

LEP - Lancashire Innovation Board

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 15th November, 2021 in the Ribble Suite at The Exchange, County Hall, Preston, starting at 10.30am.

Present:

Graham Baldwin - Chair

Jane Binnion*	Michael Gibson*
Melissa Conlon*	Natalie Jones*
Jane Dalton*	Lindsay Roche*
Gaynor Dykes*	Judson Smythe*
Dion Williams*	

*Indicates that the individual dialled into the meeting via MS Teams.

Observers:

Mike Kenny MSc, Commercial Director, Innovation Agency North West Coast.

*Matt Spinks, Head of Product Management, Victrex.

In Attendance:

Andy Walker, Head of Business Growth, Business and Innovation, Economic Development, Lancashire County Council.

Matt Wright, Lancashire Universities Innovation Manager, Business and Innovation, Economic Development, Lancashire County Council.

Mike Neville, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Lancashire County Council.

Sarah Kemp, Chief Executive, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

Presenters:

*Simon Pringle, Director, Steer Consultants.

Nathan Shoosmith, Innovation Intern.

*Darren Ansell, Professor of Aerospace Engineering, School of Engineering, UCLan.

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that apologies had been received from C Whelan and R Holland.

2. Update on Membership of the Board

Mr Neville presented a report regarding the proposed appointment of Mr M Spinks, Head of Product Management at Victrex, to the Board in place of Mr P Lee and noted that, if approved by the Board, the appointment of Mr Spinks and Mr Kenny (as agreed at the previous meeting) would be presented to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board on the 23rd November 2021 for formal approval.

Mr Neville also informed the meeting that Mr T Attard was no longer a member of the Innovation Board following the end of his term of appointment as a co-opted

member of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board. It was noted that the LEP Board on the 23rd November 2021 would consider filling the resulting vacancy on the Innovation Board.

Resolved:

1. That the Board agree that Mr M Spinks replace Mr P Lee as the Board member representing the chemical manufacturer, Victrex, and recommend the appointment to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board.
2. That the appointment of Mr M Spinks as specified at 1 above, together with the appointment of Mr M Kenny from the AHSN Innovation Agency (to replace Ms L Green) as approved by the Board on the 6th September 2021, be presented to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board on the 23rd November 2021 for consideration and formal approval.
3. That the Board thank Mr T Attard for his contribution to the work of the Innovation Board over the last 9 months and wish him well for the future.

3. Declaration of Interests

Jane Dalton informed the Board that Groundswell Innovation Ltd had been commissioned by the Economic Development Team at Lancashire County Council to provide five Round Table events aimed at giving the owners of Digital Businesses in Lancashire an opportunity to provide feedback on what they considered to be the main issues for their business/sector.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Mr Wright referred to the discussion at the last meeting under 'Any Other Business' regarding the Future Makers Hub which was being developed as part of the Lancashire bid for City of Culture 2025. He informed the Board that as the bid had not been shortlisted discussions would now take place to see if the development of the Hub, which would identify innovators and link them to young innovators looking for mentors, could be supported.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2021 are confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

5. Innovation Plan Refresh - Progress Update

Simon Pringle, Director from Steer Consultants, gave a presentation on the progress to date to develop/deliver a workplan to refresh the current Lancashire Innovation Plan. He informed the Board of the outcomes of a workshop held in September 2021 and referred to a more recent review of the 2017 Action Plan and consideration of the post 2017 socio economic baseline. The Board noted the planned activity in November/December 2021 which would culminate in the production of a summary report to identify those areas within the Innovation Plan which required a refresh.

In considering the update Board members made the following observations:

- It was important to consult with other LEPs (Greater Manchester and Oxford) regarding best practice and with organisations outside of Lancashire which may offer a different perspective.
- The importance of Lancashire developing a specific offer around cyber which could then be fed into the regional/national discussion.
- That the boundaries around travel and collaboration were porous and organisations such as the Engineering and Physical Sciences Council and Innovate UK should be involved in future activity to assist with the gathering different perspectives.

Resolved:

1. That the report and presentation from Steer Consultants on outputs from the 20th September 2021 workshop to scope the Innovation Plan refresh are noted and the next stages of the workplan involving officers, members, and stakeholders, as referred to in the presentation, are approved.
2. That a copy of the presentation from Steer Consultants be circulated to Board members outside of the meeting for information and future reference.
3. That the comments from Board members outlined above, together with any additional feedback sent to the Chair outside of the meeting, be taken into consideration regarding future activity in the workplan.

6. Innovation Observatory Progress Report

Nathan Shoesmith gave a presentation on the development of the Innovation Observatory and informed the Board that the first phase of the project would create a prototype website for stakeholders to test and refine, followed by a second phase to develop additional functionality based on the earlier trial. A budget of around £10,000 had been allocated from Lancashire County Developments Limited funding with delivery in this financial year and launch of the prototype website planned for January/February 2022.

In considering the presentation Board members made the following comments:

- It was important to co-define the descriptor of business as some businesses may have an impact across multiple sectors and use of SIC codes (the standard industrial classification of economic industries) should only be a starting point for categorising businesses and emerging sectors.
- The inclusion of micro-organisations was welcomed, and it was suggested that indicators for social innovators also be included in the project.
- Businesses should be categorised based on the technology they used or are developing and the Observatory should also take account of any supply chains.

- The development of the Observatory should be linked to [Data City](#), a service business providing accurate, real-time data on the most dynamic emerging economic sectors.

Resolved:

1. That the views of the Board, as set out above, are noted and taken into consideration when planning/developing the content for a web platform for the Innovation Board.
2. That the commissioning of a prototype web platform for stakeholders to test and refine, as outlined in the report presented, is approved.

7. Spotlight Member Reports

a) Clean Energy Technology Park

Lindsay Roche informed the Board that the Clean Energy Technology Park had been launched in February 2020 against a background of accelerated closure of Advanced Gas Reactors across the UK which for the Springfield site had created a platform for investment.

With a clear policy perspective regarding Net Zero and the future role for nuclear defined the Government had ring fenced £75m to help secure fuel fabrication industries in the UK and was inviting the submission of projects and business cases. As a result, conversations were underway with stakeholders, including the Universities and Health sector regarding areas such as the development advanced fuels, generation of clean energy (hydrogen) and the creation of medical isotopes. There were also research and development opportunities which could take advantage of the nuclear/chemical licences and available land at the Springfields site and help develop it as part of the Lancashire Innovative ecosystem.

Matt Wright added that Innovate UK had formed a group to work with the LEP to explore the potential of the Springfields site and the development of a masterplan around co-generation technology.

b) Development of an Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) cluster

Professor Ansell gave a presentation on the various opportunities arising from the emerging aerospace markets and development of a UAS cluster in Lancashire. He updated the Board on various projects, including the Aerial Uptake Project, where UCLan and Preston City Council were working with European stakeholders to share knowledge and identify examples of best practice around UAS, that would result in the production of an Action Plan for Lancashire, a draft of which could be shared with the Innovation Board in the future.

Professor Ansell reported that the Lancashire Action Plan would aim to:

- establish a refocussed Steering Group to support the development of a new

UAV cluster and build upon the emerging aerospace/space sector in Lancashire.

- increase the number of businesses in the region and bring new drone technology and services to market, and
- increase the use of drone technologies by local authorities across Lancashire in areas such as monitoring of traffic or surveying to reduce the cost of managing estates.

The Board discussed the potential future use of drones to make localised deliveries and offset transport costs, particularly in relation to medical supplies which had become an emerging market during the pandemic. The development of technologies in the UK associated with electric flight were also discussed and it was recognised that Lancashire was well placed to maximise opportunities across a variety of sectors.

c) Innovate UK event

Matt Wright informed the Board that Innovate UK was considering holding a joint Lancashire/Cumbria event in the New Year involving a senior representative from Innovate UK and possibly a Government Minister aimed at highlighting the work being done around clusters such as Electech.

Resolved:

1. That Lindsay Roche and Professor Ansell be thanked for their respective presentations on the Clean Energy Technology Park and development of an Unmanned Aerial Systems cluster in Lancashire.
2. That the presentations referred to at 1 above, together with a copy of the Executive Summary of the draft Lancashire Aerial Uptake Action Plan be circulated to Board members outside of the meeting for information and future reference.
3. That the Board be kept informed of further developments in both areas referred to in 1 above and also with regard to the Innovate UK trial event to promote clusters in Lancashire/Cumbria to be held in the New Year.

9. Any Other Business

Andy Walker reported that a member of the Economic Development Team had recently given birth to a baby girl and the Chair asked that the congratulations and best wishes of Board members be recorded in the Minutes and passed on to the family.

Michael Gibson informed the Board that he had recently attended an event which had involved Horizon Europe - the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation aimed at tackling climate change, helping achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosting the EU's competitiveness and growth. He reported that he had asked for further information regarding Horizon UK which he would share with the Innovation Board.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting would be held at 10.30am on the 3rd March 2021 at County Hall, Preston.