

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Notes / Actions from the Meeting held on
Monday 5 October 2020, 4-6.00 pm
via Zoom

Chair: Frank Myers (FM) **Present:** Christian Dangerfield (CD), Christine Snell (CS), Cllr David Hitchiner, (DH), David Williams (DW), Debbie Gittoes (DG), Doug Barrat (DB), Gareth Williams (GW), Helen Bowden (HB), James Newby (JN), John Reed (JR), Karen Usher (KU), Mark Pearce (MP), Nic Millington (NM), Paul Stevens (PS), Sharon Smith (SS)

In attendance: Kathryn Jones, Marches LEP (KJ), Nick Webster, Herefordshire Council (NW)

Apologies: Abigail Appleton, Gill Hamer, Roger Allonby

Minutes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

FM welcomed everyone to the meeting. A special welcome was extended to David Williams and to James Newby.

Apologies were as noted above.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

2. Minutes of the last meetings

The Minutes of the Herefordshire Business Board meeting held on 27 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

3.1 Energy – Restrictions to the Hereford Grid (ref point 4.6)

GW explained that he sits on a number of local energy strategy groups, both at local and Marches level. The sector is well served with appropriate committees and it is important to use this existing communication infrastructure. If Business Board members have any issues to raise with regard to future energy demands,

concerns about capacity, etc, please email these to GW. He will then ensure these are discussed with relevant groups and / or Western Power, as appropriate.

3.2 Sheriff's Skills (ref point 11.1)

FM advised that the Sheriff's Skills project, 'Just the job', is moving forward and schools are being contacted with details about the competition.

3.3 Herefordshire Business Board Terms of Reference (ref point 11.2)

FM advised that this project is still ongoing, but now near completion.

3.4 Herefordshire Community Foundation (ref point 11.4)

FM advised members that there is still c£45K available in the fund to help people who have been affected by this year's floods. If they know of anybody who may need help, please refer them to Frank / HCF.

4. The Shell Store, Rotherwas

4.1 MP made a presentation to members on the progress made at the Shell Store development in Rotherwas (copy presentation attached).

4.2 MP stated that this progress couldn't have been achieved without the financial support of Herefordshire Council, the ERDF and Marches LEP.

4.3 MP stated that interest from businesses in the development had so far been strong, and requested that Business Board members help to raise awareness and promote the facility.

4.4 MP is in the process of arranging visits to the site for Business Board members. Members will be contacted directly by MP to confirm details. If any members would like to visit outside the times already offered by MP, please let him know as he will be pleased to arrange alternative dates/times.

5. Decision making processes

5.1 FM stated that he was frustrated with the delays being experienced in the county with regard to progressing a number of significant and important projects.

5.2 FM was keen to stress that this wasn't intended as a criticism of any particular body/ies. Rather, as Business Board Chair he was keen to offer members' help to identify and remove some of the barriers to progress.

5.3 Business Board members agreed that this was an issue that they would be keen to help resolve.

5.4 It was agreed that a working group of four members would be set up to offer help. FM will invite one of these members to lead the group.

5.5 FM will write to the relevant decision-making bodies in the county to offer the Business Board's help to look at decision making processes and to see where improvements might be made.

Action 1: FM to set up working group and nominate leader

Action 2: FM to write to decision making bodies to offer Business Board's help

6. Update and progress report

6.1 Marches Investment Fund (MIF)

6.1.1 NW advised that the county had been successful in securing a further £5.6M funding from the LEP with reference to the Getting Britain Building Fund. This will be invested in Hereford City Centre and Lugg Valley Wetlands improvements and would help towards the county delivering its housing targets.

6.1.2 NW advised that NMITE had also secured funding from the same source.

6.1.3 FM advised that Orphans Press had been successful in winning the tender to develop a tourism communications strategy for the county. NM will be working with HB as part of this tender

6.1.4 It was agreed that HB will make a presentation to the next Business Board on the tourism campaign and branding.

6.1.5 Business Board members agreed that it was important to ensure a long-term, strategic approach to tourism was adopted.

6.1.6 Business Board members also agreed the importance of sustainability for all tourism to the county. GW urged HB to involve green groups in discussions. HB will contact GW to ensure that this is done.

6.1.7 SS advised that the Chamber of Commerce is holding a seminar on 8 October to hear views on how to spend £25M in Hereford City Centre. Details have been circulated to members.

**Action 3: HB to make a presentation at next Business Board meeting.
JB to add to agenda**

**Action 4: HB and GW to discuss involvement of green groups in tourism
strategy discussions**

6.2 Stronger Towns Fund

6.2.1 NW provided an update on progress achieved to date.

6.2.2 The Towns Fund Board has now held several meetings and was working towards producing a Town Investment Plan in time for the deadline of the end of January 2021.

6.2.3 NW advised that CD had been appointed by the project consultants, Rose Regeneration, to work at a local level to engage local populations and stakeholder groups. A lot of consultations have already been undertaken, with more in the forthcoming weeks / months. NW stressed that Herefordshire Business Board will be involved in this consultation process. The objective of this consultation process is to identify key projects for submission in the Town Investment Plan.

6.2.4 FM will circulate the Towns Fund prospectus to members.

6.2.5 NW asked Business Board members to contact CD if they haven't already been in touch with him about the Fund and / or if they feel that they represent a key sector that should be represented in the consultations.

Action 5: FM to send Towns Fund Prospectus to JB for onward circulation to members

7. Marches LEP

7.1 KJ provided an update on the recent Marches LEP Board meeting. Minutes are available via the Marches LEP website.

7.2 KJ stated that although funding for projects such as the 'Getting Britain Building Fund' (outlined by NW above) were welcome, the LEP was lobbying the Government to offer longer term project opportunities as well as the short term 'shovel ready' projects which are being pushed through.

7.3 KJ advised that the LEP was staging a week of activities in a 'Business Recovery Week', commencing 12 October. Of particular interest to Business Board members might be the launch event (12 October) and Business Summit (15 October). KJ will send details to JB for circulation to members.

Action 6: KJ to send details of Business Recovery Week events to JB for circulation to members

8. NMITE

8.1 JN advised that NMITE has now been authorised and accredited as a Higher Education Institution by the main regulatory bodies. This is a significant step for the university.

8.2 JN advised that the next stage is validation. This is nearly complete and going well so far. Once this is completed (anticipated end of October 2020), the University can advertise for and recruit students to commence in the new year.

8.3 JN highlighted the significant challenges being faced by all HEIs in the face of COVID19.

8.4 KU welcomed the progress being made on facilities at Rotherwas, which will be vital to the University's links to industry and the development of future engineering skills.

9. Hereford Transport Strategy Review

9.1 FM had circulated a note from the Council prior to today's meeting regarding continued delays to this review.

9.2 DH acknowledged these delays, but stated that decisions are expected later this month (October).

10. Horizon Scan

10.1 Market Towns Development

10.1.1 NW advised that the Council was currently in discussion with the market towns regarding the development of a plan for future investment and development opportunities.

10.1.2 NW advised that as soon as these initial consultations had been held and a plan agreed, engagement with the Herefordshire Business Board would be undertaken.

10.1.3 Members queried whether the Business Board should be involved at an earlier stage in the process. NW replied that established systems (via town councils) were already in place and that the Council felt it proper to engage with them first.

10.1.4 FM reiterated the importance of the Business Board being appraised of these and other similar discussions at an early stage.

10.2 Government Kickstart Scheme

10.2.1 NW advised that grants of between £1k and £3K per business are available for small businesses affected by COVID19. The amount of funding available indicated that approximately 70 businesses may benefit.

10.2.2 NW advised that the scheme will go live on 17-19 October. Significant interest is expected (hence the short window). Further details of the application process will be published later this week.

10.2.3 NW will send further details to JB for onward circulation to Business Board members. Business Board members are asked to please raise awareness of the scheme.

**Action 7: NW to send details of Scheme to JB for onward
circulation to members**

11. Herefordshire Vision – Herefordshire Investment Partnership

11.1 DB stressed HIP's interest and ongoing wish to be involved in urban space management, particularly in relation to Hereford City and the Maylord Orchards development.

11.2 DB advised that there continues to be strong interest in the Marches Building Investment Grants, with many applications being received.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Cultural Compact

12.1.1 NM provided details of this initiative, which is essentially to get cross-sector support for the important role that culture plays in the county's economy. Funding of £20K had been received.

12.1.2 NM will keep the Business Board updated regarding developments.

12.2 Mental Health and Productivity Pilot Project

12.2.1 Details of this project have been circulated. Members are encouraged to get involved.

13. Dates of Next Meetings

2020: Monday 30 November, 4-6 pm – expected to be via Zoom, to be confirmed.

2021: Venue tbc – all meetings 4-6 pm

Monday 1 February

Monday 29 March

Monday 7 June

Monday 26 July

Monday 4 October

Monday 6 December