



Devon Economic Partnership

**Held on Wednesday 22nd April 2009, 2pm
Woodlands Enterprise Centre, South Molton**

Present:

Jeremy Filmer-Bennett (chair)	DCBC	Andrew Lightfoot	DEP Executive Officer
Stewart Horne	WDBIP	Leanne Crawford	Devon Rural Network
Cllr. H Temperley	DCC	Ian Morris	GOSW
Tony Skeel	LSC	Richard Ball	Exeter City Council
Ellen Vernon	North Devon Council	Cllr. Bill Hitchins	South Hams District Council
Pete Tansey	BT/Devon Renaissance	Peter Harding	CCD
Derek Phillips	Exeter CoC	Ian McGregor	Exeter CoC
Karen Chapman	Jobcentre Plus	Andrew Southall	SWRDA
Jane Rickhards	PLUSS	Lucy Gough	DEP / DRN
Cathy Moran (in part)	Connexions		

Apologies:

Tim Jones	DCBC/Enterprise Plymouth	Edward Chorlton	DCC
Graeme Bell	DCC	Andrew Ashley	Enterprise Network
Mac Sherry	FSB	David Incoll	CEX Group
Paul Sadler	EA	Chris Redding	Business Link
Nicola Poultney	Visit Devon	David Parlby	Plymouth CoC
Karime Hassan	East Devon District Council		

English@Work Presentation

This has been a highly successful programme under the PS4D sub group. John Willis, Project Manager gave an overview of the scheme which involves providing free English training to migrant workers and which 30 employers across Devon have now participated in. Investors in Migrant Workers Awards were presented to a number of these employers by Jeremy Filmer-Bennett in recognition of their commitment.

Employers present: Atlas Packaging, PSP Healthcare, TDG Logistics, Wiseman Dairies, Sidmouth Nursing Home and Exeter City Council.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Jeremy welcomed the group and apologised on Tim's behalf that he was not available to chair the meeting. Congratulations were given to Ellen Vernon for the venue, which has now been open for 18 months.

Introductions were given around the table, with Lucy Gough, the new Project Assistant for both DEP and DRN giving a brief overview of the National Graduate Development Programme that she is participating in.

2. Low Carbon Economy: Opportunities for development in Devon

Cathy Doidge was not present so it was agreed that this item would be postponed until the next meeting. Jeremy commented that at that meeting feedback from the Marine Sector Conference which is being held on 5th May could be included in the discussion. It was agreed that marine industry issues should be discussed.

Action: If anyone has any points they would like raised on this issue or know of people that would be interested in participating in this discussion at the next meeting – please let Lucy know.

3. Young people's needs in the economy and how the Partnership gains the perspectives of young people – discussion led by Cathy Moran from Connexions

Cathy gave a brief presentation on the work of Connexions, who work with 13-19 year olds to engage them in work and learning. They run a number of different post 16 schemes and meet with children in schools, both in Year 9 before they choose their GCSE subjects and in Year 11 before they leave school. They have jobs bulletins, and offer a free vacancy placing service.

There are a number of ways in which the economic situation is affecting young people. There are fewer vacancies – currently 35 in the bulletin for Exeter and East Devon whereas last year there were 80. There is stronger competition for jobs as adults with more experience are going for the same jobs. Apprenticeships are now open to all ages, not just up to age 24.

It has become less attractive to employ young people. In 3-5 years there is a danger that there will be very few opportunities for young people to be in work.

The most common areas that young people express an interest in working in are construction, motor vehicle, hairdressing and child care. Advisors do try and suggest other opportunities, linked to particular interests that the young person has. Computer programmes are also used, which suggest different options depending on responses to a number of questions.

Schemes have been piloted where children are first seen by an advisor during primary school, but there is a lack of funding for this.

Connexions do liaise with the voluntary sector. They take referrals from other organisations. They also go out to voluntary centres to try and engage with harder to reach groups.

At the moment Connexions are actively canvassing and are suggesting that all school leavers have a back up plan of a college place in case they are unable to go straight into employment.

There is already an aspiration issue and this is likely to get worse – there will be a large number of young people with no prospects – how are they going to be dealt with?

There is now too much focus on academic excellence. It was hoped that the new Diplomas would focus more on practical skills, but they are similar to GNVQs and focus more on knowledge instead. Young people need to be supported to become more job ready whilst they are still in learning.

The new Employment and Skills Boards must be used – this liaison will be done through the PS4D group.

Connexions have a number of groups that they consult with about their own services which could be used to consult about the economic situation. They could also ask representatives to attend meetings or they can get the names of people that participate in their schemes that could be contacted or visited.

This group needs to act quickly if it wants to feed into the County Council group that is currently dealing with issues at the 14-19 level.

There is going to be an Economic Development Officer's meeting, where HR people are brought along, with Job Centre Plus to discuss Local Authority engagement. Often Local Authorities are overlooked by Job Centre Plus as large employers. This meeting could focus on young people and representation from Connexions was invited.

Action: Interest was invited from members in joining a discussion group to take forward actions on engaging young people. Please let Lucy know if you are interested in participating.

4. The Sub National Review and potential delivery vehicles

Regional partnerships have been looking at this and it is important that DEP looks at it as there are potential openings for the group.

There will have to be an Economic Prosperity Board. We need to look at the options and decide what is best for our economy before someone else takes the decision for us as to how this will be structured.

There needs to be briefing before the next meeting so that we can have informed discussion and set out a timeframe as the Act comes into force next year.

An Assessment of Economic Need has to be done by all unitary and top tier authorities. The assessment for Devon must relate to the ones for Plymouth and Torbay and also must look at how it relates to the functions of the District Councils. Need educating on the process for carrying out the assessment and must make sure that it is not too mechanistic or that it is owned solely by DCC.

Action: Executive to consider options and report back to the next meeting.

5. Brief Review of:

a) Devon Economic Strategy Delivery Plan 2009/10

Next quarterly Economic Bulletin to be issued in May.

Action: All to forward any comments about the structure or content to Andrew Lightfoot.

Employment Space Strategy – there is a large amount of information on a range of sites. Keri Denton is to review this with ICT and Transport and convene a meeting of the Infrastructure Group.

Worklessness Forum has been successful and there are further meetings scheduled for May.

Disadvantaged communities – there has been progress with North Devon+ and also with representatives from Seaton, Exmouth, Dawlish and Teignmouth who were to get together to discuss common issues that need to be addressed.

Skills – Over 80% of the target for Level 3 has been attained. Still waiting to hear about the allocation of LPSA money – decision due on 21 May.

Solutions for Business – had a meeting with Business Link and the RDA, but this still needs further discussion.

Greenest county – RDPE money is now starting to take effect through the LAGs.

Team Devon – Action Plan launch towards end of June. Now a good / better relationship with regional activity.

More work is needed on the practical applications of innovation strategy.

Action: Delivery Plan for 09/10 to be circulated shortly.

b) Devon Economic Partnership's Operational Plan

Resources are now available for more research and feasibility work, as well as events and communication.

Need to look at organisational arrangements in light of the Sub National Review and a decrease in funding from the RDA.

Action: Executive to review.

6. Notes of meeting held on 19 February and any actions arising

Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

Action: Infrastructure group to reconvene to take employment space strategy forward. Discussed earlier in agenda under Item 5.

Action: Find a catalyst to improve mentoring. To be followed up at a regional group meeting on 23 May

Rural Business Group is now being looked at – hoping to have initial meeting in May.

7. News Round Up from Members

- West Devon BIP: Business Survey has been launched to find out what is happening on the ground. Intended to be a snapshot rather than about long term leads.

- RDA & Job Centre Plus: Area Action Forces – consultation underway at Shapland in Barnstaple. AVX in Paignton going for total closure, not such good progress there. Princess Yachts in Plymouth – rapid response funding used to set up a reception centre for 13 weeks. This could be a best practice case study if it goes well.

- Job Centre Plus: Jobseekers Allowance increased by 0.8%. Tourist sector had a good Easter. Vacancies notified has decreased by 11.7% compared to last year.

- Exeter CoC: Chamber survey results – over 50% reported a wage freeze, 8% on reduced hours, 69% planning to invest and 8% of shops in Exeter are empty – average during normal period is 4% so this is not too bad. Carluccio's to open in Princesshay.

- CCD: Funding for migrant worker support available through Task Group (Ian Hobbs). Strategic Housing Event being held in June. Regional ESFs supporting 3rd sector agencies with skills.

- DR: Results of survey to be published soon – 3000 business across rural Devon responded. 500 have been tracked from the last survey to this one. Decision to be made tomorrow on DR future.

- BT looking at investment in Devon – decision to be made, more information at next meeting.

- SHDC: Spoken to Development Control bodies about taking a more relaxed view on developments, particularly Dartmoor NPA – awaiting their response although it was quite well received. SHDC made proposals for inward investments, have been increased enquiries to Economic Development. Have published a directory of help available.

- NDDC: Refocused activity as a result of Shaplands closure. NDDC and Torrridge DC giving an extra £10,000 through tourism boost project. North Devon+ have a new business plan. Barnstaple B.I.D progress is good – decision due Sept. Ilfracombe – Sea Change bid – decision due in June.

- ECC: Increased city unemployment, but only negligible change in Mid Devon and Teignbridge so figures could be skewed if looked at across the county as a whole. Over 50% of unemployment is within 25-45 age range. Have produced similar documents to SHDC,

increased advice available on the internet, providing a subsidy for business advice to encourage uptake. Science Park – will need to market early and proactively. Worklessness – targeting St David's area – trying to encourage greater collaboration with grass roots organisations.

- LSC: Train to Gain more popular than ever. Becoming increasingly difficult to support it due to its numerous flexibilities. Apprenticeships – not as many have been made redundant as previously thought – many employers have ring fenced them. But there will be recruitment issues in the next year. Lots of initiatives ongoing with Job Centre Plus.

- GOSW: Government Industry framework document – New Industry, New Jobs. Key document for market and sector support over next 10 years - now available on website. Action Plan due in the summer.

- Plymouth Community Infrastructure Fund – bid going forward for solution for Deep Lane and Langage.

- Tavistock Railway reopening.

- Morwellham Quay site has been transformed following £80,000 funding in April.

- Newton Abbot growth point bid successful. NHS need to release old hospital site.

- Bridge at M5 Junction 29 – project received all money asked for.

- Cranbrook Phase 1 may happen – the HCA have offered money to make it a carbon neutral project.

- Projects in Holsworthy and Bideford being actively studied.

- £100,000 to be invested in tourism- Holiday at Home scheme in Devon to encourage stay-cations.

- DCC to maintain its Capital Programme investing £200 million.

- Series of Devon Business Dinners just finished – local press were positively brought in to try and build the brand and encourage good news stories.

- Duchy Square Centre now open and all 16 units are occupied.

- Princetown Village Centre also now open – very integrated programme of work with a library, GP surgery etc.

DRN: Any suggestions for members of the Rural Business Group?

Action: Forward any suggestions to Leanne or Lucy

Date of next meeting: 26 June 2009 at 10am – venue tbc.