

**Business Leadership Group  
29 June 2022  
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**Present**

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

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

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

Daniel Newman (DN) – Local Authority (Torbay Development Agency),

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

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

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

Heather Hillman (HH) - Attending Officer (Devon)

Julie Hawker (JH) – SWBC Representative

**Supporting Officers**

Carla Modley (CM) – HotSW LEP Inward Investment Manager

Eifion Jones (EJ) – LEP Chief Operating Officer

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

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

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

Victoria Glennon (VG) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

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

David Hynd – Growth Hub's Programme & Partnership Manager

**Apologies**

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

Jason Buck (JaB) – Local Authority (Torbay Development Agency)  
Paul Bird - Paul Bird (PB) – Digital Lead (Elixel)

Philip Mitchell - Philip Mitchell (PM) – Photonics Lead (Lumentum)

Alistair Handyside (AH) - Tourism Alliance

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

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</b>
	<p>Introductions and apologies were made (please see above)</p> <p>Conflict of interest was declared by: SH and JH on the subject of Business Support and UKSPF proposals</p>
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising</b>
	<p>Previous minutes were approved.</p> <p>Action from previous minutes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AR suggested an update as a standard BLG agenda item and members tended to agree.</li> <li>• To continue featuring Growth Hub's new case studies in the upcoming BLG Update.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Finance Platform Overview – Ben Cooper (BC)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EJ opening and welcoming the HotSW funding platform.</li> <li>• BC shared information from a presentation slide deck.</li> <li>• BC gave an overview of Tech South West. This included information on where Tech South West sits in relation to other clusters across the SW. Programme and platforms on</li> </ul>

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technology- Why? LEP commissioned study shows that there is a request for an access to funding networking platform/fund Creation of platform to access to finance.

- BC described what Tech South West will deliver for example, a basic news platform, a knowledge transfer platform, a community to bring together funders and those seeking funding. The future aspect will include a regulated funding platform.
- BC went on to describe how they will deliver this platform, with five stages that includes product scope, agree specification, development, test and soft launch and finally go live (March/April 2023).
- BC talked over some of the considerations: deliver to HotSW area however scalable to align with themes rather than geography, strong engagement with other key organisations within the area as well as focus on LEP priority sectors including: energy, sustainable aviation, tourism etc.
- BC made a request for feedback from the group as well as a request for some volunteers from the group to form a group of key stakeholders to engage with.

#### **Questions & comments:**

- JuB asked, that when you talk about funders, what do you mean by that? BC answered this by saying this may be any sources of funding in the region, for example, British Business Bank, Innovate UK... BC said that the platform is there to enable connectivity to make sources of funding visible to more people. JuB asked if they will include national banks, BC answered this by saying that they haven't ruled this out. JuB made a comment that the platform should represent the breadth of finance available.
- AC asked/made note/requested to please include or consider social investors/enterprises within the funding platform. AC also mentions Angel Investment/networks and the demand for this type of investment.
- SE asked about what type of news that will be shared on the platform – will this be news on success stories etc. BC said that yes, this will be on topic. SE also made a note of the £50,000 a year to fund the platform and this being large figure, BC answered this by saying that a large aspect of this will be around the editorial and moderation element of the tool and that this will require people to run this and promote this.
- SE asked EJ about what the particular ask of the group is. EJ answered by saying that the ask is for feedback and people volunteering to form the steering group on this.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CW asked what are the other LEPs doing within this area. Are we following or are we leading? Is there an incentivised activity that we need to encourage? CW volunteered to support in forming the steering group. EJ answered CW first part of the question by saying that they are aware of a platform in the Midlands and will continue to use this to learn from.</li> <li>- SE endorsed this and offered the support of the Devon Chambers of Commerce.</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For the group to go away and consider the request for volunteers to form a wider group.</li> <li>- Send an note/email for members following the meeting to ask the group</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>UK Shared Prosperity Fund Updates</b>
	<p><b>Updates from Somerset – Ian Timms and Melanie Roberts (IT, MR)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IT started by going over the local business investment priority and that allocation for Somerset is £7,263,760.</li> <li>- IT described their consultation approach, including their introductory sessions and workshop sessions. IT mentioned that they put out a call for evidence and questionnaire throughout June. IT made note of their work to start to address the investment plan.</li> <li>- IT gave an overview on their '10 emerging objectives' for example supporting innovation and R&amp;D.</li> <li>- IT mentioned their next steps including finalising the review of existing strategies and evidence bases and finalising the investment plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SE asked if Somerset have consulted the relevant BROs in their area? IT answered this by saying that they haven't been approached individually but there has been representation in various consultation sessions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Devon UKSPF/Business Support programme - Heather Hillman (HH)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HH mentioned that they have consulted the districts about any help that they may need with delivering the Fund around monitoring and evaluation.</li> </ul>

- HH mentioned Thrive and the replacement for this including a business support programme offer similar to Thrive which includes a mixture of support available, 1:1, 1 to many...
- HH gave an overview on their ambition to deliver and build on green business support
- HH made a note of their ambition to continue to deliver on their agri-tech initiatives through the business support programme.
- HH mentioned that there is proposal which is supporting NEETS with 1:1 support which is flexible.
- PA mentioned that the interesting thing on UKSPF is that it is for individual areas to make the decisions and what you want to see from it.

**Questions:**

- SE asked is we are likely to share this across the region? HH answered this by saying that this is across the HotSW area.

**Torbay UKSPF update Dan Newman (DN)**

- DN mentioned that they are at moment going through their consultation process alongside looking at where ESF gaps may be... their stakeholder engagements will conclude in the coming weeks.
- DN mentioned 3-4 key interventions per theme/investment priority.  
DN said that the focus lies within the low carbon sector, tourism/visitor sector...

**Questions:**

None here.

**Plymouth UKSPF update Julia Blaschke (JuB)**

- JuB used a presentation slide deck to update on Plymouth's UKSPF approach. JuB gave an overview about shared prosperity fund. She then explained the investment priorities as set out in the prospectus. Information included: Plymouth's allocation, the capital and revenue split and the approach taken by PCC for example, expressions of interest. JuB concluded the presentation with milestones and next steps.

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	<p>(For further details, please go through the Plymouth City Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund Ppt. attached to the meeting minutes)</p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EJ asked around how best to identify the some of the cross over priorities. EJ asked about the opportunity or plans to work together/collaborate. JuB said that the ambition is that once the investment plan is finalised, she said that the next steps will be to have a look at where we may be able to work across the region.</li> <li>- MR made note of the Somerset perspective and how their approach has been slightly different to that of PCC.</li> <li>- SE asked about whether or not there is a possibility for investment plans/ideas to be shared across the authorities/LEPs to see if there are connected efforts or joined up thinking. EJ reflected this by saying there should be a customer journey focus, so that businesses are aware of available support.</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EJ has asked for calls to be set up with Somerset, Devon, Torbay and Plymouth on UKSPF.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>County Deal Update – Amanda Ratsey (AR), Phil Adams (PA)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PA gave an update on the county deal progress. He said that there is an ongoing conversation around the timings in order to get into formal negotiations. This led to a meeting with the minister where it was stressed that there is need to get going with this work. With an ambition to start delivering this by 2023. PA then said that the minster was receptive of this and that there was some promises made that work can start later in autumn this year.</li> <li>▪ PA mentioned that the challenge, is that there is a resourcing issue, it has proven difficult for Government to work on 14 deals at the same time.</li> <li>▪ PA mentioned that there is a big ask for Government for UKSPF to match the previous EU funding schemes and where it is not for UKSPF, there is an ask for this be part of the Devolution deal.</li> </ul>

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	<p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SE asked about why we are not currently putting forward for mayoral deal/offer. PA answered this by saying that there are a range of factors that influence this decision including the voting census and percentage which needs to be 65% of the population to have voted.</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue this update as a standard BLG agenda item and members agreed (ongoing).</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<b>Work plan Progress – Including Inward Investment – Eifion Jones (EJ)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EJ gave an update on their strategy to Build Back Better plan through the use of presentation slide deck (attached).</li> <li>- EJ gave an update on the LEP Action Plan 22/23 challenges and actions with the support of CM.</li> <li>- CW mentioned that it may be interesting to interface with the iAero facility in Yeovil which is administered by Leonardo which has the ambition to support a number of SMEs.</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	<b>Growth Support Programme Board and Service for All Updates – Katherine Coby, David Hynd (KC, DH)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DH gave an update on the Growth Hub. He expressed that there has been a challenge with interacting with businesses and business engagement and commitment remains a challenge. DH said that business engagement was good in May and remained steady in June. DH said that there is good progress with Thrive intensive support despite late start and delivery is encouraging.</li> <li>- KC gave an update on the Thrive intensive support, which had good progress, around 650 businesses registered (ERDF or non-ERDF). KC mentioned that the focus is on maintaining the momentum on the non-ERDF support. DH said that overall progress remains positive and that they have increased marketing and outreach due to more in-person events happening.</li> </ul>



	<p><b>Questions and comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SE complimented the Peer Networks programme which is no longer running but compliments the programme and asked about whether or not if there are any funding programmes coming that replicates/replaces this.</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Growth Hub Update – Colin Bettison (CB)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CB gave an update on the progress on BEIS annual report which has been written.</li> <li>- CB mentioned the 'letter of comfort' has been received pertaining to the money available/allocated. CB said that scale-up support is no longer being provided but suggested that there may be an opportunity to go through Help to Grow.</li> </ul> <p><b>Notes from CB following the meeting:</b></p> <p><i>I covered some of the contractual aspects of the Growth Hub, looking back at 2021/22 and looking forward at 2022/23.</i></p> <p><u><b>Looking Back 21/22</b></u>  <i>A requirement of the funding from BEIS is that we have to submit an annual report. BEIS provide a template for this with around 32 questions covering a range of areas including, delivery, governance, and partnership working, as well as sections on finance and outputs. Because of the prescriptive nature of the document, the report is very dry to read.</i></p> <p><i>I have completed and returned this to BEIS, who have acknowledged its receipt and will follow up in due course, if required. In previous years we have had a review meeting with BEIS to discuss the report and talk about current and future growth hub activity. Currently there are no indications whether they will adopt the same approach this year.</i></p> <p><u><b>Looking Forward 22/23</b></u>  <i>On 30<sup>th</sup> March this year we received a "Letter of Comfort" from BEIS setting out the amount of funding for Growth Hubs across the LEP Network, with the allocation for all Growth Hubs set at 50% of what had been provided during 2021/22. While our LEP's</i></p>

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	<p><i>agreement to underwrite the Growth Hub, brings certainty of delivery and a reassurance for staff, other Growth Hubs are completely reliant on the funding from BEIS, and I understand that for some areas the Letter of Comfort came too late to avoid staff leaving for alternative employment. In recognition of the lower level of funding BEIS have reduced what they expect to be delivered with the money, while trying to ensure all Growth Hubs have a similar “flavour”.</i></p> <p><i>The process of securing the funding involves the completion of two documents; a financial breakdown, showing the expenditure lines with a quarterly spend forecast, and a separate narrative response to a number of questions across areas such as branding, partnership working, and our approach to delivery. I have completed both documents and BEIS have confirmed they are happy with our approach, and will now include these as they prepare our Offer Letter. We hope to receive this shortly. Usually BEIS require Growth Hub claims to be submitted quarterly in advance, and given that we are now at the end of Q1, we anticipate a request to send our Q1 and Q2 claims together.</i></p> <p><i>The reduced funding does mean we're unable to replicate some of the additional activity delivered last year, such as Access to Finance, Clean Growth, and Scale-up. However, the core Growth Hub Service plus the additional ERDF support leveraged in remains.</i></p> <p><i>The Peer Network Programme, that ran during 2020/21 and 2021/22 has now ended, with the government confirming that Help to Grow is now considered the flagship programme.</i></p> <p><i>Finally the Working Group, set up to assist the Growth Hub to increase its engagement with businesses, has met. There was agreement on the challenges being faced by businesses and a sense that owners are operating in survive mode rather than thrive mode, however the meeting was very positive with a number of ideas suggested, and a follow up meeting planned for 14<sup>th</sup> July.</i></p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>None here.</p>
<b>7</b>	<b>AOBs</b>
	<p>SE pointed out the Freeport business case and reminded the group of the final business case having been submitted.</p> <p><b>Next Meeting: 28 September 2022</b></p>

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