

Productive Skills 4 Devon

**Held on Friday 12 February 2010, 2pm
Bicton College, Budleigh Salterton**

Present:

Name:	Organisation:
Tim Jones (Chair)	Devon and Cornwall Business Council / Enterprise Plymouth
Andrew Lightfoot	DEP Executive Officer
Ben Neild	SLIM
Chris Lorimer	Exeter College / Bicton College
Craig Marshall	Devon and Cornwall Training Provider Network
Daniel Bailyes	Devon Economic Partnership
David Rowe	University of Plymouth
Ian Stewart-Watson	Devon County Council (Children and Young People's Services)
Julia Foster	Devon County Council
Matthew Porter	South Devon College
Philip Done	North West Devon Workforce Development Group
Philip Oldfield	Exeter City Council
Sally Kittle	Job Centre Plus
Tony Skeel	Learning and Skills Council
Trevor Day	PS4D Consultant

Apologies:

Name:	Organisation:
Andrew Ashley	Enterprise Plymouth
Charlotte Hanson	Community Council for Devon
Caroline Murphy	Train to Gain (Business Link)
Deborah Passmore	Torbay Council
Geoff Hallett	Devon Education Business Project
Graham Morris	Plymouth Employment and Skills Board
John Davey	Careers South West
John Willis	Consultant
Kate Foster	University of Exeter
Liz Abell	Devon Renaissance
Margaret Davidson	Devon County Council
Michael Cozens	South Hams District Council
Rosie Bates	Devon County Council
Steve Pitcher	North Devon +

1. Welcome / Introductions

Tim welcomed those present, and in particular welcomed both Matthew and Ian who were attending for the first time. Bicton College were also thanked via Chris for hosting us.

Before the main business of the meeting, Tim asked Chris to introduce Bicton College to the group, and also invited Ian and Matthew to share a bit about their work.

1.1 Bicton College (Chris)

This meeting was taking place in the main house, which has been through an interesting journey from a stately home into Higher Education.

The last few years have been difficult for the college, mainly due to a decrease in the number of students and an increase in costs. However, the college is now going through a federation consultation with Exeter College. The paper has been submitted to Lord Mandelson and a quick response is hoped for. Should this be the case, then Bicton and Exeter will become a firmly federated group by August. The two colleges are already very close, with Chris on both leadership teams.

David Henley, the Principal, is dedicated to making Bicton prosper, focusing not only on agriculture.

In practical terms there are 600 full time students studying at the college, with on-site accommodation for 250. Two other rooms are also available for conferences – please contact Chris if interested.

1.2 Young People in Care (Ian)

Ian's role is to manage those Young People leaving care in Devon.

Compared to other young people, those in care leave their foster home much earlier than average. This can impact upon educational attainment, skills development and employment opportunities. Ian is working to increase the age at which young people leave care to mirror the leaving age in ordinary families.

Ian is interested, through PS4D, in forging links that can help Devon County Council to discharge its Corporate Parenting Responsibility. He would like to build the strategic links that would help to create new employment opportunities for those leaving care.

1.3 South Devon College (Matt)

Is the Business Development Manager at South Devon College and is working with a high number of companies.

2. Research Proposals

2.1 Introduction

Andrew reported that the steering group overlooking the research proposals met this morning before this meeting. Ben Neild was taking the lead for SLIM and a meeting was held in January with the 4 Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) and with Cornwall too. Ben has since drafted some revised proposals, which were discussed this morning. The work will be underway soon, and will feed into the Local Economic Assessment (LEA).

2.2 Details of Proposal

Ben reported that the proposal breaks down into three phases:

1. A period of data analysis and desk research

This will involve mining existing literature and bringing together a range of national data sources looking at worklessness, the public sector etc.

2, 3. Discussion and Priorities

Will be working with Local Employment and Skills (LESBs) to see whether the data collected strikes a chord or not, and from that to discuss potential priorities. This will lead to a clear statement of priorities, to be reflected in the Regional Skills Strategy and have traction in the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

Some LESBs also want interviews to be taken with people in different sectors in their area.

Currently, stage one is about to begin.

2.3 Questions

Does the proposal look ahead at Conservative policies as part of the thinking? And does it look at the impact of funding on education?

- Dealing with the second question first, the answer is yes – and data is coming from the LSC.
- Tory policies are also being considered – but so much is unknown. Tony agreed with Ben, arguing that the Conservatives would keep much of what they could inherit.

Is there alignment with Serio's work and other sources of information?

- Yes, Ben has already met with Serio and discussion this morning focused on linking up with partners, for instance with Ian.

Action (Andrew): To circulate the Revised Proposal.

Action (All): Send Ben any comments / details of potential links.

3. Regional Skills Priorities and the Regional Skills Strategy

3.1 Context

The government is splitting 16-19 funding from post 19 education, which is why the LSC is being replaced by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The SFA will have far less than the current capacity on the ground as the LSC, becoming an office based funding agency, as opposed to planning which will be transferred to the Regional Development Agency (RDA). The RDA is therefore now heading the Regional Skills Strategy.

3.2 Priority Statement

The plan is that each region would produce a regional skills strategy with a 20 year vision, accompanied by 3-5 year delivery plans. Each year partners will produce a set of priorities with specifics on funding from the SFA.

There are real opportunities in engaging with this work.

4. Funding allocations for the Reward Grant

a. Capital Schemes

Eight applications were received. The panel met on Friday 15 January to discuss the proposals, and again on Monday 8 February to decide between 3 presentations followed by a period of questions and answers.

The panel recommends the following 4 schemes for support:

1. Bicton EARTH Centre (EARTH = Environmental and Renewable Technologies Hub) - £400k
2. Petroc, Creative Arts Centre in Barnstable - £200k
3. Support Centre at Torrington by TTS - £91K
4. Devon and Cornwall TPN – just under £10k.

The following are not recommended by the panel:

1. CCD – Rural Support Centres – too loose a proposal to develop
2. Devon Heartlands – For a feasibility study into a difficult site
3. South Devon College – There is other work taking place in Newton Abbot, and there was a lack of joined up thinking
4. Wings South West – Huge project (£5m) and uncertainty over feasibility.

Consent was given for the proposals.

Action (Andrew): To produce a summary of the outputs expected from each of the projects.

b. Revenue Schemes

Formal agreements are in the process of being formed at the moment. They will reflect the criteria set by the group to ensure that we can monitor outcomes and that progress is being made at the expected rate.

In the Backing Young Devon category one scheme, by Exeter College, was approved. Currently £154k remains unallocated because it was decided, with all the help currently provided for apprenticeships, this sum would only be a drop in the ocean. Therefore, the panel believes the money could be better used if it were kept and used to fund any worthwhile projects that may appear in the future, possibly as a loan. The current panel would be happy to continue meeting for this purpose.

Action (Andrew): To articulate the details of the above proposal in more detail.

This proposal was endorsed by the group.

5. Helping children in care into training and employment (Ian Stewart-Watson)

Ian is interested in working with partners in order to create the links necessary to improve the opportunities available for those leaving care. For instance, are there opportunities for care leavers to be involved in the EARTH project at Bicton?

Action (All): Anyone with any helpful links that can improve the opportunities available to care leavers please contact Ian.

A number of links were raised during the meeting:

- Sally Kittle suggested a link with Job Centre Plus and the Young Person's Guarantee;
- The National Apprenticeships Service;
- Philip Oldfield at Exeter (re. deprived areas);
- David Rowe raised a new skills programme and will chat with Ian about it.

6. Reports from the Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) and Workforce Development Groups (WDGs)

6.1 EHOD (Philip Oldfield)

The ESB meeting in March and the board has established three working groups – 1) pre-employment; 2) Worklessness; and 3) Workforce Up-skilling.

Through Devon and Cornwall Business Council EHOD are also advertising for a coordinator.

Overall there is good momentum and enthusiasm.

6.2 North Devon ESD (Philip Done)

Steve Pitcher has done a good job in achieving a great range of representation for the group. The group is still in its early days but is starting on its journey e.g. finding out what its needs are.

The Chair of the group is Sara Vincent, the MD of a large pharmaceuticals firm in North Devon.

6.3 South Devon and Torbay (Trevor Day)

The ESB and WDG are pretty well integrated. The last meeting of the core group was last week and it was well attended. There is a strong willingness to get involved and there is enthusiasm for Backing Young Devon.

The group is active in skills promotion with the new website and promotional leaflets.

Torbay Development Agency is also practising what they preach and are currently advertising for an apprenticeship.

6.4 Spending

Andrew mentioned that the ESBs have been funded by the group to the tune of £20k each, with £15k to the WDGs. Under previous funding Philip Done has spent £47k of the £60k awarded to him, but the others as of yet have spent very little. Andrew will be agreeing spend profiles with each group.

7. New Approach to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

Andrew reported that the New Approach to ESOL agenda is built around community cohesion. Further information on the background to this can be found on the Devon Economy website (<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/new-approach-to-esol>)

Two meetings have now been held between the Council and colleges and community groups. The group has identified a range of priority groups and links are being pulled together. Dave Wright's report on this, found on the above website, will be updated as more information becomes available.

Tim agreed that this work is crucial. There are, for instance, 600 foreign workers involved in the Langage Energy Park. Hinkley and the Atlantic Array will also be employing foreign workers. This issue is very relevant.

Chris also pointed out that it may be a misapprehension that many Poles have returned to Poland as demand is still very high at college to serve their needs.

8. News Round-up

8.1 David Rowe

E-learning content, please see the attachment sent by David for more details.

8.2 Trevor Day

A number of contractual issues meant that the Skills 4 Life Devon project was running well behind. However, now there is a rapid catch-up. There are 700 learners on the programme, and there's a year to go on it.

8.3 Julia Foster

With the LSC disappearing, responsibility for 16-19 provision is being shifted to Local Authorities. With this in mind the Commissioning and Funding team structure is almost defined. The team is increasing from 4 to 16 members, and at the next meeting Julia will go through who's who.

Julia also raised an agenda item for a future meeting: the raising of the participation age has implications, for instance, on employers.

Finally, Deborah Frazier is replacing Geoff Hallett.

8.4 Update from Liz Abell

As part of our Local Action Programmes under RDPE, we are funding the following skills project activity:

Business Improvement through Skills Training (BIST) – a project run by West Devon BIP to provide businesses with the skills they need to get through recession, such as financial management.

Devon Wheels 2 Work (and Wheels 2 Train) – supporting the provision of scooters to enable people to access training and work opportunities, and support to help reduce long term grant dependency

EAT Dartmoor Online Training – Web based training for the catering and food & drink businesses

Pilgrim Preservation Project – development of traditional skills in the restoration of the oldest remaining fishing trawler from Dartmouth which will then be used for tourism purposes to exhibit displays

Women Do Business – project delivered through CCD to enable women running businesses to develop support networks and to access relevant skills to help improve their businesses

We could be doing more, particularly in South Devon and applications are still welcome.

Devon Renaissance News

We are now operating entirely independently as an organisation, and will shortly be moving premises up to the Okehampton Business Centre. We have lots of

new exciting plans for the business and we will be keeping our partners up to date with the latest developments – watch this space!

8.5 Ben Neild

SLIM have produced a Green Skills Learning Report and Regeneration Skills Report, which is available on the link below:

http://www.swslim.org.uk/themes/themes_past.asp?theme_ID=27

8.6 Sally Kittle

Job Seekers Allowance information is due to be published in the week. There are also a number of events about the Young Person's Guarantee taking place in Tiverton, Torquay and Plymouth. They are aimed at practitioners. Please see the briefing (attached) provided by Sally for more information.

8.7 Matthew Porter

The Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Service is now generating case studies. Further details can be found in Matthew's attachment.

8.8 Andrew

Andrew raised a number of points:

Firstly, he drew attention to the Devon Social Enterprise scheme. For more information, please select the link below:

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/assets/PDFs/News/Devon%20SEDV.pdf>

The future of the Devon Economic Partnership (DEP) is also being discussed this week. A joined up approach with the Devon Rural Network is anticipated.

The DEP website has had a lot of work done to it recently, particularly the European pages. Please provide Daniel with any feedback that will improve the site for the use of partners.

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

Finally, there were not any representatives from the third sector this meeting. Does anyone have any observations? Craig argued that the involvement of the third sector was imperative.

9. Date and venue of next meeting

Daniel will arrange dates for the next three meetings. Matthew also suggested that the next meeting take place at Heathfield. Further details to be sent soon.