

DORSET PERFORMANCE AND INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

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| Meeting Date | 4 May 2021 | | |
| Security Level: | Confidential <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Commercially Sensitive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Unclassified <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Paper Title | Dorset LEP Programmes - Delivery Update | | |
| Papers are provided for: | Decision <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

SUMMARY OF NOTES:

Local Growth Fund

- NOTE: The Committee notes the Local Growth Fund financial and programmatic update, including risks identified.

Getting Building Fund

- NOTE: The Committee notes the Getting Building Fund financial and programmatic update.

Growing Places Fund

- NOTE: The Committee notes the Growing Places Fund financial and programmatic update, including risks identified.

1. PURPOSE

This paper gives an overview of Dorset LEP programme delivery. It is accompanied by several annexes, which are all classified as confidential due to containing commercially sensitive information:

- Annex 1: March 2021 meeting minutes – confidential
- Annex 2: April 2021 meeting minutes – confidential
- Annex 3: Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund – grant programme overview – confidential
- Annex 4: Growing Places Fund – loan programme overview - confidential
- Annex 5: Growing Places Fund – 5-year forecast – confidential

2. SUMMARY/BACKGROUND

A) LOCAL GROWTH FUND PROGRAMME

Annex 3 provides a high-level overview of Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund projects; outlining risks and progress.

Recently Closed LGF Projects – End of Project Reports

The projects below have now submitted their End of Project Reports. You can read about the success of the projects and future projected outcomes on our Dorset LEP website.

- Arts University Bournemouth** – [Lapsafe Learning](#)
- Bournemouth & Poole College** - [Workstations](#)
- Bournemouth & Poole College** – [Digital & Enterprise Innovation Hub](#)

NOTE: The Committee notes the Local Growth Fund financial and programmatic update, including risks identified.

B) GETTING BUILDING FUND

Annex 3 provides a high-level overview of all Getting Building Fund projects.

All nine projects are progressing at pace, and there are currently no risks identified. A couple of projects have slightly changed their outputs; however, these do not affect the outcomes delivery. Details can be found in Appendix 3.

NOTE: The Committee notes the Getting Building Fund financial and programmatic update.

C) DORSET GROWING PLACES FUND

Annexes 4 and 5 provide high level overview of Growing Places Fund projects.

Growing Places Fund Financial Overview

To date, the Fund has invested into 11 projects, 10 of which are loans and 1 is a grant. As of today, 7 projects are complete with loans repaid. There are currently 3 outstanding loans and 1 grant (Ultrafast).

NOTE: The Committee notes the Growing Places Fund financial and programmatic update, including risks identified.

D) DORSET GATEWAY

Enquiry management

An overview of business engagements recorded for the period between 1 April 2018 and 31 January 2021 is presented below in **figure 1**. Figures for the end of year are subject to a final audit before being finalised and submitted to the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as part of an annual report. To avoid confusion and skewing the figures, those businesses registering in the Peer Networks programme have not been included in the High Intensity support despite 150 of them receiving more than 20 hours of support through this programme. However, they have been included as a light-touch engagement as part of the Gateway teams standard triage process.

| Engagement Level | 2018/19 | | | 2019/20 | | | 2020/21 | | |
|------------------|------------------------|--------|------------------------|---------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| | No. Businesses Engaged | Target | No. Businesses Engaged | Target | Progress against target | No. Businesses Engaged | No. Businesses Engaged | Target | Progress against target |
| Light touch | 679 | 600 | 113% | 1,099 | 900 | 122% | 954 | 800 | 119% |
| Medium intensity | 219 | 120 | 190% | 483 | 180 | 268% | 359 | 150 | 239% |
| High intensity | 55 | 60 | 92% | 85 | 90 | 94% | 64 | 50 | 128% |

Figure 1: Business engagements by intensity for period 01/04/18 – 31/03/21.

COVID-19 enquiries

Since the start of the first lockdown on 23 March 2020, there have been just under 665 individual COVID-19 specific enquiries made into the Dorset Gateway. These figures represent individual contacts and do not include any subsequent calls that businesses might have made. Enquiries

regarding COVID-19 continue to focus on access to short-term finance and general advice and support.

Peer Networks Programme

The Peer Networks Programme came to a close for 2020/21 at the end of March. A total of 148 participants from 146 businesses completed the programme with a further 17 withdrawing from the programme at varying stages, largely due to issues relating to the impact of the pandemic.

Feedback from those business leaders participating in the programme has been extremely positive as illustrated below:

Managing Director of a digital marketing agency

"The biggest positive for me is the accountability. Having to report back to our group every two weeks to feedback on what you've actioned and achieved since the last session. That accountability makes you think, and really DO that stuff. I guess from the personal, mental and emotional side, it's just nice to have eight other people around you who are going through similar issues. That's been really, really useful. For me, it's the only ZOOM call that I genuinely look forward to!"

Managing Director of an engineering business

"I would just say, it's a stimulating, inspirational 3 hours that flashes by in a moment. I just find it really, really stimulating, it makes me think and it makes me analyse my own thinking and try to improve it. It's difficult to put my finger on one particular benefit, it's just been a really enriching experience. Having our 1:1 sessions on top has been fantastic. It's really honed my thoughts, my focus and realise what truly is important."

Operations Director of a small technology business

"I've been on a roller coaster journey, with a new role and promotion and just a mass of overwhelming tasks. I know the industry and the processes well, but it's the other, the important people and team aspects that nobody teaches you. The 1:1 session is just amazing and the open honest sharing of the group has been just incredible."

Despite seeing a small number of people withdrawing from the programme, Dorset has still managed to deliver one of the largest programmes across the country. The success of this pilot year has meant that we have managed to secure an increased funding allocation for 2021/22, totalling £300,000. By comparison, our baseline budget for 2020/21 was £165,000 although we were able to secure additional funds midway through delivery. As figure 2 shows below, Dorset ranks joint third highest for allocations in 2021/22.

| Peer Networks cohort allocation for 2021-2022 by LEP area | | | |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| LEP area | Cohort allocation | LEP area | Cohort allocation |
| Lancashire | 26 | Stoke and Staffordshire | 14 |
| North East | 26 | Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 12 |
| Greater Manchester | 25 | Coventry and Warwickshire | 12 |
| Dorset | 20 | Gloucestershire | 12 |
| Greater Lincoln and Lincolnshire | 20 | Leeds City Region | 12 |
| London | 20 | Tees Valley | 12 |
| New Anglia | 19 | Cheshire and Warrington | 10 |
| Greater Birmingham and Solihull | 18 | Coast to Capital | 10 |
| Cumbria | 17 | Hertfordshire | 10 |
| D2N2 | 17 | Swindon and Wiltshire | 10 |
| Heart of the South West | 17 | West of England | 10 |
| Leicester and Leicestershire | 17 | Enterprise M3 | 9 |
| Oxfordshire | 15 | Buckinghamshire Thames Valley | 8 |
| South East | 15 | Sheffield City Region | 8 |
| Black Country | 14 | Thames Valley Berkshire | 8 |
| Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough | 14 | Worcestershire | 8 |
| Liverpool City Region | 14 | Hull and East Riding (formerly Hull) | 6 |
| Solent | 14 | York and North Yorkshire | 6 |
| South East Midlands | 14 | The Marches | 3 |
| TOTAL = 522 | | | |

Figure 2: Peer Network cohort allocations 2021/22 by LEP area

We have recently concluded an open tendering process and have appointed three partner organisation to work with us to deliver this programme in 2021/22; Dorset Chamber of Commerce, Evolve Members and Dorset Business Mentors. Business can find out more and register to take part in this year programme by visiting: www.dorsetlep.co.uk/peernetworks

Support for small businesses

In response to the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic Dorset LEP established the **Crowdfund Dorset Business** campaign. The initiative offered micro, small and social enterprise businesses up to £5,000 of match-funding, provided they raised an equivalent amount from 10 or more supporters.

Developed as part of Crowdfunder UK's pay-it-forward campaign and with support from Enterprise Nation, the scheme has now pledged £50,000 in match-funding to 11 businesses and projects across Dorset. Among them is Weymouth's Nothe Fort, which raised £5,000 through crowdfunding, matched by Dorset LEP - to make the heritage attraction COVID-19 safe, enabling over 35,000 visitors to safely enjoy the attraction throughout the summer of 2020.

"When COVID-19 struck, we were faced with a choice: either shut the fort and use our reserves – enough for about a year – in the hope we could ride-out the pandemic or invest in adaptations to enable the fort to open. We applied to Dorset LEP's crowdfund campaign and managed to secure the full match-funding of £5,000, which gave us the confidence to make the changes needed to open safely." James Farquharson, Chairman of Nothe Fort

At the start of the second national lockdown, colleagues from the Dorset Gateway team entered discussions with local town chambers and Business Improvement Districts (BID) about

rolling out a new initiative to allow local businesses free access to ecommerce platform, **ShopAppy.com**.

Following consultation with business community leaders across the county, five towns have signed up to take part initially: Bridport Chamber of Commerce, Bournemouth Chamber of Commerce, Gillingham Chamber of Commerce, Sherborne Town Council and Wimborne Business Improvement District (BID). As a result, Shopappy is available free of charge for businesses who fall within the following towns:

- Bournemouth - (Post codes: BH1 - BH11)
- Bridport
- Gillingham
- Sherborne
- Wimborne

Note: Sturminster Newton and Shaftesbury are also eligible but these are not core towns.

Dorchester decided to not pursue this opportunity as they are launching their own town app later this year. At the Expression of Interest meeting in November, Bournemouth Chamber of Commerce expressed an interest to promote the platform to their members. Therefore, Bournemouth has now taken Dorchester's place.

Shopappy have a community support team who are making outbound calls to engage with businesses and raise awareness of the platform and will also support them with the sign-up process. Training session on how to use the platform are also being made available through Eventbrite and businesses can book their session via the following link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/find-out-about-a-free-scheme-for-businesses-in-your-area-tickets-136928941149>

Recently, colleagues from the Dorset Gateway engaged with the Federation of Small Business and provided them with more information on the Shopappy scheme to promote to their 3,500 members across Dorset. There has also been a good amount of press and social media coverage.

The platform went live for businesses in Dorset to sign up to at the end of January. To date Shopappy have engaged with 230 businesses with 47 of those now actively using the platform. Shops and businesses based in these towns are being urged to come forward immediately to take advantage of the free opportunity to secure more local trade and shoppers are encouraged to use the platform to support their local high street outlets. Dorset LEP has committed to supporting this project up until the 31 January 2022. Between now and then, we are working to assess the effectiveness of the platform for local towns, high streets and businesses and working with those areas to identify ways of finding sustainable means for funding this type of support in the future if it is valued/required.

Mid-Life MOT

Colleagues from Dorset Gateway have been encouraging local businesses with employees aged 45+ to volunteer to take part in an innovative new 'Midlife MOT' programme. Government backed and funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, the pilot has been created to help individuals in midlife evaluate personal health, finance and skills.

The Midlife MOT offers opportunities for employers to access a free bespoke toolkit, helping them to review finances and staff's personal health and skills. Dorset LEP also produced a series of webinars to support conversations with employees and help them realise the benefits of the initiative. Dorset businesses that sign-up to take part are given access to a digital resource pack enabling them to promote the initiative to their midlife workforce. The online resources include links to comprehensive support and advice from well-respected organisations.

The series of webinars and podcasts that were produced during the week beginning Monday 19th April 2021 and involved expert guests who shared their thoughts on the challenges of midlife and how employers can help.

More information is available at: <https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/midlifemot>

Support for innovative SMEs in Dorset

We have reported previously regarding the continued positive impact that the **bid writing support service** has had on those businesses seeking Innovate UK grant funding. Having supported Dorset-based companies secure over £500,000 of grant funding in the early part of the year, we were advised in February that another business we have supported has been awarded £274,000, taking the total for the 2020/21 financial year to just under £800,000.

Dorset LEP's third national One Health conference – **One Health 21: Big Ideas in One Health** – took place on 24th March and was attended by more than 75 people from across industry, academia and government. The event built on the success of the first two and provided a platform to showcase Dorset LEPs support and vision to establish Dorset as the national centre for one health in the UK and global one health super-power. The event was also used to launch Dorset LEP's **One Health Nucleus**; a knowledge exchange and a support network for innovators that will support start-ups in their journey from high-potential to high-growth companies. Accordingly, sandpit event will be held on 12 May to bring together interested parties to help establish this new programme of support.

Design Innovation Support

We are continuing to develop proposals with Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) to offer a new, exclusive, consultant and **specialist-led innovation and design support** for emerging Dorset businesses. This new offer will aim to support businesses with design and product development, at any stage of their design process, allowing a wide range of businesses to progress design ambitions more quickly and to better respond to opportunities for growth and innovation in the county.

UK/EU Transition support

In December, we successfully secured funding from BEIS to deliver support for businesses as the transition arrangements for businesses came to end. In the run-up to the end of the Transition Period, we were advising businesses to take action and get ready for the new trading rules that would start on 1 January. Whilst some took up the advice, there are clearly still a number of areas where businesses require additional support as issues relating to trade outside of the EU materialise. To assist Dorset businesses through these changes, challenges and opportunities, we have introduced a number of additional areas of support. these include:

- A funded Customs Declarations service and specialist business training for Dorset-based SMEs in partnership with Dorset Chamber;
- A legal advice helpline offering up to two hours of fully funded specialist, one-to-one business support to Dorset businesses with complex legal questions regarding post-EU transition; and
- A specialist business VAT/customs advice Line offering support on matters such as place of supply, proof of origin, VAT registration in other countries, duty advice on quotas and tariffs, and custom warehousing.

Department for International Trade's (DIT) Export Growth Programme

Dorset Gateway's Business Relationship Officer (Trade and Investment) has been working alongside the Department for International Trade (DIT) to connect local businesses with **Export academy** and **SME Internationalisation Fund**.

To date, 15 Dorset SME's have applied for and been accepted onto the **SME Internationalisation Fund**, which offers match-funded grants of between £1,000 and £9,000 to help support future export activity. Our target is to help up to 95 Dorset SME's successfully apply for this fund between now and June 2023. The focus of this support is around high growth potential (HGP) SME businesses that also have high potential to succeed or grow in international markets or can bring new products and services to new international markets. Whilst there is a focus on businesses with annual sales of £500K+ there is scope to support smaller companies.

To find out more, visit: <https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/business-support-international-trade#InternationalisationFund>

Similarly, we have helped 19 businesses enrol onto the **Export Academy** programme from across the county and across a range of business sectors.

E) DORSET INNOVATION PARK

The Dorset Enterprise Zone (EZ) Committee acts as a 'strategic board' for the Dorset Enterprise Zone. The EZ Committee has the primary aim of unlocking opportunities for additional investment and growth of Enterprise Zone sites (and concurrent generate business rates growth return). The Committee facilitates realising the potential of the site which includes retained business rates alongside the ability to support business relocation, growth and expansion. This includes job creation and ensuring Dorset remains an attractive proposition for business.

The Committee oversees the strategic direction of the Enterprise Zone as well as the overall management of the Enterprise Zone programme. It receives regular reports for each meeting from the landowner (Dorset Council) with regards to progress.

Future areas of work which the Enterprise Zone Committee will cover include: ensuring delivery of the project, establishing measures of success, alignment with the Local Industrial Strategy and Investment Prospectus, strategic ambition and the inward investment pipeline.

F) CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE COMPANY – CAREERS HUB

The Dorset Careers Hub is now half-way through the academic year. The operating context has been challenging due to the pandemic, which has greatly affected our school partners on which we depend to achieve impact. Despite this, the Hub has made good progress in many areas.

All six main projects are now underway and are on track to deliver their goals. Some of the highlight activities and impacts are as follows:

| Project | Activities |
|---|---|
| Programme Planning | Intensive support and CPD provided to new schools, and Benchmark scores are improving. |
| Activation Fund | 33 school bids funded, to kick start new school careers activities. |
| Inclusive Careers | Steering group formed, comprising businesses, parent groups, DWP, FE colleges, special school and learning centres. |
| Virtual Work Experience | Pilot underway, and summer programme offering placements to 2,000 students on track. |
| Online Careers and Apprenticeships Show | Major event with 60 companies, 7 universities, 15 colleges and thousands of students under development. |
| LMI Dissemination | CPD session delivered to Careers Leaders across county. |

Looking forward, The Careers & Enterprise Company have received confirmation for programme funding from the Department for Education and will begin discussions with LEPs in due course.

And on the policy front, the Government released the Skills for Jobs white paper which affirms its commitment to the Careers Hub model and a commitment to the Skills agenda as a driver of economic growth and renewal. The key themes of the white paper are;

1. Business taking a central role in all skills proposals and investments
2. The elevation in status of technical education
3. Local Skills Improvement Plans to drive investment in local economic priorities
4. Identification of careers education as a key driver

There is now a consultation process underway, which will lead to legislation which will clearly be very relevant to the LEP and Careers Hub.

Financially, the Careers Hub has been able to deliver its main project with less than the budgeted expenditure, and is therefore currently considering new proposals for projects which can be initiated this year.

Skills Programme

In March 2021 we published the Department for Education Local Skills Report, with full data analysis and reporting on the DLEP Skills Actions Plan and activities across the county. The report forms the complete guide to skills strategy and actions for Dorset, and aims to be the 'go to' document for skills providers and employers. The SAPB contribution has been critical to the success of skills across Dorset, and this report is our demonstration to the DfE of the vital work being undertaken by public and private providers to be the benefit of the population of Dorset.

In addition to delivering this report, the skills team are delivering:

Dorset LEP have been working to ensure Dorset residents have opportunities to participate in recovery initiatives, as they become available.

- **Skills Boot Camps** – we have secured places on these free training opportunities for Dorset residents in wave 1 and 2, working in partnership with Heart of the SW LEP. These are digital and technical skills courses, funded by the DfE and designed to enable a change of skill set. Each participant is guaranteed a job interview at the end of the course. Wave 1 is currently delivering the learning, wave 2 digital courses started delivery on the 1st April, with technical courses open for registration soon.
- **Mid-life MOT** – DLEP were successful in their bid to DWP for funds to support an innovative mid-life MOT for employees aged 50+. The funding is aimed to support older workers remain in relevant employment, giving greater quality of health and prosperity in retirement. The project is currently live, with a week of promotion in April delivering detailed information sessions around financial choices, skills updates and wellbeing.
- **LMI training for Dorset Job Centres and Work Coaches** – we have continued to delivery training for the 3 job centres in Dorset, and the 100 Dorset work coaches employed to support those who are looking for work. Our training enables work coaches to advise and guide people back to sustainable work, based on the statistics relevant to Dorset around required skills sets, employers and future opportunities.
- **Restart Programme** – DWP are investing £2.9bn in a Restart programme to help those who have been out of work for 1yr+ get back into work. We have been supporting the tender process to ensure the strategic needs of Dorset are embedded with the provision, and the provider is able to deliver relevant support to Dorset residents.
- **An Hour to skill** – In January we promoted the DfE initiative to encourage everyone to take an hour a week to learn a new skill. This programme continues and with free learning opportunities available to all.
- **Bidding support** – we have supported the Health Foundation bid for innovation in healthcare, lead by University Hospitals Dorset, and a bid to the Health Alliance relating to Health Economies and support for areas of deprivation (CCG/DC lead).
- **T level support** – Ferndown Upper School will offer Dorset's first T level qualification in Sept 2022, and we are supporting the school as they move to this target date.

- **Apprenticeship myth busting** – we have secured funding from the CEC to complete a programme of work to increase the number of apprenticeships offered in Dorset and support decision making in schools around apprenticeships. This work is funded to Aug 2022.

Labour Market Information

The latest labour market insights dashboard and updated key industries dashboards with current vacancies and job trends will be released on 11th March. A new Apprenticeship finder dashboard has been developed with DSTPN and will also be released shortly. Please check <https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/labour-market-and-skills-research> for latest figures and analysis. Key early findings:

- **Recruitment activity slower at the start of the year**

As we entered the New Year and a new lockdown simultaneously, vacancies were unsurprisingly sluggish in January of 2021 compared to the previous years (down by a fifth on January 2020 in Dorset and by a quarter UK-wide). Vacancies also slightly declined in January from their December levels (down 2%, up 5% UK wide). However, despite the continued lockdown, the difference narrowed in February (down by only 4% in February compared to same time last year, 6% UK reference).

There were 10,262 vacancies advertised in Dorset in the first two months of 2021, which is 87% of their 2020 reference levels before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. Demand declined for service roles, but it considerably increased for nurses and carers, accountants, lawyers, web developers and cleaners.

- **Unemployment and Furlough**

There were 4.6 claimants for each advertised vacancy in February - a ratio three times as high as the pre-crisis levels, but showing improvement from the 7.5 peak in May.

Claimant count remains high, accounting for 5% of the 16+ residents and 7% of 18- 24 year olds. Furloughed workers have increased again. The UK unemployment rate, in the three months to December 2020, was estimated at 5.1%, 1.3 percentage points higher than a year earlier and 0.4 percentage points higher than the previous quarter. In Dorset unemployment is traditionally lower with latest figures from September at 3.4%.

- **Top employers in Dorset at the start of 2021**

While the National Health Service continued to be the top recruiter followed by J.P.Morgan, Bournemouth University, the Councils and residential care firms, Checkatrade joined the top of the chart as they are expanding in the South West and the Office for National Statistics was recruiting to support the Census.

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