

Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership



Board Meeting – 14th December 2011

This note briefly summarises the outcomes and actions agreed at the Board Meeting.

The Board confirmed its top priority as being the very best at growth and jobs (the latter being the key focus). This ambition continues to be pursued by members of the Board across a wide range of activity and the Board agreed a number of key actions that will contribute towards providing a "Red Carpet" for business.

The Board will be writing to Ministers to update them on progress in this area.

The Board was pleased to receive a presentation from the Homes and Communities Agency on its work and how it could contribute to the economy of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire particularly the new "Stewardship Panel".

Growing Places Fund

The fund represents a major opportunity for the LEP to unlock stalled developments which deliver jobs and growth. The Board agreed a timetable and considered a draft of the Pre Qualification Questionnaire. This was agreed, subject to some amendments, and will be submitted on the 20th December.

The LEP has already received submissions for 27 projects and others are being received. These will be reviewed in January to provide a shortlist for the Board's consideration.

Business Development

The Board were pleased to witness the signing of a partnership agreement between the Chambers of Commerce, the County and City Councils, and the LEP to undertake a trial of a single point of contact for business advice across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

The trial will be evaluated to assess the need for a longer term operation. The trial is being funded by monies allocated to the LEP in the Start Up Fund.

Inward Investment

A working draft of the Business Plan for the Inward Investment Team was discussed. This identified a number of activities and targets for the team with the aim of raising our profile as an investment location, to directly target potential investors, develop relationships with key multipliers and engage with potential investors worldwide.

The Sub Group was asked to review the business plan and bring back an updated paper to the next meeting.

Branding and Communications

The LEP has had constructive discussions with neighbours, and many of the area's influential partners including MP's. The Board has been pleased with the supporting work by the County and City Council's Communication teams. One of the LEP's key objectives is to promote Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire.

To take this work forwards the LEP has agreed to retain a Marketing specialist and to develop a Board of Influence.

Enterprise and Skills

A highly successful event on Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) event has been held at Alstom. The event showcased good practice from schools and employers. The LEP has agreed to work with the Vice Chancellor of Keele University who is developing the concept of an Educational Trust to bring together Schools, Colleges, Universities and Employers.

The LEP was pleased to support an initiative being developed by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Apprenticeship group to increase the number of places available and promote STEM and high value technical skills apprenticeships.

Land and Housing

The Stewardship Panel had now met and the Board was pleased to see that the assets would be managed to deliver local benefits. This would be assisted by work to compile a database of site opportunities across the area.

Two events led by the Housing Associations are to be held in Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent. In addition a small event is planned with the Community and Voluntary sector.

Low Carbon/Energy

The Chair reported back on his trip to Berlin to see how Germany was approaching this issue. The trip highlighted a wide range of opportunities that local business could exploit and the large scale of the initiatives in place in Germany to develop the industrial capacity it needed to eliminate its need for nuclear power.

Planning

The LEP has been working with businesses and local planning colleagues to identify a number of outcomes that should form the basis of a "Charter Mark" approach. These are – Clarity and consistency, Effort and focus, Competence and respect, Accuracy and fairness, Dialogue and understanding.

The results of the workshop held at the end of October have been circulated and the Board agreed that it should be launched by the LEP and Local Authority partners in the new year.

Broadband

The team has been working hard to secure agreement with BDUK. A prospectus is being prepared to promote the funding options and ERDF funding is being sought. The Local Authorities have agreed to provide a letter of comfort to BDUK to ensure that we maintain momentum.

Funding

A consultant has been engaged to develop the proposal for a Risk and Growth Fund. A report will be given to the next meeting. The allocation of an additional £1bn to the Regional Growth Fund was welcomed as were a number of other initiatives. The LEP will be holding a programme of Access to Finance events which will provide a market place for banks as well as an opportunity for businesses to seek advice.

Peak District and Rural Issues

The LEP is to work with neighbouring LEP and Business Peak District to discuss how the potential of the Peak District can be maximised. As part of these discussions the potential for a Rural Growth Area is to be explored.

The opportunities presented by the Rural Growth Review are to be promoted to partners – <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/economy/>

The LEP and the County Council are working with Natural England on studying the relationship between the economy and the natural environment.

Any Other Business

The Board were interested to learn of the emphasis the Government was placing on the introduction of Local Development Orders. Whilst these are being seen as a requirement in Enterprise Zones they are also being viewed as a demonstration of intent in other areas who's bids were unsuccessful.