queried whether there were certain international markets the LEP was targeting. It was answered that it was different depending on the sector. The ERDF project includes some budget for marketing which will be used to match fund Inward Investment events.

Jab clarified that having worked with DIT during the first round of HPOs there is support in identifying target markets.

LMJ offered her independent viewpoint of working with DIT and anything else that would add value.

5	Update on Business Leadership Group
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JuB presented an update on the future of the Business Leadership Group. There are a number of issues which will influence the future of the Group. Namely that the Group will be acting as the programme board for the ERDF Inward Investment project and as the programme board for the Growth Hub Support programme. As such the Group must be compliant with ESIF requirements.

In addition to this the LEP Board Review identified key areas for improvement:

- A separate Innovation Board be created.
- Closer links to LIS delivery
- Changes in reporting to the Board

The future of the Group must also be mindful of the previously discussed change in language from BEIS which seems to suggest greater accountability as well as other changes around oversight and monitoring, more flexibility and more sector engagement. This might result in a more intricate Growth Hub ecosystem that will need to be accounted for.

Looking forward work must now focus on reviewing and agreeing the Terms of Reference, agree an annual work programme, review the current membership and invite, where appropriate, new members.

An extract of the new Terms of Reference was presented to the Group which outline the primary purpose of the Group:

1. Provide strategic leadership and expertise
2. Form key understandings of needs and gaps
3. Provide management and oversight of LEP led programmes
4. Identify new programmes
5. Provide specialist advice
6. Act as programme board for externally funded business support programmes

The work programme for this financial year has been drafted and includes:

1. Delivering existing business support provision
2. Develop a proposition for the BLG going forward
3. Identify future needs of the region with view that ERDF will come to an end
4. Develop revised business support provision based upon these needs and gaps
5. Provide support based around economic shocks (both the current crisis and looking forward to Brexit)
6. Monitor delivery for Inward Investment support working
7. Oversee LEP business engagement

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8. Work with sectors to monitor opportunities.

As a result the membership of the Group must reflect these new terms of reference and the fact that there will be a separate Innovation Board, there is a desire to increase private sector membership, however the Group must also be aware of the need to be compliant with ESIF requirements. With this in mind gaps in membership (geographical, sectoral, and thematic) must be identified.

The Group was asked to suggest new members.

RS highlighted the fact that this process has been accelerated and there is some pressure to get these Terms of Reference agreed before the next Board meeting. RS hoped that new members would be proposed and noted that current membership was light on North Devon, digital and agri-tech etc.

JaB asked whether there was room for photonics in terms of private sector membership. RS felt that any relevant skills where value would be added would be considered.

HC drew attention to the formal process for recruitment to create a greater level of transparency.

KL – asked for the current membership of the group to aid in identifying the gaps in the Group’s skillset.

Action: circulate current membership and draft of the terms of reference. One week to come back with comments on the terms of reference, if an agreement can’t be reached another meeting will need to be scheduled.

AOBs

SH provided comments from a business support perspective.

1. BIP had similar volume of engagement as Growth Hub.
2. In conjunction with DCC have put in a bid and are now one of nine pilots working with DEFRA to support farmers with their subsidy system as they leave EU. One thing that has been picked up is the frightening reliance on the basic payment scheme for their profits.
3. Concern also over how many businesses are acquiring the bounce back loans. There may be an issue in 12 months’ time when payments are coming out.
4. There hasn’t previously been a great demand for start-up support due to high levels of employment. However, with the current mass unemployment this will be needed going forward.

RS noted that access to finance will be needed in coming future.

Next Meeting: 6th October 2020

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