

Meeting of the
Solent LEP Business Support Investment Panel
to be convened electronically
Thursday 10 November 2022: 11:00 to 12:00

Item	Title	Time
1.	Introductions	11:00 - 11:05
2.	Apologies for absence	
3.	Minutes of previous meeting - 4 April 2022	
4.	Matters Arising	
5.	Declarations of Interest	
6.	Business Support Programmes Status Update Report	11.05 - 11.30
7.	Contract Updates - Local Growth Deal	11:30 - 11:55
8.	Any Other Business: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel membership • Next meeting 	11:55 - 12:00

Meeting to close at 12:00



**Solent Local Enterprise Partnership
Business Support Investment Panel Meeting Notes**

Held on Monday 4 April 2022 10:30-12:30 (in lieu of Thursday 24 March 2022: 10:00 - 12:00)
Convened electronically via Zoom video conference

Present	Ex-Officio members present
Adrian Went (Nominated Chair)	LEP
David Bream	Chris Heath
Caroline Carter	Kate Cloud
James Fitzgerald - PCC	Lauren Hartley (note taker)
Paula Swain	Jayne Sime - for item 8 only
Rob Dewing	
	PCC
Apologies	Shabana Islam - PCC
Mark Waldron	Amy Stamp - PCC
Tim Fielder	
Cllr Derek Pretty	Guests
Lyn Davis	KCC Ltd - Neil Houghton (Presenter)

Item		ACTION
1.	<u>Introductions</u> Adrian Went welcomed members to the meeting.	
2.	<u>Apologies</u> Apologies were received from Tim Fielder, Mark Waldron and Cllr Derek Pretty.	
3.	<u>Notes of previous meeting</u> The notes from the meeting on 3 February 2022 were Agreed as a correct record of the meeting. The notes will be signed electronically following the meeting.	LEP Executive to action accordingly
4.	<u>Matters Arising</u> The Panel asked if the information contained in the tables in item 6 from the previous meeting be included for comparison. The papers for this meeting have been prepared with this request in mind. All other matters will be covered during the course of the meeting.	

5.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>An interest was noted for David Bream in a named beneficiary. This was noted by the Chair.</p>	
6.	<p><u>Business Support Programmes Status Update Report</u></p> <p>The LEP Executive confirmed IOW Natural Enterprise figures have changed slightly to take into account recent funding stream amendments from IOW Rural Fund. The LEP Executive are satisfied with these changes.</p> <p>A panel member reiterated that we need to be comfortable that the 'number of jobs safeguarded' output from beneficiaries is robust. Particular attention was drawn to the disparity between the number of jobs reported across the various funds. The LEP Executive confirmed the process itself is robust, but the LEP Executive does rely on applicants confirming these numbers.</p> <p>The LEP Executive confirmed the LEP will investigate these numbers more closely and will report back to the BSIP accordingly. The LEP Executive also confirmed the Solent LEP will consider the evidence provided to support safeguarded jobs numbers in any future funding.</p> <p>Confidential report has not been published as it includes information defined as exempt in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, including information relating to an individual and/or relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person.</p>	
7.	<p><u>Contract Updates</u></p> <p>Confidential report has not been published as it includes information defined as exempt in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, including information relating to an individual and/or relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>Panel members were updated on areas of focus for business support including specialist support e.g., sustainability, 121 support, peer network support, recover and rebuild programmes and digital support. It was confirmed the LEP Executive is currently looking into facilitating SME support from private sector investors. Support was offered from panel members in respect of these initiatives.</p> <p>Discussion around support for SMEs continued. Based on the above comments on facilitating support from private sector investors it was suggested that the LEP Executive might have a role using its institutional credibility to represent regional SMEs in their search for both private or large corporate investment / other business support. However, it was recognised that this needs much more attention and it was requested that the BSIP members present ideas to the LEP Board in the near future.</p> <p>The LEP Executive would circulate details relating to the Ringwood business support to panel members. Where panel members can support, please respond accordingly.</p> <p>No further business.</p>	

Meeting closed at 12:30

Item: 6

Title: Business Support Programmes Status Update

Date: 10 November 2022

Purpose: To provide the Business Support Investment Panel with an update on Solent LEP SME grant programmes

Introduction

This report provides panel members with an update in relation to progress and changes to LEP Business Support programmes since the 4 April 2022 meeting. It includes high-level information on job outcomes and awards made.

SME Priority Sectors Loan Fund

At the Solent Summit held at the new Horizon Cruise Terminal at Southampton on 8 June 2022 the Solent LEP launched two new loan funds. The first, Solent LEP Prosperity Loan Fund, which invited applications for loan funding between £100,000 and £1,000,000 and the second, Solent LEP SME Priority Sectors Loan Fund, which invited applications for loan funding between £15,000 and £99,000. The level of loan funding available was 50% and 80% respectively of total project costs.

In terms of the SME fund applicants had a deadline of 8 July 2022 to submit the Expression of Interest (EOI) form as the first part of the application process. The LEP received six EOIs requesting loan funding totalling £280,000 with the total cost of the projects being £438,000.

An initial eligibility check was completed on the submitted EOIs and two applicants were invited to submit a full application by 30 September 2022.

Ahead of the application deadline one of the applicants invited to apply discussed their application with a member of the Accountable Body's Finance team. Following this conversation, the applicant confirmed they were unable to provide appropriate security for the loan and would not be proceeding to application stage.

The deadline passed and no applications were received for the Solent LEP SME Priority Sectors Loan Fund.

The LEP received seven EOIs for the Solent LEP Prosperity Loan Fund. After the initial eligibility check was completed five applicants were invited to submit a full application. The LEP received three applications, and these are being considered by the Funding, Finance and Performance Management Group at their meeting on 8 November.

As a result of this initial round, the LEP Executive together with the Accountable Body are reviewing the prospectus of both loan funds. It is the intention to undertake a further round for both loan funds in the new year. This will be discussed further at the Funding, Finance and Performance Management Group (FFPMG) meeting on 8 November.

BSIP is asked to **advise** the LEP Executive on possible amendments to the loan funds in order to make them more attractive to SMEs.

Current Fund Status

The status of the funds and job outputs, as at 19 October 2022, can be viewed in Tables 1 and 2, below. Any changes since the last meeting have been shown, and the paper from the 4 April meeting is also available in the meeting pack for comparison.

Table 1- Financial

	Solent Prosperity Fund ¹					
	Current Fund End Date: 31 March 2021					
	Project Cost		LEP Funding		Match Funding	
	Oct-22	Change	Oct-22	Change	Oct-22	Change
Crowdfunder	£854,972		£226,993		£627,979	
Solent Prosperity Fund	£3,953,150		£600,193		£3,352,957	
Small Business Programme	£3,064,122	-£642,663	£492,953	-£104,273	£2,571,169	-£538,390
Z21	£929,312		£500,000		£429,312	
IoW Rural SME Fund ²	£3,514,774	-£124,181	£1,368,605	-£2,719	£2,146,169	-£121,461
New Forest Rural SME Fund ²	£273,080	-£11,135	£127,008	-£5,568	£146,072	-£5,568
Predecessor Programmes	£12,723,718		£1,875,708		£10,848,010	
Sub-totals	£25,313,128	-£777,979	£5,191,460	-£112,560	£20,121,668	-£665,419

¹ Funded from the Local Growth Deal 2015/16 to 2020/21 including LEP predecessor programmes and investment programmes delivered by LEP partners.

² This includes both Isle of Wight Rural Fund and Isle of Wight Rural Business Resilience Fund and New Forest Rural Fund and New Forest Rural Business Resilience Fund as appropriate. Figures provided on 12 July 2022.

Table 2- Outputs

	Solent Prosperity Fund ³					
	Jobs created by: 31 March 2021					
	Projects Supported		Jobs Created		Jobs Safeguarded	
	Oct-22	Change	Oct-22	Change	Oct-22	Change
Crowdfunder	98		37		441	
Solent Prosperity Fund	9		0		0	
Small Business Programme	12	-1	26	-2	7	
Z21	14 ⁴		41		0	
IoW Rural SME Fund ⁵	102		137.6	9.5	284.48	4.1
New Forest SME Fund ⁵	24		5	-5	34	-1.25
Predecessor Programmes	34		168		34	
Sub-totals	293	-1	414.6	2.5	800.48	2.85

Administration of IoW Rural SME Fund and New Forest Rural SME Fund

The LEP Executive have received the final accountants report which covered the latest round of grant money awarded to cover the IoW Rural SME Fund, IoW Rural SME Business Resilience Fund, New Forest Rural SME Fund, and the New Forest Rural SME Business Resilience Fund.

The LEP Executive and Accountable Body have reviewed and have accepted the findings of the independent accountants report. The unallocated funding can be used in future funding for SMEs.

Solent LEP Growth Hub

The Growth Hub continue to lead on direct business support activity including specialist hubs as follows:

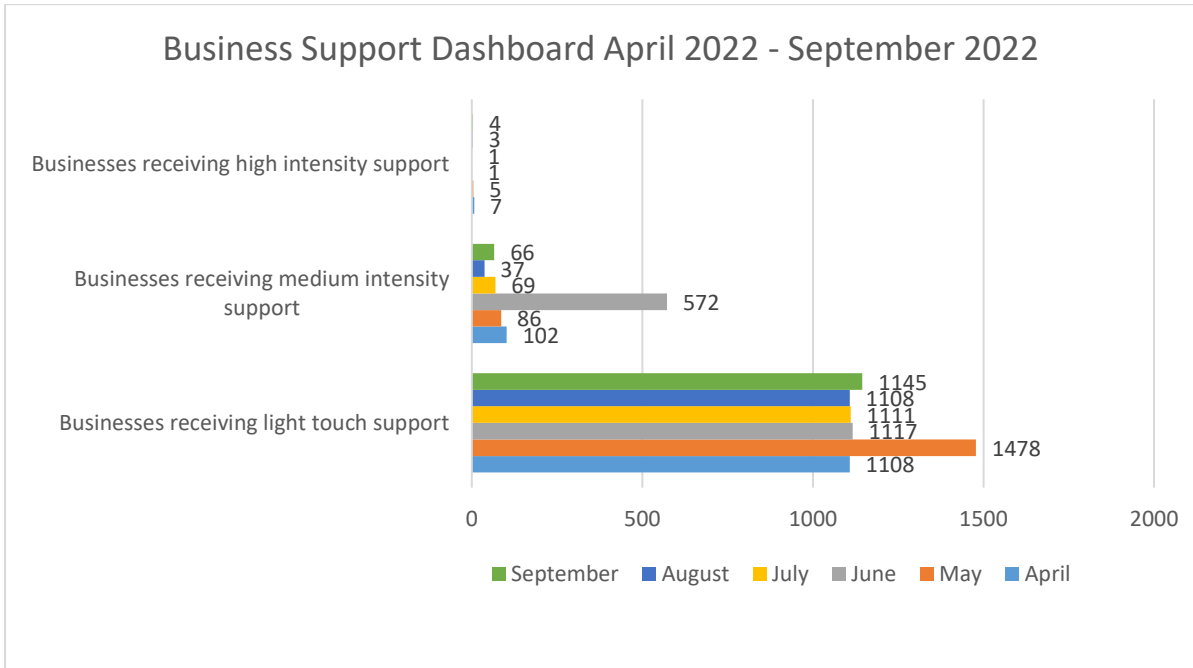
- [Coronavirus Support Hub](#)
- [Brexit Transition and Trading Overseas Hub](#)
- [Green & Sustainable Business Hub](#)

The chart below graphically illustrates the levels of support provided by the Solent LEP Growth Hub to the local business community since September 2021.

³ Funded from the Local Growth Deal 2015/16 to 2020/21 including LEP predecessor programmes and investment programmes delivered by LEP partners.

⁴ This is the number of projects supported in the Z21 programme. Of these, 10 new start-up businesses have been formed.

⁵ This includes both Isle of Wight Rural Fund and Isle of Wight Rural Business Resilience Fund and New Forest Rural Fund and New Forest Rural Business Resilience Fund as appropriate. Figures taken from the final Accountants Report dated 31 May 2022.



Businesses receiving high intensity support - These are businesses taking part in business coaching exercises.

Businesses receiving medium intensity support - These are businesses who have attended masterclasses, business clinics and webinars, and have therefore had an element of one-to-one or one-to-few support from the Growth Hub team.

Businesses receiving light touch support - These are businesses who have made an initial enquiry by telephone or email or attended larger events with the Solent Growth Hub team.

The Solent Growth Hub have a wealth of data regarding their operations. Some examples are displayed below in order to better illustrate the breadth of activities across the areas:

The Type of Support chart below categorises activities into three main areas of growth, stabilise/maintain and start up. This chart illustrates the majority of activity this financial year has been in the area of business growth.

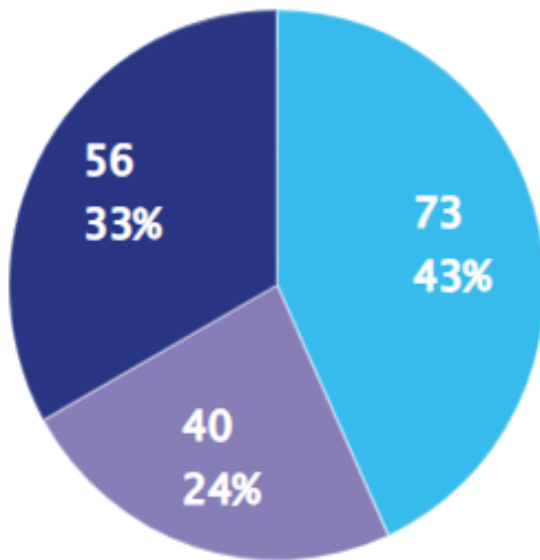


Type of Support



Type of Support

- Growth
- Stabilise/Maintain
- Start Up



The Growth Hub Key Support Requests chart below gives a more detailed breakdown of the sort of enquiries coming forward to the growth Hub so far this financial year. Finance & funding and coaching & mentoring have seen the highest number of requests to date.

These figures are monitored monthly, and provide the Growth Hub with data that influences their responses to local needs.



It is proposed that for future BSIP meetings, the existing Business Support Dashboard chart is removed and more detailed and illustrative data is presented. This will provide a better insight into Growth Hub activities, and could help to inform future discussions around funding support for SMEs.

Legal implications

No legal comments at this stage.

Financial comments from the S151 Officer of the Accountable Body

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.
 All of the grant funding streams referenced in this report form part of the approved Solent LEP budget as agreed by the Solent LEP Board.
 Where any funding is returned or recovered from beneficiaries this will become available for the LEP Board to redirect as they consider appropriate.

Item: 6

Title: Business Support Programmes Status Update

Date: 4 April 2022 originally scheduled for 24 March 2022

Purpose: To provide the Business Support Investment Panel with an update on Solent LEP SME grant programmes

Introduction

This report provides panel members with an update in relation to progress and changes to LEP Business Support programmes since 3 February 2022 meeting. It includes high-level information on job outcomes and awards made.

Current Fund Status

The status of the funds and job outputs, as at 8 March 2022, can be viewed in the following Tables 1 and 2. Any changes since the last meeting have been shown.

Table 1- Financial	Solent Prosperity Fund ¹					
	Current Fund End Date: 31 March 2021					
	Project Cost		LEP Funding		Match Funding	
	Mar-22	Change	Mar-22	Change	Mar-22	Change
Crowdfunder	£854,972		£226,993		£627,979	
Solent Prosperity Fund	£3,953,150		£600,193		£3,352,957	
Small Business Programme	£3,706,785		£597,226		£3,109,559	
Z21	£929,312		£500,000		£429,312	
IoW Rural SME Fund ²	£3,638,955	£124,181	£1,371,324	£2,719	£2,267,630	£121,461
New Forest Rural SME Fund ²	£284,215	-£935	£132,576	-£5,499	£151,640	£4,565
Predecessor Programmes	£12,723,718		£1,875,708		£10,848,010	
Sub-totals	£26,091,107	£123,246	£5,304,020	-£2,780	£20,787,087	£126,026

¹ Funded from the Local Growth Deal 2015/16 to 2020/21 including LEP predecessor programmes and investment programmes delivered by LEP partners Natural Enterprise (IoW Rural SME Fund) and University of Southampton (Z21 Innovation Fund)

² This includes both Isle of Wight Rural Fund and Isle of Wight Rural Business Resilience Fund. Figures correct at 17 March 2022.

Table 2- Outputs

	Solent Prosperity Fund ³					
	Jobs created by: 31 March 2021					
	Projects Supported		Jobs Created		Jobs Safeguarded	
	Mar-22	Change	Mar-22	Change	Mar-22	Change
Crowdfunder	98		37		441	
Solent Prosperity Fund	9		0		0	
Small Business Programme	13		28		7	
Z21	14 ⁴		41		0	
IoW Rural SME Fund ⁵	102	2	128.1	-7.25	280.7	5.7
New Forest SME Fund ⁵	24	0	10	0	35.25	5.25
Predecessor Programmes	34		168		34	
Sub-totals	294	2	412.1	-7.25	797.95	10.95

Crowdfunder

As reported at the last meeting, Crowdfund Solent has now closed. As the final projects supported continue to be monitored, updated outputs will be shown in the table above along with other legacy funds

IoW Rural SME Fund

As previously reported at the last Isle of Wight Rural SME Fund Local Action Group meeting held on Thursday 13 January 2022 the full allocation of grant money to the IoW Rural Fund was committed. Please see comments below regarding the re-allocation of some funding from the New Forest SME Rural Fund to a beneficiary which has allowed their project to be fully funded.

New Forest Rural SME Fund

Due to an applicant, who had received support from the New Forest Grant Approval Panel, withdrawing their application prior to the execution of the contract the grant amount requested for that project, £24,924, remained to be allocated. Following discussions between Natural Enterprise and New Forest District Council a decision was taken that, given the deadline for defrayal of funds, that there was insufficient time for a new application round to be opened. Subsequently, £10,000 of this figure was allocated to the IoW SME Rural Fund to enable a beneficiary to be fully funded for their project. Due to the full allocation of funding for the IoW Rural Fund this business had been allocated a grant of £5,000 rather than the requested £15,000. The balance of the New Forest Rural SME funds will be returned to the LEP for distribution via future SME funding calls.

³ Funded from the Local Growth Deal 2015/16 to 2020/21 including LEP predecessor programmes and investment programmes delivered by LEP partners Natural Enterprise (IoW Rural SME Fund) and University of Southampton (Z21 Innovation Fund).

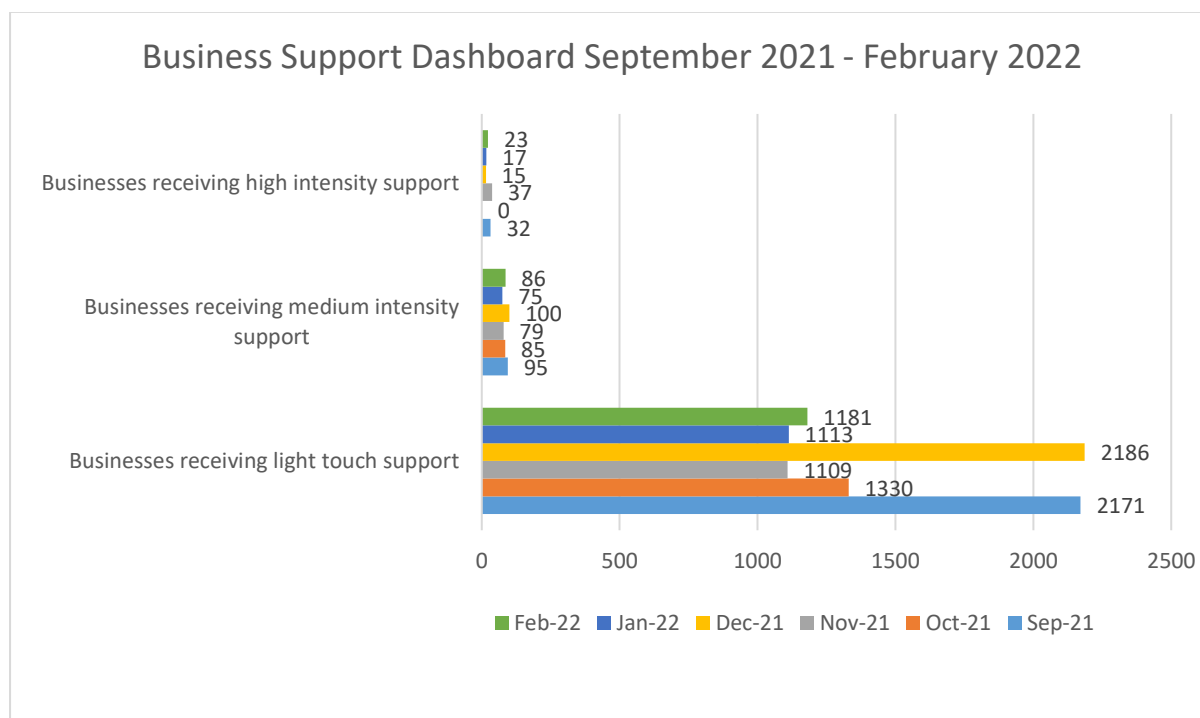
⁴ This is the number of projects supported in the Z21 programme. Of these, 10 new start-up businesses have been formed.

⁵ Figures for IoW Rural SME Fund taken from information supplied on 17 March 2022.

Solent LEP Growth Hub

The Growth Hub continue to lead on direct business support activity including specialist [Coronavirus Support Hub](#) and a [Brexit Transition and Trading Overseas Hub](#).

The chart below graphically illustrates the levels of support provided by the Solent LEP Growth Hub to the local business community since September 2021.



Businesses receiving high intensity support - These are businesses taking part in business coaching exercises.

Businesses receiving medium intensity support - These are businesses who have attended masterclasses, business clinics and webinars, and have therefore had an element of one-to-one or one-to-few support from the Growth Hub team.

Businesses receiving light touch support - These are businesses who have made an initial enquiry by telephone or email or attended larger events with the Solent Growth Hub team.

Legal implications

Legal comments to follow.

Financial comments from the S151 Officer of the Accountable Body

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

All of the grant funding streams referenced in this report form part of the approved Solent LEP budget as agreed by the Solent LEP Board.

All of the grant funding included in this report had Government defrayal deadlines of 31 March 2021 so in order to allow a small tail of expenditure into the current year, the Accountable Body in conjunction with Board approval used some of the freedoms and flexibilities made available by Government to enable projects to complete in the 2021/22 financial year.

Item 7

Project Contract Updates

A confidential report will be considered at the meeting