

**Business Leadership Group  
October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**Present**

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

Stuart Elford (SE) – Devon & Plymouth Chamber of Commerce

Dolores Riordan (DRi) – Local Authority (Devon County Council)

Katriona Lovelock (KL) – Local Authority (Somerset County Council)

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

Chris Wardman (CW) – Marine & Defence Lead (Thales)

Dirk Rohwedder (DRo) – Inclusive Growth Lead (Dartington Trust)

Adam Chambers (AC) – Business Representative (Smart Outcomes Limited)

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

Paul Bird (PB) – Digital Lead (Elixel)

Julie Hawker (JH) – SWBC Representative

Philip Mitchell (PM) – Photonics Lead (Lumentum)

**Supporting Officers**

Eifion Jones (EJ) – LEP Chief Operating Officer

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

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

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

Carla Modley (CM) – HotSW LEP Inward Investment Manager

Heather Hillman (HH) – Attending Officer

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**Apologies**

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

Steve Warren Brown – Business Representative (YSL Landscapes)

David Ralph (DR) – HotSW LEP Chief Executive

Alistair Handyside (AH) - Tourism Alliance

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

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<b>1</b>	<b>Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</b>
	<p>Introductions and apologies were made (please see above)</p> <p>Conflict of interest was declared by:</p> <p>AC</p> <p>SE</p> <p>JH</p>
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising</b>
	<p>Previous minutes were circulated and approved.</p> <p><b>Matters arising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regarding the suggestion that a Freezone update to be in the next BLG; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RS suggested taking up the invite next year when things have solidified more.</li> <li>- SE mentioned that they are planning a stakeholder event in November and that he would circulate an invite to BLG.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Growth Hub and Business Support Mapping &amp; Evaluation Study- Final Report</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rebekah Southern mentioned that their presentation will cover mapping since Emma Buckman presented previously about evaluation,</li> <li>▪ The presentation explained the purpose of this commission being to identify and explain the business support available, gather key stakeholders' views on the demand for and supply of business support, provide a review of best practices and finally present some recommendations,</li> <li>▪ The presentation went on to dwell upon the 4 basic steps of the mapping elements as well as its scope and limitations,</li> <li>▪ The presentation covered interesting topics such as the geography and types of business support provision and a comprehensive explanation of gaps and barriers faced before ending with concluding remarks and considerations for the future.</li> </ul>

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**Comments following the update:**

- RS asked about identifying the extent of the competitive element of the same customer as being a barrier- given the past experience where people questioned why help others with their deliveries while they are competing for the same. Emma said that she can't recall such thing and Rebekah mentioned that it certainly wasn't front in the centre but it was flagged out during conversations as a dilemma that all business support providers face.
- AC talked about the problem of fragmentation of business support in previous business discussions in the 2010s, and how it was a great concern. He also mentioned that sharing information and experiences between business support delivery partners was a contractual obligation back then (a carrot and stick approach).
- EJ said that he agrees with AC's thoughts that indeed it was a carrot and stick process since the government was channelling huge amounts through RDAs entailing that sort of command, which luckily does not exist now. EJ said that being at the other end of the telescope, he thinks that the study was an enormous effort by all parties involved and he commended Emma and Rebekah on the thorough and detailed analysis. He emphasized the role of growth hubs as a front door helping businesses navigate and talked about the next steps and collective achievement- saying that there is more than filling the gaps as starting points and that there are fundamental issues around productivity, achieving net zero and around inclusion and levelling up. Finally, he said that from a BLG point of view the questions should be what outcomes are to be achieve, framework and priority approach and then how to find funding.
- JuB mentioned that a related issue is that the funding landscape for business support is very fragmented. As long as there is duplication at the source, there will be duplication at programme level. As EJ said, this is where the Growth Hub can provide clarity to the customer.
- SE commended the hard work saying that it is very thorough and helpful. He said that speaking on behalf of the chambers of the south west, there is a frustration regarding the government support following funding (tends to be sporadic, short term and requiring all to bid against each other) which isn't helpful and it prevents collaboration. He went on to talk about what BCC South West has done recently which is that they had a thought about the regional growth strategy which is about concentrating on key sectors that can make a difference (the blue green kind) and how to help those. SE added that with governments want to help more there will be a question about counties sharing best practices, resource, cost-sharing,

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suppliers and pulling a joined- up approach. SE raised a point regarding levelling up and the generic heat-maps used by the government that amalgamate an overall county recount but ignore challenges and differences such as rural and coastal. He asked a final question about whether the growth hub has a questionnaire where its query leads to a guide pointing out funding sources and packages of support.

- DRO commended the study as thought provoking and substantial. He said that having a fragmented funding led to a fragmented support provision and that moving forward the more unified funding structure will lead to reduced duplication. DRO went on to talk about inclusion and diversity- something around specialist (is it good or should it be generic provision) and asked about the insights gained through the interviews and reports about such provision. He concluded that such report and relevant studies are needed.
- JB commented that he agrees with the comments on growth sectors and the need for regional level funding and that simplification and ease of this would be very helpful.
- CW asked: “Can we build on the governments Social Value Model to address the cohesion?”
- JH mentioned that there needs to be recognition for delivery of programmes of business support and training, there is a high value in the development of content, materials and models - particularly the value of IP. The commissioning and contracting process for projects rarely deal with these issues well and there is poor understanding at all levels about how to deal with the IP in collaborative development and delivery when in funded projects.
- Emma Buckman came back to thank all who commented and said that she agrees with all especially EJ’s points about not only to focus on filling gaps but also to think strategically about what to achieve and what kind of challenges are faced. She attempted to answer DRO by saying that the study wasn’t massive enough to disaggregate findings in terms of equality and inclusion, however the study summarized a number of academic researches that studied best women and BAME communities’ support in business which had different views- either supporting targeted or mainstream business support.
- RS concluded by saying that this needs to turn into an action for the group or recommendations for the next steps. He added that in conclusion, the study says that there is good quality business support out there but navigating this support is tricky; that is why growth hubs are needed and also other signposting to be considered. He added that however, he hasn’t yet identified a secret source for the LEP to produce “lovelier” results.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JuB suggested that since we are coming to a year end, whether there could be an in-depth session about what to be focused on in terms of business support in the next year, priorities, flow... etc.</li> <li>EJ clarified that he meant earlier that the focus should be on what to be achieved then on filling the gaps- not just colouring the map. He suggested drawing together a business support proposition based on this research and outcomes, then testing that with the group which would put it in a good place for shared prosperity fund or the like.</li> <li>AC said that if he were to put a recommendation to the board it'd be around achievability- given limited levels of funding. He added a point about the framework of funding and another about how best to make use of growth hub to help more businesses- making use of the asset of understanding what the market looks like. He concluded that the way to go should be to map where gaps are on, where there is a strategic ask and no provision.</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions, suggestions and recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To have an in-depth session in January 2022 for further discussing findings from the Growth Hub and Business Support Mapping &amp; Evaluation Study</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Growth Support Programme Board and Service for All Update</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>David Hynd and Katherine Coby gave a presentation about the Growth Hub's Service For All, which David started by giving a background about the service, the contracts it entails and the nature of delivery.</li> <li>David went on and talked about the recent highlights and developments and KPIs, saying that although September was slow but they are witnessing new business support schemes coming onto the market and some key themes emerging.</li> <li>Katherine covered the ERDF part (phase two of the support programme) and the new activity of extending provision to non-ERDF eligible businesses.</li> </ul> <p><b>Comments following the update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RS asked about the availability of funds to market this great opportunity and Katherine answered that they had a disparity of funding for the ERDF program and that a lot of marketing needs to be joined up so a sub-standard calculation could be used for ERDF and no ERDF promotion.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RS suggested triggering thoughts and actions to make the promotion of Service for All newsworthy.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Business Support Update</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CB mentioned that he initially was going to cover 5 topics- a couple of which were covered in the previous presentation (the clean growth/ net zero programme, support provision for non-ERDF funded businesses and the newly commissioned scale- up service).</li> <li>▪ CB said that he'd talk about two things on which he'd need the group feedback: access to finance and peer network.</li> <li>▪ He gave a brief background about access to finance and mentioned that there is a specification that he wants to circulate among the group for feedback about whether it'd be good to have additional focus in this sort of activity.</li> <li>▪ CB went on to cover off peer networks- funded from a separate part of BEIS. Last year 10 were delivered and this year funding was received to cover 17 peer networks- 14 of which are procured. In August, a partner was commissioned to deliver the remaining three, which was asked to run one network for women- led businesses and a cohort for businesses in the hospitality sector. So the ask for BLG was for thoughts and feedback on these two cohort prepositions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Comments following the update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SE said that they are a bit short on the defence and security area and that it would be great if Charlie and Victoria would know any business that would benefit from this network so that the chamber could reach the delivery point.</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<b>Update from the SW Regional Defence and Security Cluster</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Charlie Heard gave a presentation about the South West Regional Defence and Security Cluster starting by introducing himself and Victoria then telling the audience about the content of the presentation, which included an update but what the cluster has been up to and a background about members.</li> </ul>

- Charlie talked about the coverage of the cluster then informed about the members, those within the cluster, affiliate members, strategic members, trade related and all- saying that the members' list is growing (a 20% growth rate over the last three months).
- Charlie mentioned that they don't have representation of some sectors, particularly security. He added that they managed to attract high profile and prestigious events.
- He went on talking about membership saying that it's rather an open invitation and went on explaining key values and aims that members are to acknowledge.
- Next, Charlie talked about the DSEi 2021 SWRDSC Networking Event which took place in September and introduced the SW RDSC News Platforms to BLG,
- The presentation concluded with a depiction of the cluster's future events and programmes.

**Comments following the update:**

- JuB asked about how (potential) members are identified; if there are sort of minimum requirements and Charlie answered saying that the short answer is no- there aren't any requirements. He elaborated that at the cluster, they are attempting at recruiting SMEs as well as more established larger businesses and what they are trying to focus on is to attract businesses with transferable technologies into defence and security sectors regardless of the size.
- CW said that initially it was focused on a DASA (Defence And Security Accelerator) team and asked whether they've now extended outside of DASA and included others. Charlie said that DASA now acts like a hub for the cluster activities and that yes, there is now an extension to include others and more
- RS asked about what's working and what's not, how the group could help and whether they have funding to keep going and support. Charlie requested that BLG members promote the cluster through their business networks. In terms of funding, Charlie said that it was an easy year to organize for external events and that the funding the cluster has now came from HotSW, Dorset LEPs and offers for contributions from Cornwall LEP. There is a plan to get into physical events in the future where funding could get "twitchy" however; Charlie said that the main thing for now is to get the cluster known.
- JB made a comment about hooking up with Charlie to make sure that Torbay High Tech Cluster and their surrounding companies are linked with the cluster- having lots of potential cross overs through photonics and microelectronics companies.

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7	ERDF Inward Investment and Trade Programme Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CM started the update requesting a BLG session for an hour to decide about two applications.</li> <li>▪ CM sought decision from the members for two applications: the effect photonics application, which had major changes. Therefore, a change request was made and shared with members. However, there was a need to complete a new application form, which needs to be re-appraised for compliance with ERDF. CM went on and ran the effect photonics application's details past BLG briefly, mentioning that the major change was in job creation.</li> <li>▪ RS suggested waiting for the new application since it's quite a significant change.</li> <li>▪ PM observed changes to the number of employees and what they were planning to do. He said that he was initially concerned and now agrees that a new application should be in place. He added that he felt positive about their potential.</li> <li>▪ JB said that he agrees too and that it'd be good to see a newly revised application.</li> <li>▪ KL said that it would be better to assess the application once it comes in and that she wasn't positively disposed towards them last time. However, KL had an observation that they had an astonishing VFM compared to others.</li> <li>▪ CM said that the other decision is pertinent to a similar request for Marine. Two documents went around: one for oceanology and the other for C Tech week. Cost for both events would be just under £26,500 and that they'd only be able to fund half of it. CM mentioned that these are quite popular events so it would be key to be present then asked for thoughts and decisions.</li> <li>▪ RS said that he doesn't have anything against it.</li> <li>▪ EJ asked about how much is in the budget for it and CM said that £40,000 of the ERDF budget is allocated for such endeavours. EJ said that he is supportive because such things are in line with HotSW LEP's priorities. He wondered whether it's worth to get funding from elsewhere rather than to test it.</li> <li>▪ CM said that the match funding is coming from the University of Plymouth and some of the key businesses that will also be attending.</li> <li>▪ CW said that oceanology internationally is a well- respected and well- attended activity and that there'd definitely be some significant interests by attending. He however mentioned a concern about value- where the value is coming from and how to show that we have the value out of it bearing in mind how this is difficult to measure. He concluded that in his perspective</li> </ul>

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he thinks it's possible and that it'd be great if we focus on one, show its value and see how it affects regional growth.

- SE said that he is supportive in principle because it's a key sector. He asked how Maritime UK South West is otherwise funded and whether they are saying that if we don't fund it they won't be able to go. CM said that it would be more difficult for them to attend.
- AC commented that he is supportive but it's conditional and that he firstly would like a report on what attending such events actually achieved and secondly that he'd like to see more than just raising awareness- more about specific objectives of people and organizations targeted to achieve.
- JB said that he is supportive and asked whether Sheldon is confident that he'll get the match funding. CM answered that obviously awarding is subject to him getting the match funding and that he mentioned that it's coming from key partners to Maritime UK South West.
- PM asked about the stand cost, and the number of participants and RS concluded that they need to know what sum of money they are comfortable with and then Sheldon can go on and profile it.
- RS mentioned that his question to the group would be: "if not this then what?" saying that there is this designated sum of money and a couple of bids, so with the notion of wanting the South West to be nationally and internationally present if not these bids then what?
- EJ said that he concluded that there is a need for reassurance rather than people being against these endeavours.
- RS concluded that in principal, the members are supportive yet they need granularity of the outputs and the value for money tested.
- SE asked that in the future to have an idea about whether they'd go ahead with funding or not and perhaps they'd be mentioned in the application process.

**Actions, suggestions and recommendations:**

- To ask members to vote for a BLG session for ERDF applications review and decision in w/c 08 November (target a quorum).

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<b>8</b>	<b>LEP Review Update</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ EJ briefed the group about the LEP review, saying that it was announced back in March around the budget and that it is the second after the first one issued in 2018.</li> <li>▪ He mentioned that The review itself was due to be complete by the summer and that it's now scheduled for completion as part of that levelling up white paper at the end of this month.</li> <li>▪ EJ talked about where things are, mentioning the engagement with other LEPs which led to the drawing together of four functions for future LEPs and the big caveat with all this and with the reshuffle. He went on to explain these four functions.</li> <li>▪ He added that these function are yet to be agreed by ministers and that the funding to go with is still unclear.</li> <li>▪ EJ said that in a nutshell, mostly things are still up in the air and that we'd hopefully have some clarity soon.</li> </ul> <p><b>Comments following the update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SE asked whether there were any thoughts about joined geographies with different LEPs coming together. EJ mentioned that there has been some exploratory conversations with neighbouring LEPs and local authorities but there isn't much momentum behind that and no clear indication at this point.</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions, suggestions and recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To circulate the LEP review document among the group.</li> </ul>
<b>9</b>	<b>AOBs</b>
	<p>NA</p> <p><b><i>Next Meeting: TBA</i></b></p>