



THE LEP NETWORK

Newsletter

September 2011 Issue

Message from David Frost CBE, Chair of the LEP Network

A clear message from Government: 'Just do it!'



Since taking over this role my focus has been to understand the priorities for individual LEPs and get their steer on what role the Network should play. I have always been clear that the Network exists to support LEPs and not to speak for them or tell them what to do. Over the summer, I made an effort to visit as many LEPs as I could. What has impressed me is the sheer enthusiasm and passion from the Boards of the LEPs to make them succeed and drive local economic development. I also heard about individual projects such as the new Jaguar plant at Wolverhampton's i54 business park and common themes, such as digital infrastructure where the Network could help

interested LEPs to work together. I will continue these visits in the coming weeks and months. If anyone wants me to visit them or has an event they would like me to attend, please contact me on d.frost@lepnetwork.org.uk. The Network also recently hosted its inaugural event, which was a huge success. The commitment and passion of all those involved was very obvious to all who attended and I took the chance to listen to LEP representatives from across the country.

My job now is to ensure that LEPs' priorities drive the Network's activities. It is clear that there many issues and frustrations facing LEPs, from skills through planning to stimulating enterprise. Eric Pickles MP could not have been clearer when he told LEP delegates at our event 'just do it'. Of course LEPs need to decide how they are going to 'do it' and in which areas they want to work together. LEPs need to agree how to make their voices heard and how they want to respond to announcements and requests from government, including those made at our event such as the consultation on creating local transport consortia using LEPs and Greg Clark MP's broader challenge that LEPs should tell the Government which specific powers they want devolved to them.

In the coming weeks the LEP Network website will be launched (see below) and we will announce plans for workshops on some of the themes identified by LEPs as their priority areas of interest. It is clear that the Boards of LEPs are determined that they will succeed in their vital role of driving forward local economic development.

Network Update

Latest on LEP Network activity

LEP Network Event

This month saw the inaugural event of the LEP Network, held in London. It brought together around 100 LEP Chairs and Board members, senior civil servants, ministers and membership group representatives. The day included keynote speeches from:



Network Chair, David Frost - who focussed on the importance of building meaningful bilateral relationships between LEPs, Westminster and Whitehall on terms that work for LEPs;

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP and Minister for Decentralisation and Cities, Greg Clark MP – who stressed the Government’s commitment to support LEPs and their aspirations for localism in economic development ([link to Eric Pickles’ speech](#));

Secretary of State for Transport, Philip Hammond MP – who chose the event to formally announce a consultation on routing sub-national Transport funding through consortia of LEPs ([link to speech](#)).

On a day that saw extensive networking and swapping of innovative ideas, LEP leaders were able to put their concerns directly to Philip Hammond and Vince Cable in a ‘LEP Question-time’ session on matters including funding and drawing down powers from the centre. Following group sessions on stimulating enterprise, infrastructure and getting the skills system to deliver locally, LEPs were able to question a panel of senior civil servants on the issues.

The LEP Network will be working hard over the coming weeks to establish its new website (www.lepnetwork.org.uk) and ‘LEP Community’ facility to enable LEPs to carry on this important dialogue, share best practice, and raise issues with other LEPs for discussion and joint working.

LEP Network website will be the new hub for information and knowledge exchange on all things LEP



The LEP Network’s new website, which is due to launch shortly, will be the premier hub for research and information on all things LEP. It will include news from around the network, details of forthcoming LEP Network activities and how to get involved, feature examples of innovative new projects and best practice from LEPs around England. It will feature a 'community' function - a new online platform for exchanging knowledge that will organise discussion threads, postings and resources into an easy-to-search range of economic development topics.

The new website will offer the opportunity for LEPs to post information about themselves and their activities and advertise their events free of charge. Users of the website will be able to find their local LEP and relevant contact details.

The contents of the website will be driven by the needs and requirements of LEPs themselves and we would call for and welcome any information, news, research and ideas for community discussions that you would like to see featured on the site.

For more information on how to submit material to feature on the website, please email info@lepnetwork.co.uk.

LEP Life

News from around the Network

Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership bid approved



The LEP Network extends a warm welcome to [Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership](#) (NEP) which this month became the latest addition to the LEP family. Launched in May this year, NEP received formal endorsement from the Government as the Local Enterprise Partnership on 23 September. NEP covers a population of around 683,000 and represents over 24,785 businesses. It has the support of both businesses and local authorities in the area and joins the 37 partnerships announced since the Government’s Local Growth White Paper was published in October last year.

The focus of the private sector-led partnership is to promote growth and create jobs in the area. Its priorities include increasing the coverage of super-fast broadband, regenerating and improving connectivity between the main population areas, supporting the tourism industry and helping to realise the potential of the growth sectors like advanced manufacturing and engineering, information technology and logistics.

For more information please contact Sajeeda Rose Sajeeda.rose@northamptonshireep.co.uk.

Midlands LEPs lead the way on red tape agenda



Changing local regulatory enforcement in order to promote prosperity and growth has been put high on the agenda by two Midlands LEPs; [Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership](#) (LLEP), and [Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP](#) (GBSLEP).

The LLEP identified issues relating to regulation and its members are working collectively to change the way regulation is delivered on the ground. The result is the 'Better Business for All' programme to build a new and more positive relationship between businesses and regulators. 29 September saw the launch of the programme including a 'single point of access' into the regulatory system. The launch at the King Power Stadium - home of Leicester City FC – took place against the backdrop of a major annual business event. Better Business for All is about creating an effective and efficient regulatory system to support business growth by removing real and perceived regulatory barriers.

The scheme has piqued the interest of senior figures in government such as Minister for Business and Enterprise, Mark Prisk MP, who are interested to see how the work by the LLEP may be replicated to support similar schemes in other LEPs across the country.

Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP identified the chief issues regarding local regulation via a survey of businesses and focus group studies throughout the area. A workshop will take place on 19 October between businesses, local and national regulators to identify key areas where a number of 'quick wins' can be made by changing the approach to regulatory enforcement. The LEP Board is keen to find the right approach to regulatory enforcement to stimulate growth and further the LEP's ambitions to make Greater Birmingham & Solihull an appealing location in which to invest. The Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) is supporting this pilot work with both LEPs with a view to sharing best practice with the rest of the UK's LEP community – possibly through a summit held in March next year.

For more information about both schemes please contact Gemma Hume at the [LBRO](#) (Gemma.Hume@lbro.org.uk), Tel 0121 226 4004.

York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP to pilot new Certificate of Business Growth



Everybody wishing to start a legitimate business visits a bank to arrange account facilities. If funding is required banks are reluctant to lend unless applicants have a good understanding of the proposed business and a credible business plan is presented. The Certificate of Business Growth (CBG) is designed to address both these issues. It is intended to be promoted by all major high street banks within their branch network. York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP is now in discussion with the British Bankers Association and they are also encouraging as it fits with their Better Business Taskforce plans Senior regional bankers in Yorkshire have been very positive because it reduces risk; will improve business sustainability and assist in reaching lending targets.. They are jointly considering the most appropriate accreditation body and also how to make it clear that the CBG will not be interpreted as a guarantee of lending.

The CBG will be a series of online, focussed modules based around the preparation of a business plan. The Certificate will only be awarded on successful completion of the modules and an online assessment. The programme will be suitable for retail, service or manufacturing businesses. It will not duplicate but will provide links to existing sites such as HMRC and HSE. Course content is being monitored by a focus group of successful 2-4 year old businesses. The LEP proposes to run a short pilot in the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding area and iron out any glitches.

LEP involvement is essential as the local convenor between banks and colleges, the CBG will provide a route to market for mentoring initiatives without the need for the large marketing budget deployed by Business Link. It will also provide colleges with greater penetration into the local business community.

York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP is calling for expressions of interest from LEP Chairs around the network. For more information on the CBG, please contact Barry Dodd, Chair, York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP (c/o Julie Chandler, LEP Secretariat Julie.Chandler@ynypu.org.uk).

Calling all LEPs: Whitehall seeks LEPs' views on designing the second round of the Capacity Fund



The Capacity Fund established earlier this year aimed to support LEPs understand the issues facing businesses in their areas. Round 1 of the fund was focussed on activities that enabled the development and prioritisation of action plans. But as Round 2 of the fund approaches, some recently-approved Partnerships will still be developing their plans and will want support to do this while others will be at the implementation stage.

For those at the implementation stage, BIS is looking for feedback from LEPs on what activities should be supported in the next round. It is also looking for suggestions from all Partnerships on how to improve the process for Round 2 to make it simpler and work better for LEPs. The sponsoring Department for the fund - Business, Innovation & Skills – is looking to ensure Partnerships are in a position to start spending from 1 April 2012 when the next tranche of funding will be available. The intention is for a panel to agree the objectives and methodology for Round 2 at a meeting in late October. LEPs can input to the meeting by speaking to their representatives from BIS Local – who will be on the panel - and the LEP Network will also collate and forward to the panel any comments it receives by email by 14 October 2011.

Department for Transport seeks views from LEPs on delivering local transport priorities



At the LEP Network's inaugural event, the Secretary of State for Transport Philip Hammond MP announced his intention to "launch a consultation on how the Government can put in place a structure to fully devolve decisions and funding for local capital transport improvements" from April 2015 to a number of what he called for shorthand "local transport consortia," each made up of a number of LEPs and their constituent local authorities. The consultation will invite thoughts on the role, structure, optimum size, configuration, governance and accountability arrangements that would be most appropriate to deliver value for money, while achieving genuine local ownership of the prioritisation and delivery of sub-national transport projects.

The Government is proposing that all Local Enterprise Partnerships are closely involved with the decision-making of local transport consortia and provide advice on what transport investment would best align with growth priorities. The Department is now calling for LEPs to get involved in early local conversations about the formation of local transport consortia, and consider what roles and responsibilities they might wish to take on in respect of strategic transport decision-making and delivery post 2014-15. The Department has been running a series of informal consultation events across the country, well attended by LEPs. BIS Local and the Department's local engagement hub teams are willing to help facilitate further conversations, and are also available to meet to discuss further.

Ones to watch: infrastructure funding and Enterprise Zone information packs....



You may have seen the recent announcement from Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander MP on the creation of a £500m "Growing Places" fund to support infrastructure projects that will support local growth priorities, unlock development and create jobs. Further details are expected to follow soon...

An Enterprise Zone information pack will be issued imminently to those areas that were successful. We would welcome stories and good practice on Enterprise Zone development for example on LDOs or Broadband and would like to remind you that the new website will allow you to share best practice and develop discussions to support each other.

Feedback

We welcome your feedback. If you have any comments or suggestions for our E-News bulletin, please email us. If at any time you wish to unsubscribe to this newsletter, please email info@lepnetwork.org.uk with 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

In the news

We want to hear your news! Why?...so we can let everyone else know in the next issue of LEP Network E-News. Whether its innovative new approaches to local challenges, appointments, or just a quick update – tell us what's going on with your LEP. Email us your news on info@lepnetwork.org.uk.