

Devon Economic Partnership Executive

Tuesday 14th July 2009, 8.30 am via Audio Conference

Present:

Tim Jones	DCBC/Enterprise Plymouth
Steve Pitcher	North Devon Council
Andrew Lightfoot	DEP Executive Officer
David Incoll	Devon CEx Group
Tony Skeel	Learning and Skills Council
Lucy Gough	DEP/DRN

Apologies

Graeme Bell	DCC
Leanne Crawford	DRN
Andrew Southall	SWRDA
Paul Sadler	Environment Agency

1. Follow Up to Partnership Meeting – 26th June

a) Economic Assessment

- If legislation goes through, duty to carry out Economic Assessment will fall to the upper tier authority – DCC.
- There was good acceptance by the broader Partnership at the meeting. They seemed to embrace the concept and were keen to be involved. There was also encouragement for the plan to be brought back to the Partnership once it is completed.
- Whilst DCC are carrying out the work, there needs to be a degree of cooperation with the Partnership as the work will form the basis of the future Devon Economic Strategy.
- Generally the Executive are supportive of the overview, but would like whatever is proposed at County Hall to be brought back to the Partnership.

There followed a more general discussion around relationships with the new DCC administration:

- Tim has met with Cllr. William Mumford, the new Cabinet member for Economic Regeneration and Strategic Planning on 2 occasions already. He is currently trying to form a strategy that he wants to adopt.
- Agreed that a face to face meeting of the Executive with Cllr. Mumford be organised, as then the messages of the Partnership would gain strength.
Action: Andrew L to arrange meeting between Cllr. Mumford and the Executive – either face to face or via audio conference.
- David will be meeting Cllr. Mumford in South Hams as he is a new councillor in the area so will be able to raise any key points at this meeting if needed.

b) Low Carbon Economy

- Thanks to Paul Sadler for putting together the action table which has been circulated to the group following the discussion at the Partnership meeting – this detailed work now needs to be followed up.
- Role of the Partnership will be to take the lead, be the catalyst and draw people in.
- Karime Hassan has done some commendable work on the East Devon Action Plan, working with a consultancy firm Element Energy. To build an energy neutral house to Code Level 6 standards, potential additional cost was £30,000, but now by incorporating this into a district solution the cost has been brought down to £7,000. Karime is happy for this work to be shared and it could have implications for Cranbrook, Sherford and Langage.

- There is a need to engage businesses. The actions suggest finding a business that is willing to go through the carbon journey steps and provide a case study for other businesses. There were suggestions from around the table:
 - Angela Wright at Crealy – looking at building sustainable buildings – will need to go through the planning process, so may not be an ideal example.
 - Dartington Hall Trust – looking at pilot projects to update existing buildings.
 - Energy from Waste sites – Seven Brethren and Larkbear
 - Most of the actions in the table involve the Low Carbon presenters, so further discussion will be needed with them about how to take things forward.
 - Need to encourage all DEP members to look at carbon management schemes.
 - Possibility of widening the net to other institutions – Police/MOD/Prisons/Forestry Commission/PCT and Hospital Trusts/Universities – do they feel that this is part of their agenda? Could invite them to participate and share best practice if they are already actively tackling these issues. Discussion would need to be pitched at right level – CEO and Head of Estates.
 - Action table is mostly practical tasks – we could ask these big players if they are prepared to take part in these practical things, to show they are an active partner and give them something tangible. These organisations might shy away from talking about the environment, but might engage more through practical activity.
 - Also need to look at links with energy suppliers – EDF who are very keen to engage, NPower who are the promoters of the Atlantic Array project, Centrica and South West Water.
 - To look at organising an event in the Autumn with key players to discuss practical steps, share practice and potential linkages.
- Action: Andrew L and Tim to discuss separately.**

2. Devon Economic Strategy Delivery Plan and role of champions; impact of the Regional Spatial Strategy

- Delivery plan is now available on website – group happy with it.
 - Needs to be used as a working toolkit
 - Leads on to idea of champions – if appropriate they should be resurrected. One for each of 6 themes – responsibility for broadcasting about the Partnership is then shared. Champions could chair meetings and report back to the Partnership. They will need to be given clear responsibility in order to fulfil the role.
- Action: Andrew L to contact all previous champions to find out their views.**
- Regional Spatial Strategy – still delayed, but local Directors will still continue with their own planning.
 - There is a danger that opponents of LDF and housing provision will use the delayed RSS to try and delay progress on developments.
 - Not aware of any impact so far on Kingskerswell Bypass
 - In North Devon, they are not holding back on decisions and are using the RSS as a framework.
 - However, differences between districts are apparent – investment is welcomed in the North, but in the South, particularly in South Hams, there are people with money who are trying to stop developments.
 - We need to reinforce the economic intelligence – what will the benefits be to the area?
 - Tim is chairing a Housing Forum on 16th July – talk about delivery in the current situation with a range of public and private sector representatives, both supply and demand side. There could be some actions to take forward following this.

3. Future Jobs Fund Application

- Draft application circulated to the group – it is joint for Devon and Torbay. Plymouth are submitting their own separate application.

- GOSW have requested some additional information regarding the jobs and the number of young people. This is currently being put together ready to be submitted.
- Up to 153 jobs in the public, private and third sectors will be available, in Torbay, Exeter and North Devon.
- The application should be assessed in early August.

4. Items for DES August bulletin

- Good feedback received on the bulletin so far.
- All 6 priority areas have now been covered – Kate from Step Ahead has suggested making the August edition a more general update, rather than focusing on any particular areas – agreed by the group.

Action: All to send any items for inclusion in the August edition to Lucy

5. Developing role of the Partnership, including co-operation with Plymouth and Torbay, and links with local authority Economic Development Officers

- At the last meeting there was decreased attendance, particularly from private sector – is the format, time etc of meetings right or does it need to be looked at?
Action: Tim to speak to contacts to address private sector engagement
- Also, there is opportunity for engagement with private sector through PS4D and Employment and Skills Boards – therefore there are opportunities within the Partnership for engagement so perhaps we need to be less concerned about it?
- There is now an increased emphasis on Partnership outcomes – they need to prove their worth. The added value of Partnership working must be justified.
- There have been discussions about MAA opportunities with Plymouth and Torbay in the past – we need a planned structure looking outside DCC boundaries, even if it is not a formal MAA.
- Need to use topics such as RSS and Low carbon economy to engage with Plymouth and Torbay.
- Also there is a need to pull out the good practice identified in the Boundary Review and use it to our advantage.
- The last Partnership meeting was different to normal – was more about information sharing than just running through business – perhaps this type of meeting should be used more often as it may be more useful.
- Economic Development Officers (EDOs) need to be more engaged – they should have regular meetings or at least share information/practice virtually. The group agreed that this was necessary and that ideally it should be EDO led, rather than Partnership led.

Action: Andrew L to ask a DCC EDO to arrange a meeting.

6. Operational Plan / Budget

- Updated version of the Operational Plan is now available on the website.
- The RDA have asked to end their funding relationship with the Partnership in September rather than March next year. If this happens the Partnership will have to curtail its activity.
- We need to tell the RDA that we need to keep the money, and will need to produce a strong case to show why – there was a feeling that the RDA are testing the boundaries so we need to respond strongly.
- At the moment there is £20,000 allocated to business engagement –some or all of this could be given to the Employment and Skills Boards.

7. SWRDA Corporate Plan

- DEP has been invited to comment for the first time, so we should ensure that we send a response.

- Some key comments raised were:
 - No reference to local delivery
 - The 3 key priorities are identified, but then they are not used in the discussion section.
 - No reference to North Devon
 - Concerns about lack of attention for rural productivity
 - Has the document been rural proofed? If not then the DRN are happy to advise.

{Update since the meeting – a response has now been sent to the RDA – copy attached}

8. Items for next Partnership Meeting

- Update of Low Carbon Economy and actions to be taken
- Invite a GOSW speaker to discuss RSS
- Update on Langage and Plymouth travel to work area
Action: David to suggest a speaker
- Reports from Chairs of Employment and Skills Boards and discussion around private sector engagement.

9. Date of next meeting

Next audio conference scheduled for Tuesday 22nd September at 8:30am