



County Durham  
Economic Partnership

## MINUTES

<b>Meeting</b>	County Durham Economic Partnership Board
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Monday 29 <sup>th</sup> July 2013
<b>Time</b>	13.00 – 15.00
<b>Venue</b>	NETPark Incubator Boardroom

### Attendees:

Brian Tanner	Chair
David Land	NELEP
Gillian Roll	NELEP
Phil Jackman	DCC
Paul Robson	Jobcentre Plus
Sue Parkinson	Chair of the Business, Enterprise & Skills Group
CLlr Neil Foster	Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration
Catherine Johns	Business Durham
Barbara Gubbins	County Durham Community Foundation
Ray Hudson	Durham University
Ian Thompson	Director of Regeneration and Economic Development
Andy Palmer	Strategy, Programmes & Performance, DCC
Jonathan Walker	North East Chamber of Commerce
Stephen Howell	Neighbourhood Services, DCC
Tarryn Lloyd Payne	Strategy & Partnerships, DCC
Angela Brown	Strategy & Partnerships, DCC

### 1. Welcome

Brian Tanner welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 2. Apologies

Cllr Eddie Tomlinson	Chair of Rural Working Group
Christine Yule	Durham Business Group
Ivor Stolliday	Chair of Visit County Durham Board
Peter Chapman	JCP
Jack Richardson	JCP
Melanie Sensicle	Visit Co Durham
Simon Hanson	Federation of Small Businesses
Geraldine Wilcox	Derwentside Homes
Simon Goon	Chair of Business Durham
Adrian White	Head of Transport, DCC
Brian Manning	ESH Group
Sarah Robson	Chair of Housing Forum

### 3. Minutes of the last meeting

Barbara Gubbins mentioned that the minutes showed her as working for County Durham Community Federation and it should read as follows:- County Durham Community Foundation

The rest of the actions were agreed as a true record

### 4. Matters Arising

Stephen Howell informed the Board that he was picking up on the link in relation to the Cultural Partnership for procurement issues and he stated that more detail will be brought forward as this is on the agenda to be discussed at the next Cultural Partnership Meeting.

**Action: Sue P and Stephen to discuss further working group collaboration.**

### 5. Chairs Remarks

Brian mentioned how pleased he was to be welcomed by NECC Durham Committee at a working breakfast. There was a lot of local business optimism but overall a good degree of caution in the wider economic prospects.

Brian highlighted some of the yearly performance figures presented at a recent County Durham Partnership board meeting:

- 2075 apprenticeships were started in 2011/12 for 19-24 year olds, there has been a significant increase so this is a good news story.
- 1659 apprenticeships started in 2011/12 for 16-18 year olds there has been a 15% reduction so it is noted that there is an issue with this age group.
- 9.4% of 16-18 year olds were not in any sort of education, training or employment between Jan-March 2013.
- JSA Claimants currently stands at 16,388, which is the highest level since 1996/7.
- There has been a slight drop in claimants for JSA for 18-24 year olds; however the figure still remains very high.
- Over 30% of JSA claimants have been claiming for a year or more.

#### Welfare Reform

It is important for members to keep an eye on the impact that Welfare Reform is having:

- Child poverty remains high at 24.8%
- 25% increase in housing solutions presentations
- 2322 new referrals onto IAPT (Interventions for treating people with depression & anxiety disorders)

Brian concluded that these stats support today's Board Agenda and the necessity of working in Partnership to maximise NELEP opportunities and mentioned that the meeting would focus on digital issues within the County.

### 6. Digital Demand; NECC – Jonathan Walker

Jonathan informed the Board that business confidence is growing within the North East but as highlighted by Brian this comes with certain caveats. In regard to digital demand the NECC members feel that it is an important priority to roll out superfast broadband in many areas as there is a desire for businesses to have better internet to be able to trade internationally and remain competitive.

This is further supported by anecdotal evidence from members to say that they are winning work from London or South East as they are able to access wider tender opportunities that don't require physical location. As a result they can win tenders based on using local advantages through reduced overhead costs. This reinforces the need for digital demand and the digital infrastructure needs to be reliable so businesses can link up to conferencing calling and procurement portals for example.

There is also an increased demand in the tourism sector as the businesses that are doing the best are the ones who have embraced digital infrastructure such as Facebook/Twitter. There is therefore a need to ensure connectivity to the most remote parts of the County.

#### Challenges facing increasing demand

- Ability to articulate demand and putting numbers to it.
- How do we get businesses that aren't engaged involved? It could be that residents need to get involved as the North East is in a really good place to be at the forefront of business connectivity and increasing competitiveness.

#### **Paul Robson – JCP**

Paul felt there was a need to ensure that there is basic access for everyone. There are concerns in Co. Durham with both access and aptitude, especially in connection to the JCP client base, which can affect multiple parts of the job seeker journey.

In way of example of how this is apparent Paul raised access issues including how some people do not have the facility to access technology to create CV's etc. They therefore need access to places like the library that provide these facilities. There is a need for people to be searching for jobs for lots of hours per day. It was also recognised how this runs parallel to wider austerity measures with reduction in community services.

Currently the UK online centres link together to provide free access points for IT facilities. Community Centres have access but people do not always know what to do with a computer as they don't have the necessary basis skills. Not everyone can use computers and this is not just an age thing. There is a misconception regarding this as a lot of young people are unable to use technology.

95% of job vacancies are now advertised online, this can be difficult for people who are unable to access these jobs and will be of increasing concern if Durham isn't able to reconcile supply side initiatives with demand and usage.

#### **7. Maximising opportunities in Digital Durham – Phil Jackman**

Phil Jackman gave a presentation to the Board in relation to maximising opportunities in Digital Durham

Key highlights include:

- 50% of people in County Durham are now already online
- 5433 businesses in County Durham are not yet online
- 76000 houses in County Durham are not yet online

Once Broadband has been rolled out across the County all properties will have a minimum 2mbps download capacity.

David Land felt that there was a worry in regard to losing the art of face to face communication and felt that some people preferred to actually speak to

someone rather than to communicate via technology. Phil mentioned that it was still a way of communicating with someone only by a different method.

Andy Palmer mentioned that in relation to getting access from a Job Seekers perspective we need to examine opportunities to get Job Centre and key aspects of the Voluntary Sector working together to see what can/can't be addressed and existing/potential gaps in resources.

Andy is working with Phil Jackman to develop a demand stimulation project through an ERDF bid. Further details will come to the partnership as this project develops.

## **8. Influencing opportunities for County Durham; David Land**

David gave a presentation to the Board

David highlighted key next steps for the NELEP Board. The first stage included an event on the 6<sup>th</sup> September at which the NELEP would look to respond to the Adonis Review with the release of its own strategic plan. This is currently being developed by the LEP and partners and will look to ensure alignment across, strategic, business and European delivery plans. An area emphasised was the need for partners to feel comfortable with the suggested shared priorities. Partners to date have been very supportive. David and Gillian thanked the local authority for secondments to the LEP to support the above process. David thanked Ian and Andy for their help with this.

There is a need to ensure the County Durham Regeneration Strategy is aligned to the NELEP Strategy and vis-versa. Worklessness was highlighted as a potential gap. The DCC policy team is currently reviewing further areas as they emerge.

Gillian Roll mentioned that the North East approach to the development of the strategic plan has received national recognition of good practice.

## **9. Investment Planning – Sue Parkinson**

Sue gave a presentation to the Board. She talked about the way forward in establishing a pipeline of projects for European funding. The board agreed that it was an enormous opportunity for Co Durham and should be a top priority going forward.

- There is €157m available for Durham which is part of €539m NELEP allocation. However the early stage submission timescales are very tight and will require decisions by proxy and to short deadlines.

After further discussion on practical implications for the partnership and the roles and responsibilities expected with this programme the board agreed the following:

- The Board agreed it would take leadership in respect of the Durham transitional programme.
- Current arrangements for working up the submission have been via a partnership group led by BES. It was agreed this would continue.
- The ESI draft (or at least the Durham components) will come to the Board for comment but timescales for return will be very tight.

Brian felt that Sue (with support from the BES) was doing an excellent job with arrangements for submission and therefore further endorsed its continuation.

**Action: ESI draft & Opt in Prospectus to be circulated**

## 10. CDEP Review – Brian Tanner

Brian T presented a paper that builds on discussions at the last Board meeting and subsequent consultation with Board members and working group chairs.

After discussion the board unanimously agree the paper and its proposals. The following high level implementation stages have been agreed by the board in order adopt the new operating model:

- Produce and establish new Governance arrangements for the Economic Partnership
- Establish new Board
- Promote new ways of working with the Partnership and communicate with all partners and Working Groups
- Establish new Economic Infrastructure Working Group
- Establish new Working Group Chairs/Data Management/Resources Group
- Hold Annual Conference

Neil Foster said he felt it was pointing in the right direction of what the partnership is trying to achieve

The Recommendations were agreed to be taken forward.

**Action: Secretariat to progress actions as agreed in the above**

## 11. Any Other Business

Brian T mentioned that there was a presentation given to the working group chairs meeting on Sustainable Communities Strategy an on-going advice review is underway and they are keen to look at cross cutting issues and programmes across the thematic partnership. If partners have ideas on cross cutting issues please email to Brian/Secretariat.

### **Catherine Johns**

Business Durham reported that an inward Investor had saved the RFMD facility in Newton Aycliffe to create 200 highly skilled jobs. Compound photonics is a high tech company which is developing high definition projectors which will fit inside a smartphone. This is a huge success for the County.

### **Ray Hudson**

There was a voluntary sector meeting that took place in Murton in relation to Welfare Reform. He felt that if we were intent on delivering an exclusive economic strategy then we need to pay attention to the views of the Voluntary & Private Sector.

### **Barbara Gubbins**

*What the voluntary Sector is currently doing in relation to Welfare Reform?*

- Setting up community champions based in community buildings.
- Increasing demand for foodbanks across County Durham.
- Advice services have been merged to help people to fill in forms and share funding

Of further note is the success of the previously discussed “Learning, Working and Earning” fund, run by the CDF and launched at the end of March. All targets and delivery has been exceeded with the funding all accounted for. The CDF had no idea it would be so successful and is perhaps an indication of need? Currently compiling a report which will be circulated once it is complete.

## 12. Date and Time of next meeting

4<sup>th</sup> November 2013, 1pm Location TBC