

DRAFT MINUTES

DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP RURAL ENTERPRISE GROUP COMMITTEE

16 JUNE 2022 FROM 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

MS Teams Meeting

Attendees:

Elliott Hutt (EH)	Country Land and Business Association Limited (CLA)
Gemma Harvey (GH)	National Farmers Union (NFU)
Ian Alexander (IA)	Natural England (NE)
Imogen Davenport (ID)	Dorset Local Nature Partnership (LNP)
Jon Bird (JB)	Dorset Council (DC)
Luke Rake (LR) Chair	Dorset LEP and Kingston Maurward College (KMC)
Neil Wedge (NW)	Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC)
Nicola Kildunne (NK)	Federation of Small Business (FSB)
Will Bond (WB)	Alaska Ecological Contracting Ltd (AEC)

Also present:

Kathryn Hill (KH)	Dorset LEP
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Apologies:

Tom Munro (TM)	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Dorset AONB)
Martin Cox	British Holiday and Home Parks Associations (BHHPA)
Martin Sutcliffe	Dorset Coast Forum (DCF)

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
1.	Apologies were received for: Martin Cox, Martin Sutcliffe and Tom Munro. LR welcomed Gemma Harvey as a new member of the Committee and everyone introduced themselves. LR explained he was also the chair of the Dorset LNP and explained the overlaps with other groups.	
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest declared.	
3.	The Minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the last meeting. There were no matters arising.	
4.	Levelling Up the Rural Economy Report LR mentioned the report is an interesting piece of work researched and funded by the CLA. EH explained that the recently released document was an enquiry into productivity and levelling up in the rural environment. LR said it mirrored the SW Productivity document Dorset LEP contributed to a few years ago.	

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4.	<p>Levelling Up the Rural Economy Report Cont'd</p> <p>IA mentioned the issues with planning in rural areas and that it is said 85% of rural businesses are now not related to agriculture. There is a historic presumption that the point of the countryside is for rural agriculture but the majority of the countryside doesn't have to be used for farming in the way it has been.</p> <p>WH mentioned that there is never a good time to bring out a report and it is a useful background planning document to have.</p> <p>ID observed that the report does touch on natural capital and was particularly useful that it refers to measurement of productivity and useful that quality of life and natural capital should also be used. The question was how to take this forward locally and merge into conversations around nature and natural capital. She mentioned the Financing Nature Recovery UK Report which identifies a number of issues and the fact that the barrier isn't necessarily lack of finance or potential projects but lack of skills and awareness and that integration between environmental and economic knowledge and developers.</p> <p>GH informed that the Food Strategy is coming out this week, looking at areas to improve around trade, supply chain and productivity and links in well with Government's ambition.</p> <p>LR said he can share with EH some reports from the group.</p>	
5.	<p>Shared Prosperity Fund</p> <p>LR informed that the Shared Prosperity Fund is a replacement for ESIF and LEADER funding.</p> <p>JB informed that Dorset Council have to submit their Investment Plan to Government by the end of July and the informal consultation has just closed. We have asked the 'what' without getting into the 'how' or the 'who' yet. The overall objective of the fund is building pride in place and building life changes. Within it there are three strands: community and place, supporting local businesses and people and skills. There was a discussion about who was invited to participate in the consultation.</p> <p>JB said the first part has been completed. The Investment plan goes to Government end of July.</p>	
6.	<p>Member Updates</p> <p>EH said currently the key themes are the rural powerhouse, the agriculture transition and speaking to members about moving into new schemes.</p> <p>LR said he would circulate the update from TM with the minutes.</p> <p>WB informed a CLA Natural Environment Committee met yesterday and went through the Governments environment targets. ID informed the Wildlife Trust will be responding to it as well.</p>	

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6.	<p>Member Updates Cont'd</p> <p>IA gave an update on Natural England. He visited the Mapperton Estate with West Dorset Wilding, a collective of farming and landowners seeking to enter this new environment.</p> <p>JB informed that Nick Webster is joining Economic Growth team on 6 July. Currently concentrating on Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Fund.</p> <p>NK gave an update on the FSB. FSB have run virtual networking events for businesses in Dorset. Everyone is welcome, you don't have to be a member. If you would like to be on the distribution list please let NK know. FSB has an on-demand channel which has webinars that cover all aspects of running a small business. These are available to everyone free of charge. The main issues affecting members at the moment is rising costs, like fuel, utilities, raw materials, transport of goods, wage inflation. Retaining staff is also difficult.</p> <p>GH gave an update on the NFU. There are various grants and schemes coming down the line re agricultural transition. We are making sure members are kept up to date and hosting a virtual event to ensure members are fully versed. Improved Farm Prosperity arm, a couple of grants coming down. The Adding Value grant for farmers is open currently and the Slurry Infrastructure grant. In regards the Food Strategy White Paper - clearly a very good statement of support for domestic food production. NFU keen to stress good production and environment go hand in hand and not one or the other.</p> <p>ID gave an update on the LNP. The Board held an away day in May and discussed environmental targets as well as the strategy and vision. The LNP is now 10 years old and a review of the strategy is needed, so it is still fit for purpose.</p> <p>NW updated on the work of the Town Councils. There has been a lot of work undertaken for the Queens Jubilee and planning delivery of that and that went exceptionally well.</p> <p>LR updated on the College they have renewed the strategic plan which has approved by the Board and will be circulated around the group.</p>	
7.	<p>Board Report</p> <p>It was agreed that the APPG Report and the Shared Prosperity Fund were important to raise to the LEP Board.</p>	
8.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>KH to ensure GH has been added to all meeting invites.</p>	KH

Note: Date of Next Meeting – 15 September 2022 11:00 am - 12:30 pm