

Food & Tourism Partnership, 2nd December 2014

Present: Jenny Beard, David Curtis, Clare Greener, Bobbie Heavens, Nick Read, Cathy Meredith, Rachel Jones, Clare O'Reilly, Christine Hope

Apologies: David Bailey

Updates since the last meeting

a. Broadband report.

Submissions had been made to EFRA and DCMS and the enquiry is to take place on December 3rd.

b. LEADER project meeting

A meeting was held on 20th November looking at potential LEADER projects. The Herefordshire LEADER submission has been approved but funding will not be available before the Spring. The meeting decided to streamline some of the proposals by amalgamating projects. Further discussions were scheduled with Richard Tyler concerning co-operation (pan European) projects but final details needed to be published by Defra.

c. Food Projects

A meeting would be held with Peter Norton to progress the food strand.

d. Marches LEP

- It had been announced that Gill Hamer had been appointed as CEO and that Jacqui Casey was the Partnership Manager.
- The LEP Tourism Group has £3k available to research the best ways for tourism businesses to access European funding.
- Nick Read and Caroline Bedell were both standing for the environment and rural posts respectively on the ESIF Committee. Tourism was going to be included within the Environment brief.

e. Hereford Business Board

HBB were undertaking a mapping exercise to look at strategic partnerships.

f. Rural Business Day

This had been very successful. Janet Dwyer from CCRI was the guest speaker with David Ledbury from Growth Accelerator. It was important that we knew the value of the rural economy.

g. Rural and Farming Network

Broadband provision had been one of the issue discussed and Defra would like to see the report.

h. Visit Herefordshire

Alan Curless had been elected as Chair. He was collating benchmarking research from 8 destinations that were similar to Herefordshire and using this to help develop a strategic vision for Visit Herefordshire. There was an open forum to meet the chair on December 16th.

- VH would become a membership organisation again
- VH wants to promote more effective Tourist Information Centres in local areas
- VH was developing a marketing, media and PR group inviting marketing professionals to contribute pro bono on behalf of the Herefordshire economy. The group was looking to include geographical and sectoral skills.

Jenny had met with Alan and spoken about the Food & Tourism Partnership. It was suggested that the Partnership should make a presentation to the VH Board.

i. Defra update

John Coleman had become the Rural Policy lead for tourism (Roger Allenby was the former lead).

Broadband discussion

Matt Smith of the Fastershire team joined the meeting for this item.

Matt was the Fastershire Operations Manager and managed the contract with BT. He was writing the strategy to get 100% connectivity for Herefordshire by 2018 and worked with the LEP and the Rural Services Network.

The Partnership had identified that the major concern of rural businesses was the lack of broadband availability and had commissioned David Bland to write his report. There were two substantive issues:

- In the short term, training and support to help people connect more effectively who already had access
- In the longer term, the ability to be connected to a quality service

Existing roll-out in Herefordshire was based on “milestone” areas, and BT was under a contract to reach specific targets of connectivity. These included rural areas but delivery would take longer and might have to utilise different technologies. There tended to be more emphasis in rural areas on fibre than elsewhere and lines had to be re-routed to enable new cabinets to be put in. The final 10% to be connected would be a patchwork of properties rather than discrete locations or a well-defined area.

In South Herefordshire the scoping had largely been completed and it would soon be possible to know who would not be connected. However, Herefordshire was divided into 7 milestone areas and in each of these there were two phase to the work:

- M Zero – BT conducted initial surveys to determine who would be included
- M IGA – delivery of the fibre, which took c 9 months and only after that would it be possible to say for sure who wouldn’t be connected. The contract with BT had to run up to this point before any further action could be taken.

Once this second stage had been completed it was possible to intervene in various ways:

- The contract allowed for funding for a satellite connection for up to 1200 premises (across Herefordshire and Gloucestershire). This only applied if existing connectivity was less than 2megabytes.
- A bursary of £350k was available to support businesses who could prove the need for more efficient connectivity. Health needs could be part of the assessment but it was not available unless there was a real need or proven value.

The existing Fastershire contract would end in 2016 and M IGA was going to be rolled out in 2015 and it would not be until the end of 2015 that the “unconnected” 10% would be identifiable.

Fastershire was developing a broadband strategy beyond 2016:

- a. The period 2014-18 which looked for a further allocation from BDUK to support improvements. This pot would comprise £2.5m from Herefordshire Council, £2.4m from the Marches LEP and £5.5, from central government. It would be possible to use this money to contract with a provider to help complete the connections to the other 10%.

- b. The Golden Valley and Mid West Herefordshire was to have a separate procurement contract because of its rurality, but this would not start until December 2015. The Cotswolds in Gloucestershire had a similar provision though that would begin in May 2015.
- c. European funding would be available via ERDF and RDP to support individual businesses.

Date of next meetings

Monday 19th January at 2pm at the Cider Museum

Friday 13th March at 2pm at the Duchy Offices

Food & Tourism Partnership, 15th December 2014

Present: David Curtis, David Bland, Jenny Beard, Cathy Meredith, Nick Read

The purpose of the meeting was to determine the next steps for the Broadband document. It was agreed:

- Nick would write a press release outlining the work of the partnership in response to the issues raised from its members. Jenny would provide data on the business consultations in order to provide a context for the report.
- We would ask for a meeting with Graham Powell as the Cabinet Member overseeing the Fastershire roll-out.
- We would also seek an early meeting with Jesse Norman.
- Our goal was for a transparent relationship with Fastershire (and potential inclusion on a Fastershire Steering Group), and early identification of those who would not be adequately connected, together with a plan of action to help support their needs.
- David Bland would amend the report to tone down the reference to 1 Gigabyte which had exercised Matt Smith, though we would align ourselves with the need for at least a 10 megabyte connection (publicly asked for by the FSB and CLA).
- We will anonymise the potential case studies – they were indicators of what could happen rather than suggested examples.
- We will include case studies of actual businesses that were struggling because of poor broadband connectivity.

Early in the New Year we would send the amended report with a covering letter to key people, as a means of continuing to generate dialogue and momentum. The Bulmer Foundation agreed to be the contact point.

The initial list for those to receive the report would be:

- Jesse Norman MP
- Bill Wiggin MP
- Roger Williams MP
- Philip Dunne MP
- Frank Myers, Chair of the Business Board
- Richard Ashgard Sandys, Chair of the Federation of Small Businesses
- Alan Curless, Chair of Visit Herefordshire
- Cllr Graham Powell,
- Julian Morgan, CLA County Chair
- Julian Patridge, NFU County Chair
- Edward Harley, High Sheriff
- Mike Ashton, Chamber of Commerce
- Bishop Richard Frith
- Dr Andy Watts, Chair of the Clinical Commissioning Group