

Herefordshire Sustainable Food & Tourism Partnership, 20th April 2015

Present: Alan Curless, Matt Smith, Nick Read, Clare Greener, Jenny Beard (Co-Chair), David Curtis (Co-Chair), Rachel Jones, Cathy Meredith

Apologies: Bobbie Heavens, Mike Ashton, Mel Potter, Christine Hope

Matters arising from the previous meeting

A meeting had been arranged with David Llewellyn for the 18th May at 3pm at the Clive. Key issues to be discussed:

- How will the LEP support delivery and is it fit for purpose?
- Clarifying the lines of communication and their effectiveness
- How does local influence impact on the LEP?

No response had been received from Gill Hamer.

Visit Herefordshire

Local Authority contributions nationally were being reduced to tourism associations and many were going through a similar funding situation. Nevertheless, VH had succeeded in turning a trading deficit for the last few years into a surplus. It would come under the umbrella of the Hereford & Worcester Chamber of Commerce from 1st July. The Chamber has agreed to continue certain parts of VH's portfolio and it will retain its identity and have a presence in Hereford Town Hall, working alongside Hereford BID. Mike Ashton will become the VH representative on HSFTP.

Broadband

A national voucher scheme was being extended to include Herefordshire. £110m was still available nationally from which SMEs could apply for grants of £3k to help them connect, though this will not fully cover costs for many rural connections. Herefordshire can also add a "top up" and is looking for ERDF funding to extend broadband to rural businesses.

David had supplied Matt with a list of SMEs found on the Duchy Estates and Matt addressed this. In practice a substantial number were close to being connected via Fastershire and it was still difficult to predict whether the remaining premises would be excluded or not when Fastershire was completed. In addition, some are serviced via commercial cabinets and State Aid rules would not allow public investment to these unless they are so far from the cabinet that they cannot be connected.

It was decided that:

- The HSFTP did not need to issue a press release concerning the voucher scheme as this was already being advertised.
- BT should be invited to a future HSFTP meeting.

Marches LEP and funding streams

Rachel produced a paper outlining the funding streams and the amounts attached. Tourism was included as part of strategic activity 3 within the ESIF. There was discussion whether we should offer to write the call for applications on behalf of the Marches LEP when it was to be issued.

It was noted that "Birmingham City Region" included Herefordshire, but how do we influence the development of the City Region idea?

LEADER

Guidance notes were still being drafted by Defra. It was already known that only capital spend would be permitted which would seriously disadvantage any attempts to co-ordinate activities. Nick was attending a LEADER training event on May 6th as Vice Chair of the LAG, Cathy was Chair but was unable to attend on the day. Task and Finish Groups were to be re-established when the details of LEADER were known.

Buttermarket

The Food for Growth CIC, established by the Bulmer Foundation, was the legal vehicle for one of the two remaining bids for the Buttermarket. A business plan was being drafted and the group were required to make a presentation to Hereford Council representatives in late April/early May.

Economic Master Plan

A Steering Group had been established and Geoff Hughes had been appointed to lead the process.

Members' feedback

Jenny had attended a Rural Alliance Conference concerning Interreg funded projects. The programme had cost £10m over 5 years and a booklet and DVD produced. Brecon Beacons National Park had been one of the beneficiaries.

Action Plan

It was agreed to renew the HSFTP Action Plan and present a revised plan for the coming months.

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust

Hereford Wildlife Trust had expressed an interest in becoming part of the group but it was difficult to determine its role in food production and tourism. It was suggested that the Local Nature Partnership was the better strategic partnership for their interests.

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 12th August at 2pm at the Bulmer Foundation.