

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Notes / Actions from the Meeting held on
Monday 29 March 2021, 4-6.15 pm
via Zoom

Chair: Frank Myers (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA); Christian Dangerfield (CD) (part); Christine Snell (CS); Cllr David Hitchiner (DH); Debbie Gittoes (DG); Doug Barrat (DB); Helen Bowden (HB); John Reed (JR); Karen Usher (KU); Nic Millington (NM); Stephen Eckley (SE)

In attendance: Eden Ihle-Vance, Marches LEP (part); Kathryn Jones, Marches LEP (GH); Mark Armitage, Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce; Roger Allonby, Herefordshire Council (RA)

Apologies: David Williams; Gareth Williams; James Newby; Mark Pearce; Paul Stevens; Sharon Smith

Minutes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Welcome

The Chair 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 meeting

The Minutes of the Herefordshire Business Board meeting held on 1 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

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

Item 5.1.1 (Circulate PR Activity Report): Outstanding. Action completed after today's meeting.

Item 5.1.5 (Link to new Tourism Website): Action completed.

Item 5.2 (Circulate Stronger Towns Fund bid document): Action completed.

Item 5.2.5 (Members to contact Chair regarding mentoring roles): No members have come forward to volunteer. If anyone is interested, please let the Chair know.

Item 8.3 (Liaison re content ideas for NMITE's 'Summer of Discover'). Action completed.

5. Updates and progress report

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

5.1.1 RA/HB advised on progress:

- Visit Herefordshire site now launched (see: <https://www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/>). Currently 340 providers are on board.
- Post-lockdown media activity being finalised with PR agency, including digital media campaign
- The LEP has confirmed that funding could be extended to the end of July
- A western cider discovery route is shortly to be launched.

5.2 Destination Improvement District (DID)

5.2.1 RA advised that businesses are being contacted regarding this initiative and that a task group has been established that currently meets fortnightly.

5.2.2 A ballot must be held to gauge business interest in the DID levy. This is planned in October and must record a majority in favour for the DID to go ahead.

5.2.3 HB advised that she and members of the Mosaic Partnership (consultancy) had presented DID to a selection of County Councillors, with mostly positive feedback. Concerns had been expressed about asking businesses to pay an additional levy on top of the costs they had already faced this year. She emphasised the importance of the Business Board advocating for this initiative in order to encourage businesses to get involved. In particular, they would want to see evidence of the likely return on their investment such as the successful uptake of the PR initiatives funded by the Marches Investment Fund money

5.3 Stronger Towns Fund (STF)

5.3.1 RA advised that 45 other STF bids had been approved in the March budget, with most being awarded around £22-£23 million. He felt that this was a good indicator for Hereford; the outcome of our bid is expected after the local elections in May.

5.3.2 The Chair reminded members that after a decision is received from the STF bid, there will be a short 'window' of 10 weeks to collate information needed for the next stage of the process.

5.3.3 The Chair advised that a recent bid for Capacity Funding had resulted in £40k being awarded in response to a bid for £120k. The capacity funding is intended to fund the administration and expert help needed to complete the bidding process.

5.4 Knife Angel Hereford Project

5.4.1 The Chair advised the new dates for the Knife Angel's visit: arrival on 14 June, departure 12 July. The associated Knife Angel conference will take place (remotely) as previously planned on 9 June.

5.5 Sheriff's Skills Project

5.5.1 The Chair advised that this project had now concluded and that there had been about 250 competition entries and significant wider engagement from schools.

5.6 Old Market Retail Centre – latest update

5.6.1 DH advised that he had no further information on this. However, following concerns raised by Board members, DH agreed to contact the owners, British Land, for an update on the situation.

Action 1: DH to contact British Land

5.7 Communications with Business

5.7.1 JB will liaise with RA/Nick Webster to discuss 'top Herefordshire companies' database.

5.7.2 JB/CS also to liaise with reference to key agricultural employers/contacts in the county. CS suggested JB contact Claire Greener at the NFU in the first instance.

Action 2: JB to develop local business database, in conjunction with RA/NW and CS and with reference to suggestions in circulated paper

6. Herefordshire Business Board Terms of Reference

6.1 The Chair advised that a draft Terms of Reference document will shortly be circulated to members of the Board. Following their feedback and amendments, this will be circulated to all Board members for comment/agreement.

Action 3: FM / JB to circulate draft ToR for feedback

7. Export Briefing

7.1 Mark Armitage, Director of International Trade at the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, provided a presentation entitled 'International Trade and EU Exit Business Support Update'. In his presentation, Mark highlighted the particular issues being faced by businesses who export and

import products to and from the UK. He referred members to:
<http://hwchamber.co.uk/eu-exit-hub/> for further information.

7.2 KJ also advised Board members of the Government support available, in particular the Customs Intermediary Grant, see:
<https://www.customsintermediarygrant.co.uk/> (Post meeting note: It should be noted that this grant is no longer accepting applications but the SME Brexit Support Fund is to be found at the same link.)

8. Marches LEP

8.1 Eden Ihle-Vance, Marches LEP Careers Hub Lead, provided a presentation about the work of the Marches Careers Hub. Eden requested that Board members share the information presented with their colleagues and associates, in particular with reference to opportunities to become a 'Cornerstone Employer Group' or 'Enterprise Adviser'.

8.2 The Chair welcomed the presentation but stated it was difficult to understand how the Marches Careers Hub fitted in with other initiatives, for example the new approach of the Skills Advisory Panel, as required by Government, and Council's newly formed Skills Board. He will discuss this further with KJ.

Action 4: FM to discuss county careers provision with KJ

9. NMITE

9.1 KU provided an update:

- Main focus is on recruitment and fund-raising to support students
- Focus also on the 'Summer of Discovery' programme to be published shortly
- A new Chair of Board has been appointed, Terence Jaeger, start date in mid-April

10. Horizon Scan

10.1 RA provided an update from the March budget. In particular the Government review of the LEPs, which is expected to be concluded before the summer parliamentary recess. The expectation is that LEPs will focus more on business support than capital and infrastructure projects.

10.2 RA provided information on the 'Levelling Up Fund' which provides over £40 billion for capital infrastructure projects. Three priority levels have been developed by Government; Herefordshire is in the 2nd. This means applications for up to £20 million funding can be made, for capital projects to be completed by March 2024.

10.3 RA further provided information on the Community Renewal Fund, which is revenue funding to replace EU streams. Herefordshire has been identified as one of

100 top priority areas in the country. £3 million is potentially available for skills, business or employment projects and bids of more than £500,000 per project are being encouraged in the government guidance. The local authority will shortly be publishing a call for bids. The timeline for a shortlist of bids to Government is the 18 June 2021. Government decisions are expected by the end of July and delivery by end of March 2022.

11. Herefordshire Vision – Herefordshire Investment Partnership

11.1 DB advised that the HIP had met on several occasions since the last Business Board meeting. They are very keen to be involved with the Hereford Stronger Towns Fund bid and to help this project move forward.

11.2 DB advised that the Marches Business Investment Group also continues to thrive and that the SME business sector in particular seemed very robust, lots of grant applications having been received.

12. Sector Updates

12.1 Sector updates were provided by Business Board members as follows:

- DG/JR/SE – Manufacturing
- NW/HB/AA – Creative Industries
- CS – Agriculture

12.2 Gareth Williams and Christian Dangerfield were not present, therefore no Agricultural or Tourism updates were provided.

13. Any Other Business

None

14. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 7 June, 4.00 – 6.00 pm, venue tbc.

Following meetings – all at 4.00 – 6.00 pm, venue tbc

Monday 26 July

Monday 4 October

Monday 6 December