

# Distinctly Birmingham

## Europe Association Steering Group 17.01.14

### *Minutes*

Present:

Steve Harding	BCU (chair)
Clare Lewis	DanceXchange
Heather Law	Birmingham City Council
Abdul Qadir	Birmingham City Council
Jonathan Webber	Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
Phil Bennion	MEP
Paul Knobbs	Aston University
Katharine Fuller	Innovation Birmingham Ltd
James Woodcock	International Synergies Ltd
Jon Bloomfield	Innovation Birmingham Ltd
Andy Roadnight	University of Warwick
Gina Rippon	Aston University
Val Birchall	Birmingham City Council
Sandy Taylor	Birmingham City Council
Pam Waddell	Birmingham Science City
Mohammed Zahir	Birmingham City Council
Xavier Rodde	University of Birmingham
Ellen McAdam	Birmingham Museums
Isla Aguilar	BE Festival
Liz Baines	CBSO
Miquel Oyarz	BE Festival
Lloyd Broad	Birmingham City Council
Jennifer Crisp	Birmingham City Council
Neena Gill	MEP
Beverley Nielsen	BCU & Birmingham Made Me

Apologies

Keith Stokes-Smith	Honorary Consul for Lithuania
Tim Manson	Marketing Birmingham
Peter Laybourn	International Synergies Ltd

## 1. Welcome

### 1a. Introductions

- Jennifer Crisp (European Affairs Manager, BCC) welcomed everyone to the first meeting and outlined the rationale behind the association and its purpose. The European Association was formed as part of BCC's Distinctly Birmingham Strategy which was launched on the 20<sup>th</sup> September to support the city and local partners in their international work.
- Area based associations have been set up in relation to China and the Far East, North and South America, and the Commonwealth. The purpose of these Associations is to bring together city partners to develop ideas, and encourage information sharing and opportunities for joint working where appropriate.
- Given the potential for a very large number of people being interested in European work (approx. 90 attended the Europe workshop at the launch of the International Strategy in September), in order to keep discussion manageable this meeting is intended as a Europe Association *Steering Group*.
- Steve Harding from Birmingham City University was introduced as the interim chair of the European Association.
- Round table introductions were made. Each organisation was asked to share information about one European project or initiative they are involved in. **See appendix 1.**

## 2. Role and purpose of the European Association Steering Group

- **It was agreed that** the role of the group is to: promote better sharing of information, as well as improving joining-up and co-ordination of European activities across the city, and to devise an action plan to this end. It should not duplicate existing structures but utilise them.
- The group's focus will be on maximising (non-structural) funding opportunities to support Birmingham's priorities, deepening exchange and partnerships, and enhancing Birmingham's reputation and influence in Europe.

## 3. Joint European priorities for 2014

- Four priority areas that were presented by Jennifer as set out in the discussion paper on identifying joint priorities and actions. There was support for the priorities and many of the actions. During discussions the following points were discussed:

- Partners should seek to involve smaller inexperienced organisations in accessing EU funding opportunities, this could be provided through briefings and support sessions. This should also include partner searches and consortia building where appropriate.
  - Larger organisations such as universities are already experienced in accessing EU funding opportunities and can help shape and direct the Europe Association's priorities in terms of large scale funding opportunities for instance Horizon 2020 and KIC, projects could be used to help meet some of the city's priorities.
  - That we should continue to use existing structures like the RDI (research, development and innovation) and EEN (Enterprise Europe Network) groups to support and signpost interested parties.
  - That the Distinctly Birmingham website (currently under development) should be used to signpost and share key information with local partners, providing a repository of documents, etc.
  - There would be merit in a potential event showcasing the work of partners already working across the EU, highlighting the benefits of working in Europe
  - Need to make connections to key organisations who will have extensive contacts with sectors such as RAWM for the Third Sector and the Chamber for SMEs
  - How can we better support experience exchange? Simple people and mobility exchange.
- **It was agreed that** Jonathan Webber and Jennifer Crisp to discuss how the EEN can further support European opportunities in relation to SMEs and trade, perhaps by setting up a sub-group on this matter.
  - **It was agreed that** BCC will set up a series of briefing sessions for specific sectors e.g. schools, third sector etc wishing to access EU Funds.
  - Larger organisations already working across EU funding opportunities to continue to work and network with each other through existing structures (i.e. RDI Group, etc. ), to share ideas and opportunities for collaborative working in accessing EU funds
  - That we should all report on our EU successes, this will also inform the debate on the benefits of EU engagement to Birmingham.
  - **It was agreed that** BCC would develop the discussion paper into an action plan, taking into account the discussions, and following up with colleagues and organisations before the next meeting. ***See the attached document.***

#### 4. Information sharing

- A website is currently under development to promote information sharing about how Birmingham's European & International Strategy, Distinctly Birmingham, is being delivered.
- Partners are encouraged, on an on-going basis to submit news articles about European initiatives and projects that they are involved in.

## 5. Governance and organisational issues

- **It was agreed** by the group that Steve Harding will chair the Europe Association throughout 2014.
- **It was agreed** to hold 3 European Association Steering Group meetings a year, which would be organised by Birmingham City Council. The next meeting will be in May and the proposed date will be circulated with the minutes.
- **It was agreed** that a 4<sup>th</sup> meeting would be held towards the end of the year but that this would be open to the much larger group of stakeholders and would be a networking opportunity and an chance to take stock of progress made to date.

### Next meeting

Time: 13:00-14:30

Date: Friday 9 May

Venue: Innovation Birmingham Ltd  
Holt Street  
Birmingham Science Park Aston,  
B7 4BB

Agenda to follow. Will include a focus the Climate KIC (Knowledge and Innovation Community) and other KIC developments.

**Appendix 1 – Roundtable update on key European projects and initiatives partners are involved in:**

- BCU is part of a new European Design and Innovation Platform bringing together SMEs and regions across the EU.
- Last year's BE Festival tour of Madrid sold out.
- CBSO has 15 European concerts in 17 days planned this year.
- BMAG has an international loans programme which the current photorealism exhibition is part of.
- University of Birmingham is working with the European Commission on issues relating to the delivery of a new chemical Directive. Identifying Horizon 2020 opportunities.
- Birmingham City Council's business enterprise and innovation team is currently involved in two Interreg projects, COGITA which looks at corporate social responsibility and SMEs and Creative SPIN which is on creative 'spill-over' opportunities.
- Birmingham Science City and University of Warwick are co-ordinating a West Midlands consortium of partners who will form part of a much broader European consortium that is bidding to become the new Active and Healthy Ageing KIC (Knowledge and Innovation Community).
- Birmingham City Council's Climate Change and Environment team is co-ordinating a joint meeting of the EUROCITIES Environment Forum and Mobility Forum on the theme of sustainable mobility. Birmingham is currently Chair of the EUROCITIES Environment Forum.
- Birmingham City Council's Culture team is active in the EUROCITIES Culture Forum and its Access to Culture Working Group.
- Aston University's Brain Centre has signed a memorandum of understanding with a brain research organisation in Lyon. Identifying Horizon 2020 opportunities. Also working on a EU Researcher Night project with the Library of Birmingham.
- University of Warwick is interested in the Advance Manufacturing KIC the call for which is expected in 2016 given their connections to the High Value Manufacturing Catapult. Identifying Horizon 2020 opportunities.
- Innovation Birmingham Ltd continues to lead for the West Midlands on the Climate KIC which brings together a large European consortium of academic, public and private partners. The Climate KICs Pioneers into Practice programme offers funded 2 x 1 month placements for professionals from all sectors whose role relates to climate change. Innovation Birmingham is also looking for experts in a range of areas such as industrial symbiosis and the built environment, travel costs will be covered.

- International Synergies Ltd is currently active in the Climate KIC and is delivering industrial symbiosis programmes in several EU countries.
- Phil Bennion MEP sits on the European Parliament's Employment and Transport Committees. He highlighted the fact that HS2 was part of the TEN-T Connecting Europe programme, and the opportunities for SMEs.
- Birmingham Chamber of Commerce is responsible for part of the Europe Enterprise Network service and Europe Direct. It is currently involved in EuropeAid and Erasmus for Entrepreneurs.
- DanceXchange will have performers from Europe taking part in this year's International Dance Festival.