



FOREST

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Delivering a thriving economy

Stakeholder Meeting Notes 09:30 to 11:30

11th September 2019

Lydney Town Hall, Lydney

“The Forest Economic Partnership (FEP) is bringing together business, education, public sector, people, ideas and resources to give the Forest of Dean a voice and to help deliver a thriving and sustainable economy”

Notes:

Community Interest Company (CIC)

Wendy Jackson informed the stakeholder group that we have now appointed chartered accountants Griffiths Marshall to register the Forest Economic Partnership as a CIC limited by guarantee. The paperwork for this will now be submitted and will be processed within the next 4 weeks (Target for formation -11th October 2019).

To date there are 6 directors registered with the CIC:

- Andrew Callard - Chair of FEP and Director Aired Business
- Wendy Jackson - Regeneration Manager, Publica on behalf of the Forest of Dean District Council
- Cllr Richard Leppington - Vice Chair of FEP and Cabinet Member for Forest of Dean District Council
- Ray Cotton - Awre Parish Council
- David Trevelyn (Secretary) - Sustain You
- Paul James - CAP

Please find attached the Articles of Association and Directors Handbook for your review.

Projects Update

How Fast;How Good?

David Trevelyn, Chair of the Digital Connectivity Sub-Group informed that stage 1 of the How Fast; How Good survey ran from June to August 2019. This survey measured the current Forest

of Dean performance against the national average and 381 useable responses across the district were collated.

The report published to the stakeholder group explained the findings of the survey (a copy of which is attached) of which David explained the findings underlined how compared to the UK average and the rural average, the Forest of Dean's broadband was worse than average. The information can be broken to parish level but given GDPR issues is only available by valid request.

Based on the results of the survey, the next stage for the Digital Connectivity is focusing on enabling practical improvements by:

- continuing to work with partners to facilitate the technological fix;
- beginning to unpick the issue of perception and knowledge;
- leading on the reality of rural broadband through succeeding surveys.

The stakeholders broke off into groups to discuss ways this could be implemented:

- Flyers - A two page flyer can be produced to educate and inform users of the things that some end users would not know such as; connecting as simple fixes to improve connectivity, exchange connection vs fibre to the house, activating fibre.
- Workshops run by parish/town councils to educate the public, funded by the providers as part of their corporate responsibilities.
- Education workshop for stakeholders so they can be ambassadors in their communities.
- Outlines in planning procedures to ensure the infrastructure is in place

Bridging the Gap

David Trevelyn, Chair of the Digital Connectivity Sub-Group informed that the Bridging the Gap case study in Hewelsfield was advancing as expected and were currently awaiting a response from service providers for that area.

He also informed the stakeholders of the current project being undertaken by Fastershire in Churcham. Fastershire are looking at business in Churcham to take up the MGBroadband grants, however they are struggling to achieve the necessary level of uptake. Angela Presdee (GCC and Fastershire) advised however they have had a recent win within the business park in Churcham where they have now connected all 38 businesses to faster broadband. David called for anyone who has/knows business within Churcham to speak to Fastershire about the take up.

The Economic Case for a Biosphere Reserve in the Forest of Dean (ECBR)

Andrew Callard presented an overview of the report for an ECBR to the stakeholders on behalf of the Transport and Infrastructure Sub-Group. Andrew stressed again that the document issued is not for wider circulation until after 1st October 2019 and is for personal use only.

Andrew highlighted that most biospheres in the World have been based on the ecological/environmental case and that there has never been a study into the economic case and as such the report that had been carried out by volunteers at the ONS as part of their corporate responsibility was the first model ever made. Within the model the authors introduced an optimism bias of 40% increase in costs and a 40% decrease in benefit. The report shows a cost benefit estimate calculated at approximately 3:1.

The next steps for the project is for Transport and Infrastructure Sub-Group to discuss how to move forward.

Inspiring the Forest - IF

Sarah Taylor, member of the IF Action Group, informed the group that the first Local Inspiring the Forest Event (LIFE) will be going ahead at Dene Magna on the 14th October 2019. This will be the first in a series of events over the next 3 years.

The objectives of the IF events are to raise aspirations amongst the young, parents, teachers and adults across the Forest of Dean; show local residents what amazing businesses and opportunities are on the doorstep; create closer links between schools, local authorities and businesses; create a community.

The IF project is still looking for sponsors and stakeholders and local business can contribute from as little as £5. More details are available in the attached leaflet.

Severn Vale Board

Andrew Callard, informed that the FEP have been invited to join the Severn Vale Board. The Severn Vale Board is one of 3 boards established by Leadership Gloucestershire from Concordat of October 2018. The purpose of the board was been challenged and has evolved, principally the board will focus on the digital and transport connectivity in the key geographic area given the impetus of the Great Western Powershouse.

Terms of Reference have been submitted to Leadership Gloucestershire, upon acceptance FEP membership will be put to stakeholders to vote on the participation of the FEP in this board alongside Stroud Local Strategic Partnership and Monmouthshire County Council.

Merging of the Sub-Group

Andrew Callard explained to the stakeholders of the potential of merging the Sub-Groups Bridges & Borders with Transport & Infrastructure due to the crossover of agenda and attendees.

It was agreed by the stakeholders that they two groups would merge.

Aging Society

Due to time constraints, the stakeholders were not able to discuss the 4th Grand Challenge which supports the local industrial strategy (LIS) being compiled by GFirst LEP. The first draft of the LIS will be launched at the GFirst LEP annual review in September and will be ready for public consultation and feedback. The agenda item will be carried over to the next stakeholder meeting on 11th December 2019 at Gloucestershire College, Forest Campus 9:30 to 11:30.

Online Consultation

Andrew Callard advise of a number of online consultations which are now live and encouraged members to send an individual response:

- Help to develop ideas for the services to be provided in the new hospital - Closing Date 14th October 2019 : <https://www.fodhealth.nhs.uk/engagement/>
- The new draft Gloucestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy has now been launched. The strategy sets out how we can achieve the vision that the county is a place where everyone can live well, be healthy and thrive. To give your views on the strategy, please see complete the online survey - Closing Date 15th October 2019: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing>
- In May 2019 the county council declared a 'climate emergency' and committed to holding a public consultation on climate change this summer. They are now ready to ask for feedback from residents in Gloucestershire on this important issue - Closing Date 23rd September 2019: <https://gloucestershirecc-climate-change-survey.questionpro.com/>

Enclosed Documents:

- Articles of Association
- Directors Handbook
- How Fast; How Good is Your Broadband? Better than Average-The Forest's need for effective rural broadband.
- IF Sponsorship Information
- Presentation

**Next Meeting: 11th December 2019 9:30 to 11:30 at
Gloucestershire College, Forest of Dean Campus, Cinderford,
GL14 3FF**

**Please put in your diary now and confirm you are coming to
FEP@fdean.gov.uk**