

Q.1.Which of the 6 recommendations of the Connected Catapult recommendations have been taken forward? 05/10/2022

The recommendations are as follows:

1. Treat relationships as the essential glue – being developed and underway

The Innovation Leadership Group is intended to be led by businesses with Local Authorities providing the secretariat in the initial stage. Since its inception in July 2021, there have been three meetings and a fourth planned for November 2022. Three workshops have also taken place which helped to inform the forward looking Connected Places Catapult action plan for the next year.

The initial constitution on of the Group has involved key cluster/sector leads, County and District Councils (SWT/Sedgemoor), Barclays, Tech South West, Singers, Bridgwater and Taunton College and the HotSW LEP.

The ILG were represented on the steering group of the Innovation Exchange conference and with the organisations represented at the conference, national, sub-regional as well as local relationships have been taken forward, all committed to continue to work with Somerset.

2. Create mechanism for distributed ownership and leadership – future planning for the new Unitary

Although this was an SWT initiative, decisions regarding Governance and its operation will need to be determined by the executive of the new Unitary Council. The new Council will need to consider input from the innovation LGR working group and work with the appropriate representation of people and organisations on any future group.

Discussions have been also held with Yeovil College and with the Somerset economic development officers group as part of ongoing LGR discussions who are keen to adopt a distributed hub and spoke model of the innovation district.

3. Build up a customised proposition grounded in the region's DNA – tender draft and approach being prepared

The start of identifying a customised proposition grounded in the DNA was first undertaken by EiBC and shared through the science and innovation audit and the framework document produced in 2021.

A proposal is being taken to the November meeting of the ILG regarding the next steps in terms of delving deeper into the businesses within the clusters to further hone the DNA and the unique characteristics of businesses represented in the area.

In parallel, collective work is being undertaken on the Somerset inward investment website, strategy and propositions which is being informed by the innovation district work.

4. Create real focal points and avoid dilution – being implemented

The three physical innovation centres of the Somerset Energy Innovation Centres (SEIC) in Sedgemoor, the Digital Innovation Centre on Firepool in Taunton (DIC) and the iAero innovation centre in Yeovil represent the key entry gateways to the Somerset innovation ecosystem.

An organisation will imminently be appointed to deliver the initial phase of a three year innovation ecosystem and business support linked to these 3 physical centres, but intended to connect with other public and private sector support and cluster networks across Somerset, wider than just the occupants of the physical centres.

5. Learn and practice new roles and habits for Local Government – for the new Unitary

One of the actions proposed was to commit some dedicated resource/capacity to support the running of the Innovation Leadership Group and its future Governance and operating model.

As under point 2, this is a discussion for the Executive under the new Unitary authority after April 2023.

6. Consolidate effort into clear phases with stage gates to ensure real progress – see Connected Places Catapult first year action plan in the report

The clear phases have been set out in the action plan at the end of the Connected Places Catapult report.

The first major one of establishing an annual innovation exchange has been successfully completed.

Q.2. Is the £50k “Innovation Districts” money identified in the Economic Initiatives EMR (BE019) table the monies set aside for the Innovation Exchange conference? 05/10/2022

Yes.

It cost £35k in total to stage the Somerset Innovation Exchange event. £20k was secured from the Somerset £4m Business Rates Pool pot and so only £15k of SWT funds was utilised to stage the event. Income generated from ticket sales amounted to £1.5k, which further off-set the cost, resulting in a final cost to SWT of only £13.5k.

Q.3. What are the outcomes of the Innovation Exchange? What options are there for the new Council to expand upon this?

The initial aims of the event were set out as:

- To showcase / raise awareness of Somerset's innovation assets, activities, and support services, among local businesses, partners and stakeholders, and with Government.

- To strengthen innovation networking and knowledge sharing among Somerset's businesses in order to increase collaborative opportunities.
- To build Government awareness of, engagement with, and investment in, innovation activities within Somerset.

The outcomes are set out against each individual aim in the table below:

Aim	Outcome
<p>Showcase / Raise awareness of Somerset's innovation assets, activities, and support services, among local businesses, partners and stakeholders, and with Government.</p>	<p>Engagement of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 speakers • 8 session leads • 23 Expo and showcase exhibitors <p>Pre-event marketing campaign focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses exhibiting at the event • Business representatives speaking at the event • Themed sessions at the event such as skills and finance. <p>Further awareness raising through partners within the County such as Somerset Chamber of Commerce, SWT, Somerset County Council and other key SW stakeholders.</p>
<p>Strengthen innovation networking and knowledge sharing among Somerset's businesses in order to increase collaborative opportunities.</p>	<p>Collaborative opportunities were increased through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of pre-event newsletter and connections and engagements made pre-event over social media • Dissemination of information and knowledge through the content of the event • Provision of delegate contact list at the event to facilitate networking • Connections, networking and knowledge sharing among the businesses that attended the event. • Data gathered from event feedback survey to be utilised as a tool to assist with planning future interventions • Contact list of delegates for engagement in future innovation activity • Commitment from Innovate UK to commit local contact to work with us more closely in Somerset and for the speaker to sit on the Innovation Leadership Group and further follow up with Connected Places Catapult

Build Government awareness of, engagement with, and investment in, innovation activities within Somerset.	<p>The event attracted engagement, participation and endorsement from:</p> <p>Government organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovate UK • Innovate UK Edge • Department for International Trade • Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles <p>Non-governmental organisations with specific interest in innovation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech South West • Connected Places Catapult • Bridgwater and Taunton College • Yeovil College
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In addition, the event has acted as a vehicle to:

- Demonstrate that the Council is committed to supporting Innovation as part of ambitious plans to accelerate the growth of the innovation economy and create a thriving and connected peer to peer business destination
- Demonstrate that Taunton/Somerset is forward thinking and a place in which to confidently invest.
- Act as a call to action for businesses to get involved
- Help shape the most appropriate activity to take forward to develop innovation across Somerset in line with business need

Actions to take forward with partner organisations:

1. Short term action plan being progressed with the ILG contained within the action plan in the report.
2. Support launch and integration of the innovation support service (ecosystem) with the Innovation District and Digital Innovation Centre
3. Supporting the Digital Innovation centre Governance and operating model and driving business occupation and events
4. Undertake the mapping of the sectors/clusters to identify the differentiation factors if any
5. Review the outcomes of the Innovation Exchange and plan for future events/webinars
6. Review opportunities arising from Shared Prosperity Fund for bids
7. Future Governance and operational model to be determined under new Unitary.

