

Herefordshire Sustainable Food and Tourism Partnership, 1st September 2017

Present: Andy Black (AB), Nick Read (NR), Cathy Meredith (CM), Rachel Jones (RJ), Matt Smith (MS), Clare Greener (CG)

In attendance: Martin Grant

Apologies: Jenny beard (JB), David Curtis (DC), Christine Hope (CH), Martyn Hammond (MH)

In the absence of both joint chairs, NR chaired the meeting.

Marches LEP Agri-Tech Project

Martin Grant reported on the new agri-tech project being jointly delivered by Harper Adams and Aston University within the Marches LEP. It provides free innovation support to eligible businesses via knowledge transfer, expert advice, specialist workshops and access to the universities' research and test facilities. Important points to note:

- It applies to SMEs (there was a discussion on whether seasonal labour would make it difficult for some horticultural businesses to fit the SME criteria)
- The emphasis was on agri-tech and was targeted at agri-tech companies rather than producers. In order to qualify the agri-tech component of a major producer would need to be a separate legal entity. Examples included the use of drones in mapping and monitoring of plant health, photonics, logistics, sensing, robotics, precision agriculture etc.

The objective was to help businesses to innovate, which meant either bring a new product onto the market, or into the company and or enabling the company to become more efficient and consistent in its activities.

- The target for stage 1 was to work with 90 businesses over 3 years and the funding would guarantee 2 day's support from Aston or Harper to develop an innovation review and action plan.
- The target for stage 2 was to produce more detailed support for 20 businesses producing innovative responses (whether a new product or service) and 16 businesses that wanted to become more efficient. Stage 2 guaranteed a minimum of 10 days' support over a three-month period and could include research, product testing etc.

There would also be 8 specialist workshops hosted over the life of the project, open to anyone, which would be held around the region focusing on the growth hubs. It was accepted that there was a need to improve the culture between SMEs and academia.

HSFTP members had a role to play in communicating the initiative.

Aberystwyth Innovation& Enterprise Campus

Rachel reported on a presentation given by Aberystwyth University at Hereford Enterprise Zone on an Innovation & Enterprise Campus scheduled to open in 2019. Building on the expertise within the university the proposal would support new product innovation, improved supply chain efficiency and promote new technology through providing research, analytical and training facilities together with office accommodation as part of a "Development Hotel." The slides from the presentation are appended with the minutes.

Updates: LEADER

Cathy reported that applications for LEADER projects are beginning to gather momentum and that 3-4 EOIs per week are being disseminated. The upper limit for project spending has also been raised.

Destination Plan

- The Executive Summary has been submitted to a graphic designer and the launch date has been fixed for October 18th at Ballingham Hall Farm. Members were asked to consider who the keynote speaker might be to talk about rural tourism. **ACTION: Members to note and respond**
- There is a meeting taking place to discuss the merits of whether to hold a business referendum aimed at raising funds to support tourism activities.
- It was proposed to hold a pre-launch discussion for HSFTP members on 26th September at the NFU offices. **ACTION: Members to note date**

Defra Growth Programme

- Rachel reported that the programme was also gaining momentum within Herefordshire though primarily on growers rather than manufacturing. High quality proposals had also been received from the tourism sector.
- There is likely to be a national call to support broadband provision
- A day's seminar is being planned on farm reservoirs
- There is a Rural networks conference taking place in Cheltenham

Visit Herefordshire

- A decision is expected on 5th September concerning the new Tourist Information centre (TIC) and an information point is being installed in the Left Bank.
- The next tourism forum is on 7th September
- The tourism awards will be held on 19th September and there are 11 categories
- Andy is writing a Destination Plan for the city to compliment the rural Destination Plan
- A photo competition is being held to promote tourism within the county

Food Poverty proposal

Nick reported on a proposal being worked up by the Brightspace Foundation to develop a Food Poverty alliance for Herefordshire.

Date of next meeting(s)

- The meeting to discuss the Destination Plan is on 26th September
- The launch of the Destination Plan is on 18th October
- Herefordshire Rural Business Day is on 22nd November