

# Distinctly Birmingham

## EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION STEERING GROUP MEETING

### NOTES

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#### Practical details:

Time: 13:00-14:30  
Date: Friday 19 September 2014

Venue: Committee Room 6  
The Council House  
1 Victoria Square  
Birmingham  
B1 1BB

#### Present:

Steve Harding (Chair)	Birmingham City University
Jennifer Crisp	Birmingham City Council
Mohammed Zahir	Birmingham City Council
Karolina Medwecka-Piasecka	Birmingham City Council
Sonja Eichmann	BCC/District Council Berlin
Heather Law	Birmingham City Council
Judy Owen	BE Festival
Linda Saunders	DanceXchange
Stuart Russon	Birmingham City Council
Abdul Qadir	Birmingham City Council
Peter Laybourn	International Synergies Ltd
Pam Waddell	Birmingham Science City
Paul Knobbs	Aston University
Symon Easton	Birmingham City Council
Norman Cave	Bournville College
Stephen Maddock (thematic part of meeting)	CBSO

#### Apologies:

Val Birchall	Birmingham City Council
Katharine Fuller	Innovation Birmingham Ltd
Gina Rippon	Aston University
Sadie Newman	BE Festival
Ellen McAdam	Birmingham Museums Trust
Phil Bennion	MEP, Liberal Democrats
Jonathan Webber	UKTI / Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
Sandy Taylor/Jackie Homan	Birmingham City Council

Lloyd Broad	Birmingham City Council
John Hillen	South and City College Birmingham
Keith Stokes-Smith	Consul for Lithuania
Malcolm Harbour	MEP, Conservative Party
Neena Gill	MEP candidate, Labour Party
Miquel Oyarzun	BE Festival
Andrew Roadnight	University of Warwick
Jon Bloomfield	Innovation Birmingham Ltd
Liz Baines	CBSO
Tim Manson	Marketing Birmingham
Xavier Rodde	University of Birmingham
Richard Kenny	Birmingham City Council
Clare Lewis	DanceXchange
Beverly Nielsen	Birmingham City University
Raj S Mack	Birmingham City Council
Rachel Cockett	Birmingham Museums Trust
Anthea McIntyre	MEP, Conservative Party
Ellen McAdam	Birmingham Museums Trust
Gina Rippon	Aston University

### 1. Welcome and introductions

- Attendees introduced themselves. Apologies received were noted.
- Steve Harding (Chair) welcomed the group and explained the meeting structure: first part – focused on the Strategy and the second on the creative economy.

### 2. Notes from the previous meeting

- Notes from the previous meeting were agreed, no outstanding actions were identified.

### 3. Update on Europe Association action plan Priority 1 – Deepening exchange, exposure and partnerships

#### 3.a. Erasmus Plus awareness raising seminars aimed at schools and colleges

- Abdul Qadir (Birmingham City Council) presented an update on the Erasmus Plus programme, its launch, eligibility and deadlines. He also mentioned a plan for hosting an awareness raising seminar aimed at schools and colleges. He stressed an importance of providing some structured support for potential applicants as the programme's deadlines were tight and finding partners can prove difficult. Ecorys, a national agency responsible for the English programme would need to be invited to the seminar as they don't plan to host any information events in Birmingham. Jennifer Crisp (Birmingham City Council) added that Erasmus could be a great way of introducing smaller organisations into EU funding.

#### 3.b. Aston University's neuroscience links with our partner city of Lyon

- Paul Knobbs reported on a forthcoming trip of 18 scientists from the Aston Brain Centre to Lyon (23 to 25 September). They have been invited as a part of the newly established Lyon Birmingham partnership in neuroscience. The meeting will focus on sharing the latest developments in neuroscience with scientists from the Neurodis Foundation based in Lyon. During the trip, scientists from both groups will come together to discuss ideas and developments in the areas of epilepsy, central pain and neuroimaging. There will also be a discussion on how the relationship can be developed in the future with regards to funding.

The City of Lyon have also invited Deputy Lord Mayor Cllr Mike Leddy and the Deputy Lord Mayoress to attend a formal reception in order to officially open the event.

### **3.c. 'Buddying up' mentors for EU funding opportunities**

- Steve Harding explained what the idea behind 'buddying up' was and confirmed that this service would be particularly useful to organisations that are applying for EU funding for the first time. Steve offered his expertise on creative art and business development. He also reported that Katharine Fuller (Innovation Birmingham Ltd), declared prior to the meeting that she could provide support on innovation. Steve reminded that this support needed to be a two-way dialogue and these interactions can benefit mentors too. Jenifer Crisp agreed saying that this activity was not about being an expert but about joined up actions. Stuart Russon (Birmingham City Council) added that this type of support would be especially important to those who didn't feel confident with the bureaucracy and jargon associated with EU funding.

## **4. Update on Priority 2 of our Action Plan – Maximising large-scale, pan-European initiatives to support the development of Birmingham's key growth sectors**

### **4.a. Active and Healthy Ageing KIC – update on submission**

- Jennifer Crisp provided update on behalf of Pam Waddell. The bid has been recently submitted with West Midlands partners (represented by West Midlands Academic Health Science Network) being one of 52 partners in the consortium. There will be a competitive selection process as there was at least one other application submitted. It was expected that the results would be announced before Christmas. Notwithstanding the result of the recent submission, partners believe that the work leading to the submission hasn't been wasted as the West Midlands partnership proved to work very effectively and this collaboration will most likely continue with or without the KIC funding. Local partners have already agreed to look into Horizon2020 opportunities.

### **4.b. Climate KIC update/key news**

- Jennifer Crisp provided update on the recent Climate KIC activities on behalf of Innovation Birmingham. The following events were briefly discussed: 1) Climate-KIC-sponsored PhD in 'The Governance of low carbon transitions in European cities' at University of Birmingham, 2) Short courses organised as a part of the autumn educational programme at Climate-KIC ('Developing the bioeconomy throughout Europe', hosted by EBRI at Aston University on 2-3 October and 'Sustainability Models for Businesses', held at Birmingham City University on 20-21 November). 3) Vote in the Climate-KIC Open Innovation Slam: <http://www.openinnovationslam.org/ideas>. As Katharine explained prior to the meeting, our submission was on 'Harvesting & Re-Using Waste Thermal Energy in Berlin Transport'.

## **5. Update on Priority 3 of our Action Plan – Supporting the city's competitiveness and innovation agenda through European working**

### **5.a. Birmingham's response to the EU Smart City 'invitation to commitments'**

- Stuart Russon briefly presented an update on the European Commission's 'Invitation for Commitment' launched under the European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities. The European Commission expects cities to sign a Commitment which is a measurable and concrete engagement in support of one or more focus areas. One of those focus areas is the digital agenda focussing on smart cities. Digital Birmingham has responded to the Commission's invitation and we hope to hear if it is accepted in due course. Digital

Birmingham's Raj Mack was invited to the EC's Open Days which will give us access to the discussion on the European digital agenda.

#### **5.b. Horizon 2020 awareness raising seminars aimed at SMEs**

- A potential workshop for universities and SMEs was discussed. Stuart Russon reminded everyone that Horizon 2020 was a different programme from FP7 with the major difference being an expected impact outside academia. The European Commission wants to bring local authorities into the future projects. Birmingham City Council has recently completed an exercise on H2020 and mapped out the areas the Council would be interested in working on. Paul Knobbs (Aston University) indicated problems with attracting the right type of SMEs. Paul suggested that only certain types of SMEs (those that already have R&D/technology capabilities, that are 'research ready') should be targeted. There is a risk that the number of SMEs getting through is too small (4%). Steve Harding suggested contacting our Brussels Office to gauge the situation in Brussels on the SME success rate within the H2020 programme.

Stuart Russon emphasised that it was not just the SME instrument that was open for SMEs to apply. All calls of H2020 programme are open to SMEs to apply.

Peter Laybourn (International Synergies Ltd) informed the group that they had recently submitted a successful H2020 bid under priority 6b on Urban Metabolism. His small SME is planning on putting another proposal through soon. Jennifer Crisp suggested that case studies like Peter's could be very useful at the future workshop.

Discussion focused on the planned workshop and it was decided that there needs to be a critical task completed before the workshops that would allow us to access the people that are likely to submit or join future projects.

- *It was agreed that BCC would contact Birmingham Chamber and see whether they could help in accessing relevant SMEs.*

#### **5.c. News / updates from the Chamber / Enterprise Europe Network on EU support to SMEs including SME week**

- A representative of the Chamber was not present. Attention was drawn to EEN's EU SME week events and their twitter account for more news and information: [@EEN\\_Midlands](https://twitter.com/EEN_Midlands)

### **6. Update on Priority 4 of our action plan – Develop greater joined-up working among local partners, as well as closer working with our ambassadors in Europe to further enhance Birmingham's reputation and influence**

#### **6.a. Reception for Brussels office partners and stakeholders on 8 October during Open Days**

- Jennifer Crisp provided update on the reception hosted by Cllr Bore during this year's Open Days in Brussels. The idea behind this event is to bring all Brussels Office partners together. We are expecting universities, SMEs and companies like Jaguar Land Rover to be present. These stakeholders don't necessarily come together otherwise whereas their interactions can be very fruitful. Another reason behind the event is for Cllr Bore to outline Birmingham's response to the European Commission's consultation on the Urban Agenda. Birmingham-based organisations present in Brussels on that day is welcome to come to the reception.

#### **6.b. Update on Distinctly Birmingham website**

- Karolina Medwecka (Birmingham City Council) provided an update on the Distinctly Birmingham portal. After its launch in March 2014, the website has become increasingly attractive to visitors. In May, 2014 the corresponding Twitter account @DistinctlyBham was launched which almost instantly tripled the traffic. Currently, the website attracts up to 3,270 visitors weekly. An increased traffic is expected after the quieter summer season.

Karolina encouraged partners to follow @DistinctlyBham twitter account and subscribe to the newsletter. She also reminded partners about the possibility of showcasing their events and articles on the website's home page. This can be done by following the link: <http://distinctlybirmingham.com/news-events/update-us-on-your-events/> or through email: [distinctly@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:distinctly@birmingham.gov.uk)

Finally, Karolina mentioned that the website is getting a new look which would make it even more user friendly and informative. BCC is also currently developing a new functionality: a page on Education that will improve our work with schools and colleges (information on workshops and funding available, partner search facility and a dedicated space for case studies).

#### **6.c. Update on Benefits to Birmingham of being in the EU publication**

- Heather Law (Birmingham City Council) presented her paper on the Benefits of being in EU publication. She stated that the case studies received from partners were very good. The idea is to make the publication readable for people who don't understand EU jargon. It has been agreed that the document will be produced in an electronic format only. The document will be shared and discussed with Cllr Albert Bore. Steve Harding suggested that another editorial meeting should be organised in early October. Norman Cave (Bournville College) commented that there should be more impact featured in the document. He agreed for the document to quote his opinion: 'There wouldn't be an FE sector without European Funding'. Pam Waddell (Innovation Birmingham) suggested that more people outside the Association should be invited to co-operate (i.e. big private companies like Jaguar Land Rover) to make this document less heavily focused on funding.

#### **7. AOB**

- Sonja Eichmann (Treptow-Köpenick District Council Berlin) kindly offered help in sourcing partners from Berlin for various international projects. Sonja's email address: [sonja.eichmann@ba-tk.berlin.de](mailto:sonja.eichmann@ba-tk.berlin.de)

#### **8. Close of core part of the meeting**

- Steve Harding confirmed the date of the next meeting - 12 December. Venue tbc, suggestions welcome. It was suggested that the thematic focus be on examples of the FE sector's European engagement and Norman Cave agreed to be a contact point in co-ordinating the input from the FE sector for the next meeting.

#### **Thematic part of meeting: Culture and creative Industries**

#### **9. Introduction to the aims of this thematic session on culture and creative industries**

Steve Harding reported that it was the intention to have a different thematic focus to the second half of each meeting of the European Association Steering Group. The thematic focus at this meeting would be on culture and creative industries as the Association would be interested to know this sector's perception of working in Europe.

#### **10. Current examples of European activities in culture and creativity**

Linda Saunders from DanceXchange gave a presentation on the biennial International Dance Festival and their recent edition that was particularly successful making the festival one of

the biggest dance festivals in Europe. She also stressed that the economic impact of the festival should not be undermined – the number of overseas and national visitors made the festival one of the more important cultural events in Birmingham.

An important part of Linda's presentation related to the Metropolis project currently being developed by DanceXchange with the intention to submit a proposal to the Creative Europe programme on 1 October. The project will bring together theatres from 5 European countries (Birmingham is the sixth partner) to build a collaborative framework of commissioning to create individual works that will become part of a Metropolis series of performance events premiered first in May 2016 during the International Dance Festival. The idea is to use dance to explore the cities of the future. DanceXchange is contributing to a wider debate on bringing other art forms to the project, i.e. architecture. There is a scope for new cross-innovation partnerships, as Linda explained visualisation of data could be a great example of collaboration between artists and universities or companies.

Abdul Qadir offered to look and comment on the Creative Europe bid before its submission.

BE Festival's Judy Owen gave a presentation on the recent (5<sup>th</sup>) edition of the Festival highlighting one of their biggest achievements, namely getting the MPA funding from the Arts Council which gives them three years of guaranteed funding. She mentioned that after a very successful edition of the July's festival, they were taking BE Festival on tour, starting with an event at the Barbican in London in early October. There are also plans to expand on the BEMix project and invite new countries in, i.e. Finland, Slovenia, Italy, focusing on the subject of democracy. Judy explained that BE Festival would benefit from mentoring and would certainly value some support in putting the EU funding application together.

Stephen Maddock (CBSO) gave a short overview of the Symphony Orchestra's international engagement. He stressed that their international work had been driven by the location of audiences for classical music. Hence, their activity concentrated around the Western European countries. It has only been recently, that CBSO managed to do a project with 7 Eastern European countries. This resulted in a very fruitful tour with 16 concerts organised. Stephen also reported that he had been approached by a music organisation from Rome who wanted CBSO to be a partner in their Creative Europe bid. Despite the project being interesting, CBSO had to reject the offer due to a very short deadline and a lack of clarity on some of the proposed activities. There might be scope for them joining in for the final two years of this project should the bid be successful. Stephen underlined the importance of getting to know the international partners and the clarity as to who would be responsible for the project.

At the end of the discussion Stuart Russon encouraged creative industries to look into different streams of funding not only Creative Europe, i.e. digital, health programmes.

#### **11. Resources: Update on Creative Europe seminar held on 9 June**

Stuart Russon provided an update on the seminar on Creative Europe programme held at the Council House on 9 June. Stuart reported that 44 attendees registered to the event and as a result of the seminar, two applications had come through. A number of organisations that were present at the seminar admitted that they didn't have the capacity or knowledge to become a lead partner. There is a lot of bureaucracy involved in EU funded projects which is a big issue for most small organisations. Mentoring activity could help them get the confidence and encourage them to take next steps. Judy Owen confirmed that links with bigger organisations, like universities could help them make their bid stronger (i.e. democracy link) as well as it could help them with co-financing.

## **12. Results of survey on international activity in Birmingham's cultural sector and views on taking this forward**

Symon Easton, covering for Val Birchall (Birmingham City Council), presented update on the on-line exercise conducted recently to map the cultural sector's international activity. Symon reported that this exercise had not been finalised yet. So far, we've only managed to collate information on Birmingham's presence abroad. Inward delegations were not included. Also some institutions had not sent sufficient information yet. There were plans to continue the work through Birmingham Arts Partnership (BAP) and possibly include sectors that haven't been invited so far, i.e. independent music sector. Steve Harding suggested organising another session on creative economy in January to continue the discussion.

## **13. Close of meeting**