

**MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS BOARD MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 1st July 2013 4.30 PM – 6.30 PM
HELD AT BRIDGNORTH ALUMINIUM**

Present:

Businesses

Shaun Carvill	Clicking Mad Ltd
Tudor Griffiths	Tudor Griffiths Group Ltd
Arthur Hill (Vice-Chair)	CH Hill & Sons, Much Wenlock
Mandy Stoker	E4 Environment and Chair of METnet
Mandy Thorn (Chair)	Marches Care Ltd

Representatives

Cllr Steve Charmley	Portfolio Holder Business Growth & Commissioning (North)
Simon MacVicker	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise Ltd
Glynn Jones	Bank of England West Midlands
Cllr Tina Woodward	Deputy Portfolio Holder Business Growth
Rob Hudson	Handlesbanken - Banking Representative

Observer

Steve Davenport	Chair, Shropshire Council Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny
Will Morris	Kingsland Consulting Ltd & SSE Ltd
Richard Sheehan	Chief Executive of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise Ltd

Officers

Mark Pembleton	Service Manager for Business and Enterprise
Amanda Holyoak	Committee Officer

1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all present and thanked Simon MacVicker for hosting the meeting at Bridgnorth Aluminium.

Apologies were received from Tony Bywater, Nick Chavasse, Karen Davies, Ann Johnson, Fay Easton, Andy Evans, Katie Foster, Duncan Gray, Nick Scott and Steve Wain.

Bridgnorth Aluminium

Simon MacVicker welcomed Board members to Bridgnorth Aluminium and gave a presentation which covered the company's background and overview of its business. Members were particularly interested to note that:

- 75% of output was for use in printing plates in which Bridgnorth Aluminium held 10% of world market share.
- 1 in 20 pages printed in the newspaper industry worldwide were printed using Bridgnorth manufactured Aluminium foil

- 25% of output was used in the food industry, for example yogurt lids, medicine lids and wrappers
- Demand from the BRIC economies was growing and remained steady from the USA and Europe.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

Updates

Flax Mill

The West Midlands Board has given unanimous backing to the Flax Mill Lottery Bid. The National Board was due to meet on 23 July and all indications of a successful outcome were positive.

Board's Terms of Reference – Will Morris had provided a clear definition of the Board's role (previously circulated to Members). Members agreed it was important for the Board to be used as a sounding board, but to also sometimes give the Council messages it did not like, if these reflected the views of the business community. Members also felt that the Board's experience could be utilised, for example, in the development of IP&E. Steve Charmley, Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, said he would welcome this

M6 Toll – this would be free for members of the Road Haulage Association in July and the Marches LEP Transport Group were in talks with the M6 Toll organisation. Reference was made to the M54/M6 link which had been announced as an infrastructure project in the recent spending review announcement.

Start Up Bus Tour – the Bus would call at the Square, Shrewsbury on 25 July from 9 am to 1 pm, and then at Bailey Head, Oswestry on the same day, 2pm – 5pm. Shropshire was the only county with two stop off points. Members of the Business Board and Ambassadors were encouraged to join the bus as business mentors.

4. Marches LEP Update

Appointment of New Chair

The Chair was pleased to report that Graham Wynn had been appointed as the new Chair of the LEP. He had previously been Chair of the Telford and Wrekin Business Board and was a very able business man, having a national profile. The Board was pleased to note that he believed in working in partnership, was a big supporter of start up businesses and had a good understanding of rural issues.

Skills Plan

The Skills Plan had been developed to be more action focused and would be considered at the 2 September meeting with a view to the Business Board approving the amended version.

European Funding

The Government had announced that approximately £97 million (depending on exchange rate) had been allocated to the Marches LEP area, which had been better than expected. This was however an indicative allocation, match funding would be needed to draw it down with a draft Investment Strategy to be submitted by end of September 2013. The Strategy would need to relate to the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy and a draft would hopefully be available for the Business Board agenda at the 2nd September meeting.

The Board discussed the need to work a lot smarter, and focus on getting match funding. Richard Sheehan reported that UKTI had already started to meet LEPs to look into the possibilities of match funding.

Keeping Informed

The Chair suggested that Board Members used the LEP Website for updates or to follow the LEP on Twitter.

5. Business Summit

The Chair thanked Members for their attendance and hard work at the Business Summit. Feedback had been very good with a 51% response rate and the vast majority rating the event as good or excellent.

Mark Pembleton reported that :

- over 100 businesses had been in attendance, from a more diverse range than at previous summits
- the format, which had avoided formal presentations, had been welcomed
- many new businesses had attended
- a high number of respondents had indicated they were happy to get involved with further work
- A powerful message had been provided through the involvement and time of Business Board Members at the event.

**Julie
Macrae**

A short summary of feedback gathered from each discussion group had been circulated and Business Champions were invited to add to these

Business Hub –

The Chair reported :

- Positive feedback on the hub concept had been given.
- View it will create jobs and more business wealth.
- Now need to find and cost a venue and find seed funding to move forward.
- There was a rumour that government funding might become available for Growth Hubs.

William Morris reported that a draft paper on development of the Hub had been drawn up and would be costed shortly.

Exporting –

Simon MacVicker reported on discussion held:

- A UKTI infrastructure is in place and works well.
- There was a communication challenge – letting people know that exporting is not just for big companies, anyone can do it. So far SME take up had been low.
- Lots of events are held by the Chamber and it's not necessary to be a member to attend.
- No budget for general publicity for these events.
- Business Hub should help with this and the Chamber is supportive of the Hub.

Procurement

The Board discussed the promotion of cogs, and procurement charter. More electronic tendering was needed. (tender vault)

Members wondered whether the name 'Cogs' could cause confusion – as it implied an acronym. Some felt this might detract from the excellent message of cogs.

Employment Sites

The Chair reported on discussions over allocation of employment land, and problems related to current values which meant it was not being released whilst prices were low.

Mark Pembleton emphasised the importance of having a lot of different types of employment land to suit any business which comes forward.

Visitor Economy

The Chair was not sure that the notes circulated on visitor economy reflected the conversation at the Summit. She referred to the difficulty of

politics within different organisations and the need for a collegiate view.

William Morris felt that Shropshire was missing out on an opportunity to become known as 'The Festival County'.

Steve Davenport, Chairman Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee, expressed his view that rather than individual Destination Partnerships, there should be one 'Destination Shropshire'.

Members discussed the value of the Muller and Santander Adverts and felt there was a need for a cohesive brand for the whole of the county.

It was agreed to add tourism to the meeting for the September meeting of the Board and a 'family tree' of tourism organisations to be provided.

There was some difference of opinion over the importance of Shrewsbury within the county in terms of the visitor economy.

Mark Pembleton clarified that each of the Destination Partnerships were concerned with the practical considerations of the tourism offer in each area, eg facilities and infrastructure, and not the marketing. The marketing to attract visitors to Shropshire was done on a Shropshire basis with Shropshire Tourism Ltd.

Broadband

The roll out programme had not yet been identified but the information would be shared with the Board as soon as it became available, probably in September time.

Simon MacVicker said it would be useful to know the final 5% or so earlier in the process rather than later to allow consideration of other options, for example community initiatives. Mark Pembleton explained why technically this was not possible due to BT planning work.

Arthur Hill expressed concern that at the end of the day some areas might only get 1.8mb. He reported that a lot of NFU Members paid £35 a month for satellite provision, which gave speeds of 14 or 15mb, but slow up load speed.

Mandy Thorn said that Nick Chavasse as Champion had done a great job and could provide an update in September.

The Land Based Sector

In addition to the bullet points on the briefing note, Arthur Hill referred to issues around phosphate pollution, ammonia pollution from chicken farms and water issues. He reported that 17 woodchip burners had been installed in schools.

Rob Hudson referred to the debate on recyclable energy, eg solar farms and the need to know where Shropshire was heading.

**Julie
Macrae**

The Environmental Low Carbon Sector

Mandy Stoker reported on discussions held on CO2 reduction. An eco-architect had been present at the summit and a new sector of opportunity related to new housing, which should be designed to meet a higher spec than currently.

There was generally a lack of understanding around what the carbon economy was and a significant need to raise awareness.

She reported that Shropshire currently had a lead on Anaerobic Digestion, one project involving investment from London was worth £300 million.

Creative Industries Sector – Shaun Carvill was on holiday at the time of the summit and therefore did not attend. Notes were forthcoming from the meeting but these had not been discussed or agreed with him. If/when these are he will be able to report at a future meeting.

Shaun Carvill

7 Action Plans

The Board noted that £18,000 both this year and next would be available to help tackle blockages holding up the Business Board's delivery of the Growth Strategy. It was capacity money to aid co-ordination and delivery.

Business Champions were asked to have an initial think about how this might best be used and share thoughts.

Simon MacVicker suggested using some of the money for UKTI event publicity purposes. The Chair said it was important to ensure the capacity money would aid delivery of the action plan.

Mark Pembleton agreed to e-mail members with examples of how the capacity funding might be used.

Mark Pembleton

8. Bank of England Update

Glynn Jones' update to the Board included the following points:

- Overall sentiment was improving
- There had been a very gradual recovery but with businesses still very cautious around their investment and employment intentions.
- Recovery was not driven by any particular sector but the construction industry was looking reasonably positive due to a spike in house sales with the government schemes to help provide deposits and easier mortgages.
- Manufacturing appeared to have a slightly more positive outlook and tourism attraction visitor figures were up.

- Deflation rather than inflation might be a concern moving forward.
- There was not much change in the labour market but private sector job creation was slowing.

Richard Sheehan referred to the Chamber of Commerce's Quarter 2 Shropshire figures which showed significant moves in capital investment, employment intentions, orders and export orders. However growth in competition was leading to erosion of margins. This data was sent to central Government and based across 110 companies in Shropshire. As many respondents as possible would help to give an accurate picture.

Mark
Pembleton

Mark Pembleton agreed to circulate the Quarter 2 update to all Members

There had been a net growth in Shropshire of jobs, business and confidence and this was a good news story.

Any other Business

The NFU update report was circulated to Members.

Dates of Next Meeting

All meetings could be held at Shirehall but any offers for hosting a meeting would be welcomed. (Tudor Griffiths has offered to host the 2nd September meeting).

2nd September 2013

14th October 2013

2nd December 2013

The Chair thanked all for attending and to Simon MacVicker for Bridgnorth Aluminium's kind hospitality and an excellent tour of the manufacturing plant.