

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)

Notes / Actions from an Emergency Meeting held via Zoom Thursday 23 April 2020, 10.30-11.45 am

Chair: Frank Myers (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA); Christian Dangerfield (CD), Christine Snell (CS), Gareth Williams (GW), Helen Bowden (HB), Ian Peake (IP), Karen Usher (KU), Mark Pearce (MP), Nic Millington (NM), Sharon Smith (SS); Stephen Eckley (SE),

In attendance: Nick Webster (NW), Roger Allonby (RA),

Apologies: Cllr David Hitchiner, Debbie Gittoes, John Reed, Laura Hughes

Notes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Marches Investment Fund

FM referred to two documents previously circulated to members:

- A resolution from the Marches LEP Board concerning change of use of MIF funds to support strategic tourism and business initiatives affected by the impact of the floods and the COVID19 virus.
- Content of an email from Mandy Thorn, MLEP Chair.

Discussions revolved around the following issues:

- Whether the £444K fund earmarked for Herefordshire could be used for capital and revenue funding.
- The deadline for submission of business cases.
- Whether the money is only available for travel / tourism related initiatives or could be used for other badly affected business sectors.
- Whether the money could only be used for strategic projects or to alleviate some more immediate problems being faced by businesses or a combination of the two.

- A keenness to ensure money is distributed as equitably as possible and to maximum effect.

- An acknowledgement that Herefordshire's tourism industry is structurally very weak and this was the case before the immediate emergencies caused by the floods and COVID19.

Actions arising from discussion

- a. FM to clarify with MLEP the parameters of the funding, with particular reference to the queries raised above.
- b. NM to send Frank the notes of guidance the Rural Media Company developed when considering requests for funding from its Great Places initiative.
- c. A sub-group of the Business Board will be set up to develop the business case for investment of the funds. This will comprise Frank, Nic M, Christian Sharon, Nick W and Roger. JB to organise date / time for meeting via Zoom.
- d. NW / RA to send findings of recent business survey to Jan for circulation to members

2. Stronger Towns Board

Board members expressed disquiet at the apparent lack of progress in relation to Herefordshire's proposals for Stronger Towns funding.

RA reassured the Board that although the planned meeting in March had been postponed due to the need for the Council to concentrate on actions related to the COVID crisis, that first response phase had now passed and the Council was keen to drive forward planning for the funding. However, because of the need for community involvement, this would be curtailed by the lockdown.

FM stressed that this initiative should be business led, as opposed to council led, and offered the Business Board's support to move the project along.

Members agreed that the Stronger Towns Fund is an integral part of addressing Herefordshire's structural weaknesses in terms of its tourism industry. It was therefore imperative that immediate action is taken to develop Herefordshire's bid.

3. Any Other Business

MP advised that construction on the Shell Store and Cyber Centre in Rotherwas was shortly due to be restarted.

FM reminded members that the Herefordshire Community Foundation has emergency funding available for individuals / community groups who are struggling as a result of the floods / COVID19. full details can be seen on the website <https://www.herefordshirecf.org/>.

4. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.