

Hull & East Yorkshire LEP Board

Business Engagement Board – Paper A – 26th May 2021
Report from James Newman, Chair

1. Background Summary

- 1.1 The Business Engagement Board (BEB) was founded in autumn 2020 because the Humber LEP was ceasing to exist from 31 March 2021, due to new Government guidelines on LEP membership.
- 1.2 Its primary purpose was to fill the vacuum for the private sector links with the public sector, whilst the new HEY LEP was created in early 2021 to commence from 1 April 2021. It also encouraged both Hull and East Riding Councils to come together to form the new HEY LEP and together to have the confidence to commit publicly to a debate around Devolution for the new region.
- 1.3 The BEB also led the recruitment of a new Chair and Deputy Chair for the LEP and it also was able to bring together, and re-energise, key private sector leaders.
- 1.4 Now that the new HEY LEP has been formed, there is a need to regularise the relative roles of the BEB and the LEP, in order to avoid confusion and duplication.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Board agree to appoint the Business Engagement Board (BEB) as its main private sector and business Advisory Partner.
- 2.2 That the Board delegates the agreeing of the final Terms of Reference for the BEB to the Chair on behalf of the LEP.
- 2.3 That the Board delegates the Chair to agree the composition of the BEB with the Chair of the BEB.

3. The need for the Business Engagement Board

It is important to the success of the LEP that the private sector, especially business, is given a big voice in the future of the region. The BEB will be the conduit to provide this influence via the new LEP, who will be working in partnership with the public sector at local and national levels. The LEP's role is to ensure the private sector voice is included in all relevant decisions, whereas the two Councils have a broader focus and therefore the Council/LEP partnership is an important asset to all parties.

It is essential, especially for a new LEP, new geography and a highly competitive economic and political landscape, to ensure that the private sector has a primary

recognised forum in which to bring key economic issues to the LEP Board's attention. The key BEB role, therefore, is to ensure effective private sector collaboration with the LEP. Historically, a range of organisations have sought to represent the private sector, all with different agendas and memberships. These have been in place across both sides of the Humber Estuary, which has historically added further complication.

4. Proposed role of the Business Engagement Board

It is, therefore, proposed that the BEB, become the LEP's main private sector partner at strategic level. This will not preclude continuous consultation and dialogue with all private sector representative groups, business organisations and key individuals and businesses.

The BEB will **not** be a sub Board of the LEP, but an Advisory Board, which will influence and support the work of the LEP board. It will not duplicate the work of the LEP sub Boards but will focus on strategic business needs for the future of our region as the role of a Public /Private sector partnership is the preserve of the LEP to deliver. .

5. Composition of the Business Engagement Board

The BEB is currently chaired by Thomas Martin, Chairman of Arco, one of the region's largest companies and employers. I have asked Thomas to continue in this role, which he has accepted. The Deputy Chair of the BEB is Bill Walker, Chairman of Marketing Humber.

The other members of the BEB will need to have their main business interests in the HEY geography, although it is expected that some may have some additional interests south of the Estuary as well, which will help any pan Humber collaboration activities.

The membership will include private sector representative organisations such as the CBI, Chambers of Commerce, FSB and IOD plus others. It will also need to include representatives of the key economic sectors in the region, who would be able to inform the debate, influence the sector and have credibility within the business community. All members will be expected to represent the key sectors of the region's economy and are not members as individuals.

The two Councils have previously been represented on the BEB but going forward this will not be the case. The two Council Leaders are already members of the main LEP board and the two CEOs are also invited to attend the LEP board, as important Observers.

To avoid confusion and duplication, the Chair of the BEB, in consultation with the LEP Chair, will define who is to attend, by invitation and when. This ensures that the private sector can be as open as possible to express their views in the meetings and to identify and steer their priorities. It is expected that the majority of the existing private sector members of the BEB, will remain as members as they already represent some of the region's business organisations and many of the key sectors.

It is also expected that representatives from BEIS or other Government Departments will be invited from time to time to attend the BEB to enable Government to understand better the private sector issues and for the private sector to influence Government policy and funding decisions. Members of the BEB are also well positioned to work alongside the LEP to influence and provide advocacy for the region.

6. Key Sectors

There will always be arguments as to which sectors are strategically important to the region. The configuration of the new LEP means that there will need to be a realignment of which sectors should be represented on the new BEB.

The previous focus on high capital intensive and industrial sectors, such as energy, chemicals, manufacturing, ports and logistics, as well as other net zero industries, are still very important for the region's economy as are the enablers of digital, property and construction, education, health and community sectors. However, the rural, agricultural, coastal, hospitality, leisure and tourism industries of East Riding will play an ever increasing role in the economy of the new geography, so a bigger emphasis on these businesses will be needed.

7. Relationship between the LEP and the Business Engagement Board

It is expected that the LEP Chair/Deputy Chair and/or other LEP Board members will be invited to attend the BEB depending on the BEB agenda. The LEP Chair and the Chair of the BEB will meet regularly to discuss key items for the BEB agenda to ensure issues important to both the BEB and the LEP are properly addressed in BEB meetings.

It is also expected that the Chair/Vice Chair of the BEB will be regularly invited to attend the main LEP Board to report on the activities of the BEB, make recommendations for consideration by the LEP Board and take back to the BEB any messages and requests for support from the LEP.

8. Frequency of Meetings

It is envisaged that the BEB will meet bi-monthly to harmonise with the LEP Board meetings, ideally in the month between LEP Board meetings.

9. Administration

Currently the administration and secretarial support for the BEB is done by Hull CC. As the BEB will now become the main private sector partner of the LEP, the LEP team will take on this role.

10. Activities and Terms of Reference of the Business Engagement Board

The BEB will be the primary source of private sector consultation at strategic level for the LEP, key strategic sectors and pan-Humber issues.

The BEB will also:

- Bring to the attention of the HEY LEP important business developments in the region where the LEP might be interested or could assist.
- Advise the LEP Board on priorities for economic development.
- Identify gaps and risks in the provision of business-related services or funding provided by the LEP, councils or national Government.
- Act as a monitor and provider of information for the various economic metrics, such as demand, supply, outlook, employment and other national or international market intelligence.
- Be collective and individual advocates in promoting the region and its industries, sectors and communities, in collaboration with the LEP, to councils and national Government.
- Act alongside the LEP as a convenor of the private sector, when required, to make a case, develop bids or to lobby for strategic funding for the region.
- Provide independent business advice and guidance to the LEP.
- To provide or suggest appropriate individuals required for governance or delivery of major projects.