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INNOVATION COUNCIL MEETING • 16th December 2021 via Teams

**Apologies Received from:**

James Batty  
Kate Pym  
Liz Shutt  
Vicky Addison

**Welcome to:**

Amy O'Sullivan - Strategic Advisory Board Coordinator for the GLEP  
Susannah Carr, Strategic - Projects Manager at the University of Lincoln  
Professor Stuart Humphries – Founding Director of the Lincoln Institute for Advanced Studies

The meeting considered the University of Lincoln's (UoL) 5 year strategy focusing on innovation in terms of key research areas and business engagement.

**Discussion Topic 1**

**Are the current areas of research appropriate and relevant to business? Focusing on the sectors highlighted in the Industrial Research Strategy: Agri-Food, Rural Health & Care, Green Energy, Defence and Security, Heritage & Visitor Economy.**

Although there are many areas where businesses and the University of Lincoln are already collaborating there are low levels of innovation in many SME's and there may be a need to expand into new and different sectors.

Net zero is a broad topic and UoL should have a particular focus as it is not the only university thinking about this, so where does UoL sit in the field and what is its niche?

High level considerations for UoL – what is the balance between fundamental research and innovation translational research? The University is looking to adopt a balanced and purposeful approach focusing on challenge based research.

To what extent should UoL be demand led or do we build on areas of regional importance? How should it respond?

Large demand for short sharp interventions to help with innovation and research which universities find difficult but it may be an area to explore and an opportunity for UoL to be unique. However, it would require structural changes and investment.

UoL does have an unusual degree of business engagement and adopts a system based approach which should continue to be built upon.

The need for UoL and LEPS to work together and gather intelligence on what business and industry need and want.

Skills requirement for the future. Bespoke training packages to be considered.

Innovation to be focused on real world problems. Where are the opportunities in the future?

Look at national and international models that have worked well.

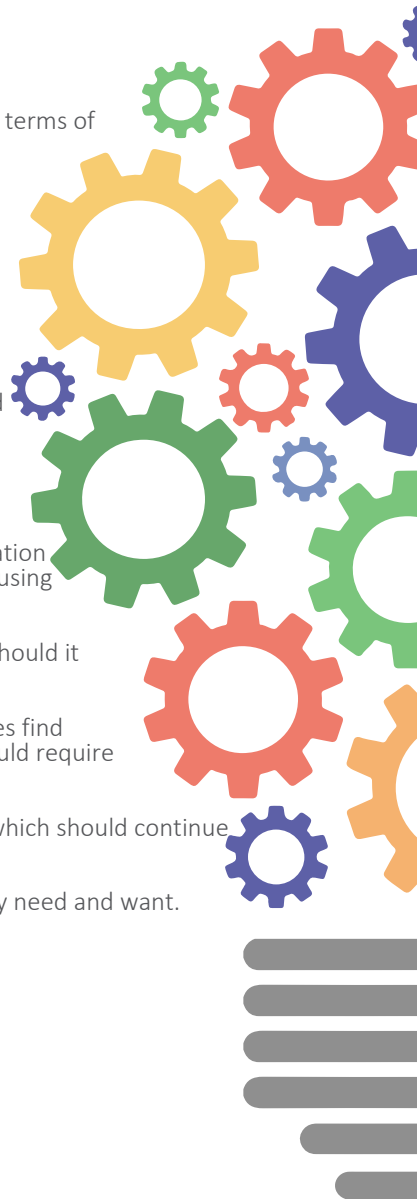
Agility in responding to business needs and generational changes – in particular in digital skills.

Cross sector collaboration to ensure opportunities are not missed through silo thinking.

Consider the language that UoL uses to ensure barriers are not created.

The sectors are what business needs but transport and housing could be considered.

How to ensure businesses understand what research goes on in the sectors and how does UoL mix and match across them? Who does UoL we need to talk to? The areas seem broad and appropriate but what is inside them and are academics able to react on a timescale that works for business?



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## Discussion Topic 2

### What do businesses want and need from the University over the next 5 years?

UoL has been successful in winning grants to drive local growth productivity and innovation challenges but the reach to businesses needs to be wider. There needs to be improved communication and awareness raising.

UoL to attend meetings for projects that are underway in businesses in order to conduct peer reviews, learn from the businesses' approaches and make suggestions which could lead onto other interventions.

Large proportion of micro SME's and sole traders who mostly are not engaging with UoL. Be very clear about UoL can offer in this space and what other organisations businesses can be signed posted to.

Make engagement with the University less unnerving and troublesome. Offer tasters to get businesses involved.

UoL to make direct approaches to local businesses rather than a mainly event based marketing programme. Via face to face meetings identify what the businesses' challenges are and be able to act as an honest broker in highlighting areas where support can be found both within the University and other organisations the region.

Influence future funding calls based on Lincoln's businesses strengths.

What SMEs need and want is help with foresight and clusters/networking and Universities can bring this.

UoL to be deliberate about knowledge dissemination and could do more of this.

UoL to assist with connecting SMEs to larger procurers in general brokerage.

Introduce tools and techniques for business planning and new methods of working. There are a number of areas for the Business School to look at.

H2020 - Supports projects that identify best practice and techniques and has strong knowledge dissemination. They have been transformational for business. Look for additional funding to increase this type of activity.

Businesses want consistent and regular engagement. Events happen but a regular set of meetings would help reduce time lag with the University.

UoL to offer businesses a single entry point and a dedicated person who has the knowledge to link the right support/academics.

UoL to extend its reach more widely across Greater Lincolnshire.

## Discussion Topic 3

### What are the biggest barriers for business in engaging more with the University and how can the University better appeal to them?

If UoL is going to engage with business it needs to do it correctly and invest heavily in it. UoL has done well in achieving this to date. However, the approach may need to be re-considered as there can be a disconnect between the requirements of the funders, the structural offer of the University and the timescales/speed that businesses need.

The challenges of business and Universities and the need to understand better what each other does. University delivery needs to be by those who understand/are experienced in business.





## THE GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP INNOVATION COUNCIL

The value of industry academics.

University bureaucracy and pace can be a barrier to businesses engagement. Can the University be more agile so opportunities are not missed? There may be a need for academics to better understand the value of working with business, alongside the professional services team who are the link between industry and academics.

Improve communications to business via case studies.

How can industry be more attracted to visit campus for example via community and show case days?

UoL to consider more strategic sponsorship of events.

People's opinions of Universities may not be up to date, so changing perceptions needs to be addressed.

Further incentivise Universities and academics to engage with business. The Government to further fund anchor institutions to support this.

Can UoL work increasingly effectively with other Universities e.g. as Scottish Universities do?

Could Further Education increasingly collaborate with UoL/Institute of Technology to drive innovation and the development skills

UoL will consider the challenges raised throughout the discussion, including the direction of travel and focus for business engagement and what opportunities exist to gain the investment required.

**Next Meeting March 10th 2022 at 1.00pm**

