

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP: Strategy and Business Plan

Evidence Base Papers: 5 – Emerging
themes from the LEP Roadshows

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SQW

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1: Introduction

- 1.1 As part of its strategy development process, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly LEP ran 15 roadshows between November 2011 and January 2012. These were targeted at businesses and they were held at local venues across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Each roadshow included a presentation from a Board member and then a wide-ranging discussion with attendees. In total, close to 300 individuals attended the roadshows and hence the feedback generated through these events constitutes an important input into the overall strategy for the LEP area.
- 1.2 Based on notes from the roadshow events, this document summarises the principal messages from roadshow attendees.

2: Key themes from the roadshows

2.1 The key themes identified by attendees at the 15 roadshows may be summarised as follows:

- **ORGANISATIONS AND STRUCTURES:** Relationships between the LEP and both Cornwall Council and Cornwall Development Company need to be clear: currently many businesses are not certain how the different bodies will work together
- **FUNDING:** Expectations are high in terms of the LEP being a source of funding, and businesses also want clarity on where they can go for grants
- **“DOING BUSINESS” IN CORNWALL AND THE ISLES OF SCILLY:**
 - There is a need to build networks in Cornwall as the business community is “disconnected”
 - However, formal networking is not easy for micro-businesses – they simply don’t have the time or resources to commit to it
 - In many cases, *“businesses are fearful of trading outside of Cornwall as they don’t have the skills”*
 - Many small businesses are concerned only with survival – “growth” is not really on the agenda. Particularly in current circumstances, the LEP simply needs to help small businesses survive
 - The *“island mentality”* of the Isles of Scilly has bred success – there is a need to harness it
- **SECTORS:**
 - Food, farming and tourism are really important to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and must not be overlooked
 - The retail sector is struggling and needs support (especially small, town centre, retailers)
 - There is a need to focus on moving up the value chain in a range of sectors – most have a knowledge-based element
 - The marine sector in Falmouth is exciting – as is the network linked to it
 - The energy sector is not delivering jobs – although Cornwall does have something special in this context
- **GROWTH:**
 - Growth can be very challenging. Currently, models of economic growth use vast amounts of resources and they are not sustainable: there is a need for a “Plan B” which is more resource efficient

- In this context, there is a need for “balance”. Sectors like food and farming may not generate substantial economic growth, but they deliver other impacts – notably as environmental custodians – and the importance of these wider impacts must not be overlooked
- **ENVIRONMENT:**
 - The low carbon economy has potential and the concept of “clean Cornwall” should be promoted
 - The LEP needs to be clear about protecting the environment and balancing the needs of business with the environment (although it is not wholly clear what “balancing” means)
- **SPATIAL ECONOMY:**
 - The LEP needs to recognise the distinctive issues/opportunities facing Cornwall’s towns and nudge these along as economic hubs
 - It also needs to recognise the issues facing rural areas, and the specific circumstances of the Isles of Scilly
- **INFRASTRUCTURE:**
 - A30 dualling is really important – although it needs to go hand-in-hand with strategies for each town
 - Newquay Airport is very important – although the finances are difficult
 - There is a need to increase the speed and responsiveness of the planning system
 - Infrastructure is critical – including the roll-out of superfast broadband. BT needs to maintain the service and businesses need to understand fully how to use it
 - There are issues relating to limited premises for employment uses in some Cornish towns
 - Links between the Isles of Scilly and the mainland are seriously important for businesses on the Isles of Scilly and there are concerns currently surrounding existing provision
- **SKILLS AND PEOPLE:**
 - The skills and aptitudes of local people in relation to work can be an issue. There is a need to do more for young people in this context: the ability of firms to attract young recruits seems to be influenced by TV coverage of particular sectors. Instead of being driven by “fads”, there is a need for better careers advice

- Apprenticeships could be useful – but it is difficult to make them work in micro businesses
- There is currently a mismatch between training supply and training demand. Specifically, some colleges are currently not very responsive to the needs of businesses. However this may be because of centrally-determined curriculum issues
- There is scope to develop student placements with local businesses – more could be done in this context
- Skills/people are “*aligned to three major industries, all in decline*”; yet firms seeking to recruit can’t find appropriately skilled people locally and hence recruit internationally
- **BUSINESS SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE:**
 - Innovation Centres – Pool, Treliske, Tremough – are succeeding: the model now needs to be rolled out
 - The banking sector has no confidence in businesses. Businesses are finding it very difficult to borrow money
 - Enterprise mentoring/facilitation can be useful and effective, and this could be a focus for the strategy