



Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

28 April 2011

Dear Sirs

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Enterprise Zones: An Expression of Interest

As an established internationally renowned seat of learning, Oxfordshire is world-class in the transfer of knowledge out of academia and research centres into the businesses of the future. At its heart lies a resident community whose entrepreneurial spirit brings with it a shared interest in realising its economic potential to the full.

Oxfordshire has a concentration of specialised science and technology without parallel in the UK. Indeed it has the largest concentration of research and development activity in Western Europe. This knowledge base and expertise enables the creation of many new and fast growing businesses in high performance engineering, biotechnology and medical instruments.

However, the full potential of the Oxfordshire economy has yet to be realised. Whilst our strengths form the basis for many business starts-up, our ability to nurture these into medium sized businesses is more limited. As a consequence our economy is still heavily dependent upon the public sector.

At the heart of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership is a commitment to:

- Create additional sustainable private sector employment, in the process helping to:
- Reduce the dependency on the public sector for longer-term growth and prosperity.

This focus on supporting and encouraging the drivers for innovation and wealth creation in is the key to developing long term sustainable economic growth.

We welcome the prospectus for Enterprise Zones as it offers our Partnership access to opportunities that have the potential to support our ambition

Our aim is to develop markets and create private sector jobs in those sectors that have the greatest potential and global competitiveness such as:

- Low carbon and green technologies;
- Advanced material and engineering;

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- Space and other high value R&D science based sectors (including health care, cryogenics, etc)

In so doing our work is focused in supporting economic growth in our key spatial priorities:

- Science Vale UK –home to the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, the Science and Technology Facilities Council, the European Space Agency Centre, the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy, and Milton Park (which is one of Europe’s largest multi-user business parks).
- Eco-Bicester – where the eco-town designation is being used to act as the focus for delivering an international exemplar of sustainable development.
- Oxford – where we will continue to promote the work that already makes this a world-class centre of education, research and innovation.

Our Partnership shares the Government’s focus is committed to tackling barriers to growth, including the need to realise investment in the underlying infrastructure.

Through the Local Economic Assessment we have identified the key issues on which the Partnership is focused on addressing:

- Skills deficiencies particularly in providing opportunities for young people to become involved in the science sector
- Supporting innovation and growth, including access to finance
- The provision of high quality meaningful business support
- Securing investment for infrastructure priorities.

We welcome the prospectus for enterprise zones as illustrative of Government’s commitment to work with us to develop and implement new ways of addressing barriers to securing long-term sustainable economic growth.

We see the measures set out in the prospectus as having the potential to realise significant opportunities for additional private sector jobs in our key spatial priority areas. We therefore formally express our interest in exploring their potential at greater length with the Government.

In the absence of clear criteria upon a proposal for an enterprise zone might be assessed we are seeking a more general dialogue with Government as to how the proposals set out in the prospectus might complement our on-going work to create an enduring growth mentality.

Through such a dialogue with the government we would seek to establish whether an enterprise zone is the most appropriate mechanism as there is concern that a single location may create undesirable distortions to local markets.

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We would also wish to explore through such a dialogue whether there is a case for seeking to apply some of the proposed measures using an alternative delivery mechanisms.

We are confident that our knowledge and understanding of the economic opportunities and the barriers that need to be overcome will allow us to address the issues identified in the prospectus as part of this dialogue.

This Expression of Interest has the full support of all the partners on the Executive Board of the Enterprise Partnership which has representatives from the private, public and academic sectors of our economy.

We look forward to entering into a productive dialogue with Government, and its agencies, as part of our on-going and shared commitment to secure economic growth.

Yours faithfully

Martin Dare-Edwards
Chairman – Oxfordshire LEP