



Attendees	<p>David Andrews – VisitWiltshire Paddy Bradley (PB) - SWLEP Phil Clement – SWLEP Kathryn Crossweller (KC) – Chippenham Chamber Jim Davison (JD), representing Stephen Tulip. Make UK Ruth Lambert (RL) – Federation of Small Business Robin McGowan - Salisbury BID – joined at 12.15pm Colette Mallon – SWLEP Tim Major (TM) - Thames Valley Chamber Swindon Andrew Mercer (AM) – Business West, SWLEP Growth Hub Mandy Paterson (MP) - Inspire by Wessex Chamber Leigh Robinson (LR) – Thames Valley Chamber Mel Squires (MS), Regional Director, representing Becky Butland, NFU Chris Stevens – SWLEP Growth Hub Dee Temple-Multon (DT-M)- Business West Beverley Waters – ICAEW</p>
Apologies	<p>Becky Butland – NFU Ian Larrard - Business West Andy Rhind-Tutt (AR-T)- Salisbury Chamber Mark Rogers - Swindon BID Stephen Tulip – Make UK Guy Tullberg - Institute of Directors Peter Wragg (PW) – VisitWiltshire</p>
Guest(s)	Russell Frith (RF) / Paul Moorby (PM) / Julia Stuckey (JS) / Shona Taylor (ST)
Chair	Alison North (AN)
Minutes	Deborah House (DKH)
Venue	Via video / teleconference call
Start time	11.30am
Finish Time	1pm

1.0	Welcome and Introductions	Date
	<p>The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies were noted.</p> <p>AN stated that she would like to set up some 1:1s to get to know BROG members further.</p> <p>Action: DKH to help establish.</p> <p>AN advised that she would have to leave the call at 12.45pm to attend another meeting, but that PB would take over at that point.</p>	May 2020
2.0	Minutes of meeting on 12 February 2020 and matters arising	
	The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2020 were read and approved.	



	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crimestoppers - to provide ambassador leaflet for sending out to group members COMPLETED; and • RMcG and AR-T to make contact with MM at Crimestoppers; NOT KNOWN • the Chair asked Highways England to engage with David Andrews of VisitWiltshire regarding the A303 project. DA advised that HE had emailed him the survey. As yet, no further follow-up. • bring project back to group in due course for further discussions. • GradTalent - AP to send leaflet of details to Deborah for forwarding to group members. COMPLETED • Business Health Report - maintain item on agenda for future meetings. PB stated that there would be further discussions as there was ambition to do it. So, it would come back to this meeting at an appropriate time. 	
3.0	NFU – the state of farming	
	<p>MS of NFU gave a verbal update to the meeting regarding Covid-19 impacts after explaining that she was Regional Director and represented farmers and growers across the South West region. She was also non-executive Director of Heart of South West LEP so was prepared to leave the meeting if there was an area of conflict.</p> <p>MS had provided documents which DKH would circulate to members after the meeting. The documents can be accessed via the following links on the SWLEP website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFU's response to ERFA Select Committee https://swlep.co.uk/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/brog/efra-inquiry-into-covid-19-and-food-supply-nfu's-response-final-040520.pdf?sfvrsn=c03e334e_4 <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFU briefing to MPs https://swlep.co.uk/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/brog/mp-c19-briefing---updated-(002).pdf?sfvrsn=c7a35e8a_4 <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main challenge was that as a nation until lockdown we consumed 50% of our calories outside the home. • This had impacted greatly on food service, retail and hospitality losing significant market share. • Supermarkets had reduced their lines, for example, the speciality cheese market had taken a hit in added value sales. • In response, there had been an increase in local deliveries and online sales. • Many farms were moving into online sales to compensate. 	May 2020



- There was advise on how to do this via helpful links on NFU's website.

Dairy Sector

- Examples of the situation for farmers were being collated to present as evidence to Government.
- Most farms were family-run, and cash flow was a real challenge.
- There were 100 dairy farmers throughout Wiltshire.
- Lack of foodservice orders was a massive loss.
- Milk was being thrown away and also the spot price was below the cost of production.
- Overdrafts were having to be increased.
- These are highly perishable goods which cannot be stored, and we do not have the capacity in this country to dry to milk powder.
- Farmers could have to dry out cows, or at worst, cull herds.

Growers

- The closure of pubs had reduced the consumption of beers, so affected the supply chains, and
- together with bad Winter weather had led to a catastrophic planting season for spring malt and barley.

What were farmers doing about it?

- Many consumers had turned to local sourcing, but consumer behaviour was uncertain, and many will revert to the suppliers they had before lockdown, as would prefer one point of sale.
- Buying local built in resilience.
- Cashflow was king. The business interruption program and bounce back scheme had been helpful, but many farmers were not able to access these loans as 50% were tenant farmers.
- Agri businesses were very borrowed beforehand and many did not have the confidence or ability to borrow their way out of this crisis.
- The discretionary funds would help to plug the gap, and any help from BROG members to promote would be greatly appreciated
- Many farmers had diversified, particularly into the hospitality and tourism sectors. They were now experiencing extra problems as holiday lets etc were not business rated, so they were not entitled to that support.
- Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) within food supply chains was problematic. For example, within the poultry sector to allow workers to continue doing their jobs. NFU was talking directly to DEFRA about this.
- Within the poultry sector again the availability of wood shavings was an issue.
- Owing to the delays in logistics, there was also problems obtaining machinery and parts even if there were the engineers and mechanics to complete the jobs.



- There had been an increased in fly tipping with the obvious damage to the environment and countryside.
- Increased footfall by walkers in hot spots.
- Problems with dogs and livestock.
- Not following the Countryside code with grassland and crops damaged.
- Responsible access to the countryside required at this time. NFU was helping by giving free notices to farmers for rights of way.
- There had been an increase in rural crime.

AN commented that her local dairy had expanded rapidly during Covid-19 and she would remain with them afterwards because of their service to the community.

Questions raised were:

- **How was the recruitment of local workers going with the Pick for Britain campaign?**

MS gave an update on the status of the campaign. The website went live the previous week and was supported by Defra. There had been a great response and there was currently enough offers of help. The challenge for home grown labour was that they still needed to be trained to do these skilled jobs and that it proved too physical for some. Therefore, the UK still needed access to the labour from the continent as local resources alone would not plug the gap. There were different seasons for different crops, so there may well be a spike of need in June. Any support from BROG members would be good if needed.

- **Are there any schemes that have been particularly useful for farmers? Any good news stories that could give hope or ideas to others?**

The dairy sector had been working with MPs, Defra etc and a hardship fund for 800 farmers nationally was nearing completion. In this way, it was hoped to cater for those most deeply affected. There had also been campaigns to drive up sales for consumers to buy British dairy products just to increase volumes. And some supermarkets were driving great campaigns for meat etc for example, the expensive cuts like steak, as there was more at-home consumption.

- **Is culling livestock currently a real option? As opposed to drying off in the short-term.**

MS stated that farmers were doing everything to avoid having to do this. But, if social distancing were still in force when hospitality re-opened, out of home sales would still be hit. They were hoping to move livestock on through sales, rather than to cull.

- **The Government announced a new £617m top up fund this week to support businesses that do not pay business rates, such as accommodation being run by farmers. Would that help?**

There were still some questions about how that would function.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could FSB help by putting a call out to members re wood chip etc? And if so, who should we direct people to if they could help? <p>PB stated that something like this could go out to all platforms at the same time.</p> <p>RG advised that, a call with DIT the previous day, had looked at the food and drink sector specifically.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in robotics, especially within the horticultural sector, was due early next year. This could be an answer to the labour issues. • The cost of haulage in goods from Southern Europe was impacting on pricing. Some organisations were therefore looking to relocate food production back into the UK. • The use of PPE would significantly increase in food manufacturing and this cost might make some businesses uneconomic. <p>MS was thanked for her clear update on the state of farming at the present time.</p>	
4.0	Business situation update	
	<p>BROG members gave an update on their individual organisations in the current circumstances.</p> <p>BusinessWest AM updated the meeting on BusinessWest's Trading through Coronavirus campaign which had received 10,000 hits on the website with 7-8,000 enquires.</p> <p>ICAEW BW stated that there were 11,500 chartered accountants in her area. A Business Advice Service had been launched in the last four days, which was available for anyone to access. This was available on the website.</p> <p>Action: BW to pass the link to DKH for circulation.</p> <p>This entitled people to two hours' free advice from an accountant in their area who could help to put together the funding applications.</p> <p>With regards to the loan scheme, ICAEW had heard good reports on Barclays, but some other banks were selling their own products rather than the Government one. Alok Sharma, current Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, was a member of ICAEW and discussions with him had been fed back to Government.</p> <p>(NOTE: AM advised that all three grants, Furlough, SEISS and Small Business Grant, were classed as taxable income. This fact should be made clearer on communications.)</p>	May 2020



	<p>ICAEW would be issuing a survey to 100 practice members over the next four days which would ask specific questions set by Government.</p> <p>Most of ICAEW's members were working hard to support their clients, with most working 15hours+ per day. Specific webinars were also available on the website.</p> <p>Action: provide DKH link to webinars for circulation.</p> <p>SWLEP advised that we had received good feedback concerning Bounce Back Loans so far from some of the businesses supported through the Growth Hub. Part of our recovery planning needed to include workshops on financial planning into recovery, including provision for taxation.</p> <p>Growth Hub</p> <p>CS explained the triage+ service which had been launched with business navigators covering the whole SWLEP area serving as a Government messaging vehicle offering general support. 500 businesses had made contact, of which 292 had requested further information. The Growth Hub was working in partnership with Wiltshire Council which had redeployed staff, and we had also expanded the telephone group with BusinessWest from one person to four people. We had received very productive and positive feedback about the service.</p> <p>SWLEP Business Engagement</p> <p>CM stated that SWLEP was talking directly to businesses to get the good news stories during this crisis. For example, breweries making hand sanitiser, manufacturers of tarpaulin now making visors and employees' wash bags, and one company which had shared its business rate relief with clients. The aim was to get these stories on the website.</p> <p>VisitWiltshire</p> <p>DA commented that VisitWiltshire was giving advice within the tourism sector to access support. A recent survey identified issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• furloughing of staff, and• how to survive the winter, if they lose the summer business. <p>VisitWiltshire was working on recovery marketing with VisitBritain and launching Virtual Wiltshire. This would raise awareness of Wiltshire's offer and looked ahead for when travel was again possible. It was felt that rural destinations would be quicker to recover. Canal bookings were already being taken from September. It was working with other Destinations to draft an industry standard.</p> <p>BusinessWest</p> <p>DT-M advised that a recent survey had been completed by 1,300 businesses which had been shared with BEIS and the councils. A link was available.</p> <p>BusinessWest was now working on the recovery phase and with Innovate UK to support clients with a strap line of "We're looking to survive, stabilise and grow." This was a free service with five days' expert advice.</p>	<p>May 2020</p>
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Issues amongst their members had been cashflow, supply chain, grants and bounce back loans.

Wiltshire Council

RF reported that Wiltshire Council had dealt with 5,900 businesses issuing £70m in grant funding. The new scheme would plug some of the funding gaps of other schemes, but we were waiting to find out how this money would be distributed, as it was not a large fund and he felt that some businesses would be disappointed.

MakeUK

JD reported that MakeUK had been supporting manufacturers. The first challenge had been whether these businesses should remain open in the first place. Further enquiries were on the Retention scheme, questions from members around holidays, cashflow and CBILS. Lobbying had helped manufacturers to access the schemes.

MakeUK was now seeing a shift towards recovery. Furloughing staff in three-week blocks was proving difficult to manage.

Manufacturers were being encouraged to innovate, for example, the ventilator challenge and to move into diversification – a lot to PPE. Digitally connected manufacturers had suffered less than others, which represented a changing picture for the future way of working.

(Resumed to Item 4.0 after discussing Item 5.)

Swindon Borough Council (SBC)

JS reported that SBC had distributed £25m in grant funding but was still chasing 100-150 remaining businesses. She requested that BROG members prompt their membership to check the SBC website to see whether they were on the list. SBC was talking to Government about the new set of cash grants and how they should be administered and was beginning to get ready for the recovery phase. SBC would be in touch with BROG members as that progressed.

Salisbury BID

RMcG reported that the BID had ensured it was communicating effectively to individual business which had vastly differing working practices amongst its varied membership around the City Centre. The BID had set up weekly webinars and was engaging with Wiltshire Council and local MPs. Any discussions were therefore being fed back into Government. It was assisting Wiltshire Council to track businesses which had yet to claim the grants and it had launched a campaign called Raise the Bar. This was for businesses which were above the £51k business rate grant and were therefore not entitled to funds from existing schemes. The BID had heard positive feedback about the Bounce Back loans. It continued to track footfall and was also working with Police and CCTV on key holder information and antisocial groups in the City.

The BID was now working on recovery regionally and locally and a report from the Institute of Place Management would be shared wider in the coming weeks.

Inspire by Wessex Chamber



MP reported that the chamber had been working hard with its business community. Its membership fell into three major groups:

- those where the business had increased as result of Covid-19, such as Apetito delivering meals for in-home consumption;
- those which were on the cliff edge. These were main in the hospitality and retail sector; and
- those in the middle which still had the engine running, ticking over as best they could. Being able to furlough staff had significantly helped cashflow.

Businesses were now spending time on planning work during lockdown. Some would return as before, but some would need to remodel what they did to stay afloat.

On the positive side, many businesses were switching production to hand gel and visors etc showing innovation, adaption and agility.

Swindon TV Chamber

TM reported that the website had received 24,000 hits last month, which was double the normal amount and a webinar programme was in place. Now moving to recovery stage. Some employers had jumped quickly to furlough staff and some were anguishing over whether they needed to or not. There were now thoughts within supply chains to change previous habits and get 50% of products produced locally.

FSB

RL reported that the 2,500 fsb members did not have huge cash reserves and were focussing on survival. One of the big concerns was that the VOA had responded poorly so businesses were unable to get their valuations updated and the CIBLs had high interest rates.

RL had heard that the HMRC eligibility tracker was not working properly and anticipated another influx of enquiries when things went live.

5,500 businesses across the country had responded to a recent fsb survey. Once the results were available RL would share with the Group.

Action: RL to share survey results with the Group when available.

It was proposed whether the group should meet more regularly as the UK went into the recovery phase. Covid-19 had raised the issue of the structural viability of some industries and sectors. For example, stretched and singular supply chains put businesses at risk if we were to experience further global emergencies. It would be good to understand different organisational roles in recovery at future meetings and any impact on the Local Industrial Strategy.

Decision:

The Business Representative Organisations' Group (BROG) to meet monthly.

Action: DKH to liaise with Chair on prospective dates.

Asap

**May
2020**



5.0	Swindon & Wiltshire Careers Hub	
	<p>ST of the Swindon & Wiltshire Careers Hub presented to the meeting detailing the work of the Hub. (The presentation given on the day can be accessed via the following link:</p> <p>https://swlep.co.uk/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/brog/s-w-careers-hub-brog-presentation-may-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=445e490f_4).</p> <p>She finished the presentation with a call for businesses to become more involved in the programme to offer students an experience of the world of work.</p> <p>(AN left the meeting at 12.45pm.)</p> <p>PB stated that the young people now would be our future employment base in this rapidly changing environment. It was therefore beneficial / crucial for employers to become involved and requested BROG members to promote the programme within their memberships.</p>	
6.0	AOB	
	JD advised of a medical device manufacturer which was keen to hire some engineers from the Honda site. PB advised to discuss with JS outside the meeting.	
7.0	Date and time of next meeting	
	<p>Extraordinary Meeting 10 June 2020 Via video / telephone conference</p> <p>Future Meetings:</p> <p>Extraordinary Meeting 8 July 2020 Via video / telephone conference</p> <p>Wednesday, 5 August Chemring Countermeasures, High Post, Salisbury SP4 6AS</p> <p>Wednesday, 4 November Digital Mansion Corsham, Pickwick Road, Corsham, SN13 9BL</p>	
	Meeting closed at 1.05pm	

Alison North

Alison North - Chair

11 June 2020



Membership	<p>Alison North – SWLEP Director, Chair of BROG</p> <p>Business Improvement Districts (BIDs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salisbury – Robin McGowan, (RMc)• Swindon – Mark Rogers, (MR) <p>BusinessWest – Ian Larrard (IL) OR Dee Temple-Multon (DT-M)</p> <p>CBI – Deborah Fraser, (DF)</p> <p>Chambers of Commerce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chippenham – Kathryn Crossweller (KC)• Devizes – Richard• Inspire by Wessex Chamber – Rob Perks (RP) OR Mandy Paterson (MP)• Salisbury – Andy Rhind-Tutt, (AR-T)• Thames Valley – Leigh Robinson, (LR)• Thames Valley Swindon – Tim Major, (TM) <p>CLA – name to be advised</p> <p>Federation of Small Business – Ruth Lambert (RL)</p> <p>Icaew – Beverley Waters</p> <p>Institute of Directors – Guy Tullberg, (GT)</p> <p>Make UK – Stephen Tulip (ST)</p> <p>NFU – Andrea Witcombe (AW)</p> <p>SWLEP – Paddy Bradley, (PB) / Phil Clement, (PC), / Colette Mallon, (CM) / Chris Stevens (CS), North / Amanda Peach (AP), South</p> <p>VisitWiltshire – David Andrews (DA) OR Peter Wragg (PW)</p>
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