

Devon Economic Partnership Executive

Held on Tuesday 23rd March 2010, 2pm
Audio Conference

Minutes

Present:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
Tim Jones (Chair)	Devon and Cornwall Business Council
Andrew Lightfoot	Devon Economic Partnership / Devon County Council
Andrew Southall	South West Regional Development Agency
Daniel Bailyes	Devon Economic Partnership
David Incoll	Devon District Councils
Leanne Crawford	Devon Rural Network
Mary Talbot-Rosavear	Devon Farming and Food Board
Philip Wagstaff	Devon Rural Network
Steve Pitcher	North Devon +

Apologies:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
Tony Skeel	Learning and Skills Council
Paul Sadler	Environment Agency
Richard Ball	Exeter City Council

1. Welcome / Introductions

Tim thanked everyone for joining in, and welcomed those who were joining us for the first time.

2. Way ahead (Andrew)

Please read the discussion paper produced by Andrew and circulated in advance of the meeting.

Andrew described the main features of the above discussion paper which laid out the proposed structure and characteristics of the Partnership in the future. Please read the paper for the details.

Regarding the communications strategy to be employed by the future partnership, Andrew also suggested an increased role for the website, perhaps replacing expensive newsletters. The website would be continually refreshed with new developments and updates.

Feedback was positive, with the revised structure / features described as very sensible. One or two comments were made about it:

- Everyone within this new partnership structure would need to pull their weight;

- The Chambers of Commerce would better be represented by a single representative, rather than each single body;
- Need to make sure that the work programmes of the DEP and DRN are integrated, without losing the best parts of both;
- The issue of 'rural proofing' needs to be well promoted;
- The issue of membership fees was raised – this seems inevitable, and the expectation ought to be specified. It was suggested that fees to be set by factor of 10. Districts, for instance, could be asked to pay £2,000, with £200 and £20 being charged to smaller organisations. Andrew reminded the group that these would be expensive to administer.

Action (Andrew L): To put together a scale of fees for comment

Referring still to the future operation of the Partnership, Tim discussed stakeholders that currently are not being engaged with as hoped. Plymouth is being transformed and there is a great deal of expectation that they are willing to engage in sub-regional activities. David Statham (?) is the man in Plymouth to engage with. Torbay, on the other hand, still needs to be looked at.

Regarding to the scope of the partnership Tim referred to the Marine Network and the Forestry Commission. The inclusion of organisations such as the National Farmers Union (NFU), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Community Council of Devon (CCD), along with Further and Higher Education, would lead to a very broad partnership.

3. The Economic Bulletin: Draft for March (Andrew L)

The 'Stop Press' section on the front page will include details of the Renewable Energy for Devon (RE4D) award. The bulk of the bulletin deals with the six themes of the Economic Strategy, along with a brief report from Business Link, and a paper looking at the forward direction of the DEP.

Broader involvement of stakeholders through the bulletin was also discussed. It was suggested that it be geographically based, with each edition focusing on a single District, with the work of partners in that District expanded upon.

Andrew L again brought to the discussion the possibility of using the website to a far greater extent, and thus discontinuing the bulletin, which is one of the most expensive items paid for by the partnership.

4. Review of Informal Event, 22 March

The event provided an opportunity to say thank you to Leanne, Geoff Hallett, Tim Beavon and Tony Skeel for their work, while also updating a broad range of partners on partnership news.

5. Brief Updates on Topic Groups

5.1 Infrastructure

Lee Bray, who heads up spatial planning and economic development at South Hams District Council, has joined the group. He will reinforce the links that the group needs to move forward. He suggested a joint meeting in May to focus on the Employment Space Strategy and the needs of Economic Development Officers.

Each District is currently identifying key sites for intervention in the short and medium term, with information being shared across District boundaries.

Support is also being given to the managed workspace strategy that has been commissioned by Devon County Council, to be completed next month.

5.2 Worklessness, including Future Jobs Fund

Tim reported that the feedback he has received from the business community has been of considerable nervousness, with concern that the unemployment figures are not telling the full story. Voluntary downsizing, such as voluntary pay cuts, are still persisting. There are continued concerns over expected cuts in the public sector.

Steve reported that the first meeting of the North Devon Employment and Skills Board (ESB) was held at the end of February. There is a great amount of energy in the group, and the chair has been very keen with great initiative being shown. The North Devon ESB has also made a conscious effort to include land based industries to cover issues of rural employment.

Andrew L reported that there had been a disproportionately high number of young people included in the unemployment figures. This justifies the high focus on tackling youth unemployment. Although the Future Jobs Fund (FJF) is a short term measure, it is hoped that these opportunities can be combined with apprenticeships in order to increase their sustainability. The next Productive Skills for Devon (PS4D) meeting on 12 April will have a major focus on apprenticeships.

5.3 Team Devon

Their next meeting is next week to decide upon the route of the Olympic torch relay in the lead up to the games. A programme of events has also been agreed.

6. Agenda items for the next DEP meeting, 21 April in Totnes

A number of items have been proposed:

- The reform of the DEP and 'housekeeping' items;
- A focus on the link between the environment and the economy – the Culm Grasslands project could be used as an example;
- Tim suggested a presentation from the City Development Company in Plymouth, and David also suggested that a quick presentation on the LDF debate in Totnes;
- Reports from each of the topic groups may also be expedient with the first meeting of the revamped partnership.

7. Note of last meeting (17 February)

Tim commented that the last meeting in Tiverton was excellent, and the notes were passed.

8. News Round-up

- (David) (1) The Okehampton Business Centre is now fully let, which is a bit of good news. (2) However, there are problems with Langage and its development.
- (Steve) (1) Planning and economic development of the Atlantic Array and (2) economic development people on LDF.

- Devon County Council is responding to a consultation on Next Generation Access (NGA) – the 50p rate suggested may not be enough to sufficiently finance the project
- Philip thanked Leanne once again for her contribution to the DRN.

9. Date of next meeting

22 April was suggested and confirmed – 8:30-9:30 by audio conference.