

Agenda Item 3

Title:	Chief Executive’s Report
Purpose:	To update board members on the main operational issues that have developed since our last board meeting in July 2023.
Recommendation(s):	That board members note the contents of this report and approve the request to convene a separate meeting on October 20th.
Response To Risk Register	The Risk Register is included as part of item 3 within this report.

1. REDACTED

2 Project Variation – Silverstone Swimming Research and Innovation Centre (SSRIC)

On November 17th, 2021, the Buckinghamshire Enterprise Zone (BEZ) Board approved £2m of funding alongside £2m from the English Institute of Sport and TotalSim for the development of the SSRIC. The decision was reconfirmed by the BEZ Board on the 12th December 2022. This project will create world class R&D facilities and add value to sports performance capabilities as part of the Silverstone Technology Cluster. It will distinguish the Enterprise Zone offering, creating high value jobs and encourage more students to participate in STEM activities.

The SSRIC will consists of 565 square metres within the [Silverstone Sports Engineering Hub](#) (SSEH), consisting of:

- A unique instrumented swimming flume for R&D, innovation and training
- A fully instrumented R&D, innovation and training swimming pool

The facility will be unique in a global context and has already drawn interest from sports bodies and sports related businesses. This project builds on the high-performance sports-related technology focus and economic growth potential of the existing Silverstone Sports Engineering Hub - which from early 2019 has been providing flexible innovation workspace arranged around a unique R&D ecosystem that includes wind tunnel for bicycles, fabric and materials production centre, and the recently opened pedalling efficiency rig.

Reason for project Variation: An improved engineering solution has now been identified as the original pit dig (milestone) was not feasible. The flume will now be built on a raised platform, taking place at a later stage the project, all outcomes will be delivered in line with the terms of the original agreement. The Key elements of the variation are below.

Grant Payment	Completed Project Milestone
Payment 1	Start of Pit Construction Appointment of key contractors and consultants
Payment 2	Start of solar panel installation

Payment 3	Start of main steelwork installation
Payment 4	Start of Plant Room Installation
Payment 5	Start of Waterline Installation
Payment 6	Flume passes acceptance tests for use by British Swimming

The development of the revised solution, coupled with delays in securing a Distribution Network Operator (DNO) connection for Solar Panel installation, has delayed progress slightly. However, the project remains on track to meet the needs of the Institute of Sport who continue to fund the project. The total maximum amount of BLEP funding for the project is two million pounds (£2,000,000) and the profiled annual amount allocated to the project is stated below; £500,000 in 2023/2024, £1,000,000 in 2024/2025 and £500,000 in 2025/2026. This is agreed on the basis that no further changes will be needed and the DNO for solar installation is in place.

3 Enterprise Zone Budget Update - A41 Westcott Roundabout Funding Position

The Board are asked to note the final funding position in respect of the A41 Westcott roundabout. Initially, up to £1.7m of Enterprise Zone funds were budgeted for this scheme. I am pleased to report that, due to the securing of additional funds from other sources and the efficient management of this project by Buckinghamshire Council, only £662K will be required from Enterprise Zone funds for this project retaining c£1m for investment in future schemes.

Total expenditure for the scheme	£1,649,330.05
Local Growth Funding	£800,000
S106 commitments	£186,396
Enterprise Zone funds to fund remainder (due 25/26)	£662,934.50

4 Horizon Programme

Following the UK rejoining the Horizon Europe Research and Copernicus Earth Observation programmes in September, the Westcott Space Cluster has been invited to participate in a new collaborative Horizon programme on Unmanned Aviation Vehicles (UAVs/Drones). The programme was identified as an excellent fit for the BVLOS (beyond visual line of sight) development we are seeking to deliver from Westcott. The focus of the project is on development of the necessary technologies for missions and public service solutions covering platforms, systems, navigation, instrumentation, algorithmics and ground segment.

The Satellite Applications Catapult has agreed to lead the Westcott Submission for this programme which, if successful, could be one of the first UK programmes to benefit from the re-entry into this multi-national research programme.

5 Productivity puzzle

Productivity data is shared with the Board on an annual basis. We know that Buckinghamshire's productivity growth has been comparatively weak over the last decade or so, with an improvement over the last two years. Historic data shows that growth was particularly weak between 2011/12 and 2016/17, which led to Buckinghamshire falling from 5th to 10th position of the 38 LEP areas.

To help understand what contributed to particularly weak growth during this period, and identify what we could learn from the past, we are undertaking a deep dive to establish the potential causes. It is anticipated that this will help inform future Growth Board policy.

The deep dive will include a historical review of economic structure; employment space; property; connectivity (including digital); population growth; investment in capital (including buildings, equipment, IT) and intangibles; FDI; significant companies that have left the county; and skills development. The deep dive will also consider 'what's worked' in areas of the county that have experienced stronger growth.

6 Business Support & Growth Hub Update

The final selection process is nearing completion for £1.7m investment into the Buckinghamshire element of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation for the next two years. The Buckinghamshire allocation focussed on four areas of delivery, business growth and productivity, start up and entrepreneurship support, business sustainability and journey net zero business innovation and rural business support. BLEP have been working closely with Buckinghamshire Council in the assessment of the programme applicants and are looking forward to supporting the programme delivery which is expected to commence in November 2023.

Another successful Buckinghamshire Business Awards ceremony was hosted at the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre on September 21st. BLEP were once again the sponsors of the Business Innovation Category and nominated Lunaz from our Silverstone Enterprise Zone site as the category winners from a very strong shortlist. I am pleased to say that Lunaz also scooped the Company of the Year award, a fitting recognition for their remarkable growth over the past 4 years.

7 Risk Register

The LEP Risk Register has been updated and is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report. As board members would expect, the issues relating to the orderly and effective integration process are the main issues highlighted within the register, as well as the continued focus on delivering (and exceeding) the contractual obligations to Government during this process.

8 Communications Update

The LEP AGM has been confirmed for the morning of November 17th at the Gateway in Aylesbury. In preparation for the event, a schedule of filming has been agreed to highlight some of the impact of LEP investment and partnership support over the past decade. As well as looking back at these achievements, the coverage will form invaluable collateral for the Team Bucks Inward Investment programme over the months to come. The event will also see the publication of our Annual Report for 2022/23, once again this is being developed to show the impact of the LEP programme over the past decade, the draft copy of the Annual Report is attached as **Appendix 2** to this report for information.

Other notable events coming up that board members may be interested in include.

[Focus on Artificial Intelligence](#) – October 12th.

[Simply Exporting - International Trade Week Event](#) – November 8th

Advance Notice [Bucks Skills Show](#) - March 6th, 2024