

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Extraordinary Meeting
7 December 2023 online
(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 Graham Biggs	GB	Cabinet Member Economy and Growth, Herefordshire Council
Cllr Lee Carter	LC	Cabinet Member for Place (The Economy & Neighbourhood Services), Telford & Wrekin Council
Dave Courteen	DC	Marches Business Support Steering Group Chair
Graham Guest	GG	Skills Champion; Chief Executive and Principal of Telford College
Sara Williams	SW	Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs
Alex Green	AG	Director, Radfield Homecare
Paul Kalinauckas	PK	Access to Finance Champion
Simone Clarke	SC	Higher Education Champion, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education & Students, Harper Adams University

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
Roger Allonby	RA	Service Director for Economy, Herefordshire Council
Mark Barrow	MB	Executive Director for Place, Shropshire Council
Katherine Kynaston	KK	Director Housing, Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
Matt Johnson	MJ	Executive Manager Strategic Projects, Shropshire Council
Rachel Laver	RL	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
Kathryn Jones	KJ	Head of Partnerships & Strategy, Marches LEP
Mark Schneider	MS	Head of Business Development & Delivery
Ennis Vingoe	EV	Executive Assistant, Marches LEP

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 L Picton, C Fenton and G Coppock.</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>	
2.	<p>Oxon Link Road update SR said that the extraordinary meeting had been convened following the Marches LEP Board meeting on 28 November 2023 as further reassurance had been requested from Shropshire Council regarding the outputs of the Oxon Link Road (OLR) project and details of progress and validity of the business case. SR</p>	

introduced Mark Barrow (MB) from Shropshire Council who would provide an update to the meeting and MB introduced Matt Johnson (MJ) also from the Council who was also in attendance to respond to any specific queries.

The main points covered in the update were:

- A brief history of the project including the core objectives, including delivery of core strategy housing targets (835 new homes); opening additional employment land (1,090 jobs created/safeguarded); improve local road network resilience (2.05km resurfaced); reduce accidents (no target); to allow the form and function of Welshpool Road to be altered in favour of more sustainable modes of transport (1 km cycleway); to facilitate improvement of the existing local centre (no specific target); to enable delivery of a North-West Relief Road (NWRR) in the longer term (1.14km).
- The NWRR and OLR complete the ring road around Shrewsbury. Government has indicated that additional financial support will be available for the NWRR element. Planning has been approved with conditions, and it is hoped that these will have been agreed and approved by the end of January 2024.
- There are a number of environmental sensitivities along the length of the road including woodland and a water extraction point.
- The Sustainable Urban Extension (West) is a development providing significant growth in housing, employment opportunities, local highway improvements and creation of cycle lanes and a new local centre. The commitment to build the road and the planning status is contributing to unlocking the development of housing and retail, and some sites are already under construction including a health care campus.
- The construction cost has increased from the original figure of £12.93m to £17.2m due to inflation and the effects of the pandemic. The LEP grant is critical to securing other funding opportunities and some of the sites will only be unlocked with the construction of the road.
- 2885 jobs will be supported with a GVA impact of approx. £774m.
- OLR will remove a significant amount of traffic from Welshpool Road, reducing congestion and facilitating the use of active travel measures with a footway and cycleway connecting into a network around the town. Traffic flow and congestion around the inner ring road and in the town-centre will be improved.
- The overall rationale for OLR still stands and aligns with local, regional and national strategies and the benefit cost ratio (BCR) remains high for this project. The project is still on track to deliver the projected benefits.
- The Council remains committed to the NWRR and believes that it is crucial to the future development of Shrewsbury.
- It is hoped that the scheme will be open for use in March 2027.

Board members discussed the information presented in the update, and the following points were made:

- Of the £8.3m Section 106 funding required for the scheme, £5.3m is secured and £4.9m of capital receipts are required. Capital receipts will come from land disposals. In addition to the Section 106 funds, the community infrastructure levy of approx. £7400 per dwelling will be drawn down, therefore the Council is confident that it can deliver on the Section 106.
- The Section 106 funding is conditional on the construction of the road and the continuing delivery of outputs is dependent on the OLR being built.
- JW, Section 151 Officer confirmed that the funding is in place and is reported through the capital programme in the public meetings and built into cash flow

	<p>projections. There are no issues with this. Accounting for it is done as MB has demonstrated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was confirmed that none of the funding mix for OLR is affected by the Council's revenue budget position. • A number of Board members commented on the benefits the project will bring to the local area, the town and businesses. <p>SR said that the LEP Board had required further reassurances around funding and planning permission. Shropshire Council had demonstrated that funding will be available to continue this project and that planning had been granted, with conditions, which should be discharged by the end of January 2024. The LEP Board had also been concerned about the time taken to get the project started. Shropshire Council have said that the road will be complete by 2027. This is 7 years later than intended but this timeline is now as secure as it can be, and there are many benefits to be had by unlocking development with the construction of the road.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding the potential for a judicial review of the project, and what impact that would have. MB responded that government has confirmed that there will not be 'call in' on planning and any appeal for a judicial review can only therefore be on the processes followed. Part of the delay (approx. 2 years) has been in reassuring the Environment Agency, Natural England and Severn Trent Water on the environmental impacts. Due to the processes undertaken and the external input into them, the Council feel that any risk around judicial review is minimal.</p> <p>SR requested that MB bring a risk assessment paper on the OLR to a future meeting of the LEP Board.</p> <p>SR said that the political commitment is not in question for the project, and it is hoped that any change in government will not alter this. SR thanked MB and the team for the information that had been presented to the Board and apologised to members for the late distribution of this.</p> <p><i>Members of the Marches LEP Board agreed that based on the information given around costs, benefits and timelines, the Board would continue to support the OLR project and would not initiate a clawback process for the £4.2m funding. (Unanimous)</i></p> <p>SR thanked Board members for taking time out of their busy week to attend the meeting.</p>	MB
3.	Any Other Business Nil	
	The meeting closed at 10.46am.	
Current Dates for Future Meetings:		
Jan 2024	23 January 2024 – Ludlow Racecourse	
Mar 2024	19 March 2024 – Ludlow Racecourse	



Signed (electronically):

Sonia Roberts, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 23 January 2024