Notes of Meeting

Present:
Sara Vincent – Actavis (chair)
Will Bowden - Training Officer, Babcock Marine
Paul Knox - Housing Director, Pearce Construction
Mike Matthews - Managing Director, Lineal; Federation of Small Businesses, North Devon Branch
Andrew Mosedale - Head of HR, Brend Group
Michelle Rose - HR & Corporate Services Manager, North Devon Homes
Jane Worley - Training Officer, TDK Lambda
Sarah Wragge-Morley – Director, Electronic Test and Calibration (ETC) Ltd.
Felicity Bright – Careers South West
Mike Colton - Partnership Coordinator, Northern Devon Academic Board (NORDAB)
Richard Daulton – National Apprenticeships Service
Sarah Grigg - Employment & Skills Manager, North Devon+
Robin Makeig-Jones - Commercial Director, North Devon+
Janet Sinclair - Devon Partnership Manager, Jobcentre Plus
Deborah Waddell - Devon Education Business Partnership (DEBP)
Clive Rowe - Petroc

Welcome:
Tim Jones – Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP),
Jo McCreedie – Exeter University
Craig Marshall – Devon & Cornwall Training Provider Network (DCTPN)

1. Apologies:
Ellen Vernon - North Devon Council; Roz May - Education + Training Skills Group; Gail Richards - Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust (NDHT); Huw Davies – Petroc; Alison Thorpe – Skills Funding Agency; Alison Cox – Peninsula Enterprise; Richard Barnes - Beran Instruments; Sue Wearne - Careers South West (CSW); Emma Wilkinson - Barnstaple Chamber of Commerce; Maria Bailey – Bideford Chamber of Commerce; Rose Cockerill - Human Resources Manager, Mole Valley Farmers; John Edwards - Torridge District Council; Darren McClure - Anglo Krempel; Rob Garrett - unionlearn, (TUC)

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising
The Board highlighted employer frustration with some training provider (TP’s) perceived lack of desire to proactively collaborate with each other and the ESB. CM talked about the challenging landscape for TP delivery in North Devon explaining that since the DCTPN started, of the training providers membership 14 went bankrupt, 10 have been taken over, 7 have been sold to larger businesses and in the last two months 3 have gone under, including Torridge Training Services. TP issues include; busier workloads, increased learner costs, and a need to focus on “cheaper to deliver” urban areas. Consequently, this means that North Devon is facing rural delivery issues, which also raises concern over the quality of local provision. The DCTPN asks; how does North Devon attract providers to the area?

The ESB website now has an employer-facing, basic training provider portal providing links to local operators. TP’s are asked to provide information if they wish to be included.

ACTION: Update the TP Matrix for North Devon and add any new information to the website. All TP's
The ESB website has been updated to include a variety of new resources and links. In addition to Apprenticeship and Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) information there is now a Must-Knows for Employers section, Skills Resources and Reports, updated government news on Employer Incentives, plus the agendas and minutes from previous ESB meetings.

**ACTION:** Explore the ESB website: [http://www.northdevonplus.com/what-we-do/esb.aspx](http://www.northdevonplus.com/what-we-do/esb.aspx). All

All other actions from July have been achieved. Thank you to everyone that contributed.

**3. Progress on Skills Action Plan**

**a) Apprenticeships & Task Group update**

The **101 Apprenticeship Campaign** has now created 749 apprenticeships starts since January 2012, which represents a 30% increase on the same time period as last year. RD from the National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) explained that one in eight apprenticeships in Devon is started in North Devon or Torridge equating to a success rate that is approximately 15% higher than that of Devon, The South West and England.

The Board discussed changing the target from 101 to something much higher, although RD and CM warned that 24+ apprenticeship numbers will drop significantly with the arrival of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans. Our local challenge remains to increase 16 – 24 apprentice numbers.

The **Apprenticeship Task Group** is building on the campaign success and planning next year’s event and press campaign. MC told the Board that local secondary schools are creating Apprenticeship Champions to support teachers to improve the delivery of apprenticeship guidance to pupils. An event is being held on 11 October and employers and their apprentices have been invited.

**ACTION:** Apprenticeship Task Group will meet again on Monday 5 November to finalise the campaign plan. **SG** to facilitate.

**ACTION:** Employers that have apprentices and would like to contribute stories for next year’s campaign please contact **SG** sgrigg@northdevonplus.co.uk 01237 426 426. **Employers**

**b) Schools Task Group & Torridge District Council Project**

The Schools Task Group is now called the **Work and Education Network, (WE.NET)**. AM announced the creation of a LinkedIn group for employers, educationalists and teachers who seek to improve the employability skills and enhance the work related experience for young people across North Devon and the wider area. This group has a targeted action plan and is also collating a calendar of local school events to help businesses choose how they would like to get involved. Braunton, Great Torrington, Pilton, Chulmleigh and Ilfracombe have provided information to date. This will be published on the ESB website and promoted to employers.

**ACTION:** ESB members are encouraged to join this group and get involved. Search LinkedIn; Groups; “Work and Education Network” **Individuals in career guidance roles & Employers**

The Torridge District Council proposal for working with small groups of pupils in three state Secondary Schools has been unanimously voted for by councillors. The pupils will be supported by employer mentors to develop their real-world understanding of work and their employability skills. This **Pupil & Employer Engagement Project** will grow improved links and complement other like-minded initiatives. Employers are now being invited to get involved.
c) Northern Devon Skills Research project
Leader 4 has approved the funding of localised skills research to support our ESB action plan objective to gather labour market intelligence (LMI). Our local statistics tend to be Devon wide and skewed by those of Exeter and Plymouth. By doing our own research through local employer networks we can better identify the skills needs in Torridge and North Devon. This will improve the clarity of our action plan and support us to target specific local skills issues. DEBP are gathering work experience and STEM data in partnership with the schools and, as part of WE.NET, have offered to feed this in to our local LMI.

The steering group for this work will meet on 15 October and participants to date are: Maria Bailey – Bideford Chamber, Emma Wilkinson – Barnstaple Chamber, Steve Wright – Northern Devon Manufacturers Association (NDMA), David Avery - Federation of Small Businesses, and Sally Macey-Watson from the Local Action Group. An invitation has been extended to Petroc’s Directorate of Employers. The steering group will finalise the brief and choose an academic partner with which to develop the survey. Thanks to those of you who offered letters of support.

ACTION: Employers that would like to support this work during the next academic year (workplace visits, school talks, interviews, mentoring etc.), please contact SG sgrigg@northdevonplus.co.uk 01237 426 426 - Employers

ACTION: Send schools’ STEM and work experience LMI to ESB – DEBP & CSW

d) Graduate retention
JS explained that with more graduates in the area looking for work there is greater local competition for jobs. With this comes a danger that lesser-skilled jobseekers could be squeezed out of employment opportunities that have traditionally been theirs. There is also evidence that graduates seeking apprenticeships are struggling to get to interview stage as they are unaware that employers are offered funding for non-graduates and this in turn can affect their morale. Locally, evidence also suggests graduates are being under-employed and finding themselves in jobs that under-utilise their skills.

JM explained that the University of Exeter has grants available of £500 to £1,500 for employers offering internships. One, in conjunction with Santander, is the ‘Access to Internship’ competition. SMEs can apply for £1,500, towards the cost of employing an Exeter graduate.

Employers interested in finding out more contact Jo McCreedie
Tel: 01392 722617 Email: J.McCreedie@exeter.ac.uk

How employers can engage with the University: http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/employers
Graduate Business Partnership: http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/employers/internships/gbp
Student Business Partnership: http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/employers/internships/sbp

To support graduates in finding work JobCentre Plus in Barnstaple are hosting a Graduate Event on Thursday 1 November with Careers South West and the University of Exeter. To date they have identified approximately 70 local unemployed people who have degrees or are looking for a change of career. The event will offer Skills Health Checks and CV workshops, information on starting your own business and the grants available, and an employers’ master-class with guidance from local HR managers. The ESB will be supporting the organisation of the event.

Graduate Event – Thursday 1 November 2012 – Jobcentre Plus, Barnstaple. 1.00 – 4.00pm
For further information call Tracie on 01271 395 477 or email tracie.hennessey@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk
4. Tim Jones – Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

TJ explained that LEP’s are being asked to engage with ESB’s and ESP networks in parallel. The UK has lost 11% of its productivity so the government is looking at Scandinavian successes in productivity and skills to help address topical issues including NEETS, low attainment and skills gaps. A needs-based approach is central to current policy-making and the government is keen to identify barriers to growth and productivity, like the Further Education example where there are 49 different funding streams to negotiate.

Regarding funding opportunities, TJ said it is important for us to differentiate between vocational and academic career paths and focus on direct alignment between the funding initiatives and what our ESB is doing within its action plan. Routes to self-employment, Green Deal, reinforcement of current in-house training programmes and mentoring are favoured and there is an opportunity to get ahead of the game with digital skills.

TJ highlighted that there is radical change on the horizon for training providers and a shift in how Skills Funding Agency funding is distributed, whilst the UK Commission is focused on Intelligence; developing LMI, and Investment; where significant changes move the balance towards employer ownership of skills.

The Growth & Innovation Fund still has £90 million available.

TJ said the LEP has pushed for allocation of funding, rather than entering a bidding process, as this slows down delivery.

5. Employer Ownership of Skills (EOSkills) – progress update

The UK Commission announced 34 successful bids from 269 applications from the first round. Four of these were based in the South West. Round two is due to be announced in October.

The ESB bid-writers met prior to this meeting to review the existing proposal whilst taking into account the Board ideas from the previous workshop. The recommendation for the second round is to focus on technical and digital skills because anecdotally there is a local technical skills shortage that is likely to get worse with the advent of skills demand in emerging technologies. This mirrors a national trend and could affect local manufacturing and engineering sectors in particular. A diagram showing how a technical skills pathway could look was shared with members. This also highlighted potential shelf-ready projects that could be delivered if funding is secured.

To prepare for the second round a partners meeting is planned, which will help a) identify match funding from training budgets, b) gather the training information required for a successful bid and c) develop ideas.

MC raised the importance of getting the schools involved and he offered to secure a slot at the upcoming NORDAB meeting for SV to attend.

ACTION: Attend the EOSkills Bid partners meeting – Employers & partners – SG to facilitate

6. Craig Marshall – Devon & Cornwall Training Provider Network (DCTPN)
a) 24+ Advanced Learner Loans

CM explained what the introduction of these loans means for employers. From August 1st 2013 all those aged 24 or over wanting to study at level 3 or above, (including including QCF Certificates and Diplomas, Access to HE, A-Levels and Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships), will not receive any Government funding. In order to fund their study they will have to take out a student loan. Apprentices can take out a loan for the whole programme, or take out a significantly smaller loan to undertake the vocational training part of the programme. Where appropriate, employers will continue to be required to pay their share in line with current practice.
TJ and SV thanked the Board and left the meeting at this point due to prior commitments. RMJ chaired the remainder of the meeting.

b) Devon County Council – Workforce Skills – Apprenticeship Case Studies
CM presented this project which looked at eight Small and Medium Enterprises (SME’s) from a variety of sectors including; Construction, Engineering, Hospitality, Financial Services, Health & Social Care, Business Admin plus a Group Training Association (GTA) example in the Agriculture sector and a STEM related Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA) example.

The project aim was to increase apprenticeship engagement and identify other training issues. Whilst all SME’s were in agreement that apprenticeships do require significant commitment by management, they are seen as a good method of starting new young workers in the business, providing technical and employability skills, and bringing in new ideas. All involved are certain that training has played an important part in improving their firm’s productivity and all thought training helped prevent staff absenteeism and reduced staff turnover.


7. Funding News
In her absence, AT provided a useful summary of the latest Skills Funding Agency news, including EOSkills update, 24+ Advanced Learner Loans, Raising the Participation Age, New European Social Fund, New Higher Apprenticeships and Exeter and East Devon Growth Point.

This also covers the relaxed criteria for the Apprenticeships Grant for Employers (AGE), which is now available for businesses with up to 1000 employees that have not employed an apprentice in the last twelve months. Up to ten grants per employer are available.

**Read the Skills Funding Agency Update here:**

8. Events Diary
Thursday 1 November 2012 – Graduate Event – Jobcentre Plus, Barnstaple – 1.00 – 4.00pm
Thursday 14 March 2013 – 101 DAYS: Apprenticeships - Employer Showcase - Barnstaple Hotel
Thursday 27 June 2013 – Big Bang South West – University of Exeter

9. AOB

**ACTION:** Volunteers sought for local STEM Task Group – email sgrigg@northdevonplus.co.uk  All & DEBP

**ACTION:** Add sector-based Careers Progression Maps to ESB website.  SG

The board did not have any other business to report.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**
**Thursday 6 December – 2.00 – 4.30pm - Actavis**

RMJ thanked everyone for their contributions. Meeting closed 4.30pm