

WE ARE RURAL ECONOMY

RURAL ECONOMY SECTOR GROUP

AGENDA

The 28th meeting of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership's Rural Economy Sector Group will be held on 10.30am on Wednesday 23rd September 2015
Thrings, The Paragon, Counterslip, Bristol BS1 6BX

10:30	1	Welcome and introductions
10:35	2	Actions arising from the meeting held on 22nd July 2015
10:45	3	WoE LEP Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEP activity - <i>Melissa Houston</i> • EU SIF Investment Committee - <i>Chris Head</i>
11:00	4	Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation and opportunities for skills development • Shared apprenticeships <i>Pearl Mills, West of England LEP Skills Team</i>
11:45	5	Enterprise Zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somer Valley (and other new submissions?) • In 21 Food Enterprise Zone <i>Mandie Berry, Principal Economic Development Officer, North Somerset Council</i>
12:00	6	Growth Fund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls for projects – initial tourism call • Future calls and development
12:15	7	Rural Broadband <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BDUK Phase 2 lobbying • Voucher Scheme – <i>LA Representative</i> • Case studies
12:25	8	Any other business
12:30		Dates and venues for future meetings: 25 November

Please confirm your attendance or send apologies to
melissa.houston@westofengland.org

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LEP Rural Economy Sector Group

Wednesday 22 July 2015, 10:30am
Alvis Bros, Lye Cross Farm, Redhill, Bristol BS40 5RH

Attendees: Charles Hignett, Mark O'Sullivan, Steve Ashworth, Antony Merritt, Chris Head, Graham Clark, Deborah White, Mike Amos, Mandie Berry, Paul Taylor (Heart of the South West LEP), Tim Harrap (Alvis Bros), Matthew Uren, Doug Douglas (Avon Valley Country Park)

Apologies: Duncan Sigournay, Helen Sharp, Marti Burgess, Sophie Kirk

Welcome and introductions

- Tim Harrap (head of communications at Alvis Bros) welcomed the group to Lye Cross Farm, where they have 3 dairy herds (2 organic).
 - The whole operation happens onsite and Alvis Bros supply to companies all over England and export to the rest of the world.
 - 160 staff and it is a competitive market particular now with the milk market battle – a global problem.
 - Tim also spoke of the hopes/plans for the Alvis family to continue into the 4th generation.
 - Introductions were made for the benefit of visitors and new members.
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Actions arising from previous meeting

- MA issue around the skills academy has been raised with both the skills group and the EU SIF committee.
 - Broadband knowledge continues to be poor for SMEs. No ineligible companies have been emailed to CH.
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WE LEP Update

LEP activities:

- New [LEP Board](#) in place, held their first meeting in June. Colin Skellett to continue as Chair.
- Mix of old; James Durie, Robert Sinclair, Kalpna Woolf and new representatives; Neil Way – SME Chair, Simon Bird from Bristol Port as well as representatives from GKN and Knightstone Housing.
- Invest Bristol + Bath (in partnership with Business West and Bristol 2015) organised Venturefest (an innovation showcase) within the Passenger and Engine Shed. Just under 2K registered and 1200 attendees.
- The [Joint Spatial Plan](#) (JSP) was launched at the end of June.
 - The start of a long process.
 - 4 authorities working together – a big step forward in tackling key issues around housing, infrastructure and planning.
- Save the Date: **Thursday 12 November**. LEP Annual Conference, in partnership with UWE and their Bristol Distinguished Address Series - More details to follow.

Sector Chairs meeting:

- A recent sector chairs meeting with held. A very productive session focused on skills.
- Due to funding there is an overall concern with the current situation as the skills team has gone from 15 to 4 people.
- To secure delivery, members need to be committed to continue communication and support the existing team.

Open discussion:

- Parents need to be involved more, too much onus on career advisors.

- Is there too much focus on apprenticeships? There are other gaps that also need to be addressed.
- Results from the Skills Survey will be published on the West of England LEP website in due course.

EU SIF Committee:

- Chris reiterated that this committee is not a LEP function.
- Slides from the recent briefing session (which were open to anyone) and the list of committee members can be found [here](#).
- Chris expressed his concerns on the process/procedure and the meetings are not conducive to what needs to happen/be decided as some have been called at very short notice. Therefore not everyone can attend.
- Next meeting is due in September.

Heart of the South West LEP

- Paul Taylor, Head of Strategy & Operations at The Heart of the South West LEP came to update the group on their position.
- HotSW covers Devon, Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay, spread across 19 local authorities. With 3-4 core members of staff (no office), partnership is key.
- Rural growth productivity is very important as well as looking at raising the overall economy. Job/employment within the HotSW is high but wages are low.
- Connectivity (both technology and transport) is the biggest item on their agenda.
- £15.5m EAFRD. £117m EU SIF funding.
- £1/2 billion of public and private funding through the Growth Deal. Majority for infrastructure.
- Around skills – previously a construction shortage, now there's a focus on all sectors. Important to grow the labour market, nuclear and marine are big industries.

Open discussion:

- Similar broadband issues but confusing around what's happening with Phase 2 – roll out/ state aid.
- Unlike the West of England, HotSW were successful with the Rural Growth Network bid. 2 year pilot ends this year – looking at ways to make it sustainable. A growth hub with rural components. Informal feedback = what it did was unclear and branding was confusing.
- Group is very keen on cross boundary working. Charles highlighted that this should be one of many future meetings (in order to produce actions).
- Paul is happy to update his colleagues and look at current strategies – where are the common links, where can we collaborate?

Actions: CH to maintain links and work with LEP office to explore and develop common ideas and activities particularly on skills, tourism and broadband

Food Enterprise Zone

- For the last 12-18 months Mandie has been working on developing a food/drink enterprise centre that will contain specialist help and advice to support businesses.
- Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) – 10 were initially announced. North Somerset was announced in phase 2.
- North Somerset has identified 10 acres on the Junction 21 Enterprise area (out of 35 acres that North Somerset own). Looking to create a food and drink cluster that will then be supported by the food and drink centre.
- DEFRA recently coordinated a meeting in London for all FEZ to attend and discuss how to package the offer. A website for people to share best practice has also been created.
- There will be a consultation period and a launch event on the 22nd September at Thatcher's, where there'll be a model to show what the centre will look like.

Open discussion on the intentions:

- Displacement is an issue
- Centre of excellence = satellite of something that already exists
- Not to replicate but to complement.
- Overall, group is very supportive.

Future Proposal for Sector Group

- Chris gave a short summary on what was discussed at the last meeting and why he felt food was becoming increasingly more important for the RESG to take ownership of.
- With new members, it is a good opportunity to refresh the Terms of Reference.
- Mark felt the group needed more time to address and digest the proposal. In favour of change as this will raise the group's profile but is against losing any rural (nonfood) elements.

Open discussion:

- What is our focus?
- It shouldn't be about turning ourselves into a "conventional" sector group.
- Main concern for group – losing the focus of nonfood issues in rural areas.
- The importance of being a cross cutting group and having a rural representative to attend other sector group meetings.
- Group agreed to stay as Rural Economy but to incorporate and "own" food and beverage.

Action: CH to liaise with Barbara at LEP office to communicate proposal

Rural Broadband

- Vouchers managed by Bristol, open to anyone.
- Following the meeting at Williams Automobiles, Nita Patel is looking into alternative solutions – Nita is happy to update at a future meeting.

Action: Make businesses aware of [Voucher scheme](#)

AOB

- Mike requested that if we discuss skills, could we invite career advisers to attend.
- Mike also requested that "shared apprentices" be on the next agenda.

Action: Melissa to invite Pearl Mills (from the LEP skills team) to attend.

Next meeting: Wednesday 23 September, 10:30am
Venue - TBC, Bristol

Jobs boom could be on the cards with Somer Valley business zone plan

By **Somerset Guardian**

Posted: **September 19, 2015**

The Somer Valley could soon see major jobs boost thanks to a proposed scheme aimed at encouraging businesses to set up in the district.

Bath and North East Somerset Council is hoping to win Government funding through the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership to create a multi-site urban and rural enterprise zone that could create up to 16,000.

The plan has been put forward by the council's cabinet member for economic development, Patrick Anketell-Jones (Con, Lansdown) who wants to see the Bath City Riverside Enterprise Area re-designated into an Enterprise Zone and includes an additional portfolio of employment locations in the Somer Valley corridor district, which includes Midsomer Norton and Radstock and the rural areas which lie along the A367 corridor.

The proposed Enterprise Zone would comprise 15 employment sites with a total development area of 54ha with capacity to deliver in excess of 16,000 jobs, with around 7,000 in the Somer Valley area.

Mr Anketell-Jones said the Bath element is forecast to deliver £131 million additional growth in business rates over a 25 year period with the extension of the Zone along the Somer Valley Corridor having the potential to unlock a further £38 million of Business Rates growth over the same period.

He said the Enterprise Zone status for the current Bath Enterprise Area would help stop Bath-based businesses moving out of the city to Bristol and explained that the advantage of rate relief for its occupiers, combined with the fact that Bath Riverside will be a highly desirable location for national and international investors, means that the Zone proposal is a low risk.

Mr Anketell-Jones added: "The proposals also seek to address a clear market failure in the rural economy where multiple land ownerships, information constraints and public good issues continue to blight the prospects of developments that are necessary to generate employment opportunities in one of the West of England's most deprived areas.

"We intend to utilise the full fiscal incentive package to unlock physical development, whilst also utilising the added value of the provision of superfast broadband to unlock the full economic potential of 35,000 residents in the Somer Valley.

"The zone allocation would enable individual site constraints to be addressed including remediation, infrastructure, planning or environmental works.

"The Somer Valley sites will be directly complementary to the Bath sites providing much needed sustainable growth on space for advanced engineering, high tech and low carbon technology companies constrained by their existing urban environments or that have outgrown their start-up space at the University of Bath and Bath Spa University innovation centres.

"The sector focus of the overall Zone will support and enable the clustering and agglomeration benefits, such as innovation, knowledge-sharing and marketing, across the whole of the West of England."

There have been four expressions of interest within the West of England, including a similar scheme near Weston-super-Mare, that have been lodged will go forward to the Government for them to decide upon the proposal.

The council has now submitted the plan to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). They are expected to hear if it has been successful later this month.

Councillor Barry Macrae (Con, Midsomer Norton North) welcomed the plan.

Mr Macrae said: "This is something I have personally been seeking for over four years. It will be good news for the Somer Valley and good news for the whole of B&NES."

<http://www.somersetguardian.co.uk/16-000-jobs-created-business-zone-boosts-economy/story-27809453-detail/story.html#ixzz3mLxWkSft>