

January 2013 - THINK TANK AT C-TECH



The MDA held a Think Tank feasibility workshop on 25th January 2013 at C-Tech Innovation in Capenhurst. This initial consultation meeting was attended by 22 delegates from a variety of backgrounds including private sector business support, science and technology, SMEs, DCLG / ERDF etc. The aim was to engage relevant partners to advise on the type of body required. Feedback was that an Advisory Board for the MDA area would be a good idea, but that it needed to include representatives with clout from the area's anchor companies as well as the business support community. The work became part of planning for the Future of the MDA.

February 2013 - INNOVATION NETWORK EVENT

MDA Strategy Group met at Redwither Tower on 6th February. Among the items discussed were the Welsh Government City Regions report, and the Industrial Innovation Corridor study.



On 22nd February the first MDA Innovation Network Business Breakfast of 2013 took place at Redwither Tower, Wrexham. A total of 98 delegates attended this event, which included a series of 12 'elevator pitches' showcasing businesses within the network and presenting the latest news on current opportunities within the area, and 17 exhibitors. 25% of delegates completed our survey with 50% saying they had made 4+ new connections during the event.

March 2013 - INNOVATION CORRIDOR REPORT



MDA, NWEF and Cheshire West & Chester Council (Altogether Better) jointly commissioned AED International to produce a Concept Proposal for the development and promotion of the M56/A55 Industrial Innovation Corridor. The final AED Report was released on 12th March.



University of Chester

The MDA Strategy Group met at University of Chester on 19th March. Among the items discussed were cross border barriers to economic growth and feedback from a meeting between BIS North West and the MDA.

The MDA helped to establish the STEMcat partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council and attended a meeting at the Riverside Innovation Centre in Chester. STEMcat has been set up to raise the awareness of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) careers and includes partners such as Cheshire and MerseySTEM, Wirral Met, Semta, Cogent, National Apprenticeship Service and the Cheshire and Warrington LEP.



April 2013 - MDA BOARD WELCOMES NEW CHAIR

The MDA's AGM and first Board Meeting of 2013 was held at the Advanced Composite Training Centre, Hawarden, on 10th April. Cllr Bob Dutton OBE succeeded Cllr Herbert Manley as MDA Chair and Cllr Pat Hackett was elected Vice-Chair. The Board meeting involved a presentation on the M56 Innovation Corridor, next steps following the Think Tank workshop and the future development of the MDA.



The Energy Innovation Centre in Ellesmere Port hosted the Innovation Network on 19th April. The event was once again well attended and included a series of 10 'elevator pitches' that showcased businesses within the network and presented the latest news on current opportunities within the area. 25% of those who attended filled in our online survey with 70% rating the event as 'excellent'.

The MDA attended a STEMCAT meeting held at Ellesmere Port Library on 24th April. A presentation was delivered by Cogent and a regional event planned for June.

May 2013 - WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

The Dee Region Report was published by the Welsh Government in May 2013 with a short consultation period on its findings to 17th May. The report's recommendations were as follows:

- to become a real strategic force in the region, the MDA will need to be given relevant powers and funding. It will also need to change its structure, to incorporate strong private and education (HE/FE) sector membership.
- the MDA should have the authority to develop a cross-border labour market plan, and to develop and deliver a regional skills agenda.
- the MDA should take the lead in promoting the region for investment purposes, making a virtue of its cross-border nature and rejecting the existing tendency to focus marketing on one side of the border or the other.
- there should be an MoU between the Welsh and English Governments covering cross-border transport planning (binding on independent bodies such as Network Rail), with the MDA, or Taith and the Cheshire LTP, having a statutory role to be heard on proposals of regional significance.

The MDA responded positively to the consultation and urged the Welsh Government to accept the recommendations and began planning the future development of the MDA.

June 2013 - INNOVATION NETWORK EVENT

The MDA presented on the Industrial Innovation Corridor at a STEM event on 12th June at Riverside Innovation Centre in Chester. The aim of the event was to increase opportunities for partnership working between STEM stakeholders in the region and provide opportunity for CPD and networking.



On 14th June, OptIC Glyndwr University, St Asaph, hosted the MDA Innovation Network Business Breakfast. A total of 95 delegates attended the event including a series of 8 'elevator pitches' and 18 exhibitors. 30% of those who attended filled in our online survey with 60% indicating that the network is likely to have impact on generating new sales in their company.

The MDA team welcomed Bethany Skinner when she joined the Mersey Dee Alliance on 24th June as a Modern Apprentice.

July 2013 - MDA BOARD AT CHESTER UNIVERSITY



The MDA Board meeting on 11th July was hosted by University of Chester in the Westminster Building. Charlie Woodcock gave a presentation about the University's development plans including the new Food Technology Centre under construction. Paul Hildreth gave a presentation to the board to introduce his proposal for using the MDA as a case study for his PhD. Other things discussed included next steps on from Dr Haywood's Dee Region report, M56 Innovation Corridor and the International Festival for Business 2014.



The MDA gave a presentation to the STEMCAT group on 24th July about the Mersey Dee Alliance and M56 Industrial Innovation Corridor. With the help of the MDA, it was also decided that inviting Welsh partners to join the group would be key to improving the delivery of STEM in the region.

August 2013 - MDA WEBSITE UPDATED

Throughout the month of August, the Mersey Dee Alliance website went through an update. The website was transferred to new software and was given a new look. Not only updating the look, the content of the website was also updated to make sure the information was up to date. We also started to schedule two news items a day to upload to our feed – these being current business, economic and development stories.



The MDA attended a meeting on 22nd August with IchemE and AstraZeneca to discuss the implications of "Chemical Engineering Matters" and the "Concept Proposal for the Development and Promotion of the M56/A55 Industrial Innovation Corridor"

Paul Hildreth undertook a site visit of the Mersey Dee Alliance area from 27th August – 29th August. Over the three days Paul spoke to key MDA partners and completed visits of Chester, Ellesmere Port, Flintshire and Denbighshire.

September 2013 - DR HAYWOOD MEETS MDA



MDA Strategy Group met at CWAC HQ on 3rd September.

Following the Strategy Group Meeting on 3rd September, members were invited to a meeting with Dr Elizabeth Haywood to discuss the Great Western Partnership, Dee Region Cross-Border Economy and the role of the MDA. Dr Haywood gave the MDA key pointers for its future development.

Paul Hildreth completed the second week of his MDA area site visit from 3rd – 5th September completing further interviews in Chester and Wirral.

On 19th September Melissa Parsons attended the North West Business Leadership Team's Innovation Report Workshop on behalf of MDA, attending with select senior Innovation Leaders from across the region.

October 2013 - MDA EVENT AT LAUNCH FBW 2013

The Mersey Dee Alliance opened Flintshire Business Week 2013 with our Innovation Network Business Breakfast at Deeside Leisure Centre. A record 148 delegates attended the event on Tuesday 15th October including a series of 11 'elevator pitches' and 20 exhibitors. 25% of those who attended filled in our online survey with 50% indicating the network is likely to impact on new business growth and development.



**Flintshire
Business
Week**

13

15th October - 25th October

The MDA welcomed PhD student Herryman Moono from Lancaster University who is undertaking a project entitled "the Role of Coordinating Agencies in Regional Growth Strategy" using the MDA as a case study.

Herryman agreed to keep the MDA informed of his progress on a regular basis and will start his studies based in the area in October 2014.

On 31st October, Vince Cable opened the Fab Lab Ellesmere Port which the MDA supported the bid of. The Fab Lab is a partnership between The Manufacturing Institute, Cheshire West and Chester Council, the Ellesmere Port Development Board and the Cheshire & Warrington LEP.



November 2013 - HS2 LEADERS MEETING



On 25th November, a HS2 North Wales and Cross Border Leaders Meeting took place in Northop to exchange views with the national HS2 Growth Task Force about HS2 benefits for the area and in particular what needs to be considered to unlock the schemes that will lead to economic growth.



The MDA Board Meeting on 27th November was hosted by Sharp Manufacturing in Wrexham. Paul Hildreth gave an update on his recent findings and Nigel Wilcock from Mickledore gave a presentation regarding the Growth and Investment Prospectus. Governance & Linkage with EAB/LEPs was discussed.

December 2013 - INNOVATION NETWORK EVENT

On Friday 6th December, Chester University hosted the MDA Innovation Network Business Breakfast at the Riverside Innovation Centre. A total number of 103 delegates attend the event including a series of 11 'elevator' pitches and 25 exhibitors. In our post-event survey, 55% of delegates said that the network is likely to impact on new sales and 40% new growth.



The last STEMCAT meeting of 2013 was held at Fab Lab Ellesmere Port on Tuesday 3rd December. Items on the agenda included a £10k My Science Bid and plans for the STEM Festival 2014 being organised by BOOST Ellesmere Port.



January 2014 - MICKLEDORE STUDY UNDERWAY



Mickledore

Solutions in regional development

A Growth and Investment Prospectus to be undertaken by Mickledore Consulting got underway taking into consideration the recommendations made by Dr Haywood's Dee Region Report and the M56/A55 Innovation Corridor. Key deliverables include:

- Executive summary on shared cross regional priorities for communications purposes
- Inward investment key messages
- Short review of economic corridors in Europe
- Prioritised projects matched to funding opportunities
- Options/recommendation on Governance & addressing barriers

The MDA also set up a Twitter account with the username @mdainnov8. This will be used to promote the MDA Innovation Network and to date has 35 followers including Sci-Tech Daresbury, MerseySTEM and Glyndwr University.



Melissa Parsons attended Paul Hildreth's PhD 'Upgrade Seminar' at UCL in mid January 2014. Paul has now chosen the MDA as his main (and currently only) case study. Paul will now give closer focus to the central issue of realising the economic and social potential of the MDA area and how governance institutions (locally and nationally) can contribute to this. There is a very strong emphasis on understanding the MDA economy.

The MDA/Mickledore presented at the North Wales Regional Leaders Board on 24th January along with Dr Haywood, to outline the Growth and Investment Prospectus and cross border issues.

The MDA also presented at the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the Heads of Economic Development in North Wales on the MDA work programme and its future direction.

Representatives from the MDA met with the Welsh Finance Minister Jane Hutt on 30th January 2014 in Wrexham, in partnership with the WLGA. The Minister outlined the context for her interest. Early in January the Minister met with Lord Deighton, Commercial Secretary to the Treasury and stressed the significance of cross border issues in Wales and the need to consider how both Governments consider assisting cross border infrastructure projects. Further to the meeting the Minister undertook to report to her colleagues on the meeting and to highlight identified issues at the next opportunity at a UK Government level.

2014/15

The 2014/15 year will bring new challenges and opportunities for the MDA, including building on the Greengauge and Mickledore studies, and aligning with the relevant economic partnerships across the region to realise economic potential.

The potential for an Integrated Transport Project building on the NEWITT work is something for the MDA to consider.



