

# **WE** ARE RURAL & FOOD ECONOMY

LEP Rural & Food Economy Sector Group: Notes  
Wednesday 25 May 2016, 10:30am  
Thrings, The Paragon, Counterslip, Bristol BS1 6BX

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**Attendees:** Chris Head, Graham Clarke, Chris Lyons, Jade Kent, Mike Amos, Clare Ladkin, Antony Merritt, Melissa Houston, Mandie Berry

**Apologies:** Steve Ashworth, Charles Hignett, Chris Smith, Deborah White, Martino Burgess, Duncan Sigourney, Mark O'Sullivan

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## **Welcome and introductions**

- Chris welcomed the group for the last time as chair.
  - Introductions were made for the benefit of any new or visiting members.
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## **Actions arising from the meeting held 23/03/16**

- Mike requested that Melissa amend a previous action (around Devolution) with more neutral wording.
- After a general call to members regarding the chairs position, Steve Ashworth has put himself forward to take on the role for 12 months. Chris supported this nomination and put this to the members of the group who all supported and endorsed Steve as the new Chair.
- With developments around food (and beverages), the group needs to increase its focus on this area whilst maintaining links into rural businesses, and it was felt that Steve would be an excellent representative for the group.
- Chris has advised Steve to take on a vice chair to assist him.

### **ACTION: Vice chair to be proposed**

- Chris will write to Barbara Davies at LEP office to advise of changes

### **ACTION: Advise main LEP Board of changes**

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## **LEP Update**

- Stephen Robertson has been announced as the new LEP Chair, replacing Colin Skellett who stepped down in January. Stephen will take over from Robert Sinclair (interim chair) at the next LEP Board meeting in June.
- There will be a sector chairs meeting in early July and Stephen is keen to meet the sector chairs individually – Melissa is currently coordinating.
- The ESIF committee hasn't met since March. Next meeting is scheduled for September.
- Stage 1 application (Social Enterprise bid) has been approved.
- Mike – Now schools are academies are they eligible? No reason why they shouldn't be.

### **ACTION: Melissa to email Mike Amos contact details for the Technical Assistance (TA) Team.**

- Members are interested in finding out where the main focus regarding projects/areas is. Are minutes from the ESIF committee available? Now group is out of the shadows, yes, these should be available.

### **ACTION: Chris Head to investigate where the minutes are uploaded – DCLG website?**

- If Devolution goes ahead, the ESIF committee will have Independent Body (IB) status. This will allow the group to make their own decisions and become a more meaningful group.
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## **Devolution**

- Infographics outlining the deal have been circulated.
- Members of the business community are asking those in support of the devolution deal to contact their local councilor before the four councils meet in June.

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## Group Governance and function

- Group unanimously supported the appointment of Steve Ashworth as the new chair.
- Good opportunity for the group to set new priorities. By the next meeting we will know more following a sector chairs meeting with new LEP Chair (Stephen Robertson), Devolution and EU referendum results.

**ACTION: Chris and Melissa to meet with Steve to go through the handover.**

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## EAFRD – LEADER and Growth Programme

- No progress - staff have been seconded to work on flood defence.
- EAFRD money will be for:
  - Broadband
  - Tourism – Call going live Oct/Nov
  - SME Business Support – generic
- Initially skills and training was a heading but DEFRA now want to spend money on food processing and food technology. Call due out by the end of the year.

*Open discussion:* Process = who makes the decisions, information sharing, combined knowledge.

- Presence at the North Somerset Show – very beneficial, spoke to around 40 different companies.
- Learning experience. Now looking for similar events/opportunities within the other councils.
- Assessment process: Jan-Feb 1<sup>st</sup> stage applications, 19 sent. 15 approved to 2<sup>nd</sup> stage.
- Phase 2 application = July time.
- Rural Payment Agency (RPA) has to approve everything – this is causing some delays.

*Open discussion:* drop out figures between stage 1 and stage 2, length of time (process), timescales (between now and receiving the grant).

- £1.5m = There needs to be a balance between informing people that there's money available and ensuring it's not over promoted.
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## Rural Broadband

- Open discussion: BT position, intervention, infrastructure, voucher scheme.

**ACTION: Chris urged members to response to the BIS consultation.**

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## Future work plan

### Food

- Claire Ladkin was pleased to see from our meetings that food has been added.
- Bristol has been awarded a silver status in the Sustainable Food Cities award.
- Bristol Food Network is about effective partnership and collaboration.
- Interested to see if there will be any synergies with the LEADER calls.
- Still a need to raise the "food" profile for the area.
- Claire suggested members revisit the "[A Good Food Plan](#)" booklet to assist the group when refreshing the Terms of Reference for the food agenda.

### Apprenticeship and training

- SGS College is hosting an Apprenticeship Levy Event on behalf of the Skills Funding Agency and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on Wednesday 1 June.
  - From April 2017 the Apprenticeship Levy will affect all employers with a pay roll which exceeds £3million and will apply to all sectors and both private and public sector organisations.
  - Employers will have the opportunity to hear from the decision-makers and take part in the consultation process - BIS and the SFA will welcome comments and questions from affected employers.
  - Held at SGS WISE Campus, New Road, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, BS34 8LP: 9.30 – 12.30.
  - Bookings can be made at <https://the-apprenticeship-levy.eventbrite.co.uk>
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## **AOB**

- West of England Growth Hub – There is now a “Rural Economy” section on the website (as well as Food and Drink). Members are encouraged to try and drive traffic to this page, particularly those looking for grant.
- Mike suggested we visit Bakers of Nailsea for either the July or September meeting.
- Mandie mentioned that North Somerset Council is preparing a Local Development Order (LDO) to simplify planning requirements related to the Food Enterprise Zone. The draft LDO can be viewed and commented on [here](#).
- Dates for the diary
  - West of England Rural Conference: Leigh Court, 7<sup>th</sup> July
  - South West Rural Farming Conference: Taunton, 21<sup>st</sup> July

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**Next meeting:** Wednesday 20 July 2016, 10:30am  
**Venue:** TBC