

Minutes from the Innovation Board Meeting

September 22nd 2021

Apologies

Wayne Loschi, Cathrine Armour, David Ralph

In attendance

Stuart Brocklehurst, David Ralph, Chris Evans, Adrian Dawson, Icarus Allen, Sally Basker, Ian McFadzen, Stephen Mariadas, Victoria Hatfield, Vince McConville, Martyn Ashford, Layla Burrows, Paul Coles, Stuart Nicol, Andrew Dean.

Minutes from the meeting held on 30th June 2021

Accepted with no further comments.

Lobbying and engagement (SB, CE, ADaw)

There will be a further meeting with Geoffrey Cox MP in October when the Technopole Business Case will be complete. The Board are progressing the marine and environmental asks accordingly.

Simon Jupp MP has also approached the PM concerning measures that are relevant to the group - such as the environmental impact accelerator.

Stuart has also spoke to Fiona Murray (of the |Prime Minister's Council on Science and Innovation) who will also be informed of developments so she can support our work. Our planned activities are seeking to maximise what we offer - not replace existing innovations.

Technopole business case development (SB, SN) (Paper circulated)

Stuart Nicol spoke on progress in developing the Technopole concept. He has already spoken to many on the Panel and is also speaking to other potentially useful models. On the whole Board Members and others consulted were enthusiastic and any concerns tended to be around unnecessary targets, impacts on resource and potential confusion over where to go for support.

It should be practical to avoid such duplications and the TECHSW Paper was an indication that this should be possible.

SN reported that respondents were concerned that the Technopole must be sustainable – and not a 3-year only activity/project. It must therefore include useful services that can help subsidise the Technopole.

The Board were happy with progress and with Stuart's circulated paper.

Technopole Platform (Paper circulated) (SB)

The LEP was continuing to progress the Technopole and to look out for opportunities for supporting innovation and recently received an interesting proposal from TECH SW to develop a form of Platform that could enable Technopole activity. It is very positive that Tech SW are actively involved in this field.

PC has also seen similar developments in the West Midlands - known as 'the Grid' - this targets IDEs and is supported by universities and Local Authorities. Board members described other similar developments and potential offers in what is an interesting space.

Stuart Brocklehurst requested information and contacts for any organisations that can provide this kind of service.

It could be that such a Platform would cover a larger geography.

Stuart Brocklehurst also identified that there were two Technopole elements – a short term piece for developing the platform, then a longer-term piece which was around the delivery of the Technopole elements.

Board members expressed a desire that the early phase developments should not limit options for future delivery. Making sure the Platform, or its owners, do not define or limit the Technopole.

IA was supportive of the development and identified that a really clear, punchy, case would need to be made for the Technopole – describing the clear benefits.

The Board wished to see the commissioning documents ahead of their going out to tender. This must have the real value proposition incorporated.

It was recognised as important that the Technopole needs to be inclusive and must not be too closely associated with one or other sector.

ACTION LEP: In procurement, we will need to add in that ‘the chosen solution does not limit options for the future implementation of the Technopole’

ACTION LEP: Make sure Technopole documents make the value proposition very clear and circulate the commissioning documents ahead of tender - for comments by the Board.

ACTION AD: Circulate the Grid presentation (Via PC)

Environmental intelligence and proposals for Exeter (CE)

Exeter have been seeking to pull together an ask around Environmental Intelligence for Government. A potential vehicle could be an Environmental Impact Accelerator. This idea has been consolidated to involve a number of partners including PML, UoE, UoP, Met Office. There is also the potential for an Innovation District in the city where the Environmental Impact Accelerator would be a core offer.

Smaller projects have also been progressed - that could form part of a larger ‘whole’ though form different funds.

The UoE VC will meet BEIS soon to help progress discussions. This is on target and discussions are ongoing, including through COP26 where the University is well represented. The Business Case is not far from being finalised.

Ultimately this will be part of a larger package that includes the below Marine and Ocean Futures work.

ACTION: CE to circulate details to organisations concerned and interested on the Board

Marine and Ocean Futures (ADaw)

The Brand was successfully launched last week in London to help get traction for the concept. Business Plan is 70+% complete. The central elements/themes are now well defined. BEIS discussions have already taken place and a further briefing with BEIS and MOD will take place later in September. A related Lloyds Register application will be submitted that would complement what is being proposed more broadly.

As with the previous item – there is areal need to encapsulate this in one or two sentences.

Entrepreneur Panel (ADea) (Paper circulated)

The secretariat has contacted the individuals who that have engaged previously in the MIT-REAP work and have circulated details to all Board members requesting their support with recruitment. They have also reached out through networks and organisations such as: CBI, FSB, SWBC, TechSW, ExIST, Chambers of Commerce and Innovate UK.

We have just over 40 members already, but the list is not terribly diverse. Board members recommended individuals and organisations to contact.

Board members were consulted on topics to consult the IDE Panel, the following were agreed as themes:

1. Testing the proposals of the Technopole consultancy work underway.
2. Exploring 'skills' as a topic given the labour market shortages - the LEP Board may well have specific questions and Stuart Brocklehurst will advise. Similarly, the SWIoT are in a position to suggest questions around skills.
3. Space to grow for IDEs (availability across the region) and can they access that space.

ACTION: SBro approaching three local Directors re: Panel membership

ACTION LB: Please check the Women in Innovation award winners for potential Panel nominees

ACTION SM: SWIoT are looking to survey people regarding apprenticeships and other provision given skills gaps – liaise with ADea as to whether the Panel can support this by sending out a small number of questions.

ACTION: ADea inform Panel of the forthcoming survey(s) and their topics and circulate survey(s) when ready

Innovate UK update (LB)

The wider context of the Innovation strategy were not considered. The presentation was very much concerned with Innovate UK's delivery strategy. Particular elements include:

- Build on the Plan for Growth
- Business and SME focussed
- Seeking a major change in private sector investment

The slides presented by Layla were circulated after the meeting.

In addition to the programmes and approach set-out open competitions and KTPs will allow bids to include areas wider than these. There are still considerable elements to be confirmed including County Deals.

The Board were concerned at the lack of R&D funding in the LEP area. Over the last 7 years, £866m has been given to 1,058 companies in broader SW. But half of that was just to West of England. This year only £3.2m has gone to HotSW so far. The Board recognised the major impact of R&D investment and that large areas in the HotSW geography receive very little compared to many others outside the region – and this has, and will, continue to hinder any attempts at Levelling Up.

CE noted a report had been produced a few years ago concerning R&D barriers for regional businesses that could be re-visited.

ACTION CE: Recover the cited report and circulate (via secretariat) if possible

LB was eager to discuss where the major regional opportunities are – for place-based innovation support, possibly linked to Levelling Up. Creating a regional package of support. Marine and Environmental Intelligence are the two core priorities for the Board.

Catapults will remain part of Innovate UK's delivery. SME grants of up to £15k are available for those seeking to engage Catapults (whether in region or not).

ACTION LB: Circulate presentation to the Board

The parallel R&D People and Culture Strategy is led by UKRI and as yet has not filtered down into Innovate UK. Inclusivity is a key element of the delivery of the Innovate UK approach given the demographics of the sector. CE highlighted the work of the regional IKEEP project - and the potential for entrepreneurial support through this.

ACTION: LB offered to link Board Members into UKRI

Date of Next Meeting

ACTION: Andrew Dean to 'Doodle' the Board Members for the next 2 Meeting Dates