

## GFirst LEP Business Group Update – October 2017



### Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- As reported on the September update we recently held a Gloucestershire Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing [AEM] breakfast Summit. We had a very encouraging 36 businesses attend. This was due in no small measure to Circle2Success ([www.circle2success.com](http://www.circle2success.com)) who provided invaluable help in promoting the event.
- The aim of the event was to review the needs of the businesses within the AEM sector and explore how an LEP Business group can help support and provide solutions to these needs and recruit new members.
- The output from the event will be discussed at a sub group of the LEP AEM business group on 2 November in advance of the next full meeting of the AEM business group. Full details will be provided on the November update.

*The next AEM meeting is at the Growth Hub on Monday 11 December. For questions about the group, please contact Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



### Agri Food & Rural Business

- The group had a Strategic Planning session on 24 October at Waterend Farm, Coaley, Dursley, GL11 5DR. It was both extremely interesting and productive. The group identified 13 broad themes to be considered in creating the strategy.
- A small sub group was formed to produce a draft document for consideration at the next meeting.
- The group also identified the need for more interaction with other LEP Business Groups, particularly Banking & Finance and Construction & Infrastructure

*The date of the next meeting is to be agreed. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran [mike.curran@gfirstlep.com](mailto:mike.curran@gfirstlep.com) or Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Banking & Finance

- The group met at the Growth Hub on 31 October. The group discussed the possibility of obtaining a fund to be run by the group similar to that offered by Finance Birmingham. [www.financebirmingham.com](http://www.financebirmingham.com). A sub group was set up to explore this.
- Work has been taking place on updating Access to Finance Guide currently provided [HERE](#) on the GFirst website. It is hoped to update this very shortly.
- The meeting was preceded by another Banking and Finance clinic which provided advice to 3 separate businesses. Once again these were extremely successful and the feedback received was very positive.
- Another **free** Banking and Finance Clinic will be held on **Tuesday 12 December at the Growth Hub**. In a 30 minute, one-to-one session, the panel will be able to offer advice on a variety of funding issues to help businesses grow. Further information, including an application form for a **free** session, can be found at [HERE](#)

*The next Banking and Finance meeting is at the Growth Hub on Tuesday 12 December. For questions about the group please contact Mike Curran: [mike.curran@gfirstlep.com](mailto:mike.curran@gfirstlep.com)*



## Business & Professional Services

- It has been agreed that the group will act as a critical friend in assisting projects in preparing their Business Cases and provide guidance on the formulation and wider commercial engagement of relevant projects.
- The two immediate projects waiting the input from the group are the Cheltenham Cyber Park and the Growth Hub rollout. As these were not quite ready to put before the group it was decided to cancel the October meeting.

*The next meeting will take place at the Growth Hub on Wednesday 22 November. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran [mike.curran@gfirstlep.com](mailto:mike.curran@gfirstlep.com) or Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Construction & Infrastructure

- The group had a meeting with a packed agenda on 18 October. Mark Boyce provided very useful advice and guidance on how to tackle problems encountered with utility companies. Roger Mortlock and Gemma Jerome gave an interesting presentation on a new programme *Building with Nature*. This brings together the evidence and existing good practice guidance, creating a set of principles that planners and developers can work towards to more effectively and consistently deliver high-quality green infrastructure. Further details are [HERE](#).
- The group's paper "*Consideration of Barriers to Development*" was discussed at a very constructive round table meeting attended by Senior Officers from the County Council, all the Local Authorities, and representatives from the group. A joint operational sub group was formed to consider the issues arising from the paper. They will meet on 9 November.
- The next meeting will have speakers to talk about road transport, developments on the Cheltenham *Place* initiative and the Stroud local plan.
- There is a Planning Matters forum on 23 November at Charles Russell Speechlys. Alex Chalk MP will be talking about *Fixing our Broken Housing* White Paper and Barriers to Development.

The next meeting is at Roberts Limbrick on 29<sup>th</sup> November. For questions about the group please contact Mike Curran: [mike.curran@gfirstlep.com](mailto:mike.curran@gfirstlep.com)



## Creative

- It was discussed and agreed at their last meeting that the Creative Group takes a step back and take a more county-wide vision in terms of strategic intent and activity and be inclusive of the whole cultural scene and not focus on the already well established activity alone. Work has commenced on putting together a county wide database of creative and culture within the county.
- We are working on engagements to increase the membership of the Group from the entire cultural sub-sectors across Gloucestershire with the ambition of re-energizing the Creative Business Group with plans for a late autumn summit hosted by the LEP.
- The Group is keen to work closely to enhance the strength, richness and diversity of the county's cultural heritage and offerings and is looking to embed activity with other sector groups to widen its reach to enliven the cultural economy and its impact on Gloucestershire.

The date of the next meeting is yet to be scheduled. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran [mike.curran@gfirstlep.com](mailto:mike.curran@gfirstlep.com) or Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)



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## Energy

- The last meeting was held at Spirax Sarco on 12 September. They are the global leader in the supply of engineered solutions for the efficient design, maintenance and operation of industrial and commercial steam systems. Jeremy Miller kindly hosted an informative tour of their Technology Centre.
- Subsequently the group has been successful in a bid to the Department of Business Energy & Industrial Strategy [BEIS] to obtain funding to create an LEP Energy Strategy for the county. Further information will be provided at the next meeting.
- Discussions have also taken place on creating 4 National Energy Hubs covering the 38 LEPs. GFirst would sit in the SW Region with another 6 LEPs. BEIS would provide total funding of £1m for 2 years to fund a core team of 4 and 3 local project managers in the SW Region Energy Hub. More details will be provided at the next meeting.

*The next meeting is on 7 November at SGS Berkeley. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran [mike.curran@gfirstlep.com](mailto:mike.curran@gfirstlep.com) or Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Retail, Tourism & The High Street

- The last meeting was on 23 August which was kindly hosted by Stroud District Council. A round table discussion on the sector identified the different challenges from each of the Districts covering areas such as rents, transport and recruitment. The latter is a particular problem given pay rates and the fact that the county has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest employment rate in the country.
- There was exciting news about the possibility of a large UK Digital Retail Lab having finally been identified. Capital funding of £400k is available to provide advice, training and incubation space for both new retailers and for established retailers wishing to develop new products and ways of working. Further information is precluded pending sanction by the LEP Board but it is hoped an announcement will be made soon.
- The Group is focusing on highlighting retail as a serious career. The work that the Group members have been doing in their own areas and as project collaborations is very positive and many synergies were detected and several initiatives need to be morphed to align activity and objectives for a stronger cohesive approach and effect, which will also avoid duplication of effort.

*The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 15 November. It will be held at the Managers Office, Eastgate Shopping Centre, GL1 1XN. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran [mike.curran@gfirstlep.com](mailto:mike.curran@gfirstlep.com) or Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*