



Attendees

AB	Adam Bryan	South East LEP	JHa	James Harris	East Sussex CC
AC	Ana Christie	Sussex Chamber of Commerce	JHv	Jo Havers	University of Brighton
AF	Amy Ferraro	South East LEP	JM	Cllr James MacCleary	Lewes DC
BH	Ben Hook	Rother DC	KF	Cllr Kim Forward	Hastings BC
BS	Cllr Bob Standley	Wealden DC	KG	Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex CC
CB	Cllr Christine Bayliss	Rother DC	MA	Marwa Al-Qadi	East Sussex CC
CE	Christina Ewbank	ACES	PJ	Philip Johnson	Locate East Sussex
CS	Clive Soper	FSB	PSm	Penny Shimmin	Sussex CDA
DE	Dave Evans	East Sussex CC	PSp	Peter Sharp	Lewes DC / Eastbourne BC
DSp	David Sheppard	D-RisQ Ltd	RD	Richard Dawson	East Sussex CC
DSy	Dan Shelley	East Sussex College Group	RM	Rhiannon Mort	South East LEP
DT	Cllr David Tutt	Eastbourne BC	RS	Cllr Rupert Simmons	East Sussex CC
GP	Graham Peters (CHAIR)	ES Rural Partnership	SBa	Sue Baxter	University of Sussex
HA	Holly Aquilina	East Sussex CC	SBe	Suzanne Bennett	South East LEP
IG	Isabel Garden	Wealden DC	SD	Stewart Drew	De La Warr Pavilion
ISm	Ian Smallwood	Business East Sussex	VC	Victoria Conheady	Hastings BC
ISu	Ioni Sullivan	East Sussex CC			

Apologies

ME	Martin Ellis	Recruitment South East	SH	Simon Hubbard	Hastings BC
MS	Martin Searle	FSB	TL	Tony Leonard	Rother DC
RC	Rob Cottrill	Lewes DC / Eastbourne BC			

1. Welcome & introductions

- 1.1. **GP** noted that this is an *additional extraordinary TES meeting*, called due to the current Covid-19 crisis and conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. No agenda/papers have been prepared, but the agenda items for the upcoming SELEP Board meeting on 17 Apr 2020 will be discussed, in particular those items relating to SELEP's response to the crisis.
- 1.2. **GP** asked the group for any specific conflicts of interest with those agenda items and for any additional interests not already held on record; no additional interests were declared.

2. BES Growth Hub

- 2.1. **ISu** and **ISm** provided a brief update on the Business East Sussex (BES) Growth Hub, which has been on the forefront of information gathering/sharing since the current crisis began.
- 2.2. Management of the Growth Hub was transferred to the County Council on 1 Apr 2020. Whilst traffic to the Hub (both phone and internet) was very much higher than usual during this time, the transfer went smoothly and there was no interruption to service.
- 2.3. BES is aware that there remains unmet need in the business community for business support at this difficult time. An uplift in funding is expected shortly, and BES is working with partners to ensure any additional resources can be used to best effect.
- 2.4. A proposal has been put together which looks to:
 - increase frontline resource to enable the Growth Hub to be promoted as the 'first point of call' for CV19 enquiries in the county;
 - identify and align partner resources to ensure businesses are getting to the information they need as quickly as possible and to ensure we make the most of all available resources;
 - work with partners to promote the services available;
 - look at providing a business-to-business (B2B) platform for sharing information and support during the outbreak, and the possibility of working with SELEP on a 'crowdfunding' type platform.
- 2.5. All of these points will be considered at an extraordinary meeting of BES on 16 Apr 2020.

3. Funding delivered through District & Borough Councils

- 3.1. **GP** asked Borough and District colleagues to provide headline figures on the number of grants they've administered as Business Rate Collection Authorities through the Government's schemes:

- **PSp** – awarded £24.5m relief to Eastbourne businesses and £8.8m to Lewes businesses; their online portal is now working and 1,620 forms have been submitted via the portal so far.
- **BH** – processed 700 grant applications in Rother and £8.025m has gone out.
- **IG** – over 2,000 claims submitted in Wealden (but around 10% don't qualify for whatever reason) and processed £14m in grants so far.
- **VC** – 1,252 Hastings businesses have applied so far (out of 1,968 eligible businesses, so around 64%); 666 have been processed and £7.89m paid out (expecting the final bill to be around £23m).

4. SELEP Board agenda items

- 4.1. **AB** ran through the agenda items for the upcoming virtual SELEP Board meeting, rescheduled from 20 Mar 2020 to 17 Apr 2020.
- 4.2. Some of the items originally due to be covered have now been completed – a written resolution has been taken to appoint the Directors who weren't able to be registered when the company was formed in Feb 2020, including Cllr Glazier, so that SELEP Ltd now has its full complement of 20 permanent Directors; a written resolution was also taken to give the Chair delegated authority to approve the final responses to the three consultations currently open; and Board member induction has now been completed via a virtual induction pack, with further workshops to be offered later in the year.
- 4.3. The appointment of the Co-opted Directors, endorsement of the Coastal Prospectus and the adoption of updated policies are straightforward items which have already been reviewed by TES (16 Mar 2020) and can be approved.
- 4.4. Other items will be delayed until the next SELEP Board meeting in Jun 2020, including the SME Board Champion appointment, consideration of the Delivery Plan, a full report on the LGF Capital programme, an update on the LIS (which will need a certain amount of reworking to include 'economic recovery') and a HIF project update from Chelmsford City Council.

New agenda items on the Covid-19 response

- 4.5. Four separate reports are now included in the SELEP agenda pack, with proposals for how SELEP can best use its resources to support the economy and the business community during the CV19 crisis.
- 4.6. **The first paper** is for information only, and describes the steps SELEP has already taken in immediate response to the crisis, such as increased communications and intelligence gathering through the South East Business Hub (Growth Hub), and developing online resources to increase Digital Skills.
- 4.7. **The second paper** proposes a degree of flexibility in SELEP's Growing Places Fund (GPF) and Local Growth Fund (LGF) programmes, specifically: (i) offering to delay GPF repayments for existing GPF projects where justification is provided on the impact of CV19; (ii) offering a 12-month grace period on the charging of interest on GPF loans where repayments are not able to be made due to the impact of CV19; and (iii) extending the Growth Deal period (due to end on 31 Mar 2021) by at least two months, plus the duration of the social distancing measures introduced by Government.
- 4.8. TES members agreed that the above proposals are reasonable and appropriate in the current circumstances, but also made the following comments:
 - Delaying GPF repayments will of course impact the amount of funds available for reinvestment through GPF Round 3, so repayments should still be made on those projects that have not been adversely impacted by CV19. Note that we're already aware of one East Sussex GPF project that has flagged a repayment risk (Charleston Centenary) and has urgently requested that their repayment schedule be revised.
 - In regard to extending the Growth Deal period, other federated areas have suggested a blanket 6-month extension for all LGF projects, rather than individual extensions of 2 months plus the social distancing period. *TES is happy to support that position* if it's the majority view of the SELEP Board.
- 4.9. **The third paper** proposes that funding previously earmarked for existing SELEP funding programmes, but still currently unallocated to specific projects, is 'repurposed' to support SELEP's ongoing response to the crisis. Specifically, the SELEP Board will be asked to agree: (i) that GPF Round 3 investments be held back until a full assessment can be made on options for supporting a post-crisis economic recovery; (ii) to delegate approval of a written technical response on ERDF monies to the Chair; (iii) to support in principle the CrowdFunder UK 'Pay It Forward' initiative; and (iv) to close the Sector Support

Fund (SSF) and divert its remaining monies to the CrowdFunder project. It's planned that a full report setting out potential options to support the CV19 recovery will be brought to the Jun 2020 SELEP Board meeting. TES members made the following comments on this report:

- The paper does not recommend redirecting LGF monies at this time, as the funding programme is fully allocated and there is already a substantial risk of cost-escalation on existing projects due to the CV19 crisis. *TES members fully agree with this point.* Final funding decisions on some LGF-3B projects are still due to be considered by the Accountability Board (May/Jul 2020) including Exceat Bridge Replacement Tranche 2 (£1.5m) and Eastbourne Fisherman's Quayside & Infrastructure Development (£1m).
- The suggestion to repurpose GPF monies away from the projects currently sitting in the GPF Round 3 pipeline is a difficult one, as those schemes have already done a huge amount of work as part of their GPF progression, and will be at great risk if the process is stopped. However, TES recognises that funding for CV19 recovery must come from somewhere, so the proposal to delay the Investment Panel's prioritisation exercise while SELEP comes up with a more detailed assessment of the options is sensible. SELEP needs to consider the benefits of using the funding for recovery against the value/benefits of the GPF Round 3 projects. *A hybrid approach may be more appropriate*, allocating some of the funding for GPF projects and a percentage to recovery.
- The CrowdFunder scheme and the suggested eligibility criteria seem appropriate, and TES members endorse the scheme in principle. However, the suggestion of completely closing the SSF programme and using all of the available funding (around £200k) on this one scheme seems heavy-handed considering its benefits will only reach around 40 companies with a proposed match funding of £5,000 per company. There will undoubtedly be more business support/recovery schemes in the coming weeks that may be even more beneficial to our businesses and to the region's economic recovery, and which would also benefit from our investment. Furthermore, there is an outstanding SSF bid that has already been submitted (Teaching for Growth project extension, endorsed by TES at last month's meeting) which could possibly be allowed to continue and be considered for funding (or perhaps part-funding). In addition, there are several other pipeline SSF projects in development by SELEP working groups (e.g. Buy It Local campaigns and promotion of sectors) to support the CV19 response, and which will in our view reach and benefit more businesses across SELEP. TES would argue that there is an opportunity here to fund a larger CrowdFunder initiative, circa £500k to £1m, from the GPF pot available rather than this small SSF pot.
- The South East Business Hub (Growth Hub) will receive an additional £234k of Government funding. It's suggested that these funds should be held centrally, *but TES would advocate delegating the budget to local areas* (as is done already with the main Growth Hub grant), as what is needed on the ground in each area can be best determined by the individual 'sub-hub' of each area.
- The ERDF Legacy Funding is intended strictly for the former SEEDA geography – East Sussex and Kent – and these areas have previously agreed to use the funding for Scale Up programmes. Whilst we appreciate the need to repurpose the funds, it's important that we're able to retain the ability to work intensively with companies with *potential*; this may now be the potential to recover or diversify rather than to Scale Up, but we wouldn't want to lose that focus. Also, it's not appropriate to try and shoehorn Essex back into the pool via a 'virtual resource'; in our view it's more important that the money is spent well, for the benefit of SMEs in East Sussex and Kent, rather than exploring options for a programme just to get around the geographical restrictions of the funding (which are in place because Essex has already benefited from their share of the original ERDF/SEEDA area funding). Note also that the funding does not have to be spent solely in 2020/21 so there's a bit more flexibility.

4.10. **The fourth paper** proposes the formation of a CV19 Crisis Sub-committee to cover the period between this week's SELEP Board meeting and the next planned meeting on 12 Jun 2020. The purpose of the sub-committee is to allow time-sensitive decisions to be made during a crisis period – the guiding principle is that it will only take decisions that must be made in advance of the next planned Board meeting on 12 Jun 2020. TES members agreed that the composition and powers of the sub-committee, as set out in the Board paper and the draft Terms of Reference, all seem appropriate given the nature of the current crisis.

[Action: TES members of the SELEP Board to ensure all of the above points in relation to the CV19 response are raised during the virtual SELEP Board meeting on 17 Apr 2020]

5. Future activity – Economic Response Plan

- 5.1. **JHa** advised that plans to refresh the East Sussex Growth Strategy are currently on hold. Instead it is proposed that an immediate *Economic Response Plan* will be created for this crisis. The intention is to create a rapid plan, to be completed by the end of May 2020, setting out all the things we're doing in the county to respond to the crisis, as well as the additional things we want to do (should opportunities become available, such as when SELEP decides how its funding will be used), plus what we're unable to do but can lobby Government for. ESCC will cover the cost of the Plan, but work will be carried out with the help and support of partners in a coordinated way, using the existing groups of TES, SES, BES etc. **TES members fully supported this proposal.**

6. AOB

- 6.1. **AC** advised that the Sussex Chamber has been regularly circulating information/links on their ongoing work and the schemes that businesses can access.
- 6.2. **CB** queried whether a 'factsheet' is available to signpost people to the right advice; **ISu** advised that SELEP has produced one, and is also publishing *daily* business briefings.
[Action: ISu to circulate the CV19 factsheet from SELEP and links to the SELEP daily briefings]
- 6.3. **SBa** suggested that universities are being hit very hard, particularly those with a lot of international students (like Sussex); universities have already lobbied government on this issue – full details on the [Universities UK website](#).
- 6.4. **JHv** commented that Brighton University is currently supporting Innovate UK applications, and their business school is preparing webinars.
- 6.5. **HA** advised that the next Skills East Sussex (SES) meeting will consider the impact of CV19 on the key organisations and sectors involved in employment and skills provision (FE, HE, National Careers Service, Jobcentre Plus, independent providers, the third sector) as we need to make sure our infrastructure is sufficiently intact to enable us to support the recovery. SES will also explore how we can collaborate to address employment and skills needs for individuals and businesses in recovery.
- 6.6. **DSy** remarked that Apprenticeships are not getting the support they need, and the issue needs to be pushed at the highest levels; **GP** responded that he and SELEP are making that point very strongly. **DSy** also advised that East Sussex College is developing online courses to help those currently furloughed.

7. Next steps

- 7.1. **GP** advised that we'll use the next scheduled meeting slot – a TES workshop on 4 May 2020 – to have another shorter virtual meeting with further updates on our continued response to the crisis, including the above Economic Response Plan. The subsequent scheduled TES meeting is on 8 Jun 2020, so we'll also consider having an additional virtual meeting in the interim period.

Summary of actions

- 4.10 **TES members of the SELEP Board to ensure all of the above points in relation to the CV19 response are raised during the virtual SELEP Board meeting on 17 Apr 2020.**
- 6.2 **ISu to circulate the CV19 factsheet from SELEP and links to the SELEP daily briefings.**