

Productive Skills for Devon

Friday 15th August 2008, 2pm Start, Pynes Hill Court, Exeter

Present:

Tim Jones (Chair)	DCBC	Ali Cox	Train to Gain
Craig Marshall	Training Provider Network	John Davey	Connexions
Joan Farleigh	Job Centre Plus	Liz Abell	Devon Renaissance
Tony Skeel	LSC	Kate Foster	University of Exeter
Philip Done	NWDWDAG	Janet Sinclair	Job Centre Plus
Trevor Day		Anne Barnett	DCC
Andrew Lightfoot DEP		Kate Grimes	Step Ahead Research
Margaret Davidson	DCC	Kristin Brophy	Step Ahead Research
Leanne Crawford	DRN (Scribe)	Steve Opie	South West Pound
Tracey Hill	Integria	Ian Harper	DCBC

Apologies:

Lynn Del Greco	SWRDA	Tracey Field	Enterprise Plymouth
Charlotte Hanson	CCD	Steve Smith	DCC
John Willis	Skills for Life	Geoff Hallet	Connexions
Richard Ball	Exeter City Council	Alan Denby	Torbay Council
Alan Gorman	South West Pound	Dee Rogers	TUC
Tim Beavon	West Devon BC		

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Introductions were given round the table.

2.0 Summary of the Devon Economic Partnership activity through the Economic Strategy and LAA outcomes

It was reported that Step Ahead are in the process of producing monitoring arrangements for the Strategy, and that a workshop was to be held on 9th September to report proposals and present a draft. It was stated that the Delivery Plan for skills, drafted by Tony Skeel will link in with the wider Strategy.

It was confirmed that the LAA outcomes had been signed off by government, with 22 of the indicators falling under the 4th Economy and Environment related theme. A summary sheet of these was circulated during the meeting. It was reiterated that some of the outcomes will depend on some skills input.

It was stated that an updated version of the 'Devon State of Economy' has just been produced, with the report available on the Devon Economy website (http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=55) – Pages 19 & 20 are specifically on skills, and it was highlighted that earnings in Devon are still lower than the rest of the UK, and some areas of Devon are also behind in terms of skills. It was reported that evidence showed that Mid Devon in particular had declined, and suggested that this was due to the loss of the economy team within Mid Devon council, although the team had recently been reinstated.

Sub-National Review – it was confirmed that a new, larger economic research team will be employed within DCC in line with the SNR's increased emphasis on economic assessment.



An overview of the DES key points was discussed:

- Growth Points – it was suggested that there were mixed messages here due to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) predicting larger developments than expected, and stated that actual delivery may not be met due to the global economic situation
- Employment Space – a workshop was held on 25th July, with the final Strategy to be signed off at the DEP meeting on 18th September. The Strategy will contain some skills implications
- ICT Strategy – John Baker at DCC was leading on this project and examines the best use of ICT in remote locations, picking up on previous Broadband for Devon work
- Worklessness Forum – this is behind 2 of the LAA indicators and is promoting joint working both generally and in priority communities. The next group meeting is 19th September looking at deprived wards in Exeter
- Targeting resources – a number of points were raised:
 - Differences within Devon to be tackled alongside differences with rest of UK
 - A Strategic Investment Framework is almost agreed in North Devon with the RDA for physical regeneration projects with social development inbuilt – this model could be used elsewhere
- Business Support Simplification Programme – focus of the next DEP meeting on the 18th September with a presentation from Peninsula Enterprise
- Europe – The RDA is commissioning for the Competitive Programme shortly, alongside Cooperation and existing ESF. Andrew attended a national meeting to discuss ESF post-LSC and it is expected that there will be sub regional groupings, to be agreed by 26th September 2008, who will manage commissioning of further education and 14-19 work.
- Innovation – a workshop was held in July, identifying commonality and gaps. This linked in with a visioning workshop for a long term vision after the DES, with a 10-15 year timescale
- Olympics – it was reported that Team Devon are looking to build a legacy for 2012, with key ideas to progress including skills and volunteer engagement

Several issues were discussed, including the implications of RSS and increasing population, likely to be ages 45+, and the potential impact on the skills agenda; and Business Link Start Up targets are not being met in Mid and North Devon.

Kristin Brophy of Step Ahead gave a brief update of progress to date. Contact was made with each of the priority champions and subject leads to begin creating the proposed monitoring framework, and a draft is in progress to be presented at a meeting on 9th September, which will highlight the tie in to the LAA. The DES framework will include skills, based on the PS4D framework. Kristin reported that innovation has been the most difficult issue to address in terms of contacts and pinning down measurables.

Action: any contact ideas for the innovations aspect of the framework to contact Kristin or Kate Kristin.brophy@stepaheadresearch.co.uk or kate.grimes@stepaheadresearch.co.uk

Tracy Hill gave a quick update of the progress of the Duchy Square project and highlighted what facilities would be available once complete.

3.0 Delivery Plan and Budget

A copy of the draft framework for the Delivery Plan had been circulated prior to the meeting.

This looked at an approach in terms of simplicity and recognising the reporting framework by Step Ahead. It was agreed that less tangible factors needed to be examined, including the role of PS4D in terms of an operational group for the DEP; the responsibility for LAA indicators; and the tie in with other work around the county.

It was stated that the Delivery Plan sought to add value to the Step Ahead work by looking more closely at local activity, as specified on pages 4&5. It was agreed that a list of current work needed to be collated in order to provide PS4D with an overview on what is already happening in Devon.

The meeting was questioned whether the draft structure for the Delivery Plan was approved by the PS4D members. All agreed.

Action: Feedback on gaps within the plan, in terms of text, overall approach, and especially local activity (P4&5) to be forwarded to Tony by 31st August. (Philip Done to provide information for North Devon, Liz Abel also to assist)

A number of comments on the strategy were given in the meeting:


- A paragraph on governance is needed
- Page 4 – tourism and hospitality are needed beyond food and drink
- Liz Abel to map Devon Renaissance projects – **result to Tony**
- Budget – 2006-2008 committed but only half spent. It was confirmed that the committed funds would be spent on their intended purpose
- Context – direct links are needed for activities – **Suggestions, including websites, to be forwarded to Tony**
- Networking and communication networks need to be strengthened, with Step Ahead having a role to play through quarterly reporting
- There is a need to recognise that there is a whole infrastructure around worklessness but feedback mechanisms are needed
- Further engagement with Youth is needed
- Need to ensure work of PS4D is not duplicating others
- A list of activities is needed – this would help Step Ahead with their research

Budget

The budget sheet circulated (attached) identified funding from the LSC and DCC and their allocation. Andrew reported that for 2008/09 allocations, DCC has put a bid into LABGI for PS4D funding. It was reported that in terms of LPSA money, PS4D was on target for meeting all 4 indicator targets, with a potential fund reward of £2 million, but was unclear how much of this would be reinvested in PS4D and the DEP by DCC.

In terms of future funding it was agreed that the Delivery Plan needed to be agreed before other funding was considered. It was suggested that there could be a tie in with RDPE and Local Action Groups. It was identified that there could be a weakness with 3 of the LAGs split over several districts which could have implications in terms of overlap with local economic partnerships.

The Chair extended thanks to Tony for his work on the Delivery Plan.



Step Ahead Research – it was questioned how reporting of specific indicators could be incorporated. It was agreed that priority headline indicators should be picked up for DES reporting, with others sitting behind to allow the DEP to request full skills data if required.

Skills Funding Post-LSC

A paper on the future of the LSC was circulated in the meeting, based on the LGA response to the recent consultation.

Tony gave an overview of the current situation. It is expected that the LSC will cease to exist in approximately two years, with issues around primary legislation and parliamentary agreements yet to be resolved. For the next two years LSC will be in a transitional phase to become two other agencies – the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). The SFA will largely be based around adult skills. There was currently a lack of clarity on how these agencies would work together, with the SFA structure yet to be agreed. It was stated that the funding of the LSC will be rerouted through Local Authorities to fund the Young Peoples Agency, which will act as a referee to ensure Local Authorities are working together. It was stated that these arrangements will increase the accountability of Local Authorities.

The report for the consultation was now available at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=698701>

4.0 Employment Engagement update

Papers had been previously circulated on employer engagement and the Business Skills Academy.

A brief summary was given, including details of the First Friday Business Club initiative at South Devon College. Building on previous experience, engagement events will now be shorter, although it was stated that the event on 3rd October had not been widely advertised.

Action: Andrew to contact Stephane and circulate information to rest of group

Progress on the Skills Academy was given, with confirmation that the CFA had met to discuss growth in Exeter a year ago but had since moved their focus to Plymouth, with a number of training providers taking a step back from the proposal.

5.0 Employment and Skills boards - update


A Product Descriptor Template paper was circulated for information.

It was confirmed that the model would be offered to businesses from April 2009 as part of the Train to Gain offer through Business Link.

6.0 Further Education Specialisation and Innovation Fund

A GRANTfinder report had been circulated previously.

Andrew reported on a Regional Skills Partnership meeting in June where it was confirmed that of the government's priorities and goals there were 7 priorities and 86 goals relating to the skills agenda. Tony reported that the Training Provider Network is doing some work, especially around inclusive and rural delivery, which is currently falling away due to resource. It was questioned whether this should be addressed in the PS4D Delivery Plan.



Ian Harper reported that electronic learning platforms were increasingly high value delivery methods in rural areas, and it was suggested that some sort of information portal was needed for wider access. The high value of networks was also reiterated.

Action: People to be directed to Craig Marshall for information and feedback

Action: List of contacts to be forwarded to Tracy Hill

Action: David Rowe to be included on the next agenda

Tracy Hill raised two main issues – lack of support for prestart businesses and skills for people above NVQ Level 3, for which provision is almost none existent.

It was agreed that use of ICT structure also needed to be looked at, not just provision.


7.0 Notes of meeting held 19th June 2008

All agreed.

Action on COSMIC and TalkTraining – the proposal was being worked through to identify the potential for support, although it was stated that COSMIC was not based in a priority area.

8.0 News Round Up

- Exeter University currently has 34 students on placements with local companies, with a presentation event to be held on 29th August. Details to be circulated via Leanne. Graduate retention discussions are also being held.
- DCBC – European projects. Ian has been looking at a soft skills and training project but has had to take a Cornwall rep due to the lack of response from Devon. Work is also ongoing looking at innovation centres in terms of transnational cooperation with Brittany and Normandy. A KIS 4B bid had also been submitted
- Train to Gain – the programme is more flexible with L2, L3 and Skills for Life all on the agenda. Levels of engagement and referrals are high, but start rates are lower. A new Leadership and Management service is also being provided with a specialist advisor for SMEs.
- Trevor – Skills for Life project manager is to be employed in September 2008. Young People – September sees the next round of diploma development. A presentation will be given at a future meeting
- Jobcentre Plus – A Green Paper on welfare reform was released in July. The Employment & Support Allowance goes live in October to replace the current incapacity benefit. The New Deal initiative will also have greater flexibility, with main providers now identified.
- South West Pound – the money matters education programme is now being geared up to provide a numeracy qualification
- Connexions – A national apprenticeship matching service pilot is underway, a web based tool for young people, providers and employers which will allow direct application for vacancies
- Anne Barnett – development of a qualifications strategy for Devon County is underway, covering all skills levels and will have a strategic approach for skills use. This will be ratified in November
- Integria – Duchy Square is looking at a number of community projects for engagement including a young people's radio project. Employment space will be available, and Integria are looking to secure NVQ funding



for future delivery. There will also be business support for social enterprise provided

- Margaret – the Adult and Community Learning department has secured a Train to Gain contract for the first time, commencing September 2008
- Devon Renaissance – the Business Survey is being rerun, with all rural Local Authorities agreeing support. Previous work on trends, migrant workers and remaining skills gaps, ICT, environment and its business use as an economic driver, business take up of training, and innovation will all be examined in greater detail
- Craig – local providers are being overtaken by nationals with a move away from local specialists. There is concern that nationals will focus on “easy” urban targets
- Philip – Workforce development and worklessness agendas overlap and there are gaps in terms of support for businesses and potential employees. A gap has also been identified in mentoring, with innovation work here a possibility
- Andrew – SLIM newsletter released – link can be provided if necessary. A consultation on the DCLG framework for regeneration closes on 31st October. Team Devon is looking for involvement with the events and health group to provide a skills link ***Volunteers to Andrew***
- Tim – The Forest Enterprise prison project with Dartmoor Prison is now going to be scaled up to cover the whole of Devon. In the pilot project there were only 4 reoffences out of the 28 attendees.

9.0 Dates of next meeting

24th October, 1.30 lunch 2pm start
to be held at Pynes Hill Court, Exeter