

Heart of the South West LEP Board

January 19th, 2024

Chief Executive's Report - Agenda item 6

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1. Summary

With the proposed transition of functions to Upper-tier local authorities proposed to be completed by the end of March, this is currently the last scheduled Board meeting of the HotSW LEP. So firstly, thank you to all Board Members and staff for their contributions over the past dozen or so years.

Consequently, we are splitting the meeting in two – addressing outstanding business and the transition arrangements.

This report therefore provides for sign-off:

- The Impact Report with updated dashboards
- Proposals to develop a Social Investment Fund – to help deliver reduced social exclusion.
- There is also an update on the relicensing of the SW Institute of Technology and the Green Skills Funs

Elsewhere on the agenda, there is also an update on the Build Back Better Plan including recommendations on allocations for any outstanding LGF funds and the Accountable Body will be leading a discussion on the proposed transition plan.

2. Recommendations – it is recommended that the LEP Board:

- i) **Agree to the Impact Report and Dashboards for Publication**
- ii) **Agree on the completed study to establish a Social Investment Fund and in the light of transition ask the LAs to consider taking the proposals forward**
- iii) **Agree to a funding contribution to the Great South West of £15k – to cover both 23/24 and 24/25**

3. Since the last Meeting

- a) Central Government has confirmed that areas will receive £240,000 to deliver LEP functions together with further guidance on establishing economic growth boards – (the Minister's letter and link to updated guidance was circulated before Christmas)
- b) The government has published an updated Freeports Delivery Roadmap (which included a further £150m funding)
- c) The Levelling Up Minister also published new guidance for a Long Term Plan for Towns
- d) The PM announced that the working assumption for a General Election is 'the second part of the year' with the Budget to be held on 6 March 2024
- e) Local Authorities received their financial settlement for the Year with Somerset reviewing their emergency financial plan on 15 January
- f) Carlton Power secured DBT funding for its 3 Hydrogen proposals including one at Langage (part of PASD Freeport)
- g) Through LEP funding, Somerset Council launched its pilot primary work experience/careers programme – Start Small, Dream Big
- h) A new Roadmap to Nuclear has been published – looking to deliver 25% of UK Energy needs

4. The Impact of LEP Investments Report – see attached 6a)

Before Christmas, we reviewed the draft impact report for the above capital programmes and suggested a couple of modifications and have also prepared a LEP Impact Dashboard to try to make understanding easier. As they have already been presented, we hope the Board can now agree to them and publish them.

5. Social Impact Fund – see attached 6b)

Similarly, the work on developing the business case to progress a HotSW Social Impact Fund has now been completed and is attached (*NB this is the internal facing document with recommendations, not for public release*). It was envisaged that this would form part of a refreshed GPF product range but with dis-aggregation, it is hoped

that the work might get picked up by Local Authorities. Recently, initiatives in both Bristol and Cambridge, quoted in the report, have got underway.

6. South West Institute of Technology and (National) Green Skills Programme

IOTs have to apply for a re-licence to DFE for 5 years and SWIOT are in the process of doing so. An update can be provided by their interim Director. Moreover, EDF has agreed to provide an update on the progress of the National Green Skills programme.

7. LEP Integration

We remain on track and keen to progress integration to Upper tier Local Authorities by the end of March 24. The following further information was requested at the November meeting).

- a) A completed transition plan (with perhaps any initial feedback from officials on compliance)
- b) Legal Guidance from Ashfords to be circulated;
- c) Confirmation that the Accountancy and audit treatments are consistent with the Articles and Assurance Framework
- d) Indemnity and run-on insurance
- e) A full list of assets and commitments
- f) A summary of the implications on ongoing work including the process for future monitoring/Assurance of outstanding LGF programme
- g) Any feedback from the CIC Regulator

LEP core staff have been advised that they are at risk of redundancy.

Once the transition plan is agreed – upon (by the LEP/by Government/ by Local Authorities/Regulator?) the Board will then need to agree on any future role for the company. Striking off a dormant company is pretty straightforward and would not in itself require a further meeting but would require the appropriate form signed off by the majority of Directors together with a fee.

8. Discussions with the CIC Regulator

I understand that some initial discussions have taken place between the Accountable Body with the CIC Regulator.

9. Great South West

With the new Director in post, an updated business plan is being developed which includes a request to each LEP of £15k to match-fund operations in 23/24 and 24/25. *(see annex C attached note of GSW Board 12 Dec)*

