

**Business Leadership Group
23 March 2022
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

Present

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

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

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

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

Chris Wardman (CW) – Maritime, Defence and Autonomous Systems/
General Dynamics UK Ltd

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

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

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

Paul Bird (PB) – Digital Lead (Elixel)

Philip Mitchell (PM) – Photonics Lead (Lumentum)

Daniel Newman (DN) – Local Authority (Torbay Development Agency), on behalf of Jason Buck (JaB)

Supporting Officers

Eifion Jones (EJ) – LEP Chief Operating Officer

Phil Adams (PA) – Programme Lead, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay County Deal

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

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

Carla Modley (CM) – HotSW LEP Inward Investment Manager

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David Hynd – Growth Hub’s Programme & Partnership Manager

Katherine Coby – ERDF Project Manager/ Growth Hub Service for All

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

Apologies

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

Alistair Handyside (AH) - Tourism Alliance

Julie Hawker (JH) – SWBC Representative

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

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

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

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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>
2	Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising
	<p>Previous minutes were approved.</p> <p>Action from previous minutes pertinent to feedback on LEP's business support work programme document. RS indicated approval since there was no feedback.</p>
3	Levelling Up White paper - Shared Prosperity Fund and Devolution Deal Updates
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AR explained that two deep dives were derived from the white paper which particularly apply to BLG and business support. She went on to explain that Devon was mentioned and Phil Adams (PA) is coordinating the devolutions deal on behalf of whole Devon and has been seconded accordingly, AR mentioned that since it's a vast and still a topic to uncover; presentations would be about "what's known". She said that all questions are welcome and that they'd come back for answers once known, Hence, presentations were in two folds; the devolution deal updates by (PA) and the Shared Prosperity Fund by Julia (JuB), <p>Devolution Deal Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PA kicked off by introducing himself then he seconded AR on that it's still a work in progress and that they are now helping the government shape the way it is. Therefore PA said that the more questions he gets, the more he can ask government, PA gave a background about the Levelling Up White Paper- when it was published, its purpose and new focus. He went on to explain the government's offer of 3 devolution choices to the county,

- PA then after explained what a county offer is in details and mentioned that partners in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay one of 9 pilots areas identified in the White Paper for County Deal negotiations, then elaborate on what the county deal principles are for Devon partners,
- PA dwelled upon the devolution map- explaining what each colour meant in terms of the deal and what it meant for Devon county and partners,
- Next, PA elaborated on the 5 primary areas of government's offer, explained the 8 devolution themes, what this offer will mean to local governments then concluded with explaining the plan for negotiation and the agreement principles preceding. He finally elaborated on explaining the asks.

(For further details, please go through the devolution Ppt. attached to the meeting minutes)

Q&A and comments following the update:

- SW commented that at she recently discovered that the Climate/Net Zero team at Exeter University are working with SME's in Wales and the North East. But not in Devon and at some stage she would like to see if we can get Devon SME's working with this team as it's crazy not to be using what is on our doorstep. She asked if it could be possible to have a presentation from the team at Exeter and see if we can do some cross work. EJ answered that Stuart Brocklehurst and the innovation board are working on some proposals around this with both universities, Innovate UK etc. so a presentation from Andy Dean or similar might be helpful,
- CW asked if it was to do with the Celtic Sea Cluster and EJ answered that it'd probably have a link as it includes marine autonomy,
- AR came back to SW saying that this is something which has been thrown into the pot around devolution and that they have spoken to Chris Evans at Exeter. AR said that it was a good idea about linking up with the innovation board,
- AR asked PA to go back to that last slide and zoom it out so that people could see who is leading on those groups for example. AR said that Plymouth is leading on business and innovation and that this is where BLG might be interested in. PA added that they were expecting the discussion about the LEP to be a discussion about individual functions. PA added that they now have to re- orientate as speed around economic development, business and innovation and make sure that we've got that coverage across the way it's going to work.
- SE said that he observed that there is no new money allegedly- and asked how do to ensure that this doesn't redistribute to the disadvantage of others and that the governance arrangement being put in place doesn't just suck up more money to actually dilute the part even more and how was this going to help. PA answered SE saying that he thinks that this is

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to be part of the test when actually doing the process. He added that from the way it has been set up elsewhere in the country that there can be massive benefits from doing this and gave the example of the combined authority, that they get about 2 1/2 times the existing ones; the MCAS at per head to some of the funding- a tactical advantage there. AR added that it's a deal process,

- DRO asked where social economy, social enterprise are viewed in light of all this and within that sort of new structure. He elaborated saying that it's always been an uneasy fit somewhere between business and communities and there has been a kind of certainly that the contribution of social enterprise and social economy is going to be quite vital to make that link between business and community, inclusion and then sustainability and resilience,
- PA said that they see it as part of that wider sort of cross cutting theme, how to build that in, and it's easier in terms of the business case that is finally done, but it's more difficult in terms of how department segment it. He added that there's a need as part of the discussion around those boards for a specific discussion about the third sectors role in a number of ways: its role as a service provider, its role as business provider, its role as a community leader... etc. PA repeated that they still don't have all the answers but however and more widely, social inclusion is something that the partnerships need to think about how it should work,
- DRO mentioned that in case in need for any input, they are happy to contribute. He added that there's some freedom there to do things and very little guidance on how to do it,
- RS asked about whether the mechanism of the LEP to help with devolution has been thought of. PA answered that it is thought of and that they have a range of options around LEP and its capacity, that they are still waiting for the LEP review letter to set out asks about what to be done. Officials have told that it's "folded in" but there is still the wait for a definitive answer,
- RS asked whether there was a referendum or it is just Devon and Plymouth sign it off on the way it goes and how will it end. PA said that there is no referendum and the way it works is it will be a political decision from constituent authorities through their membership and it'll have to be unanimously signed off by the Councils. So to a degree there is a referendum where local members are the democratically accountable bodies, they will have to decide that they are vesting some of their powers and some of their future operational structure,
- RS asked whether the big assets such as Freeport will be mentioned and whether that'd come in the next iteration. He also asked if equality, gender and other demographic issues in the county were mentioned and stressed the point that they should make sure to ask that question as there is a big gap,

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Actions:

- AR suggested an update as a standard BLG agenda item and members tended to agree.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF):

- JuB gave an overview about shared prosperity fund- what is known so far- and the published pre-launch guidance. She mentioned that there is still some missing information including allocation and expected outputs,
- JuB went on to explain the purpose and funding of UKSP, which is to replace European funding (ESF). She then explained the investment priorities set out in the guidance and mentioned that further details including a toolkit are expected in Spring,
- JuB went on to further explain what UKSPF meant for local businesses, communities and place, people and skills, geography, governance and delivery. She concluded the presentation with milestones and next steps.

(For further details, please go through the devolution Ppt. attached to the meeting minutes)

Q&A and comments following the update:

- RS asked about how success will be measured and whether it's possible to quantify the value of the pot- what is to be received vs. what was enjoyed in the past. JuB said that the formula the government is to use is not yet known, she added that the allocation will follow the way this formula is changed,
- AR added that a mismatch will be observed in the timings between the county deal and the timetable for that, and then the timetable for the shared prosperity fund. She added that it's a set allocation then to put a plan forward about how that's going to be spent. AR commented that there is change afoot there,
- EJ added to the point about the quantum of funding that the overall amount is significantly less than what was available under EU funding and accordingly the formula will be less.
- DRo asked about the investment priorities and allocating funds locally- specifically he wanted to know about the timing and processes. JuB said that development is when decisions about investment priorities are made- depending on these decisions then maybe have a grant programme or commissioning process,
- DRo asked how to feed into this development of plan process from a sustainability, inclusion, community resilience perspectives. JuB said that there will be consultation and possibility with partners and stakeholders to help shape those plans but there isn't a clear time line for that yet.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AR highlighted the two different time frames between the two different processes. While DN reiterated highlighting Torbay's experience by saying that plans or projects, need to be pretty much focused on local need and where opportunity is and that all partners, stakeholders and the various groups need to be consulted. He added that each of the different districts will probably have a slightly different approach- either from the bottom up. So with projects coming from organisations or from the top down. DN added that they'll commission some projects, but in reality most cases it'll probably be a hybrid between the two.
4	Levelling Up White paper - Confirming LEP's 2022/23 Business Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EJ gave a presentation about the LEP's business them plan for 2022/23. He mentioned that it was drafted in January and now worth testing what was agreed on back then, EJ started explaining the priorities based around Build Back Better, the approved budget and he talked about the need to revise the operating model, Next, he explained the business theme priorities in details, and gave a background about the action plans- as well as their challenges and timeline. The presentation was concluded with an overview of the business support proposition. (For further details, please go through the devolution Ppt. attached to the meeting minutes) <p>Q&A and comments following the update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AR suggested having all of the local authorities have a look at putting together like a position paper on shared prosperity funding until the guidance is out and EJ said that it'd be helpful, AC mentioned that he strongly supports the idea of a list of asks around what the business support offer is. He added that he likes the plan (doing a variety of things with little resources) overall but thinks that there are things that might be able to be done around the access to finance piece around a platform. PB commented regarding the digital Platform where funders and business can meet- a company called Envestors are creating an online channel for accelerators and non-profit organisations to promote investment opportunities to investors. PB added that this is also a gap that Tech South West are trying to solve with the work that Ben Cooper is doing. He mentioned that he is happy to make introductions if needed, SW suggested that it will be good to have all working together and not depend on things being mentioned in the devolution deal and in a way to use the 12 months wisely,

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DRo asked about Somerset being included in the LEP structure and not in the county deal, and how to take this forward. EJ answered that a unitization is coming in April, which will include Somerset. What is known is that there is devolution deal on offer for Devon, while there isn't one for Somerset and from a LEP stand there is. EJ added that given that Somerset will need some sort of that function, we don't quite know the details yet, but it's under that sort heading of transition.
5	Growth Support Programme Board and Service for All Updates
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DH gave an update about growth hub and service for all while KC gave an update about Thrive, DH provided a recount of the recent highlights and KPIs, and talked about some Growth Hub case studies, DH detailed the types of business support activities, the team providing it, projects and partners, KC covered the Thrive update- talking about the main highlights and challenges. (For further details, please go through the devolution Ppt. attached to the meeting minutes) <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue featuring Growth Hub's new case studies in the upcoming BLG Update.
6	ERDF Inward Investment and Trade Programme Update- COMMERCIALY CONFIDENTIAL
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CM sought BLG members' approval for an application and event funding: She explained that the Effect Photonics application, which was previously approved- went through major changes and hence they were asked to re-submit. CM gave an overview about the application and asked members for approval which was granted, PM approved of the project and commented that it is a great example, For reference, CM provided an update about two previously approved applications: Vexcolt, which put a presentation about their progress (hired 3 staff so far) and also Nanusens- an R&D Spanish company which also managed to create high value jobs. CM reminded members of the update report from Photonics West (by JaB) which were earlier supported with funding for the exhibition, which was a success. She also mentioned supporting an oceanology exhibition,

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CM moved to discuss the last request which was to support an aerospace event (Farnborough International Airshow (FIA)) and explained the event details- shared with members in a previous email. Members approved the funding for the event. ▪ KL asked about the timescale for the Inward Investment programme, the profile of what's being achieved and particularly about attracting some investment to Somerset. CM said that in terms of timescale, they'd like the September BLG to witness the last review of applications. CM said that she held meetings; recently got access to database and now is working her way through 200 companies, which have potential in Somerset. She added the challenge with Somerset is finding companies with an SME status, ▪ RS asked if there was any underspend, CM said that after today £490k was awarded (£900k in total) and that they put a request for £450k as they have a strong pipeline: potentially 3 in Torbay, 2 in Plymouth and 1 in Somerset. Hence, there will not be any underspend probably.
7	AOBs
	NA <i>Next Meeting: 29 June, 2022</i>

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