

**Business Leadership Group
12 January, 2022
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

Present

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

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

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) – Maritime, Defence and Autonomous Systems/
General Dynamics UK Ltd

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

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

Noel Stevens (NS) – ESIF Committee Representative / Business Representative
(Alder King)

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

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

David Ralph (DR) – HotSW LEP Chief Executive

Dirk Rohwedder (DRo) – Regional Director/ School for Social Entrepreneurs
(Dartington Team)

Steve Warren Brown – Business Representative (YSL Landscapes)

Alistair Handyside (AH) - Tourism Alliance

Philip Mitchell (PM) – Photonics Lead (Lumentum)

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1	Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
	<p>Introductions and apologies were made (please see above)</p> <p>Conflict of interest was declared by:</p> <p>AC (Business support programmes)</p> <p>SE (Peer Network and Growth Hub)</p> <p>SH (Thrive and Peer Network)</p> <p>JH (Thrive, CRF, Digital Boost)</p>
2	Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising
	Previous minutes approved- without any matters arising.
3	Freezone Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kevin McKenzie gave a presentation about the Plymouth and South Devon Freezone. He started by giving a background about how and when the project started then presented how it adds to employment (jobs created) and productivity growth in terms of real GVA (time series comparisons), and explaining that though, productivity still lacks behind national levels, Kevin then dwelled upon the uses of the Freezone and what it offers- including contributions to levelling up, tax benefits and establishing a global footprint for marine technology and advanced technology. He then explained the ambitions of the project, which build upon the capabilities explained earlier and the partners involved in the project, He then moved on to discuss the regeneration concept and then how to gain from Levelling Up- including addressing local skills demands, establishing a Marine Skills Academy and targeting women employment, Kevin talked about the Freezone project as an enabler for making it easier for businesses' growth- providing details about space and infrastructure, tax and custom levers, and targeting specific sectors. Then he explained these points in further details and moved to discuss what the benefits are for (small) businesses, He moved on to talk about the 3 sites which the project includes; their infrastructure, investment and proposals. After then, Kevin discusses the 3 sites in details including their concept master plans and what each site offers.

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- Kevin presented the governing arrangements, then he moved to talk about the overall benefit of the project for (outside) businesses and finally mentioned the programme's timeline- what to be achieved and when.
(please see attached pertinent presentation for detailed information)
- Q&A and comments following the update:**
- SE asked about the approach for attracting new businesses, investment and jobs. Kevin answered by saying that they have a pipeline of interested parties (140 different businesses) in various stages and that they are trying to provide a supportive environment throughout these stages. In terms of ensuring that businesses are coming into it, Kevin mentioned that they have a trade and investment strategy led by Dave Lee (PCC) and that they are also talking to DIT- the DIT Freeport Initiative,
 - CW mentioned his interest in details about the selection criteria (the 140 businesses in pipeline) and how it will be used. He questioned the worthiness of looking at future projections (use of South Yard for example) and suggested creating a business flyer to sell the capability and the idea plus the major programmes taking place in 5- 10 years per say. CW also asked about targeted engagement and adding a proactive move into the market place. His final comment was about the linkage to HPO, maritime/ autonomy space- how all these should be “intrinsically” linked to propel both in an international space. Kevin responded that they are linked to HPO through the Ocean Future's programme which is not aligned but close to Freezone. He gave an example that they are having a conversation about whether there should be a separate Freezone innovation governance or should they adopt Ocean Future's arrangement. Kevin also mentioned that some proactive conversations are taking place with the businesses in the pipeline and gave examples of a few and that there is progress in attracting big players. He finally mentioned that in the coming 4 months they will be developing their marketing plan which ensures linking up with initiatives developing in the South West region (in a 5 to 10 years' span),
 - SE mentioned that he spoke to Richard May about the website and having a “proactive window”. He added that the chamber is a stakeholder lead for the Freezones so they are keen to make sure things are joined up,
 - JB asked about engagement of existing businesses in wider South Devon and clusters- him speaking from the perspectives of photonics and electronics cluster in the region and Torbay. He seconded CW's note of joining things up and mentioned the marine and space businesses

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	<p>cutting through the HotSW's HPO. JB lastly mentioned that they were asked to pull together a report and facilitated session of tech companies (especially photonics and electronics) in the region for growth intervention purposes and the report did mention Freeport and offered to share this report. Kevin mentioned that in terms of general businesses' engagement, they held two stakeholder events (referring to SE and the chamber as the stakeholder lead). SE offered to link with JB and to add interested Torbay businesses to these events' distribution list. Kevin added that he will make sure that JB and other interested BLG members are included in their stakeholder's distribution list.</p>
4	<p>Growth Support Programme Board and Service for All Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Hynd gave an update starting with the most recent highlights and the covid related impacts on businesses and engagement and the launch of Tier 2 support end of last year (with 127 businesses in the pipeline). He moved on to talk about Thrive in terms of money feeding into it, sources and how to fit in non- ERDF supported business sectors. He concluded this part by listing the challenges faced, He then after talked about the KPIs in terms of deliverables referencing B1 to B7 in numbers of businesses engaged and connected as well as the intensive support provided. The tables also included info about the ERDF funding. David then discussed the details of engagement including the website and workshops, He moved on to discuss a couple of Growth Hub successful case studies and reminded members of how to get in touch and handed over the talk to Katherine Coby, Katherine mentioned that from a Thrive perspective despite the late start; the early signs of engagement are promising, the interest is positive and the focus now is on that conversion rate as well as ramping up the numbers. (please see attached pertinent presentation for detailed information) <p>Q&A and comments following the update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SE asked about the sort of engagement they are getting- anecdotal or qualitative or quantitative, what sort of sentiment, what type of questions are businesses asking, and lastly for what reasons were the presenters sounding positive. David answered by saying that there are very high volumes of start- up enquiries - which is a big change- which are mostly about

finance, funding, seeking grants and financial support... etc. the rest is a general range about how to develop and grow a business.

- SE had another question about the 1 2 1 and clinic services and when they will be back. David answered that they still adhere to guidelines of working from home but could see the face-to-face services gradually coming back. He added that the February and March events are scheduled on line,
- EJ asked members about experiences of what businesses are looking for. SE said that people/ labour are the main issue as well as access to finance- whether there is a need for a regional growth fund and the question of coping with the pandemic. EJ asked about the declining number of businesses accessing support and SE responded that the chamber is helping businesses with declined international trading and that now the concern of most businesses is to keep the business going rather than growing,
- AC asked David whether they have any numbers of social enterprises' engagement with the Growth Hub- a year post the end of the social enterprise programme end. David and Katherine responded that they should be able to extract some data. AC mentioned that social enterprises face issues of lack of access to finance- specifically equity finance and hence wanted to know about the engagement and numbers of social enterprises,
- JB mentioned that the report for LEP on growth interventions for Photonics/Microelectronics growth also sets out a regional fund approach/ask from the sector,
- JuB mentioned that there are two dedicated Peer Network cohorts being delivered for Social Enterprises. Plymouth has commissioned specific support for Social Enterprises, running until end of March 2022,
- AR asked about whether there was an element of seasonality in take up of business support. David said that it is part of the mix and that it's partially why they don't see a pattern of continuity,
- SE referenced the quarterly economic survey by the British Chamber of Commerce and suggested coming up with a way- out plan so that people would rapidly bounce back- a longer term planning of how to cope with covid as well as getting firms' cash- flow ok,
- SH commented that according to their experience businesses are now indeed picking up,

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5	Business Support Work Programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AR explained that the presentation is about explaining the Build Back Better plan and the lessons learned from the mapping and evaluation research. She explained the plan and how it is linked to the local industrial strategy then further explained its purpose, ▪ AR picked up from the mapping and evaluation presentation in the last BLG meeting and how they used the research findings to look at the business community is saying in terms of what they need of business support, how business support is delivered (on line or face to face) and that there was an actual demand of face to face support, ▪ AR spoke about the gaps in scale up, start- up, access to finance and net zero, then moved on to explain what the action plan for next year are. She concluded the presentation by dwelling on the detailed programmes that are scheduled and recommended to continue, (please see attached pertinent presentation for detailed information) ▪ EJ talked about access to finance, highlighting the government announcement of the £200m fund for the South West region for both loan and equity- for which now the LEP has more details- the British Business Bank is leading on this fund, the timeline is end of calendar year. The model used is an overall regional fund with sub- regional geographies- a (strategic board running the fund with series of sub- geographic boards underneath) and fund managers. There is no match funding required, and no EU money so more flexibility on matrix guiding the fund. It is not fully confirmed yet but there is a possible focus on net zero, on the innovation sphere, a focus on gender and ethnicity matrix. EJ also talked about aligning all that with the local priority; explaining that there is a possibility to provide some sort of clean growth, sector type piece, innovation and inclusive growth. HotSW LEP is now working on details with British Business Bank. <p>Q&A and comments following the update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EJ mentioned that there isn't any suggestion of moving directly to provider business support, also the solution will be pertinent to the different cases and that there is a common theme that the Growth Hub will continue providing support however this support will be varied, ▪ PB commented that he agreed to not reinventing the wheel and that the main challenge particularly around start-ups is signposting and knowing where to get the right business support. He mentioned that Digital Plymouth / Elixel is starting a project this year (similar to

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	the WoE Tube map), looking into how this challenge could be solved in Plymouth. He finally offered to have a chat further with whomever interested.
6	AOBs
	NA <i>Next Meeting: 23 March, 2022</i>

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