

**ACTION NOTE OF THE ‘CONNECTED ECONOMY GROUP’**

**Wednesday 4 December 2019, 1400-1600 hrs, Council Chambers, Townhouse, Haddington**

**Members present:**

Cllr J McMillan, East Lothian Council (JMM)

Cllr J Findlay, East Lothian Council (JF)

Phil Ford, Skills Development Scotland (PF)

Nick Croft, The Edinburgh College (NC)

Alex Mackay, East Lothian Council (AM) (for L Brown)

Frank Beattie, Scottish Enterprise (FB) (for E Morrison)

Garry Clark, Federation of Small Businesses (GC)

Douglas Proudfoot, East Lothian Council (DP)

**In attendance:**

Susan Smith, Economic Development, East Lothian Council (SS)

Claire Goodwin, East Lothian Council (CG)

Duncan Nisbet, Scottish Government (DN)

Fiona Muir, Scottish Government (FM)

1. **Appointment of Chair**

All those present agreed that Cllr McMillan chair the meeting as Spokesperson for Economic Development and Tourism.

1. **Welcome, introduction and apologies**

Welcome and introductions were made. Apologies from Cllr McLellan, Lesley Brown, Elaine Morrison, Keith Barbour, John Reid and Paolo Vestri.

1. **Minutes of previous meeting**

Approved.

1. **Matters arising**

The East Lothian Tourism Action Plan will be finalised in the New Year (**ACTION: SS** **to circulate final version to CEG members**) and JMM referred to ongoing industry engagement that continues to inform and influence tourism priorities.

1. **The Scottish Government R100 (Reaching 100%) Programme**

This presentation was delivered by Duncan Nisbet, R100 Programme Director and Fiona Muir, DSSB Stakeholder Director. DN said that the focus of the programme is providing the infrastructure for a minimum of superfast broadband (30 megabits per second, Scottish Government definition) and gave the background to this strategic approach, namely Scotland’s Digital Future (Scotland to become a world class digital nation). Affordability and skills are also key and at present there is no Universal Service Obligation. DN provided a resume of the 2019 General Election Manifestos around broadband coverage.

JMM mentioned ‘rural communities’ taking charge of their own broadband coverage and commended this approach to meet real need.

FM outlined the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme and its partnership approach and £463m investment, not commercially feasible. 14,901 properties in East Lothian are currently connected with 13,323 properties at superfast speed. The total benefit has been calculated at £12 value for every £1 of public investment. Of note is the original open market review map that shows the extent of deployment, more limited than now. The take-up in East Lothian exceeds the Rest of Scotland average.

CG asked about demand stimulation and the reasons for not taking up broadband – examples are a lack of awareness, not being sufficiently important.

In summary, the key points of the DSSB programme are – delivering on time and budget, continuing to deliver into 2020, not all areas can be covered, continuing to roll out fibre broadband, plans can and do change as build work commences and [www.scotlandsuperfast.com](http://www.scotlandsuperfast.com) is the best means of finding out where and when.

In response to a query from JF, FM said that adjacency to the cabinet can mean up to 80Mgbps with 10Mgbps given as Universal Service Obligation. JMM wondered if take-up levels were influenced by the expectation that R100 will soon be implemented but FM has seen no evidence of this having analysed all queries to the programme.

DP commented on the changing world of work and asked what can be done to encourage take-up and new work patterns. DN referred to Scottish Government policy around getting people online and how public services are being digitally redesigned. PF added that other models continue to be explored. DP also asked about telephony and what influence the Council can bear. DN referred to masts constructed and some reluctance from mobile network operators to implement. With regard to 5G, DN said that the Scottish Government has published its 5G Strategy and opened its 5G Test Centre in Glasgow.

JF asked about smaller broadband providers and DN said that the number of infrastructure providers has grown during the period of the programme from two to around 15. He reminded all that where a commercial operator is delivering in a particular area, then the programme cannot intervene.

Turning to R100, the intervention area will fall under the R100 Main Contract and the R100 Aligned Interventions. Current coverage for Scotland is at 93.9% of properties, 91.8% for East Lothian. This means around 7-8% to be covered by the R100 programme. There is the challenge of reaching full fibre, currently 7% for Scotland (4.77% for East Lothian). The R100 programme has funding of £600m, all but £21m from UK Government, from Scottish Government. R100 builds on DSSB investment. The main procurement is targeted at remote and rural premises meaning 172,000 premises in-scope, 3100 in-scope in East Lothian. There are three geographic lots, North, Central and South, with East Lothian spanning Central and South. DN explained the procurement process recently undertaken with BT succeeding in all three lots and anticipation of contract signature before end 2019. The aligned interventions will focus on premises that are out-of-scope or procurement fallout alongside the main contracts and emerging UK Government schemes. DN referenced UK Government initiatives around infrastructure, local full fibre networks and vouchers. It was suggested that once R100 coverage is clearer, then communities may determine their own solutions. There will be a final update as part of the State Aid approval process that will be included in contracts. The completion date is part of ongoing contract negotiations and will be published early January. New build connectivity remains an issue with Planning legislation encouraging housebuilders to install connectivity during the build process and more needs to be done to understand what can be done to enforce although not applicable in East Lothian. DN expects improved connectivity for rural areas as full fibre will be delivered by the contracts.

1. **The East Lothian Partnership**

CG provided an update on East Lothian Partnership issues as follows.

* The East Lothian Partnership Forum

The autumn East Lothian Partnership Forum took place on Saturday 5th October at Queen Margaret University with the theme of Town & Country Placemaking and was attended by 74 people from a wide range of Community Planning partners. Two presentations were delivered -  ‘How Good is Your Place? – ‘Introducing the Place Standard Tool’ (Irene Beautyman, Improvement Service); and ‘Placemaking in Practice – the Fife Experience’ (Hazel Cross, Fife Council) followed by workshop sessions on a range of topics such as ‘Delivering a Sustainable Economic Future for Local Places’ (Garry Clark, Federation of Small Businesses) and ‘Funding for Rural Communities’ (delivered by Anne Hastie from LEADER with support from Scottish Rural Action). An example of a follow-up work is input on the Place Standard Tool to the Council Management Team, as well as planned use of the tool by Dunbar & East Linton Area Partnership. The next ELP Forum will take place in late March/early April and will focus on the refreshed East Lothian Plan.

* ELP Governance update

The November meeting of the East Lothian Partnership received a progress report on delivery of the East Lothian Plan 2017-2027. Overall progress on delivery of the Plan is measured against 34 performance indicators – 10 of these link directly to the CEG’s remit:

6 indicators were rated green (performance has improved or is at, or above, target)

1 indicator was rated amber (performance has remained unchanged and / or may not have reached target)

2 were rated red (performance has declined)

The remaining indicator is still being developed. See attached report that also includes recommendations for changes/additions to the current East Lothian Plan. A ‘refreshed’ Plan, incorporating these changes, will be brought to the February meeting of the ELP Governance Group for approval. Any comments on the attached Report/Appendix are welcome – email cgoodwin@eastlothian.gov.uk

1. **Employability update**
* Parental Employability Support Fund

AM referred to the paper that has been circulated in advance and to the context for support. Examples of support will include upskilling and addressing a range of barriers to work. This project is at the early stage of development. JMM asked about other initiatives and AM said that there will be integration with these, such as New Opportunities East Lothian, IRES programme. PF offered to provide labour market information to facilitate identification. JF asked about geographic spread and AM provided reassurance that support will be focused on demand, not on any particular area. NC offered a discussion around this as the Edinburgh College has courses that may be eligible and can support delivery (**ACTION: AM**).

1. **The East Lothian Economic Development Strategy**

SS referred to the update circulated. JMM suggested that more detail on outcomes and leads be added to the next meeting agenda. SS added that proposition work is ongoing, led by East Lothian Council’s Communications Team Manager. DP commented that the strategy refresh was a refresh and the focus is on significant projects with greater returns anticipated. DP is heartened by improving job density figures for East Lothian.

1. **BREXIT update (verbal)**

SS reported that the BREXIT final position remains unclear before the pending General Election. The Council continues to monitor the anticipated impact of BREXIT on services and PF said thatSDS has undertaken regional analysis on impact of BREXIT**. (ACTION: PF to share).**

1. **Update on major projects (verbal)**
* ESESCRD – Regional Growth Strategy

In context of the ESESCRD, DP said that a council report was presented - <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16435/east_lothian_council> - and this included a commitment to undertake a Regional Growth Framework and a Regional Spatial Strategy. East Lothian Council recognises the opportunities around collaboration. Both documents will replace Strategic Development Plans and will influence the National Planning Framework, recognising the need to maintain a housing supply and up-to-date Local Development Plan.

* ESESCRD – IRES

DP said that there is a need to ensure transition from the departure of the IRES Chair (Angela Leitch) and PMO personnel to a new governance arrangement with Steve Grimmond, Chief Executive of Fife Council, taking over the chair role supported by Adam Dunkerley also from Fife Council.

* ESESCRD – QMU

DP reported that Planning Permission was consented with a Section 75 agreement signed between the landowner and Council as trigger to invoke the missives. The land has been transferred to the Council to construct the junction and a detailed design and planning permission are both now in place – works on the ground are expected to start April 2020. The new Principal of QMU, Sir Paul Grice, is very supportive of the project. The development of the final business case is in the process of being procured. JF asked about transport infrastructure and DP said that there is ongoing engagement with and influence over Transport Scotland as well as the Sheriffhall Junction. DP recognises the need to plan to mitigate disruption.

* Cockenzie

DP referred to the site’s National Planning Framework designation and the need to change this. This is a site of national significance. There is ongoing work looking at the constraints and technical requirements with 1600 houses consented. High speed 2 may provide an opportunity. JMM referenced to interest in the site – examples being US and Chinese Consuls in Scotland.

* Blindwells

Technical work in and around Blindwells and Cockenzie continues.

1. **Any other business**

JMM thanked CEG members for their attendance and input to the discussion.

1. **Date of next meetings**

Wednesdays 4 March, 3 June, 2 September, 2 December, 1400-1600 hrs, Haddington **(ACTION: SS).**