

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEP (BLEP) CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUB GROUP MEETING**

Held Thursday 29 April 2021 from 11.30am via Teams

<b>Present:</b>	Adrian Brown (Chair)	(AB)
	Richard Harrington	(RH)
	Clare Pelham (Part meeting)	(CP)
	Martina Porter	(MP)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Cllr Steven Broadbent	
	Hiren Gandhi	
<b>In attendance:</b>	Daniel Lindsay, Hatch Urban Solutions	(DL)
	Kevin Hooctor, BEIS/MHCLG Cities and Local Growth Unit	(KH)
	Claire Hunter, Buckinghamshire Council (Section 151 Officer)	(CH)
	John Rippon	(JR)
	Sarah Fraser	(SF)

**MINUTES**

**ACTION**

**1 MEETING PURPOSE**

It was confirmed the sole purpose of this additional Capital Programme Sub Group meeting was to review project appraisals undertaken on bids received to the recent Getting Building Fund (GBF) open call and agree a recommendation to be put to the Buckinghamshire LEP (BLEP) Board regarding projects to be supported with funding available.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no new declarations of interest. Cllr Steven Broadbent, having an interest in one of the projects seeking GBF support, took no part in the call and had received no papers.

**3 PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Further to the paper provided, the Sub Group noted progress made with both the Satellite Applications Catapult DISC and the Bucks Rural Broadband projects.

Sub Group members noted the enormous success of the Broadband voucher scheme, which has been significantly oversubscribed, and has the potential to extend gigabit capability to over 2,000 premises (over 430 of those being businesses in Buckinghamshire in predominantly rural locations). £710k BLEP funding has already been deployed against this project but there remains a shortfall of £300k to meet voucher scheme demand.

Sub Group members were extremely supportive of the Broadband scheme and requested further analysis be undertaken on:

JR

- Sectors benefitting from gigabit capability through this scheme.
- Whether applications were received from collaborative workspaces and, reflecting on the way working practices/the economy have changed as a result of the pandemic, whether these applications might be prioritised to support SME/micro businesses.

**Sub Group members agreed to recommend to the BLEP Board that an additional grant of £300k be approved for Buckinghamshire Council to support the Bucks Rural Broadband project.**

RH

### 3.1 National Film and Television School (NFTS)

Further to the report provided, and to previous discussion at both the Capital Programme Sub Group and main BLEP Board, Sub Group members noted the withdrawal of £2.99m GBF grant from the NFTS as expansion plans for the school have failed to progress.

The Sub Group acknowledged the excellent work being undertaken at the NFTS and the LEP will continue to seek ways in which to support the school, this forming part of the wider discussion taking place around skills, the creative industries, and how to address the levelling up agenda with Buckinghamshire.

## 4 **GBF GRANT REALLOCATION**

Further to the paper circulated, Sub Group members noted the quantum of the ask, and the total number and quality of the applications received to the GBF Open Call, these having been previously discussed. With the withdrawal of funding from the NFTS, the Sub Group also noted the total GBF grant funding available to reallocate as £5.79million.

Having been agreed at main BLEP Board, it was confirmed Hatch Associates had undertaken a robust, independent appraisal of the identified nine shortlisted schemes under the key areas of assessment: strategic alignment with BLEP strategies; deliverability within Government timescales; impact/value for money.

It was confirmed the Bucks Rural Broadband project fell outside the scope of appraisal work undertaken. It was also confirmed that, whilst an excellent scheme, Bosch's Start Up Harbour has been withdrawn as the project requires revenue, not capital, funding.

(CP joined the meeting)

It was reported all projects within the scope of the assessment scored well in terms of strategic alignment, economic outputs and deliverability, and Hatch Associates considered all offered additionality and value for money.

Sub Group members noted the caution around job creation figures associated with the Lunaz scheme and the recommendation that, should this project receive support, further evidence be sought around the number and type of jobs to be created, and timescales in which these will be achieved. It was suggested further evidence could well increase the project's assessed score, Lunaz being a private sector company unused to preparing capital funding bids and public sector business case processes; this did not reflect on the potential of the scheme, but simply requires additional assurances.

With regards to the CAVWAY project, the Sub Group noted funding available would be insufficient to support the totality of the ask for this project and that anticipated economic outputs to be gained would be less than those available in delivering smaller projects (even noting the above concerns around Lunaz).

Sub Group members requested:

- Appraisal work be undertaken on the remaining “amber” projects not currently assessed to ensure the LEP has a pipeline of projects should funding become available in the future.
- Consideration on how the LEP can be more effective in project delivery, particularly in terms of monitoring and review, and having a well-defined pipeline of projects to revert to in a timely manner should schemes falter.

JR

RH

**Noting the limit on funding available, Sub Group members agreed to recommend to the BLEP Board that GBF grant funding be reallocated as follows:**

- Bucks Rural Broadband Voucher Top Up - £300,000
- Innovation Ecosystem at Westcott - £2,609,530
- TESTA – Novel Test Facility at Westcott - £250,000
- Bucks Operator Skills Hub - £750,000
- Centre of Excellence for Rocket Engine and Flow Tests Facility - £740,000
- East West Rail-Fibre Provision Upgrade - £643,000
- LUNAZ Applied Technologies - £250,000

The Sub Group noted the final list totalled circa £5.54m of the £5.79m available, the balance to be reinvested in one or a combination of original and wave 2 Board approved projects, subject to those projects being able to demonstrate necessity, additionality and value for money for any additional funds invested.

It was confirmed the recommendation will be put to the BLEP Board via email (as previously agreed) for approval in the next few days.

RH

Following approval by the BLEP Board, it was confirmed discussions will be progressed at speed with Government, recognising the tight timescales attached to this funding, on the Change Order process required to enable grant funding to be reallocated.

JR/KH

## 5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing of note.

## 6 DATES OF 2021 MEETINGS (all 2-4pm)

- 13 May
- 4 August
- 9 November