



CESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP BOARD MEETING

Subject: Chief Executive's Report

Agenda Item: 5

Author: Philip Cox

Meeting Date: 6 September 2017

A) Executive Summary:

This report provides an overview and a commentary on: Ministerial and Parliamentary Engagement; Review of LEPs; Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund; HS2 Phase 2a; Department for International Trade; Supporting our High Streets; PR & Communications; and Move to Wyvern House.

B) Recommendations / Action Requested:

The Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

C) Details:

Summary

1. Since the Board's last meeting, Whitehall has been making up for the time lost during the election campaign, and a number of key announcements and decisions have been taken that affect the LEP. We have also been making sure that we are aware of the priorities of all of our new and returning MPs and that they are brought up to speed with our Strategic Economic Plan

Ministerial and Parliamentary Engagement

2. Jake Berry, the relatively newly appointed Minister for the Northern Powerhouse spent a whole day touring our area in mid-August. He already knows the area well having studied at the College of Law at Christleton and lived and worked in Knutsford. Nevertheless he was excited by what he saw at Thornton (where he formally opened the LEP funded Energy Centre), Birchwood and Alderley Park, and by the wider presentations he was given on our Strategic Economic Plan, the Mersey-Dee Alliance, Warrington New City and the Constellation Partnership. He is very keen to help us achieve our objectives, and is already looking to have further meetings with us to discuss practical things he can do.



3. We held one of our Portcullis House briefing sessions for the sub-region's MPs just before the Parliamentary recess, and since then Christine and I have met virtually all of them for individual discussions to explain, in more detail, how the LEP is benefitting their area, and to get a better understanding of the issues being raised with them by their constituents.

Review of LEPs

4. DCLG have written to all LEP chairs announcing that they will be undertaking a review over the autumn designed to strengthen the role of LEPs, including, in particular, through local industrial strategies. The review is likely to conclude that, if LEPs are to be given a stronger role, it will be even more important that they have robust systems and processes and are fully open and transparent, and it may suggest that all LEPs should be structured, as we are, as companies limited by guarantee. Christine has been invited to join a small advisory panel to the review.

Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund

5. In the middle of August, DCMS announced a competition to fund a small number of capital projects to "benefit areas that have historically low levels of cultural and creative investment". The maximum grant per project is £4 million, which must fund no more than 70% its cost. Each LEP is being asked to submit one bid by 30 November. We are therefore designing a process which will allow the Executive team to put some draft proposals to the Board meeting scheduled for 8 November.

HS2 Phase 2a

6. The Parliamentary Bill that will bring HS2 to Crewe was formally tabled on 18 July, alongside a consultation document on the Crewe Hub station itself, seeking views on a proposal to increase the number of HS2 services stopping at the station from the originally proposed two per hour to five arriving from the south, of which two would split to give seven leaving to go North. This is exactly what we and our partners in the Constellation Partnership have been arguing for. The deadline for responses to the consultation is 11 October, and we are currently working with Cheshire East and other partners to ensure we send in a co-ordinated set of responses. The LEP will be leading on regional rail services from Crewe. The challenging element of the response will be that the Consultation document asks how much the region is prepared to contribute to secure these services, and how many new houses we will build.



7. Jackie Sadek, the chair of the Constellation Partnership has also announced that she won't be able to stay on beyond the end of her first year in post, which concludes just after MIPIM UK.

Department for International Trade

8. We hosted a very successful visit to the sub-region by DIT's Advanced Manufacturing Team, who were keen to understand the inward investment opportunities in the area. In parallel DIT have agreed to fund an extra post within the LEP until March 2019. The role of the post, which is one of a number being funded across the Northern LEPs, is to improve co-ordination of inward investment enquiries across the sub-region.

Supporting Our High Streets

9. The LEP hosted a "Best Practice in British High Streets" event in Northwich at the end of July. It brought together a panel of national experts with retailers and traders from across Cheshire and Warrington, alongside the local authorities and the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to look at how we can work together to create sustainable high streets. It has already engendered conversations and exchanges of best practice between different high streets.

PR and Communications

10. The Enterprise Zone featured in an article on Granada TV during the summer, and we secured coverage in the local press for the funding decision for Warrington West station, the first Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund investment in C&W, and formal approval for the two LGF projects in Crewe.

Move to Wyvern House

11. Our move to Wyvern House takes place over the weekend of 2/3 September. Rachel Brosnahan has done an excellent job co-ordinating the move, which gives us much better facilities for visitors, an open plan working environment, helping us to work even better as a single team, and the ability to walk across the road to shop at Asda in our lunch-breaks!