

# Leaders

for the Heart of the South West

## **Heart of the South West Joint Committee Update from Heart of the South West Economic Resilience and Opportunities Group**

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### **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** This report provides an update on the work of Heart of the South West Economic Resilience and Opportunities Group (HEROG) between Spring and Autumn 2021 in support of the Joint Committee and HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSW LEP) objectives.

### **2. Recommendations**

#### **2.1. It is recommended that Joint Committee:**

- (a) notes the continuing work of HEROG to support the economic recovery of the sub-region;**

### **3. Reasons for recommendations**

- 3.1** HEROG continues working in partnership with Constituent Authorities, business representatives and Whitehall officials to influence Government policy and practice in response to leaving the EU and recovery from the Pandemic.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1** The HEROG was established by the Joint Committee and HotSW LEP as a working partnership of senior officers from Constituent Authorities, business representative organisations and Whitehall officials to identify mitigations and opportunities following the decision to leave the EU.
- 4.2** In April 2020, the Joint Committee tasked the group with facilitating conversations with Government to influence policy and practice during the Covid Pandemic.
- 4.3** The Joint Committee has received reports on the work of HEROG at each

meeting. This report sets out activity between Spring and Autumn of 2021

## **5. HEROG Work Programme (Spring-Autumn 2021)**

### **Roadmap out of lockdown**

The group worked through the four steps of the Government's Roadmap out of Lockdown between February and July 2021. This was to raise awareness across the business community of safe re-opening and to feed back to Whitehall the specific sector concerns with each step.

### **Beaches and Tourism Task Group**

This group brought together sub-regional public health, public services and businesses over spring and summer to provide evidence and practical solutions into a Government Task Force on the re-opening of tourism. The Group will shortly present its final report to Government officials on learning from the summer 2021 such as:

- Requirement for Government to work with regions and local areas to plan early for next year with clear messaging and shared communication at the heart of the collective response
- Impact on housing market of a shift to provision of holiday accommodation
- Government departments need to co-ordinate activity as there were numerous examples of mixed messaging between DHSC, BEIS and DCMS
- Government departments such as DfT are a key component of any response to effective visitor management but were reluctant to provide solutions to help local areas
- Alignment required between effective visitor management and visitor experiences. A shared definition between Government, businesses and public health teams would have resulted in more effective management
- Overall message is that Government should be working with local areas now to manage the 2022 season

### **Recruitment and Retention Task Group**

Following an alert from the South-West Tourism Alliance about a recruitment crisis in the sector, HEROG formed a Task Group to look at the specific recruitment and retention issues facing the sub-region. The Group was established in June and within six weeks produced a report with recommendations for local solutions and Government action.

The Group rapidly identified the most pressing problems were in sectors with traditionally low pay, an element of seasonality or with no clear paths for progressions. In particular there were problems identified for hospitality,

tourism, care and supply chain – HGV drivers. The Group provided evidence of the problems in these sectors such as 46% of hospitality businesses stating they had less staff than pre-covid and their concerns about the safe management of tourism re-opening in what was one of the busiest seasons for decades.

HEROG will continue to monitor the comprehensive set of recommendations put forward for Government or partner action.

### **Brexit impacts and opportunities**

The Group continues to monitor the impacts of the transition out of the EU. For example, at its recent meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September the group heard from officials about the decision to delay additional import rules for products from EU to help supply chains.

Through the Better Business for All group the Heart of the South West has contributed to a range of post-Brexit seminars for business run by Home Office for EU Settled Status scheme and BEIS.

### **Looking forward**

The Group will continue to work on projects that assist the economic resilience of the sub region and to identify opportunities for a sustainable recovery. A key piece of work will be the business implications and awareness of moving to a net zero carbon economy.