



Minutes

Name of meeting

Economic Development Board (EDB)

Date and time

Tuesday 7th January 2025, 10am-12pm

Venue

Boardroom, Building 41, Cowes

Attendees

Colin Rowland, Julie Jones-Evans, Phil Jordan, Ian Stephens (all IWC), Will Myles (VIOW), Janet Stevens (IW College), Steve Holbrook (IOW Chamber), Rachael Randall (HTP), Gavin Stride (Creative Island), Rob Sauven (Business Net Zero Hub)

Observers Chris Brammall, Alex Minns, Lee Mathews, Ella Clapham

1.

Welcome

2.

Apologies

Graham Biss (Natural Enterprise), Nicola Kildunne (FSB), Dominic Ward (IOW Tech Group)

3.

Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes approved.

4.

Presentation – Together for Mission Zero (TMFZ) – Rob Sauven

IOW Tech Group

RS presented and outlined how the TMFZ was formed through a collective of community actors who have a shared vision of 'a fair and thriving nature positive Net Zero Island'. He highlighted the IOW's biosphere status and the subsequent Beacon Group that has been established is to try and attract funds to the Biosphere. The Beacon Group will connect across stakeholders, pilot projects, and leverage the skills of Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust and Ellen Macarthur Foundation to increase impact. RS highlighted the current projects underway which include 117 net zero homes, active travel pilots, 100% renewable pathway with SSEN and OFGEM, and a Business Hub of Island SMEs. He advised that a key area to focus on is how all Islanders are engaged, especially young people. RS outlined key takeaways for EDB consideration including improved partnerships on refurbished housing, net zero housing, a clearer pro-

renewables stance, and a greater ambition on active travel.

ACTION – Share Mission Zero slides with Board.

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Board comments on Draft IOW Growth and Prosperity Strategy – Lee Matthews

LM introduces Gareth Brown, Senior Associate Economist from Stantec.

GB provided a summary of the IOW Growth and Prosperity Strategy to date including the range of stakeholders engaged, extensive feedback collected, and list of interventions produced as a result categorised into themes. The purpose of this work is to create hooks to attract funding in the future, building on what is already here and looking to 2050. GB asks the Board how they would like to provide feedback.

RR asked how the strategy is going to feed into the Solent Prosperity and Growth Plan.

There was a general consensus amongst the Board that from an initial view of the strategy it needs to be more ambitious.

JJE suggested an afternoon workshop in January, this would produce an overall response on the strategy from the Board. The Board agreed to do this.

ACTION – EC to invite board to a January workshop.

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Regional developments - Solent LEP merge into Solent Growth Partnership and Solent Growth and Prosperity Strategy – Alex Minns (paper attached)

AM reported on the regular meetings of a new group focused on devolution. The next meeting is scheduled 13th January, with Terms of Reference in place. Leaders of the three unitary councils, relevant Chief Executives, and some directors involved. The other two unitary councils are exploring the formation of Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), with funding considerations from the Solent Growth Prosperity Group. The IWC is already an LVEP and will meet WM shortly to determine funding for transition from a pilot to a developed bid.

LM raised some concerns about the transition of roles from the Solent LEP to Portsmouth City Council (PCC), including ongoing staff consultations and policies regarding funding allocation.

GS reported on a regional film office meeting, noting interest from Southampton City Council (SCC) and PCC in bringing in other partners who would need to fund the initiative.

GS expressed concerns about the regional film office's future, highlighting the risk due to Solent Partners no longer driving the initiative. Concerns were also raised regarding the status of the Solent Cultural Strategy which was being paid for by the Solent LEP and Arts Council.

AM suggested that government might want a broader focus beyond the three areas, encompassing Hampshire. Local government reorganisation and devolution both by 1st April with good opportunities as a result if embraced.

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English Devolution White Paper – Julie Jones Evans (paper attached)

JJE reported that the IWC has been missing out on funding opportunities by not applying to be a devolved area. An Expression of Interest (EOI) was submitted in September. The recent white paper and local government reorganisation aim to remove local and borough councils, with a preference for unitary authorities with populations over 500,000.

IWC received an invitation to apply for Stage 1 Devolution Priority Programme by 10th January, in collaboration with Hampshire City Council (HCC), PCC, and SCC. The goal is to form a combined authority and achieve Level 3 (mayoral authority) status. As an upper-tier local authority, IWC does not need to be concerned with local government reorganisation, but this poses challenges for potential devolution partners. The devolution bid and other local authority partnerships for a combined authority will proceed regardless of local government reorganization outcomes

The Board raised concerns about the concentration of power in one mayor. JJE confirmed that the mayor would have a board with equal representation from all authorities. By the end of January, we will know if we have been accepted onto the fast track. If accepted, the government will start a consultation in February/ March, aiming for mayoral elections in May 2026. As a result, local government elections would need to be delayed by 1 year.

GS asked if the Board's endorsement of the proposed strategy would be beneficial. RR noted that the Solent Business Board also supports the strategy, emphasising the retention of current powers and gaining additional authority. WM queried the implications of Full Council voting against delaying local elections. JJE confirmed we would go to the back of the queue, and devolution would be imposed in any case, losing the opportunity to shape it.

The Board agrees to endorse the strategy.

ACTION – JJE/CB to communicate Board endorsement to Full Council.

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Current Projects Update

a. UKSPF

i. Building 41 - CB reported that Building 41 continues to develop successfully, a large tenant will be moving in soon but confidential at this point. It continues to host events and activities.

ii. Go for Growth – CB reported that Go for Growth is developing successfully and nearly at full capacity.

iii. Inclusive Island – CB reported a successful Inclusive Island launch event with approximately 50 people in attendance, attracting some interest from a national stage as Government is looking at this with a view to moving the long-term sick into work. Inclusive Island is set to assist 20 IOW businesses in developing Inclusivity Plans as part of UKSPF.

b. Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) – CB reported that the rural grants programme is developing well. IW Grain returned their grant and their funding has been reallocated to other grant bidders. CB highlighted that while these projects are going well, there is no funding for these beyond 31st March.

JJE confirmed that UKSPF has been extended for another year albeit at a lower rate.

LM advised that the UKSPF funding needs to be linked to the priorities within the growth and prosperity strategies.

The Board confirmed they want to review the programmes to date to effectively evaluate their value.

c. Youth Hub and Connect to Work – EC reported that the Youth Hub is progressing well with 251 young people welcomed into the Hub and 96 moved into employment since it opened 1st May. LM updated on the upcoming Connect to Work programme which focuses on moving economically inactive people into work with a target of 280 people per year on a three-year programme. Currently working alongside PCC and SCC to develop the Solent delivery plan.

d. Levelling Up Fund

i. East Cowes – AM reported that Venture Quays is progressing well. Columbine is looking for permanent tenant. Barracks building works are progressing with HoT underway for UKSA. Public Realm project at pre-planning permission stage.

ii. Greenlink – AM reported that the Green Link funds are yet to be secured, but confirmation has been given to government on our intention to proceed. However, government has demanded that the original timescale is to be realised (to complete 2026), which is not possible due to project scale and involvement of land acquisition. IWC intends to deliver but needs to negotiate timescales to either 2027 or 2028.

e. Ryde Town Fund – AM reported that the Government is still keen on the Ryde Town Board but on hold due to potential new criteria and delay in implementation date. The Ryde Town board's intention is to spend the next year to establish the background procedures such as the governance and procurement.

f. PTEC – AM reported that there is activity to move tidal energy back onto the agenda with discussions happening between PTEC, Wendy Perera, and Colin Rowland. AM will report back to the Board with any updates and keep as a regular agenda item.

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Vestas

CB reported on the Barclays Eco Business Support Programme, which provides match funding. The programme coincides with the recent news of redundancies at Vestas, with 108 production employees at risk. A support package has been put together as an application for Barclays match funding, including courses to help employees start their own businesses. The package also includes scoping opportunities for employees to transition from blade manufacturers to blade technicians, addressing a shortage in the industry. CB is waiting on a response from Barclays.

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IOW Film Studio – Julie Jones-Evans

JJE reported that she was able to attend the Focus event with Film Wight, heading up the IOW stand. Blackgang Chine also participated in the event. The studio project has generated significant interest and is progressing well and now half-way to completion.

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Student accommodation feasibility update - Julie Jones-Evans

JJE reported that sites suitable for a 170-unit student accommodation facility are being investigated near Newport Harbour.

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AOB

JJE advised that scrutiny wants the Skills Board to be re-established.

AM highlighted the desire for a Transport representative to be included on the Board. Neil Chapman (Hovertravel) has been put forward.

Action – WM to extend an invite to Neil Chapman.

1st April – Presentation from IW College