

FIFE ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP

EXECUTIVE GROUP MEETING

TUESDAY 5TH MARCH 2019

NOTE OF MEETING

Present: Michael Longstaffe (Smith Anderson); Colin Brown (Investment Group Chair); Ian Palmer (John Fergus & Co Ltd); John Penman (Fife Fabrications); Stephen Hall (FLEXcon); Ian Wilkie (Leviton); Stuart Strachan, Stephen White (Scottish Government); Pamela Marshall (University of Strathclyde); Alan Mitchell (Fife Chamber of Commerce); Sue Reekie (Fife College); Derek Watson (University of St Andrews); Elaine Morrison (Scottish Enterprise); Cllr Altany Craik, Gordon Mole, Sandra Montador-Stewart, Anne Rennie, George Sneddon (Fife Council).

Apologies: Phill Thompson (Innovation Group Chair)

WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND MATTERS ARISING

- Ministerial Business Breakfast - following discussion it was agreed that if the Cabinet Secretary was not available for the business breakfast subsequent to the follow-up letter being sent then a different format would be proposed.
- Fife Business Charter – it was noted that the Charter had been launched on 4th March and it was agreed that the press release would be circulated to members.
- Fife's Economic Strategy - It was noted that a performance report on Fife's Economic Strategy would be tabled at the June meeting.

NATIONAL MANUFACTURING INSTITUTE FOR SCOTLAND (NMIS) OUTREACH AND ADVANCED MANUFACTURING CHALLENGE FUND

Stuart Strachan and Pamela Marshall provided an overview of the NMIS Advanced Manufacturing Challenge Fund. The NMIS is based in Inchinnan and has a national focus with the outreach programme and the fund supporting that aim. The NMIS will comprise a Manufacturing Skills Academy, Digital Factory 2050, Innovation Collaboratory and Forum.

The aim of the Advanced Manufacturing Challenge Fund is to create sustained cultural change in leadership and knowledge development. There are two elements to the fund – *cluster building* (no match funding required) and *leveraging our assets* (50% match funding required). Projects must come from the public or third sectors, support SME development and address horizontal themes eg equal opportunities and sustainable development.

The call structure for the fund is currently being developed but it is anticipated that the first call will be in late spring/early summer. Potential project examples could include new and enhanced existing centres of excellence; services to increase SME access to expertise, equipment and skills. Funding can be used to buy capital equipment providing that it can be used by SMEs in a test or demonstrator capacity to test new products and processes.

Members of the partnership were advised to liaise with NMIS to discuss any potential project proposals.

INVESTMENT GROUP

Colin Brown provided an update on the work of the Investment Group over the last year. Meetings have focused on Fife Industrial Estate Regeneration Programme; digital connectivity and infrastructure; Investment Group Action Plan/City Deal; and Scottish Water/Scottish Power Energy Network.

The priorities for the group are:

1. Increased investment in industrial estates – working group established and paper on options to be developed for FEP.
2. Stronger approach to joint infrastructure planning, delivering increased investment – programme of engagement with utilities.
3. Gaining Scottish Government commitment to Levenmouth Rail Link (Levenmouth Sustainable Transport Study).

Gordon Mole provided an update on the Levenmouth Sustainable Transport Study – the preliminary options appraisal report is currently being finalised and transport options have been selected for the detailed options appraisal stage. Sandra Montador-Stewart attends the monthly progress meetings and can provide updates as required or information can be found on the project website: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/levenmouth-sustainable-transport-study/>

Gordon also advised that the Scottish Government has launched its Town Centre Fund 2019/20 and Fife has been allocated £4.3m. Details of the terms and conditions for the fund is expected by Fife Council within the next week.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Stephen White provided an overview of regional economic partnership working. Scotland's Economic Strategy sets out the challenges for inclusive growth. Regional economic partnerships will see the partners identify joint priorities for action to deliver inclusive growth; maximise economic benefit from regional assets and cluster development; and integrate activity such as strategic planning of development and infrastructure planning and local partnerships. Regional economic partnership structures are already emerging as a result of City Deal funding. Business involvement in the partnership structures is key for the Scottish Government but otherwise partnerships can develop in their own ways.

Stephen offered to be a link to Scottish Government for any issues raised by FEP members and Michael agreed to pick this up with Stephen.

BREXIT PREPAREDNESS

Gordon Mole provided an update on BREXIT outlining the potential outcomes of a no deal exit from the EU and the steps that are being taken nationally and locally:

- In some sectors employers are already experiencing worsening skills and labour shortages.
- The EU settlement scheme allows EU citizens resident in the UK (for five years) and their family members to remain here permanently.
- www.Prepareforbrexit.scot aims to raise awareness among businesses and provide a one door service to the advice and support that is available.
- Fife Council has a Brexit business advisory group which will continue beyond BREXIT date of 29 March.
- There are likely to be immediate impacts on the movement of goods and services, longer term support and advice will be available for companies.

Businesses were urged to access the information and tools online and information will be disseminated through as many business channels as possible.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Alan Mitchell reminded members that the Fife Business Awards 2019 is being held on 29 March and asked that all businesses get involved through social media.

ACTION POINTS

Meeting Date	Action	Owner	By Date
5 Mar 2019	Press release on launch of Fife Business Charter to be circulated to members	SMS	19 Mar
	FEP members to liaise with NMIS to discuss any potential project proposals	All	End May
	Discussion with Stephen White Scottish Government	ML	4 Jun
	Business urged to access online information and tools regarding the impacts of BREXIT	All	End Mar
	Business requested to get involved in Fife Business Awards via social media channels	All	29 Mar

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 4 June 2019 – venue now confirmed as Eden Campus, University of St Andrews, Guardbridge.