

CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP

CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT OCTOBER 2020

Summary

1. Covid-19 remains the main focus of the LEP's work, and over the next few days we will need to have a particular focus on the impact on business of the new restrictions introduced by the PM on Monday evening. We have, nevertheless, been able to continue to take forward, longer term, more strategic pieces of work, and have items on the Board agenda to cover our plans for investment around the HS2 High Speed Growth Corridor and in Alderley Park.

Covid-19

2. Over the past month, the LEP has continued to lead the sub-region's work on the response to and the recovery from Covid. The major item on the agenda for the Board meeting is a discussion about the LEP's response to the new restrictions announced on Monday evening by the Prime Minister. For the time being, the whole of Cheshire and Warrington is in "Tier 2", which means that people from different households cannot meet indoors, including in bars and restaurants. Liverpool City region is in tier three, which includes compulsory closure of bars and restrictions on travel into and out of the region. C&W's designation will be reviewed in two weeks, with the risk that, with the current rate of increase in infection rates, that it will be included in the Tier 3 restrictions.

HS2 Design Refinement Consultation

3. DfT issued the snappily titled HS2 Design Refinement Consultation (DRC) on 7 October. Crucially it confirmed, for the first time, that Ministers plan to build the Crewe North Junction. The other main agenda item for the Board meeting will explain how this investment of several hundred million is critical to making Crewe a full hub station on HS2 and our plans for a High Speed (Rail) Growth Corridor.

Annual Conference and AGM

4. Our Annual Conference and AGM on 30 September was extraordinarily successful, with Andy Haldane's speech making front page news in the national press and both The Sun and The Times mentioning that the speech was given to the Cheshire and Warrington LEP. Clare has sent a note of thanks to the team that did an extraordinary job to deliver such a successful event in very difficult times.

Board Membership

5. Board members will be disappointed to learn that Graeme Bristow has decided to step down from the Board. Graeme left AstraZeneca several months ago and is now planning a number of new ventures which mean that he would struggle to find the time to discharge his LEP role. Graeme was an excellent Board member, most recently playing an invaluable role as the chair of the Local Transport Board and the LEP's representative on Transport for the North.
6. As well as Graeme we have a number of vacancies on the Board, and amongst the non-executive members of the Board's sub-committees. Clare has been meeting Board members over the past couple of weeks to discuss Committee roles, and the executive team has begun to draw up job descriptions and person specifications for the vacancies. These will be agreed with the Appointments and Remuneration Sub-Committee and then an open recruitment process launched to fill the vacancies.

Wake Up to Money

7. Clare had another very early morning last Tuesday (6 October) when she appeared, for a second time, on Radio 5's 5am Wake Up to Money programme. She appeared shortly after Warrington's Covid restrictions had been increased, so discussed the need for help for businesses if they lose trade (but are not forcibly closed) because of restrictions placed on the population. She was also able to remind the programme's listeners that the Andy Haldane speech that attracted so much publicity was to this LEP!

PHILIP COX