3LE Portfolio 2014

With LEPs and partners engrossed in strategic economic plans (SEPs), EU structural and investment fund strategies (ESIF 2014-20), strengthening local leadership and governance of their economies, and managing existing programmes as the market picks up, 2014 has been exciting and challenging. Thinking and influencing increasingly turned towards the 2015 general election and enhanced devolution agendas, especially in the aftermath of the Scotland referendum. Amongst major areas of work this year have been:-

Local Growth Strategies, leadership, governance and business planning:-

- Continuing my association with the 'Far South West, I assisted with the formulation of the **Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP** SEP - submitted in late March; and with the **Heart of the South West LEP** approach to Smart Specialisation in both their SEP and ESIF

- I advised a number of LEPs on their SEP - both formally and informally, including continuing my association with **SEMLEP**. It was also good to participate in the establishment of the new **LEP Network** - now run by the LEPs themselves; and undertake three advisory commissions for **LGA** on how LAs can engage with LEPs, on economic governance agendas over the 2014-20 period, and on repositioning strategies in the aftermath of the Scotland referendum.

- There was also a lot of work on how local government positions itself in LEP-land, and on the rise of Combined Authorities and other intermediate tier governance models. This was both at:-

  - national levels for **LGIU**, LGA and at conferences and events
  - local levels - with commissions such as the **Plymouth** local economic strategy, **Milton Keynes Council** on leadership and governance, and district economic growth strategy refreshes for **South Kesteven** and **Breckland**

Big data and the digital economy

- A new departure has been a major collaboration with the **Corsham Institute (Ci)** - a private sector-led NGO seeking to be one of the drivers of UK growth and skills for big data and the digital society. Ci comprises HE, Research Park, and social development footprints in Corsham; is one of three 'transformational' investment priorities in the Swindon & Wiltshire LEP SEP; and also operates as a 'think tank' and influencer of national and global agendas as the UK Centre for Digital Society

Setting up the Smart Specialisation Advisory Hub (S3AH)

- Having worked with CURDS colleagues on this in 2013, it is a huge pleasure to be engaged by the **National Centre for Universities and Business** (NCUB) to bring the S3AH to fruition by the end of the year - working closely with **HEFCE** and other partners. This culminated with a presentation of the England S3 experience at the 2nd EU Cohesion Policy Conference in Riga in February 2015.

CEME and industrial growth for Outer East London, Thurrock and Basildon

- The four local authorities of **Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Thurrock and Basildon** are collaborating on developing an innovative manufacturing, engineering and technology-led growth plan for the area, on which I am working with **CEME**.

Other notable commissions

It is pleasing to continue the association with **Ashridge** on LA leadership development, and with **Penna** on technical assessment (for executive recruitment).

A new departure in 2014 was as presenter/facilitator on the **Planning Advisory Service** 'Leaderships Essentials programme - on the role of planning in local growth and LA-LEP interfaces. I hope to broaden this relationship in 2015.

Commentary, conferences and events: I am particularly proud to work as:-

- Visiting Professor of Practice at **CURDS, Newcastle University**

- Research Associate at **Ashridge Business School**

- The author of the *Economic Development blog* for Planning/Placemaking, likely to be replaced by a monthly column in 2015

- An associate of the **Local Government Information Unit** - producing briefings this year on city deals and city development, leadership and governance (including combined authorities), and neighbourhood planning

    I am a regular speaker, facilitator and participant at conferences and events