

Questions from Members of the public put to the Marches LEP Ltd AGM 29/09/20 and the answers

Name: Tom Tibbits (Dr)

Organisation: Extinction Rebellion Transport Group

Question:1

In the 2019 LEP Annual Economic Review, high speed broadband access across the Marches reportedly languishes at around 63%. What will the LEP do to ensure that this reaches 100% *as soon as possible*, and therefore allows locals to continue with their commercial life whilst reducing the need to travel during this pandemic and also further into a lower carbon future?

Answer: 1

The Marches LEP secured £7.7m in Growth Deal funds in 2015 for investment in broadband and these funds continue to be invested in the Marches to support the roll-out of superfast broadband services (>30mbps) to more households and businesses across all three of the LEP's Local Authority areas.

The superfast broadband data published on page 37 of the 2019 LEP Annual Economic [Review](#) was sourced from Ofcom's 2019 Connected Nations report. The data has been updated in the [Report](#) published on 10 September 2020. The latest coverage figures are:

Local Authority	Superfast broadband availability (% premises)
Herefordshire, County Of	86.2
Shropshire	86.9
Telford And Wrekin	97.6

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Question: 2

Quoting the 2019 LEP Annual Economic Review page 38: "Within The Marches area, the highest category to emit emissions was transport at 1,499 Kt CO2 in 2017." Transport is responsible for 38% of CO2 emissions in the Marches. Why is the LEP still backing projects such as the Hereford bypass and the Oxon Link Road when all data shows that more roads induces more traffic and emissions can only rise? What efforts is the LEP making to encourage active modes of transport and reduce the need for fossil powered transport to facilitate economic activity?

Answer: 2

The Marches LEP promotes schemes being taken forward by its constituent Councils which facilitate economic growth across the region. In respect of CO2, the three Councils have declared a climate emergency with the aim of being carbon neutral by 2030. The LEP is committed in helping achieve this outcome. Through the work of the LEP Transport Officers and Energy Sub-Groups, consideration is given to supporting partners in respect of their transport programmes and declared climate emergencies in pursuit of 'net zero'. In partnership with the Midlands Energy Hub and local authorities, the LEP is actively seeking to develop low-carbon transport options in the Marches.

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Question:3

Does the LEP agree with the statement on page 38 of the 2019 Annual Economic Report that "If The Marches continues to reduce at the average of the last 3 years (-4.1%) we would reach net zero emissions in 2231. In order to achieve as close to net zero as possible by 2050 (less than 1 Kt CO2), emissions across The Marches would have to reduce annually by 25% from 2020."

Given that net zero is now the Law in this country, what is the LEP doing to ensure that the necessary annual 25% reductions are made?

Answer: 3

The Marches LEP was one of the first in the country to publish an Energy Strategy and is now working closely with partners to deliver against the seven priorities it sets out. The LEP is also supporting all three local authorities, in the delivery of programmes to reduce both their own emissions, and those of the wider area, to net zero by 2030. This includes projects such as developing heat networks, investigating opportunities to create low-carbon transport hubs, and supporting community-scale energy schemes. A proportion of the path to net-zero will also require interventions from national government. The LEP will therefore continue to influence local and national policy and, through the Midlands Energy Hub, the investment in a clean energy infrastructure.

Name: Tom Tibbits (Dr)

Organisation: Artistray Cider

Question: 4

Having examined the Statement of Accounts, I can not find the answer I am seeking to the following query:

In the year ending 31st March 2019 how much funding or grant (if any) was made to (or via) the Herefordshire Business Board to carry out or fulfil any aspect of the LEP's work?

It would also be good to have the same information for the following year, to 31st March 2020, please.

Answer:4

No grant funding has been awarded to the Herefordshire Business Board.

- £2,500 in 18/19 and £5,510 in 19/20 has been paid by the Marches LEP for sub-contracted part-time secretariat services to support the Chair of the Business Board in arranging a forward plan of meetings, liaison with Board members and following up actions from meetings.
- In May 2020, £444,220 was awarded to Herefordshire for the delivery of projects to support key tourism and business recovery projects. This is being delivered through Herefordshire Council and the activity plan was developed in partnership with the Herefordshire Business Board.
- Consultation events to support the development of the Strategic Economic Plan and the Local Industrial Strategy have been arranged by the Marches LEP and supported/co-hosted by Herefordshire Business Board. In these cases, the LEP has paid for venue costs.

Name: Tom Tibbits (Dr)
Organisation: personal interest

Question: 5

How much loan or grant funding has the LEP made to, or committed to make to NMiTE in
(a) the financial year ending 31st March 2019
(b) total up until the present time (or 31st March 2020, if that is where the current accounts end)?

Answer : 5

In March 2017 the LEP Board agreed to allocate £8m to the NMiTE project from the £21.859m of Growth Deal 3 funds it had been allocated by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). In 2018 the LEP contracted jointly with Herefordshire Council and NMiTE the sum of £2.340m for the NMiTE Phase 1 project, which contributed to the cost of development of the Blackfriars campus in Hereford City.

In February 2020 MHCLG agreed that £5.660m of Growth Deal funds be awarded to Herefordshire Council to support the development of NMiTE Phase 2 Skylon Park Campus development which includes the Centre for Advanced Manufacturing, the Centre for Automated Manufacturing and the proposed Centre for Future Skills. This funding was contracted by Herefordshire Council with NMiTE in June 2019.

To note the 2019/20 Marches LEP Ltd accounts end on 31 March 2020 .

Name: Tom Tibbits (Dr)
Organisation: Friends of the Upper Wye

Question: 6

The river Wye has in recent years been suffering with excessive pollution which has resulted in severe algal blooms, the tragic loss of wildlife, fish stocks, young cygnets, a moratorium on all new construction development in the Lugg catchment, and the death of 70km of riverine habitat comprising ranunculus and water crowfoot, amongst many other incidents and problems. Given the centrality of the Wye to the Marches wider reputation as a tourism destination, not to mention the importance that the LEP places on supplying new housing as an economic driver in the area, will the LEP consider supplying a small amount of funding to a new group, called Friends of the Upper Wye (FOUW), who wish to set up and carry out pollution monitoring in both the main stem of the river and also its tributaries. This citizen science pollution monitoring project planning is already underway and plans well developed, in order to complement the existing monitoring undertaken by Natural Resources Wales and the Environment Agency. Both NRW and EA have suffered swingeing cuts in the last decade which has decimated their testing programme, with over 80% of testing sites now no longer tested and the testing frequency has fallen to once a quarter. Using the powerful enthusiasm of the public, FOUW aims to start a pilot monitoring project in anticipation of a more rigorous academic collaboration starting in September 2021. For the pilot project FOUW is seeking the sum of £10000 in order to purchase equipment, defray training expenses, and gather initial data. Any sum towards this goal would be greatly appreciated, and the long term goal of first understanding and then reducing the pollution into the Wye can only have beneficial economic results for the Marches region, particularly with respect to tourism and construction, as well as reputation of the area and other such intangible economic benefits.

FOUW is aware of the role of the Nutrient Management Board but find that in the six years of its existence, absolutely no progress has been made and in fact the problem is only getting worse.

Answer:6

We note your request on behalf of the Friends of the Upper Wye (FOUW) for £10,000 to fund a pilot monitoring project. Unfortunately, the LEP does not have any revenue funds to support feasibility studies or pilot projects in the Marches. We will note your request and will ensure, if the government does provide the LEP funding to support pilot projects and feasibility studies in the future, FOUW are advised of the opportunity to bid for funds.

Organisation: Wye Salmon Association

Contact: Stuart Smith, Chairman - 07789133263

Question 7 : The River Wye is a world renowned salmon river. The current state of its salmon stocks and poor water quality have reverberated around the global angling community and is reducing massively the angling tourism. Coupled with the ecological damage and the impact being felt right across all other river users, this situation will be reflected severely on the local economy. What actions are current in place and future planned by the Marches LEP to raise resolution of these issues with the responsible government bodies?

Answer: 7

The Marches LEP supports the work of the Marches Nature Partnership, which is an informal association between the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Partnership and the Herefordshire Local Nature Partnership. The Marches LEP has contributed to the development of the Marches Nature Partnership Marches Environmental Strategy – Strategic Visions and Priorities 2019-23 which is currently being finalised. We will with our partners from the Marches Nature Partnership continue to raise at every appropriate opportunity the impact of soil erosion and pollution in our rivers with the relevant authorities including the Environment Agency and DEFRA as we know this is impacting on the tourism sector and our ability to utilise this fantastic natural asset to develop the economy.

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