

**EUROPEAN STRATEGY BOARD**  
**Notes of meeting held 27 February 2009**  
**at Advantage West Midlands**

**PRESENT:**

**Members**

Cllr Sir Albert Bore (WMLGA/CoR) – Chair, Teresa Addinell (LSC), Louise Bennett (CWMCC), David Brown (Chair, West Midlands in Europe), Mike Cherry (FSB), Nicholas Cole (GOWM/Chair ESERG), Chris Crean (Friends of the Earth), Tim Gebbels (AWM), Malcolm Harbour MEP, Jerry Hutchinson (North Warwickshire Borough Council), Isabella Moore (COMTEC), Paul Richards (WMHEA), Cllr David S Smith (WMLGA), Cllr Paul Tilsley (WMLGA)

**Officers**

Jon Bloomfield (AWM), Esther Knight (WMRA), Glynis Whiting (WMiE), Patrick Willcocks (Chair REFPG), Louise Chilton (WMLGA)

Item	Discussion and Decision	Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies</b>  Apologies had been received from  Cllr Philip Atkins (WMLGA), David Burton (CWMCC), Philip Bushill-Matthews MEP, Michael Clarke (WMHEA), Brendan Connor (AWM), Cllr Pauline Dee (CLRAE), Trudi Elliott (GOWM), Olwen Dutton (WMLGA/WMRA), Neena Gill MEP, Cllr Martin Heatley (WMLGA/CoR), Cllr Syeda Khatun (CoR), Mick Laverty (AWM), Cllr Roger Lawrence (WMLGA), Liz Lynne MEP, Doug Mahoney (UKTI WM/AWM), Roger McKenzie (Midlands TUC), Julie Robson (LSC), Cllr Ken Taylor (WMLGA), Cllr Milner Whiteman (CoR)</p>	
2.	<p><b>Notes of 10 December 2008 meeting and matters arising</b>  The notes were <b>agreed</b> as a correct record of the meeting. There were no issues arising.</p>	
	<p><b>For Information</b></p>	
3.	<p><b>The Future of EU Territorial Cohesion: Responding to the Green Paper</b>  The West Midlands’ Response to the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, which had just been submitted to the European Commission to meet the 28 February deadline, was tabled at the meeting. A small working group had drafted the Response, which had been signed off by the Chair of the European Strategy Board. The Response was based around the idea that EU Funds (non structural as well as structural) should be coordinated under a regional strategy and go into one pot, with the EU funding the strategy and not the project. Where there are substantial sub regional partnerships there should be delegation down to that level. This was a fairly radical departure from the past view of how cohesion policy should be applied.</p> <p>The response was generally welcomed by ESB members. During discussion the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the changing European funding landscape, finding the most cost effective way of funding projects was vital. The roll-out of the next programme period/ESF needs to be integrated in here because training and equipping people will be a bigger imperative</li> <li>• Concerns were expressed that funding could start to evaporate although</li> </ul>	

	<p>probably not until after the next set of Commissioners is in place in 2013. Discussions have taken place regarding the aligning of the new Parliament and Commission 5 year electoral period with the 7 year financial process, and having the new Commission set the budget rather than the outgoing Commission. It was noted that the Region had lost out on funds that had required bidding for, such as the Framework 7 Programme, although there had always been allocations regarding structural funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The issues of communications and emerging regional environmental technologies must be on the agenda – this is a particular issue for the West Midlands that was once the heart of manufacturing.</li> <li>• Matchfunding, or the lack of it, may begin to emerge as an issue.</li> <li>• Although the Region already works with networks such as the Lisbon Regions Network and ERRIN through West Midlands in Europe, the next stage would be developing strategic alliances.</li> </ul> <p>It was <b>agreed</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To note the report and endorse the Response.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>European Strategy Board Annual Event 18 September 2009</b>  Following on from last year’s launch of the European Strategy in September 2008, this year’s event would examine the progress of the Strategy and the Economic Recovery Plan. The event would also look at the priority working groups and how they are developing their work plans. As usual there would be an ESB meeting on the same day, as well as a WMiE Management Committee meeting.</p> <p>It was <b>agreed</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESB members to note the date in diaries</li> <li>• WMRA to circulate timings for the day as soon as possible.</li> </ul>	<p>ALL WMRA</p>
	<p><b>To Note Progress</b></p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>EU Connects Update Report</b>  The successful pilot project, which had run for 18 months and had attracted a wide range of customers, had brought an estimated 4 to 5 million euros into the Region. Funds concentrated on had matched the Region’s strategic priorities. Other regions had demonstrated a great deal of interest in the project and the strategic approach taken by the West Midlands.</p> <p>Following the successful second round bid an experienced larger team was now in place, working on an expanded number of funds. It was proposed that relevant figures should be submitted to the ESB on a 6 monthly basis.</p> <p>The “Highlights” newsletter, a joint EU Connects/WMiE initiative, was tabled which details activities both in the Region and Brussels and highlights the complementarities between the two organisations. Feedback on the publication was welcomed.</p> <p>ESB members were pleased to hear details of this successful bid and congratulated all involved. Points made during discussion were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team must recognise when to signpost customers to other</li> </ul>	<p>EUC  ALL</p>

	<p>networks or bidwriters to make full use of the range of national/sectoral initiatives on subject areas/programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest was expressed in how the link between business support programmes and research funding programmes was working</li> <li>• It was suggested that the Enterprise Board should be used to raise awareness of the unit and European funding opportunities amongst the business community</li> <li>• It was suggested that it was necessary to complete a brokerage model to ensure that everyone can be helped while trying to create stronger links with Business Link</li> <li>• Such wider engagement must be thought through from the point of view of SMEs. There are limits to the amounts of funds businesses can individually bid for, and Business Link and other agencies must be encouraged to examine opportunities available and fit these to companies in the Region that could benefit.</li> </ul> <p>ESB Members were assured that EUC begins its contact by looking at the issues new clients are trying to address; that the service is as accessible and user friendly as possible and there was strong evidence that people who apply for small funds progress and make bigger bids. Decisions were continually being taken on how to use the Unit's limited resources and in line with this, customers are already signposted to other organisations if necessary after first approaching EUC.</p> <p>ESB members were reminded that WMiE provides advice on more European funds and would find advice on brokerage beneficial for a broader set of funding.</p> <p>It was <b>agreed</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EUC to provide case studies to ESB members to demonstrate that the Unit is not working in isolation</li> <li>• A report on EUC to be brought to the September ESB, showing clearly what other advice is available to EUC customers and communication channels with other organisations.</li> </ul>	<p>EUC</p> <p>EUC</p>
	<p><b>For Discussion</b></p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Progress on European Strategy Environment and Rural Group</b></p> <p>ESERG Group Chair Nic Cole (GOWM's Sustainable Futures Directorate Assistant Director) reported verbally on the Group's progress since its first meeting in July 2008. The Group which meets every 6 weeks has a membership drawn from 10/12 organisations interested in the agenda with more interest being shown in meetings. The Group began by looking at climate change and energy as required by the European Strategy but it was then decided that it would be appropriate to combine this with the work of the European Rural Group, with Terms of Reference evolving as a result.</p> <p>Main activities so far have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigation into mainstreaming the rural agenda across the European Strategy – a Task and Finish Group has been set up to look at options</li> <li>• Creation of a work plan which has assigned activities to organisations or individuals</li> <li>• Collaborative work with AWM on the regional response to the CAP</li> </ul>	

	<p>healthcheck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of excellent links with EUC and with Xenia Tsitiridou at WMiE, who produces factsheets containing invaluable information on opportunities.</li> </ul> <p>Future activity will concentrate on climate change, continuing mainstreaming of the rural agenda and driving forward the workplan. The Group must engage more positively with policy development, developing partnerships and contact with networks over the next 6 months as there is the need to increase successful bids. Individual capacity is a problem but opportunities could be maximised by focusing on activities already happening which could be co-fundable. Following a postponed Leonardo bid the Group was now examining other sources of funding and ways of developing links with other regions, such as through WMiE's work on benchmarking European regions, which will contribute to the development of the Strategic Integrated Regional Strategy.</p> <p>ESB members welcomed the update and the practical examples of activities already undertaken/to be undertaken. Specific points made were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MH to be included on the WMiE factsheet circulation</li> <li>It was confirmed that group membership included the NFU, Natural England and the Environment Agency</li> <li>DSS to welcome NC to Chasewater Green Park, Lichfield Council's joint project with Birmingham University, which will be used for the testing and development of environmental products and eco methodologies prior to their potential manufacture by West Midlands companies.</li> </ul> <p>It was <b>agreed</b> to note the Group's progress.</p>	<p>WMiE</p> <p>DSS/ NC</p>
<p><b>7. (a)</b></p>	<p><b>European Aspects of Economic Recovery Proposals: West Midlands in Europe Report</b></p> <p>The latest version of the WMiE European Economic Recovery factsheet was tabled which consists of short articles organised in a thematic way. The topic will attract ongoing debate and regional input would be welcomed. There are areas of relevance for a wider audience, including the small business community, and information on support to the automotive sector including details on the Intergroup on the Automotive Crisis set up by the Committee of the Regions and attended by Cllrs Bore and Heatley. There is also a section on pre-commercial procurement, a huge opportunity for the public sector. ESB members were asked for their views on the factsheet and on its dissemination.</p> <p>The following points were made during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns were expressed that many of the Economic Recovery schemes were around infrastructure, which SMEs could not bid for</li> <li>Summits will take place on 1 and 16 March during which ministers will discuss the EU Recovery plan</li> <li>The Commission has issued a set of state aid guidelines that remind member states about meeting state aid criteria</li> <li>Public sector funding was seen as part of the instruments to helping economic recovery but these procurements must be accessible. There is an expectation that public authorities should set aside procurement budgets to encourage innovative companies for which they could act as</li> </ul>	

<p>(b)</p>	<p>lead customer in areas such as transport and health which would keep innovation moving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the factsheet was looking at issues of specialist interest it would be better to revise it before distribution to individual businesses to remove any euro jargon. Business organisations such as Chambers of Commerce could receive the factsheet as it stands</li> <li>• CWMCC to share their revised version with TG for onward circulation to Support West Midlands members</li> <li>• An additional briefing article could explain how businesses could break into the European market in the current economic climate.</li> </ul> <p>It was <b>agreed</b> to note the report.</p> <p><b>European Automotive Strategy Network – an example of Regional Activity</b></p> <p>This network had met in Brussels on 24 February to discuss collaboration opportunities with other European organisations to support the EU automotive industry by bringing together other automotive regions that were running skills programmes to work jointly and facilitate SMEs on product areas to work together. The network had applied for grants to move forward. AB is to be its Vice Chair. As the West Midlands was well known in European automotive bodies because of work done on the Region on the car industry, operating the network from Birmingham Chamber seemed appropriate. The Region must support the Interreg and Priority 4 bids that had been made.</p> <p>It was <b>agreed</b> to note the update.</p>	<p>LB</p> <p>LB</p> <p>WMiE</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p><b>European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT): Promoting the Low Emissions Economy (PLEE): A Knowledge Innovation Community (KIC) for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</b>  <b>Presentation by Jon Bloomfield</b></p> <p>Jon Bloomfield presented this on behalf of Professor Fred Steward, Professor of Innovation at Brunel University who is the Strategy Development Director for the Region’s KIC bid. At its 10 December meeting the ESB had agreed to contribute to the development of a KIC bid on mitigating the effects of climate change, one of the three topic areas chosen by the EIT Governing Board. New capabilities would be needed for this and partners would need to be obtained from 4-6 member states. There would be a focus on two areas: low carbon living and low carbon mobility.</p> <p>There was potential involvement from other regions and cities including Darmstadt which has experience in new building technologies, other German Regions, Rhônes-Alpes and Wroclaw. Support had also been offered by Jerzy Buzek MEP, a member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.</p> <p>This bid would give the Region the potential to act as a catalyst and would link the West Midlands to key developments in other parts of Europe. The old Curzon Street Railway Station building has been proposed as the centre of EIT in Birmingham.</p> <p>ESB members made a number of points during discussion including the</p>	

	<p>need to act quickly especially as this KIC would be a popular choice, a plea to involve big corporate companies and the need to ensure that Local Government must be a key player. Concerns were also expressed regarding what the KIC would imply in leadership and funding. In reply the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The bid will demonstrate clearly that stakeholders included Local Authorities.</li> <li>• Regarding funding, the EIT offers 75% matchfunding. Having AWM involved in the bid would mean that the £80 million put into Science Cities can all count as real match and the PMC had also agreed to contribute £5m pa. Many other regions would have real difficulties finding that match funding. The Region was looking to try and do this under the Science City umbrella.</li> </ul> <p>It was <b>agreed</b> to note progress on the bid.</p>	
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b>  The programme for a major conference on 14-15 May hosted by the University of Birmingham’s European Research Institute entitled “Bringing the Policy Back In: A Substantive Agenda for the New Union” was tabled. The ERI had had to bid to get funds to host this conference, of which at least 3 of the main items were consistent with the European Strategy. ESB members would be receiving personal invitations.</p>	
	<p><b>FUTURE MEETINGS</b>  The following future meetings were noted:</p> <p><b>Friday 3 July at 1100 at the Regional Partnership Centre</b>  <b>Friday 18 September – time and venue to be confirmed</b>  <b>Friday 27 November at 1100 at the Regional Partnership Centre</b></p>	