

Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH) Extra Board Meeting - 21 October 2022

This meeting was conducted via online conference.

Attendees

Ed Barlow (Buckinghamshire Council) - Buckinghamshire LEP (BucksLEP)
Sheryl French (Cambridgeshire County Council) - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)
Simon Wyke - Greater London Authority (GLA)
Maxine Narburgh (MN) - Greater South East Net Zero Hub – Regional Hub Manager
Erica Sutton - Greater South East Net Zero Hub – Hub Support Coordinator

Helen Pollock - Hertfordshire LEP (HertsLEP)
Ellen Goodwin - New Anglia LEP (NALEP)
Sarah Gilbert (Oxfordshire County Council) - Oxfordshire LEP (OxLEP)
Arthur Le Geyt - South East Midlands LEP (SEMLEP)
Jo Simmons - South East LEP (SELEP)
Ben Burfoot (Reading Borough Council) - Thames Valley Berkshire LEP (TVBLEP) - Chair.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Board meeting 18.10.22 was not quorate for decision making. This Extra Board meeting was convened to complete the agenda items from the meeting that required formal decisions.

Minutes

1. Apologies, Introductions

- Apologies were given by Elinor Bendell, Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS); Swapna Uddin, BEIS; Robert Emery, CPCA; Marsha Robert, Coast to Capital LEP; Enterprise M3 LEP and Chris Starkie, NALEP.
- The meeting was chaired by Ben Burfoot, TVBLEP.

2. Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2

- Background information on this project was provided with the GSENZH Board papers 21.10.22 in advance of the meeting.
- The Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) is a £700million challenge fund set up by BEIS that will provide energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating, via local authority funding, to low-income households that are not heated by gas and have an Energy Performance Certificate between D and G.
- The following recommendation was presented by GSENZH to the GSENZH Board:
 1. To support the proposal for the Greater South-East Net Zero Hub to bid into the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 challenge fund being run by BEIS. CPCA would act as Lead Authority on behalf of local authorities who have requested to be part of the consortia.

- MN highlighted the following points:
- Although the Local Authority Delivery programme has been challenging to date, GSENZH is keen to be involved so that it can support the local authorities that have asked the Hub to bid on their behalf (51 expressions of interest have been received).
- HUG2 will be a £700 million fund over a two-year timeframe and is aimed at off-the-gas-grid households and vulnerable householders.
- There are two bidding stages: November 2022 and January 2023. GSENZH would like to apply to the first bidding window. This is because it will enable the transition from Sustainable Warmth to be seamless, and it will enable more time to deliver, and it will enable GSENZH staff retention.
- HUG 2 has a longer delivery timeframe of two years, which is more favourable compared with earlier phases of Local Authority Delivery and HUG1. Furthermore, GSENZH has now built up its supply chain, with 76 suppliers now registered on its Dynamic Purchasing System.
- The Board had no comments or questions on HUG2.

BOARD DECISION: To support the proposal for the Greater South East Net Zero Hub to bid into the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 challenge fund being run by BEIS.

3. Local Energy Advice Pilots

- Background information on this project was provided with the GSENZH Board papers 21.10.22 in advance of the meeting.
- The Local Energy Advice Pilots are a BEIS project that will trial up to five different face-to-face energy advice services in the region, which are to be located in different areas across the geography. These services will be established through a regional competition run by GSENZH.
- The following recommendation was presented by GSENZH to the Board:
 1. To note the codesign approach to the regional Consumer Advice and Information pilot projects.
 2. To agree to the Hub Board to provide the governance for the project (approval of applications, project oversight and reporting).
 3. To agree to the Hub procuring technical support to provide advisory services to support the delivery of the project.
- MN highlighted the following points:
- The pilot services are part of a BEIS initiative set out in the government's Energy Security Strategy. Energy advice services to be provided by phone and the web have already been dealt with by BEIS. However, BEIS wants to co-design the face-to-face energy advice provision with the Local Net Zero Hubs and wants the Hubs to deliver the project.
- There are two stages to the project: Interested organisations will submit an expression of interest. The Hubs will then work with those that are successful to develop their bids.
- The MOU for the project provides for a £22 million fund, of which £20 million is grant funding for up to £2 million per pilot service. A national panel, to include representatives from the Hubs will assess the pilot applications. The GSENZH Board will need to approve bids from the region.
- A key issue is the lack of quality standards for energy advice services, although The Retrofit Academy is now offering Level 2 and Level 3 training.
- The pilot services will be giving advice to vulnerable people and hard-to-treat homes.
- A steering group advisory service will support both the Hubs and the pilot projects.
- The Board had the following comments and questions on the Local Energy Advice Pilots project:
- BucksLEP asked whether GSENZH would run the bids for local providers to apply. MN clarified that there will be a national panel for applications with a BEIS veto that GSENZH would feed into. BucksLEP asked what the arrangement would be for the Greater South East Region. MN advised that there will be one panel for evaluation of the bids. However, the Hubs have suggested that they conduct an initial sift, but this arrangement is not confirmed.

- CPCA asked how the funding would be apportioned within the region. MN advised that there is no minimum grant level expected. The objective is to gather learning. Pilot services can cover small or large areas and there will ideally be a mix of rural and urban areas involved.
- CPCA asked whether the project would be similar to the Business Support Programme and whether there would be benchmarks. MN advised that the KPIs for the project will be metrics like the numbers of hard-to-treat homes that have been helped. The focus is not on providing general advice.
- NALEP asked how the project might fit with skills boot camps. MN suggested that while the pilots will be focused on giving advice, the skills bootcamps could be used to help train the providers.
- HertsLEP asked whether the project would involve a helpline. MN clarified that the helpline is a government project and is not part of the Local Energy Advice Pilots. HertsLEP raised a concern about GSENZH capacity, given that it would be a large project to manage. HertsLEP observed that it had been a struggle to deliver the LAD2 programme, and that Sustainable Warmth is rolling out, and asked whether the project would stretch resources too thinly, and whether it was part of the Hub's core programme. HertsLEP expressed concern that the Hub should keep its reputation for delivery and avoid growing too quickly. MN advised that a colleague within CPCA with suitable skills and experience has been identified and will be seconded to support the project. MN clarified that the project is part of the GSENZH core programme rather than an energy-efficiency programme. MN advised that the Hub has now recruited an Energy Efficiency Programme Manager who will soon be in post, and this will increase team capacity significantly.
- TVBLEP raised the issue that it is important for the pilots to be clear which organisation is doing what, so that clients can identify legitimate activity. There could be potential for fraudsters to take advantage. Marketing used by the pilots would need to identify what a legitimate government programme looks like. MN advised that all marketing will be co-branded, which will include the BEIS logo. MN requested that the GSENZH be advised about any suspected fraudulent activity that Board members become aware of, so that it can be reported to the BEIS fraud team.
- TVBLEP also stressed the importance of the advice given being congruent with the approach being used by the government retrofit schemes. MN advised that GSENZH will be working with successful applicants on their project plans and that these plans will come back to the Board.
- TVBLEP asked whether the same companies were likely to be involved in the pilots as those acting as managing agents for the Sustainable Warmth retrofit schemes. MN advised that the expected applicants were likely to be community-led or local authority, rather than commercial. MN further advised that the goal of the pilots is to build confidence in retrofit rather than pointing people to funding.
- TVBLEP asked about the issue of governance for the project, as originally it had been proposed that a project Board should be set up, which the GSENZH Board had not regarded favourably at its meeting 18.10.22. MN confirmed that the revised recommendation was that the GSENZH Board would provide governance and oversight for the project, but that this would be supported by the procurement of technical support by the Hub.

BOARD DECISION:

1. To note the codesign approach to the regional Consumer Advice and Information pilot projects.
2. To agree to the Hub Board to provide the governance for the project (approval of applications, project oversight and reporting).
3. To agree to the Hub procuring technical support to provide advisory services to support the delivery of the project.

4. Any Other Business

- No other business was raised.

5. Dates of Future Meetings

- Subsequent Board meeting dates are scheduled 10:00-12:30, to take place virtually, on the following dates:
 - 6 December 2022 (Arthur Le Geyt, SEMLEP to chair)
 - 24 January 2023 (Helen Pollock, HertsLEP to chair)

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record by Ed Barlow – (Buckinghamshire Council) Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership.	
SIGNATURE	DATE