

**West of England Local Enterprise Partnership  
Board meeting – June 12<sup>th</sup> 2020**

**Local Industrial Strategy Update**

**Purpose of the report**

1. To provide the LEP Board with an update on progress in implementation of the LIS, where the actions have been flexed to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic

**Recommendation**

That the LEP Board note to contents of the paper and use it to inform their consideration of how the region should respond to the future scenarios set out in the paper for agenda item 4 for discussion at the meeting. Questions to consider:

- Are there other areas of the LIS action plan that could be flexed to respond to the current circumstances?
- What are the key gaps in the LIS action plan where focus is needed to respond to current circumstances?

**Background**

2. The West of England Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) was published in July 2019. The actions and activities identified in the LIS were incorporated into the WECA business plan, with an updated plan for 2020/21 approved by the Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> January.
3. Following the introduction of lockdown measures in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the WECA business plan was reviewed to ensure that WECA focused on delivering critical support, continuing business as usual where required, and to enable work to commence on planning to support our region's recovery and to continue to deliver clean and inclusive economic growth.
4. A number of key LIS initiatives were flexed to respond to the pandemic, and further initiatives are already planned to change focus to support emerging plans for short, medium and term recovery. These are summarised below by theme.

**Cross Sectoral Innovation**

5. The overarching objective of this theme is:
  - Strengthening innovation and driving productivity by connecting researchers, businesses and residents through a Global Centre of Innovation Excellence to focus the region's innovative strengths on globally and nationally significant challenges; and

- Developing, testing and preparing for market, user-centred products and services through a new West of England Network of Living Labs.
6. Progress up to March 2020 had included preparation of a full business case for Digital Engineering and Technology Institute, submission of expressions of interest and support to a number of funding initiatives including Made Smarter, Digital Innovation in Professional Services, 5G Create and Future of Flight.
  7. Response to Covid-19 to date and future planning includes the following:
    - Digital, Engineering and Technology Institute (DETI) business case refocused to better respond to current challenges
    - Research and Innovation Challenge Fund design reviewed to include and target crisis challenges in SMEs
    - Research and Innovation group ensuring focus on research contribution to response
    - Flexing of the Creative Scale Up Programme, moving provision online and focusing on helping businesses to address the challenges of Covid-19
    - Preparing for future funding bids including Strength in Places Wave 3
    - Exploring how Low Carbon Challenge Fund can be extended further to address climate emergency
    - Leveraging the WECA Innovation Framework to focus the research and innovation communities on mission-led innovation to tackle crisis problems and opportunities

### **Inclusive Growth**

8. The overarching objectives of this theme is to introduce new measures to help all residents contribute to and benefit from our economic success by:
  - Targeting support to communities facing challenges, delivering the right employment and skills provision so that businesses can find the talent they need
  - Linking everyone to jobs, training and services via improved physical and digital infrastructure that is accessible, sustainable and low carbon.
9. Progress up to March 2020 included building foundations for delivery including regional Employment and Skills plan and establishment of Skills Advisory Panel. Funding had been agreed for Adult Education Budget 2021/22, Careers Enterprise Company and Future Bright Plus. Ongoing work underway to further develop West of England Growth Hub to extend support.
10. Response to Covid-19 to date and future planning to support recovery includes:
  - AEB provider funding for 2019/20 guaranteed, and actively encouraging online provision. Working on delivery plans for 2020/21

- Future Bright criteria flexed to support individuals falling out of employment or seeing significant reductions in income, and plans for transition to Future Bright plus reviewed to build on learning and respond to Covid-19 impact
- Careers Hub provision moved online
- Workforce for the Future programme flexed to help SMEs address skills and training needs, with plans to launch 'brokerage' service
- Skills Advisory Panel positioned as sub-group to Regional Recovery Taskforce, meeting monthly

### **Productivity Challenge**

11. The overarching objective of this theme is to providing businesses with the space, networks and skills they need to boost productivity, grow and thrive by:
  - Encouraging the uptake of modern technology, management and leadership practices to lift employee wellbeing, productivity and exports.
  - Including more regional providers in businesses' supply chains and widening access to public procurement for small business.
  - Supporting and incentivising companies towards low carbon business models.
12. Progress up to March 2020 included significant enhancement to the Growth Hub core offer with additional information, advice and guidance to SMEs, development of universal business support packages with each of the Local Authorities to offer extended Growth Hub reach in the region. Expert Intellectual Property Office advice has been made available and a Mentoring for Growth activity launched with the Growth Company and Be the Business.
13. Response to Covid-19 to date and future planning to support recovery includes:
  - Refocus of Growth Hub to provide advice and signposting to national resources
  - Technology adoption scheme repurposed to help businesses adapt using online tools
  - Financial resilience information advice and guidance package developed with Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales to support SMEs
  - Mentoring for Growth activity modified to include rapid response mentoring
  - Further interventions planned to provide a package including trade and export support, resource efficiency and productivity through people
  - WECA/Be the Business benchmarking and business diagnostic tool for SMEs to be launched

### **Innovation in Infrastructure**

14. The overarching objective of this theme is tackling climate change, addressing air quality and ensuring quality of life for current and future residents by:
  - Supporting businesses to drive productivity by adopting new clean technology and energy efficiency measures

- Investing in infrastructure that reduces energy demand, lowers carbon emissions and is resilient to the impacts of climate change
  - Building new carbon-neutral homes, using modern methods of construction and other housing innovations
15. Progress up to March 2020 included successful submission of £24M bid to deliver a Future Transport Zone, enabling us to pilot smarter, greener transport solutions and an award of £500k to support a community led wind turbine project in Avonmouth. Alongside this research taking place to scale up Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) across the region and development of regional Green Infrastructure Plan.
16. Response to Covid-19 to date and future planning to support recovery includes:
- Supporting the Housing & Construction and Low Carbon sector discussions from the Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce to consider the innovation opportunities that will enable recovery from Covid-19
  - Development and launch of the Climate Emergency Action Plan which will incorporate actions on improving buildings & placemaking, enabling clean smart affordable energy, fostering clean growth and innovation