

## Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)

### Notes / Actions from the Meeting – Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019

**Chair:** Frank Myers (FM). **Present:** Christian Dangerfield (CD), Debbie Gittos (DG), Gareth Williams (GW), Karen Usher (KU), Ian Peake (IP), Sharon Smith (SS), John Reed (JR).

**In attendance:** Daisy Rees-Evans (DRE), Roger Allonby (RA), Nick Webster (NW), Kathryn Jones (KJ).

**Apologies:** Abigail Appleton (AA), David Harlow (DH), Nic Millington (NM), Stephen Eckley (SE), Andrew Henry (AH), Mark Pearce (MP), Doug Barrat (DB) Eric Drummond (ED), Gill Hamer (GH).

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#### 1. Welcome and apologies

FM welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.

#### 2. Minutes of the last meeting and Actions Arising

The minutes of the last meeting were approved by the Board with minor changes.

The following actions are **ongoing**:

**14/11/17 Action 2:** Set in place a process of reporting from the Marches Growth Hub. **NW/GH**

**13/03/18 Action 1:** Progress the questions around skills with the Marches Skills Board and local representatives to develop a full picture of skills in Herefordshire in order to develop future plans.

**FM, IP, SS, DG**

**DRE to set up meeting.**

**15/05/18 Action 1:** To put forward a few paragraphs to help show a more joined up message about Herefordshire and to indicate the required budget **NM**

**15/05/18 Action 2:** To consider how to fund a budget that would help ensure that Hereford has a good joined up message. **GH**

**05/02/19 Action 3:** Roger to provide any updates on the bypass to Board Members in upcoming meetings

### **3. Hereford Enterprise Zone**

The Hereford Enterprise Zone have now signed a joint venture agreement for the Cyber centre with the Marches LEP. The HEZ project is making good progress and now have contractors on site at the Shell Store. Currently they're in advanced negotiations with NMiTE for the use of this building, with more information to follow.

### **4. Herefordshire Vision - Herefordshire Investment Partnership**

Apologies received from DB for not attending today's meeting. DB passed on the message that there is nothing new to report.

### **5. NMiTE**

NMiTE are continuing with ongoing projects and are waiting for contract with the LEP. They are currently recruiting both staff and students in readiness for Semester 1. NMiTE have managed to raise 1/3 to fund students in September thanks to the event they held in March at the Black Friars building. There are 23 properties that are of interest for the academic and teaching space. NMiTE would prefer to have properties in the city centre to provide services and safe spaces to walk at night for students as well as easy travel and parking. NMiTE have spoken about the need for better lighting on streets and better infrastructure for students living in the area as they want students' experience to be safe when away from home. Good progress with the design cohort and once they return from holiday they will be working on designing the teaching side of the course.

### **6. Horizon Scan**

Currently the Council want to develop Hereford as a city. There is a £50m pot for small holdings to invest in other projects for example a GP hub, urban village, accommodation near the railway station etc. They are now talking closely with NMiTE and Higher Education colleges to understand the potential of developing the Ayleston hill area.

The Council have just entered a bid for the future high street fund to develop the city centre and tackle retail. This stage was just for expression of interest and if they are successful this could help with large developments for the city. There will be another bidding round at a later date and they will put this in for Herefordshire towns such as Leominster for regeneration. Herefordshire Business Board felt that this should be shared with the Board prior to bids being put in, both RA and NW agreed that if they move to the next stage they will involve the Board and other key partners with consultation.

The Council have a Master Plan for all big capital projects including focuses on health and the community, with the aim to make Herefordshire a better place to live in. They will be meeting with the Cabinet in June to discuss Herefordshire priorities. Currently this is an internal plan but will then consult with external partners including the Board.

The Herefordshire bypass, first phase funding was confirmed a few weeks ago. The bid for the rest of the bypass is still in process and they need to prove there is a business case. If this bypass doesn't go through then the council will have to start denying planning permission as they are currently 1/3 towards the target for housing. Looking to have a conversation for funding with the government about where the council can go for more funding. There has been approval for the southern link road meaning this will go ahead, however the rest of the bypass could be stopped as it hasn't been approved yet. Herefordshire Business Board discussed how infrastructure needs to be a priority as employers are happy to recruit apprentices but can't get the people to the place of work, would also like it if the council could subsidise travel and spend

more on public services through the income generated by the bypass. The LEP should also be pushed on this issue to provide easier transport for apprentices.

**Action 1: Send message to LEP that they need to consider how they can help businesses get apprentices to travel to work.**

## **7. Marches LEP Structure**

All LEPs have currently undergone changes to become a company limited by guarantee, Articles of association have been changed and this will be approved at the meeting in May. The Government has required LEPs to move away from Council control.

## **8. Marches LEP Update**

LEP recruiting Board Members and currently there are only 2 that sit on the board from Herefordshire. It is desirable for there to be a Herefordshire representative in order for the county to have a voice, however the next two positions should ideally be filled by a female in the interests of diversity on the board. One Board Member felt that the LEP should not give emphasis to bringing gender equality to the board without having equal representation of the three counties first. Arguing that it should be much more valuable to have equal representation of each county first and then to focus on gender split.

Herefordshire Business Board also discussed whether the positions should be advertised with subsidised travel and expenses policy to encourage people to travel over to Shropshire and attend the meetings.

The LEP will soon be advertising for the Chair vacancy, should have been done sooner but due to capacity there has been a huge delay in advertising.

All funding from the EU will have ceased and the LEP will have a big steering on funding. Soon two funding streams will become available; the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which isn't coming out immediately and will need a consultation period. The Stronger Towns Fund has no details yet and will be released after the local elections.

**Action 2: LEP to send round information before LEP board meeting to the Herefordshire Business Board**

FM went through the LEP Board agenda which discussed the Strategic Economic Plan, the Local Industrial Strategy, Chair vacancy and other items such as the Growth Hub. Board discussed the nature and culture of the LEP Board as well as conflicts of interests that can occur at these meetings.

**Action 3: KJ to check policy on conflict of interest and what the process is for conduct when a declaration has been made**

Next LEP Board meeting will be on the 8<sup>th</sup> May with a MP briefing, discussion on transport, and skills.

## **9. Sector Update**

### **Sharon Smith, Marches Growth Hub Herefordshire**

An application was submitted from the Chamber for £25,000 to produce the video with Rural Media to promote Herefordshire. This will help create 3 films and can be used at events and

seminars, originally put in for £30k but had to cut that down. Deadline to use the funding is in July so the turnaround is very fast.

### **CD -Tourism**

Hereford Tourism needs to have a strategic approach. The Green Dragon is proceeding quickly with 37 people on site conducting the refurbishment. Currently working with Rule of Tum for the development of the indie food festival and will be seeking private sponsorship for the event.

### **DG - Major Company Engagement Programme**

Planning for businesses is difficult with Brexit. Skills and people are very difficult and with the current labour market it encourages others to become competitive with the limited talent pool in the county. We don't push out the message about Herefordshire as a county especially for one seeking jobs and it's something we can do better.

### **GW - Energy and Renewables**

There was a price cap introduced on energy a few months ago, but this has now increased again. Clean energy is on the rise and it is now becoming more affordable for people to invest in renewable energy. There are grants out there that businesses can use in order to become more sustainable and lower energy costs, one is called BEEP that firms may find useful. BEEP offers free energy efficiency assessments which could lead to grants for businesses who wish to use their energy more efficiently, reducing costs and improving environmental credentials. More information about BEEP can be found [here](https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/directory/v/-183) (<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/directory/v/-183>).

### **IP - Marches Skills**

Marches over the last 10 years has seen funding cut and frozen for education. Some colleges have closed and out of the 9 in the local area this has reduced to 3. After the spend review, they're hoping to see the cuts alleviated as this will help keep the delivery of courses running for students. Brexit is having an effect on the number of students coming from the EU to study.

### **JR - Major Company Engagement Programme**

All about Brexit currently with the uncertainty to plan for anything, this just slows business down unfortunately.

## **10. Any Other Business**

Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce will no longer be running Visit Herefordshire. Council originally offered it to the Chamber to try and commercialise but could never run at a profit, made the hard decision to not support one sector (tourism) over all sectors as it was using up a lot of time and resources that could be used on other sectors. Didn't anticipate other private sectors to be interested in the Visit contract but there is interest which is good. The Chamber hopes they can work collaboratively with whoever takes this contract on.

The Marches are still collecting feedback from businesses which you can feed into here: <https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/brexit-advice-for-businesses/>

The Strategic Economic Plan has now been published and you can read it here: <https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/what-we-do/economic-plan/>

## **11. Dates of Future Meetings:**

- Tuesday 28th May

- Tuesday 30th July
- Tuesday 1st October
- Tuesday 3rd December

All meetings will be held in the Seminar Room (unless stated otherwise) at the Hereford Business Solutions Centre, Skylon Court, Coldnose Road, Rotherwas, Hereford, HR2 6JS

## 12. Close

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**Links to Marches strategic boards** (ctrl & click to follow the links):

[Hereford Enterprise Zone / Skylon Park](#)

[Herefordshire Business Board](#)

[Marches LEP](#)

[Shropshire Business Board](#)

[Telford Business Board](#)