

Terms of Reference – April 2021

Heart of the South West Innovation Board

Innovation, the translation of knowledge and ideas into economic or societal benefit, is a key driver of productivity growth and is fundamental to the achievement of our objective to raise levels of productivity within the HoTSW area. It enables businesses to enter new markets and compete, it creates new and disruptive companies, and it is central to capitalising on our transformational opportunities. At the same time it requires the right workforce skills, management culture, enabling infrastructure and investment. The importance of innovation, cutting across all areas of our productivity strategy, means it warrants strategic leadership and engagement in the form of a dedicated Innovation Board.

The overarching objectives of the HoTSW Innovation Board are threefold:

- To ensure that the HoTSW area has a clear “innovation vision” which articulates how we intend to seize the opportunities to stimulate and exploit innovation while addressing the barriers to it, founded on:
 - An innovation ecosystem that supports/attracts the very best talent, business, & investment;
 - A successful track record of delivering collaborative initiatives of scale & impact
 - Integration across identified growth sectors;
 - A shared set of innovation objectives (what do we want to achieve);
- To oversee the development and implementation of the LEP’s Business Innovation Programme (as outlined in the Productivity Strategy);
- Development of a clear offer to government (the HoTSW “Innovation Deal”) as to how the LEP area can make a significant contribution to the delivery of national industrial strategy.

These three objectives will take into account wider geographic synergies, reflecting that a fully functioning innovation ecosystem is clearly not constrained by political or administrative boundaries, and key growth sectors operate across a larger geography than the HoTSW area alone. Any HoTSW focused work will need to recognise wider geographies appropriate to particular technologies or sectors and the benefits of wider collaboration and joining up of assets across a geography of scale.

Role of the Group

The role of the Innovation Board is:

- To advise the LEP on innovation and R&D issues;
- To provide sound evidence-based intelligence to the LEP to underpin innovation policy and intervention;
- To advise the LEP’s People, Business and Place Groups on the interventions required to support the Heart of the South West’s ‘innovation ecosystem’ and growth in sectors of the economy with potential for future growth through innovation;
- To provide leadership in the LEP’s engagement with government and national agencies such as NESTA, Innovate UK etc, around the innovation agenda;
- To promote and foster collaborative approaches to respond to national opportunities (for instance in response to the industrial strategy challenge fund);
- To advise the LEP on good practice innovation support initiatives and on how to maximise the impact of local investment;
- To engage with and make use of existing groups and fora established to support particular opportunities and future growth sectors – using evidence, debate, events etc to bring together a community of interest around a shared vision for an innovative economy.

Specific tasks

An annual work programme for the Innovation Board will be developed and agreed with the LEP.

Initial tasks may include:

- The development of a deeper innovation evidence base to inform potential interventions;
- The development and agreement of a set of innovation and R&D metrics, by which success can be measured;
- The development of a LEP innovation prospectus - a high-level view of the potential programme for transformative innovation across the LEP, and a programme to help accelerate innovation across the LEP area, and potentially beyond.

Working arrangements and membership

The group will meet quarterly or more frequently if the need arises.

The chair will be appointed from amongst the independent directors on the LEP Board, and additional members of the LEP Board may be invited to join or attend ad hoc.

The following organisations will be invited to appoint representatives to the Innovation Board:

- University of Exeter
- University of Plymouth
- South west Institute of Technology
- Met Office
- UK Hydrographic Office
- Plymouth Marine Laboratory
- Rothamsted Research
- Exeter Science Park
- Plymouth Science Park
- Innovate UK

In addition one person will be invited as a representative of the following groups of bodies:

- Local authorities hosting science parks and/or universities
- Other local authorities
- Corporates investing significantly in R&D within the region

Membership will be geographically representative, noting in particular the need to include appropriate representation from Somerset and the more peripheral parts of our region.

Entrepreneurs Panel

The Innovation Board will establish a panel of entrepreneurs running R&D intensive businesses within the region, who can be consulted through online surveys and focus groups. The 'gateway criteria' for inclusion in the panel would be for the business to meet any of the following:

- Located in a HotSW science park or innovation centre;
- Claimed R&D Tax Credits within the last three years;
- Received Innovate UK funding within the last three years;
- Has an ongoing R&D relationship with a university.

For start-ups and recently formed businesses, they would be included if they hold a reasonable expectation of qualifying on any of the above criteria in their first three years of operation.