



WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING

Friday 08th October 2021
14:00 – 16:00

**2nd Floor, View Building, Worcestershire County Cricket Club, New Road,
Worcester, WR2 4QQ**

PRESENT:

Mark Stansfeld	(MS)	Non-Executive Chair
Gary Woodman	(GW)	Chief Executive, Worcestershire LEP
Carl Arntzen	(CA)	Managing Director, Worcester Bosch Group
Cllr Simon Geraghty	(SiG)	Leader of WCC and Cabinet Member for Finance
Jennifer Long	(JL)	Director, Ice Blue Marketing and Design
Jeremy Cieslik	(JC)	Chief Operating Officer, Mettis Aerospace
Julie Snell	(JS)	Non-Executive Director of Hereford & Worcestershire Health & Care Trust
Jane Britton	(JB)	Director of Communications and Participation of University of Worcester

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ian Smith	(IS)	Assistant Director West Midlands and South West, BEIS
Luke Willetts	(LW)	Director of Operations, Worcestershire LEP
Phoebe Dawson	(PD)	Director of Business Engagement, Worcestershire LEP
Kate Snell	(KS)	Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership
Ste Ashton	(SA)	Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity Manager, WCC
Alex Pearson	(AP)	Midlands Energy Hub
John Hobbs	(JH)	Director of Economy & Infrastructure, WCC

APOLOGIES:

Steph Simcox	(SS)	Head of Finance, Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Karen May	(KM)	Leader of Bromsgrove District Council
John Dillon	(JD)	Managing Director, GJS Dillon
Sue Jordan	(SJ)	Non-Executive Board Member
Stuart Laverick	(SL)	Principal & Chief Executive, Heart of Worcestershire
Cllr Marc Bayliss	(MB)	Leader Worcester City Council (Representing Southern DCs)



1.	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u>	ACTION
1.1	<p>Mark Stansfeld (Chair) welcomed the Board and was great to see everyone in person again after holding meetings virtually for so long. Apologies were received and noted from Cllr Karen May, John Dillon, Stuart Laverick, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Sue Jordan and Steph Simcox (observer).</p> <p>New member Jane Britton, Director of Communications and Participation from the University of Worcester has joined our board, following Sarah Greer's successful appointment as Vice Chancellor at the University of Winchester, and our Chair welcomed her to the board.</p> <p>Carl Arntzen joined the board virtually.</p>	
2.	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>	
2.1	<p>MS asked the Board if there were any declarations of interest. New declarations of Interests have been sent out to the board and will be signed and updated.</p>	
2.2	None were raised.	
3.	<u>Minutes of WLEP Board Meeting on 28th July 2021.</u>	
3.1	Some points of accuracy on the BGF programme update item have been addressed by the team and updated on the website.	
3.2	Remainder of notes were agreed to be correct and the minutes were signed off as a true record.	
4.	<u>Matters Arising and Action List from 28th July Meeting.</u>	
4.1	Action list	
4.2	Matters Arising	
4.3	The Chair asked Gary to review action list from previous board meeting.	GW
4.4	GW added feedback on the LEP Review & Levelling Up Agenda and will discuss further later on the agenda.	
4.5	PD updated the Board on the delivery of specialist advisors within the Growth Hub. Developments with Tractivity was reported with progress. A plan of action is happening at present. With an underspend more being added towards the Specialist Advisors roles.	PD
4.6	LW advised the board on progress of the newly formed sub-board 'Worcestershire Innovation Board', and progress towards pulling together action plan which address plan for growth priorities and intelligence gathering from innovative companies. Next meeting of Worcestershire Innovation Board taking place Tuesday 12 th October.	LW



4.7	GW updated on the BetaDen Workshop to take place next week Monday 11 th October to help and advise going forward.	
4.8	All other issues were covered by items on the agenda.	
5.	<u>LEP Review Update – Gary Woodman.</u>	
5.1	GW updated the board on the current LEP Review.	
5.2	Overlapping geography issue still in progress with central government decision making to still happen.	
5.3	Levelling Up white paper looks set to be published within the Autumn period but looking more likely to be after CSR announcement on 27 October.	
5.4	IS hopeful some clarity and decisions will soon be made on this matter.	
5.5	All agreed on the need to continue focusing on local delivery.	
5.7	SG commented that central government should reflect on the significant loss of momentum that will be experienced if a radical overhaul of LEPs and local delivery mechanisms is proposed as part of Levelling Up agenda. IS agreed and noted officials continue to provide advice based on experience from when RDAs were abolished and the 18-24 month ‘down-time’ that resulted.	
5.8	Chair closed on this and thanked the board for the informative feedback.	
6.	<u>Net Zero Ambitions in Worcestershire – Luke Willetts / Alex Pearson.</u>	
6.1	LW introduced presentation to the board from board as opportunity to seek Board’s appetite on engaging with Net Zero agenda and potential project pipeline opportunities.	
6.2	LW highlighted the progress to targets on Energy Strategy.	
6.3	AP Net Zero context set out in UK law along with its terminology and themes to reach our goal for 2050 and its meaning for our county along with it’s potential market worth.	
6.4	LW presented to the board on work with key businesses within our county around a Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership Hydrogen Taskforce. Opportunities are positive within transport, heating and industrial processes.	
6.5	LW outlined proposal explored at a recent consortium workshop run in partnership with Faun Zoeller and the potential for decarbonising the county’s Waste Services by exploring low-carbon technologies including hydrogen fuel-cell and EV RCVs.	



6.6	The Chair asked for thoughts from the Board. Carl was asked on where and what more can we do as a board within the hydrogen area for our county.	
6.7	CA outlined UK pilots that Worcester Bosch have been involved with, including linking up homes onto blended gas networks with 20% hydrogen and 100% hydrogen blends. Potential support would be a demonstration project within a new build or regeneration housing scheme within the county. - Worcester to perhaps Bid as the Hydrogen West Midlands town for hydrogen supply, however intel suggests Government would prefer a coastal location to benefit from wind-powered generation.	
6.8	JS added that businesses would invest once shown data on expenditure saved and develop an awareness. This would create funding on this more.	
6.9	PD added feedback on Armstrongs company recently relocating within the county and involved in new innovative ideas and helping with skills and apprenticeships for training and skills development.	
6.10	JS added latest innovative projects happening currently within his company in reducing carbon emissions, including alternative production and manufacturing facilities which are not brick-built but marquee-style but retain heat efficiently.	
6.11	Chair keen to see a plan which can support our main businesses but also made the point agenda should not be dominated by recency bias. AP added strong local working relationship with the University and Worcestershire have established a strong track record within Midland Energy Hub in terms of projects delivered and within pipeline (No 1 in both categories)..	
6.12	SG suggested a potential pitch to Government could include Worcester Bosch and seeking to be an exemplar within the county for taking first step at scale to blend 20% hydrogen into local gas distribution network.	
6.13	CA advised boilers manufactured since 2004 or younger can blend up to 20% hydrogen. CA added all new housing developments should be mandated to have hydrogen-enabled boilers to reduce emissions. Board noted this is a Planning Authority issue.	
6.14	Action – Proposal / plan to come back to next meeting for further discussion on this matter.	LW / AP
6.15	Chair thanked AP and LW on their informative presentation and feedback.	



7.	<u>Digital Connectivity – Ste Ashton.</u>	
7.1	SA presented to the board on the progress of digital connectivity within the county incorporating mobile, broadband and 5G.	
7.2	Worcestershire is in a good space at present in regards superfast and gigabit broadband coverage in comparison with other counties, as a result of investment made by Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership and WCC over the last 5-8 years.	
7.3	The Gigabit Voucher scheme was launched in Spring 2021, Worcestershire has been successful accessing this scheme previously and the aim is to continue this trend and complete build on committed vouchers. DCMS has also announced much of Worcestershire is part of their early Project Gigabit procurement lots. the newly launched scheme within the digital of our county. New data on coverage and operators' plans is expected to be shared with us soon from the DCMS.	
7.4	It is recognised there are gaps in mobile coverage and issues of performance in the county. 4G services have improved between 2017 and 2019 and 5G networks have started to be built, in more urban areas. Investing public money directly is an issue, but there are routes by influencing delivery of services and also an education piece.	
7.5	An update was provided on developments at NexGworx, with a focus on securing new customers and the West Mercia Rural 5G project, that is looking at sustainability beyond March 2022. JS added that some NHS staff require to stop before getting to patients to download notes which is an issue. SA added this is rural networks are important for delivery of public services and outlined the work of the Shared Rural Network initiative.	
7.6	JL added basic broadband and mobile networks should be done within all new builds within our county. SA explained the team had recently included both gigabit capable broadband and engagement with mobile operators in the recent Wyre Forest and South Worcestershire Development Plan documents that would put the requirement on the developer.	
7.7	Chair added positive feedback received from DCMS recently for Ste and his team done within our county.	
7.8	The board thanked on this and its progress. How can we support further on this and where to next was asked by SG.	
7.9	Action – The programmes and investment to improve connectivity has been excellent - how to move things more forward again would be helpful to see a plan at the November Meeting.	GW
7.10	All agreed to the boards input added here and going forward on this matter.	



8.	<u>AOB and Close.</u>	
8.1	None were raised.	
10.	<u>Board Meeting Dates for 2021 –</u> 25th November 2021 10:00 - 13:00 <u>Dates for 2022 -</u> 27th January 2022 09:30 – 13:00 24th March 2022 09:30 – 13:00 19th May 2022 09:30 - 13:00 21st July 2022 09:30 – 13:00 22nd September 2022 09:30 – 13:00 24th November 2022 09:30 – 13:00	