

DEP Executive 19th November 2008 By Audio Conference

Present

Tim Jones
Andrew Lightfoot
Steve Pitcher
Cathy Doidge
Andrew Southall
David Incoll
Jen Brogan
Leanne Crawford

Apologies

Graeme Bell
Tony Skeel
Richard Ball

1.0

Economic Downturn

Recent good news about RDA support for businesses was highlighted. The RDA was starting to put together an "Area Action Force", with key contacts currently being approached. Andrew Southall will be emailing these contact details round and organising a meeting to discuss an initial broad brush approach. It was agreed that turnaround needs to be quick in terms of SME's. The FSB had been feeding into DCBC and it was suggested that lessons needed to be learnt from 1993/4, where identification of the rapidly recovering sectors could assist in identifying those which may benefit from additional help. In terms of business intelligence, the RDA had set up a generic email, business@southwestrda.org.uk, for partners and businesses to feed in information to the RDA to inform BERR.

David stated that the food manufacturing businesses along the A30 corridor had been reporting an upturn in business, but difficulties in recruiting maintenance engineers.

Affordable Housing

Issues in terms of delivery and the new Housing Agency were discussed, including the increasing demand for affordable housing and how to kick start certain parts of the economy to facilitate delivery.

Steve reported that North Devon had been looking at buying in strategic sites for a longer term view. David reported that South Hams/West Devon had looked into buying incomplete developments to be finished by the Authorities to ensure continuity of the construction industry.

It was suggested that the Housing Associations were brought together to develop an action plan for the new Housing Corporation, starting at the local level. It was suggested that Mary Ridgway should be involved.

It was suggested that coordination to stimulate delivery should be looked at, possibly through Highways or the Devon Planning Officer Groups.

Action: Environment Agency, Highways and Planning officers to meet and discuss this, to be organised by Steve Pitcher

It was suggested that email traffic was a good way of highlighting trends, with teleconferences for any issues considered to be sufficiently urgent. It was reported that there had been a number of organisations and agencies requesting information and requested that the RDA took a stronger line in encouraging coordination at the local and regional level.

It was suggested that DEP communications could be used to produce and disseminate a fact or news sheet.

Action: Andrew Lightfoot and Andrew Southall to develop

2.0 Devon Economic Strategy

Monitoring/Reporting

Work was continuing with Step Ahead and Devon County Council to get the database fully operational. A progress report of all the LAA outcomes has been produced and includes projections of required resources.

In terms of the Bulletin, there has been some feedback but other comments are welcome.

Forward to Andrew Lightfoot

Delivery Plan

Preparation and handling to be discussed at the full DEP meeting on 9th December. The group will be encouraged to consider points for refresh prior to this meeting.

Action: A note will be prepared for the DEP to encourage thoughts

LAA

It was questioned how the LAA was impacting the local level and whether more coordination was required to apply the process. David stated that the Chief Executives group would be meeting during w/c 24th November and this would be put on the agenda to ensure buy in.

Action: Andrew to attend CEX meeting, David to organise

It was agreed that there was still a great deal of confusion and uncertainty around the LAA process by those who have not been involved, and concern was expressed by the current lack of alignment or pooling of resources.

3.0 Research Opportunities

It was confirmed that there was an amount in the DEP budget that could be allocated to research and it was stated that there needs to be a debate on the use of this resource, i.e. for pure research or organisation of events.

Action: Executive to consider proposals to take to full DEP

Action: individuals within organisations who could help with research (contracting) or themes to be identified, along with local consultancies, and schools

Andrew Lightfoot informed the group that an additional £35K had been allocated by DCC to the Centre for Rural Policy Research at Exeter University to look at the impacts of climate change on agriculture. It was suggested that ideas raised during the Devon Rural Network meeting should be considered, and an event was going to be organised for February/March 2009 focussing on the rural economy.

Ideas included local sourcing and low carbon economies, and rural use of oil and gas with promotion of alternatives.

4.0 Ideas for events

An event had been proposed for late February/March for afternoon and evening focussing on the rural economy, i.e. research, impact of ICT, diversification, case studies etc to include entertainment, such as the New Devon Opera.

Action: DEP/DRN to organise

5.0 Membership

There had been categories; however the Partnership had been growing in an ad hoc way. The practical issue was raised and agreed that there was a danger that the group could

become too heavy, and suggested that events could be the way to get more involved. It was agreed that the current membership would be retained and monitored.

6.0 Involving young people

There was discussion around how young people could be involved in research and the work currently ongoing in schools.

Action: Research (Item 3) to be tied into Young People agenda, with involvement from schools, colleges and universities to be considered. Snapshot of what 2 award winning schools have achieved so far to be promoted to other schools

7.0 EU Funding

Meetings had been organised to look at the Competitiveness programme, with a follow up meeting scheduled for 1st December. A meeting to discuss ESF and opportunities for transnational projects, possibly focussing on older people, with involvement from DCBC and SLIM had also been held. It was reiterated that there was increased, varied opportunities for funding from the EU for specific topics which could be dwelled upon at future meetings.

These opportunities would be linked to the environmental agenda and collaborative (MAA style) approach.

8.0 Dates for meetings in 2009

Action: Leanne to email for suggestions of dates

9.0 Agenda for DEP 9th December

Agreed that the priority for discussion would be the economic downturn, DES Delivery Plan 2009, and proposed research.

10.0 Round Up and minutes of meeting 17th September

Andrew Southall – in terms of the lobbying role of DEP, support is needed on the increased activity level of Business Link and contract and sustained activity. **Action: Andrew Southall to produce draft for group to present to Whitehall**

It was agreed that the regional funding allocation for the RDA will be a recurring debate for 2009.

David Incoll – the Okehampton Business Centre has won recognition for the Best Environmentally Sound Building and new tenancies had been taken up. The success of the Watermark opening in Ivybridge was also recorded.

Steve Pitcher – Post Office reviews – a final report summarising the collaborative exercise and work to be done had been produced by the task group, with the impact of the PO card accounts impact to be examined. The opportunity for rebuilding the network needs to be on the radar.

Jen Brogan – an email would be sent round for the proposed Farming and Food Board – a single strategic body that will be accountable to the industry.

Minutes of meeting held on 17th September 2008 – All agreed.