

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)

Notes / Actions from the Meeting held on Monday 1 February 2021, 4-5.15 pm via Zoom

Chair: Frank Myers (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA); Christian Dangerfield (CD); Christine Snell (CS), David Williams (DW), Debbie Gittoes (DG), Doug Barrat (DB), Gareth Williams (GW), Helen Bowden (HB), James Newby (JN); John Reed (JR), Mark Pearce (MP), Nic Millington (NM); Paul Stevens (PS); Sharon Smith (SS), Stephen Eckley (SE)

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

Apologies: Cllr David Hitchiner; Karen Usher

Minutes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Welcome

FM welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished all a Happy New Year.

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 30 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

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

None.

5. Update and progress report

5.1 Marches Investment Fund (MIF) – Update on Visitor Economy Marketing Project

5.1.1 RA advised that the project had had lots of good early successes, including being named in three publications as the ‘Staycation venue of choice’. FM requested that the reports of PR coverage so far received be circulated to Board members.

Action 1: RA to circulate PR Activity Report

5.1.2 RA advised that delays had been caused to planned activities due to the current lockdown. As a result of these unavoidable delays, the Marches LEP had kindly agreed to extend the period by which the allocated funding had to be spent to the summer of 2021.

5.1.3 FM stated that Tourism is a hugely important part of the county's economy. In order for the gains achieved from the MIF not to be wasted, attempts are being made to create a Destination Improvement District (DID) which is intended to continue the initiative into the future.

5.1.4 RA advised that a task group has been set up to take forward this initiative. In response to an offer from RA, FM agreed that members of this task group be invited to a future Business Board meeting to explain more about the DID.

Action 2: FM / JB to add DID to future Business Board meeting agenda (in liaison with RA)

5.1.5 HB endorsed FM's statement regarding the importance of tourism to Herefordshire. She advised that the new Destination Herefordshire website is expected to go live in March and that she is currently making contact with tourism businesses in the county to secure their involvement. HB asked SS to circulate the link to the website to any Herefordshire tourism-related Chamber members.

Action 3: HB to send link to SS. SS to circulate, as appropriate, to members

5.1.6 HB advised that there were many fantastic events already planned to take place in the county in June. Final details are being confirmed. Further details will be shared with Business Board members at the next scheduled meeting.

5.2 Stronger Towns Fund (STF)

5.2.1 RA advised that the final Stronger Towns Fund bid had now been submitted. He will circulate this to Business Board members.

Action 4: RA to circulate final Stronger Towns Fund bid to members

5.2.2 RA further advised that a response is expected to the Hereford Stronger Towns bid in April/May 2021. He said that most other bids seemed to receive 80-85% of the money they requested. If that's the case for Hereford, adjustments would need to be made to the proposal to reflect the confirmed funding available.

5.2.3 RA advised that following a decision on Hereford's bid being communicated, the Towns Fund Board would then have 12 months to build a full case for each of the submitted projects.

5.2.4 FM, PS, AA and NM congratulated the team involved in pulling together the Hereford Stronger Towns Bid. Particular thanks were given to CD for his considerable efforts.

5.2.5 FM stressed the importance of not losing sight of those projects that hadn't made it into the final bid. He said many of these had significant merits, but needed some additional input before they would be properly ready to be included in any future bids for funding. He reiterated his request from the last Business Board for members to come forward if they were interested in mentoring others towards turning unsuccessful projects into successful bids.

Action 5: Any members interested in mentoring to contact FM

5.3 Hereford Transport Strategy Review

5.3.1 FM advised that a final decision regarding transport strategy was due to be made in a full Council meeting tomorrow (2 February).

5.4 Knife Angel Hereford Project

5.4.1 FM advised that this important project for Hereford was progressing well. A sponsorship pack had now been circulated and FM encouraged members to share these details with their business associates.

5.5 Sheriff's Skills Project

5.5.1 FM advised that this project was also progressing well but that, due to the latest lockdown, the deadline for submission of entries from schools had been postponed until February.

6. Herefordshire Business Board Terms of Reference

6.1 FM advised that following his re-election as Chair and previous discussions at the Business Board, a sub-group will be established to consider future Herefordshire Business Board Terms of Reference. FM will be in contact with members very shortly to invite them to join this group.

Action 6: FM to set up sub-group to discuss and agree Herefordshire Business Board's Terms of Reference

6.2 FM stated that there is now some urgency to this task following the decision made by the two other Business Boards in the LEP to set up their own individual Terms of Reference.

7. Marches LEP

7.1 GH advised that a new chair had recently been appointed to the Marches Growth Hub: Dave Courteen. Dave is an experienced local businessman with many ideas to take the Growth Hub forward.

7.2 GH further advised that a new Marches Careers Hub Lead had also recently been appointed, Eden Ihle-Vance. It was agreed that Eden would be invited to the next Business Board meeting to explain to members the objectives and plans of this new Hub.

Action 7: FM / JB to add Marches Careers Hub to the next Business Board meeting agenda (in liaison with GH)

7.3 GH advised that following additional funding from Government, the Growth Hub had been able to recruit additional export advisory capacity. Support is available via the Growth Hub for businesses across the LEP area who wish to export to the EU or other nations.

7.4 GH also outlined the popular peer-to-peer networking programme, organised via the Growth Hub, which she is hoping will continue into 2022.

7.5 Anyone interested in either export advice or the peer-to-peer networking programme should contact the Hereford Growth Hub.

8. NMITE

8.1 JN advised that due to the latest lockdown, the first cohort of students to join the University had now been pushed back until September 2021.

8.2 JN advised that the academic team at NMITE were now putting together a programme of courses named 'The NMITE Summer of Discovery'. Further information will shortly be available via the university's website. JN stated he would welcome any suggestions for content from Business Board members.

8.3 It was agreed that HB and JN would liaise after today's meeting to discuss content ideas HB has in relation to some of the bids submitted for the Hereford Towns Fund bid.

Action 8: HB and JN to liaise

9. Horizon scan

9.1 RA updated the Board on the variety of COVID19 grant schemes available to local businesses. Further details of all of these schemes are available via the Council's website: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/business-1/business-advice-support/9>. Any member who would like any further advice on any of these schemes is invited to contact RA.

9.2 RA stated that there were some difficulties in communicating with businesses and that many were not aware of what help was available to them. FM said that this was part of a wider issue of how to communicate with business.

9.3 It was agreed that HB and JB would look into this matter and come back to the Business Board with recommendations on how communications to business could be improved, perhaps by the utilisation of partners' networks (where appropriate).

Action 9: HB / JB to develop recommendations on communication with business

9.4 In the meantime, PS and DW offered their help in communicating RA's / Herefordshire's Council's messages regarding available grants.

9.5 In response to a query from HB, RA advised that the amount for individual grants was set by central government.

9.6 RA advised that the Chamber of Commerce, NMITE and Herefordshire Council were preparing to deliver the Kickstart Scheme with employers across the county. This scheme offers six month paid placements to those aged 16-24 who are receiving Universal Credit. RA said that across the three organisations, over 200 placements have been approved.

10. Herefordshire Vision / Herefordshire Investment Partnership

10.1 DB provided an update on HIP current activities. He advised that the group was not currently taking a very strategic approach to investment opportunities but was looking at projects that had not been included in the Stronger Towns Fund bid to see how they could be developed further. FM welcomed this activity.

10.2 In view of the fact that the Bypass plans are likely to be formally cancelled in the Council meeting tomorrow, FM asked GW to make a presentation to the next Business Board meeting. This should focus on the opportunities for economic growth available via the Council's alternative approach to the climate emergency. GW agreed to do this.

Action 10: FM / JB to add item to next Business Board agenda (in liaison with GW)

10.3 DB advised that the Marches Business Investment Group had met on two occasions since the last Business Board meeting and had processed 15 applications for funding. All but one of these had been approved. He thanked the Marches LEP for their continued support.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 FM advised that with effect from the next Business Board meeting (29 March) sector updates be provided by Business Board sector representatives, ie:

- DG/JR/SE – Manufacturing
- NM/HB – Creative Industries
- GW – Energy
- CS – Agriculture
- CD – Tourism

11.2 FM requested that if members complete actions identified at Business Board meetings, they let JB that they have done so.

11.3 NM advised that a survey was being developed as part of the Herefordshire's a Great Place end of project initiatives. NM will provide an update on the results at the next Business Board meeting.

11.4 CS asked what the impact would be to the city of Debenhams' and the Arcadia Group's recent collapse. FM advised that he had recently asked Cllr Hitchiner about this, had had some information and was awaiting more. Further information to be provided at the next Business Board meeting.

11.5 SS offered to provide a briefing to Business Board members on the help available to exporters following Brexit. FM agreed to include this on the next meeting agenda.

Action 11: FM / JB to add Export Briefing to the next Business Board meeting agenda (in liaison with SS)

12. Date of Next Meetings

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

Monday 29 March

Monday 7 June

Monday 26 July

Monday 4 October

Monday 6 December