

WORK HUBS INFORMATION EVENT

Wednesday July 17th 2013
Gt Bow Wharf, Longport

The event was attended by a total of 33 participants. This note covers the specific discussion points and questions that came up during or after the presentations.

Devon presentations

a) Devon strategic approach

- *To what extent is the Devon Hub Branding required?:* It is a guideline; with a light touch
- *Is there consistent pricing for hot desks across the County? :* No, locally set, depends on the local market

b) Lessons from Tavistock

- *When will the Tavistock Hub be viable?* Within a year we aim to achieve break-even (but this may be based on manager not taking a full income)
- *What do you consider to be the smallest size for a town/village? And the smallest size of work hub to be viable?* The catchment considered in Tavistock's case was anywhere within a 30 min drive, and so the town's 7,500 popn expands to 30,000 taking that into account; Premises need to be scaled to size of catchment
- *What are the charges for a co-working space?* £20 per day or £200 per month (& once they have been there for 11 days, they can move to monthly rate)
- *What role does business connections within the work hub play in terms of the offer?* The importance of networking is not to be underestimated: via website promotions; jelly events; free promo days to get customers to come and try; etc
- *Does the higher demand for discrete office space presume that's where the real demand is?* This varies across the hubs; but staying flexible is key. There may be a need to 'vet' occupiers – they have got to fit in with the others using the work hub; and open to sharing & collaborating. They will send some businesses on to other bigger spaces when they out-grow the Hub
- *Is there a maximum length of lease? 1 year?* No, but will review after a year, but recognise need to have some continuity – it was clarified that occupiers are there on a licence
- *In Cheddar we have been offered two possible locations for a hub – one on the outskirts (industrial estate; good parking) and the other on the High street; which do you think might be best?* The Tavistock hub is in middle of town as we want people to walk/cycle in or use public transport. There is good footfall and it adds to the High Street; though because it is a Conservation area we have not yet fully resolved signage. Need a decent broadband connection. There is also scope for an offer for tourists. No need for separate phone kit as all mobile workers have their own mobiles.

SCC Presentation

- *Broadband issue: Can the Hub help get better broadband speed, or do we need it?* There is potentially a timetable issue with the roll out of faster Broadband; some locations may already have access to fast broadband. The meeting was advised that Tavistock isn't due to get fast broadband until Aug/Sept (2013) and that they were quoted a huge monthly cost for high quality broadband in advance of that – they took the decision to wait.
- *Do the discrete spaces provided have to be used for offices or could they be used for other purposes?* Each applicant can make the case for what they will use the spaces for according to their Business Plan
- *Is it a grant or an investment?* The terms of the SCC managed Funding are for it to be a grant, dependent upon various terms. It was explained that Devon had used a different funding stream which lent itself to payments based on targets being achieved by the Hubs.
- *Is match funding really necessary, given how difficult it is to secure other funding?* It was explained that the match could be in the form of staff time; and reference was also made to the Awards for All funding that they had secured at Tavistock. Another contributor thought that there might be LARC funding available again post 2015. A third remarked that other partners, such as a housing association (as at Totnes) could get involved.
- *Could the Fund be a revolving fund?* As part of the Funding stream we need to see the impact of the funds and various targets will need to be achieved.
- *Is there a plan for SCC to bring other services to the hub?* Not to the same extent as Devon; there will be help for applicants to the Fund with their Business Plan; and then help to those who get a grant – business support; and also help to the work hub beneficiaries; but there won't be a central booking/administration system; and the SCC funds are essentially for the Hubs and not for any central administration/branding etc. It was commented that It needs to be clear what help will be available and for the hubs to be honest about broadband speeds.
- *A contributor described the potential for a volunteer mentoring programme and queried about the availability of business support to the Hubs?* It was explained that the provision of business advice & support was a separate strand of the RGN package and that this would be procured across the Devon & Somerset area. A contributor raised the prospect that potential bidders might wish to collaborate.
- *Would it be 2 or 3 Hubs financed and how would this be decided?* It was clarified that of course any successful bidder would need to meet a quality threshold and that meant that we would be looking for value for money against required outputs – if there weren't good bids than we wouldn't award funding and we would go back out to the market as required.
- *Would a local contractor be used to provide business support?* The intention was for the provision of centrally provided business support if

needed. In Tavistock it was clarified that they were able to draw in local collaborators within their hub.

- *A question was asked about how the rural areas would be weighted, as against the larger towns?* It was explained that each bidder would need to make clear their case for funding. All areas were deemed eligible outside of the 4 largest towns in the County. Applications might need to be scaled against the catchment population. A contributor made the observation that it was understandable that the public funding would be directed to where there was greatest need for it.

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