



Membership

Name of Member	Organisation	Attendance
Rory Bowen (RB) and / or Rachel Finlay (RFi)	Wiltshire Council	✓✓
Richard Bell (RBe) and / or Dave Dewart (DD)	Swindon Borough Council	(RBe) Apologies
Tom Harrison (TH)	SWLEP Board	Apologies
Victoria Moloney (VM)	Wiltshire Council	✓
Tom Marshall (TM)	SWLEP	Apologies
Alison North (AN) - Chair	SWLEP Board	✓
Debby Skellern (DS)	SWLEP, Acting CEO	✓
Chris Stevens (CS)	SWLEP	✓
Prof Ian White (IW)	SWLEP Board	Apologies
Suzanne Wigmore (SW)	SWLEP Board	✓

Guest(s)	SWLEP Comms ✓ / Rob Creer (RC) ✓ / Brea Woods (BW) Apologies iCAST representation – Prof Matt Davidson ✓
Chair	Alison North (AN)
Minutes	Deborah House (DKH)
Venue	Via video / teleconference call
Start time	12.30pm
Finish Time	2.30pm

1.0	Welcome and Introductions	Date
	The meeting opened at 12.33pm. The Chair welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the Business, Ideas and Place Subgroup which was the Subgroup arising from the merger of the Business Environment and the Ideas, Infrastructure and Place Subgroups. Apologies were noted.	
2.0	Minutes and Matters Arising	
	The Minutes from the meeting of the Ideas, Infrastructure and Place Subgroup from 13 September 2023 were approved. There were no Matters Arising.	



	<p>The Minutes from the meeting of the Business Environment Subgroup from 18 September 2023 were approved.</p> <p>Matter Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rachel Finlay to share with Tim Burghes when information available on further “Doing Business with us” and UKSPF events for SWLEP to promote. <i>Update received prior to meeting: Wiltshire Council had been in touch with the Growth Hub to publicise the “Doing Business with us” procurement events it was hosting in November / December. In respect of UKSPF, the Council was still at the procurement stage for the business support programme “Business Fit for Future” so there was no engagement activity yet, and unlikely to be until the New Year.</i> 	
3.1	The Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster and BCC update	
	<p>Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster Owing to the absence of Brea Woods (BW), DS updated the meeting on activity within the Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster.</p> <p>A successful event had been held on 11 October with a series of workshops at the Institute of Technology in Swindon with eight large employers from the area. A lot of interest was generated from surrounding schools, with attendance from further afield. In total, 289 students participated and feedback from teachers was good. The Cluster was currently working on the potential for a second careers event with Wiltshire College and University Centre which would be aimed in the south of the county.</p> <p>DS advised that she had recently attended a governance meeting with UKC3, the national body representing the cyber clusters. SWLEP was informed that the funding for all clusters would be reduced by half next year; for the Swindon and Wiltshire Cluster that meant a funding allocation of £25,000 for June 2024 to May 2025. SWLEP would seek sponsorship to bolster the budget. A forward schedule of events was being planned the next 6-7 months.</p> <p>Action: BW to give a planning update at the next meeting</p> <p>BCC update TM was offsite on a visit so was unable to attend the meeting. DS gave a brief update as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the BCC continued to work with prospective tenants. If current negotiations were successful, all the offices would be occupied from February 2024; there was now a push on filling the event space. For example, the Business Festival on 15 November would be an excellent showcase for the BCC; and SWLEP had signed up to a system to promote the space to increase room hire and events. 	<p>Jan 2024</p>



3.2	Business support	
	<p>CS presented to the meeting on the trading environment, good news, risks and opportunities within business support. The presentation can be accessed by following the link below.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/business-environment-subgroup---main-meeting/2023/06-nov/business-support-bip-subgroup-update-131123.pdf?sfvrsn=ce8991ee_3</p> <p>Core funding conditions for the Growth Hub was that support was free at the point of entry for advice, guidance, brokerage and basic green skills. In order to continue levels of business support service provision following the closure of the SME Competitiveness Programme in June 2023, the Growth Hub was investigating future delivery opportunities to try and plug the gaps in available support through paid for provision. None of this additional activity is core funded.</p> <p>SWLEP had therefore developed and trialled its own start-up delivery provision to backfill the lost provision delivered by YKTO through the SME Competitiveness Programme. SWLEP's programme had been used to support Cooper Tires' staff who were facing redundancy and it had been well received. Some start-up support was also being delivered on behalf of GFirst.</p> <p>The Business, Ideas & Place Subgroup: NOTED the contents of the report.</p>	
3.3	Wavehill Evaluation	
	<p>CS gave a presentation summarising the findings of the Wavehill Evaluation on the Growth Hub's performance. The presentation can be accessed by following the link below.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/business-environment-subgroup---main-meeting/2023/06-nov/bip-subgroup-wavehill-evaluation-summary.pdf?sfvrsn=53eb8fb3_3</p> <p>There had been a lower than hoped for response rate from businesses to the survey, but this was in part explained by overall survey fatigue and the fact that the report by Technopolis on the performance of Growth Hubs nationally had recently been completed. There were no national comparisons for Growth Hubs for 2022/23 to benchmark against. However, the Swindon & Wiltshire's Growth Hub monitored its own activity year-on-year to ascertain whether there were any areas which needed improvement.</p>	
3.4	Business Festival 2023/24	
	<p>RC gave a presentation outlining the programme for the first Business Festival being held at the BCC. There was a good take up of exhibitors and a varied schedule of</p>	



	<p>seminars. Over 350 attendees were expected. The presentation can be accessed by following the link below.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/business-environment-subgroup---main-meeting/2023/06-nov/business-festival-presentation.pdf?sfvrsn=44828d6a_3</p>	
4.1	Update from The Innovation Centre for Sustainable Technologies (iCAST) at the Carriage Works, Swindon	
	<p>Prof Matthew Davidson presented an update to the meeting on the progress of The Innovation Centre for Sustainable Technologies (iCAST) at the Carriage Works in Swindon. The Centre was operated by the Universities of Bath and Oxford. The presentation can be accessed by following the link below.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/business-environment-subgroup---main-meeting/2023/06-nov/icast-swlep.pdf?sfvrsn=83cb8b16_3</p> <p>£17m funding had been obtained from UKRI Research England to combat market failure and bring research together with commercial opportunities. In 2020/21, SWLEP had awarded £4.0m of Getting Building Fund towards the refurbishment for Phase 2b of the Carriage Works and Swindon Borough Council had invested a further £2.1m, which had enabled the iCAST Research Gateway to operate from Swindon. Its focus included bio feedstocks, sustainable engineering, circular plastics and sustainable manufacturing.</p> <p>A more agile way was needed to work with businesses, mainly high tech, high growth SMEs, working in the area of NetZero and sustainability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• post-doctoral researchers, called technology translators, had been appointed to work with businesses on joint projects which were industry-led;• made the projects more attractive to investment;• companies retained the IP and businesses would grow; and• some case studies were cited as examples of joint projects and those publicly available were on the website. <p>The ERDF Business Accelerator Hubs, the forerunners of iCAST, had provided the initial pipeline of SMEs. SMEs needed to become members to be part of the pipeline with iCAST, but it was actively looking for new members who had an interest in deploying sustainable technologies and requested attendees to encourage such businesses to make contact.</p> <p>The meeting was advised of Wiltshire Council's recent UKSPF project funding call "Invest in Wiltshire" which required applications to demonstrate a NetZero contribution; iCAST could potentially help some businesses. Prof Davidson advised</p>	



	<p>that Dr Zakir Hossain, iCAST's Industry Manager, would be the main point of contact in this instance. SWLEP added that it had a meeting with Dr Hossain already in the diary.</p> <p>Prof Davidson was thanked for his interesting presentation and an update was proposed for a later meeting.</p>	
5.0	AOB and items for the next meeting	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events planned for the Swindon & Wiltshire Cyber Cluster from Brea Woods • The Western Gateway was invited to the meeting to give an update on its workstreams Connecting Communities and / or Supporting Innovation but was unable to attend on this occasion. Bring forward for January. • Industrial decarbonisation from SWIC / Western Cluster. Bring forward for January. 	
	Date and time of next meeting	
	<p>Next meeting: Indicative date w/c 8 January</p> <p>Further indicative dates for 2024: w/c 4 March w/c 7 May (Monday, 6 May being Bank Holiday) w/c 1 or 8 July w/c 9 September w/c 4 November</p> <p>All meetings held online unless otherwise specified.</p>	
	Meeting closed at 1.53pm	

Alison North

Chair BIP Sub-Group

16 January 2024