



**FOREST**

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Delivering a thriving economy

CIC Number: 12262533

## Stakeholder Meeting Notes (Online)

17 December 2020

**“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:

Due to the COVID-19 the stakeholder meeting was held virtually on a Zoom platform. A recording of the full meeting can be found [here](#).

#### 1. Welcome from the Neill Ricketts, Chair of the Forest Economic Partnership

David Trevelyan introduced Neill Ricketts, the new chair of the Forest Economic Partnership who was welcomed by the board on 7 November 2020. Neill supersedes Andrew Callard, who will remain on the board of Directors.

Neill's full bio is available on the FEP [website](#).

#### 2. Forest Economic Partnership Update

Wendy Jackson provided an update on the progress of the Forest Economic Partnership.

She advised that the Forest Economic Partnership currently has 7 board members since the appointment of Neill Ricketts to chair in November 2020. There are 8 active projects in all stages.

The board agreed previously that they would allocate a board member to each of the projects to monitor the progress of those projects objectively.

Wendy confirmed that the FEP currently hold £16,141.00 in their account and £13,945.60 of which has been allocated to the Inspiring Forest project.

It was also advised that whilst the board currently have 7 members FEP's governance allows for up to 12 and if there were any stakeholders who wish to become board members, to contact any of the board members or email [fep@fdean.gov.uk](mailto:fep@fdean.gov.uk).

#### 3. AccXel

Nicola Bird informed the stakeholders of an exciting project from the KW Bell Group called AccXel.

AccXel is a purpose built training facility looking toward the sustainability of the construction industry.

KW Bells group have been looking how they can adapt the skills sets of construction over the last three years. The key for AccXel is to create the aspirations for both men and women to work in construction. Nicola informed that the construction industry has changed and it now no longer meets its stereotype of a dirty manual job and perceptions of this now need to adapt.

Nicola stressed that this project was not just about KW Bell, this is a project that will benefit all of the construction industry.

AccXel will be based in Cinderford. Work has commenced and they will be ready to launch November 2021 for an intake of students in January 2022.

Nicola added in the zoom chat:

*“Please also follow our build journey on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Any support and help is appreciated. Once the build is complete I will be delighted to offer the venue to facilitate a lot of the project ideas being spoken about today. Thank you for the opportunity to meet everyone today. My email address is [nbird@kwbell.co.uk](mailto:nbird@kwbell.co.uk)”*

#### **4. Publica Procurement**

Lauren Gardner, Trainee Procurement Officer at Publica Group (Publica is a council owned employment company which delivers shared services between Cotswold, West Oxfordshire, and Forest of Dean District Councils and Cheltenham Borough Council) presented to the stakeholders on how they can get registered as a provider to the procurement portal.

She informed all requests for quotation and invitations to tender for contracts of work and services over £10,000 are managed through the in-tend portal for all the partnering councils.

To register, please visit: <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/publicagroup/asp/Registration>

It was discussed that it would be a good idea to host a “meet the buyer” event like the council has previously run.

#### **5. Project Updates**

##### Biosphere Reserve

Sarah Rizvi gave background information on the project, confirming that the biosphere reserve is a UNESCO designation. She advised it differs from an area of natural beauty or similar designations in that it has a different framework from those traditional landscape designations.

It takes into consideration the sustainability of the areas, forestry and tourism. It helps to promote the area on a global scale.

It was advised that the action group submitted a bid to Heritage Lottery in February 2020, but unfortunately this funding was withdrawn due to COVID-19.

She informed that the Biosphere Reserve Action Group have submitted their bid to the Arts Council England for £10,000.

The current bid is looking at community engagement to confirm if there is an appetite for a biosphere reserve in the Forest of Dean. It was agreed that there is very little knowledge in the wider communities of what the designation is and what prospects it could have for the District.

The aim is to educate the resident enough to make an informed decision through the medium of film and audio (podcasts).

### Inspiring Forest

Wendy Jackson informed that due to COVID-19 there is a proposed additional project in the overall Inspiring Forest Programme.

See It; Be It will focus on a video campagne. Using film clips, we could record real life experiences of people working in a variety of workplace settings to demonstrate the vast range of employment on offer in this location. We could also give businesses a chance to shout about why working for them could be a great career choice.

As a new digital response, the film could be used to promote employer/school/college engagement, grow FEP participation and alert young people and their families to what is on offer to new employees or apprentices on their doorstep.

FEP will be submitting a grant variation to the FoDDC for partial funding for the project and GFirst LEP and GCC will provide further funding.

The aim is to bring in Gloucestershire College media students to work on the editing and voiceover portions of the project.

If successful this could act as a pilot for the entire county.

### Mobility as a Service

David Trevelyan informed that a bid has been submitted to InnovateUK SBRI (Geospatial Data) 2 stage funding programme. This bid is being led by a local company Rural Technologies Limited of which he and Andrew Callard are Directors.

He explained that Mobility as a Service is every form of public mobility from walking to rail in a "uber" style approach. Looking at need and demand and overlaying technology.

He informed that within the bid, there is a proportion of monies outlined towards conduction a transport study of which the FEP Sub-Group, Transport & Infrastructure have been looking to create and roll out across the District.

If successful the bid will allow FEP to start working on this project.

### How Fast; How Good? 2

Andrew Callard informed How Fast; How Good? 2 was now live on the FEP [website](#).

Andrew explained that in March 2020 the Universal Service Obligation came into effect. 50% of our sample and 19% of Ofcom rural samples fail to meet 10Mbps download obligation which was larger than the 2% reported by Ofcom.

The report also confirmed Covid has not increased the proportion of sample households using broadband for business purposes. Excluding the retired it was already 90+% Covid has increased usage to a mean average of 42% of time.

The main conclusion was that “We are already in Industry 4.0 but not a SMART Economy.”

### Fastershire Cinderford

David Trevelyan informed us that Fastershire have identified 550 premises within Cinderford Town Centre that appear to receive less than 30Mbps broadband speed - these are a mix of homes and commercial buildings.

Fastershire looking for premises within specific streets to sign up to the Expression of Interest (EOI) form on their website (<https://www.fastershire.com/>)

The proposal would place FEP in a contract with Fastershire (Grant Funder), FEP (Contract Owner), and the selected provider (Broadband Network Builder) to design, build and deploy a new gigabit broadband in the Cinderford Area.

The contract would be a tri-party contract, with all operational and financial activity being carried out between Fastershire and the Provider. FEP's involvement would be as a community lead who aggregates demand.

The approximate process would be:

1. Enough eligible Cinderford Residents sign up to the Fastershire Website to show there is demand
2. FEP / Fastershire put a call out for competitive tendering to install the broadband network
3. FEP / Fastershire appoint the broadband network builder
4. Payment made directly from Fastershire to the Network Builder

Stakeholders agreed to move forward with the project.

## **6. AOB**

### Trains

Sarah Taylor Phillips advised that there is still an issue with the school transport via train into Gloucestershire with students still waiting up to 90mins for a return commute.

### Thank You

Wendy Jackson thanked Mikki Liddiatt for the support to the FEP throughout 2020. Neill Ricketts extended this to Wendy also.

### Local Plan

Mikki Liddiatt advised that the local plan preferred location consultation was extended and encouraged stakeholders to participate in this.