

## **Policy & External Affairs Committee Notes – 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

**Group Attendees:** Clive Watkinson (Vice Chair) Andrew Denniff, Dominic Beck, Adrian Platts, Martyn Benson, Bob Langley, Tim O'Connell

**External attendees:** None

**Apologies from:** Matt Jackson, Cheryl Sanderson, Matt Travis, Ian Ashmore

### **Executive Report**

- Andrew Denniff (AD) briefly updated the Committee on a number of recent and upcoming activities the Chamber are involved with.
- AD referred to the HS2 Consultation and that feedback through the Transport Forum had been submitted. A copy of the consultation document is also available on the Chamber website and was published to social media.
- AD mentioned that a private meeting with David Higgins, Chair of HS2 which was by invitation only, which was being held at Nabarro's in Sheffield. Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber have not formally been invited. AD indicated that Steve Robertson is attending on behalf of Rotherham Growth Board, so would not be left out of the loop information wise. It is deemed that meeting will be Sheffield centric, however Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber will not be changing its position on HS2. Clive Watkinson (CW) stated that we should write to HS2 expressing the view that Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber would like to engage and are interested in the project but are not being invited to these key meetings and that Chamber representatives are happy to meet with Sir David Higgins, if necessary in London, to discuss.
- AD covered the regeneration of Barnsley Town Centre and that it is well underway. A meeting had been held regarding progress, and the outlook is very positive for Barnsley. Plans have been presented in the local press and the short time frames have been welcomed. The only negative feedback has been that some people feel that the architecture of the build is too radical and should be scaled back a little.
- AD clarified that the Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber Barnsley Office which currently resides at the Core in Barnsley, will be moving to new office space based at Woskow Brown in Regent's street.

### **Policy Activities**

- AD mentioned a meeting at AES Seal Plc to promote Rotherham under a major place marketing strategy. It was suggested that Forge Island could have a significant bearing on the regeneration of Rotherham Town Centre.
- CW covered business rates and questioned the impact on business at this point. It was hoped that the rates adjustments for Rotherham would have been more positive for small businesses, but had not made the desired impacts. It was felt that bigger changes are required to make the right impact.
- AD mentioned the positive aspects of recent developments such as the McLaren investment at the Advanced Manufacturing Park alongside Boeing's proposed investment to expand manufacturing. It was suggested that there are not enough executive homes being built to counterbalance these and other prestige developments and that this may force up the prices of such homes.

- AD highlighted Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber support for the Meadowhall expansion plan, and for the Gullivers World development near Rother Valley Park.
- AD mentioned the plans for the provision of motorway services at both M1 J33 and M1 J35. It was felt that the proposed site at J33 could well rule out the development at J35 should planning permission be achieved.
- AD covered a recent request to sign an open letter of support for Doncaster Sheffield Airport in their efforts to be recognised as the airport of choice for the region thus strengthening their offering and appeal to further airline carriers.

## **Update on Legislation Issues**

- Martyn Benson highlighted that Article 50 is to be triggered on March 29<sup>th</sup>, starting the proceedings for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union.
- Summary of Investigative Powers Act 2016 – The bill will make provision for the interception of communications and the retention of data for security purposes. This is currently in the final stages at the House of Commons and is likely to be completed in 2017.
- National Citizens Service Bill – This will enable to government to make provision for the National Citizen Service programme and support young people more effectively.
- Cheryl Sanderson submitted some documents to highlight environmental legislation including;
  - A consultation to review increasing Local Authority environmental permitting fees and charges – the proposal focuses on increasing fees by 4.5% to businesses that use the permits.
  - Consultation on the UK National implementation plan for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP's). This legislation is aimed at protecting human health and the environment from POP's. The plan will outline banned substances, and cover the required introduction of measures to reduce the release of POP's into the environment. This could have significant impact on businesses that produce POP's as a bi-product of production or directly manage these substances.
  - A call for views has been raised around the UK's implementation of the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR). The register is designed to provide public access to records indicating the location and nature of pollutant sources around the country as required by the Kiev protocols that the UK has signed up to.

## **What does Brexit Mean for Business?**

AD stated that business is going as usual. Exiting the EU will bring its challenges, but businesses will continue to power on and adapt to new ways of doing business to survive. CW highlighted that some retail based businesses are not fairing so well due to the uncertainty around Brexit as people prepare for an increase in costs across the board. This is also affecting the car industry, with sales of motor vehicles not being sustained to previous levels in many areas.

## **Any Other Business**

There has not been much focus on local Foreign Direct Investment recently, however Tim O'Connell (TO) suggested that there are opportunities for relationship development with China to encourage inward investment into the Rotherham area. There is the planned Horasis event taking place on behalf of the region, and in addition a suggested Silk Road Exhibition is reported to be taking place in China during June. TO considered that luxury brands might be a good market to focus on and maybe a possible market visit opportunity would benefit local business.

AP to approach Duncan Hoyland at Department for International Trade to engage with the Policy Group and explore opportunities.

AD covered the Membership Survey. He clarified how well received Chamber events are and that they are popular with members. The general consensus is that this is due to the right balance of events that meet the needs of members and providing a fresh and innovative approach to providing opportunities for businesses to network and learn.

AD also indicated how well the recently implemented Chamber Skills Solutions is doing and that the range of training offered through the initiative is helping bridge the skills gap across the region.

### **Date of the next meeting**

16<sup>th</sup> May 2017 at the Holiday Inn, Dodworth, Barnsley, S75 3JT.

**If you would like to get involved with the Committee please call the Chamber on 01709 386200**