

Devon Economic Partnership Infrastructure Group

Held on Thursday 14th January 2010, 10am
Larkbears House, Exeter

Present:

Name	Organisation
Karime Hassan (Chair)	East Devon District Council
Allie Clark	Teignbridge District Council
Andrew Lightfoot	DEP Executive Officer
Daniel Bailyes	DEP Administrator
Ellen Vernon	North Devon Council
Gordon Cleaver	Mid-Devon District Council
Mary Ridgway	Devon Affordable Housing Co-ordinator
Michael Cozens	South Hams District Council
Maureen Gori-De-Murden	Exeter City Council
Tim Beavon	West Devon District Council
Tim Jones	Devon and Cornwall Business Council

Apologies:

Name	Organisation
Andrew Southall	South West Regional Development Agency
Kevin Atkinson	Torbay Council
Keri Denton	Devon County Council
Philip Oldfield	Exeter City Council
Tom Dixon	Devon County Council

Welcome and Introductions

Karime welcomed Mary Ridgway to the group and introductions were made around the table.

- 1. Devon Employment Space Strategy (DESS) update and priorities and**
- 3. Single Conversation Investment Plan**

The meeting began with Karime identifying the task at hand. Having produced the list of priority sites as described in the DESS, it was now the time to clarify which three sites from each authority would be taken forward. It was acknowledged at the beginning that it may be difficult to identify such priorities, but nonetheless the process would prove its worth.

The group was also reminded concerning the purpose of the list of priority sites. It highlights those sites that are of strategic importance and that require public sector intervention in order to make them viable prospects.

In order to move forward on this agenda, it was agreed that the authorities concerned would seek to produce delivery plans for those sites considered to be of the highest priority. Should a delivery plan seem viable, then it would be included on the DESS list. If a delivery plan could not be put together, then it would not. The delivery plans would then be sifted further by both Karime and Mary before feeding into the Single Conversation. The investment plan is driven by a five year timescale and by deliverability.

Action (all): Begin work on the delivery plans that would feed into the Single Conversation.

At Tim Beavon's suggestion it was requested that a template for the delivery plans be circulated to the group in order to provide a consistent methodology.

Action (Mary): To send an edited version of the template suitable for the group to Daniel for circulation to the group via the Devon Economic Partnership website.

According to the initial time frame, the delivery plans ought to be completed by March (first draft) with a final version by May. The deadline for delivery plans would therefore be the end of February. Mary remarked that these dates may, though, be overly ambitious.

2. ICT Strategy Update

Andrew brought to the attention of the meeting a number of points given to him by Keri for this purpose. The ICT Strategy has been prepared using the Devon branding. However, clarification is needed over whether it is a Devon County Council or a Devon Economic Partnership document.

The document is on the Devon Economy website.

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/delivery-strategies>

Keri is also in the process of submitting a bid to the RDPE for rural broadband – which is a joint bid between Devon and Somerset. More information can be found by clicking the link on the Devon Economy website. The link to the relevant page is:

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/news>

Concerning ICT, Michael argued that connectivity to the internet was the single most important piece of infrastructure that could be developed in the foreseeable future. This view was echoed around the table.

Discussion on how the strategy can be taken forward at the forthcoming Executive Group meeting and also at the full partnership meeting in February.

4. Any other matters arising from the previous meeting on 18 November

Action points from the previous meeting are either completed or nearing completion.

5. Updates from partners

Tim Beavon

Terms have been agreed with the South West RDA for an infrastructure project in Okehampton. That site is on the priority list and is going to happen.

Andrew Lightfoot

The Productive Skills for Devon group will shortly have around £700k worth of capital reward grant money available for various projects. Expressions of interest have been invited and there have been between 8-10 submissions thus far, some of which appear quite interesting.

Revenue reward money has also been allocated to various projects and schemes. Those who have been allocated funds will receive them once the money has been signed off by the government.

Details of both reward and capital grants are available on the Devon Economy website.

Daniel Baillyes

Echoing words from Andrew, Daniel encouraged those present to visit the new Devon Economy website (www.devoneconomy.co.uk). Any comments would be welcome, and should there be anything that you would find helpful to be included then please get in contact.

Tim Jones

Tim mentioned that he had been struck by the variation in partnership coherence in the region. North Devon + is now alive and kicking, which sadly is in contrast to other areas.

Referring to real time and future understanding of the economy, Tim was encouraged by the forthcoming SLIM report. This will provide an enormous help in making informed decision making.

Maureen Gori-De-Murden

Investment enquiries have been very quiet, and had reached a real low in August. However, there has been an upturn recently, which may represent the green shoot of recovery (but by no means guaranteed).

Gordon Cleaver

Economic development has shot up the Mid Devon agenda. As a result, resources have been increased slightly, which will contribute towards support of town centres.

Ellen Vernon

North Devon is keen to support the Bristol Channel zone. As for the general economy, larger businesses are apparently seeing the green shoots. A large pharmaceutical firm has recently landed a large contract and has hired more staff.

Michael Cozens

There has been a great deal of distraction recently concerning budgets and shared services etc. However, Michael agrees with earlier statements referring to signs of recovery.

There is also a big preoccupation with children and young people, reflecting the fact that young people can be disproportionately affected by the recession. Michael also expressed his regret at the low number of signatures on the petition to No. 10 Downing Street fighting the increase in business rates.

Karime Hassan

The Exeter area is close to signing off plans but for the negotiation of a further few small details.

6. Date of next meeting

22 March, 2pm
Darts Farm