

Minutes of the LEP Place Leadership Group 20 April 2021

VIA TEAMS

Attendees

Mel Squires (MS)- NFU (Chair and Board Member)
Andrew Ardley – South Western Railway
Andy Wood – East Devon Council
Chrissie Ingle – HotSW LEP Rural Productivity Lead
Claire Gibson – HotSW LEP Lead
David Edmondson – Torbay Council
David Lewis – SW Energy Hub Project Manager
David Northey – Network Rail
Doug Bamsey – Somerset Local Authorities
Helen Dobby – Environment Agency
Ian Harrison – HotSW Transport Board
Mike Deaton (MD) - Devon County Council
Paul Hickson (PH) - Somerset County Council/HotSW LEP
Richard Gibson - Cross Country
Ruth Lambert – Federation of Small Businesses
Sally Bell - Openreach
Tim Jones (TS) - Devon and Cornwall Business Council
Vince McConville – Digital Futures Sector Lead, HotSW LEP
Katriona Lovelock – Connecting Devon & Somerset

Supporting Officers - Anne-Marie Spalding - HotSW LEP Place Secretariat

Apologies

Caroline Ayre – Confor
Chris Evans – Exeter University
Chris Garnsworthy - WPD
David Northey (DN)- Network Rail
Derek Phillips (DP) - Exeter Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Eifion Jones – HotSW LEP
Hazel Williams - Regen
Helen Dobby (HD)– Environment Agency
Joanne Lee – Plymouth City Council
John Dixon (JD) - Plymouth City Council
Judith Gannon – Abbey Manor Developments
Julian Gray – South West Coastpath
Mark Worsfold - South West Water
Mel Sealey - HotSW LEP
Mike O’Dowd Jones (MODJ) - Somerset County Council
Richard Grant – Plymouth City Council
Steve Mewes – Somerset LNP

	Agenda item	Lead
1.	Welcome, introductions and apologies MS welcomed everyone to the meeting . Apologies are noted above.	MS
2.	Declarations of Interest Sally Bell – Openreach – previously work with CDS	MS
3.	Minutes of the Last Meeting Minutes of the last meeting – Action regarding railfreight – is old and perhaps should be removed? Likely to be a presentation later in the year so should be removed for now and then revisited. Could be also linked to airfreight.	MS AMS – To <i>forward minutes to publish</i>
4.	Business Plan Aim is to set out the business plan for 2021/22 and in particular the Place Theme focus. The work plan sets out activities for the coming year across all themes. This also provide a focus for the Place Leadership meetings throughout the year. The LEP Board will be receiving a presentation of this at their next meeting on the 23 April 2021. Extract shared on screen with the meeting – copy to be circulated. Context is that Covid recovery is key for the HotSW and partners, there are significant opportunities to ‘Build back better’. Also to focus on the delivery of programmes such as Getting Building Fund. The operating focus for LEPs is to be reviewed and the Government will be working with them to review this, the results of which should be known by the Summer. There is also a change in the way funding streams are actioned by the Government, eg Levelling Up fund and Community Renewal being led by Local Authorities. There are three areas of priority for the coming year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring delivery of current programmes and activities - Driving forward transformational opportunities - Ensuring high level effectiveness across all LEP operations Areas of focus slides shared. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levelling up and strategic connectivity This will include the study around Market Towns, Strategic engagement around the Levelling up, Coastal Productivity. Digital connectivity. Transport connectivity working with Peninsula Transport as part of the Clean Growth agenda. - Natural Capital Facilitating investment in the HotSW Natural Capital, how to develop as part of the future Build Back Better - Employment Sites Continuing to work with partners to progress the suite of Enterprise Zones – commitment to working with partners in South Somerset around an Enterprise Zone in Yeovil. Plus a piece around the future of workspace post Covid – new ways of working and future of the economy. 	Paul Hickson

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural Productivity Agenda Includes commissioning of the Community Lead Local Development study, looking at how this could be incorporated in the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), developing Rural Productivity priorities and looking to embed those in a Productivity Deal or SPF rollout. - Energy Progressing work around Grid Constraints, continuing to work with the regional energy hub <p>Grateful for any feedback on the document – comments after the meeting gratefully received. If anyone would like to be involved in a specific area please get in touch.</p> <p>Opportunity raised regarding connectivity with current review of the railway – first and last mile of travel of particular interest, especially in rural communities. Looking for a joined up approach.</p> <p>Comment made on need for lateral thinking post-Covid, eg well-being is now a key component of productivity. Social Enterprise needs to be a component. Also are Enterprise Zones still in current thinking? It was highlighted that it is a Government requirement that LEPs and Local Authorities continue to monitor performance of Enterprise Zone, part of the ongoing portfolio of work that needs to be reported to Government.</p> <p>Point raised that there is no mention of Fusion Expression of Interest Submission and also the Freeport at Plymouth announcement. It was confirmed that the Fusion EOI is in the Sector Opportunities part of the report so was not drawn out as part of the Place Portfolio. Freeport specifics are featured under the Business</p> <p>Discussions have taken place in the Coastal Productivity Group around the importance of the natural environment and the move towards home-working and reduced commuting – what does this mean moving forward? Enterprise Zones are a long term designation and a good way of influencing delivery locally. Work being commissioned from the National Infrastructure commission – referenced as part of the budget. Need to make sure that things are aligned to the strategic policy.</p>	
5.	<p>Digital Futures</p> <p>Link to Digital Strategy – https://heartofswlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Heart-of-the-South-West-Digital-Strategy-March-2021.pdf</p> <p>Original Strategy was presented in November 2019 – this has been reviewed in light of what has happened since this was produced. A 2020-2025 Executive Summary has now been produced reflecting the recent Strategies – Productivity, Local Industrial and Build Back Better. It also reflects the HotSW ambitions setting a proactive agenda which is action focused, with some actions already underway. Each of the themes came up with a focus on potential actions with suggested sub-actions (See presentation).</p> <p>A Digital Futures Steering Group has been created encompassing members from each theme. A 12 month action plan has been put forward as part of the workplan being presented to the</p>	Vince McConville

	Board. Some of the suggested actions relate to previous work and it will be up to the authorities to decide if they choose to adopt them. Some have been superseded by national actions	
5.	<p>Update from Connecting Devon & Somerset Team (CDS) (Presentation circulated)</p> <p>Brief update on where the Connecting Devon & Somerset Programme is. Approximately 1 million premises across the region – 660,000 have been delivered commercially, approximately 330,000 delivered by CDS done primarily through the Phase 1 contract with Openreach and Airband in the National Parks. Several contracts are coming through. National Parks are coming to an end – these were taken separately as it was recognised that these would be difficult to deliver. The area between Dartmoor and Exmoor has had 11,000 delivered with a further 6000 to come. Procurement process in 2020 for the remainder of the area was let to 3 different suppliers.</p> <p>CDS overlaps with the Heart of the South West area but also has two collaborative partners – BAINS and North Somerset. The contracts let were all for gigabit capable technology and will deliver around 56,000 premises. Approximately 15,000 premises will be delivered by the commercial sector. This leaves around 40,000 premises that will not be covered commercially or by CDS in the region.</p> <p>Priorities over the coming years is to ensure that contracts are delivered according to plan – there are some issues in delivery which are common across the country. It challenged by a lack of resource within the industry so it is important to mobilise delivery – scarce personnel resource has been identified nationally. Another issue that the programme and the industry faces, at the moment there is a shift towards gigabit capability however the programme is focusing on the Superfast agenda which delivers 30MB download speeds. The gigabit technology is being rolled out however that will be delivered to areas that already have Superfast – the challenge is that those who already have will have will have more and those that do not have connectivity still will not have it. Working hard with BDUK to ensure that those premises do not miss out. Currently working on a business case for approximately £8m from HotSW and will be based on previous pilots working with communities to bridge the gap to help schemes get off the ground. BDUK are now offering vouchers for gigabit capable schemes however there could be a shortfall on the scheme and therefore the business case will be looking at how to address that gap.</p>	Katriona Lovelock
6.	<p>Update on Digital Projects – Growth Deal</p> <p>Boosting Mobile Connectivity – voucher scheme to boost mobile call reception in areas where there is poor mobile connectivity. This does also boost the digital data connectivity but this is not the main aim. Issues experience around delivery through Covid as there is a need to access interiors of properties as well as exteriors. Also issues with suppliers having to furlough staff. Programme launched at the end of February 2021 and already have 147 applications. Also being promoted through the Growth Hub.</p> <p>https://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/the-cds-mobile-booster-voucher-scheme-guide/</p>	Anne-Marie Spalding

Smart Plymouth Sound – this is to bring 5G to Plymouth Sound to help research technology and commercial operations. Project is going well although it had to retender for the MESH network. Ahead in the procurement process and should be appointing a contractor in May. On track for delivery by the end of March 2022. One site has proved problematic however they are looking at new sites. Good outputs being achieved.

Further Education Digital Accelerator Programme - Working with colleges across the HotSW to increase network capability and availability of equipment for students. Again issues over the past year with access but they are on target to spend by the end of March 2022.

Points Raised from Presentations on Digital

Question raised as to whether work should be started on the demand stimulation – Covid has increased online retail and homeworking. Is this already being covered? Demand stimulation is part of the actions being undertaken by HotSW Strategy but funding could be an issue. CDS consider demand stimulation to be important and funding will be needed for that. There is some work in place through ERDF funding in the area between the two National Parks. An issue is trying to find the right funding for the things that they want to do . In the first areas the demand is around 70%, in rural areas demand stimulation is not an issue. Programmes such as ‘Getting up to Speed’ helped in the past. Working with the Growth Hub on business support services. Also do not want to lose sight of the delivery to the 40,000 premises that may not get connectivity.

Health mitigation is becoming an issue which might not have previously been envisaged and can take pressure of existing services. More public services are expected to be delivered in this way. Care services are now being linked to the economy and regeneration and digital connectivity will be key in getting centres off the ground. Question around how this activity will be delivered. The focus is around how people can get connected if they can’t get fibre – but not to everyone - there are other options out there, eg satellite or fixed wireless, and it is important that people are made aware of their options. This does not necessarily have to be a gigabit connection as not everyone needs or wants this. Starlink Satellite has recently been given permissions for the UK and this is now available across the South West. Fibre will come eventually however there are many issues along the way so short term alternative provision should be considered. Focus needs to be on outcomes in particular places and how they can be achieved – excellent connectivity required to deliver solutions.

CDS have an open market review refresh to find out what is happening in the market and that they do not subsidise in the wrong places. This is refreshed on a regular basis. There is a lot of activity coming in from commercial providers, eg Virgin, Openreach, Jurassic. Information on funding (approx. £110m) for Local Fibre Network has been announced to provision public buildings- eg doctors surgeries, schools etc – which would then encourage providers to come into the area. One issue in the HotSW is that there are not enough public buildings – perhaps approach Government to consider whether community halls, pubs etc could be used. It is currently unclear how they are going to select buildings. Perhaps we could collectively be proactive and link to the regeneration agenda.

[South West to benefit from full fibre announcement \(openreach.com\)](https://www.openreach.com/news/2021/07/south-west-to-benefit-from-full-fibre-announcement)

Rail mobile connectivity programme – linking Cornwall, Devon and Somerset – using part of that to give communities connectivity along the lines especially on rural branch lines. Need to

Action – CG to find out how this could be influenced

	<p>look at what benefits that could bring to areas like North Devon and West Devon in addition to the rail users. Stations throughout the South West have mobile connectivity hubs. These could be used as public buildings to help spread connectivity a bit further. CDS are aware of the opportunity however there is not a great deal that they can take advantage of but will continue to monitor.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Community Energy Fund/Energy Working Group</p> <p>Presentation was circulated prior to meeting – happy to take questions – this will form the template for future Place Group meetings.</p> <p>Specific question around home upgrades grant – the South West Energy Hub has a role supporting local authorities in Green Homes grants (LAD Phase 1) which was directly from Government on a competitive basis, to Local Authorities to carry out retrofit to the fuel poor. Then tasked with the delivery of Green Homes grant (LAD Phase 2) – that has now been out to tender (total budget £51m) – currently under procurement embargo. Update will be provided when contracts have been let.</p> <p>Swathe of other grants from Government, all with short spend time. Next two are Home Upgrade Grants (£150m fund) supporting low income households and specifically targeted at the off-gas grid homes – hard to reach rural areas. No specific detail however there will be multiple measures, eg wall insulation, loft insulation, heat pumps etc. Government’s target to upgrade to Energy Performance C.</p> <p>Green Homes voucher scheme had a ‘hiccup’ which has resulted in a decision to pull the funding that was allocated to that and redeliver under a new scheme (LAD Phase 3) – expecting details of another £200m fund which may also be targeted at the off-gas areas.</p> <p>Once documentation is available it will be circulated. (David Lewis left the meeting)</p>	<p>David Lewis</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Rural Productivity</p> <p>Rural Productivity Group met the week previously – they now have 4 agreed priorities. Priorities are quite ‘blurred’ and things can fit under most eg Natural Capital and Clean Growth. Golden thread runs through – Innovation, skills, business support are all cross cutting.</p> <p>Priorities are: Support rural enterprises building on traditional and social enterprises to become more resilient by accessing emerging markets and the changing ways of working as a result of Covid and EU Exit. This refers to things like the Rural Productivity Community Programme which we hope to progress on from the Community Led Local Development study that is being undertaken – looking at things such as market and supply chain mapping, increased connectivity and rural digital networks. There is a lot of crossover with other sectors of the LEP and these areas need to be identified so that work is undertaken with other groups, eg Business. Rural workhubs, business support, skills support and apprenticeships.</p> <p>Second priority – to support the clean growth of rural enterprises and the communities that support them, eg sector specific support to reduce carbon and waste; develop and grow</p>	<p>Chrissie Ingle</p>

	<p>social enterprises as by nature they tend towards a circular economy and a local economy. Support for land based natural capital solutions, building on what has gone before. Ensuring that we have the right data; helping farmers to diversify and become more green – as well as looking at more innovative technologies.</p> <p>Third priority is to drive innovation to meet specific challenges for the rural economy – looking at things such as Agritech but also building a skills programme that will enable delivery of the innovation, eg Train for Tomorrow, R&D apprenticeships, digital. Also to look at how ‘Brain Drain’ can be reduced, which is a particular programme in rural communities. Ensure innovation and entrepreneurship is encouraged through looking at rural enterprise zones, rural environmental zones, innovation challenge programme looking at transport, access to training etc and how that can be addressed.</p> <p>Fourth priority is to enhance rural social mobility and wellbeing by providing equitable access to training and skills – this will probably sit within the Skills Advisory Panel and the Digital Skills groups to work with the Rural Productivity Group to develop interesting and useful programmes, eg skills for business advice service, skills and workforce training, adult training and retraining, digital skills for newly connected businesses.</p> <p>Thanks expressed for getting the rural agenda onto the LEP’s list of priorities and an officer in post.</p> <p>Is there enough flexibility for rural diversification and the scope of that – eg rural eco-tourism, health initiatives. There needs to be scope for looking at these in further detail. Point will be considered and how to address this.</p> <p>Recognition of change and transition over the next few years coming out of Covid knowing that some businesses will be struggling. Making sure that we are adaptable and creative with the response – not just for rural.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Transport Update</p> <p>Presentation to be circulated.</p> <p>Five issues – Post Covid Recovery, Strategic Road Network , Restoring your Railway, Bus Strategy and Decarbonisation.</p> <p>Post Covid Recovery – significant challenge as for the past year people have been told to avoid travel. Financial problems for the rail industry – Government supporting the rail industry. Bus industry primarily private sector. Awaiting a review of social distancing which will have a significant impact on how public transport is used. All studies indicate that the patronage will be lower and also for future planning the indication is that there will be a reduction in commuting, fewer 5 day per week commutes. This indicates that there should be a reduction in town centre highways and also rail capacity into cities.</p> <p>Strategic Road Network – some success in the LEP assisting with the development of strategic routes. A303 works should start later this year. Stonehenge is subject of a judicial review hearing – if successful works will start in 2022/23. A358 dualling – contractors have been appointed – working on the consultation prior to the DCO, very positive. Consultation taking</p>	<p>Ian Harrison</p>

	<p>place for next round of funding – which parts of the A303 should be included. Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway carrying out corridor studies which should be available later in the year.</p> <p>Rail – re-opening to Okehampton approved and construction underway - 2 hourly service later this year. New Ideas Fund – 3 rounds – 1st round business cases prepared for Cullompton and Wellington stations – submitted to Government and looks positive. 2nd round – Somerton and Langport station work for SOBC just starting. Round 3 – HotSW significantly represented – LEP engaged with West Somerset Railway for services between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard. LEP is involved due to concerns over social mobility issues in West Somerset.</p> <p>Buses – National Bus Strategy published in March. Significant commitment to the provision of buses outside London – strings attached in that local authorities have to develop Bus Improvement Plans and enter into Enhanced Partnerships with the private sector. Covid Recovery Bus Funding and Bus Service Operators grant will be conditional on this. Considerable challenge and unclear about how far the funding will go. The Covid Recovery is going to be a significant challenge for bus operators, primarily as this is a private sector industry. There is also funding for zero carbon buses – Government and operators are keen however these buses are a lot more expensive.</p> <p>Decarbonisation – announcement of the quickening of the pace is welcomed as, as a nation, we have not made good enough progress on this. Little progress made since 1990 so a big challenge. Cars, Transporters and Air Travel are significant contributors of transport emissions. There needs to be a multi modal approach with the rate of change needing to increase. Rail – electrification and battery traction. Road – electrification and investment in charging facilities with prioritisation of walking, cycling and public transport also poses a question around scale of investment in the strategic road network – removing bottlenecks is a good investment. Freight – particular challenge, need to understand rail freight. Air Travel – significant – issues with frequent flying. Also, if air travel has reached its peak then there is a question around viability of regional airports – difficult for HotSW.</p>			
10	<p>AOB</p> <p>Plymouth Freeport is in workplan – it is in the Marine Sector</p> <p>Virtual Work Fair, on 26th May 2021 organised by the Lead for Digital Skills. 300 individuals that have or are due to complete the courses – they are seeking companies who may wish to be involved – details to be circulated.</p>			
<p>Next meeting: 1 July 2021 – 11:30 to 13:00 - via Teams</p>				
Actions Log Summary	Meeting Date	Owner	Status Update	Next Steps
To forward previous Place Leadership Group meeting minutes for publication on HotSW LEP website.	11/02/2020	Anne-Marie Spalding		N/A
Information on funding opportunities to be shared with the LEP	08/05/19	All	Ongoing	Ongoing

Natural Capital Demonstrator fund - next Steps	Ongoing	Anne-Marie Spalding	Next Steps to be developed	
Workplan for 2021/22	Circulated	Paul Hickson	Feedback requested.	
Explore additional resource for Natural Capital task group	Ongoing	Paul Hickson		

ANNEX – Strategic intervention Ideas for Infrastructure and Place

Foundation – Infrastructure	
Clean Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabled distributed generation capacity/capability • Grid distribution capacity • EV infrastructure (roads) • Electrification of rail
Advanced Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution network and connectivity e.g. resilience of A303 • Access to ports and airports e.g. for international connectivity/exports • Supply chain efficiencies... (export region)
Artificial Intelligence and Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital connectivity and resilience • (Big) data management e.g. to facilitate/optimize smart transport and grid networks • Data management/ownership etc • Added value from data
General Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility services e.g. to support zero carbon cities • Green infrastructure e.g. cycle routes, pedestrian walkways • Urban green spaces?

Foundation – Place	
Clean Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of regional renewable energy resources e.g. solar, wind, biomass and tidal • Innovative local energy solutions e.g. heat networks, ground source heating, efficient build etc • Grid distribution capacity
Advanced Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regionally developed renewable energy technologies/solutions? • Land management/agri-technologies to promote clean productivity gains e.g. monitoring and autonomous systems • Food processing opportunities
Artificial Intelligence and Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems and analyses to support land management to facilitate resource use and agri-tech productivity gains • Smart energy management • Food supply chain management • Data analysis opportunities/services – competitive advantages • Better equip businesses about data ownership, management, exploitation, marketing e.g. through cooperation/collaboration
General Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon capture/sequestration opportunities • Land management opportunities e.g. natural flood protection and payment for ecosystem services and for the “public good” • Digital connectivity • Feedback loop with infrastructure piece and natural capital • Carbon balance sheet • Circular economy • Health and well-being benefits