

## **DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY BOARD MEETING**

**Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Digital Connectivity Board  
Meeting  
held 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at 4.30pm by video conference call**

**Present:**

Nicola Dunbar (chair)	Richard Bailey	Helen Gopsill	Rupert Collis (from 5.10pm)
Stephen Fitzsimmons	Calum Lewis		

**In attendance:**

Roy Newton	Ian Brooks	Sarah Williams	

**Apologies**

Becky Stuttard	Kathryn Eade	Eleanor Blackburn	Bill Carr
Connor Diskin	Charles Jarvis	Philip Cox	

**Members of the Public (for Part A)**

N/A			
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**Agenda Item 1: Apologies and Introductions**

1.1 Nicola Dunbar welcomed members. Apologies were noted as above.

**Agenda Item 2: Conflicts of Interest**

2.1 An ongoing conflict was noted for Rupert Collis in that Fisher German are acting for Cadent with respect to Hynet.

**Agenda Item 3: Minutes of Meeting 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and Matters Arising**

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022 were accepted as an accurate record.

**Agenda Item 4: Public Presentation**

4.1 There were no public presentations. Mr Peters continues to take an interest in the work of the committee.

**Agenda Item 5: Feedback LEP Board Discussion Forum**

5.1 ND summarised the discussion session held by the LEP board and the themes raised which were captured in the paper. From the perspective of connectivity infrastructure, the board thought there

was considerable overlap between the needs of businesses and the needs of residents, and that neither one nor the other should take priority. There was also a strong recognition to address the issues of knowledge, skills and capability, which present challenges on a number of levels to digital growth, acceptance of digital solutions and digital safety.

5.2 SF mentioned that Digital Cheshire was holding a meeting w/c 4<sup>th</sup> July to discuss its investment plan. He also confirmed that the local authorities are separately engaging stakeholders for views on projects for SPF funding. Digital Cheshire is also working with SMEs to promote awareness of how digital solutions can improve business activities.

5.3 The board was asked to help provide evidence or case studies that would illustrate the challenges we face to underpin decision making. For example, the NFU has reported that 30% of farmers have connectivity speeds less than 3MB. CL referred to an example of people being fined for parking following their inability to use a parking payment app. And that poor experiences of using digital technologies represented a barrier to further digital service delivery.

5.4 SW offered to find out more about Cheshire 4.0, which explores new technologies for manufacturing. She also explained about the work the Digital Skills Partnership is doing to improve inclusion for communities and businesses.

ACTION: SW

5.5 CL asked if there is any measurement of awareness of the programmes although HG thought it was more important that people recognised the impact, even if they lacked the awareness of how it came about. IB will ask CJ how Digital Cheshire tracks its interventions.

ACTION: IB

#### **Agenda Item 6: Feedback on Meeting with Esther McVey**

6.1 ND presented the key themes of her discussion with Esther McVey, MP. EMcV has suggested a digital workshop with local MPs so that they can have a better understanding of existing coverage and the digital issues. HG suggested we take this up while the offer is still “fresh”. Discussion considered the merits of working with individual MPs who might have a specific interest or influence regarding digital or whether to aim more generally at influencing all parties / MPs with messages about the short, medium or long term, which could then carry through to spending decisions.

6.2 EMcV expressed interest in the update on developing satellite technologies and supported the idea of a pilot. ND explained she has been talking to a supplier of satellite domes and there may be an opportunity to “borrow” one for a pilot.

6.3 IB mentioned that CWaC is in the process of commissioning a study of mobile coverage, which would provide a useful cross check to maps provided by the industry. The board agreed it would be a useful exercise which, depending on its outputs, could be considered to roll out to Cheshire East and Warrington.

#### **Agenda Item 7: Update on Connecting Cheshire**

7.1 In the absence of CJ, SF referred to the meeting next week which would be discussing investment plans and the utilisation of the gain share. He expected that poor connectivity issues in rural districts would carry a high priority.

7.2 It would be useful for the board to receive an update on the plans for digital projects.

ACTION: CJ

## **Agenda Item 8: Update on Skills bootcamps**

8.1 SW provided updates explaining that three videos have been commissioned demonstrating various digital applications. In addition, a questionnaire had been piloted at one school to obtain feedback about digital awareness and digital career choices from the students. There are plans to roll it out to more schools in the Autumn.

8.2 The second lot of skills bootcamps, all relating to digital, have been launched for training providers to provide their expressions of interest by mid July. Learners are expected to begin training before the end of September.

## **Agenda Item 9: Discussion**

9.1 Discussion of the updates took place with each of the above items.

## **Agenda Item 10: Any Other Business**

10.1 HG referred to an invitation she had received to Connecting Britain 2022 on 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> September. She, and CD, had attended last year and found it useful. The agenda can be found at: [Agenda | Connected Britain 2022 \(terrapinn.com\)](#). If any board members are interested, there are free tickets to public sector organisations, so register as a member of the LEP.

10.2 ND recommended the Digital Leaders webinars, if people had opportunity to watch or attend sessions.

## **Date and Time of next meetings**

July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022 4.30-6.00pm via MS Teams

August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022 4.30-6.00pm via MS Teams