

THE MARCHES LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP LIMITED					
BOARD MEETING					
Thursday 28 November 2023			3.30 pm – 5.30 pm		
Plymouth Rooms, Ludlow Racecourse, Bromfield, SY8 2BT					
AGENDA					
Item	Time		Lead	Purpose	Paper
Part A – Public Session					
1.	3.30 pm	Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest	SR		
2.	3.30 pm 5 mins	Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-election of G Guest Confirmation of items approved by correspondence 	SR	Decision Information	X
3.	3.35 pm 5 mins	Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 19 September 2023 and any Matters Arising	SR		X
4.	3:40pm 10 mins	LEP Chair and CEO Report	SR/RL	Information Discussion	X
5.	3:50 pm 5 mins	Minutes of the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting – 26 October 2023 (including risk registers)	SR	Information	X
6.	3:55 pm 10 mins	Marches Careers Hub update presentation	A Usherwood- Brown	Information	
7.	4:05 pm 10 mins	Funding recommendations following appraisal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport Strategic Outline Business Case Low Carbon Innovative Land Use Fund 	SR, RL	Information Decision	X
8.	4:15 pm 5 mins	Business Board funding	SR, RL	Discussion Decision	X
9.	4.20 pm 20 mins	Oxon Link Road update	SR, Shropshire Council	Information Decision	X
Part B – Private Session					
10.	4.45 pm 45 mins	Confidential Discussion Marches LEP Future and Transition arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision on future of LEP Bank Account Budgets Staffing Careers Hub LGF/GBF, Growth Hub, Key Account Management Timescales 	SR	Information Discussion Decision	X

11.	5.30 pm	Any Other Business	SR		
Future Meetings					
Jan 24	23 January 2023 3.30pm - 5.30pm Board Meeting at Ludlow Racecourse				
Mar 24	19 March 2023 3.30pm – 5.30pm Board Meeting at Ludlow Racecourse				

Blank Page

Meeting date:	28 November 2023					
Agenda Item:	Item 2					
Item Subject:	Governance					
For:	Discussion		Decision	x	Information	x

Purpose of the Paper:

To provide information to Board members regarding the proposed re-election of a Board member and to provide confirmation of an item approved by correspondence.

Summary of Recommendations:

That Board members:

1. Confirm the re-election of Graham Guest as a Board member for a further term.
2. Note the recent item approved by correspondence to approve the Marches LEP capital funding project call 2023.

Main points

1. Re-election of Graham Guest as a Board Member

Graham Guest has served as a member of the Marches LEP Board (Skills Champion) for 1 term (2 years). Ordinarily, this appointment would be reviewed and potentially rotate to another college principal in the Marches. However, as the future of the LEP is yet to be confirmed and the appointment may potentially be for a limited period, it is proposed that, for continuity, Graham Guest continues as a Board member for a period of 1 year in the first instance. Graham has confirmed that he is willing to continue as a director and Board member on this basis.

Members of the Board are asked to confirm the re-election of Graham Guest as Skills Champion for a further period of 1 year.

2. Confirmation of items approved by correspondence

The Board is asked to note that the recent item by correspondence to approve the Marches LEP capital funding project call 2023 was approved on 25 November 2023.

Report Author: Rachel Laver, CEO

Blank Page

**Draft Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
19 September 2023 at Ludlow Racecourse
(Company Number: 11822614)**

Present:

Sonia Roberts MBE	SR	Chair, Marches LEP
Will Westley	WW	Deputy Chair, Marches LEP & Telford Business Board Chair
Frank Myers MBE	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
Cllr Lezley Picton	LP	Leader, Shropshire Council (online)
Cllr Lee Carter	LC	Cabinet Member for Place (The Economy & Neighbourhood Services), Telford & Wrekin Council (online)
Cllr Graham Biggs	GB	Cabinet Member Economy and Growth, Herefordshire Council
Alex Green	AG	Director, Radfield Homecare (online)
Dave Courteen	DC	Marches Business Support Steering Group Chair
Paul Kalinauckas	PK	Access to Finance Champion
Simone Clarke	SC	Higher Education Champion, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education & Students, Harper Adams University (online)

In Attendance:

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

Observers:

Gary Blackburn	GB	Project Officer, Marches LEP (part of meeting)
Mandy Powney	MP	Office Administrator designate, Marches LEP (part of meeting)

Part A – Public Session

ITEM		ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest SR thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Apologies were received from Graham Guest, Clare Fenton, Sara Williams, Gordon Coppock and Cllr Jonathan Lester. Cllr Graham Biggs was attending as the Alternate Director for Herefordshire Council.</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>No declarations of interest were received.</p>	

<p>2.</p>	<p>Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 3 August 2023 The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2023 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> <p>Matters arising Item 2 – Governance. EV confirmed that the necessary documentation had been submitted to Companies House regarding the recent appointment of the new directors.</p> <p>Item 8 – Oxon Link Road (OLR). MB updated the Board on the action on Shropshire Council to provide a date for the OLR project being submitted to planning committee. MB stated that no formal objections remained from any agencies and the final conditions were being agreed so things were on track for fixing the date of the planning meeting. WW asked if this would be the October 2023 planning meeting. MB said that a special planning meeting would be called for this and couldn't yet confirm the date.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>LEP Chair and CEO Report SR reiterated that it was still 'business as usual' in terms of LEP operations. RL had recently attended a transport round table meeting in London with the local MPs and the Strategic Land Use Study would be launched next week at an event at Harper Adams University, chaired by Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP.</p> <p>The Careers Hub had secured funding for academic year 23-24. A revised structure for the delivery model removes the need for one post and a consultation is taking place with the affected staff member.</p> <p>Energy projects – these are progressing well, and the Marches Energy Grant (MEG) Scheme has approved £116k worth of grants so far. It was acknowledged that it had taken some time to get to this position with the MEG, due to contracting issues with the relevant LAs. The assessment panel was now meeting monthly and there are another 8 projects ready to be presented to the next meeting.</p> <p>Marches LEP Board Transition Group – this group is meeting weekly to look at the processes required during transition of the LEP functions to LAs. Governance is a particular focus and SR reminded members that they are part of a company limited by guarantee.</p> <p>As part of the transition processes a dedicated corporate legal advisor has been appointed by the LEP to support the transition group and the Board, in particular to help manage any exposure to risk for directors and partners.</p> <p>SR thanked the LEP staff for all their hard work during this difficult time. She thanked JG for all her support to the team and various groups and committees during her tenure and wished her well in her new role. SR welcomed Mandy Powney as the new LEP Office Administrator.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the content of the report.</i></p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Confirmation of items approved by correspondence:</p> <p><i>The Board noted that the recent resolutions by correspondence had been approved as follows:</i></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of appointment of new directors and re-election of a Board member approved on 07.08.23. Oxon Link Road project – Option 1 approved on 18.08.23. 	
5.	<p>Minutes of the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee meeting held on 24 August 2023</p> <p>SR reported that the PRMC continues to meet regularly and thanked the members of the committee for their continued support to the LEP.</p> <p>Continuity of staffing had been included on the Corporate Risk Register and it could potentially have a knock-on effect on programme registers.</p> <p>Some capital projects were being closely monitored due to the uncertainty of timelines for some and MS was working with LAs to ensure consistency.</p> <p><i>Board members noted the content of the PRMC minutes.</i></p>	
<p>Part B – Private Session Confidential</p>		
6.	Confidential - Funding Proposals	
7.	Confidential Discussion Future of the LEP	
8.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>SR said that the Careers Hub was advertising for volunteer Enterprise Advisors. A commitment of 4 hours a month. Members were asked to share this with their networks.</p>	All
<p>Future Meetings:</p>		
Nov 2023	28 November 2023 – Ludlow Racecourse	
Jan 2024	January 2024 – Ludlow Racecourse	
Mar 24	19 March 2024 – Ludlow Racecourse	

Blank Page

Meeting date:	28 November 2023					
Agenda Item:	4					
Item Subject:	Marches LEP Chair and Chief Executive Officer's Report					
For:	Discussion	X	Decision		Information	X

Purpose of the Paper: To provide Board Members with a brief overview of the LEP's activities not reported elsewhere.

Summary of Recommendations: That Board Members note the content of the Report.

1. Executive Summary

Each of the three councils have now approved proposals to set up a Joint Committee. The committee met for the first time on the 17 November. The LAs will feedback at the Board meeting.

Shropshire Council have completed a transition plan return for government which is due to be submitted at the end of the month. Government is expected to issue transition guidance to LAs in the coming weeks and confirmation of funding for 24/25.

A transition plan is in place and the LEP team and council officers are working through the processes needed to transfer the functions that government have said they expect to be transferred at the end of March. These include the LGF and GBF programmes and the Growth Hub. To date there has been no clarity about the need to transfer the Careers Hub Service, with the Careers and Enterprise Company confirming that any proposals would need to be approved by them. In the meantime, they're happy for the LEP to continue to deliver the contract until the end of August 24.

There is still no clarity about funding for Growth Hubs next year. This is one of the functions that has to be transferred to the LAs, so we've looked to extend all the different licences to the end of March and to complete the audit at the end of April. It will then be up to the Joint Committee to decide how they want to operate a Growth Hub/s across the Marches and seek the appropriate approvals.

The LGF and GBF returns have been completed and have highlighted where projects are significantly behind on outputs and match. Given the time that has now passed since both the LGF and GBF programmes closed and we're now in the monitoring period, it is evident that some projects won't achieve the contracted match funding and therefore PRMC have reviewed the status of match on individual projects and will make recommendations to the Board about clawback of grants.

We have gone out to call for three different small funds, to allocate the capital funding we have left. We had a very disappointing response to the Low Carbon Innovative Land Use call so, at the request of the Marches Nature Partnership members, extended the deadline for two weeks, we had one subsequent application which following a scoring exercise is recommended for approval of funding.

2. Staffing and resources

The Marches LEP team is continuing to concentrate on the delivery of all contracted programmes and projects. The team is now greatly reduced but showing great flexibility in working across different programmes to help manage the workload.

Due to a revised delivery model for the Marches Careers Hub project, the LEP's Enterprise Co-ordinator post has been made redundant following a consultation process. David Taylor will, therefore, leave the Marches LEP team on 31 December 2023. We would like to thank him for the support he has given to the Marches Careers Hub project and wish him well for the future.

Following a procurement exercise, we have appointed Tim Travers as a Marches LEP dedicated legal adviser who will be working for the LEP approximately one day a week until the end of March. This provides additional resource to support transition discussions. Tim has been advising Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP on their transition, so has very specific helpful experience.

3. Strategic activity

The launch of the [Marches Land Use Study](#) was held on 28 September 2023 at the Agri-Epi Centre at Harper Adams University. This was a well-attended event featuring speakers including Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP, Colin Preston MBE and representatives from the Forestry Commission, Country Land and Business Association and Hutchinsons. Examples of the economic, environmental and social benefits derived from new approaches to land use were highlighted. Rachel Laver launched the Marches Low Carbon Innovative Land Use Fund at the event.

3.1. Transport business case call

There was limited interest in this call, with only two applications being received. We were particularly surprised as we had expected bids from at least two of the authorities.

3.2. New capital funding call

There is currently a new capital call out, as approved at the last Board meeting which concentrates on three themes, Business Support, Skills and Net Zero. The closing date is 1 December 2023 and there has already been strong interest.

3.3. Local Area Energy Plan

The first draft has been received and been sent back for further work. A final draft is expected in December which will be of benefit to the LAs in terms of outlining the most effective routes for the area to contribute towards meeting the national Net Zero target, as well as meeting local Net Zero targets.

The Marches LEP has contributed to the LEP Network's response to DEFRA's call for evidence on the relationship between education and land-based industries. Our comments highlighted the importance of Hereford, Ludlow and North Shropshire's Walford and Holme Lacy campuses and Harper Adams University's strengths in this sector.

4. Finance

The LEP remains a going concern as there are funds to trade through another 6 months. We have received all anticipated income for the year. We are benefiting from higher interest on funds we hold, and costs are within profile apart from the ring-fenced budget for wind-up costs. The ring-fenced budget for wind up costs had to be increased substantially as the redundancy figures provided by Shropshire Council didn't include broken service which, according to the council policy, is eligible. We've also had the figures for pension strain recalculated which have changed significantly. Given the confidential nature of these figures an update will be given in Part B of the Board meeting.

5. Delivery

5.1. Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund

The LGF and GBF returns have now been completed. It is clear that some projects won't achieve their outputs and match funding. PRMC has been monitoring the projects closely and will make recommendations on potential clawback of grants. While this is far from ideal, grants have been awarded with outputs put forward by applicants, and considerations of value for money against other projects were considered as part of the decision to award the grants, therefore it is important that the contracted outputs and match are achieved unless there are mitigating reasons.

Recommendation:

PMRC has continued to receive updates from projects and challenge under delivery. It is recommended that the Board delegate responsibility to the committee to initiate clawback procedures on projects where appropriate and where the value is below £1m.

5.2. Marches Growth Hub

There remains a lag in terms of the forecast spend against actual spend; the underspend is approximately £61k. Of this, £20k is linked to budget lines for LEP events and research. After consultation with the Marches Business Support Steering Group and the Growth Hubs (GH), it was agreed that £19k should be reallocated; £5k has been given to each GH for additional business support activities and £4k has been given to Be Bold for further publicity to promote the work of the Marches Growth Hub. Regarding the remaining underspend of £42k, the GHs are confident they will bring spend back into profile now that the SPF business programmes are up and running. The LEP had planned to deliver an Innovation Training workshop on 8 November, however this was cancelled due to low levels of registration; only 7 people had registered to attend by 1 November. The LEP is considering whether to organise another training session in Feb/March 2024. A bid writing workshop was delivered on 16 November at the University Centre Shrewsbury; 3 companies attended the event.

5.3. Energy Projects

Marches Energy Grant scheme - this project is now progressing well after a slow start due to contracting issues. The assessment panel is now meeting every few weeks and 30 grants have now been awarded worth £339k towards projects worth £1.3m. The anticipated carbon savings from the projects already approved are 300 tonnes just from these first 30 grants.

The Low Carbon Technology Centre in Herefordshire is progressing well, with work still expected to complete in Spring 24.

5.4. Department for Business & Trade (DBT) Key Account Management (KAM) Programme

Progress remains positive under this project, and we are on target to achieve the contracted outputs by the end of the financial year. Companies being actively account managed have been reviewed and 'churned' as required by DBT. Communication with local authority partners continues to ensure that our delivery partner resource is focussed on identifying and engaging with new foreign-owned businesses. The first project win, against our target of 6, has now landed and work to gather evidence to formally report this to DBT is underway.

Gary Blackburn, Marches LEP Project Officer, attended the Midlands meeting held on 2 November 2023 and our delivery partner, Mountain Perspective Ltd, presented on effective approaches being employed to identify and engage client companies.

We are awaiting further information from DBT on any potential extension to current funding and to better understand any transition arrangements.

6. Skills and Labour Market Support

6.1. Marches Careers Hub

An update will be provided at the meeting

Financial implications: None

Legal implications: None

Risks, opportunities and impacts: None

Equality implications: None

Report Authors:

Sonia Roberts, Marches LEP Chair

Rachel Laver, Marches LEP CEO

Blank Page

DRAFT
Minutes of the Marches LEP Performance, Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) Thursday 26 October 2023

Present		
Sonia Roberts	SR	Chair of the Marches LEP Board
Alex Green	AG	Marches LEP Board Member
Sara Williams	SW	Marches LEP Board Member
Frank Myers	FM	Marches LEP Board Member
Dr Simone Clarke	SC	Marches LEP Board Member (attended this meeting as an observer)
Dainy Runton	DR	Deputy Section 151 Officer, Telford & Wrekin Council
Rachael Hart (part)	RH	Deputy Section 151 Officer, Herefordshire Council
Jude Tranmer	JT	Chief Accountant, Herefordshire Council
Rachel Laver	RL	Marches LEP Chief Executive
Mark Schneider	MS	Marches LEP Head of Business Development and Delivery
Kathryn Jones	KJ	Marches LEP Head of Partnerships and Strategy
Mandy Powney	JG	Marches LEP Office Administrator
Alex Collins	AC	Deputy Area Lead, Cities & Local Growth Unit
Govin Aujla	AJ	Assistant Director, Cities & Local Growth Unit
<u>Guest Speakers</u>		
Tim Yair	TY	Principal Net Zero Project Officer
Andriané Usherwood-Brown	AUB	Marches LEP, Strategic Careers Hub Lead
Susan White	SWh	Programme Manager, Herefordshire Council
Mark Averill	MA	Service Director Environment & Highways, Herefordshire Council

ITEM		ACTION
1	<p>Welcome, apologies and introductions</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Dr Simone Clarke who is a new LEP Board Member and is attending the meeting as an observer.</p> <p>Guest speakers attended for their particular agenda items: Tim Yair, Andriané Usherwood-Brown, Susan White and Mark Averill</p> <p>Apologies were received from Ken Clarke, Andrew Lovegrove, Karen Morris and Ben Jay</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting on 24 August 2023 were reviewed, checked for accuracy, and approved as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Any actions from the previous minutes were either completed or would be discussed under agenda items at this meeting.</p>	
3	<p>Performance Monitoring Exceptions</p> <p>a) Growth Deal & Getting Building Fund update</p> <p>i. HCCI Extension</p> <p>MS introduced Susan White and Mark Averill from Hereford Council who attended the meeting to discuss their request for an extension. Details of the request are to extend the Business Grants by 3 months to 31st December 2023; to divert funding from City Greening and City Trees</p>	

projects to their Public Art Project; to extend the Public Art Project to 30 June 2024; to extend Project Management to 31 Dec 2024. A risk was noted that committed spend may not be defrayed by 31 Dec 2024. You can find a copy of the presentation at the link [HCCI Presentation](#)

Questions and Comments

It was confirmed that the public art project is part of the original approval. An update was requested on the actual amounts involved and the matched funding position. **Action MS to circulate updated figures. Update 26.10.23 MS circulated updated figures to SR/RL. Action Completed.**

A discussion took place around the low take up of business grants which was disappointing. Even though the grants had been promoted thoroughly, take up had been quite low. Planning wasn't considered to be holding up the process. There was a general consensus that the information around this request for an extension to the HCCI project was presented at short notice and didn't allow the committee adequate time to consider the detail. **Action MS will bring the item back to an interim PRMC meeting to be held in November giving the committee time to consider the proposal.**

MS

ii. Overview of Grant position across all projects

MS presented a paper on the overview of grant positions across all projects and a discussion focussed on those projects with particular concerns.

Getting Building Fund (GBF) projects

The Integrated Construction Wetlands (ICW) project is due to finish at end of March 2024. Housing units are starting to be unlocked, but the information in report is a little bit out of date. There are 182 housing units currently unlocked. Match funding has been identified. They have spent the local grant too.

On other projects there is more time to spend the money.

The Stronger Communities project is starting to move forward now so those targets are on schedule.

Pride Hill Modelling, MS met with the Council project team to discuss and they are looking to have a further extension to that project. There are delays associated with Riverside. **Update 30.10.23** There will be a report on the next PRMC in November.

Questions and comments

DR highlighted that the grant on the Stronger Communities project is New College, Wellington not Station Quarter. **Action MS to amend.**

The abbreviations Con Act Pos mean Contract, Actual & Position and Actual minus Position equates to the current position.

MS

Going forward, the overview report will focus on a graduated timeline so that the committee can identify the probability of projects hitting targets. **Action MS to amend.**

MS

	<p>MS will update the report to the most recent figures for the next PRMC in November. The Committee will then take a view on whether to contact project sponsors to ensure they can meet their outputs. Action. MS to bring a revised report to the next meeting of PRMC in November.</p> <p>Action. MP to set up a November PRMC interim meeting. Action completed.</p> <p>b) Growth Hub update At the last meeting of the Business Support Steering Group (BSSG) it was highlighted that there is an underspend on the Growth Hub budget of around £60k. £40k is linked to physical growth hub activity across this area, this is due to some delays in expenditure linked to the SPF programme. The hubs have assured us they will spend the monies by the end of the financial year. The remaining £20k underspend is linked to activity in the centre around organising events and research. At the BSSG meeting the steering group were asked to come up with suggestions on how this underspend could be used. Ideas will be collated and a view taken as to how to achieve best value/impact with these remaining funds.</p> <p>c) Key Account Management KJ gave an update on this project, which is funded by Department of Business and Trade, with a purpose of providing support to smaller foreign owned businesses across the Marches to help them expand. The project has 3 main targets;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the number of businesses that it supports where it is currently exceeding the target of 32, having supported 34; 2. Is to identify growth and expansion plans with 16 of those businesses and we are currently at 10. 3. Is to see 6 of those expansion projects to fruition by the end of the year. <p>All targets are on schedule or where we would expect them to be at this point in the year.</p>	MS
4.	<p>Marches LEP update SR gave an update on the Marches LEP. There are regular meetings of two groups; a transition group comprising of Officers meeting weekly and a Transition Board that meets and reviews recommendations made by the Officers meeting. SR has had a meeting with representatives from DBT/MHCLG and they will be attending the next LEP Board Meeting, to assist the Board in working through the transition of functions of the LEP to Local Authorities, as required. The LEP is getting some clarity now on what is happening between LEP and the Local Authorities and have appointed legal support. The LEP has been constituted for some time as a Private Limited Company, it is important that Board Members and Directors of the LEP are aware of their responsibilities to the LEP as well as the requirements and recommendations of Government. It is important that these two align as we move forward but company law will have to take precedence.</p>	
5.	<p>Top 5 Risk Registers MS gave an update on the top risks.</p> <p>A) Corporate Risk Register Corporate Risk Register Overview 15.11.23 A number of risks are gradually increasing because of the uncertain future of the LEP. A new risk has been added “Directors of Marches LEP Ltd not acting in the best interests of the company”.</p> <p>Action MS to circulate the full register to ¹⁷SR and JW (151 officer) prior to each</p>	

	<p>Pre-PRMC meeting. This had been completed prior to this meeting.</p> <p>Going forward there will be issues coming out of the transition process which will need to be added as strategic risks as they arise. It was agreed that the risk register would show both risks and issues.</p> <p>B) Programme Risk Register Programme Risk Register Overview 17.11.23 Oxon Link Road A discussion took place as to whether this risk should be updated, as one of the concerns is affordability. If the Government agree to underwrite the NWRR this risk could then be updated. The planning meeting on the NWRR is 31 October 2023 and JW confirmed that they are waiting for clarification from the Government around the underwriting of the NWRR.</p> <p>Growth Hub risk may increase dependent on the transition processes. The message around transition needs to be clear and that business support will continue subject to confirmation of funding from the government. If in the transition, valuable pieces of work are lost or reduced, such as The Growth Hub website which disseminates information to local businesses, this would have an impact on local businesses. Shortfalls will need to be added to risks in the future.</p> <p>A new risk has been added which is Marches Careers Hub around the potential disruption to the project during the LEP transition process.</p>	MS
6	<p>EA Technology and National Grid Monitor Tim Yair, Principal Net Zero Project Officer gave a very informative overview on the following presentation. Low Voltage Substation Monitoring presentation</p> <p>This is a Substation Monitoring Project part of MEP which is looking at capacity issues. It should help us to understand what goes on at a voltage substation level and identify constraints. In this region they are installing about 200 LV monitors, some will concentrate on business communities and be in areas where we get a lot of complaints about capacity. Output of all monitors will be on a mapping system held by National Grid. The important part of this project is that we will be able to advise businesses on how they can do something different rather than saying no you can't do something due to grid capacity. It will in theory support 85 businesses and will start looking at innovative solutions in our area. To date the project has installed 160 VisNets. Data is being uploaded to the portal. There has been a media launch. It will take some time to fully understand the stresses on individual LV Substations and there will need to be a year's worth of data to understand it properly.</p> <p>Questions and comments How will all of this data create action? A. There is a need to collect and understand the data then it will be down to technical experts to decide how the data can support action. We need to make the best use of the grid infrastructure we currently have. The data will help us identify the best ways to put energy into businesses in the future. Is there any change in attitude about getting solar onto the grid? A. We hope to see more renewables because of this project that will match demand and maximise the grid. It is important to keep pushing that this data will help develop the Marches business base because energy constraints are an issue hampering the area's ability to attract businesses.</p>	
7	<p>Herefordshire Low Carbon Technology Centre (Energy Fund) update Tim Yair also gave a very informative presentation on the Herefordshire Low Carbon</p>	

	<p>Technology centre.</p> <p>This is a Capital project to convert two barns in Herefordshire into a dedicated teaching space for Low Carbon Technology. Objectives include upskilling those who work in the construction and allied industries in the installation of low carbon technologies and create sustained employment in the low carbon sector; support businesses by becoming an exemplar and work with schools to raise the profile of low carbon technologies amongst pupils and promote future training and employment. The project is on schedule to complete 29th March 2024. A press release has launched and there are lots of photographs available to view as required. SR said that this was a very effective and impressive project. Well done to those concerned.</p>	
8	<p>Marches Careers Hub Update Presentation KJ and AUB gave an update and presentation on the Marches Career Hub Marches Career Hub Presentation</p> <p><u>Background on the project.</u> The Department of Education appointed the Careers and Enterprise Company to manage the project across England. Its purpose is to positively drive improvement in careers education in secondary schools and colleges. The LEP manage the hub delivery and activities and contract with each Local Authority on the Enterprise Co-ordinator posts in their areas. The Careers Hub Steering Group meets two or three times a year. This group works with other partners like Job Centre Plus and National Careers Service; there is also a Careers Hub Strategic Planning Group which assesses that this work aligns with other areas and adds value to what goes on; and a Careers Hub Operations Delivery Group where the Local Authorities come together to plan activities and ensure they meet targets and KPIs.</p> <p><u>Performance and Achievements</u> The Careers Hub covers the 3 local authority areas and includes 64 schools and colleges. It is currently in the top 3 performing careers hubs in the West Midlands area and the only one in that area that has had their delivery plan approved and funds received. Schools engage well with the Hub. We have a network of 54 business advisors that support our schools. We are currently focussing on how we can support schools working with employers and have a key focus on making sure young people are well informed on pathways open to them. A recent live broadcast around apprenticeships saw over 7000 young people take part.</p> <p>We are promoting local labour market information to ensure young people are aware of what is in their area. We have recently partnered with Telford & Wrekin Council and obtained additional funding from University of Wolverhampton, focussing on early intervention with younger people, and piloted a piece of work with 30 Year 9 students at two schools in Telford identified at being most at risk, which was very successful. AUB has case studies that she can share with anyone who would like to see the outcome of that work.</p> <p>The Future Skills Questionnaire was launched within schools which is a student survey at KS3, repeated at KS4 and again at KS5 and helps school to understand gaps in knowledge. 2935 students completed the questionnaire, and we have access to that data to ensure we address the gaps in that knowledge.</p> <p>The Volunteer network has 54 volunteers and is continually growing. Enterprise Advisers have attended over 50 planning meetings directly with schools. Enterprise Co-ordinators have hosted over 150 one to one meetings with Careers Leads in schools to ensure young people are receiving impartial advice. AUB has attended Head Teacher briefings at each of our Local Councils.</p>	

	<p>The next steps are to build on that success. We have identified risks around short term of funding and the changing environment during LEP transition. The work relies heavily on the support work undertaken by the Accountable Body's (SCC) Finance team who help us streamline the funding and subsequently deliver the work. This contract is in place to the end of August 2024 and any changes to the delivery model would need approval from CEC, and they have emphasised the importance of this model and approach.</p> <p>FM agreed with the need to disseminate this message about careers advice whenever we can down into primary schools. Great deal of evidence now highlighting how important it is to target younger pupils. SR congratulated KJ and AUB on the work they are doing. It is a positive message and great to see the impact of what you are doing with young people benefitting from careers advice and education. The presentation will go on to the LEP Board in November.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Any other business Dates of future meetings were approved and MP will set up those meetings in diaries. Update 31.10.23 Meetings in diaries. Action closed.</p> <p>KJ asked JT (Herefordshire) if she could chase up an update on progress made by Herefordshire Council in sealing their agreement for Marches Careers Hub funding.</p>	<p>JT</p>
	<p>Dates of Future Meetings November 24th 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Grant position across all projects • HCCI extension and Pride Hill Extension • Outcome of Oxon Link Road Planning Meeting. <p>14th December 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station Quarter • Marches Centre of Excellence in Health and Social Care • Cyber Quarter: Midlands Centre for Cyber Security • Integrated Construction Wetlands <p>SR asked that all information relating to any agenda items for future meetings is shared before the meetings to give the committee opportunity to read and prepare.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 3.45pm</p>	<p>All</p>

Blank Page

Meeting date:	28 th November 2023					
Agenda Item:	Funding recommendations following appraisal					
Item Subject:	Item 7					
For:	Discussion		Decision	X	Information	X

Purpose of the paper:

1. To seek Board endorsement on the grants as outlined below:
 - a. **Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) Transport Funding**
 - b. **Low Carbon Innovative Land Use Fund**

Summary of Recommendations:

1. To approve a grant of £75k to Shropshire council for the development of a transport business case for an active travel corridor in Shrewsbury.
2. To approve a grant of £39k to Bentley growers Ltd from the Low Carbon Innovative Land Use Fund to fund a study looking at the potential use and benefits of bio-char in chicken farming. This would be subject to clarification of outputs and outcomes with the applicant.

Main Points

a. Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) Transport Funding

The call opened on 2nd October 2023 and closed on 3rd November 2023. Two applications were received for funding, only one fulfilled the minimum criteria. After reviewing this application for a feasibility study for the development of an active travel corridor from Meole Brace to Coleham Head in Shrewsbury, it is recommended that £75k is awarded to Shropshire Council. The Council has agreed to provide £35k of match funding to the scheme.

b. Low Carbon Innovative Land Use Fund

This £100k fund was launched at the Marches Land Use event on 28 September 2023 and closed on 17 November 2023 (following an extension of two weeks to encourage further applications). Three applications were received and following an appraisal process, it is proposed that one application is supported with funding of £39k. This project, led by a Shropshire based business and incorporating a project team of private businesses, HE and public sector partners, aligns with the development opportunities detailed within sections 7 and 8 of the Land Use Report's recommended next steps.

The project will look to see whether Bio-char can significantly reduce ammonia emissions in commercial broiler units. This project if successful could be rolled out nationally but would be of particular interest in the Marches and neighbouring authorities which have a high number of chicken farms and significant problems with run-off from farms impacting water quality.

Financial implications

Both of these funding calls were approved by Board Members by written resolution in June 2023. The funding will come out of the Marches Investment Fund.

The funding unallocated from these calls can be transferred to the general call pot if it is over-subscribed.

There will be modest monitoring costs associated with the delivery of these projects which can be met out of reserves/ future income post March 24.

Legal implications

The projects will need contracts which will be drawn up using the approved template.

Risks, opportunities and impacts:

N/A

Equality implications:

N/A

Additional information:

N/A

Report Author: Mark Schneider, Head of Business Development & Delivery/Kathryn Jones, Head of Partnerships & Strategy

Blank Page

Meeting date:	28 th November 2023				
Agenda Item:	Item 8				
Item Subject:	Business Board funding				
For:	Discussion	x	Decision	x	Information

Purpose of the Paper:

To seek approval to provide funding for the Herefordshire and Telford Business Boards for a period of up to five years.

Summary of Recommendations:

To provide funding to the Herefordshire and Telford Business Boards for up to five years to help ensure that the private sector continues to be engaged and heard effectively.

Main points

Previously there were three Business Boards operating across the region representing each of the local authority areas. The Marches LEP provided funding for the administration of these Boards to help ensure that the business voice was heard and that we had a clear channel to communicate with private businesses. Representatives (usually the Chair) attended the Marches Growth Hub Business Support Steering Group and other LEP sub groups and fed back issues facing businesses as well as taking away information to share with their relevant boards. These relationships have enabled LEP and Growth Hub work to be shaped to meet businesses' needs and the information has also been fed back in the monthly returns to the Department for Business and Trade, who are keen to understand "on the ground" business issues.

The Shropshire Business Board wound up last year with the private sector now represented at the Shropshire Enterprise Partnership Board. There are no proposals to fund the partnership.

Continuing to provide a small amount of funding to meet the administration costs of the Herefordshire and Telford Business Boards will enable them to continue to operate, bring businesses together and enable two way communication with the wider business community. It's important that the Business Boards endeavour to work with and engage with the local authorities and feedback business issues, as LAs develop and deliver different business support services. The local authorities are currently both represented on both Boards.

Financial implications:

Currently we have an allocation of £4,400 per year per Business Board. Telford Business Board do use most of this. Herefordshire uses more in the region of £1,000 per year. Therefore, we would like to allocate £6,500 per year for the next five years (a total cost of £32,500) to the Business Boards. It is proposed that this funding is paid out of either the LEP reserves or returns from the Shell Store Loan which will be £100k per year until 2038.

There will be a small administration cost associated with this funding which the accountable body would need to meet but again, if they are agreeable, this could be met out of the reserves.

Legal implications:

We will require a 5 year funding agreement. In the event of either Business Board not continuing the funding will revert to the LEP reserve pot. In the absence of the LEP it is expected that this will be administered by the Marches Joint Committee or Shropshire Council as the LEP's accountable body.

Risks, opportunities and impacts:

- The local authorities may have other plans for engaging the private sector and there is the risk of duplication of efforts.
- The accountable body might refuse to administer the funding beyond March 2024. The grants could, therefore, be paid upfront this financial year with a clause that any unused funds are returned to the accountable body at the end of the five year period or earlier if either Business Board ceases to operate.
- The funding will enable the continuation of two-way communication with local businesses to enable ongoing engagement.

Equality implications:

n/a

Additional information:

n/a

Report Author:

Rachel Laver, Marches LEP CEO

Blank Page

Meeting date:	28.11.2023				
Agenda Item:	9				
Item Subject:	Oxon Link Road (OLR)				
For:	Discussion	x	Decision	x	Information

Purpose of the Paper:

To discuss the progress of Oxon Link Road and the recommendations of PRMC.

Summary of Recommendations:

The information requested has not yet been provided by Shropshire Council and therefore will have to be tabled at the Board meeting. The Board will be asked to take a view on whether the information meets the requirements agreed at the last Board meeting or whether the clawback procedure should be started.

Note that the wider North West Relief Road has received indicative funding support from DfT since the last Board meeting which reduces the risks of the scheme being unaffordable for the council and improves the financial position for the OLR scheme.

Main points:

Following protracted discussions at the LEP Board meeting on the 3rd August 2023 about the continued delays with the OLR project it was agreed that Shropshire Council would provide:

- An updated business case and traffic modelling to show that there is still a need for the project and that the Benefits Costs realisation (BCR) is still positive. This would need to be submitted by the end of October along with confirmation of planning approval. This would then go to the LEP Board meeting on the 28th November for consideration.
- If planning isn't in place by the end of October, the process to clawback the funding would proceed.

Updated position

The NWRR was granted planning permission, subject to conditions, on the 31st October. The conditions will be finalised with affected parties through the Local Planning Authority and will be available in advance of the next Northern Planning Committee meeting. This is expected to be in early January 2024. It should be noted that work cannot begin on OLR before all conditions are agreed. The consent to grant planning permission cannot be undone unless there is a judicial review. It is understood that objectors to the scheme may lodge a request for a judicial review but this cannot be done until the conditions are approved.

To date Shropshire Council has provided the original business case for OLR from 2015, the most recent traffic modelling data for NWRR from August 2021 and a paper which highlights the most recent BCR data.

Following discussions, the Council has agreed to refresh the original business plan with comments and updates on each of the five cases. A review and updating of the initial BCR calculations will be undertaken and this will be based on the current estimated monetised benefits and cost analysis. In terms of traffic modelling, the review will include a re validation of the 2017/18 base year model that has been endorsed now by DfT, National Highways and Shropshire Highways through the planning process. This will be made available before the LEP Board meeting on the 28th November.

Government has indicated that it will fund the NWRR out of the savings it has made by cancelling part of the HS2 route but is yet to confirm the exact amount. However, this additional funding in whatever quantum will free up additional capital to complete OLR which will have seen a significant increase in costs since the original approval.

Background

The contract for the OLR commenced on the 1st December 2015. Shropshire Council (SC) received a grant of £4.2 million from the 1st round of Local Growth Fund to deliver a number of outputs, including 1.14km of new road. The Council also committed to generate match to the value of £8,734,222. Under the terms of the original contract the project was due to be completed by 30th November 2020 and the last claim to be submitted on the 30th November 2021.

However, it has suffered a number of delays with a number of revised dates being put forward and missed. The project issues and updates have been to the LEP Board 9 times in total, as well as to PRMC numerous times. It has been ranked in the top 5 risks for non-delivery on the LEP risk register for the last 31 months (see timeline in Appendix 1).

The Board needs to consider the viability of the project and whether the LEP should consider clawback of the funds for OLR and whether the original outline business case and traffic modelling is still valid.

Financial implications:

The return to the Marches LEP of a grant of £4.2 million. There will be associated costs with managing the clawback of the grant and administering the reallocation and monitoring of funds.

Legal implications:

Depending on the decision of the Board, the LEP would potentially have to start the clawback process with Shropshire Council as the accountable body supporting this process, recognising the need for clear separation of duties.

If the Board want to continue to support the OLR project, then an updated contract variation would need to be agreed with revised timescales.

Risks, opportunities and impacts:

Risks

The LEP has to be seen to be consistent in how it manages projects and deals with delays and non-delivery. If the LEP doesn't follow the same process as it has for previous projects suffering similar issues, then there is the risk of challenges and reputational damage to the LEP.

There is an awareness of the financial situation at Shropshire Council, so any clawback decision should be mindful of the implications this may have for the Council and how the LEP needs to manage the implications and communications.

LEPs were awarded Local Growth Funds to administer the funds on behalf of government. LEPs are assessed annually on delivery and governance processes. Government and in particular NAO may raise questions about the LEPs governance processes if it can't be demonstrated that this allocation of funds has been managed appropriately. While the LEP has been very patient and accommodating with the OLR project, it has left the LEP exposed to criticism that a project that received funding over 8 years ago hasn't yet been delivered.

Due to uncertainty about the future of the LEP, the funding if clawed back would have to be reallocated this year or transferred to the Joint Committee for reallocation. Funding would have to be ringfenced to oversee the delivery and monitoring of any new projects awarded funding.

Equality implications: n/a

Report Author: Mark Schneider/Rachel Laver

Background papers/documents:

Appendix 1- [Schedule of key decisions and meetings](#)

End