

Heart of the South West Skills Advisory Panel

1st November 2021

from

09:30am – 11:30am

Via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- Vince Flower
- Andy Berry
- Bill Blythe
- Claire Gibson
- Chris Evans
- Debbie Stafford
- Gabrielle Climie
- Hilary Stevens
- John Laramy
- Katy Quinn
- Khristine Norton
- Laurence Frewin
- Lee Tozer
- Mel Roberts
- Neil Radford
- Nora Corkery
- Paul Turner
- Phill Adams
- Rod Davis
- Rosie Bates
- Sharron Robbie
- Stuart Brocklehurst
- Stuart Elford
- Tina Brinkworth
- Ruby Hamm
- Guy Hazlehurst
- Helen Higgs
- Jackie Grubb
- Jamie Evans
- Joanne Caine
- Keri Denton
- Louise Knight
- Mike Green
- Mike Matthews
- Nicola Williams
- Paul Blackmore
- Sean Mackney
- Suzanne Bond
- Tony Skeel
- Victoria Hatfield

Apologies:

- Alan Denby
- Carl Wyard
- Chris Young
- David Ralph
- Fran Stratford

09:30am Welcome, Housekeeping and any new Declarations

Vince Flower welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Phill Adams provided an update on the Budget announcement from last Wednesday.

09:35am Minutes of Last Meeting

- Actions from last meeting:
 - All previous actions had been completed.
 - Board members approved the minutes from the meeting held on 9th September 2021.

09:40am Update on Deep Dives – Hilary Stevens

Hilary Stevens updated the group on the work that has completed at the University of Exeter alongside the Business School. Hilary reviewed the reports produced as part of the research and consultations on the Future of Work, covering workforce development and skills and business models.

The pandemic has affected the jobs and skills required going forward including issues around displacement, impacts to wellbeing and mental health, and a need to focus on inclusion and

diversity. She concluded that there is still work to be completed and that it should be completed collectively. An integration report is needed to bring all the findings together.

Phill Adams responded on the topic of training and recruitment and stated that there will be changes in ways of working to incorporate the impacts of the pandemic.

John Laramy spoke about 'hand' and 'heart' related workers, where hand related work would cover labour-based roles and skills and heart related work would cover caring and emotional roles and skills.

Phill Adams ventured that there is a clash between those caring, emotional and social skills, and government policy which is more technologically focused, and that funding is moving towards more technical skills. That approach however is likely to create a new challenge, with an expectation that LEPs and others will fill the gap left within the hand and heart skills funding agenda.

- **All to offer comments to Secretariat on the Future of Work reports from the University of Exeter by COP 17th November**
- **Phill Adams to consolidate findings on social mobility from University of Exeter into a report**
- **Future of Work - Next Steps to be added to December Agenda.**

09:50am Tourism Recovery Plan and Survey Findings – Phill Adams / Carl Wyard

Carl Wyard updated the members on the Tourism Recovery Plan and survey findings.

Carl covered how the visitor economy was one of the hardest hit sectors during the pandemic. The Plan for the Future – Towards 2030 report details how the sector has been looking ahead and how the sector is not recognised as a career of choice. There are skills gaps in the area for particular roles such as chefs and particular skills such as soft skills and digital skills.

Carl detailed how the Great South West Tourism Partnership's survey found that 1/3 of businesses were recruiting, with 60% of roles advertised being part-time. 4 in 10 businesses are taking on unskilled workers and providing training in house. This is all felt particularly acutely in the coastal economies.

Carl rounded up the presentation stating that the sector is asking to work together with the SAP and to determine if there is support provision that can help now. Phill Adams stated that the skills review is about to take place, and this will help identify specific needs for the tourism sector.

Sharron Robbie highlighted how there is a downward trend in 16-18 and L2 Apprenticeship starts, with young people staying in further education rather than entering the world of work, resulting in fewer young people available for work which is contributing to the current labour market issues.

10:00am The Southwest Technopole – Stuart Brocklehurst

Stuart advised that Innovate UK grants in the LEP are 28% of the UK average, and that HotSW is behind many areas of the country when it comes to R&D investment. There is due to be £128.3m of investment into the LEP area, with only 2 projects in R&D.

Major metropolitan centres are where most businesses are founded, but the impact of building a business like this in a rural area can boost economic development in those areas, provide higher wages for roles and offer more training.

Stuart emphasised that universities and colleges need to make student entrepreneurs aware of the support that is available for them. Universities have good links to R&D companies, but colleges provide links to areas further out and can be the missing links to areas that are not currently engaged. This will enable each part to be greater than they would without that interlocking support.

Many points raised by Stuart Brocklehurst were supported and echoed by the members. Tina Brinkworth advised how Defence has nearly 30% of delivery spend but R&D has less than 1.5%. Bill Blythe also agreed highlighting that Petroc are working with the Science Park to extend reach.

Sharron Robbie commented on student entrepreneurship and detailed how there was historic work conducted with the Gazelle Group to introduce entrepreneurship into the curriculum across further education, which raised some good ideas on supporting staff and what is available in terms of support to students looking to entrepreneurship.

Lawrence Frewin highlighted that students are not only job seekers but job creators, starting at Level 4 & 5. Colleges need external partners to bridge the missing links to university and commercial spaces. He emphasised that entrepreneurship is not just about building your own business but also can make people more employable; businesses want people who are innovative thinkers.

Chris Evans supported this discussion, advising that student entrepreneurship comes in many forms, that this can come under employability skills for students. She highlighted that integration is important but opportunities for support in venturing ideas and taking them to market are important as these are the skills that make them attractive to blue chip companies, and there is a need to increase the overall ecosystem of entrepreneurship in the area.

- **Stuart Brocklehurst sent a one-page summary on the Technopole to all members after the meeting.**

10:15am Roundtable of Members – All

Stuart Elford updated members on the Devon Chamber of Commerce, stating that Chamber members were struggling with the lack of skills and raising the question of what is being done to get people ready for employment in low skill areas. He also advised that the Devon Chamber Strategic Business Group met for the first-time last month and have agreed to focus on skills, recruitment, and retention, as this is the biggest challenge they face. Best practice will be shared, and the group will aim to come up with solutions.

Lawrence Frewin emphasised the need to make noise for central government to include skills in funding while anticipating the outcomes of the devolution talks, as there is a lot stalling while we wait for the outcomes.

Paul Turner advised the group that the biggest challenges they were facing were recruitment and retention to get boats built and on time. Skilled and semi-skilled workers are required for this work, but none are available. Regarding mid-term or longer-term recruitment, they are 200 people short currently and are looking ahead to the next 5 years to amend this. The upcoming Skills Summit will be paramount in what is trying to be achieved locally, and he raised the question of how the next generation of people will be recruited into hospitality and tourism.

Tina Brinkworth echoed Paul Turner's sentiments, advising that they have 80 attendees registered for the skills summit to help shape the city's strategic skills plan, interventions, and skills investment priorities.

Phill Adams advised that he had seen revised modelling data which suggests the squeeze has been reinforced post COVID and could present the details of this at the next meeting.

Bill Blythe updated the group on the Northern Devon Futures meeting, where employers were reporting real difficulties in recruitment, which could mean that they will have to turn to more innovative ways of recruiting or provide options for relocation to fill their roles.

He also updated the group on how Petroc College are also struggling with recruitment and they are looking at their long term aims. He noted the hourglass nature of the economy, and how there is difficulty with mobility out of the centre of the hourglass.

John Laramy advised that 16–18-year-olds have stopped seeing apprenticeships as the way to go, and the only way to solve this is to ensure that young people see working in a hand or heart vocation as a real option. He highlighted that there needs to be a change in how young people view higher education decisions, as going to a highly ranked university will likely equal a higher salary, but otherwise it might be a better decision to go to a local college and save themselves from the debt.

Lawrence Frewin emphasised that critical skills might be better in place of soft skills. He also highlighted that it would be important to get young people to build their transferable skills, as it can sometimes seem to them once they have made a choice in one field that they are unable to change, and it is important that they don't feel locked into one career path.

Sharron Robbie advised the group that the number one challenge across their network members was the recruitment of staff and retention of staff. She highlighted the push from government towards occupational traineeships for those aged 16-24, but apprenticeship vacancies are not being filled due to lack of people.

Rod Davis advised the group on the work they had been doing around Level 2 qualifications and apprenticeships and how less Level 2 standards have been developed in recent years. There would be an economic benefit in encouraging more Level 2 standards to be developed. He echoed the other members by reporting that there were challenges in recruiting and a great number of apprenticeship vacancies not being filled. He concluded by stating how the network is making sure the provider base is ready to respond, by continuing to work with strategic stakeholders, adult FE and skills consultation.

Stuart Elford updated the group on numbers for Kickstart, with 700 approved placements listed and 300 people placed into the scheme. 79% of those placed were in some kind of employment and 70% were in full time roles. The employers have better support in a scheme like this, wrap around support.

Andy Berry advised that Bridgewater & Taunton College were currently overseeing 1000 young people retaking GCSEs, and that there has been real growth in their apprenticeship programme, whilst keeping an eye on changes from the Level 3 review. He advised that they had been working with Visit Dartmoor to support the hospitality and tourism sector and they had submitted for the £50k funding under the Skills Accelerator and were working to pull together a skills improvement plan. He advised that there were many opportunities arising in Somerset from the Gravity project,

and they have just opened a new mechanical centre of excellence. He concluded by saying they have been working with employers that have these short-term pressures to recruit now but he confirmed that there are a number of young people studying and training in these areas, who are just not qualified yet.

Rosie Bates updated the group on the feedback she was seeing from employers, that there are huge shortages of people especially now remote working is possible which makes the competition global. She highlighted the jobs fair that was held in September and how although there were a third of the usual attendees, there was positive feedback from employers that they were able to have more quality time with the attendees.

Khristine Norton raised a point about the HotSW Careers Hub and how it could provide access to all schools and colleges to a tool that sets out all the learning routes for careers options. More details of this are to be sent out with the minutes.

Nora Corkery added that across the VCSE sector, they are also facing very difficult challenges with regards to staff recruitment and retention, and they have been getting behind the new paid carer promotion & recruitment drive.

Rod Davis highlighted the Springboard project in Somerset launched by Somerset County Council where £375k has been made available to support modular training needs to enable progression in the workplace or to an ongoing learning programme. He emphasised that this is not the whole solution, but a helping hand – a springboard.

- **Ruby Hamm/Secretariat to send out information on careers hubs with minutes as mentioned by Khristine Norton**

10:45am Local Skills Report Update – Phill Adams

Phill Adams advised that there had been a formal request by DFE to bring forward a light touch review of the Local Skills Report

He continued with the Local Skills Report update, in which there are 3 primary objectives; providing skills that meet business needs, providing skills that support individuals to achieve their potential and providing skills investment that drives both productivity and individual prosperity. These will be accompanied by an action plan to be pursued over the next 3-5 years.

He advised that there can be a Level 2 dichotomy, where the government is moving away from funding Level 2 qualifications but often Level 2 is needed to move higher up the skills ladder.

Phill then advised on the timetable moving forwards to produce the updated Local Skills Report for DFE, with the first milestone to have a draft ready for the next SAP board meeting on 14th December, and further milestones to ensure a final draft to be completed by the end of January.

- **SAP Secretariat Team to put together the first draft of the updated Local Skills Report and share at the next meeting on 14th December 2021.**
- **Update on Local Skills Report to be added to December meeting Agenda.**

11:15am Update on HEROG Actions – Phill Adams

Phill Adams advised the group that there were 3 immediate areas of need that were identified from HEROG feedback: a need for mapping and gapping of support provision available, a need for workforce advice and support for SMEs and a need for additional support for labour with the most complex needs. There were further recommendations for the medium term and long-term areas of need.

Phill continued with an update on the Digital Skills Programme, as the LEP board has allocated £1.5m for digital. This has resulted in 3 programmes being funded

- Improving Digital Engagement at Key Stage 3 (£400,000, 3,000 individuals)
- Digital Skills for Key Sector (£800,000, 450 individuals)
- Enhanced Digital Leadership (£300,000, 150 individuals)

Phill Adams confirmed that the timeframe for these programmes would be to achieve delivery by April 2022/23.

- **Update on SAP Projects and Programmes to be added to December Agenda.**

11:25am AOB

There was no other business to report.

11:30am Close

The next SAP Board meeting is scheduled for 14th December 2021.