

MIT REAP GROUP/INNOVATION BOARD

11.00 – 13.00, 25 FEBRUARY 2021 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Minutes and Actions

In Attendance:

Stuart Brocklehurst, Applegate, LEP Board (Chair)

Sally Basker, Exeter Science Park

Paul Coles, Independent Consultant

Adrian Dawson, University of Plymouth

Chris Evans, University of Exeter

Alex Parmley, South Somerset District Council

Steve Pascoe, Babcock

Andrew Dean, University of Exeter

Apologies:

None

1. MIT REAP PROCESS REVIEW (CE)

CE summarised the MIT-REAP journey for those who had joined subsequently. HotSW were one of 6 pilot LEP areas for an intensive and involved 1 year programme which generated considerable new materials.

Activities and successes

- A great deal was learned about our Innovation Ecosystem
- Very useful links with BEIS and Ministers via Fiona and the team at MIT (formally and informally) were forged
- Considerable thanks were expressed at the meeting to CE for helping drive the work and producing many documents and materials that were very much welcomed and appreciated by the Group
- The MIT-REAP Alumni Group was identified as an area where the IB can be active and would be helpful ongoing
- BEIS recognised our level of 'robustness' thanks to our progressive activity throughout COVID
- Recognition that there is no silver bullet – and instead a need for consistent input from the right stakeholders
- Definite desire from the Group to continue to network and to engage with the IDEs
- Team at MIT were good at drawing real world lessons from their research and findings
- Recognition that this is the start of a process and a mission where the IB will learn more and which does provide a real way forward

Elements which could have been better

- Level of engagement and links with IDEs could have been deeper and could be addressed
- More input to engaging risk capital ongoing would be an advantage
- Corporates wanted to help but perhaps their route to this wasn't quite as clear in the process

ACTION: Publish the Evidence Base on the LEP Website (CE&ADe via the LEP)

ACTION: Explore how we can deepen engagement with IDEs and risk capital (ALL via IB Board and potential panel ongoing)

2. FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS WITH UNIVERSITIES (SB)

- SB met recently with the Vice Chancellors of both the Exeter and Plymouth Universities.
- Both HEIs will work on broad action plan by the end of March.
- Both HEIs are also collaborating in the field of Marine and Environmental Intelligence – with a view to establishing ministerial recognition of our national leadership in this area. To be developed by the end of March.
- SB working with the LEP on an outline PID for a Technopole, again by the end of March.

ACTION: All papers to be circulated to this group by the authors (AD, CE, ADa, SB)

- Related to these – the Met Office is working on a strategy group where it can identify more clearly where it can link into the region and opportunities such as the G7 Event.

3. UPDATE ON LOBBYING AND UPDATING MPs (SB)

- Recognition that greater access to MPs would be useful, particularly where they had the capacity to initiate change
- Best time will be after we have produced the three outputs above.
- Could be a role going forward to coordinate Innovation related activities
- Some MPs may be more responsive to the work we have done.
- Gaining a nuanced understand of the best routes is needed, but we need to approach all of the MPs.

ACTION: This is a topic for future discussion within the IB (All)

4. ALLOCATING ACTIONS SIGNED-OFF BY LEP BOARD (SB) – LEP Board Paper attached.

The LEP Board Paper was summarised. Leads were sought for the 5 areas agreed:

1. SW Technopole (SB to lead)
 2. Marine and environmental intelligence environmental intelligence (VCs at Exeter and Plymouth to lead)
 3. Developing a culture of entrepreneurship and celebrate success (lead to be sought)
 4. Access to finance - establish or work closely with Angel Investor Networks (lead to be sought)
 5. Strengthen skills around the SWIOT including increasing entrepreneurship elements within curricula and enhanced engagement with the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) (lead to be sought)
- The Board identified Stephen Mariadas as a potential lead for 5 (above)
 - PC, SP and SB all kindly volunteered as potential leads subject to greater information
 - Additional suggestions were made including individuals with links to the finance sector

ACTION: PC to contact SB regarding a potential individual for the Access to Finance work stream

- The existence of Angel Networks was recognised but there was a need to ensure we did not favour one or another – so an independent person would be ideal to lead on this
- TECH W may be a potential route for the culture of entrepreneurship stream

ACTION: Approach TECH SW regarding a potential lead for 3 (above) (ADe and SB)

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP OF IB AND ENTREPRENEURS PANEL

- There was a need to make sure the Local Authorities were fairly recognised given their different size, scale and innovation landscape.
- There was recognition that entrepreneurs were difficult to maintain within structures such as the IB.
- It would be a particular challenge to engage with micro SMEs.
- The Panel proposal was welcomed and offered potential to overcome some of the barriers. This could help overcome supply side issues.
- Nature of engagement will be key. Suggestions included: short consultations on particular topics and short surveys and introducing extra elements such as external entrepreneurs which may add to attendance.
- With smaller enterprises the easiest engagement method was to go directly to them.

The proposed gateway criteria were agreed:

- Enterprises in a Science Park or Innovation Centre
- Those in receipt of R&D tax credits
- Those with an Innovate UK grant history
- Those with a research history with an HEI

Given these SP wondered if a different element of Babcock is engaged on the IB – based on which elements of the business are more active in local and regional research.

ACTION: SP to discuss internally and with SB

- There was a need to ensure that the Board recognised that innovation and entrepreneurship were not too driven by technology and location. – but a culture of working and a state of mind.
- Chair of the IB should, in due time, be an entrepreneur.

In light of these the proposal for staffing (below) was accepted:

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- Innovation Board should be chaired by an IDE entrepreneur & LEP board member – which has implications for LEP board recruitment
- Other members should be:
 - 2* universities
 - 3* key research assets, Met Office, UKHO, PML

- 2* science parks
 - 1 rep for innovation centres
 - SWIOT, also representing FE
 - 1 LA rep from ECC, PCC or DCC
 - 1 LA rep from the rest of the geography, ideally from Somerset
 - 1 or 2 corporate reps (possibly only 1, noting that Met Office is quasi corporate in this context)
 - 1 LEP Board Observer
 - 1 Innovate UK
- Establish new Entrepreneur Panel consisting of IDE entrepreneurs drawn from membership of TechSouthWest, TechNation, university collaboration schemes, innovation centre and science park tenants, bank and accountants' IDE clients
 - This could be large, as many would often not engage actively
 - Used to consult via quick surveys as well as occasional plenary sessions

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6. HEALTH TECH PROPOSAL

Summary Points:

- Two papers have been developed by University of Plymouth at the behest of the LEP, regarding developing a new Health Tech Cluster (Papers were attached).
- LEP have requested an input on this proposal from IB. Initial Scoping Document and the Development of the Proposition have been proposed.
- Discussions have involved NHS Trust plus HEIs and other stakeholders.
- This is quite an active area in the region and there is a need to pull these into the same territory.
- Discussions included looking at LEP ownership and LEP access - which were identified as critical to our taking forward.
- Also how this topic fits with the Technopole as a support ecosystem for innovating enterprises.
- Technopole – yes it is support but also bringing critical mass together in sectors which would also make it easier for investors to access the community. Technopole needs access to 'knowledge assets' and this can be challenging. This could be important as a model for taking this forward.
- There are different clusters of Health Tech in the UK – so can we identify what elements are truly nationally leading?
- To what extent can the LEP support this development and what are the intentions from the Group and the opportunities they have identified. Really important for the sector to lead and establish an identified 'end game'.
- Our region has a stable, peripheral and ageing population which is ahead of UK demographic. Therefore the idea of a national test-bed is exciting. NE also establishing themselves as a potential test bed for this topic.
- Perhaps this goes beyond Health Tech? Another 'title' may be appropriate.
- Identifying where the enterprises are – and the true scale in the LEP area will have knock-on benefits to identifying us as a region worth living in and re-locating to.

ACTION: Make sure the developing proposal interacts with the Model of the Technopole and has the correct 'title/identifier'. (ALL)

7. LEVELLING UP PIPELINE AND ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Discussions were focused on the recent LEP Pipeline process and the positioning of Innovation and Enterprise Support initiatives.

- Ultimately funding may go through LEPs or Upper Tier LAs.
- We were approached to see if opportunities had been missed in the short response window.
- If looking at innovation-driven growth, perhaps there is a better way of establishing effective reach and consultation.
- Perhaps we could more actively curate our response to limiting numbers of asks and ensure that there isn't unnecessary overlap.
- There is a need for a quality threshold, perhaps involving market demand and feasibility studies, economic assessments, environmental impact assessments, etc.

ACTION: Discuss with the LEP a future approach when looking at Innovation ideas could be establishing where there is broader than local impacts and benefits (SB).

8. AOB

ACTION SP: Will provide more details on the SW Technopole to the Defence Cluster who are interested in this development.

9. PROPOSAL – QUARTERLY IB MEETINGS AHEAD OF LEP BOARD MEETINGS

Meet once per quarter - ideally 3 weeks ahead of the LEP board Meeting.

ACTION: AD to circulate IB dates

Remaining 2021 LEP Board Meetings

- Friday 23 April 9.30am – 12.30pm
- Friday 16 July 9.30am – 12.30pm
- Friday 22 October 9.30am – 12.30pm