

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
21 March 2023 at 3.30pm at The Shell Store
(Company Number: 11822614)**

Present:

Sonia Roberts	SR	Chair, Marches LEP
Will Westley	WW	Deputy Chair, Marches LEP & Telford Business Board Chair
Frank Myers MBE	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
Dave Courteen	DC	Marches Business Support Steering Group Chair
Andrew Manning Cox	AMC	Hereford Enterprise Zone Chair (part of meeting)
Cllr David Hitchiner	DH	Leader, Herefordshire Council
Cllr Lezley Picton	LP	Leader, Shropshire Council
Gordon Coppock	GC	Energy and Net Zero Champion
Christine Snell	CS	Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell
Paul Kalinauckas	PK	Access to Finance Champion
Dr Catherine Baxter	CB	Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University (part of meeting)
Alex Green	AG	Director Radfield Homecare
Graham Guest	GG	Skills Advisory Panel Chair; Skills Champion; Chief Executive and Principal of Telford College
Sara Williams	SW	Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs

In Attendance:

Govin Aujla	GA	Area Lead, Cities & Local Growth Unit
Alex Collins	AC	Deputy Area Lead, Cities & Local Growth Unit
Ross Cook	RC	Director for Economy and Environment, Herefordshire Council
James Walton	JW	Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council
Mark Barrow	MB	Executive Director for Place, Shropshire Council
Katherine Kynaston	KK	Director Housing Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council (online)
Rachel Laver	RL	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
Kathryn Jones	KJ	Head of Partnerships & Strategy, Marches LEP (part of meeting)
Mark Schneider	MS	Head of Business Development & Delivery, Marches LEP (part of meeting)
Ennis Vingoe	EV	Executive Assistant, Marches LEP (part of meeting)
Jo Grivell	JG	Office Administrator, Marches LEP (part of meeting)

Part A – Public Session

ITEM	ACTION
<p>1. Welcome</p> <p>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest SR thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Lee Carter and Clare Fenton.</p> <p>SR noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes.</p> <p>2. Declarations of Interest The Chair asked for any conflicts of interest and reminded members to complete the form that had been distributed for any specific Declarations of Interest for every meeting.</p> <p>3. SR made reference to the additional paper that had been circulated for Item 12 and said that this would be discussed in private session. LEP staff and anyone</p>	

	present who declared an interest in the item would be asked to leave the meeting at that point.	
2.	<p>Governance</p> <p>1. Appointment as a Director of Marches LEP Ltd Following the announcement regarding LEP funding SR proposed that no further appointments were made as directors of Marches LEP Ltd until the situation is clearer. GC would therefore remain as a co-opted member of the Board rather than becoming a Director of Marches LEP Ltd.</p> <p><i>The Board agreed the proposal subject to compliance requirements (unanimous).</i></p> <p>2. Resignation of Andrew Manning Cox and Catherine Baxter AMC had been a member of the Marches LEP Board since January 2018 in his capacity as Chair of the Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ). CB, Higher Education Champion had been a member of the LEP Board since March 2020.</p> <p>The Chair thanked AMC and CB for their excellent service to the Marches LEP Board. This was echoed by members.</p> <p><i>The Board noted that AMC and CB had resigned from the Marches LEP Board with effect from the end of the meeting. The necessary notification would be made to Companies House.</i></p>	EV
3.	<p>Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 24 January 2023 The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2023, following a date amendment, were approved by those members present at the meeting and would be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>Presentation – Update on Hereford Enterprise Zone by Mark Pearce, MD Hereford Enterprise Zone AMC, Chair of Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ) for the past 4.5 years, introduced Mark Pearce (MP), Managing Director of HEZ and welcomed everyone to Skylon Park. AMC said that HEZ had created jobs and given a buzz to this part of Herefordshire. The success of the HEZ was testament to what had been achieved with the support and funding provided by the LEP and others throughout the development of the site.</p> <p>Points covered in the presentation were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project started in 2013 with funding from Herefordshire Council and latterly LEP Growth Deal to make the brownfield land ‘development ready’. • The project increased the economic value of the locality and introduced businesses ranging from local family-owned to sub-regional businesses plus international companies. • Shell Store – the development respected the heritage of the building; retaining the original frame which was also a cheaper way to build it and complied with planning. • Cyber Quarter – a collaboration between the University of Wolverhampton and Herefordshire Council which included LEP and European funding. • NMITE Skylon Campus – new engineering campus • HEZ Outputs – 80 new businesses; 60 acres of land sold; 65,600 sq m of workspace developed; 1261 current and new jobs; 1,131 further jobs in company growth plans. 	

	<p>MP thanked the Chair and members of the Marches LEP Board for their support and said that the LEP investment had helped secure the current and future success of the Enterprise Zone. MP also thanked AMC for his contribution as Chair of the HEZ Board and his support to the private/public sector partnership.</p> <p>MP then answered member questions and added that in the Shell Store, companies originally in the incubation spaces were now moving on and there was also space for them to do that within the Shell Store itself. The intention had always been to have a churn of businesses.</p> <p>SR thanked MP for the informative presentation and congratulated him on the success of the HEZ.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>LEP Chair and CEO Report</p> <p>RL introduced the report and said that it would be taken as read. The majority of the report had been written prior to the government announcement that it was “minded to cease” core funding of LEPs from April 2024. A questionnaire had been sent to LEPs and LAs by government, to be returned by 14 April 2023.</p> <p>RL drew members’ attention to para 7.1 – that government had confirmed funding for growth hubs but not how much. Assuming the same amount of funding as last year, it was requested that approval be given to fund business information licences (Beahurst) for the coming year, as the funding for this would have to come from core funds until growth hub funding had come through.</p> <p>The Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) had also funded some additional licences but as funding for the SAP would cease, there was no further funding available for those licences.</p> <p><i>The Board agreed that funding of circa £18k would be made available from core funds in the first instance to pay for the Beahurst licence for the growth hubs for 2023/24 (unanimous).</i></p> <p>Careers Hub funding was probable for a further 12 months, for the next academic year from September. A positive meeting had been held with the Department for Business and Trade earlier today who remained keen to work with the LEP.</p> <p>RL confirmed that the LEP was able to meet all its liabilities through the whole of the coming financial year. The PR and marketing contract was now on a call-off basis with Be Bold due to uncertainty about the future of the LEP and funding for the Growth Hub.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the content of the report.</i></p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Report from the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee meeting held on 16 February 2023</p> <p>SR referred members to the report and made the point that outputs for projects would still require monitoring if the LEPs were to close. A lot of uncertainty remained around the government statement where devolution deals were not being developed. What was critical from the PRMC perspective was how monitoring of projects and measurement of outputs would continue, especially where projects hadn't yet been completed.</p> <p>Members discussed the risk registers including the Oxon Link Road and the Integrated Construction Wetlands projects.</p> <p><i>Board members noted the content of the report.</i></p>	

7.	<p>Directors' Insurance</p> <p>RL confirmed that the wording of the Directors and Officers liability insurance and information about run off insurance had been circulated to members. In the event of the company being wound up, ring-fenced funds for run off insurance would be allocated to the accountable body to keep securing insurance on an annual basis, and an additional budget for the cost of excesses in the event of a claim had also been assigned.</p> <p>AMC noted that it was imperative that the accountable body take on the obligation to maintain run off insurance.</p> <p>RL confirmed that she had met with accountable body accountants and HR in September to make sure the LEP was prepared for any potential winding up. She had gone through the likely obligations and had ringfenced budget to pay the accountable body to maintain the relevant services. This ringfenced budget had increased as further information had been obtained e.g., run off insurance including excess charges.</p> <p><i>Members noted the content of the report and the ring fencing of funding to cover run off Insurance costs for a period of 6 years following closure of the Marches LEP.</i></p>	
8.	<p>Marches LEP 2023/24 Budget</p> <p>RL commented that the paper was to confirm the budget presented at the last meeting which now included the confirmed core funding announced by government following that Board meeting.</p> <p>Members discussed that if the LEP were to close in April 2024, that the 'clean' funds it held should be used for the good of the business economy in the Marches during this year. RL went through the funds that might be available. There would need to be discussion and agreement on how best to spend this money to have the best impact in the Marches.</p> <p>AMC suggested that funds may be recouped by the government particularly if a debenture was in place. Members discussed the LEP's status as a private company limited by guarantee. AC and GA said that no information was yet forthcoming from government on this issue. RL said that the 'lessons learnt' document following the closure of Regional Development Agencies may be a useful document to refer to and that she would seek clarity on whether the government could/intend to recoup funds from the LEP.</p> <p>RL to seek advice re the funds held by the LEP.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the final Marches LEP Budget for 2023/24 (unanimous).</i></p>	RL
9.	<p>Transport Officers' Group (TOG)</p> <p>MS referred members to the update report.</p> <p>One focus group meeting with TOG members had already taken place to discuss rail projects and further focus group meetings would take place to identify specific projects in 4 other broader programmes. Everything identified would then be evaluated using the Joint Appraisal Framework. The consultants aim to have this work completed by the end of April.</p> <p>Members discussed the acceleration in requirement for and delivery of active travel measures.</p> <p><i>Members of the Board noted the content of the report.</i></p>	

<p>10.</p>	<p>Presentation – Smart Micro Energy Grids by Rory Langdon, Energy Projects Developer, Bouygues Energies & Services (UK) SR welcomed Rory Langdon to the meeting to deliver a presentation (remotely) on micro energy grids. Th main points covered were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bouygues carried out Energy Performance Contracting which de-risked delivery for the customer as it takes on financial risk and the customer pays for this based on savings made. • Example project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Swaffham Prior Heat Network – community led de-carbonisation. Led by the community land trust in the rural village of 300 dwellings. BYES provided a retrofitted zero-carbon heat network. Reliable heat source and improved air quality. Individual energy supply agreements. ○ North Angle Solar Farm, Soham – council-owned with grid connection provides the renewable power to the Swaffham Prior project. • Funding – the project received significant grant funding initially both from central government and the local council. <p>SR thanked Rory for the very informative presentation. The slides would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.</p>	<p>EV</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>Strategy Updates Skills Advisory Panel and Future Strategic Skills Oversight KJ introduced the paper which was in two parts. The first part provided an update on the achievements of the SAP since it had been created in September 2019, and was currently chaired by GC as the LEP Board’s Skills Champion. DfE had confirmed that there would be no SAP funding from 1 April 2023 and, therefore, no contractual requirement for LEPs to have a SAP. The second part of the report proposed the formation of a Strategic Skills and Employment Group (SSEG) which would enable the Marches LEP to maintain oversight of the skills and employment agenda. There would be opportunities through the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) to better understand future skills requirement in the area, and there may also be opportunities coming out of the DfE’s Local Skills Investment Fund. GC said that there was already collaboration between the colleges in the Marches and further opportunities may be available on the next release of strategic development funds. The LSIP would produce a report, but it was not about delivery. Two recent SDF projects had had a significant impact on skills in the area including the NHS where £1.5m had been saved off the agency budget in Shropshire and Telford alone. The proposed SSEG would consist of individuals working at a strategic level to look at the skills agenda across the Marches, reviewing and seeking opportunities for collaborative working.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the update in the report.</i></p> <p><i>The Board approved the proposal to develop a Strategic Skills and Employment Group as a sub-group of the LEP Board to replace the SAP (unanimous).</i></p>	<p>KJ</p>

Part B – Private Session Confidential	
12.	<p>LEP Network Update SR asked LEP staff (except the CEO) and anyone who felt they may be conflicted in discussions on the future of the LEP to leave the room. CB and AMC left the meeting as this was their final meeting as members of the Board and didn't think it appropriate to stay. KJ, MS, EV and JG also left the meeting. Private session commenced at 4.55pm.</p>
13.	<p>Any Other Business Nil</p>
Future Meetings:	
May 2023	23 May 2023 3.30pm to 5.30pm Ludlow Assembly Rooms, 1 Mill St, Ludlow SY8 1AZ
July 2023	18 July 2023 3.30pm to 5.30pm Ludlow Assembly Rooms, 1 Mill St, Ludlow SY8 1AZ
Sep 2023	
Nov 2023	

Signed (electronically):

Sonia Roberts, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 3 August 2023