

Local Enterprise Partnership

09 September 2021

Business Recovery and Growth Board Summary Paper

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Purpose of this report:	Monitoring/Assurance
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan?	Not a Key Decision

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Executive Summary

This paper provides an update for the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board across the range of activity delivered under the direction and oversight of the Business Recovery and Growth (BRGB) Board.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

Investment in activities to support businesses to survive the pandemic and to build and grow in South Yorkshire is contributing to prosperity and growth.
The investment in developing a strong international reputation as a thriving and well-connected region will increase the opportunities for South Yorkshire businesses and residents.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the LEP Board members note the activity to date on delivering the Employer section of the Renewal Acton Plan and the developments in business support and international activity.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel
None

1. Background

- 1.1 Significant work to support businesses across South Yorkshire is being developed under the direction of the Business Recovery and Growth Board, including:
- Renewal Action Plan delivery
 - Business Support
 - International Activity

2. Key Issues

2.1 Renewal Action Plan Delivery

2.1.1 Delivery against the 5 Renewal Action Plan priorities has been progressed as follows:

2.1.2 Priority 1 - A Relief Fund, providing financial support to businesses

The Additional Restrictions Grant has been administered directly by Local Authorities and covered a number of schemes to provide Covid relief and support to businesses across South Yorkshire; initially focussing on enabling businesses to survive the pandemic.

The most recent initiatives have focussed on supporting businesses to adapt and thrive and have provided grants to improve productivity and digital innovation; significant support to businesses to engage with this process has been provided through the Renewal Action Plan Business Advisors. These schemes have distributed £5.78m in grants to businesses with an anticipation of 642 jobs created across the region.

2.1.3 Priority 2 – Extending regional access to advisory and specialist support

16 Renewal Action Plan Business Advisors are now in post and are embedded within each of the local authorities. To date, 400 business interventions have been undertaken across the 4 Local Authority areas, 270 of these are micro businesses (0-5 employees), with the remaining 130 being of Small to Medium sized Enterprises and large companies (over 250 employees).

2.1.4 Priority 3 - Access to Digital adoption and upskilling support

A soft-landing programme is in development and will be brought to the Board for recommendation in due course.

The approach to providing digital and tech sector specific wrap around support and engagement is also being developed.

2.1.5 Priority 4 - Supply Development support

A supply chain mapping exercise has been undertaken by Sheffield University students in order to understand the regional clusters and the number of companies that are involved at specific levels of the supply chain in rail, construction, aerospace, automotive, energy, food and drink, defence, space, logistics, design and digital.

Supply Chain Advisors are in post in three of the Local Authorities and are progressing development of the supply chain readiness elements.

The first supply chain event took place at the end of May and received over 70 delegates with an interest in understanding how local authorities procure goods and services. A programme of events and supply chain masterclasses has been developed and will be delivered during the remainder of 2021 and beyond.

2.1.6 Priority 5 - Marketing Activity - Positive messaging and comms on initiatives

Detailed marketing plans have been developed and are being used to expand messaging across South Yorkshire and beyond.

2.2 **Business Support**

2.2.1 Growth Hub Activity

Business support and guidance continues to be delivered via the MCA Gateway and through the Business Advisors retained under the Renewal Action Plan scheme, alongside a range of interventions such as the Sheffield Innovation Programme, Skills Bank, Support for Start-ups and the emerging Ownership Hub amongst others.

Most recently, the Peer Networks contract has been awarded to Winning Pitch and will provide support, advice and training to assist businesses face the challenges they are experiencing in the wake of the pandemic. Funding was received to deliver 8 cohorts of peer network support to SMEs in the region and a soft launch of the programme will commence in September.

2.2.2 Business Pipeline

The Board have maintained an overview of activity in relation to the potential large innovative growth projects that have come to form the Business Pipeline, including reviewing potential projects to accept into the assurance process. In parallel to this the Board have overseen the development of a set of criteria that will make it transparent for businesses to engage with this support.

Projects are being developed at pace and it is expected that approvals for funding will be coming forward to the BRGB and the MCA.

2.3 **International Activity**

2.3.1 India

Work continues in developing a South Yorkshire India Trade Strategy and approvals from the Business Recovery and Growth Board supported ongoing activity through the Growth Champions and the development of a South Yorkshire India Advisory Board.

Growth Champions had held 47 meetings throughout April through the Virtual Trade Mission and feedback from these meetings has been positive in terms of trade and business partnerships.

Initial plans for the South Yorkshire India Advisory Board had been to meet in June/July and launch a business network, however, the growth of the pandemic in India prompted advice that this was delayed until later in the autumn when it was hoped the virus would be more under control. On this basis, the first South Yorkshire India Advisory Board has been scheduled for November when it was felt it would be more appropriate to strengthen relationships with India.

2.3.2 China

The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority has established the groundwork for a China facing Trade and Investment Strategy, although the Covid pandemic has brought some delay to the development of the approach. At the last board meeting in June, the Board reviewed the work that had taken place so far and discussed an approach to recommence development of a China trade strategy.

The Business Recovery and Growth Board recognised there are areas of concern raised in the UK by government, industry and media, including Openness of the Chinese Market to UK exports; UK brands and investments encountering commercial, political and media pressure to influence UK political position and possible access to security and national-interest technology. In light of this, the Board resolved that it was prudent to consider a short-term limitation in the region's interactions which would be secure for private South Yorkshire commercial interests and remove the region from political criticism.

The Board has agreed it is now timely to revisit our position as at October 2019 and phase planned activity over the next 6 to 9 months to include:

- To establish a South Yorkshire China Forum (name to be confirmed)
- To develop a phased Marketing & Communications plan both raising the profile of SCR activity across UK and in our target China Region/Sectors
- To establish baseline indicators and metrics to allow measurement of impact of the forward approach
- To use the SYCF to support the market development strategy with a focus on 4 areas of activity:
 - Developing Regional relationships which will include Culture, Heritage and Tourism
 - Support SCR Businesses wanting to build export relationships in the target region
 - Grow inward investment opportunities
 - Increase the % of Chinese students choosing Sheffield when studying in the UK

This will lead into the development of a more structured programme of activity in 2022/23

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

This is not an options paper.

4. Consultation on Proposal

4.1 N/A

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 N/A

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

6.1 N/A

7. Legal Implications and Advice

7.1 N/A

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

8.1 N/A

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

9.1 N/A

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

10.1 N/A

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

11.1 N/A

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

12.1 N/A

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None