

Report of the Cabinet Member for Policy, Corporate and Asset Management

Introduction

I have been asked to report as follows for Full Council on 20 February 2020:

By Councillor Greenslade on:

The Leader is Party to the “Great South West” initiative which is attempting to push the case for economic regeneration. A very laudable objective.

In respect of the meeting late last year with the Prime Minister who apparently gave his backing to this initiative can the Leader please say what projects the “Great South West” Organisation is specifically promoting which will directly benefit economic regeneration in Northern Devon?

Great South West

The Great South West (GSW) is a partnership covering Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset geographies. This is an alliance of the 3 LEAs, businesses, local authorities, colleges and Universities set up to demonstrate the productivity benefits of allocating funding to the SW area in the same way as the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine areas.

With the aim that we will deliver a £45 billion boost to the regional economy and create 190,000 jobs by 2035. Initial governance arrangements are in place with Steve Hindley, formerly Chairman of the HotSW LEP as the GSW chairman.

By working together at a larger geography, we can make a better case to Government for significant “levelling up” investment, responding to the Northern Powerhouse, Midlands Engine etc.

The GSW has produced a prospectus entitled “Securing our Future” which highlights the need for and benefits of funding for the area. The proposal describes the transformational change opportunity for the Green and Blue economies, which relate to land and marine based economies in our area, with a focus on clean growth giving GSW the potential to lead on clean energy economic restructuring.

With our natural and research assets the GSW has the potential to become the Clean Energy powerhouse for the country.

At this early stage, there is not a list of projects as such. The prospectus is highlighting themes from the Government’s Industrial Strategy, which Government is looking for local areas to deliver through the Local Industrial Strategies, such as: Clean Growth, Digital Connectivity, Social Mobility, Healthy Aging, Transport infrastructure and Advanced Manufacturing – such as Agri-tech, Marine, Nuclear and Aerospace. There is a focus on how digital technology and infrastructure investment can be used to raise the productivity of the area.

The prospectus seeks £2m enabling funding from Government for the first 3 years in addition to support for an enhanced export and investment hub, rural productivity deal and a South West tourism action zone.

The prospectus has been presented to the Prime Minister, Treasury, MHCLG and BEIS. This is on a geographical scale the Government, MPs, business leaders and key media figures seem interested in supporting.

The region's MPs have been lobbying Government at the highest level for the GSW to be formally recognised and for the £2m of pump priming funding to be allocated in the budget to launch the project. GSW partners held a meeting with Western Gateway colleagues to explore the appetite for future collaboration and mutual support on shared priorities. There was a positive response from all parties and agreement to continue working on this.

There is a joint meeting (APPG) being held on 3rd March, with the region's MPs to discuss ongoing strategy aimed at securing government support for the project. There will be attendees from the 3 LEPs and local authorities.

There is a launch of the prospectus at the South West Business Council event at Exeter Racecourse on 6th March and this will be attended by the 3 LEPs as well as local Councillors and business people.

At this stage the concept of a Great South West doesn't identify individual projects in specific areas. However the key aim is to bring prosperity to the left-behind of our region and for that reason areas, such as Northern Devon, should be very much at the forefront of our efforts and we would wish to see such areas benefitting significantly from the establishment of a Great South West powerhouse.

John Hart

Cabinet Member

Policy, Corporate and Asset Management