

GFirst LEP Response to Climate Change Scrutiny Task Group Recommendations – June 2016 Update for the LEP Board

From the report Recommendation 6:

The task group asked the GFirst LEP Board to:

- a) Recognise that climate change is an issue that will impact on the entire economy of Gloucestershire and that it needs to be addressed by all business sectors as well as the environment technology sector;**
- b) Develop a coherent strategy to address the impacts of climate change (mitigation and adaptation) on the economy;**
- c) Incorporate support for local businesses regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adoption of energy efficient measures, which will improve the viability and sustainability of Gloucestershire businesses, in their business advice.**

GFirst LEP's approach to a number of climate change issues is outlined in our European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) Strategy which can be found at <http://www.gfirstlep.com/gfirst-LEP/Our-Priorities/Our-Vision/>

1. Our ESIF strategy confirms GFirst LEP is fully committed to the climate change agenda and is focusing funds to address this issue through Thematic Objective/Priority Axis 4 Low Carbon and TO6 Environmental protection. Our commitment is also reflected in the cross cutting theme of sustainable development. This will result in investments of 4.34M Euros and 3.88 M Euros respectively.
2. We confirm that GFirst LEP and our partners are currently targeting a number of other funds and will continue to do so during the period 2014-2020. These other funds will be targeted to support and complement the activities set out in the strategy document and the Strategic Economic Plan.
3. In response to (c) above, Gloucestershire has a published call under our ESIF strategy for Thematic objective 4: Supporting the Shift to Low Carbon Economy in All Sectors. Within this call we have an allocation of £2.2m to promote and improve energy efficiency and the use of low carbon technologies within small and medium sized enterprises (priority axis 4b). The call opened 4th April and closed on 27th May. Outline applications are now being assessed.
- 4.** This funding will support projects with a minimum grant of £500,000 and will achieve an investment with match funding of projects of approx. £4.4m.
5. Priority axis 4b is our main response to the challenges and will provide funding to address businesses lack of knowledge, resource capacity and confidence in funding support to implement measures. Activities which will be supported under this funding will include:
 - A multi-channel (ie online, telephone, face-to-face), dedicated energy efficiency advisory service for a high percentage of Gloucestershire's eligible small to medium sized enterprises;
 - Intensive energy efficiency demonstration and support services for European Regional Development Fund eligible, high growth potential businesses;

- The application of existing knowledge and technologies to improve sustainability and encourage adoption of low carbon technologies / environmental goods and services;
 - An increase in the number of businesses that pilot or install and implement low carbon technologies and approaches / environmental goods and services.
6. This is anticipated to respond to a market failure in delivery of support to businesses. The brief from the projects includes a specific requirement for project proposals to demonstrate that:
- proposed activities complement existing and planned Growth Hub business support,
 - address the challenge of reaching businesses, both new to the support environment and those not targeted through previous programmes;
 - Offer equal consideration to ensuring businesses located in rural Gloucestershire, as well as in the business centres / market towns, can access innovation support.
7. In addition we have an allocation of £1.1m for 4F – Promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low-carbon technologies.
Within this strand indicative activities include:
- Developing financing methods that encourage the adoption of proven low carbon technologies and generate long-term financial savings
 - Demonstration and deployment of decentralised renewable energy technologies
 - Research, development and innovation and supply chain development for low carbon and resource efficient technologies and materials (including small scale pilot programmes that test the market with new low carbon solutions and the use of secondary materials).
8. Related to Climate Change: Our ERDF Environment call (Thematic Objective 6):
Gloucestershire’s natural environment faces challenges in rural, urban fringe and urban settings and there is much to be done in order to meet biodiversity, air quality and other environmental targets. Priorities and ‘pipeline’ projects for this have had to be re-worked following the May 2016 confirmation from DCLG about land that is eligible for the ERDF funding. GFirst LEP is working closely with DCLG, DEFRA and Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership colleagues to bring forward calls and projects under this priority axis as soon as possible in the Summer and Autumn of 2016.

In addition to our ESIF Strategy, GFirst LEP is ensuring the Growth Deal projects and investments also fit with the climate change and low carbon agenda. In particular:

9. Stroud and South Gloucestershire College’s Berkeley Green Project - We have included in the funding agreement for our flagship GREEN project a requirement to work to deliver a zero carbon campus and to develop a masterplan and sustainability policy for the site which recognise the unique natural features of the location.
10. Royal Agricultural University Farm 491 Project - The 491project being funded through the Growth Deal has clear proposals to deliver an environmentally sustainable project supported by an environmental action plan to reduce the University’s direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions, minimise resource use and prevent pollution.

11. We have confirmed approval for a renewable energy research centre to be based at Berkeley Green run by University of Gloucestershire. The Advanced Renewable Energy Research Centre (ARERC), will incorporate a business and domestic market-driven Demonstration Centre to build, develop, test and evaluate sustainable renewable energy technologies. ARERC will result in a higher profile for renewable energy across the county and is predicted to lead to an increased take up of renewable energy technologies in the business, domestic and community sectors. Currently the funding for this project is expected to be confirmed in 2017/2018.

12. We will continue to encourage projects seeking funding through the LEP to incorporate positive environmentally sustainable commitments in their proposals and to seek funding to deliver projects to promote low carbon and environmentally sustainable businesses in the county.

13. GFirst LEP has contributed to and attended national low carbon and climate change workshops. These have largely focussed on why we should concern ourselves with sustainable development, establishing the context and scale of threat and more recently some of the practicalities of ERDF low carbon funding process. They have highlighted some good practice initiatives such as ENWORKS in Greater Manchester. Where funding is available we will endeavour to apply the good practice models demonstrated by such initiatives.

14. There is a current county energy strategy produced by Gloucestershire First in 2007 valid until 2017. This report emanated from a Gloucestershire Sustainable energy Partnership (now defunct). The LEP's energy business group has been asked to assist in reviewing this and members of the group are keen to engage with colleagues in other sectors to raise awareness of energy use, management and sustainable energy practices.

Martin Bruton & Pete Carr, June 2016