



Devon Economic Partnership

**Held on Thursday 8th October 2009 at
Follaton House, Totnes**

Present:

Tim Jones (Chair), Tony Skeel, David Incoll, Ellen Vernon, Andrew Ashley, Sally Kittle, Peter Casey, Ian Morris, Alan Denby, Carl ..., Andrew Southall, Richard Ball, Jeremy Filmer-Bennett, Andrew Lightfoot

Apologies:

Karime Hassan, Ian McGregor, Will Mumford, Graeme Bell, Leanne Crawford

1. Partnership Review

Tim explained that SWRDA was undertaking a review of the Strategic Economic Partnerships and Andrew S. added that it was unlikely that there would be core funding in future; however, he would continue to give at least as much time and the RDA was likely to commission work from the various 'special purpose vehicles'. Andrew L. reported that the County Council also was reviewing its contributions to partnerships and, similar to SWRDA, wants more formally to attribute responsibility for actions to relevant bodies.

Jeremy outlined a private sector view, based on SMEs, albeit with significant dependence on public sector spend. He felt that there were more alliances of SMEs to bid for contracts and emerging EU legislation would reinforce this trend. Jeremy thought this was especially important given the limited potential of inward investment, a view supported by Andrew Ashley. He referred to the concordats being agreed between the Federation of Small Business and District Councils.

Alan Denby stressed the importance of working across boundaries. Tony Skeel supported this, suggesting that there were Multi Area Agreement opportunities, without the need for formal structures. David Incoll expressed the view that 'we are all in this together' and that our successes provided a good basis to face more difficult times when there was need to work together to focus our activities and get the best of our resources. He referred as an example to a S.106 paper for 'integrated Devon'.

Ian Morris reported that the government would be consulting on a framework for economic development in November, with the Sub National Review being a major influence. Tim said that the private sector felt that too much local authority executive time was spent on government processes, citing the LDFs requiring a delivery plan to 2026. Peter Casey said that Business Link was building partnerships with all local authorities in order to deliver their business clinics. Sally outlined Job Centre Plus's expansion and their work in partnership, with a charged focus in light of the recession. Tim suggested that in an area as extensive as Devon, there was need for a partnership of networks to share information and influence development policies.

Richard felt that it was crucial to find the right group of individuals prepared to put the work in to drive the partnership. Tony Skeel pose the question of what value a Devon-wide partnership would add to local partnerships and whether it was realistic to attract a broad range of business input at this level. Andrew L. outlined a proposal for consideration as agreed by the DEP Executive. This was to be circulated to the full Partnership for comment, directed through a set of questions drafted by Tony.

David said that there was need to identify clear outputs. Tim reported that Councillor Mumford had intimated that DCC was prepared to continue resourcing the Partnership.

2. Business infrastructure

A group had met on 24 September to review progress on the Devon Employment Space Strategy, ICT Strategy and transportation schemes. Work was continuing on prioritisation of employment sites. It was suggested that those involved in rail provision be invited to attend a future meeting.

3. Language

Alan Robinson (South Hams District Council) attended to give a presentation on the development of the Langage Energy Park. Amongst the many points made, the initial importance of the RDA's capital funding was noted and the need for a rapid decision on the A38 road access was expressed.

4. Sherford

Alan then gave a further presentation on the development places for a new community at Sherford. The need to influence the Plymouth Homes and Communities Agency 'single conversation' was noted, as was the potential to develop a mini skills strategy to reflect the needs for the development and future residents. Alan was warmly thanked for the two presentations.

5. Productive Skills for Devon

The continuing work of this working group was outlined, including the process to allocate the LPSA2 reward grant.

6. Team Devon

The recent visit by Lord Coe to Bicton was described and the intention for future administration to be managed by the Relays project.

7. Notes of the meeting held on 27 August

Agreed. Andrew Ashley and a representative from North Devon + were nominated to join Jeremy's working group.

8. News round up

8.1 Wisemans: concern re possible loss of employment at Okehampton.

8.2 North Devon+ : new Board in place;
expect announcement about Ilfracombe-Swansea ferry imminently;
Barnstaple Open Tennis event this week


8.3 Plymouth City Development Company: new approach to Board formation;
transitional phase with staffing at the City Council
bid being made to host matches in the 2018 World Cup

8.4 Job Centre Plus: JSA claimants down in Devon, vacancies up 4% in August, especially in care, retail, hospitality and construction.

8.5 Business Link: business clinics and procurement forums being held in each District

8.6 GOSW: Ian updates the regional team on the recession and recovery work by local authorities and appreciates news to feed to the Minister e.g. on the phased business rate relief

8.7 SWRDA: Andrew suggested there might be more involvement of the Third Sector in the Partnership.
The RDPE social enterprise voucher scheme was about to be launched.



Next meeting: Thursday 10th December, 10am. With seminars to follow after lunch.