

Herefordshire Sustainable Food & Tourism Partnership, 12th August 2015

Present: Mike Ashton, Clare Greener, Jenny Beard (Co-Chair), David Curtis (Co-Chair), Rachel Jones, Cathy Meredith

Apologies: Nick Read, Matt Smith, Christine Hope

Resignations:

David Bailey, National Trust – pressure of work

Bobbie Heavens – retired from involvement with tourism

On behalf of the Partnership both had been thanked for their advice and support over the past 18 months.

Matters arising from the previous meeting;

Meetings had taken place with both Gill Hamer and Dr David Llewellyn. Certain elements are still uncertain but with Gill Hamer now on the Hereford Business Board lines of understanding and communication are clearer. Currently Rural Tourism and Food and Drink are not Marches LEP priority sectors. In July there had been an RDPE Rural Growth Programme call for Tourism Infrastructure CAPITAL expenditure projects. Call for local priority actions had been ‘written’ by the Marches LEP Tourism task and finish group; with a very short response deadline Rachel had included some Herefordshire priorities based on consultation with both Visit Herefordshire and the Partnership. There is likely to be a further but much smaller call out for rural tourism projects in October. All applications will be on line and channelled through county councils Growth Hubs.

Visit Herefordshire

Mike Ashton, CEO, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber briefly explained the successful transfer of Visit Herefordshire to H&W Chamber and explained some of their goals for 2015/16.

The Chamber has over 50 staff whose primary role is to support businesses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The Chamber has also been successfully delivering Visit Worcestershire for the past four years with successes including;

Working with over 250 member businesses who are active in the tourism industry

Developing relationships with VisitEngland and national/regional industry groups

Developing a range of publications and PR for local, regional, national and international publicity

Developing an excellent website with an average of over 70,000 visitors per month peaking at 120,000 during the summer season

Developing a strong tourism/leisure group which represents the industry and works with other existing bodies

Securing additional funding

Delivering Worcester’s biggest tourism event for two years - Worcester Victorian Christmas Fayre.

It is the intention to duplicate much of this activity in Herefordshire and also look at reintroducing the Flavours of Herefordshire event in 2016. The Chamber has employed Sally-Ann Roberts and Clare O’Reilly who previously worked for Visit Herefordshire, giving

some continuity of service and significant knowledge of tourism in Herefordshire. They will both work with various teams across the Chamber to help deliver activities.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber have a High Tech Agri Business Advisor within the Worcestershire LEP Growth Hub.

Member Updates

Broadband

David Curtis had met with the head of BDUK and expressed his concern about plans for the remaining 5% of hard to reach rural areas re super-fast broadband connectivity. David had also expressed his concerns that the delivery of Open Reach was unreliable. He asked that information should be made available to communities which would not benefit from the current roll out.

David also reported that a trial Duchy of Cornwall and community project is successfully underway at Dewsall. As jobs and economic growth are in risk at Harewood End (as a result of the long overdue and continued lack of the final link in connectivity from the Out Reach cabinet on the A49), consideration is being given by The Duchy of Cornwall to replicating the Dewsall Project at Harewood End.

The **DCMS**, under the chairmanship of Jesse Norman, has opened a Select Committee Enquiry into the coverage, delivery and performance of superfast broadband chiefly across the hardest to reach rural areas. The committee has noted that although this is final 5% of the population it is dispersed across 70% of the country's landmass. It was agreed that Wansdyke will formulate a response to the Select Committee on behalf of the Partnership

Marches LEP and LEADER

In July Gov.uk published Marches LEP calls for organisations and businesses in the Environment, Resource Efficiency, Business Support and Rural Tourism. Managed by DEFRA supported by the Growth Hubs in the 3 Local Authorities. **LEADER** slow progress. Guidance notes were still being drafted by Defra. Concern expressed that businesses and organisations will be frustrated by the hoops and paperwork involved in both Marches LEP and LEADER funding and that it will be seen as not being worthwhile to apply.

Herefordshire Business Board

Concerns that the need of real people and businesses is not getting heard.

Herefordshire Rural Hub

Moved to NFU offices, with a superfast broadband drop in facility.

Partnership Review and Action Plan

Partnerships review no change. It was agreed that when appropriate specialist exchange meetings to be set up, with a task and finish group if needed. Essential to continue creating closer links with key personnel. Only the Budget for the Core Strategy is on line and slow progress with Economic Master Plan.

Prioritise Actions for Food and Drink

Food Champion for HSFTP

Agreed that a strong Herefordshire food champion be invited to join the partnership. **Action for everyone:** please send ideas to who may be approached to David Curtis or Jenny.

High Tech Agri Businesses

The Marches LEP is in the planning stages of creating an Agri-Tech Business Task and Finish Group to inform future EU funding project priorities for the LEP. Concern was expressed that Herefordshire must be fairly represented on this group. Whilst supporting the sole representative from the HBB, the partnership agreed that representation should be made for an additional representative to ensure continuity of attendance and feedback. **Action:** Clare Greener to initially contact Helen Thomas Weston's Cider and request a meeting with Gill Hamer and David Llewelyn September 21 0or 23 to progress. Also to arrange a specialist exchange meeting with David Llewelyn and Herefordshire Agri-Tech farmers/businesses in September. Please note that this is all now likely to be October or November.

Marches LEP research for Agri –food and drink businesses.

Action: Rachel had no knowledge and would make enquiries.

Herefordshire Council Food and Drink Strategy

Frustration that considerable financial and human resources had been wasted on a strategy that has seen few positive outcomes. After a long discussion of how best to bring life back to the strategy, within the limitations of HSFTP, but in the knowledge of potential EU funding through Marches LEP and LEADER the potential for the following were discussed:

- Herefordshire Farming and Food Awards.
- Establish and facilitate a Food/Drink Focus Group
- Identify the 10 key challenges for the growth of farming businesses in Herefordshire.
- Organise 2 Best Practice out of county cross sector visits.
- Support and encourage sustainable local food festivals and village/farmer's markets.

Individual members were undertaking feasibility research in preparation for October's meeting.

Dates of Next Meetings

19th October at 2pm at the Bulmer Foundation.

15th December at 2.00pm Duchy of Cornwall.