

HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST (HOTSW) LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (LEP) JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 February 2021

Present:-

Councillors J Brook (Chair), R Hosking, J Mathews, Y Atkinson, M Lewis, R Williams (Vice-Chair), Bown, Coles, G Derrick, M Ewings, N Bye and C Eginton

Apologies:-

Councillors J Morris, L Howgate and Spencer

* **37** **Announcements**

The Chair welcomed Mr Hipkin who was attending the meeting in his capacity as a Coopted Member of the Council's Standards Committee to observe and monitor compliance with the Council's ethical governance framework.

* **38** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 be signed as a correct record.

* **39** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* **40** **Local Enterprise Partnership Update**

The Committee received a Report from the Chief Executive of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which updated Members on the Covid-19 response (to the economy) including the LEPs emerging priorities to Build Back Better and progress regarding Inclusive Growth.

The Report highlighted several areas of success, including:

- £51m of High Street Funding had been provisionally confirmed for Plymouth, Barnstaple, Yeovil, Taunton and Paignton;
- Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) Digital Infrastructure programme (includes £10m contribution from LGF) had been re-procured before Christmas to 3 providers, which were Airband, Wessex and Truespeed;
- The Future Flight project (Exeter Airport) had been approved by Innovate UK, and was supporting the development of electric-powered flight, and Long lane access road on site;
- The Marsh Barton railway station had now been approved; and,

- There was progress on new stations including Cullompton and Wellington, and potentially the reopening of lines including Okehampton.

The Report detailed the Covid-19 Route Map to Recovery which highlighted that whilst the incidence of the pandemic had been comparatively low across the region, the economic impact had been stark; particularly in coastal and rural areas.

The Report stated that the economic impacts were stark, with the estimated impact of Lockdown 3 likely to be a loss of some 4% (in addition to the approximately 8% loss in 2020). This would likely lead to a double dip recession and although things had started to recover quickly last summer, the impact of this lockdown was likely to mean recovery would take longer.

The LEP had been responsible for local response and provided:

- a) Government accredited advice and guidance to businesses through the Growth Hub;
- b) local grants such as Kickstart and local response initiatives such as Bounceback, Digital, Jobs and Skills launchpad, Better Business for All guidelines and Train4Tomorrow;
- c) £35.4m of Getting Building Fund (shovel-ready projects to be delivered by Jan 2022) targeted at Green Recovery, Work Hubs and individual projects – summary projects can be viewed at [Getting Building Fund projects announced for Heart of the South West - Heart of the south west LEP \(heartofswlep.co.uk\)](https://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/getting-building-fund-projects-announced-for-heart-of-the-south-west)
12 of 24 of these projects have now been contracted and we are expecting to meet our delivery targets; and,
- d) Working with local partners, stakeholders and key officials to highlight particular issues affecting the HotSW area.

The full publication of the Route Map to Recovery was available at [HotSW Covid-19 - Route Map to Recovery June 2020.indd \(heartofswlep.co.uk\)](https://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/hotsw-covid-19-route-map-to-recovery-june-2020)

Members discussion points included:

- A Free Ports bid was submitted last week – one for Bristol/Avonmouth and one for Plymouth including sites at Langage and Sherford. Freeports was a UK policy with a dozen bids submitted across the Country and it was expected that some announcements may be made at the Budget in March;
- Future of local growth – the LEP had not yet received an update from Government, however there may be more detail in the Budget. It was likely there're would be more focus on Covid-19 response and delivering Brexit rather than growth plan. A Paper by the Chancellor was expected in the Budget around Recovery which may include local growth and UK Prosperity Fund;

- The Build Back Better Plan recognised key drives of the LIS and local delivering plans for Devon, Somerset, Torbay and Plymouth. published draft BBB plan before Christmas;
- The Emergency Grants for Covid-19 were complicated due to the tier system that was in place during lock down and the LEP was grateful for LA support. It was noted the grants were insufficient and did not cover anywhere near the losses that businesses were incurring, and there were many businesses that didn't qualify for any funding. Government has provided support for businesses for over 9 months, however businesses across the region were really struggling.
- Those businesses that had only been established in the last couple of years and did not have accounts to show the last 3 years of business, were not eligible to receive any grants or support. The LEP was extremely concerned about how the region's economy would recover, and was anticipating a 4% loss in the economy over the next 3 months before things started to recover;
- That to get Hinkley Point back on schedule there would need to be an increase in staffing over the next 2-3 years; and further Covid-19 secure processes were being put in place such as social distancing on site;
- There would be a LEP Board Task and Finish group to look at the Build Back Better Plan, to look at responses to the consultation and make recommendations to the Board; and,
- Issues around the lack of an equality impact assessment for the Build Back Better Plan, which took into consideration the effects of Brexit and Covid-19, especially the impact of women being out of work within the retail and tourism sector, which is not considered.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Brook, **SECONDED** by Councillor Williams, and

RESOLVED that

- a) Committee commend the LEP on the plans for inclusive growth and supports the LEP priorities in delivering programmes to respond to Covid 19 and 'build back better';
- b) The Committee recommends the LEP board undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment on the Build Back Better plan to include the impact of both covid-19 and Brexit;
- c) Councillors Brook and Williams be appointed to the Build Back Better task and finish group if agreed by the Chair of the LEP Board; and,
- d) Schedule future work programme items on progress of inclusive growth plans.

* **41** **Clean Growth Plan**

The Committee received a Report of the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership's Head of Delivery on the Clean Growth Plan, the aim being to grow the economy in a clean and sustainable way by delivering inclusive economic prosperity whilst protecting the environment, lowering emissions and enhancing natural capital.

Key points highlighted in the presentation included:

- 10 year plan for clean growth
- To capitalise on the 'Dynamic Heart' to be a UK leader in driving clean growth
- To embed zero carbon commitment in everything we do
- To embrace recent lifestyle changes and drive a low carbon recovery from Covid-19
- Clean Growth Priorities include:
 - Leadership - Become leaders in delivering clean and inclusive growth
 - Low Carbon Energy - Be integral part of a green energy powerhouse and first net exporter of low carbon energy
 - Green Businesses - Develop a green finance deal to support enterprise and business start ups developing innovative products and services to serve clean growth markets
 - Sustainable Communities - Establish the region as a test bed for development of low carbon communities
 - Decarbonised Transport - Enable delivery of a clean strategic transport network with reliable electric vehicle charging, an electrified rail network and good intermodal connections
 - Natural Capital - Enable HotSW to become the national lead in delivering nature-based solutions to provide resilience, improve biodiversity and support a positive transition to net zero.

Members discussion points included:

- The Agriculture Act 2020 – when this comes into effect, payments to farmers would not be on the basis of what was grown but based on the principle of public money for public good, providing powers to give financial assistance where farming encompasses environmental protection. The LEP's 10-year plan was silent on the impact of this Act and moving forward the impact of the Agricultural Transition plan.
- Retrofit Schemes – in order to facilitate Retrofit schemes, there was a need to encourage modular building construction in the South West and to increase the skills required over the next 10 years in Retrofit to meet Net Zero Carbon, by training construction in non-traditional retrofit housing schemes. The Getting Building Fund had looked to fund early Retrofit Schemes across the LEP area.

- The need to assist the farming and fishing industries to compete in marketing with the EU and rest of the world, post Brexit.
- Concerns around phosphate runoff into rivers and streams. Natural England had advised no building could take place in areas like South Somerset until issues of phosphate runoff into Somerset Levels had been resolved. Significant impact on delivering homes within parts of the County, where rivers flow into Somerset Levels.
- Solar panels and wind power – the Committee noted that regarding renewal energy installation, there was 1.2 gigawatts of installed renewable energy in the HotSW region: solar accounted for the largest proportion at 967 Mega Watts and onshore wind accounted for 157 Mega Watts, and other renewable energies accounted for 67 Mega Watts.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Brook, **SECONDED** by Councillor Williams, and

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- a) Welcomed the involvement of Scrutiny in the early development of the 10-year plan for clean growth and asked that the LEP take on board the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee; and,
- b) Ask that the 10-year plan for clean growth returns to the committee as there is further development on priorities.

* **42** **Scrutiny Work Programme**

RESOLVED that the following be added to the Work Programme:

- Masterclass post May Elections on workings of the LEP and Scrutiny
- Inclusive Growth Update
- Skills Plan update
- Enablers - digital connectivity
- Build Back Better Plan progress report

* **43** **Dates of Future Meetings**

Dates of Future Meetings were noted as;

17 Jun 2021 2.15 pm
21 Oct 2021 2.15 pm
10 Feb 2022 2.15 pm

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 4.17 pm