

Attendees

AC	Ana Christie	Sussex Chamber of Commerce	JW	Jon Wheeler	East Sussex CC
AF	Andrew Frost	Sea Change Sussex	KF	Cllr Kim Forward	Hastings BC
AN	Cllr Ann Newton	Wealden DC	KT	Katy Thomas	East Sussex CC
BH	Ben Hook	Rother DC	LA	Louise Aitken	South East LEP
BS	Cllr Bob Standley	Wealden DC	ME	Martin Ellis	Recruitment South East
CB	Cllr Christine Bayliss	Rother DC	MS	Martin Searle	FSB
CS	Clive Soper	FSB	PD	Pranesh Datta	Hastings BC
DE	Dave Evans	East Sussex CC	PJ	Philip Johnson	Locate East Sussex
DSp	David Sheppard	D-RisQ Ltd	PSm	Penny Shimmin	Sussex CDA
DSy	Dan Shelley	East Sussex College Group	RD	Richard Dawson	East Sussex CC
DT	Cllr David Tutt	Eastbourne BC	RM	Rhiannon Mort	South East LEP
GP	Graham Peters (CHAIR)	ES Rural Partnership	RS	Cllr Rupert Simmons	East Sussex CC
IF	Ian Fitzpatrick	Lewes DC / Eastbourne BC	SBx	Sue Baxter	University of Sussex
IG	Isabel Garden	Wealden DC	SBz	Sonia Blizzard	Sea Change Sussex
JH	James Harris	East Sussex CC	SD	Stewart Drew	De La Warr Pavilion
JS	Jo Simmons	South East LEP			

Apologies

JB	Jonathan Buckwell	Developers East Sussex (DES)	PSp	Peter Sharp	Lewes DC / Eastbourne BC
JM	Cllr James MacCleary	Lewes DC	VC	Victoria Conheady	Hastings BC
KG	Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex CC			

All of the papers and any presentations delivered at the meeting can be viewed on the following page of the ESCC website: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/eastsussex/selep/tesminutes/tes200928

1. Welcome & introductions

- 1.1. **GP** welcomed everyone to the meeting and ran through the apologies.
- 1.2. **GP** asked the group for any specific conflicts of interest with today's agenda items and for any additional interests not already held on record. No additional interests were declared.

2. Previous TES minutes, 30 Jul 2020

- 2.1. **GP** ran through the actions of the previous TES meeting and noted that all had been completed.
- 2.2. **CB** queried paragraph 2.5.9 of the minutes (**RS's** letter to the Secretary of State on Broadband coverage); **GP** clarified that the topic is very much part of the new Economy Recovery Plan so is definitely high on our agenda, and it will be up to partners to drive it forward.
- 2.3. The minutes were approved by the group as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. East Sussex Reset

- 3.1. **RD** provided an update on the Economy Recovery Plan (ERP) which was launched on 9 Sep 2020 in the form of a business-friendly brochure, '*East Sussex Reset*'. **RD** thanked all colleagues for their support in producing the brochure, and asked for it to be publicised widely amongst partners' social media channels, business networks, etc. The brochure and all of the background documents are available to view/download on the ESCC website: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/eastsussex/selep/tes/eserp. **ME** advised that he's already publicised the brochure via Linked-In and has received an extremely positive response, particularly from *outside* East Sussex.

[Action: TES colleagues to liaise with RD on publicising the Economy Recovery Plan brochure]

- 3.2. All of the actions in the ERP will now be taken forward by partners, led by the six 'Mission Leads'. In terms of monitoring and reporting, this will also be led by Mission Leads with the support of all partners, so it would be useful to add ERP to the agendas of other partners' regular meetings to ensure it's being covered. We'll look to bring updates to TES quarterly.

[Action: TES partners to add ERP to the agendas of other regular meetings to ensure it's being driven forward]

- 3.3. **RD** noted that “*Mission 4, Better places, fuller lives*” still doesn’t have a lead, so asked Borough & District colleagues to consider taking on this coordinating role.

[Action: RD to liaise with Borough & District colleagues to appoint a Mission Lead for ERP Mission 4]

Note: following the TES meeting, **RD** and **IG** spoke and as a result *Chris Bending*, Head of Policy & Economic Development at Wealden DC, agreed to take on this coordination role.

4. SELEP Covid-19 recovery funding pots

- 4.1. **LA** and **JS** delivered presentations on SELEP’s new £2m *Skills Covid-19 Recovery Fund* and £2.4m *Covid-19 Business Support Fund* respectively.

- 4.2. The Skills fund has already gained the approval of both the SELEP Strategic Board (agreed the focus, process and criteria) and the SELEP Accountability Board (approved the procurement approach, value for money and delegation of decision-making to the CEO). The fund will be formally announced at the Skills Advisory Panel & Digital Skills Partnership Conference on 8 Oct 2020, and will then be launched later that month.

- 4.3. The Business Support fund will be split into three distinct programmes, targeting support to the visitor economy, pre-starts/start-ups and digitising businesses, with the programmes to have a staggered delivery (from Dec, Jan and Feb respectively). This fund is a few weeks behind the Skills fund, so will be seeking SELEP Strategic Board approval on 2 Oct 2020 and SELEP Accountability Board approval (for the procurement approach and value for money) on 16 Oct 2020.

[Action: DE to circulate the presentations on the SELEP Skills Covid-19 Recovery Fund and SELEP Covid-19 Business Support Fund]

- 4.4. TES members discussed the funds and raised the following points:

- Information on the Business Support fund will be channelled through the Growth Hub for consistent messaging.
- There are obviously limitations on what the funds can be spent on, so our messaging needs to be very clear on that from the outset. There is also a limit to the funds themselves, so they’re likely to run out quite quickly.
- The location of the provider should not influence where money is spent, as providers/consortiums will be required to set out how they’ll spread their outputs to get equitable delivery across the patch (ensuring we get our ‘fair share’).
- Digitisation appears in both funds, intended to complement each other; in the Skills fund it relates to training to address the requirement for basic digital skills, while in the Business Support fund it’s about what businesses can do differently to improve their recovery and the tools (hardware/software purchases) they need to enable it.
- In terms of the support aimed at pre-starts/start-ups, will businesses from *outside* the SELEP area looking to set up *within* the SELEP area be eligible? **JS** agreed to give this one further consideration.

[Action: JS to consider whether pre-starts/start-ups from outside the SELEP area looking to set up within the SELEP area will be eligible for the Covid-19 Business Support Fund]

- The Business Support programme targeting the visitor economy will use approximately £1m of the funds in two areas key – £500k for a winter resilience grant scheme (grants to individual businesses) and £500k towards seasonal campaigns and placemaking for 2021 (bringing organisations together to redefine their seasonal/tourism offer, operating at a county-scale most likely).

5. SELEP funding programmes

Getting Building Fund (GBF)

- 5.1. **JW** advised that our eight GBF projects are still on track; the first three have submitted their final ‘Gate 2’ business cases for SELEP Accountability Board approval on 16 Oct 2020, and the remaining five have submitted their initial ‘Gate 1’ business cases, which will be reviewed before their final ‘Gate 2’ business cases are submitted ahead of the Accountability Board meeting on 20 Nov 2020. ESCC

colleagues are supporting project promoters through this process. We're still awaiting details of the GBF Service Level Agreement (SLA) from SELEP, which we'll need before any funding can be defrayed, but we're expecting this imminently. In terms of compiling a GBF 'pipeline' (which would be needed in the event of approved schemes being unable to deliver and we need to swap in/out with other prioritised projects), it's suggested that a short grace period be given until mid-Dec so that federated areas can assess their current GBF projects and decide whether any should be removed from the GBF programme.

Local Growth Fund (LGF)

- 5.2. **JW** referred to the *Dashboard of SELEP Funding* on page 13 of the stakeholder reports and highlighted some of the key LGF project updates. In particular, owing to a funding gap that the project was unable to fill, the *Exceat Bridge* scheme will be returning its £2.1m LGF allocation back into the LGF pot. This decision was made at the SELEP Accountability Board meeting on 18 Sep 2020.
- 5.3. **SBz** and **AF** were able to provide some additional commentary on their Sea Change Sussex projects in terms of the delays being experienced by Queensway Gateway Road (QGR) and Bexhill Enterprise Park North (BEPN). On QGR, a temporary traffic solution is needed to provide a link between the completed section of the road and the A21; the phase to complete access to businesses with a frontage to QGR (enabling the above temporary traffic solution to be implemented) actually started work *today*. Land acquisition has been a long and difficult process, but this is also now in-hand with consideration to move this forward via a Compulsory Purchase Order. On BEPN, a planning appeal was submitted Dec 2019 but the process was delayed due to Covid-19; the appeal is now scheduled for Jan 2021 with the Inspector's decision expected Mar 2021. Sea Change Sussex is currently progressing with other work (archaeology etc) and has also submitted a separate planning application for the Site Access Road to progress site enabling works. **BH** acknowledged that a planning application has been received by Rother DC but it was completed without any pre-app discussion, so it may not necessarily overcome the issues within the original application. Rother DC are certainly not objecting outright and really want to see the project move forward, but the situation continues to be frustrating.

Growing Places Fund (GPF)

- 5.4. **JW** advised that the Observer Building project in Hastings (£1.75m GPF loan) received SELEP Accountability Board approval on 18 Sep 2020. The Barnhorn Green project in Bexhill (also £1.75m GPF loan) will submit its business case in Nov 2020 for consideration at the Feb 2021 Accountability Board meeting.

Sector Support Fund (SSF)

- 5.5. **DE** provided an update on the most recent SSF submissions, confirming that TES endorsed the *Gourmet Garden Trails* and *Rebuilding Confidence & Demand in the Visitor Economy* SSF bids earlier this month by electronic procedure. However, the Gourmet Garden Trails application has since been withdrawn due to the expected match funding from the Discover England Fund being cancelled. Visit England has indicated a further opportunity to access funding through their autumn campaign, so the project will be adapted and resubmitted at a later date.

6. SELEP Strategic Board, 2 Oct 2020

- 6.1. **RM** ran through the main agenda items for this week's SELEP Strategic Board meeting, the key considerations being LGF spend beyond the Growth Deal period and SELEP's capital project pipelines.
- 6.2. The SELEP Strategic Board has previously agreed that a 6-month extension is possible for LGF projects, allowing LGF spend past 31 Mar 2021. However, there are five projects forecasting spend beyond that 6-month extension period, *including three projects from East Sussex*. The additional extension requires further approval. **TES members endorsed the project extensions**.
- 6.3. Regarding the LGF project pipeline, which is funded through LGF projects being cancelled and/or high-risk projects not being able to proceed, it's proposed that the pipeline should now comprise *existing* LGF projects that have a funding gap due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It's further proposed that any uncommitted LGF at the end of 2020/21 be reallocated into the *Growing Places Fund* (GPF) loan pot. TES members discussed these proposals and agreed that the rationale for using available LGF funds as gap funding, as described in the paper, is very clear. The following comments were made:

- All LGF funds must be fully allocated or we risk losing them, at huge reputational risk to SELEP and federated areas.
- The tight timescales preclude any further ‘open calls’ for new projects, as the required processes on business case approval etc make such an option completely unviable taking a further 6+ months.
- Even bringing forward other schemes that have already been prioritised elsewhere (say from the GBF pipeline) is unfeasible as they’d still have to go through the same lengthy process, for which there simply isn’t time.
- While it’s estimated that around £6-10m LGF may become available (through LGF projects being cancelled and/or high-risk projects not being able to proceed) the amount is really not much when spread across the whole SELEP region, and certainly not enough to warrant a new funding round.
- It’s far more important to ensure our *existing* projects are supported through to delivery, ensuring outputs/outcomes are achieved, particularly as many of them are suffering setbacks due to the ongoing pandemic.
- Clearly not all our East Sussex projects would obtain gap funding, but any coming forward as eligible would certainly have a very strong case for consideration.
- A caveat should be added to the process of LGF projects seeking gap funding, whereby those put forward with a strong *Covid-19 recovery* component should be favoured.
- The proposal to transfer unused LGF funds to the GPF pot at the end of the 2020/21 financial year is also a very sensible approach, and would potentially enable some of our East Sussex projects in the GPF pipeline to come forward.
- If we end up with a surge of LGF going into the GPF loan pot – more than the value of the current GPF pipeline – then it may allow for a further GPF open call, which would not have the same time-limiting restrictions as LGF (as GPF is a revolving loan fund).

6.4. If approved, the next steps for LGF gap funding will be for federated areas to indicate their local priority order, and a LEP-wide prioritised pipeline to be agreed at the next Strategic Board meeting on 11 Dec 2020. **RD** clarified that the approach for determining which projects come forward for gap funding will not be through an ‘open call’ involving all existing LGF projects, but rather through a more measured ‘closed application’ approach for those that have already come forward indicating funding issues directly linked to the impacts of Covid-19 and subsequent justifiable cost pressure increases. **TES members endorsed the proposals to use the LGF pipeline for existing LGF projects with a funding gap, including the ‘closed application’ approach outlined above to be taken in East Sussex over the coming months, and to reallocate uncommitted LGF into the GPF pot at the end of 2020/21.**

6.5. **JS** highlighted the other items on the Strategic Board agenda – Covid-19 Business Support Fund (4.3 above), GBF grace period (5.1 above), delivery plan for 2020/21, statement of accounts, Sector Support Fund (5.5 above) and governance/policy changes to the assurance framework. **TES members supported all of the recommendations as written in the papers.**

6.6. **GP** agreed that our Directors on the SELEP Strategic Board will follow the recommendations in papers at the meeting, as indicated above, but noted that some of the items are still part of a fluid conversation amongst other federated areas – particularly the LGF items – so reserved the right as TES Chair to make alternative recommendations if things develop further (but would of course pass those recommendations before TES electronically). **TES members approved this caveat.**

6.7. **GP** highlighted the joint appointment of **AC** and **CS** as the *SELEP SME Business Champion* (to be confirmed at the SELEP Strategic Board meeting) and thanked them both for agreeing to take on the role. This appointment is great news for East Sussex, and as it’s a new role they’ll have the opportunity to shape, influence and further develop it moving forwards.

7. Additional updates & stakeholder reports (for info)

7.1. **JW** ran through some of the key points of the Strategic Infrastructure report covering the last six months.

7.2. **RD** highlighted the Economic Profile report which has a particular focus on changes due to the Covid-19 crisis (with numbers on furloughed staff etc) but which highlights the many positives as well as the

challenges. *Kim Bloxham* has asked that TES colleagues please get in touch if they would like her to produce any other stats/reports that would be useful.

[Action: TES colleagues to contact Kim Bloxham if they have any requests for any other stats/reports]

8. TES round table / AOB

8.1. **AC** described the *Kickstart* scheme which provides funding to employers to create new six-month job placements for young people. DWP is directing queries to, among others, the Sussex Chamber of Commerce as an 'intermediary' and there has been a huge response, with over 220 job placement enquiries to the SCoC thus far across Sussex. Applications show that businesses are actually looking more long-term and want to offer proper job placements. The next step is to work with Skills East Sussex (SES) and other partners to put together a press release on Kickstart, including the training support to help develop skills. **GP** commented that other organisations are also intermediaries for Kickstart, including the FSB which is working with Adecco (to whom more than 800 have applied nationally) and also ACES locally. **AC** added that the Essex and Kent Chambers are also involved.

8.2. **AC** highlighted other areas of work related to the Brexit transition period, including a dashboard of unanswered questions which has been submitted to Government, webinars on the 'countdown to change' and Customs declarations which will be required when we leave the EU.

[Action: DE to circulate information and weblinks from AC on the Kickstart scheme and Brexit]

8.3. **BS** advised that Wealden DC is preparing its response to the Government's [Planning For The Future](#) consultation, which closes on 29 Oct 2020.

8.4. **MS** reminded the group that the FSB holds an East Sussex virtual networking event on the second Tuesday of each month, plus a new Women's Entrepreneurs event on the last Friday of every month. National webinars are also extremely popular. All of the events can be found on the [FSB website](#) (search in the South East region).

8.5. **PD** advised that Hastings BC has been successful in its bid for Town Deal [Accelerated Projects](#) funding. The £1m funding will be split between four projects – White Rock Baths, Hasting Commons, East Sussex College Group's Station Plaza building, and to the Council itself for the installation of electronic vehicle (EV) charging points. All four projects must be completed by 31 Mar 2021.

8.6. **DSy** advised that East Sussex College launched its '£1m pledge' in Jun 2020 to help retrain and upskill people following the Covid-19 pandemic, and has already enlisted almost 1,000 adults. This week also saw [Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club](#) offer its support to the scheme.

Summary of actions

3.1 TES colleagues to liaise with **RD** on publicising the Economy Recovery Plan brochure.

3.2 TES partners to add ERP to the agendas of other regular meetings to ensure it's being driven forward.

3.3 **RD** to liaise with Borough & District colleagues to appoint a Mission Lead for ERP Mission 4.

4.3 **DE** to circulate the presentations on the SELEP Skills Covid-19 Recovery Fund and SELEP Covid-19 Business Support Fund.

4.4 **JS** to consider whether pre-starts/start-ups from outside the SELEP area looking to set up within the SELEP area will be eligible for the Covid-19 Business Support Fund.

7.2 TES colleagues to contact *Kim Bloxham* if they have any requests for any other stats/reports.

8.2 **DE** to circulate information and weblinks from **AC** on the Kickstart scheme and Brexit.