

LEP - Lancashire Innovation Board

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting held via Zoom on Friday, 19th February, 2021 starting at 10.30 am

Present:

Graham Baldwin – Chair

Tony Attard OBE DL	Rick Holland
Howerd Booth*	Natalie Jones
Jane Dalton	Lindsay Roche
Gaynor Dykes	Claire Whelan
Dion Williams	

*substitute for Lorna Green for this meeting only

In Attendance

- Andy Walker, Head of Business Growth, Business and Innovation, Economic Development, Lancashire County Council.
- Maya Ellis, Innovation and Digital Lead, Business and Innovation, Economic Development, Lancashire County Council
- Matt Wright, Lancashire Universities Innovation Manager.
- Mike Neville, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Lancashire County Council.
- Debbi Lander Bid Director and Ben Blackman, Company Secretary, Lancashire 2025.
- Paul Faulkner, Local Democracy Reporter (Lancashire County Council and Central Lancashire districts) Lancashire Post/Blackpool Gazette.

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including local journalist Paul Faulkner. He also informed the Board that Lorna Green was unable to attend the meeting and had, in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the Board, given notice that Howerd Booth was to attend the as her substitute.

Apologies for absence were received from Board members Pete Lee and Jane Binnion, and also from Sarah Kemp, the Chief Executive Officer of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made by Board members at this point in relation to items appearing on the agenda.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 6th November 2020 are confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair in due course.

4. Proposed appointment of an additional three members of the Innovation Board

A report was presented on the candidates to fill the remaining three vacancies on the Board. The Chair reported that he had contacted each candidate to discuss their suitability, interest and potential contribution to the work of the Board and background information was set out in the report.

It was noted that, if appointed, the three candidates would give the Board an 8 to 7 female/male gender split, an 8 to 7 private/public sector split (including a variety of type and sized organisations) with a broad geographic spread across Lancashire. The candidates would also increase membership of the Board to the maximum of 15 permitted by the Terms of Reference.

Resolved: That the following three candidates for membership of the innovation Board are recommended to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board for approval.

Mike Gibson, Managing Director, Miralis Data limited
Judson Smythe, Technical Director, MGS Plastics Limited
Melissa Conlon, Commercial Director, AMRC (NW)

5. Full Report on 2020 Innovation Festival

The Board considered a report on the 2020 Innovation Festival which included details of how the event had been delivered, lessons learned from the experience and feedback from participants together with initial plans for a week-long event in October 2021. In considering the report members of the Board made the following comments:

- It was agreed that despite being arranged at relatively short notice the 2020 Innovation Festival had been a success and had provided officers with valuable experience for planning the event this year.
- As the 2021 Festival was intended to be focussed on the period between the 4th and 8th October it was suggested that every opportunity should be taken to link the Festival with other events throughout the year in order to both raise its profile and maintain interest/engagement. Initial suggestions for consideration included:

The Seed Alliance Healthy Business Network (health/care systems)
The Food Innovation Cluster
Springfields Clean Energy Technology Park.

The COP 26 event in November 2021.

- There should be more engagement with SMEs and young people. With regard to the latter it was suggested that the Festival could link with the Springfields Apprenticeship School. It was also suggested that the Festival could connect with planned UK RI events throughout the year in connection with equality, diversity and inclusion.
- The importance of maintaining the engagement and momentum from the previous Festival was discussed and it was noted that use of online platforms such as the planned Observatory would provide a facility to maintain communication and engagement with participants before and after the Festival.

Resolved:

- 1) That the initial plan for the 2021 Innovation Festival, as set out in Appendix 'A' to the report presented, is approved for further development.
- 2) That the comments of the Board as specified above be taken into account when developing the 2021 Innovation Festival.
- 3) That any Board Member interested in joining the 2021 Festival Steering Group contact Maya Ellis or Matt Wright outside of the meeting.

6. Proposal to Establish an Observatory and Mapping web resource

Matt Wright, Lancashire Universities Innovation Manager, Economic Development, updated the Board on the proposed Innovation Observatory which would have easy access from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership home page and incorporate the following functions:

- A searchable map of assets and clusters of innovative companies which can be interrogated against multiple criteria
- A dashboard to set into context for all stakeholders the position in Lancashire and the collective aim for innovation.
- A feed of opportunities relevant to the Boards strategic priorities and the clusters in terms of funding, challenges and projects.
- Access to relevant webinars on technologies, markets and best practice tuned to the clusters and provided by academia, businesses etc.

In view of the proposed 6-month development timescale it was suggested that the Observatory could be launched during the planned Innovation Festival in October 2021, or at least be linked to the Festival if that did not prove possible. The Board also acknowledged that it was vital that any online resource would be kept up to date and Matt confirmed that the intention was to incorporate automated feeds from other sources, enable stakeholders (including SMEs) to provide updates on activity and have a designated Officer monitoring content.

Resolved:

1. That approval is given for Officers to proceed to tender for a local web company to develop the necessary web pages to provide the one stop web resource as set out in the report using the fund allocated for this purpose from Lancashire County Development Limited.
2. That the comments of the Board, as specified above, be taken into account when developing the resource and that individual Board members be given an opportunity to input into the development of content and testing of the resource.

7. Update on the Lancashire bid for City of Culture 2025

The Board received a presentation from Debbie Lander, Bid Director, in relation to the Lancashire bid for City of Culture in 2025. Following the presentation it was suggested that in view of the commercially sensitive nature of some elements of the bid the press be excluded from the meeting at this point so that the Board could discuss the bid in detail.

Resolved: That the press be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of this item of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and it is considered that in all the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Mr Faulkner, Local Democracy Reporter (Lancashire County Council and Central Lancashire districts) Lancashire Post/Blackpool Gazette dialled out of the meeting at this point.

Following further discussion regarding the bid and how the members of the Board may be able to provide support it was proposed that arrangements be made for Board members to meet with the Bid Director to discuss the matter further and feed comments into the developing Lancashire bid before it was finalised and submitted in March 2022.

Resolved:

1. That the Board support the development of the Lancashire 2025 bid for City of Culture, as outlined in the presentation given at the meeting, and be kept informed of progress.
2. That arrangements be made for Board members to meet with the Bid Director to further discuss the Lancashire bid before it is finalised and submitted in March 2022.

Debbi Lander, Bid Director for Lancashire 2025 and Ben Blackman, Company Secretary dialled out of the meeting at this point.

8. Innovation Budget Report

Maya Ellis, Innovation and Digital Lead, Business and Innovation, Economic Development, informed the Board that, subject to confirmation of the County Council and Lancashire County Development Limited budgets and Business Plans for 2021/22, a budget of £100,000 would be available for innovation activities.

The Board discussed the various work-plan headings and allocations set out in the report and commented as follows

- The current budget associated with the development of an Observatory was considered insufficient and it was acknowledged that the budget was intended to begin the scoping process, with additional funding being pursued later.
- During the 2020 Innovation Festival engagement had been identified as a key element in driving future innovation and would require appropriate funding. It was noted that the allocation for bid writing was intended to be used to identify and apply for additional funding in the future from sources such as the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Opportunities should be explored to link the innovation budget mapping with activity by the LEP and Lancashire 2025 in order to maximise the opportunities to achieve gains in productivity and gross value added.
- The proposed budget for the 2021 Innovation Festival should include contingency provision in case the anticipated sponsorship/external funding is not achieved.
- Officers should look to external sources wherever possible to draw in additional funding to support research and innovation including the UKRI Public Engagement Fund.

Resolved: That the report presented is noted and the comments of the Board as specified above are taken into account when managing the 2021/22 budget.

9. Progress Report and Updates

Matt Wright, Lancashire Universities Innovation Manager, Economic Development updated the Board on progress regarding implementation of the Innovation plan and highlighted key areas of activity both within Lancashire and the wider region.

The Board noted the success of the Made Smarter pilot and the valuable experience which had been gained and it was reported that the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) had recently announced a 12 month follow on Fund. It was also reported that the MIT Reap had provided opportunities for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Universities in Lancashire to build relationships and link with investment organisations

The development of Tech clusters was also discussed, and it was reported that there was a strong Elec Tech cluster and Deep Tech companies based around Morecambe Bay which should be explored further.

Resolved:

1. That the report and updates given at the meeting are noted.
2. That a report on lessons to be learned from the existing Elec Tech cluster and Deep Tech companies based around Morecambe Bay be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

10. 2021/22 Programme of Meetings

A report was presented on the proposed 2021/22 programme of meetings which had previously been shared with Board members.

Resolved: That the 2021/22 programme of meetings, as set out below, is approved with all meetings to start at 10.30am and be held either remotely or, subject to any Covid-19 restrictions operation at the time, at County Hall, Preston.

7th June 2021

6th September 2021

15th November 2021

3rd March 2022

11. Any Other Business

Jane Dalton updated the board on the Food Innovation Cluster which had developed out of discussions at the 2020 Innovation Festival. It was noted that meetings were taking place between key players and the Cluster was in the process of updating the Lancashire Food Charter.

Resolved: That an update report on the work of the Food Innovation Cluster be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

12. Date of Next Meeting

In accordance with the decision taken earlier in the meeting it was noted that the next meeting of the Board will be held at 10.30am on the 7th June 2021, either remotely or, subject to any Covid-19 restrictions in operation at the time, at County Hall, Preston.