

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
29 September at 4.30pm
Meeting held via Zoom
(Company Number: 11822614)**

Present:

Mandy Thorn MBE	MT	Chair, Marches LEP Board
Sonia Roberts	SR	Deputy Chair Marches LEP Board; Social Inclusion Champion; CEO Landau Limited
Paul Hinkins	PH	Telford Business Board Chair
Frank Myers MBE	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
Paul Bennett	PB	Shropshire Business Board Chair
Andrew Manning Cox	AMC	Hereford Enterprise Zone Chair
Cllr David Hitchiner	DH	Leader, Herefordshire Council
Cllr Peter Nutting	PN	Leader, Shropshire Council
Cllr David Wright	DW	Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
Paul Kalinauckas	PK	Access to Finance Champion
James Staniforth	JS	Skills Advisory Panel Chair; Principal and CEO of the Shrewsbury Colleges Group
Ruth Shepherd	RS	Director, Results Communications
Sara Williams	SW	Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs
Dr Catherine Baxter	CB	Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University

In Attendance:

James Walton	JW	Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council
Hayley Owen	HO	Interim Assistant Director of Economic Growth, Shropshire Council
Richard Ball	RB	Director for Economy and Place, Herefordshire Council
Mark Barrow	MB	Executive Director for Place, Shropshire Council
Hayley Deighton	HD	Sustainable Growth Manager West Midlands, Environment Agency
David Throup	DT	Area Environment Manager Herefordshire, Environment Agency
Katherine Kynaston	KK	Director Housing Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
Michelle Egan	ME	Deputy Head, West Midlands & South West, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Ollie Hindle	OH	Assistant Director, West Midlands & South West, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Gill Hamer	GH	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
Ilia Bowles	IB	Director of Corporate Services Designate, Marches LEP
Kathryn Jones	KJ	Partnership Manager, Marches LEP
Nick Alamanos	NA	Programme Manager, Marches LEP
Ennis Vingoe	EV	Marches LEP Team Support Officer
Wayne Redge	WR	Marches LEP Office Administrator
Amy Bould	AB	Be Bold Media

ITEM		ACTION
1.	<p>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest MT welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting, including members of the public who were observing the meeting via Zoom. MT also welcomed Hayley Deighton and David Throup from the Environment Agency who would be providing a presentation with MB. Apologies were received from Christine Snell. MT noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes.</p> <p>2. Declarations of Interest The Chair said that members of the Board declared their interests annually as part of the Register of Interests, but also reminded members to complete the form for any specific Declarations of Interest for this meeting and forward to EV if required. FM – declared an interest in Item 2 Matters Arising, Cross Border Growth Deal as an Independent Member of the Welsh Government Health and Social Services Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. PN – declared an interest in Item 7 as Leader of Shropshire Council regarding the South Wye Transport package. DH - declared an interest in Item 7 as Leader of Herefordshire Council regarding the South Wye Transport package.</p>	
2.	<p>1. Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting held on 21 July 2020 The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 July 2020 were approved and would be signed (electronically) by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>2. Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Emergency Board meeting held on 11 August 2020 The Minutes of the Emergency Board meeting held on 11 August 2020 were approved and would be signed (electronically) by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting</p> <p>3. Matters Arising Minutes of MLEP Ltd Board Meeting 21 July 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 2 - Transport Officers' Group update. NA gave an update from the Transport Officers Group. The slides can be found here: TOG slides.pdf • Item 4b – update on Shropshire Council staff resourcing JW gave an update. The Shropshire Council Finance Team had been subject to a restructure which has provided additional resilience and increased the capacity of elements of the team supporting the work for the Marches LEP, including a temporary dedicated resource to support the LEP work. Recruiting is taking place for the permanent role. The temporary solution has helped take forward due diligence checks on the Getting Building Fund funding agreements and three funding agreements are due to be finalised shortly. A shared Sharepoint site has been developed allowing visibility on how agreements are progressing to timescales. The Council is working through the schedules to the Service Level Agreement with the LEP and this is nearly complete. The timescales in the schedules will link with and be visible via the shared Sharepoint site. Overall, this was now a much stronger position. The resilience of the systems would be tested in a 'perfect storm' situation but as much resilience as possible has been built in. 	

	<p>MT said that the Service Level Agreement was being developed with the assistance of the Marches LEP Board Incorporation Task and Finish Group. When the draft was ready it would be presented to the Board for approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 8 – update on the cross-border Growth Deal <p>GH said that two meetings had been held so far which included the Wales Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), supported by OH and Growing Mid-Wales partners. Outline ideas for priorities for submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) had been discussed. The cross-border freight strategy action plan and support for digital and energy strategies had been submitted. The Wales Office, MHCLG and the Welsh Government have been putting together ideas on what they think could form a joint CSR submission. If any funding is awarded, a joint project team would be formed to build the business case.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>2020/21 LEP Annual Delivery Plan report and Feedback from LEP Mid-Year Performance Review by MHCLG</p> <p>GH referred to the paper explaining the rationale for the Delivery Plan required by MHCLG, and the timeline this year. A discussion took place regarding the content of the Delivery Plan. GH confirmed that following the Marches LEP mid-year Performance Review with MHCLG the previous day that recovery planning, net zero and skills support initiatives would be key and would be included in the Marches LEP recovery action plan. The Local Industrial Strategy would also be re-purposed to better reflect the impact of these issues.</p> <p>MT said that she would be meeting with most Marches MPs in the next few weeks and would discuss the LEP’s priorities. Members suggested that the title of the plan wasn’t helpful as the LEP is the facilitator rather than the deliverer of initiatives, which are carried out by LEP partners. GH said that the title was set by MHCLG. PK asked about access to finance and GH updated members on the Marches Investment Fund and the Midlands Engine Investment Fund and would check how much had been drawn down for this latter fund. GH and PK would meet to further discuss access to finance.</p> <p>The Board approved the draft 2020/21 LEP Team Delivery Plan (unanimous)</p> <p>GH updated the Board on the Marches LEP mid-year Performance Review that had taken place with MHCLG on 28 September 2020. The outcome had been generally positive and there were no specific issues to report. The LEP had actions related to implementing a recovery plan; the top slicing of Growth Deal funds to cover costs in relation to Growth Deal and Getting Building Fund work; and the alignment of Business Board Terms of Reference to those of the LEP. The deadline for these latter two actions to be completed is 31 October 2020. MT thanked OH, ME and JW for attending the review meeting.</p>	<p>GH, KJ</p> <p>GH</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Overview of the LEP strategic and programme risk registers</p> <p>SR updated members on the review of the risk registers and how the recent updating of the registers ensured that they complied with best practice. The registers had been externally audited and been given a ‘good’ rating. There were comprehensive review processes and reporting procedures in place. A full review of the risk registers had been undertaken at the last Performance Risk and Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting held on 17 July 2020. SR invited Board members to attend PRMC meetings should they wish to.</p> <p>The Board noted the feedback from the Accountable Body Risk Management team on the format and management of the Risk Registers, as set out in section 1 of the paper.</p>	

	<p>The Board discussed the proposed changes and approach to the Risk Registers in line with feedback from the Accountable Body, as set out in section 2 of the paper.</p> <p>SR informed members that in the Board paper, the colour coding had not been included in the Strategic Risk Register in error, but that the arrows indicating direction of travel were correct. In the Programme Risk Register the colour code on 2.10 was incorrect but the direction of travel was correct. The errors would be amended.</p> <p>The Board noted the addition of new risks and a change of risk rating agreed by PRMC on 17th July 2020, as set out in section 3 of the paper</p> <p>SR said that new Director of Corporate Services would be leading the management of the risk registers going forward.</p> <p>The Board noted a change in LEP secretariat lead support for PRMC and management of the Risk Registers, as set out in section 4 of the paper.</p> <p>PB thanked SR for the update and said that it was reassuring that the PRMC looked at risk in detail. SR confirmed that recent changes and anticipated changes were now covered in the residual risk rating and target risk rating; and that individual risks were reviewed in detail at PRMC meetings.</p> <p>MT said that risk management would continue to be a standing item on the Board agenda.</p> <p>CB thanked SR and NA for the significant amount of work done on this.</p>	<p>NA</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Briefing on the River Severn Partnership action plan</p> <p>MT introduced MB, Chair of the River Severn Partnership (RSP) and HD and DT from the Environment Agency.</p> <p>MB gave the background to the RSP and said that the only sustainable way of managing the water challenges in the catchment area was to address it as a whole system. The partnership consists of 10 local authorities; the Environment Agency and other government bodies; water companies; industry groups and a range of other stakeholders and was formed in September 2019.</p> <p>The slides from the presentation can be found here: River-Severn-Partnership-Presentation.pdf</p> <p>The main points covered by DT were: Catchment Plan – how to harness a natural asset which is also a challenging system; how to move from risk management to look at asset management. Addressing flood risk and water resource nationally are huge challenges in terms of climate change. There are significant local challenges with flood and water quality, in the Wye and Lugg in particular. Integrated approach across the whole ‘geography’ – a ‘systems-thinking’ approach had been adopted looking at wider environmental gain and resilience, moving away from reactive risk management and looking more at the long-term. Vision – a programme of innovation moving beyond environmental mitigation and pushing forward environmental betterment. We will have to change our approaches because climate challenges are significant.</p> <p>DT covered: Ecological status –the ecological status of the catchment is not good across the whole geography. In Herefordshire there are issues of treated sewage effluent in rivers and an agricultural runoff issue. However, the River Teme and parts of the Wye and Lugg are in a good condition.</p>	

	<p>Water abstraction – this is becoming an issue due to lower water levels.</p> <p>Climate change - issues with low water levels in summer and high-water levels in winter. Even minor droughts impact on the bottom line of a number of sectors.</p> <p>Economic impact of flooding – sophisticated climate change modelling is being done down to postcode level. In the next 30-40 years river levels are expected to rise significantly leading to more frequent significant floods.</p> <p>HD explained the work done to date and the current work programme, the long-term strategy, accelerated infrastructure delivery and community engagement.</p> <p>There are 46 MPs across the geography and a ministerial debate had already taken place and conversations had been held with the Cabinet Office.</p> <p>£40million funding had been awarded to the partnership as one of 4 national pilots to produce a long-term adaptive pathway plan. RSP was working with Severn Trent Water and others around green recovery. Eden in Cornwall are interested in joining the partnership and RSP is having conversations with Midlands Connect around road and rail infrastructure; Homes England about housing infrastructure, and Higher Education institutions around water management.</p> <p>PN commented that he was fully behind the partnership and more public consultation was required. Shropshire Council was working on this.</p> <p>MT asked how businesses were getting involved and said that the public and business voices need to be heard.</p> <p>MB said that RSP had been talking with the Environment Agency and Shropshire Council colleagues this week and engagement would be taking place with North Shropshire communities. In terms of businesses, sector representative bodies were already involved but the next stage would be to open up consultation to all businesses. DH said that in Herefordshire pollution of rivers, which is different to climate change and flooding, was the issue. There was a significant issue with the River Lugg. MB said that RSP had a very balanced agenda and water resource and water management in terms of pollution was as important as flooding.</p> <p>RS noted that there was an opportunity with the partnership for collaboration across the public and private sectors, and communities.</p> <p>MT thanked MB, HD and DT for the presentation. GH attends the RSP meetings and MT suggested that the LEP Board monitor communications with the business community.</p> <p>PB left the meeting at 5.50pm JS left the meeting at 6.00pm RS left the meeting at 6.10pm</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Business Board Chair Updates Herefordshire</p> <p>FM reported that the following issues were priorities for the Herefordshire Business Board members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID - the expected redundancies; the likelihood of more lockdowns and the reported inadequacies of the test and trace capacity remained concerns. The Business Board (BB) continues to lobby for a fiscal stimulus and to increase support for the hardest hit sectors. • BREXIT – the BB feels completely unsighted on what to expect from BREXIT. More information and support were required. • The BB and Herefordshire Council are discussing the need to better understand the business dimension of climate change and how to better integrate activities. • The LEP-funded tourism initiative and Stronger Towns Fund are being discussed across the county. • Cultural and creative industries – it is felt that not enough attention is currently being given to this as a LEP. 	

	<p>Telford Due to technical difficulties, MT read out the Telford Business Board report provided by PH. The main points covered were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply Chains - businesses are seeking production supply chains closer to home which will help guard against future disruptions and could result in cost savings due to reduced transportation expenses. Regionalized production and sourcing will present new opportunities for entrepreneurs to start manufacturing facilities, warehouses, and online sourcing. • Digital - opportunities for entrepreneurs to supply work-at-home employees who need powerful, reliable equipment. Curb-side pickup and delivery services have expanded which will continue post COVID. New digital platforms will be required to support this in the tracking of the product. • The crisis has brought greater emphasis on personal wellbeing and mental health and companies will also be looking to re-evaluate their maternity and paternity leave policies. • The digital classroom will be of paramount importance going forward. The education sector should recognize the cost-savings associated with digital classrooms and move part of their formal curriculum online. The Marches must focus on the emergence of a high digital demand market which includes VR and AR. This will help us retain our youngsters whilst making the Marches an attractive place to invest. • Many TBB members believe that there is no longer a requirement to travel for work and that business can be carried out remotely. There are opportunities for the professional services sector as business and personal financial planning are more important than ever. Unemployment will cause many former employees to seek remote self-employed work which will likely result in skills and knowledge being lost from existing businesses. <p>PB had left the meeting early due to unforeseen circumstances. PB would provide an update to MT via email which would be circulated to members. MT thanked the BB Chairs. FM left the meeting at 6.20pm</p>	<p>PB</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Growth Deal Programme update and Getting Building Fund update NA said that the agenda item was for information only and that members had been asked to note a number of elements.</p> <p>The Board noted the current position relating to Local Growth Fund performance, as set out in section 1 of the paper.</p> <p>The Board noted the current position in respect to the Phase 2 Local Growth Fund review, as set out in section 2 of the paper.</p> <p>MT said that if there were any questions from members specifically on section 3 of the report regarding SWTP, that PN and DH (and council officers) would be asked to leave the meeting following their declarations of interest. There were no questions.</p> <p>The Board noted the update on the clawback of the £3.8m for the South Wye Project (SWTP), as set out in section 3 of the paper.</p> <p>The Board noted the current position relating to the Getting Building Fund, as set out in section 4 of the paper.</p>	

	<p>As an update, NA confirmed that the LEP had received the offer letter from government for £14million for the Getting Building Fund. MT commented that the LEP and partners had submitted the project bids by the deadline of 16 July 2020, but that it had taken until now to get confirmation of the funding. However, in the meantime the LEP and partners had been actively working on due diligence and funding agreements would be ready to issue shortly.</p> <p>The Board noted the Delegated Authority decision taken in relation to the Integrated Construction Wetlands project, as set out in section 4.1 of the paper.</p> <p>There were no questions raised on the content of the paper.</p>	
8.	<p>LEP Chair/CEO report MT introduced the information report. DH asked about the progress of the BB TORs. GH said that an action from MHCLG at the Marches LEP Mid-year Review was to complete the work by the end of October 2020.</p>	BB Chairs
9.	<p>Any Other Business OH confirmed that the recommendation to government from MHCLG for the final tranche of the Marches LEP Local Growth Fund funding was that it be paid, and the outcome should be received sometime next week.</p>	
10.	<p>Close The meeting closed at 6.32pm.</p>	
	<p>Next Meeting of the Board of The Marches LEP Limited: Tuesday 24 November 2020</p>	

Signed (electronically):

Mandy Thorn MBE DL, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 24 November 2020