

North East Local Enterprise Partnership Board

28 September 2023

Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

In attendance:

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| Lucy Winskell | Chair, North East LEP |
| Colin Hewitt | Ward Hadaway |
| Ammar Mirza | AmmarM (UK) Limited |
| Cllr Tracey Dixon | South Tyneside Council |
| Emily Cox | Lloyds Banking Group |
| Alan Johnson | Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK (NMUK) |
| Chris Day | Newcastle University |
| Phil Redman | Mott MacDonald |
| Cllr Amanda Hopgood | Durham County Council |
| Cllr Martin Gannon | Gateshead Council |
| Cllr Nick Kemp | Newcastle City Council |
| Dame Norma Redfern | North Tyneside Council |
| Carol Botton | VONNE |

Apologies

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|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Cllr Graeme Miller | Sunderland City Council |
| Cllr Richard Wearmouth | Northumberland County |
| Ellen Thinnessen | Education Partnership North East |
| Mayor Jamie Driscoll | North of Tyne Combined Authority |
| Heidi Mottram | Northumbrian Water |
| Mark Thomson | Ryder Architecture |
| Sam Whitehouse | High Force Research & LightOx Ltd |

Officers present

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| Helen Golightly | Chief Executive, North East LEP |
| Colin Bell | Business Growth Director, LEP |
| Michelle Rainbow | Skills Director, LEP |
| Jen Robson | Communications & Corporate Services Director, LEP |
| Henry Kippin | Chief Executive, NTCA and Interim Chief Executive of NEMCA |
| Paul Woods | LEP Finance lead |
| Janice Gillespie | NTCA – Chief Finance Officer |
| Brenda Joyce | Democratic Services, Newcastle City Council |

1 WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Graeme Miller, Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Ellen Thinnessen, Mayor Jamie Driscoll, Heidi Mottram, Mark Thompson and Sam Whitehouse.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair declared an interest as a Commission at Port of Blyth. There were no new or additional declarations of interest.

3 **MINUTES OF THE LAST BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 20 JULY 2023**

The minutes of the last Board meeting held on Thursday 20 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

Matters arising – a paper on Net Zero KPIs would be on the agenda for a future meeting.

4 **ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN UPDATE**

2023/24 was a year of transition and the delivery plan for this year reflected this as the organisation worked towards the formation of a new Mayoral Combined Authority for the North East, in which the LEP's functions would be integrated.

Helen Golightly advised the Board that a piece of work would be concluded by the end of the year and brought to the January meeting evaluating the Strategic Economic Plan.

Jen Robson informed attendees that the Evidence Hub was continuing to evolve, work on the Net Zero KPIs was being finalised and thanked members for their input.

Colin Bell said that the growth team was performing really well and hitting all targets. The main developmental activity had been the re-platforming of the Growth Hub website to help companies to better navigate the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund landscape. The new site is scheduled to go live on 5 October.

There was an appetite from the Treasury to expand Made Smarter and the LEP had spoken to the Department of Business and Trade (DBT) to see if this programme could be more than doubled.

On internationalisation work the LEP had collaborated with DBT to deliver an event focused on trade with Turkey on 15 September. As devolution portfolios developed, consideration needed to be given on how best to incorporate internationalisation strategy.

Michelle Rainbow updated on the North East Careers Hub and said there had been a busy start to this academic year. She went on to highlight two particular areas – the improved performance of schools and colleges with regard to the benchmarks and the delivery of phases 3 and 4 Bootcamps and the progression opportunities that the camps lead to, particularly for the self-employed.

A number of new contracts (approximately £17m) had also been secured which went across 2024/25 and this was fantastic. The next report to Board would include some details around the contracts.

Colin Bell informed the Board that there was positive news on the North East Growth Hub as funding had now been secured. There was also currently high demand for the Growth Hub but probably less traditional types of requests. One emerging pattern was that businesses were very busy and to remain in a profitable position, people were having to work harder.

The Chair commented that there was a huge amount of work to deliver and it was good to see that no one had taken the foot off the pedal. There were a lot of 'greens' in the plan and the organisation was on track. The Annual Delivery Plan demonstrated that the Executive Team were really sighted on getting on with getting on.

Chris Day highlighted Insights North East, the new £5m award from Research England to develop evidence through the university sector focussing particularly on local government and NHS. All five universities were involved and it had already coordinated the evidence base for Net Zero North East England. This could effectively become the collection of academics that NEMCA ultimately turned to when they wanted academic based hard evidence. It was also noted that Insights North East and the region's Evidence Hub need to work closely.

The Chair stated that this was an amazing asset for the North East and it also demonstrated how well the universities were working together and the overall collective strength of research in the region. Insights was the link between research, policy and putting it into practice. Jen Robson said it had been very interesting to see this joint relationship evolve and come into practice over the last few months.

5 FUND MANAGEMENT UPDATE

This report was confidential as it contained commercial information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person or organisation and was not for wider circulation.

This report includes delegated funding decisions since the last Board meeting; programme performance figures for qtr.1 2023/24 and recommendations to approve two funding awards for Enterprise Zone Feasibility Study and Cargo development work at the Newcastle Airport EZ site. A one-off change to the loan to cost limit for a new loan from the Commercial Property Investment fund was also presented along with proposed variations to a current loan facility for Solar Capture Technologies Ltd and a grant funding agreement on the Bessemer Court scheme being developed by Project Genesis Ltd in Consett.

Councillor Dixon declared an interest as chair of Newcastle International Airport Board. The report was presented in three parts:

Part A – Set out delegated funding decisions made since the last Board meeting.

Part B - Provided a summary of progress on each major funding programme, this included several project funding decisions that were being referred for Board for approval due to the Investment Board meeting on 14 September being inquorate. These were:

NEIF Programme

- **Common Room for the North, Newcastle** – Change to loan payment profile
- **Solar Capture Ltd, Blyth** – Change to loan agreement, with final terms being agreed under the CEO's delegated authority, in consultation with NTCA finance and legal officers.
- **Almscliffe Property Ltd, Sunderland** - Under the Commercial Property Investment Fund (CPIF) a project had been referred from the CPIF Advisory Group for an exceptional variation to the normal loan to cost guidelines.

EZ Programme

- **Air Cargo project** – a new grant award of up to £71,816 to Newcastle Airport.
- A new grant award to Newcastle Airport of up to £20,000 towards preparatory work and site investigations to support a **Development Agreement on the Airport Plot A EZ site.**

GBF Programme

- **Project Genesis Ltd, County Durham** - a significant variation to the Grant Funding Agreement on the Bessemer Court industrial units scheme was proposed.

Part C – Provided a brief round-up of other funding developments including a Skills Boot Camp procurement exercise and an update on the opportunity for Board members to tour key investment sites and strategic regional economic development opportunities on 20th October 2023.

Due to technical issues Paul Woods could not join the meeting via video to present the paper and joined via telephone. The Chair suggested that the items below for noting be noted by the Board and that the decisions around funding and an update would be dealt with by written representations.

It was therefore agreed that the full report be deferred and dealt with via written representation procedure to allow the additional information and detail to be made available.

6 **ECONOMIC UPDATE**

Unfortunately, Thomas Atley and Emma Ward were not available to present the update to the Board. The Chair suggested that if members had any questions or themes they would like to investigate to contact Helen via email. If any themes arose from this a separate briefing could be arranged.

7 **BUSINESS GROWTH ADVISORY BOARD UPDATE**

Colin Bell informed Board that this paper was designed to give feedback on the first Business Growth Advisory Board held on 13 September. The members of the Business Growth Advisory Board tended to be the sector-based organisations and the business representative organisations who wanted to get involved and engage their member base.

George Mansbridge (Strategic Economic Regional Adviser at NTCA) presented on the NEMCA portfolio development and he asked a series of questions. This paper presented the Business Growth Advisory Board members feedback from the discussion.

During the ensuing discussion and in response to questions, it was noted that:

- Ammar Mirza provided his reflections and thanked George Mansbridge for providing his insight. He also recorded his thanks to Colin, Helen and Jen for helping to facilitate the session and acknowledge the contribution and good will of all of the trade and sector bodies. Key messages included:
 - there was quite a lot of good work already done, such as the economic strategy; a number of policies and strategies were also acknowledged and it was critical not to lose sight of this.
 - All partners had provided a platform and everybody was keen to come together as a unified front. There was absolute commitment to continue to work with the Executive Team as part of the merging body as the business voice.
 - A key question was how the LEP Board and partners, as part of the transitioning body, make sure that the good will (which currently existed) was not lost.
 - The Board sought assurances from the interim NEMCA executive that meaningful engagement would be undertaken as the portfolios and strategies were developed.

The Chair commented that she was picking up the same messages that everyone was keen to maintain existing good relationships. A very successful event was held at the Helix on 18 July and this would be repeated in Sunderland on 20 October.

RESOLVED – That the Board agreed to support the LEP Executive to work with the NEMCA Transition Team to design a strategy and portfolio development process that effectively engaged members of the Business Advisory Board in the development of future NEMCA strategy and plans.

8 DEVOLUTION UPDATE

Henry Kippin (Chief Executive, NTCA and Interim Chief Executive of NEMCA) gave a devolution update presentation to the Board. The presentation included information to show the direction of travel and how the pieces were coming together, set out the timeline, the role, purpose and indicative makeup of the new MCA and next and upcoming steps.

The Chair thanked Henry for the excellent presentation and on behalf of the Board offered thanks to his team for the huge amount of ongoing work behind the scenes.

During the ensuing discussion and in response to questions, it was noted that:

- This Devolution Deal gave the region the chance to do things differently and make sure the same challenges were not being faced in 30 years' time. The Deal had clear endorsement from the regions political team and strong

stakeholder support with a degree of certainty about the long-term investment behind that – just as important as the funding and powers.

- Devolution was really important in helping the region to tell a single storey and to stick to it which was fundamental in terms of private sector investment and also public policy.
- The region needed the public, private and social sectors to come together.

The Chair again thanked Henry Kippin for the time he gave to the Board and all the hard work behind the scenes on behalf of the region.

9 CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

Noted.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 30 November 2023 from 5:00 - 6:30pm