

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)

Notes / Actions from the Meeting held on Monday 6 June 2022, 4.00-6.00 pm at Arctic Circle Ltd, Rotherwas, Hereford HR2 6JL

Chair: Frank Myers MBE (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA); Christian Dangerfield (CD); Christine Snell (CS); Cllr David Hitchiner (DH); David Williams (DW); Debbie Gittoes (DG); Doug Barratt (DB); Gareth Williams (GW); John Reed (JR); Mark Pearce (MP); Nic Millington (NM); Paul Stevens (PS); Stephen Eckley (SE)

In attendance: Roger Allonby, Herefordshire Council (RA); Mandy Thorn, Marches LEP (MT)

Speaker: Elena Rodriguez-Falcon, President & CEO, NMITE (ERF)

Apologies: Helen Bowden; Rachel Laver; Sharon Smith;

Minutes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A particular welcome was extended to Elena Rodriguez-Falcon and Mandy Thorn.

2. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

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

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting (4 April 2022)

The Minutes of the Herefordshire Business Board meeting held on 4 April 2022 were approved as a correct record.

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

4.1 Information on LoRAWAN will be provided to Board members when available (project ongoing).

4.2 DW advised that a bid had been submitted for the second phase of the Strategic Development Fund. The outcome is expected within the next couple of weeks. An update will be provided to the Board when the result is known.

Action: DW to provide update to Board

5. NMITE update

5.1 ERF made a presentation to the Board that focused on its history and background, current situation and aspirations for the future. The slides will be circulated to Board members.

Action: JB to circulate slides

5.2 ERF responded to questions from Board members on current and projected numbers of students; entry requirements; liaison with the Shadow Secretary of State for Education; new students' recruitment strategy (including overseas students); the mix of local to national students; and the quality of the Hereford student experience.

5.3 The Chair thanked ERF for her presentation and congratulated her for NMITE's achievements to date (despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic) and the huge enthusiasm and commitment she demonstrated to the university.

6. Stronger Towns Fund

6.1 AA made a presentation on the Stronger Towns Fund, focusing on the background, current situation, challenges and learning so far achieved. She commented in particular on the diversity and interconnectivity of the projects contained within Hereford's STF bid, which distinguished it from other areas. She also highlighted the potential for the projects to transform Hereford city centre. The slides will be circulated to Board members.

Action: JB to circulate slides

6.2 The Chair thanked AA for her presentation and recognised both her and CD's contributions to the project so far.

6.3 DB asked whether information was retained on the administration/consultancy costs associated with the project. AA confirmed that full detail of all expenditure was available.

6.4 NM commented on the importance of documenting the diversity of the projects contained with the STF. AA agreed that public communications were vital and that a communications strategy would be part of the project in future.

7. The Big Economic Plan Stakeholder Group

7.1 RA advised that invitations had been issued for key stakeholders to attend the initial meeting of this group, taking place later this week. This included FM (as HBB Chair), DW, JR and GW.

7.2 In addition, RA stated that he would welcome the opportunity to provide regular updates on the Group at future HBB Board meetings.

8. Levelling Up Fund

8.1 RA provided an update on the fund, stating that the deadline for applications was 6 July. He advised that Herefordshire would be submitting three bids: South Herefordshire (Enterprise Park at Ross-on-Wye); North Herefordshire (currently assessing projects for submission – possibly investment in High Streets / Development of market towns); Transport (improvements in and around Hereford city, including the transport hub at the station and cycle path improvements).

8.2 RA also advised that applications were now open for bids to the Shared Prosperity Investment Fund.

9. Marches LEP

9.1 MT provided an update on LEP activities. In particular:

- The LEP review published in April clarified the future of LEPs, including their continued importance as the private sector led voice of business. MLEP considering how to continue to work with businesses to understand the challenges they are facing, including the development of ‘clusters’ across the region.
- £4m energy call launching to business this week. Further details will be on the MLEP website and via an energy special newsletter to be circulated to businesses.
- Recruitment campaign launching tomorrow (7 June) for new LEP Board members, including a new Chair. HBB Board members to let anyone who they think may be interested know about this.
- Marches Growth Hub Funding cut by 50%. Priority will be targeting under-engaged businesses.
- Marches Careers Hub is recruiting for Business Advisors. They will work with senior leadership teams in schools and colleges to improve their careers and enterprise programmes and encourage schools / business engagement.

10. Herefordshire Vision – Herefordshire Investment Partnership

10.1 DB provided an update on Marches Building Investment Grants, for which he said demand from small businesses was heartening.

11. Sector Updates

Individual members provided updates from their sectors. Please see Annexe 1.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 CD advised members of a fundraising dinner shortly to be held to raise funds to keep the Hereford Hoard in the county. Further details will be circulated to Board members.

Action: CD to circulate information on Hereford Hoard and fund raising dinner

12.2 MT asked members to encourage businesses to apply for the Queen's Award for Enterprise, which was now open for applications.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 1 August, 4.00 – 6.00 pm at Arctic Circle, Hereford.

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Annexe 1 – Sector Updates**

1. Manufacturing

SE:

- Market conditions buoyant.
- Recruitment extremely challenging across all roles
- Supply chain issues increasing
- Challenges around importing/exporting particular items

JR/DG

- Issues the same as previously reported, but getting worse. Challenges around deliveries, exports, staffing, inflationary pressures, all of which are affecting ability to grow

2. Energy (GW)

- Unprecedented growth in interest around what can be done to generate green energy/reduce energy costs
- This has resulted in delays in terms of what can be delivered
- Tax advantages for investing in green technology
- Boiler upgrade scheme has been launched by Government, but associated processes have not been properly set up

3. Creative Industries

AA/NM:

- New research report on cultural experience in rural areas now available. NM will circulate link to executive summary.

Action: NM to circulate report link

4. Agriculture (CS)

- Very pessimistic outlook. Situation re labour is dangerous for horticulture. Biggest influence is war in Ukraine.

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Action Log

Minute	Action	Responsibility
4.2	Strategic Development Fund update	DW
5.1	Circulate ERF's NMITE presentation slides	JB
6.1	Circulate AA's Stronger Towns Fund presentation slides	JB
12.1	Details of Hereford Hoard/Fundraising dinner	CD
Annexe 1	Circulate executive summary for report on cultural experience in rural areas	NM