



Date: Tuesday, 8 June 2021
Time: 1.30pm – 3pm
Venue: via Microsoft Teams call

Name of Member	Organisation	Attendance
David Andrews (DA)	VisitWiltshire	✓
Charlotte Boole (CB)	Greenway Training	✓
Sarah Dyke (SD)	Wiltshire Council	Apologies
Dawn Hamblin (DHa)	Wiltshire Council	Apologies
Julian Head (JH)	Wiltshire Council	✓
Lynn Gibson (LG)	Community First	Apologies
Ruth Lambert (RL)	FSB	✓
Geraldine McKibben (GMcK)	Consultant	✓
Gary Mantle (GM)	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust	✓
Thomas Mason (TM)	CLA	✓
John Matthews (JM)	Pinkney Park	✓
James Miles-Hobbs (JM-H)	JMH Farming and Renewables	✓
Andy Parsons (AP)	Cotswolds AONB	Apologies
Paul Walton (PW)	New Forest NPA	Apologies
James Webb (JW)	Cotswolds AONB	Apologies
Caroline Wheatley-Hubbard (CW-H)	Boyton Farm	Apologies
Andrea Witcombe (AW)	NFU	✓
Claire Wright (CW)	CLA	Apologies
SWLEP: attendance will be dependent on topics discussed		
Claire Alexander (CA)	SWLEP	✓

Name of Member	Organisation	Attendance
Paddy Bradley (PB)	SWLEP CEO	✓
Phil Clement (PC)	SWLEP	✓
Lewis Durling (LD)	SWLEP	✓
Dragana Houston (DH)	SWLEP	✓
Debby Skellern (DS)	SWLEP	✓
Chris Stevens (CS)	SWLEP	✓
Guest(s)		
Chair	Paddy Bradley (PB)	
Notes	Deborah House (DKH)	

Item	Narrative	Deadline
1.	Welcome, introductions and apologies	
	The meeting opened at 1.32pm. PB welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.	
2.	Levelling up rural communities: the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Industrial Strategy and the work of SWLEP	
	<p>PB presented to the meeting on the current and future work of the SWLEP with reference to the rural agenda within the Local Industrial Strategy. The presentation can be accessed by using the following link.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/rural-economy-sector-group-(resg)/swlep-and-rural---rural-economy-sector-group-08062021.pdf?sfvrsn=269204e4_4</p> <p>Areas of subsequent discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The SWLEP-sponsored student is studying part-time for a PhD to develop a greater regional and national understanding of how to value natural capital and the services operating from it. The evidence produced will be used by the SWLEP and shared with the network of LEPs to help determine investment decisions. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route to net zero <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), work on which started in 2018, focussed on clean growth and low carbon outputs. The conversion of the LIS into our local Plan for Growth would have a strong emphasis on Net-Zero, cutting across all other themes of activity. This could see additional emphasis on green energy generation, carbon reduction in transport and support for changes in agricultural practice, for example, in land management with emphasis on improvement in soil health which would reduce inputs and decrease number of passes. This would improve business viability overall. ○ The SWLEP is pursuing its LIS priority to support the tourism and hospitality sectors through the development of ideas to create carbon-neutral tourist routes on and around the Great West Way. ○ A further LIS priority is the Innovation Campus for the Circular Economy, based in Wroughton Airfield and the Carriage Works in Swindon, which is in the early stages of development. ○ New energy vehicles, electric and hydrogen are covered in the LIS. The SWLEP is supporting initiatives to extend electric charging facilities to rural communities. The drop in emissions needed to be increased, so how could hydrogen be part of this? Hydrogen produced from fossil sources was called blue hydrogen and the carbon was then captured. The Government was looking to add green hydrogen to the list and there would be trials in heating and industrial processes. ○ SWLEP was pulling together more support locally for hydrogen. The LEPs along the M4, Swindon and Wiltshire were working together on this project. SWLEP was also looking into supporting arrangements to extend the use of hydrogen-fuelled buses and forklift trucks, the latter due to the extensive number of distribution centres in the area. ○ On the broader issue of energy generation and distribution, it was noted that the current electricity network is under strain in different parts of the area, with now greater pressure due to a steady increase in demand from electric vehicle charging. This was highlighted in the SWLEP's Energy Strategy as were the limited options for people off the gas grid for domestic heating and 60% of these consumers were on electric. Severn Wye Agency had been awarded the contract to help small businesses radicalise what they were doing with their energy. This was accessible via the Growth Hub. ○ Forestry owners were having a big drive on tree planting to combat climate change. It was claimed that on new housing developments trees were planted but not established and not maintained. One suggestion was that this element should be part of the planning system before planning permission was granted to ensure the trees were being looked after and possibly linked to appropriate apprenticeships 	

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	<p>with the developers. It was claimed that there was currently no course available on tree planting.</p> <p>PB thanked the attendees for their contributions and the discussion. The discussion suggested items for further coverage which were picked up in Item 4.</p>	
3.	<p>Great West Way and the DCMS review of destination management organisations (DMOs)</p>	
	<p>DA spoke to the meeting. Key points raised were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • international operators were now looking more at 2022 for inward-bound business rather than this year; • those businesses which were operating were at a much-reduced capacity and struggling financially; • although travel guides for The Great West Way already existed for the Kennet & Avon Canal and Food & Drink, with a walking guide and gardens guide in the pipeline, with the growing nature tourism business, a guide for Wildlife on the Great West Way would also be beneficial. <p>Action: DA and GM to discuss outside the meeting.</p> <p>Review of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs)</p> <p>DA advised the meeting that all DMOs had experienced significant cuts this year. Private sector funding was down by 60% and public sector by 40%. Bath & Bristol organisations had in fact just merged because of this. Visit Wiltshire had submitted a response to DCMS, as had the SWLEP, and the Southwest Panel was meeting next week to discuss future models. DA anticipated the possibility of returning to a functioning network of 15+ DMOs which would be centrally funded with a remit to market destinations.</p> <p>Visit Wiltshire was keen to promote a sustainability angle and worked with stakeholders, for example, the GWR Explorer Pass was to be extended. One unique aspect of the Great West Way was that it could be travelled by walking, by water, by bus, or by rail. DA mentioned that Visit Wiltshire would be approaching the SWLEP for some support in developing an action plan to go to the next step for a carbon neutral tourist route.</p>	<p>July 2021</p>
4.	<p>Wider discussion and topics for future meetings</p>	
	<p>Much of the wider discussion was contained in Items 2.0 and 3.0 above. Topics for future meetings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Capital; • carbon neutral tourism; • the Rural Powerhouse campaign; • how agricultural practices might need to change; 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carbon sequestration; and • tree planting. 	
5.	Government Review of LEPs	
	<p>PB updated the meeting on the Government's current review of LEPs. Future capital funds would be held and operated through Local Authorities. PB advised that Swindon and Wiltshire local authorities were not on the high priority list for the Government at the moment; more focus would be on the Midlands and the North. So, there was little prospect of getting a high level of investment from these funds. There was a lot less money available from Government than previously so the area should be looking to increasing private sector investment. There was expected to be a continuing role for LEPs for business support amongst other areas of activity.</p>	
6.	AOB and frequency of future meetings	
	<p>PB considered this meeting to operate in a similar format to the Business Intelligence and Networking Group (BING), that is, a consultative group with the opportunity to contribute and share amongst the membership.</p> <p>PB suggested that the next meeting be held in late July before the summer break and quarterly thereafter.</p>	
	<p>Future dates</p> <p>Wednesday, 21 July 2021 at 10am</p> <p>End October 2021 – to be confirmed</p> <p>End January 2022 – to be confirmed</p> <p>End April 2022 – to be confirmed</p> <p>End July 2022 – to be confirmed</p>	

Paddy Bradley

21 July 2021