

FIFE ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP

EXECUTIVE GROUP MEETING

TUESDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2019

NOTE OF MEETING

Present: Michael Longstaffe (Chair); Ian Palmer (John Fergus & Co Ltd); Colin Brown (Investment Group Chair); Sue Reekie (Fife College); Stephen Hall (FLEXcon); Lynne Cooper (Scottish Enterprise); Esther Curnock (NHS Fife); Keith Millican (University of St Andrews); Stephen White (Scottish Government); Cllr Altany Craik, Keith Winter, Sandra Montador-Stewart, George Sneddon, Pamela Stevenson (Fife Council).

Apologies: Phill Thompson (Innovation Group Chair); John Penman (Fife Fabrications); Ian Wilkie (Leviton); Alan Mitchell (Fife Chamber of Commerce); Gordon Mole, (Fife Council); Derek Watson (University of St Andrews); Elaine Morrison (Scottish Enterprise).

1. MATTERS ARISING

- **Joint Fife Economy Partnership/Opportunities Fife Partnership presentation to Fife Partnership Board** - ML will be attending the Fife Partnership meeting on 25 February along with Gordon McDougall chair of Opportunities Fife Partnership.
- **Ministerial Business Breakfast** – the annual event will be held on Wednesday 26 February. SW suggested that business-led inclusive jobs growth may be of interest and agreed to send a link to information for circulation. ML has organised a meeting of partnership members to discuss expectations of the FEP and will also discuss and agree topics for the agenda for the Ministerial business breakfast. It was agreed that Carnegie Conference Centre would be looked at as a venue and that information would be sent out as soon as possible to ensure a high level of attendance.
- **STEM Strategy Performance Monitor** – Fife College will provide an update at the June meeting.

2. HOST PRESENTATION

SH provided an overview of FLEXcon which was founded in 1956 and has had a presence in Glenrothes for 21 years. The company, which makes self-adhesive products, is constantly innovating through engagement with and developing solutions for its customers' problems. The company is a Living Wage employer and employee engagement is an essential element of its continuous improvement process.

3. PLAN FOR FIFE DRAFT ANNUAL INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND JOBS THEMATIC REPORT

KW provided an overview of the Plan for Fife Draft Annual Inclusive Growth and Jobs Thematic Report. A different approach is being taken this year which provides a discussion document and allows for input and buy-in prior to the report being presented to the Fife Partnership at its meeting in February 2020. The focus is on Mid-Fife to address disadvantage and the report highlights initiatives underway including the Levenmouth Rail Link and River Leven Connectivity Project. The key challenges outlined include BREXIT and climate change and it was noted that a climate action plan for Fife is currently being prepared.

The Inclusive Growth and Jobs section of the Plan for Fife has six areas of focus and the report provides an overview of progress and next steps for each of the areas:

- Invest in a modern business infrastructure and in developing national and international markets for Fife businesses
- Promote investment in areas such as the green economy, tourism and in STEM related businesses and skills
- Invest in Apprenticeships, skills and access together with business innovation
- Work with communities and businesses to ensure that physical and mental health issues are not barriers to sustaining work
- Invest in connectivity, particularly transport and digital and workforce mobility
- Make more of Fife's natural, cultural and historic assets to improve year-round visitor opportunity.

General comments raised by group members to be fed back as follows:

- The themes need to be cross-cutting across all of the Plan for Fife themed reports.
- Questions raised over whether the report is too public sector-led and how the business voice could and should come through this.
- Need to see more about the outcomes and what difference has been made.
- Fife College should be at the heart of skills issues and there is capacity within the college for facilities with for example, the four Academies being key assets which are currently under-utilised but could provide opportunities to be centres of excellence.
- Comments provided by the Opportunities Fife Partnership should be shared given the relevance for Fife Economy Partnership in relation to training and skills.
- It could be perceived that there is an over-reliance on one company and what it could deliver in terms of the innovation centre at Babcock.
- Connectivity for employees to areas of employment is recognised by businesses as an issue.
- Take up of opportunities for professional learning and development by employees in businesses should be examined.
- The ways in which businesses recruit, train and retain employees is a key element in the community wealth building model and the private sector contribution needs to be recognised and acknowledged in this area.

The above views will be forwarded for input to the finalisation of the Inclusive Growth and Jobs themed report and it was agreed that if there are any further comments on the report from members that these should be forwarded by 13th December.

4. INNOVATION GROUP UPDATE

PS provided an update on the work of the Fife Economy Partnership Innovation Group which is chaired by Phill Thompson. The agreed Terms of Reference set out how the group aims to help businesses do things differently and turn ideas into processes and services. The group's action plan outcomes include making sure that the existing and emerging workforce is ready for new jobs that will emerge as a result of technological transformation; making more of the opportunities offered by the University of St Andrews; and supporting innovation in key sectors.

Progress to date includes working with Interface (which connects businesses with academics) to deliver surgeries and events; manufacturing resilience projects; Napier University/Fife College leadership programme; and ongoing innovation CPD sessions with Local Authority and Business Gateway advisers.

GYS noted that initial work in this area has been on mapping out who does what and then beginning to roll programmes out to help businesses become more innovative and improve business performance. The key challenge is in involving and supporting more businesses in the process of innovation and this is difficult within a fairly cluttered landscape of support and therefore businesses need to be made aware of how they can engage.

It was agreed that the presentation would be circulated with the note of the meeting.

5. MAKING GLENROTHES A LIVING WAGE TOWN UPDATE

SMS provided an update on the “Making Glenrothes a Living Wage Town”. When the action plan was developed in partnership with the action group there were nine businesses in Glenrothes accredited as Living Wage employers. Activities since then have included the launch of the initiative in August, a joint event with Fife Voluntary Action during Fife Business Week, stall at the Fife House Builders Forum and radio adverts on Kingdom FM. Following these activities there are now 18 accredited Living Wage employers Glenrothes and the initiative is on track to meet its target of 27 accredited businesses. During 2020 activities will include further radio adverts and a focus on specific industry sectors including care and manufacturing. It was noted that there were a number of employers in Glenrothes and the rest of Fife who paid the living wage but were not accredited with Living Wage Scotland. It was noted that the external perception of Living Wage employers was a significant strength and that staff retention benefits could be used in testimonials to encourage further sign ups.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- ML advised that George Sneddon would be retiring from Fife Council at the end of the year and on behalf of the Fife Economy Partnership extended his thanks to George for his significant input both the Fife Economy Partnership and more generally to economic development in Fife.
- SMS requested volunteers to host the Fife Economy Partnership meetings in 2020 and the following meeting facilities were offered:
 - Fife College
 - Inchdairnie (excl March 2020)
 - Smith Anderson.

ACTION POINTS/

Meeting Date	Action	Owner	By Date
3 rd Dec 2019	Circulate link to Business-Led Inclusive Job Growth Strategies in the South of Scotland.	SMS	10 Dec
	Any further comments on the Plan for Fife Inclusive Growth and Jobs themed report to be forwarded to SMS.	All	13 Dec
	Fife Economy Partnership comments on the Plan for Fife Inclusive Growth and Jobs themed report to be provided to Fife Council.	SMS	16 Dec
	Innovation Group Update presentation to be circulated with note of meeting.	SMS	10 Dec

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY 3RD MARCH 2020 AT 2.00 – 4.00 PM