



## DEP Executive Audio Conference 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008

### Present

Tim Jones  
Andrew Lightfoot  
Graeme Bell  
Steve Pitcher  
Cathy Doidge  
Tony Skeel  
David Incoll  
Jen Brogan  
Richard Ball  
Leanne Crawford

### Apologies

Andrew Southall (RDA)  
Carl Budden

### 1.0 Welcome and Introductions

The Chair opened the meeting and introduced Graeme Bell, the Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy at DCC. Graeme gave a brief outline of his background and experience in Local Government to date.

### 2.0 Devon Economic Strategy/LAA monitoring and reporting framework: feedback from workshop held 9<sup>th</sup> September

The workshop was well attended and very useful for raising issues and picking at the detail. Nigel Tremlett had arranged to meet with Andrew to pick up the issues that needed to be resolved. It was anticipated that the first draft report for the first six months will be ready for the next DEP meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> October for discussion around the details and format.

There had also been a good discussion around process and managing audiences and engagement at the local level.

David suggested that the DEP needed to hold onto firm ground and ensure that it is capable of achieving the actions and ensure that the number of these was appropriate. He stated that at District level, a number of Business Rate Payers meetings were held during Autumn and Winter and suggested that these may be an effective way of meeting businesses and members.

***Action: David stated that he would be happy to coordinate this, with invited speakers to raise the profile of the DES and awareness in the market place.***

It was agreed that the process needs to be kept coherent and as simple as possible, due to the high complexity and wide range of partners involved. The Partnership would also need to be able to react accordingly in terms of timescales and challenging markets.

Graeme gave an overview of the situation in Lancashire and Hertfordshire, with the latter being a prosperous home county, and the former being more peripheral. It was easy to engage larger businesses in both these counties but always difficult to involve SMEs. They used Champions to disseminate information into the field, and a similar approach has been seen in Devon.

It was stated that mechanisms for engagement already exist in Devon and that better use should be made of these; in North Devon private business representatives were often invited to become board members of various organisations. It was suggested that a database of contacts may be the building block for giving a more coherent Devon wide picture.

It was suggested that the DEP needed to start thinking about the 2009 Action Plan, with

the possibility of specific actions to be achieved next year being teased out and agreed by champions.

It was reiterated that Step Ahead had been commissioned to do the initial work around the monitoring framework but that there was insufficient partner time in the DEP to produce quarterly reports. It was agreed that this needed to be discussed further, along with the possibility of bringing someone in to coordinate data collection and the reporting.

In terms of the LAA, it was stated that monitoring needed to link into the DCC system, as the accountable body, with data being made available for everyone to use via the website. The process and practicalities may need to be separated out.

An update was given on Champions, with Ian Hobbs agreeing to champion 'economic exclusion' but not housing. Mary Ridgeway was suggested for this. Paul Gompertz had given his apologies for the 'greenest county' position and it was suggested that someone unrelated to the environmental sector may be more suitable for this role. Vaughn Lindsay (Dartington Hall) and Guy Watson (Riverford) were suggested.

**Action: Further suggestions to be forwarded to Andrew**

It was reported that the RDA have analysed all LAAs across the region and how they align with the RES. Devon, Cornwall, and Gloucester came out best and Devon has been asked to give an account of their process at a regional conference, providing a chance to build relationships with other counties.

### **3.0 Devon Employment Space Strategy**

It was stated that the Strategy needs to be sophisticated and pre-warn agencies who could impact on the delivery, i.e. the promotion of early engagement with stakeholders. Work in this is ongoing, although frustration has been felt in the time taken for the report to become a live document.

It was suggested that LDF core strategies should pick up work and rip into the process, and questioned whether this takes on the ground implementation far enough.

In the immediate future Keith Cooper will finalise the summary document prior to the DEP meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> October for sign off. From this a group needs to be formed to look at priorities for the immediate future i.e. actual sites.

### **4.0 Potential for partnership approach to EU funding programmes**

The RDA was in the process of producing commissioning documents for the Competitiveness programme. In the past a structure was in place to make a collective response for monies but this is not present currently. It was questioned whether this should be the role of the DEP or another group. It was also suggested that an MAA approach should be considered with Cornwall, as some alignment with convergence could be very beneficial.

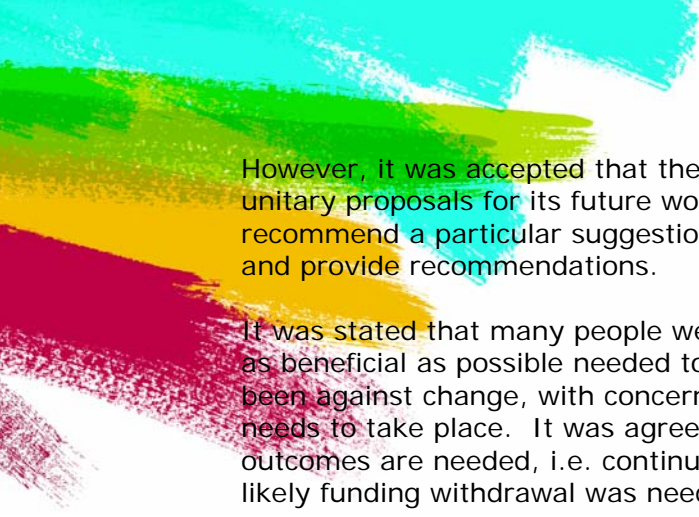
**Action: Andrew to make contact with the Cornwall Development Company/Phil McVey**

The importance of the RDA budget was highlighted and agreed that the DEP needs to ensure that costs will be covered, especially for current housing initiatives. It was stated that there are real issues around match funding and government investment which need to be subject to open debate, to ensure effective delivery.

**Action: Tim to highlight issues to Ben Bradshaw MP**

### **5.0 Boundary Commission**

It had been agreed that the DEP would not respond to the Commission's consultation.



However, it was accepted that the Partnership needed to consider the implications of the unitary proposals for its future work. Jen reported that DRN had held a meeting not to recommend a particular suggestion but to look at potential for influence in each scenario and provide recommendations.

It was stated that many people were 'riding two horses' and how to make the outcome as beneficial as possible needed to be looked at. David said that the overall view has been against change, with concern that the larger the area the more prioritisation that needs to take place. It was agreed that the DEP need to produce a manifesto for what outcomes are needed, i.e. continued investment in Devon, but that realism in terms of likely funding withdrawal was needed.

It was agreed that the transition period may prove difficult, and suggested that experience in Cornwall and Shropshire could be drawn on to look at issues surrounding transition management. David Incoll agreed to feed back from a conference being held during w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> September, with a guest speaker from Shropshire.

***Action: Issue to be discussed further after the consultation closing date. Progression in terms of a number of scenarios needs to be looked at***

## **6.0 Consultation Responses**

A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting highlighting the Government's interpretation of regeneration. It was stated that the advice was sensible and in accord with developments in Devon, and should be central to DEP work. It was questioned whether the Executive would like Andrew to formulate a response or whether a small time limited group should be brought together to formulate a response.

It was reiterated that anxiety around targeting in Devon could lead to non-investment in some areas, and ambition and young people also needed to be a factor, i.e. graduate retention.

Tony volunteered his involvement.

It was stated that concern has been expressed around LABGI funding in terms of level of allocation to County and District Councils and how they relate to allocations in previous years, however Devon has made a lot of progress in terms of influencing spend. The closing date for this consultation is end November.

***Action: Sub group to be formed to respond to both the Regeneration Framework and LABGI, with feedback to the Executive***

The BERR report on manufacturing was also brought to the group's attention.

## **7.0 Special meeting 18<sup>th</sup> September**

The invite to the A4E offices, including lunch, was reiterated.

It was confirmed that the focus of the meeting will be Chris Redding leading discussion around the Business Support Simplification programme. All agreed to this agenda with no additional suggestions. It was agreed that the potential subgroups would be discussed briefly to raise interest.

## **8.0 Partnership meeting 6<sup>th</sup> October**

It was stated that the agenda will focus on the Devon Economic Strategy and Employment Space Strategy.

It was suggested that Cathy fed the wider implications in to the group in terms of the cross cutting issue of greening and relevant policies.

It was agreed that Cathy would discuss the Shoreline Framework Consultation in further

detail at the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December, to open up the debate on implications on economy.

Tim extended an invitation to the DEP from the Brixham Harbour Master to see the fish dock. Tim to set date for those interested.

#### **9.0 Minutes of meeting 16<sup>th</sup> July and matters arising**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

David highlighted the opening of the new Okehampton Business Centre on 12<sup>th</sup> September and suggested that a future DEP meeting could be held there. David's work on the scheme was recognised by the group

***Action: Future meeting to be organised at Okehampton venue, possibly 9<sup>th</sup> December***

Steve reported that planning processes in Barnstaple were on-going in readiness for a market upturn. It was also suggested that experiences could be shared in terms of strategic infrastructure with the finalisation of the Downstream Bridge.

#### **10. Dates next meeting**

19<sup>th</sup> November to be held at 8.30 am by audio conference.