

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Notes / Actions from the Meeting held on
Monday 30 November 2020, 4-6.00 pm
via Zoom

Chair: Frank Myers (FM) **Present:** Christine Snell (CS), Cllr David Hitchiner (DH), David Williams (DW), Debbie Gittoes (DG), Doug Barrat (DB), Gareth Williams (GW), Helen Bowden (HB), John Reed (JR), Karen Usher (KU), Mark Pearce (MP), Sharon Smith (SS), Stephen Eckley (SE)

In attendance: Gill Hamer, Marches LEP (GH), Roger Allonby, Herefordshire Council (RA)

Apologies: Abigail Appleton, Christian Dangerfield, James Newby, Nic Millington, Paul Stevens

Minutes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Welcome

FM welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies are as noted above. There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of the last meetings

The Minutes of the Herefordshire Business Board meeting held on 5 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

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

4.1 Decision making processes (ref points 5.4 and 5.5)

FM advised that this action would be deferred until a more appropriate time after lockdown / COVID19. However, he stated that several members had expressed an interest in getting involved in this initiative.

4.2 Government Kickstart Scheme (ref point 10.2.3)

It is unclear whether Nick Webster had actioned this item. RA to check and advise JB.

Action 1: RA to check current status of Kickstart Scheme and advise JB whether any documents have / need to be circulated to members

5. Update and progress report

5.1 Marches Investment Fund

5.1.1 RA provided a comprehensive overview of actions that had been taken since Herefordshire had been awarded £444,000 by the Marches LEP for COVID recovery and had decided to invest it into Tourism / Visitor Economy marketing and PR. RA stated that this is the first time in more than ten years that the county had been given this level of funding for investment in the sector.

5.1.2 Orphans Press and Travel Tonic, two local firms, had been the major bid winners and RA reported that significant progress and encouraging outputs had already been achieved by both organisations. However, some plans had had to be changed due to the lockdown and COVID restrictions.

5.1.3 RA advised that tender opportunities have now been released as part of the MIF funding for the redevelopment of the county tourism website and media buying contracts. SS asked for links to these opportunities to be sent to her for onward sharing with Chamber members.

Action 2: RA to send tender opportunity links to SS

5.1.4 RA also outlined a separate initiative to set up a Destination Improvement District. This is similar to a Business Improvement District (BID), but with a focus on the countywide visitor economy. RA advised that Herefordshire Council is currently trying to garner business support for this initiative, which would help the tourism sector in the future. FM agreed that it was important for plans to be put in place to ensure the continuity of tourism investment.

5.1.5 In response to a query from FM, GH confirmed that the LEP would be willing to consider extending the period by which claims against the MIF could be submitted. She asked RA to continue to keep her informed.

5.1.6 FM congratulated all involved for what had been achieved so far.

5.1.7 HB provided a presentation to the Board to demonstrate the achievements of the marketing and PR campaign so far. Outcomes of the PR campaign can also be seen on this webpage: <https://fionareecepr.coveragebook.com/b/7581012fa5bce95a>. This includes the proposed new logo for Herefordshire.

5.1.8 Two documents had previously been circulated for information: 'Marches Investment Fund – Herefordshire Visitor Economy Project Update – October 2020' and 'Visit Herefordshire: October 2020, Prepared by Travel Tonic'.

5.1.9 DB requested clarification from HB as to how Hereford Cathedral was being featured in the tourism strategy. HB agreed that the Cathedral was clearly very important, but that it already received a lot of focus. She said the new strategy aims to provide a broader focus on the county's tourism assets.

5.1.10 DH congratulated the team on its achievements so far and asked for clarification as to who owned the new logo / brand assets / images. HB confirmed that these were owned by Visit Herefordshire. RA confirmed that this was the case and also indicated that the intention is for the photographs to be available for anyone to use.

5.1.11 KU stated that she would contact HB for the new logo for the NMITE website as it was important for students who are coming to the university and their families to understand the county and all its assets.

Action 3: KU to contact HB for Visit Herefordshire logo

5.1.12 SS agreed that it was fantastic to have this large sum of money invested in county tourism but expressed concern as to what would happen when the money had been spent. FM advised that he had raised the importance of tourism as part of the future economic strategy of the county with the LEP Board.

5.2 Stronger Towns Fund (STF)

5.2.1 FM outlined progress so far with the STF. He particularly highlighted the large volume of bids that had been submitted for funding, many of which would not be successful.

5.2.2 FM asked for offers of support from any Board members who would be willing to help assist with the bids that had been received. This help will be needed within the next two weeks.

Action 4: Board members to let FM know if they can help with the STF bids

5.2.3 FM advised that although many of the bids wouldn't be successful, many of them did have potential. In order to help and encourage those who had submitted an unsuccessful bid, FM stated that he was seeking volunteer mentors (from within the BB and outside) to help develop these unsuccessful projects into successful bids. In this way, potentially successful projects would be ready when additional tranches of funding were announced by Government.

Action 5: Any members interested in mentoring to contact FM

5.2.4 DW suggested it would be helpful to look at the unsuccessful bids with an eye to how they fit within the overall strategic vision of the city and county, rather than as independent projects. FM advised that this had already been done in terms of the

criteria set for the bidding process. He agreed to share the prioritisation tool being utilised by the project team with Business Board members.

Action 6: FM to circulate Hereford STF prioritisation tool

6. Hereford Transport Strategy Review

6.1 FM advised that Cabinet was meeting this Thursday, 3rd December to discuss this item. Questions to the Cabinet from members of the public had been invited, but the window for submission was now closed.

6.2 DH confirmed this was the case and that any decision by Cabinet would then go forward to a full Council meeting for final decision.

7. Marches LEP

7.1 GH referred to the document previously circulated to Business Board members, 'Business support and careers hub information. Update from Gill Hamer.' Further updates will be sent to JB for onward circulation to Business Board members, as soon as available.

7.2 GH advised that she was shortly expecting to hear more information about the funding opportunities announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement (replaced EIF and Levelling Up Fund).

7.3 SS asked for clarification regarding EU Exit Funding available, in particular could this be used for training days (as is the case in Worcestershire). GH confirmed that the Herefordshire funding was for adviser support only. However, GH said that she would look into funding for training and advise SS accordingly. FM asked for GH to share this with JB.

Action 7: GH to look at funding for EU Exit Training and advise SS / JB

8. NMITE

8.1 KU was delighted to report that NMITE has now received validation and was officially open as an approved higher education institution. She thanked in particular Herefordshire Council and the LEP for their support in enabling NMITE to reach this position.

8.2 The next phase is awareness raising and student recruitment. NMITE is expecting the first cohort of c50 students will start their education in March 2021.

8.3 Board members were unanimous in congratulating KU and the NMITE team and in welcoming NMITE to Herefordshire.

9. Horizon scan

9.1 RA advised that he was awaiting further detail regarding the Levelling Up / Shared Prosperity funding announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

9.2 RA outlined further funding available, following the country's second COVID19 lockdown. These are:

9.2.1 Local Restrictions Grant Scheme – auto payments based on business rate values for those businesses instructed to close, eg hospitality, tourism

9.2.2 Discretionary Grants – for those not covered by the Local Restrictions Grant Scheme, eg those who have no rateable value

9.3 Further detail of both these funds is available on the Council website: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/business-1/business-advice-support/9>.

10. Herefordshire Vision / Herefordshire Investment Partnership

10.1 DB advised that he was continuing to receive excellent interest from businesses looking for grants from the Marches Buildings Investment Grant Group. FM thanked DB for his continuing involvement in this group.

10.2 DB stated that he had no particular updates to report from Herefordshire Vision.

11. Chairmanship of Herefordshire Business Board

11.1 FM referred to the paper 'Herefordshire Business Board HBB – Chairman position' which had been previously circulated to members. He confirmed his intention to stand for re-election.

11.2 FM confirmed that there would be an election in the next few weeks (assuming that other candidates come forward) and that DG would be acting as Returning Officer. Board members were asked to submit any nominations for Chair to DG via email: deborah.gittoes@arctic-circle.ltd

Action 8: Members to send any nominations for Business Board Chair to DG

11.3 DH made a number of observations with reference to the current ToR of the Herefordshire Business Board. Board members agreed that these were all valid points, which should be carefully considered. However, they also stated that recruiting suitable members to voluntary positions on boards such as the Business Board can be extremely difficult.

11.4 GH advised that similar considerations were being discussed within the other two Business Boards of the LEP. She stated she would be happy to provide feedback on these discussions, if that would be valuable.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Sheriff's Skills

12.1.1 FM advised that schools had received the information packs about the Sheriff's 'Just the Job' project and were considering their entries. The next milestone will come in January when entries are due.

12.2 Knife Angel

12.2.1 FM advised that the Knife Angel, a 27 ft sculpture made from confiscated knives and blades, would be coming to Hereford City Centre in June 2021.

12.2.2 FM advised that JB was helping with this project and had recently developed a draft business sponsors' information pack. JB will circulate this document to Business Board members for feedback.

Action 9: JB to circulate Knife Angel draft sponsors' pack to members

12.2.3 DW offered his support to the Knife Angel team, particularly around its educational objectives. JB to connect DW with Knife Angel joint project leaders.

Action 10: JB to introduce DW to Knife Angel project leaders

12.3 Rotherwas Cyber Security Centre

12.3.1 MP will present to next Business Board meeting on 1 February 2021.

13. Date of Next Meetings

(All at 4.00 – 6.00 pm, venues to be confirmed)

Monday 1 February

Monday 29 March

Monday 7 June

Monday 26 July

Monday 4 October

Monday 6 December