

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting  
25 January 2022 at 3.30pm via Zoom  
(Company Number: 11822614)**

**Present:**

<b>Mandy Thorn MBE DL</b>	MT	Chair, Marches LEP
<b>Sonia Roberts</b>	SR	Deputy Chair Marches LEP; Equality & Diversity Champion; CEO Landau Limited
<b>Frank Myers MBE</b>	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
<b>Beth Heath</b>	BH	Shropshire Business Board Chair (part of meeting)
<b>Will Westley</b>	WW	Telford Business Board Chair (part of meeting)
<b>Andrew Manning Cox</b>	AMC	Hereford Enterprise Zone Chair
<b>Cllr Ellie Chowns</b>	DH	Cabinet Member - Environment and Economy, Herefordshire Council
<b>Cllr Ed Potter</b>	EP	Deputy Leader, Shropshire Council
<b>Sara Williams</b>	SW	Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs
<b>Graham Guest</b>	GG	Skills Advisory Panel Chair; Chief Executive and Principal of Telford College (part of meeting)
<b>Paul Kalinauckas</b>	PK	Access to Finance Champion
<b>Christine Snell</b>	CS	Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell
<b>Gordon Coppock</b>	GC	Energy and NET Zero Champion (part of meeting)
<b>Catherine Baxter</b>	CB	Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University

**In Attendance:**

<b>Dave Courteen</b>	DC	Small Business Champion; Chair Marches Business Support Steering Group
<b>Roger Allonby</b>	RA	Head of Economic Development, Herefordshire Council
<b>Hayley Owen</b>	HO	Growth Programme and Strategy Manager, Shropshire Council
<b>Katherine Kynaston</b>	KK	Director Housing Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
<b>Ollie Hindle</b>	OH	Assistant Director/Area Lead, West Midlands Team, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
<b>Sally Edgington</b>	SE	Area Director South West & West Midlands, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (part of meeting)
<b>Rachel Laver</b>	RL	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
<b>Ilia Bowles</b>	IB	Director of Corporate Services, Marches LEP
<b>Kathryn Jones</b>	KJ	Partnership Manager, Marches LEP
<b>Nick Alamanos</b>	NA	Programme Manager, Marches LEP
<b>Ennis Vingoe</b>	EV	Executive Assistant, Marches LEP
<b>Wayne Redge</b>	WR	Office Administrator, Marches LEP

**Observers:**

<b>Amy Bould</b>	AB	Be Bold Ltd
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ITEM		ACTION
1.	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p><b>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>MT thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Lee Carter and Cllr David Hitchiner. Cllr Ellie Chowns was attending the meeting in Cllr Hitchiner's stead.</p> <p>MT noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes.</p>	

	<p><b>2. Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>The Chair reminded members to complete the form that had been distributed for any specific Declarations of Interest for every meeting. The LEP had recently received a complaint from a member of the public suggesting that a member's register of interest was not accurate. MT said that it was important that registers of interest and declarations at meetings were kept up to date.</p> <p>The following declarations of interest were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AMC declared an interest in Item 12 AOB: Operating Guidelines for the Marches Investment Fund, as Chair of the Hereford Enterprise Zone</li> </ul>	
2.	<p><b>Board Member Appointment – Lee Carter</b></p> <p>MT said that Cllr David Wright had stood down as a member of the Cabinet of Telford &amp; Wrekin Council at the end of December 2021 and therefore also relinquished his role as an alternate director of Marches LEP Ltd.</p> <p>Cllr Lee Carter, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street had been nominated as the new alternate director. Cllr Carter had consented to his appointment and in accordance with the Articles of Association section 20, <b>the Board confirmed the appointment of Cllr Lee Carter as a public sector alternate director of Marches LEP Ltd with immediate effect (unanimous).</b></p> <p><b><i>The relevant documentation would be submitted to Companies House.</i></b></p> <p>MT thanked Cllr David Wright for the sterling service that he had provided to the LEP Board during his tenure.</p>	EV
3.	<p><b>Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 30 November 2021</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2021 were approved by those members present at the meeting and would be signed (electronically) by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p><b>Ratification of Decisions Made by Correspondence</b></p> <p>1. Integrated Construction Wetlands Project – January 2022. The resolution had been approved: 12 in favour; 1 declared a conflict of interest; 2 no responses</p> <p>2. Stronger Communities Project – January 2022. The resolution had been approved: 11 in favour; 2 declared conflicts of interest; 2 no responses.</p>	EV
4.	<p><b>LEP Chair and CEO Report</b></p> <p>MT said that there was still no news on the outcome of the LEP Review. The publication of the Levelling Up white paper had also been delayed again. A number of members expressed their frustration, and some said they felt insulted at how LEPs and their board members were being treated by government.</p> <p>CB reported that the Trajectory Partnership were undertaking a study called 'Understanding Rural Britain to 2050', which may be of interest to the LEP for the future.</p> <p><b>Staffing Update</b></p> <p>RL reported that the planned redundancy process had not taken place due to staff resignations and that a re-structure was now in progress. With the resulting savings, and potential savings in other areas which were currently being worked through, the LEP would be able to trade through until the end of March 2023, albeit still trading at a loss.</p> <p><b>The Board noted Section 6 of the report regarding the LEP's position on tax, and in particular, VAT.</b> A discussion took place regarding the unforeseen costs of incorporation, the approach to VAT and staff pensions. RL was pursuing the potential to employ staff directly subject to staff still being able to be members of the Local Authority pension scheme. RL was also looking at whether, following the</p>	

	<p>LEP Review, LEPs could work together to agree a change to the VAT treatment with HMRC.</p> <p><b>Information on Skills Boot Camps would be sent to Board members.</b></p>	KJ
5.	<p><b>Update from the Business Support Steering Group</b></p> <p>Dave Courteen (DC) gave an update on recent activities and the main points covered were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent feedback from BEIS on the 2020/21 contract report despite being one of the lowest funded growth hubs.</li> <li>• 2021/22 contract – the delivery model remains the same. Improvement projects include a re-designed Marches Growth Hub (MGH) website and a new interactive light touch data dashboard.</li> <li>• MGH Business Enquiry &amp; Interaction Analysis report commissioned to help identify hot and cold spots and identify underrepresented sectors and business sizes.</li> <li>• Business Support Steering Group meeting themes.</li> <li>• Profile raising – there had been a large amount of media coverage of MGH across the Marches.</li> </ul> <p>A discussion took place regarding some of the information in the business enquiry and interaction report.</p> <p><b>A link to the full report is here: <a href="https://arcgis.com">Marches Growth Hub Business Enquiry &amp; Interaction Analysis (arcgis.com)</a> Any questions should be sent to Yasmin Sulaman <a href="mailto:Yasmin.Sulaman@marcheslep.org.uk">Yasmin.Sulaman@marcheslep.org.uk</a></b></p> <p>MT thanked DC for his informative presentation and for his work as the Chair of the Marches Business Support Steering Group.</p>	All
6.	<p><b>Report from the Performance Risk &amp; Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting on 16 December 2021</b></p> <p>SR thanked Ilia Bowles and Wayne Redge for all their work supporting PRMC. She drew the Board's attention to the actions taken where there were concerns or potential risks flagged with projects, including project promoters being asked to attend PRMC meetings to provide updates on the projects. Monitoring meetings had been increased to monthly which also served to mitigate risk.</p> <p>SR said that an update on the Oxon Link Road project from Shropshire Council had been requested but had not yet been received. <b>EP said he would follow up.</b></p> <p>MT informed the Board that her previous declaration of interest relating to the Oxon Link Road project was no longer extant. She also expressed her frustration that information was not forthcoming from project promoters when requested.</p> <p>SR expressed concern over the sustainability of the Marches LEP and said that other funding strategies would have to be explored to generate income going forward.</p> <p>PMRC was currently a board member short but couldn't go out to advert at this time due to the uncertainty about the future of LEPs.</p> <p><b>SR asked for a further volunteer from the Board to join PRMC. LEP Board members were asked to contact SR should they wish to discuss the role.</b></p>	EP  All
7.	<p><b>Committee Delegation</b></p> <p>MT stated that the LEP was seeking changes to the PRMC Terms of Reference and to the Scheme of Delegation, as detailed in the paper.</p> <p>Members discussed the proposal at length. Concerns were raised that the role of PRMC was not clearly defined and there was lack of clarity in the Scheme of</p>	

	<p>Delegation. There were only 3 voting members on the committee, which could cause issues of quoracy.</p> <p>Members said they had confidence in the work of the PRMC, and it would be beneficial for the committee to undertake more of the operational business, leaving the LEP Board to consider more strategic aspects.</p> <p>SR reassured members that the level of delegation would be for decisions on projects that were already funded, not for decisions on which projects should be funded.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed in principle, <i>subject to formal approval by written procedure</i>, that the Terms of Reference for PRMC and the Scheme of Delegation should be revised (13 for; 1 against).</b></p> <p><b><i>Should agreement not be reached by written procedure, the item would be tabled at the March LEP Board meeting.</i></b></p> <p><b>The Board agreed that membership of PRMC for voting purposes would be 4 LEP Board members, with a quorum of 3 (13 for; 1 against).</b></p>	<p>SR/RL</p> <p>SR/RL</p>
8.	<p><b>Programme update</b></p> <p>NA summarised the content of the paper.</p> <p><b>Local Growth Fund (LGF)</b></p> <p>All projects had been contracted with claims received on a monthly basis. The LEP team had met with all project promoters who had confirmed they will be able to meet their 2021/22 Financial Year (FY) contractual spend targets with the majority of costs profiles in Quarter 4.</p> <p>Three LGF projects utilised Freedoms and Flexibilities last FY to enable the LEP to meet its outturn target for 2020/21 FY. It was reported that the HEZ project had offset its Freedom and Flexibilities value, whilst the Tannery (Phase 2) and Connecting Shropshire projects had confirmed their values would be achieved during the Quarter 4 2020/21 FY period.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the position relating to the newly contracted Local Growth Fund projects, as set out in section 1 of the paper.</b></p> <p><b>Getting Building Fund (GBF)</b></p> <p>1 January – 31 March 2022 represented the final quarter for project expenditure in respect of the GBF programme. The low level of spend attributed to Quarters 1 &amp; 2 had been anticipated based on project financial profiles. Quarter 3 claims were currently being reconciled, which would be reported to Government on 25 February 2022.</p> <p>To mitigate underspend risk the LEP team was conducting monthly finance meetings with all projects, receiving assurances that spend allocations for 2021/22 would be met.</p> <p>Three projects had confirmed they were unable to achieve their GBF spend allocation by 31 March 2022, all of which have had their underspend approach approved by the LEP Board. In each case the LEP had been able to proactively manage risk relating to underspend by utilising its Accountable Body in relation to Freedoms &amp; Flexibilities, enabling financial profiles to be extended into 2022/23 FY. All other projects had confirmed they were able to spend their grant allocations by 31 March 2022.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the current position in relation to the Getting Building Fund Programme, as set out in section 2.1 and Appendix 1 of the paper.</b></p>	

	<p><b>Decisions Made by Correspondence</b></p> <p><b>Integrated Construction Wetlands (ICW) project</b> On 23 December 2021 a Written Resolution paper had been circulated to LEP Board members for approval in relation to a revised proposal for the Integrated Construction Wetlands (ICW) project. It was confirmed that LEP Board Members had voted to approve (12 in favour, 1 Conflict of Interest and 2 No responses) the recommendations set out within the paper. Members were informed that following the Written Resolution decision an updated Appendix 1 had been submitted by the ICW project team for inclusion within their Funding Agreement Variation. Based on the information provided by the project an updated Funding Agreement had been drafted and circulated by the LEP for Herefordshire Council to review. It was reported that yesterday the LEP had received an email from the ICW team querying the Match Funding profiles contained within the submitted Appendix 1. To ensure momentum was not lost in contracting this strategically important project the LEP team requested that the project re-submitted an updated Appendix 1 for inclusion within the Funding Agreement, as well as any outstanding legal comments. RA would check on progress.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the Written Resolution decision on the Integrated Construction Wetlands project, as set out in section 2.2 of the paper.</b></p> <p><b>Stronger Communities (New College, Wellington and surrounding site with Wrekin Housing Group) Project</b> A Written Resolution paper had been sent to LEP Board members on 7 January 2022 for the Stronger Communities (New College, Wellington and surrounding site with Wrekin Housing Group) Project. It was confirmed that LEP Board Members had voted to approve (11 in favour, 2 Conflict of Interest and 2 No responses) the recommendations set out within the paper. It was confirmed that a variation to the Funding Agreement was currently with the Accountable Body and would be sent out to Telford &amp; Wrekin Council tomorrow.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the Written Resolution decision on the Stronger Communities project, as set out in section 2.3 of the paper.</b></p> <p><i>GC left the meeting at 5.00pm.</i></p>	RA
9.	<p><b>Careers and Enterprise Hub delivery model</b> KJ briefed the Board on the current Marches Careers Hub delivery model and the existing challenges. The Marches Careers Hub was currently under-resourced with the Hub lead post being vacant since October 2021 and vacant Enterprise Co-ordinator posts in Shropshire (part time) and Telford &amp; Wrekin. This lack of resource was constraining delivery, hampering the achievement of contracted targets and limiting opportunities to develop local Hub-wide initiatives. A new Hub lead Andriane Usherwood-Brown had joined the LEP yesterday. The latest performance report highlighted that, in spite of the resource challenges, the Marches Careers Hub was making progress against national performance measures, but that delivery was not consistent across the three local authority areas and the current operational structure limited the opportunity to flex resources to meet project needs and maximise impact.</p>	



	<p>The new Hub Lead would be supported by the CEC and the LEP team to drive consistency and build performance to maximise the impact of the project within the current contract period to the end of August 2022.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the current position of the Marches Careers Hub project.</b></p> <p>KJ proposed that the current project delivery structure be reviewed in order to identify opportunities to improve performance and consistency. The employment of Enterprise Co-ordinators by the three local authorities and the LEP limited the Marches LEP (the contract holder) in implementing new ways of working and in being agile in meeting the needs of the project. Potential alternative options (successfully implemented by other Careers Hubs) were outlined in the paper. Consideration would need to be given to the match funding requirements under the project for alternative options, the impact on current staff members, the importance of maintaining effective relationships with local authority partners and the need to maintain alignment with other local careers education related projects delivered across the Marches.</p> <p>Members discussed the proposal. Local authority representatives expressed concerns about the options and requested further discussion and consideration of additional options. Members also suggested that further discussion with other relevant providers would be helpful.</p> <p><b>KJ noted the feedback and would follow up with local authorities and other stakeholders</b> and clarified that the proposal was specifically referring to the contract that the Marches LEP holds with the CEC.</p> <p><b>The Board noted that alternative delivery options were to be discussed and considered dependent on the outcome of the LEP Review and an extension to the CEC funding post August 2022 being awarded.</b></p> <p><i>GG left the meeting at 5.12pm.</i></p>	KJ
10.	<p><b>Delivery Plan 2022/23</b></p> <p>MT said that it was difficult to look at priorities until the outcome of the LEP Review but asked members to provide their input on what the LEP priorities should be in the coming year, for inclusion in the Marches LEP delivery plan.</p> <p>RL said that the draft Plan would have been tabled at this Board meeting but due to the uncertainty around the LEP Review, this had not been possible. As much preparation as possible would be done with input from Board members, and any gaps would then be filled when the outcomes of the LEP Review were known.</p> <p><b>Business Board Chairs would ask for input from their members.</b></p> <p><b>MT asked members to email RL with comments.</b></p> <p><i>WW left the meeting at 5.22pm</i> <i>BH left the meeting at 5.23pm</i></p>	FM, BH, WW  All
11.	<p><b>Board 'Away Day'</b></p> <p><b>Members would be contacted following the meeting regarding this item.</b></p>	MT/RL
12.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>Marches Investment Fund (MIF)</b></p> <p>RL explained that the paper sought to set out how the MIF fund should operate in order to be compliant and explained the broad principles. RL had discussed the</p>	

	<p>proposals with PK in his capacity as the LEP Access to Finance Champion. Members discussed the proposals.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed the Operating Guidelines of the Marches Investment Fund (9 For; 1 Abstention)</b></p> <p><b>Vote of Thanks</b> MT thanked Wayne Redge and Ilia Bowles on behalf of the LEP Board for all their hard work during their employment in the LEP team and wished them well in their new roles.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 5.25pm</p>	
<p align="center"><b>Next Meeting: 26 April 2022 at Ludlow Racecourse</b></p>		

Signed (electronically):

Mandy Thorn MBE DL, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 26 April 2022