

Innovation Board Minutes

14:00 – 16:00, 14th March 2022

In Attendance

Stuart Brocklehurst, David Ralph, Chris Evans, Icarus Allen, Sally Basker, Stephen Mariadas, Layla Burrows, Victoria Hatfield, Ian McFadzen and Andrew Dean.

Apologies

Adrian Dawson, Paul Coles. Chris Evans had to leave after 1 hour.

Minutes from the meeting held on 15 December 2021

The minutes from the meeting were accepted with a correction regarding Sally Basker's non executive roles.

Stakeholder Engagement Update

Stuart updated the Board on the considerable progress made to date around the major investment opportunities pulled together by the LEP and the two major University partners.

Since the LEP adopted the Board's Strategy, meetings have taken place with University of Exeter and Plymouth Universities, Stuart Brocklehurst and Sir Geoffrey Cox. Propositions have been honed and Sir Geoffrey arranged a meeting with a senior minister, who was interested and engaged – particularly around using R&D spend to help level-up – where we have considerable research strengths identified through the work of the Innovation Board. There have been subsequent follow-ups.

This is a positive development, and we must ensure consistent engagement and message. Stuart Brocklehurst is speaking at a future MIT-REAP event and recognised other opportunities to help promote the outcomes of our work.

Stuart Brocklehurst also met with another minister and discussed relocating R&D beyond current concentrations in the greater South East. Things appear to be evolving still here. Going forward, combining the two proposals around Environmental Intelligence and Marine seems a logical route. There are clear links around topics such as Maritime Autonomy.

Innovate UK remains a route for levelling up around these themes and there are helpful links to County Deals and Freeports also being pursued by Innovate UK. Layla is looking internally for data to generate a report on the blue and green economy.

Victoria Hatfield fed back that Exeter City Council are working on an Economic Growth Design Skills Programme which relates to the same broader theme. David Ralph fed back that Victoria could look at the MIT-Reap process as part of the journey that has led to the identification of themes such as this.

Stuart Brocklehurst indicated more work would also look at where the financial returns to industry could be highlighted and developed.

Further meetings with government are planned.

Discussion around the recent Levelling Up White Paper

The White paper was a particularly large report and had a very broad scope for influencing domestic policy. There are clear opportunities for seeing innovation as a vehicle for levelling up. Much of the region is clearly in need of levelling up given economic and social position. We need to look at how we use the White Paper can help us to achieve what we are looking to do.

Chris Evans felt more detail was needed, especially around implication and developments such as County Deals. Most of the region is a Level 1 region which will lead to less opportunity for funding, so we need to be very focussed on where other 'non-funded' opportunities may lie, such as improving our innovation ecosystem and limits to regulation.

David Ralph has identified that there are clear grounds for adding an Accelerator for the region. We also need to look at what kind of delivery model will be needed. Potentially extending beyond traditional county boundaries. We need to be clear how we articulate innovation. There could be the potential to draw in photonics and autonomy into whatever levelling up innovation proposals emerge from our group and its partners.

ACTION: All to get back to David and Stuart with specific 'asks' linked to investment in innovation where we may not need major additional resource - as soon as possible,

Stephen Mariadas noted the centralised use of data and how this could be made available – we need to see how this could be useful for us.

Victoria Hatfield noted Devon County has been asking for information on where innovation proposals could be quickly established to help build a coherent package. This includes digital comms and working from home. Further, they were exploring how the airport can be made more sustainable.

Sally Basker fed back on meetings she had attended to build on Technopole ideas and potentially linked to areas such as increasing exports and needed to develop our economy.

Ian McFadzen noted that we have lots of issues and opportunities here - so we need to draw government's attention to what there is in the region – given decision makers do not appear to fully recognise our strengths and potential.

Icarus Allen recognised the importance of the innovation piece so far described, backed up by driving-up the skills base. He wondered if the strategy of the Innovation Board needed now to evolve. He was also concerned about the input from local politicians unwilling to accept changes to local government.

Stuart Brocklehurst responded that the fit of the Innovation Board Strategy was quite close to what could emerge from the Levelling Up White Paper. There was potential but we are certainly not there yet. We do not need an elected mayor to guarantee this.

Victoria Hatfield asked about Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and where links may need to happen with County Deals. A lot of language around SPF was not very innovation-driven. In Exeter this may be linking innovation to business support in the centre.

David Ralph recognised the Innovation Board links well to the Levelling Up ideas. BEIS is very keen on 'clusters' and we also talk to that field. If Accelerators are the way forward – we should test our fit to the needs for an Accelerator.

Layla recognised the White Paper does not allude to the spread of innovation funding from businesses. Logically our ask has to be aligned to key industry investment. Accelerators do not as yet have a Framework. One is being developed. Part of this may be a logical extension of Strength in Places. Much of the work will be around enhancing what already exists, not creating 'new' *per se*.

Chris Evans suggested looking at the logic model that underpinned the proposed Environmental Science Accelerator.

ACTION: Chris Evans to forward the Logic Models to Layla Burrows

Innovation and Skills

Stephen Mariadas delivered a series of slides on Skills. The Levelling Up White paper included considerable investment in FE capital and revenue. This included IoTs. There was also the promotion of Royal Charter Status – to boost Higher Technical – giving them awarding powers. SWIoT are yet to discuss their position on this.

Piloting has taken place of in-work courses notably around mathematics skills (SPF), T-Levels and Bootcamps. In terms of innovation and skills that our region needs we have had awards to:

- High value manufacturing catapult – emerging skills
- Adults in work skills pilots
- Higher Technical Growth Fund (mostly digital construction and health)

A lot of interest in the latter around Marine and Environmental.

In future 2 areas likely to be key – upskilling low-skilled workers and higher technical skills developments.

ACTION Stephen Mariadas to circulate the slides presented via the Secretariat

Ian McFadzen noted the new projects around digital transformation in advanced engineering and wondered how the major employers can link to our skill system and smaller employers. Getting equipment as part of an ecosystem where apprentices and others can access it. Is there a role for the Technopole? Stephen Mariadas – suggested using FE as a route - as equipment can be more accessible than within HE. Sally Basker wondered how employers would recognise the links that exist and if these are clear enough.

Stephen Mariadas argued that the IoT will help filter the information to help signpost employers. Our IOT is also first to develop specific courses with employers. Building courses hand-in-hand also demonstrates our demand-led approach.

David Ralph recognised we had done well with Digital Skills Bootcamps and asked if they would remain, given the guaranteed job interview attached. Stephen Mariadas suggested more clarity would help from government around what was requested.

Next LEP Panel Survey Proposal *Discussion* (All)

Stuart Brocklehurst noted discussions had taken place around using the Panel with the university members and this could relate to awareness of the services they offer to innovation driven enterprises.

Ian McFadyen suggested exploring what technology IDEs thought the region should prioritise investment in - that we may not be aware of yet, but could be really key in supporting them. Further, what skills may be linked to these.

He also suggested a working group on establishing where the barriers to adoption were – what are the barriers for SMEs accessing funding? We could ask what holds businesses back from applying for Innovate UK funding. Layla felt the problem was universal – but steps were being taken to address this – growing the investor portfolio and increasing their loan provision. Further to work with LEPs and others to co-create a fund and counterbalance the cashflow problems. It may also make sense for the SME to have a greater input on investment within proposals. More upfront funding could also help.

Action AD and IM: Discuss content of questions for the Panel

ACTION AD: Survey our IDE Panel on the topics above and report to the next meeting

Devon County Agricultural Association Request – May 2023 event

The 2023 County Show will have a theme on innovation. It's probably got the highest attendance of any event in the County, and is particularly well attended by young people, so could provide a great opportunity to promote STEM and innovation.

Stuart Brocklehurst reported that we had been approached as to whether the Innovation Board could help showcase technology and skills. He asked for thoughts and volunteers for judging.

Layla volunteered equality, diversity and inclusion activities. Also, inclusive innovation awards. Innovate UK might potentially be interested in sponsoring the activity.

Stephen was interested in supporting ideas around aspirational leaders in education and offered to help judge such an award. Both Science parks could also volunteer tenants as exemplars of innovation.

ACTION ALL: Please come forward with suggestions and offers of help

Show AOB and new opportunities (All)

Given the movement to date around Innovation it could be that an *ad hoc* meeting will be needed.

Dates for the next 2 meetings

ACTION AD will send a Doodle Poll for meetings in June and September.

Membership

Organisation Types	Organisation	Member	Email
CHAIR	Applegate	Stuart Brocklehurst	stuart.brocklehurst@applegate.co.uk
LEP Representative	HotSW LEP	David Ralph	david.ralph@heartofswlep.co.uk
2* Universities	Exeter Plymouth	Chris Evans Adrian Dawson	Chris.Evans@exeter.ac.uk adrian.dawson@plymouth.ac.uk
3* Key Research Assets	MET Office UKHO PML	TBC Cathrine Armour Prof Icarus Allen	TBC cathrine.armour@ukho.gov.uk jia@pml.ac.uk
2* Science Parks	Exeter SP Plymouth SP	Sally Basker Ian McFadzen	sbasker@exetersciencepark.co.uk ceo@plymouthsciencepark.com
1 Rep for Innov Centres	EPIC	Wayne Loschi	wayne.loschi@tda.uk.net
1 SWIOT and FE	SWIOT	Stephen Mariadas	stephenmariadas@exe-coll.ac.uk
1 LA ECC, PCC, SCC or DCC	ECC	Victoria Hatfield	victoria.hatfield@exeter.gov.uk
1 LA from another LA			
1 Corporate Rep	Babcock	Mark Ratcliffe	Mark.Ratcliffe@babcockinternational.com
1 LEP Board Observer	Independent	Paul Coles	paul.3.coles@outlook.com
1 Innovate UK	Innovate UK	Layla Burrows	layla.burrows@innovateuk.ukri.org