

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)

Notes / Actions from the Meeting held on Monday 3 February 2020, 4-6.00 pm at Arctic Circle, Rotherwas, Hereford HR2 6JL

Chair: Frank Myers (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA); Christian Dangerfield (CD), Cllr David Hitchiner (DH), Debbie Gittoes (DG), Doug Barrat (DB), Gareth Williams (GW), Helen Bowden (HB), Mark Pearce (MP), Nic Millington (NM), Sharon Smith (SS); Stephen Eckley (SE),

In attendance: Christine Snell (CS); Geoff Hughes (GH); Laura Hughes (LH), Richard Ball (RB), Roger Allonby (RA),

Speakers: Ben Boswell, Herefordshire Council (BB); Nick Read, Chaplain, Borderlands Rural Chaplaincy (NR);

Apologies: Gill Hamer (GHa), Ian Peake, John Reed, Karen Usher

Minutes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Welcome

FM welcomed all to today's meeting. A particular welcome was extended to NR and BB who would be speaking at the meeting. FM also welcomed and introduced CS who had recently been appointed to the Marches LEP main Board and is potentially interested in joining the Herefordshire Business Board to represent the agriculture sector.

Apologies were as noted above.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last Herefordshire Business Board meeting, held on 25 November 2019, were agreed and signed by FM as a correct record.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Item 4 - Marches LEP Energy Strategy

- FM reported that Western Power's Network Strategy Manager, Ben Godfrey, would be attending the next Business Board meeting, scheduled for 30 March.
- FM confirmed that Tim Yair had submitted questions to be posed to Ben Godfrey at the next meeting. These will be circulated to Business Board members.
- FM confirmed that JB had written a report on Hydro Electricity that had been circulated to members in advance of today's meeting. If there are any comments on this topic / document, please feed them back via JB.

Action 1: Circulate Tim Yair's questions to Business Board members (JB)

3.2 Item 10. Raising the profile of Herefordshire Business Board

FM advised that he had recently spoken at a Herefordshire Young Professionals meeting, hosted at LH's Signs & Labels premises and attended by approximately 40 guests. He had asked the Young Professionals to become involved with the Business Board. As a result, the Chair of the group, Jack Powell, is planning to attend our next meeting on 30 March.

LH agreed that the meeting had gone well and had been a good opportunity to raise the profile of the Business Board. Prior to attending the meeting, most attendees had not heard of the Business Board and most did not know what a LEP is or does.

3.3 Any Other Business

- A letter regarding Hereford Grid capacity was written and used by Gareth at his meeting.
- Re an additional Business Board member from the agricultural sector, it is hoped that CS will fulfil this role.
- Matt Hayes has been invited to join the Business Board but has yet to respond.
- Business Board member biographies are now all up on the website. Please view and let JB know if any changes are required.

4. Challenges facing the Agricultural sector Presentation by Nick Read, Agricultural Chaplain, Borderlands Rural Chaplaincy

NR explained that he is a member of a national group convened by the NFU and the Worshipful Company of Farmers to look at how we support the land-based sector post Brexit, and working with the NFU and Herefordshire Rural Hub locally to facilitate some planning to manage the changes that Brexit will bring.

NR's presentation focused on current issues facing the agricultural sector, particularly as a result of Britain's decision to leave the EU, which he said would have a significant impact on farmers, both nationally and in Herefordshire. DEFRA's national estimate is that 30% of farmers will leave the industry, 30% will continue with no difficulty and 30% will remain but will need assistance.

In recognition of the challenges ahead, NR advised that a Post-Brexit Resilience Group is being set up in Herefordshire to ensure that contingency plans are put in place. Invitations to join this group will be going out later this week inviting relevant contacts to attend an initial scoping meeting.

Board members agreed that a proactive strategy is necessary to address the issues. Although there will be farmers who will lose out, the Board felt that that the changes may also represent significant opportunities for Herefordshire farmers.

It was agreed that NR would keep the Business Board up to date with all developments and enlist its help as required with any future initiatives.

Action 2: Circulate NR's presentation to Business Board members (JB)

5. Herefordshire Vision - Herefordshire Investment Partnership (HIP)

DB advised that the next HIP Board meeting would be held early next month. However he stressed that the impasse with Herefordshire Council regarding plans for the By-pass/SWTP was continuing to have a negative effect on inward investment.

Meanwhile, DB advised that HIP was exploring a number of exciting opportunities with the Council, of which he will tell the Business Board more when he can.

6. How can businesses help contribute to Herefordshire's Zero Carbon Plan? (Presentation by Ben Boswell, Herefordshire Council)

BB outlined the Council's ambitions in terms of the declared Climate Emergency. He advised that carbon reduction had been part of the Council's ambitions since 2013 when it had published a Carbon Reduction Strategy, but that the declared emergency had created added impetus. He outlined a number of business support packages available to Herefordshire businesses to help them to reduce their use of carbon.

Action 3: Circulate BB's presentation to Business Board members (JB)

BB asked for the Business Board's support and membership of a new Carbon Reduction Steering Group. GW is already a member. After protracted discussion, HB agreed to represent the Business Board on this group.

The Business Board again voiced their dissatisfaction with regard to the Council's decision to delay work on the By-pass/SWTP which is having a significant impact on business. Members stressed their willingness to support carbon reduction efforts, but equally wanted to stress the Council's responsibility to business and to the Herefordshire economy. The Business Board's view was that these things were not mutually exclusive and urgent action is required.

7. Hereford By-pass and SWTP

DH advised that the current 'Pause and Review' process would continue until 31 July 2020. A number of options is being considered by Councillors, including an Eastern Link Road, shared spaces, electric buses, light railways, walking and cycle options.

RB referred Business Board members to recent decisions taken by the Council at their Cabinet meetings held on 24 and 30 January. Details of these meetings can be found on the Council's website:

24 January meeting: <http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6581>

30 January meeting: <http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6594>

RB advised that the Council is setting up a Stakeholder Reference Panel as part of the review process and would welcome representation from the Business Board. FM agreed to be the Business Board representative. LH also recommended that representation from Herefordshire's younger business community was important and CS further suggested that a representative from the Logistics industry was critical.

DH advised that LEP funding for the SWTP had been withdrawn and allocated for new projects. He said that the Council had made applications for some of this new funding and that three of them had been selected to go through to the next stage for consideration.

FM advised that the LEP is seeking clawback from the Council of £3.4 million that had already been paid to the Council towards the SWTP project. The Council was disputing the grounds for this to be repaid and the matter is now likely to be dealt with by lawyers.

8. NMITE - update

GH advised that the University is planning its first intake of students in the second half of 2020. It was anticipated that recruitment would commence in May once requirements around registration of students and the validation of degrees had been met.

GH acknowledged that there had been some recent press coverage regarding progress with the LEP grant, The Marches LEP Board had confirmed the release of the 2nd tranche of capital funding to the University which would be spent within the specified timeframe on refurbishing the Blackfriars Street building.

GH advised that the University is in discussion with the LEP regarding the remaining £5M funding, which is targeted at building developments at Rotherwas.

9. Horizon Scan

RA advised that good progress was being made with student accommodation at Station Approach, comprising 178 beds. This is on target for completion by September 2020. RA also advised that progress is going well on the Enterprise Zone Shell Store and Cyber Building. Construction is due for completion at the end of the summer 2020.

RA further advised that the first Hereford Town Board Meeting will take place on Friday 7 February. This Board will consider how it will invest the funding received and compile a plan by the end of the summer 2020. This action is a requirement of the funding agreement.

RA advised that the three projects submitted by the Council for the re-purposed Marches LEP capital funding are: Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park, Hereford Enterprise Zone and conversion of the current Shell Store loan to a grant. Full business cases are now being prepared.

RA thanked CD and NM for the Tourism Forum, which confirmed the commitment of the county to supporting tourism and making budget provision to do so.

RA finally advised that support was being sought from Sport England with regard to a cycle track around the Hereford Race Course.

10. Marches LEP - update

GHa sent her apologies for the meeting, but submitted an email report as follows:

10.1 At the Marches LEP Board meeting held on 27 January, two new Board members had been approved. These are Dr Catherine Baxter, Harper Adams University (Higher Education Representative) and Christine Snell, Partner in AJ & Cl Snell fruit growers (Food and Drink Sector Representative). GHa thanked all Business Board members who had supported the recruitment process.

10.2 Paul Kalinauckus (LEP Board Access to Finance Champion) is looking for representatives for a new Access to Finance (A2F) Group. Representatives must have a banking or financial background. Terms of Reference will be circulated to Board members. Anyone interested in being involved must submit an expression of interest to yasmin.sulaman@marcheslep.org.uk by 12 pm on 14 February 2020, to include the following

- biography, outlining background and experience including dealing with business finance including alternative finance; and

- confirm which objective(s) from the Terms of Reference they would like to support and why

Action 4: Circulate A2F Terms of Reference to Business Board members (JB)

10.3 The LEP sponsored the development of a [Visitor Economy Strategy for the Marches](#), which was launched at an excellent and well attended Marches Tourism Event in Hereford on 21 January. Thanks to Christian Dangerfield. Each of the three Local Authorities are looking at the best way to implement the strategy and meeting its objectives.

10.4 The LEP has recently awarded the Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College £70K to help the college build a new Energy Training Centre at the Hereford Campus.

10.5 The LEP is looking for a Herefordshire Business Board representative to consider the business cases submitted for capital funding. DG volunteered to be involved.

Action 5: FM to pass DG's name to GH

Action 6: JB to send process flow chart to DG

11. Any Other Business

FM advised that progress on the Sheriff's Skills sub-group is going well. Tricia Thomas has been asked to provide FM with a list of objectives for her year in office so that the Business Board can identify how it may continue to help.

12 Date of Next Meeting

30 March 2020, 4-6 pm, Arctic Circle, Rotherwas, Hereford HR2 6JL

Links to Marches strategic boards (control and click to follow the links)

[Hereford Enterprise Zone / Skylon Park](#)
[Herefordshire Business Board](#)

[Marches LEP](#)
[Shropshire Business Board](#)
[Telford Business Board](#)