

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
24 November at 4.00pm
Meeting held via Zoom
(Company Number: 11822614)**

Present:

Mandy Thorn MBE DL	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 (part of meeting)
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
Sara Williams	SW	Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs
Dr Catherine Baxter	CB	Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University
Christine Snell	CS	Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell

In Attendance:

James Walton	JW	Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council
Roger Allonby	RA	Head of Economic Development, Herefordshire Council
Mark Barrow	MB	Executive Director for Place, Shropshire Council
Katherine Kynaston	KK	Director Housing Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
Nick Francis	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
Clare Hannah	CH	Deputy Area Lead, West Midlands & South West, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (part of meeting)
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

ITEM		ACTION
1.	1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest MT welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting, including Cllr Ellie Chowns, Herefordshire Council who was observing the meeting via Zoom. MT also welcomed Ivan Annibal and KK who would be providing briefings on the outline plans for the Hereford and Telford Towns Fund projects. Apologies were received	

	<p>from Ruth Shepherd. 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. JS – declared an interest in Item 3 - Board Members, regarding extension of his membership. FM - declared an interest in Item 3 - Board Members, regarding his membership. PH – declared an interest in Item 4 - as Chair of the Corporation of Telford College. DW and MT – declared an interest in Item 4 – as members of the Telford Town Board. SR – declared an interest in Item 8 as CEO of Landau.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting held on 29 September 2020 The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 September 2020 were approved and would be signed (electronically) by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	EV
3.	<p>Board Members - re-election and rotation JS left the meeting at 4.07pm a. The Board approved a one-year Board membership extension for James Staniforth until October 2021 (unanimous). JS re-joined the meeting at 4.09pm b. The Board agreed to defer a decision on Frank Myers' membership, as he has now served six years on the LEP Board, until the 26 January 2021 Board meeting (unanimous) to enable Herefordshire Business Board to hold an election for the Chair in the coming month.</p>	IB IB
4.	<p>Briefing on outline plans for Hereford and Telford Towns Fund projects MT introduced KK who gave a presentation on the Telford Towns Fund Investment Plan which covered the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Telford Town Deal Board worked in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council. • Community and business engagement were key to developing the detailed proposals. • The Board's priorities were to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhance digital infrastructure ○ Transform Telford Town Centre ○ Address skills and upskilling ○ Regenerate high streets and borough towns • There were a number of proposed investments that would be submitted in the plan under 3 thematic intervention areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creating connected places; ○ Nurturing people and skills; ○ Destination Telford. • The Town Investment Plan would be submitted on 11 December 2020 with an 'in principle' deal potentially announced in February 2021. <p>DW thanked the LEP for current capital funding which had enabled initial investment which underpinned initiatives included in the Telford Towns Fund Investment Plan. MT commented that she attended the Telford Towns Fund Board</p>	

	<p>on behalf of MLEP and that FM attended the Hereford Town Fund Board on behalf of MLEP.</p> <p>MT then introduced Ivan Annibal, a consultant working with Herefordshire Council who briefed the meeting on the Hereford Investment Plan. The following points were covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were a number of challenges to address in Hereford: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skills – relatively low level of educational outcomes; ○ Hereford is isolated as a city and has a broader role as a driver for the economic prosperity of surrounding settlements; ○ Economic divide between the north, which is relatively prosperous, and the south of city; ○ The county is challenged in the distribution of businesses; ○ There are specific health challenges in the south of the city; ○ There is a disproportionately high number of over 65s. • The investment plan was reaching the end of an intensive community and business engagement process. • There were a number of distinctive elements of the plan: green agenda; commitment to fairness; creativity; digital connectivity and skills. • It had been identified that there was a low skills base; poor social mobility; a high carbon footprint and poor road and rail infrastructure. • The Towns Fund Board was undertaking a project selection process. A core of key projects would be identified by early December 2020 and these would be supported to develop their business cases. • The main areas to be developed would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ‘Skills Foundry’ – including NMITE and other FE providers; ○ Major ‘landmark attraction’; ○ Environmental and green-related activities; ○ Focus on the city centre and the South Wye area. <p>MT thanked KK and IA for their presentations.</p> <p>The Board agreed that letters of support would be provided for both submissions (12 for; 2 abstentions).</p>	<p>MT, GH</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) – report from the meeting on 22 October 2020</p> <p>SR updated members on the activities of the PRMC. Members commented that the new format of the Board report was very accessible, making the risks easier to scrutinise. SR said that nominations were being sought for a deputy chair for the PRMC; that a business continuity plan was being developed for MLEP and the Service Level Agreement with Shropshire Council was in the final stages of drafting. She also commented that the workload for MLEP staff had trebled in the past 12-18 months in managing £41million of contracts resulting in 25 live projects, and that short-term staff contracts posed a high risk to the business. Financial reliance through ‘blended’ measures was being developed but longer-term security through a 3-year commitment in the Comprehensive Spending Review was required. It was intended that opportunities for the private sector to contribute to growing the economy would be provided by growing the project pipeline.</p> <p>OH asked what the timeframe was for resolution of the action from the MLEP Mid-Year Review regarding the aligning of the Business Board Terms of Reference with the governance requirements of the LEP, due by 31 October 2020. MT said that meetings were currently taking place with the business board chairs and that the</p>	<p>All</p>

	<p>LEP did not want to be marked down on performance due to this outstanding action.</p> <p>The Board noted the PRMC report and the current position relating to both risk registers.</p>	<p>MT, SR, GH, BB Chairs</p>
6.	<p>Progress report from 3 Local Authorities on investment of £1.58m MIF revenue funds to support SMEs impacted by flooding & COVID</p> <p>The local authority officers gave an update to the meeting. MB said that due to the impact of COVID, Shropshire Council was requesting that the deadline for spend be extended to 31 March 2021 to ensure it was able to get the most out of the funding. RA said that Herefordshire Council had targeted the visitor economy but due to the impact of COVID the Board was asked to endorse the previously agreed spend-by-date of 31 March 2021. FM requested a separate meeting to discuss related funding to support other tourism projects.</p> <p>KK said that Telford & Wrekin Council was funding projects promoting the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors. Telford & Wrekin Council also requested a deadline extension to 31 March 2021.</p> <p>The Board noted that good progress was being made in delivering a range of business grants and innovative tourism initiatives to support market towns and businesses facing economic challenges as a consequence of the flooding in February 2020 and subsequently the COVID lockdowns.</p> <p>The Board agreed that all three local authorities should be given an extension until the end of March 2021 to submit their final report and statement confirming the use of the funds in line with the grant agreements issued in July 2020 (11 for; 2 abstentions).</p>	<p>FM, MT</p> <p>GH, JW</p>
7.	<p>Progress report on project spend of Local Growth Fund (LGF) & project contracting using Getting Building Fund (GBF)</p> <p>MT said that there was an error in the Agenda and that there were 2 decisions to be taken by the Board under this item.</p> <p>NA provided an update for the Board.</p> <p>a. The spend in Quarter 2 had been lower than anticipated due to issues around COVID and the practicalities of contracting £23m of new LGF projects, which were signed off during the end of Quarter 2. Just under £6m of claims had been paid in October which would be reflected in the Quarter 3 LGF Data return.</p> <p>The Board noted the Quarter 2 position relating to Local Growth Fund performance as set out in section 1 of the paper.</p> <p>b. The Board noted the receipt of the final one third payment of The Marches LEP 2020/21 Local Growth Fund allocation, as set out in section 2 and appendix 1 of the paper.</p> <p>c. The LEP had received confirmation from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) of the £14m GBF award (see appendix 2). This confirmed that the GBF allocations would be split into £7m for FY 2020/21 with an indicative profile of £7m in FY 2021/22</p> <p>The Board noted that confirmation had been received from MHCLG in relation to the £14m GBF award, as set out in section 3.1 and appendix 2 of the paper.</p> <p>d. Whilst the LEP continued to work closely with projects promoters, to date no Funding Agreements had been signed off. In the majority of instances, delays had</p>	

	<p>been experienced in receiving due diligence information from projects, impacting on the anticipated timescales for finalising Funding Agreements. The Board noted the current position relating to the issuing of GBF Agreements, as set out in section 3.2 of the paper.</p> <p>e. Due to the timescales involved in spending £7m of GBF by 31 March 2021 (as set out in appendix 2), it was recommended that the LEP Board set a deadline of Friday 4 December 2020 for all GBF Funding Agreements to be signed off, mitigating the risk to the programme. The recommendation was discussed by members and OH confirmed that the projects needed to be contracted as soon as possible. RA said that Herefordshire Council would not, under its governance arrangements, be able to confirm it can be the accountable body for the GBF funds until as the accountable body for the NMITE project, Herefordshire Council required a governance decision at the Council meeting on 17 December 2020. GH said that for all other projects, if they were not contracted by 4 December 2020, an emergency Board meeting may have to be called to decide the way forward. The Board approved the setting of a deadline of Friday 4 December 2020 for all GBF funding agreements to be signed off, as set out in section 3.3 of the paper, noting the different process adopted for the NMITE project (12 for; 1 abstention). MT thanked the LEP team and local authority teams for all their work on the funding agreements.</p> <p>f. Integrated Construction Wetlands project - following a review of the match funding information for the rewilding element it was found that the majority of the additional match funding was ineligible due to it being classed as revenue as well as sitting outside of the reporting timescales of the GBF programme. The Board approved the reduction of the Integrated Construction Wetlands match funding value from £2m back to its original value of £1m as set out in section 3.4 of the paper (unanimous).</p> <p>g. The Board noted the update on the clawback of the £3.8m for the South Wye Project, as set out in section 4 of the paper.</p>	<p>NA</p> <p>NA</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Skills activities update JS introduced the report on the work of the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) which brought together local employers, government departments including the Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions and skills providers to understand and address key local skills and labour market challenges through the development of a clear evidence base. He drew members' attention to the fact that there had been a focus on the development of skills data and intelligence which had provided evidence-based skills and labour market analysis for the LEP's priority sectors. The Marches LEP had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the DfE in order to access funding of £75k to grow the research and analysis capability of the SAP and produce the Local Skills Report. The deadline for expenditure was 31 March 2021. In order to encourage collaboration between colleges across the Marches, it was proposed that a curriculum planning exercise be undertaken. This would identify specialisms, understand gaps in provision and look at opportunities associated with digital learning. Funding had been identified for this activity. Members expressed concern regarding the mental health and wellbeing of students during the current crisis and suggested that 'digital poverty' was an issue across the Marches, in part due to connectivity problems, particularly in rural areas. It was critical to have a blend of learning methodologies in order to support students.</p>	

	<p>MT drew members' attention to the Careers and Enterprise Company and the Cornerstone Employers initiative.</p> <p>The Board noted the activities undertaken by the Skills Advisory Panel and its priorities for the coming period.</p>	
9.	<p>LEP Chair/CEO report</p> <p>MT directed members to the information in the report and said that a significant number of updates were currently being received from many sources.</p>	
9.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>PH raised a query regarding the Marches Centre of Manufacturing and Technology (MCMT). GH informed members that the LEP, with Shropshire Council, was currently in discussions with the shareholders of MCMT regarding potential changes to the structures of the company and the implications for the respective funding agreements. The Board would be further updated in due course.</p> <p>Members would also be updated following the announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review on 25 November 2020, on the implications for funding for the LEP and the Marches Growth Hub.</p>	<p>GH</p> <p>GH</p>
10.	<p>Close</p> <p>The meeting closed at 6.05pm.</p>	
	<p>Next Meeting of the Board of The Marches LEP Limited: Tuesday 26 January 2021</p>	

Signed (electronically):

Mandy Thorn MBE DL, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 26 January 2021