

GFIRST LEP DELIVERY PLAN 2021-22

1. INTRODUCTION

GFirst LEP is a successful LEP, delivering for the Gloucestershire economy, operating in an open and transparent manner and maintaining an ambitious, entrepreneurial approach to all opportunities.

Our core activity has been focused on delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for Gloucestershire (refreshed in 2018) and the priorities set out in the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), which we expect will become either an updated SEP or equivalent, depending on government guidance in 2022. Our current SEP and (draft) LIS can be found here.

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/our-vision/strategic-economic-plan/>

https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gloucestershire_draft_local-industrial-strategy_2019.pdf

However, the extraordinary challenges experienced nationally and locally as a result of the Covid-19 crisis will be the main driver for all our activities over the next 12 months or so, albeit in line with our strategic priorities, as we seek to support Gloucestershire's economy, businesses and people to recover from the devastating impact of Covid-19. We will take a leadership role locally, regionally and nationally as recovery strategies are developed and implemented.

At the same time, we will ensure that we maintain momentum on our ongoing work including the following;

- Developing the economic growth/industrial strategies for Gloucestershire
- Complete the delivery of the five new Getting Building Fund schemes and the remaining LGF funded schemes
- Continue the roll-out and development of the Gloucestershire Growth Hub network.
- Continuously improve our governance and increase the diversity of the LEP board.
- Engaging with the Private sector and the Education sector to ensure the voice of business is heard at government level and on a sectoral basis and that skills and education are developed to maximise opportunities for individuals and meet the needs of business.
- Developing a pipeline of future investment priorities that will deliver inclusive green growth, productivity and well-being for Gloucestershire
- Developing local/regional plans in partnership with business for the journey to Net Zero.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2020 was a year of unprecedented challenges. At the time of publication of the 2020 plan, we were in the early days of the pandemic and it was not clear just how fundamental some of the changes it would initiate were likely to be. The impact of lockdowns, the need for staff to isolate due to contact with others who had tested positive, the effects on supply chains, the restrictions on travel and the effects on the related industries and the dramatic shift in working patterns with home/hybrid working likely to become the norm have combined to test businesses and organisations across the UK to the absolute limit of their resilience.

As a consequence, GFirst LEP, working with our local authority partners, acted rapidly to massively increase the business support available and to implement initially a rescue plan, which was then developed into a recovery plan with additional resources provided to support recovery, including the following;

- Business Recovery Toolkit - <https://www.gfirstlep.com/news/business-recovery-toolkit/>
- Skills portal - <https://www.skillsportalglos.com/>
- A redundancy taskforce
- 'Think Gloucestershire' marketing campaign
- Re-focus our Inward Investment team to support existing foreign-owned businesses within the county
- Careers Hub - <https://www.gloscareershub.com/>
- Mobilisation of our business sector groups – a strategic strength during 2020 and into 2021. Our sector groups have massively stepped up and been a driving force in prioritising the support needed and actions required from the LEP and local govt to survive through furlough, lockdowns and the other huge challenges faced due to Covid-19 and build for recovery.

The coming year will be one of major change for GFirst LEP. In August 2021 our Chair of 10 years (with the additional year granted as an extension due to Covid-19) Dr Diane Savory OBE stood down and a new chair, Ruth Dooley, was appointed. Our Deputy Chair, Adam Starkey and three other board members (Mike Warner, Rob Loveday and Lorrin White) also stood down and so the board will have a very different composition from September onwards. Four new private sector board members were appointed at the same time; Tyler Attwood of Your Next Move Ltd, Nicola Bird of AccXel Ltd and Bell Contracting, Matt Charman of Google, Joe Roberts of Roberts Limbrick Ltd.



Ruth Dooley, Chair of GFirst LEP



Alongside the on-going LEP Review, which will determine the future nature and scope of LEPs across the UK, 2021-22 will be a year of significant transition and preparation for what will follow in 2022-23 and the coming years.

The financial year 2020-21 was also in principle the last year of the Local Growth programme. The majority of our projects have been successfully delivered and are making a significant contribution to the Gloucestershire and regional economy, notably The Growth Hub Network and our skills-based investments, but also the many transport infrastructure projects.

Five LGF projects are still in the delivery stage but are progressing well and will complete in 2021-22.

Up to 31st March 2021, the LGF programme has achieved the following key outputs;

- **390 homes**
- **2,227 jobs**
- **£205 million in leverage**
- **2,165 businesses supported by The Growth Hub**
- **16,515m² of new commercial space**
- **23,335m² of new skills/education space**

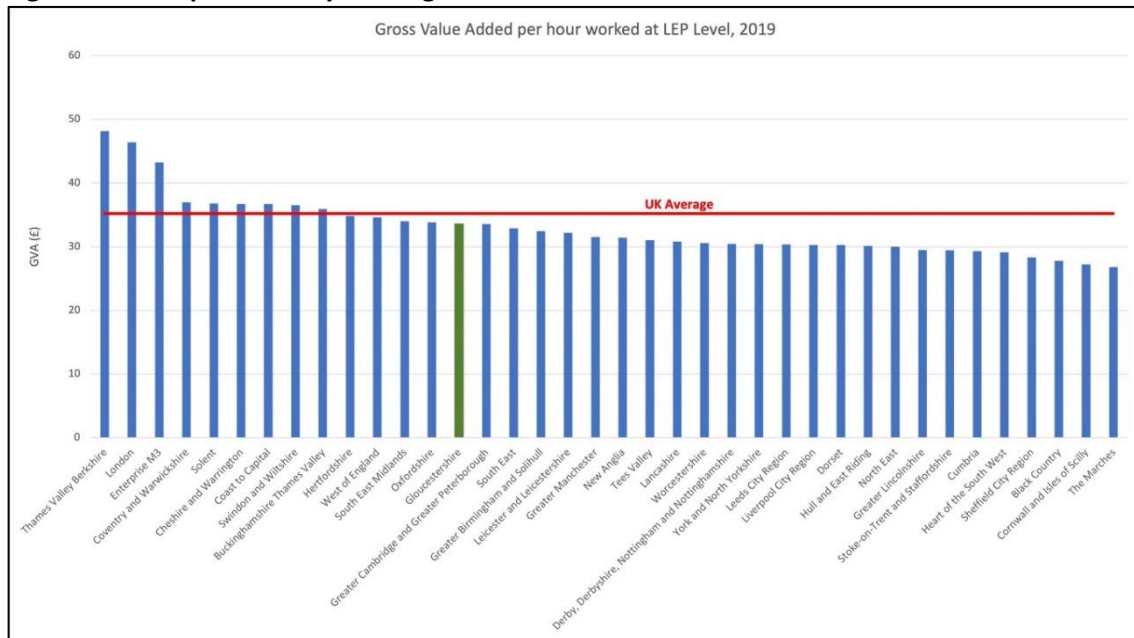
This is only a proportion of the totals that will be achieved once the programme matures fully, particularly The Golden Valley Development which has been 'unlocked' by the £23.6million investment in transport infrastructure in West Cheltenham along the A40 corridor and at M5 Junction 11.

On completion of all of the schemes funded, we now expect to achieve final totals of **3,115 new homes**, in excess of **16,000 jobs**, **over 100,000m²** of commercial space and **c£450 million** of leverage (based on only the first phase of £50 million allocated to The Golden Valley scheme).

Productivity and employment growth

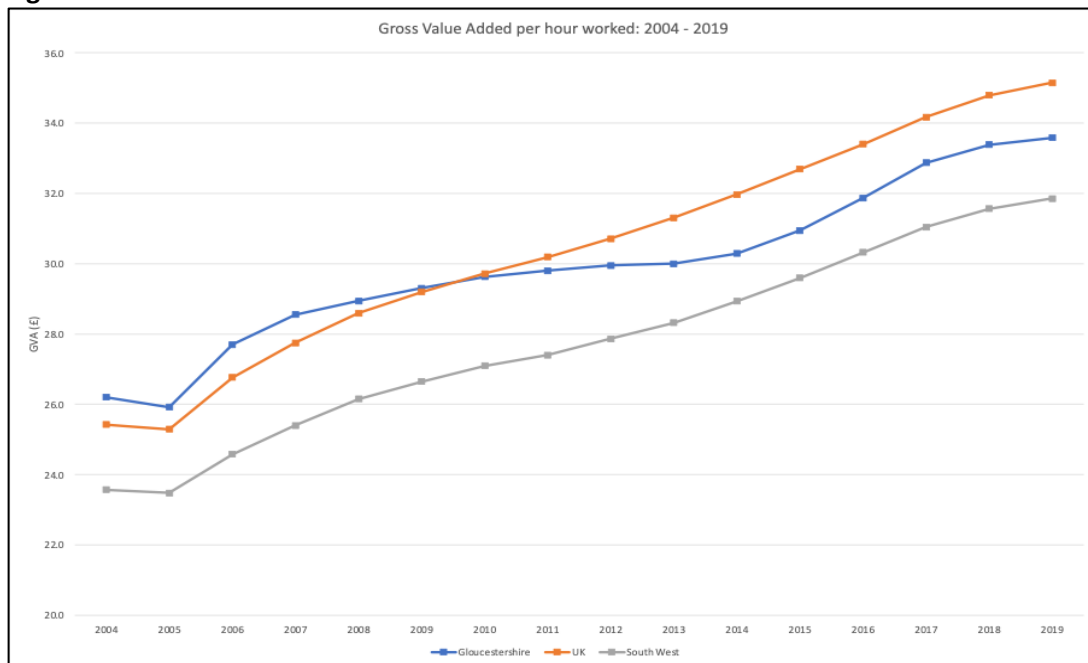
Since the launch of our SEP in 2014, GFirst LEP has continuously focused on investments and activities that support business growth, innovation and productivity. Gloucestershire is still just below the UK average in terms of productivity but punches above its weight relatively and based on the most recent LEP level figures (2019) sits 14th in the rankings.

Fig. 1 LEP level productivity rankings



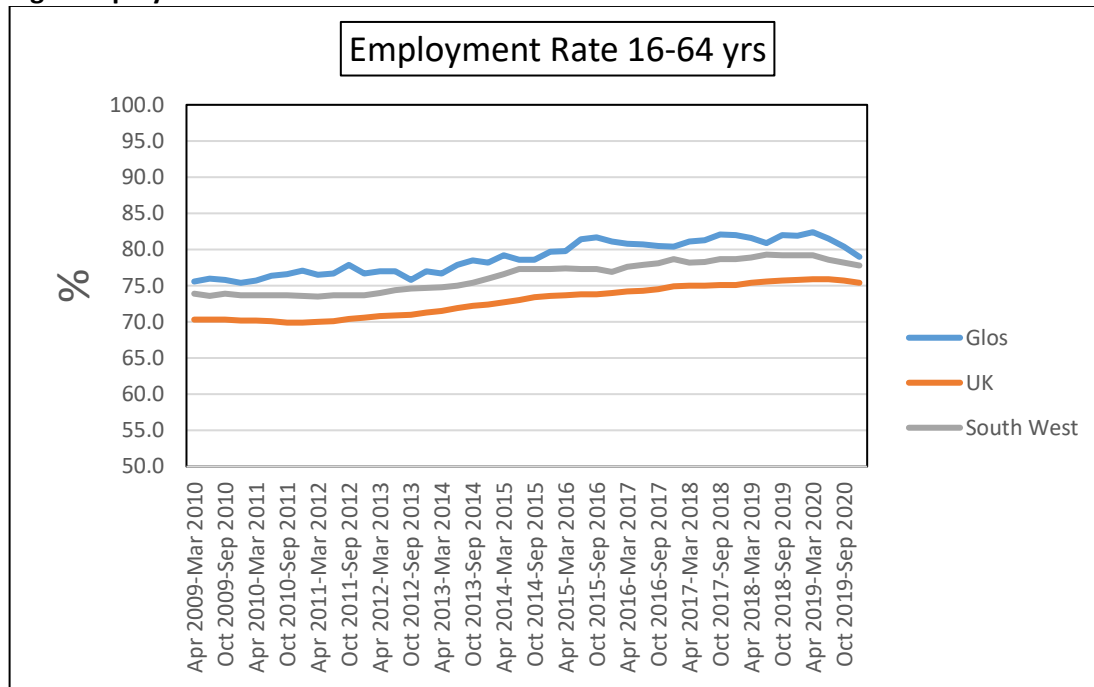
Gloucestershire has also experienced good growth in productivity over the same period having been ‘flatlining’ previously and seeing a relative decline vs the UK average.

Fig 2. Gloucestershire GVA



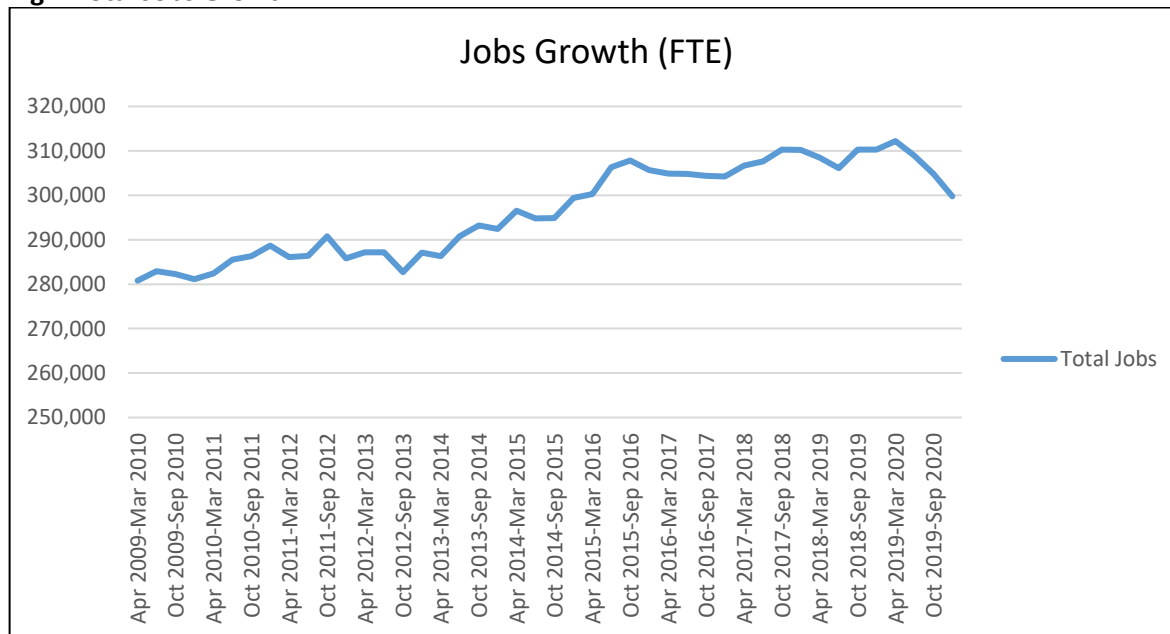
Employment growth has also been strong over the period up until 2020 when the Covid-19 crisis hit, with an employment rate above the UK and regional average which has been sustained and in 2019 reached a peak of 82.4%.

Fig.3 Employment Rate



And similarly in absolute terms we saw consistent jobs growth to a peak of 312,000 in 2019.

Fig.4 Total Jobs Growth



Getting Building Fund Programme

In 2020 as a response to the Covid-19 crisis, the government released the 'Getting Building Fund' in order to create an economic stimulus across the UK. This was launched to kick-start the economy again after the lockdown that ran from March to June 2020 and the associated economic contraction.

GFirst LEP successfully bid for £11.3million to support five 'shovel ready' projects. In 2020 the focus was on completing due-diligence on the selected projects and getting funding agreements in place with the project promoters.

In 2021-22 our focus will be on working with the project partners to ensure the projects are delivered within the year and that they start to make an immediate contribution to recovery initially and then to growth. An example of one of the projects funded is the Construction Skills Centre at Cinderford in the Forest of Dean, promoted by KW Bell. This is an excellent example of a private sector led scheme which will not only support employment locally, but will have an impact on the sector nationally with its capacity to change perceptions of the industry, particularly in respect of women entering the industry and to support the delivery of the highly skilled operatives desperately needed by the industry.

Fig.5 AccXel – Construction Skills Centre, Cinderford



For more details see: <https://www.accxel.co.uk/>

Further information on LEP activities and what has been delivered so far can be found in our most recent Annual Report here: [Annual Report](#)

3. DELIVERY PLAN 2021-22

This Delivery Plan sets out what GFirst LEP intends to deliver in the coming financial year.

Our absolute focus for 2021-22 will be on the post Covid-19 Recovery Plan for Gloucestershire, which includes delivery of the five Getting Build Fund projects alongside the remaining Local Growth Fund projects that will support recovery and growth in the coming years and further developing our inward investment offer for the international market.

Ironically for Gloucestershire, the post Covid-19 working patterns that are likely to become a permanent feature of the economy, ie a hybrid home/office working pattern, are likely to benefit Gloucestershire based on its potential to deliver an exceptional work/life balance in the post Covid-19 'normal'. The start of development on The Golden Valley scheme, un-locked by our £23.6million LGF investment in local transport infrastructure and the start of construction of The Forum in Gloucester, unlocked by our £6.4million LGF investment in the Gloucester Transport Hub means Gloucestershire is ideally placed for our digital future.

We will continue to make the case for LEPs to central government and local authority partners as the best option to engage with the business community and to determine economic growth investment priorities, particularly those related to business support, skills and innovation. We will also continue to make the case that LEPs can provide an effective 'bridge' between employers and the education sector in respect of matching the skills and education being provided to learners and the needs and priorities of business.

A breakdown of the delivery plans for 2021-22 for our key activity areas is detailed below, with reference to the 2020 delivery plan and progress made where relevant.

3.1 Governance and the LEP Board

The governance of the LEP met all criteria in our 2020 annual performance review, and continues to ensure that the LEP operates in a transparent and compliant manner. There is independent scrutiny by GEGJC (Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee) Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis to provide democratic scrutiny of LEP decision making. This committee has recently undergone a review in its own right, and is now more effective in this role than previously. Our articles of association and our refreshed Assurance Framework (August 2021) provides full details, and are published on our website:

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2020/articles-of-association-2020.pdf>

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2021/assurance-framework---v9-august-2021.pdf>

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2021/annex-c--bodies-in-af-v6-aug-2021.pdf>

The LEP has appointed a new chair, a new deputy chair (from within the existing board) will be appointed in due course, and as mentioned previously, four new board members from the private sector have also been appointed.

Within the board we will also confirm appointees for the lead roles for the following portfolios:

- **Equality and Diversity** – The Equality and Diversity Champion will lead on the development of a more diverse board and to embed processes with our board and operational activities that consider diversity at their heart.
- **Risk** – The Risk Champion will lead on the liaison between the Board and Staff regarding risks at organisation and programme level, to ensure that all risks are noted and well understood. They will provide advice and guidance to both, to ensure robust and effective risk management.
- **Employment and Skills Board** – Will represent the Board within the Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel.
- **Young people** - Will lead on ensuring the voice of young people is represented, particularly in relation to the County's 2050 Vision and the desire to make Gloucestershire a 'magnet' county for young people and to reverse the outward flow of young people that has been a consistent theme in recent years.
- **Growth Hubs** – non-exec lead on the strategic management (in conjunction with the Director of Strategic Growth) for The Growth Hub network.

A key challenge for the board in the second half of the year will be reflecting on the outcome of the LEP Review and CSR in October and developing the appropriate strategy, objectives and plans in response.

3.2 Business Engagement, Support & Recovery planning

Our core mechanism for business engagement remains our Business Sector Group structure. Currently we run 10 sector groups covering:

- Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing
- Agri-food and Rural
- Banking and Finance
- Business Membership
- Business & Professional Services
- Construction and Infrastructure
- Cyber Tech
- Energy
- Retail and the High street
- Visitor Economy and Tourism

Our latest sector groups newsletter can be found here: <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/business-groups/>

Our plan for 2021-22 is to continue to work with and develop all of the groups and to create a 'sector masterplan' with each that analyses the strengths and weaknesses of each sector in Gloucestershire, looks at the opportunities and threats they face and then sets out key interventions required, in terms of infrastructure, skills and government (local and national) policies. Key considerations will be the post Covid-19 and post-Brexit environments which present both huge challenges and opportunities.

Any potential capital projects identified through this process will be included in our Capital Investment Pipeline for consideration/assessment as and when relevant funding becomes available.

3.3 The Growth Hub

From April 2021 the GFirst LEP Board will have strategic oversight of The Growth Hub, replacing the role of the previous Growth Hub Management Board. This decision has been taken to ensure that the diverse range of partners now involved in delivery is managed cohesively and that the long-term strategy of The Growth Hub and its business support delivery remains aligned to LEP priorities.

The Growth Hub Management Board will be replaced with a new operational board for the network led by the GFirst LEP Director of Strategic Growth.

GFirst LEP is one of 10 cluster leads for Growth Hubs nationally, supporting delivery in Swindon and Wiltshire and West of England. GFirst LEP's Director of Strategic Growth has overall responsibility for the effective and compliant use of the BEIS Growth Hub grant funding and provides the cluster lead role.

Over the 12-month period 2021-22 The Growth Hub Network within GFirst LEP will deliver the following KPIs;

- 300 light touch interventions
- 400 medium intensity support interventions (minimum 3 hours)
- 120 high intensity support interventions (minimum 12 hours)
- 40 mentor interventions (minimum 3 hours)

In delivering these activities we aim to achieve the following performance ratings, 90% satisfaction with regards to high intensity interventions and 90% likely recommendation of the service to other (high intensity interventions).

In terms of delivery 2021-22 will see a shift back to face-to-face delivery (where appropriate) and excitingly the opening of both the Forest of Dean and Cheltenham 'Tier 2' Growth Hubs, at Vantage Point Business Centre and the Minster Exchange respectively.

In 2021, the Director of Strategic Growth will develop a strategy for the future of business support in particular how we will replace Growth Hub funding currently provided by the final phase of ERDF funds which expire in December 2022.



New Forest of Dean Growth Hub located at Vantage Point Business Centre

3.4 Skills & Employment

The GFirst LEP led Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel (GSAP) was established in 2020 transitioning from the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Board.

During 2020 and the early months of 2021 GSAP focused its efforts, along with the GFirst LEP Employment and Skills team, on supporting individuals, education providers and businesses in working through the effects of the pandemic and dealing with the combined economic effects of this and EU Exit.

The priorities for recovery were to develop resources to support;

- information and signposting to learning and employment resources
- careers and skills provision
- apprenticeships – supply and uptake
- cyber and digital priorities
- launching and establishing the GFirst/Gloucestershire Careers Hub to support and drive improvements in the quality and range of careers support in our schools and alternative provision
- specific work with District Councils on local economic recovery
- driving the implementation and uptake of key DWP-led initiatives such as Kickstart and Restart.

In 2021-22 the focus will be on embedding and developing these resources and promoting their use amongst schools and colleges, through our sector groups, outplacement agencies and DWP/Job Centres.

The skills and employment priorities in 2021/22 for GFirst LEP, Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel, and the GFirst/Gloucestershire Careers Hub include;

- development of a Countywide Skills Strategy that reflects the economic impacts of Covid-19 and EU Exit on employment and skills
- preparation of the updated Local Skills Report (planned for Nov 2021)
- continued implementation of our economic recovery plan
- implementation of an Employment Charter for Gloucestershire, to be endorsed by employers, that will boost careers support, in-work training and work experience and placement opportunities for all ages in the County
- continuing to work with local schools, colleges and alternative provision to improve their performance against the Gatsby Benchmarks and further embed good practice in careers education.

We will also be working closely and collaboratively with Gloucestershire County Council to provide a 'one stop shop' approach for those seeking help with careers, employment, retraining and upskilling via an Employment & Skills Hub.

A full overview of the employment and skills work undertaken by GFirst LEP can be found here:

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

The Careers Hub developed and launched in 2020-21 can be viewed here: <https://www.gloscareershub.com/>

3.5 Local Growth Fund (LGF) Programme

The coming year will see the completion of all of the LGF funded projects (some of which were subject to a capital swap in 2020-21 under the freedoms and flexibilities arrangements with the Accountable Body), with the possible exception of the Gloucester Railway Station Improvements. For those projects still in the construction stage, the current status of each and the plans for 2021-22 are detailed below.

Fig.6 Projects in Delivery

Project	Current status	Plans for 2021-22
Gloucestershire Airport, Anson Park	Contractors have now been appointed with work onsite expected to start in November 2021, with a 14 week duration.	Complete project
West Cheltenham Transport Improvements (Cyber Park)	Construction is well advanced. Phases 1 & 2 (of 4) almost complete, phases 3 & 4 to complete in early 2022.	Complete project
Gloucester Railway Station Improvements	Highways work (new car park entrance/exit under construction.) Underpass and forecourt in final design (GRIP 5) tender for works September 2021.	Confirm final costs and manage scope within budget. Appoint contractors. Completion expected October 2022.
A40 Innsworth Gateway	Longford Roundabout Improvements complete, new A40 Roundabout at Innsworth under construction.	Expected to complete in January 2022.
Gloucester Southwest Bypass Improvements	Land acquisition and relocation of businesses has been completed. Demolition work starting October 2021.	Complete demolition, prepare site for road widening, completion expected April/May 2022.
West Cheltenham Walking & Cycling Improvements (an active travel project supporting The Golden Valley/Cyber Park development)	In design – project is complimentary to the Highways England project to improve the Gloucester to Cheltenham cycle route.	Finalise design, gain Highways approval and complete Summer 2022.

Appendix A shows the full summary of projects funded through the Local Growth Programme.

3.6 Getting Building Fund Programme

1	2	3	4	5
				
The 'Minster Innovation Exchange' with Cheltenham Borough Council	'The Gloucestershire Applied Digital Skills Centre' with Cirencester College	'Cyber Incubation Units' with Gloucestershire College	'The Digital Innovation Farm' with Hartpury University and Hartpury College	'A Construction Education Centre' with the KW Bell Group Ltd in Cinderford

In 2020 the government announced the 'Getting Building Fund' as part of the Covid-19 Recovery Plan for the UK. GFirst LEP successfully bid for £11.3million from the fund to support five 'shovel ready' projects. An additional £455,581 was allocated to the programme from underspend on the LGF programme, plus the Minster Exchange project included an earlier allocation of £500k for a Tier 2 Growth Hub giving a total fund of £12,255,581.

A summary of the projects is shown in the table below (Fig 7).

The plan in 2021-22 is to work with the project promoters to ensure all projects are completed and opened to the agreed schedule and that spend is made to the agreed plan. GFirst LEP will then support the project promoters to publicise and promote their projects and to drive business engagement with all of them.

We will also establish the monitoring and reporting schedules with each project and work with each to ensure they meet their expected outputs and outcomes in line with the funding agreements.

Fig.7 Getting Building Fund Projects Summary

Project Title	Category	GBF Award	LGF 'Top-up'	Total Awarded	Project Summary	Status
Minster Innovation Exchange	Employment	£3,114,000	£500,000	£3,614,000	Modular build Cyber Innovation facility, Tier 2 Growth Hub & multi-function events space in Cheltenham	Planning approved. Contractors appointed. Due on-site Sept 2021. Open March 2022
Cyber Incubation Units	Employment	£950,000	£0	£950,000	Cyber Incubation Units and workspace at Gloucestershire College, Cheltenham Campus	Opening September 2021
Digital Skills Centre	Skills	£4,030,000	£450,000	£4,480,000	New Build, Digital Skills Learning Centre at Cirencester College	Under construction. Open January 2022
Digital Innovation Farm	Innovation	£1,250,000	£0	£1,250,000	Agri-Tech Project incubation centre and workspace Hartpury University	Groundworks underway. Open Jan/Feb 2022
Construction Skills Accelerator Centre	Skills	£1,956,000	£5,581	£1,961,581	Construction Skills Training Centre and mock site at KW Bell, Cinderford	Under construction, due to complete Nov 2021. Open Dec 2021
Totals		£11,300,000	£955,581	£12,255,581		

Fig.8 Digital Skills Centre, Cirencester under construction August 2021



Fig.9 The Minster Exchange, Cheltenham (Artist's impression)



3.7 Inward Investment

The Inward Investment programme is a collaborative project with the County Council and the six District Councils supported by ERDF European funding to set up a dedicated team to focus on inward investment in the county, in particular (non-EU) foreign direct investment. The project aims to promote Gloucestershire as one of the best investment locations in the UK. We are now in the third year of a four year programme.

The overall project value is £1million with 50% coming via ERDF with the balance match-funded by the local authorities and is for a period of 4 years – January 2019 to December 2022.

The focus is on four key sectors; Cyber, Agri-Tech, Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing and Renewables. Despite the backdrop and challenges around Brexit & Covid-19, the project in the 2020-21 financial year achieved Gloucestershire's third best year for FDI in a decade with investments secured across all the key sectors of Advanced Engineering, Agri-Tech, Cyber-Tech and Renewables.

For example, in 2020 it was announced that ZeroAvia, who have built the world's first hydrogen powered plane, will now be delivering their future R&D and testing at Cotswold Airport in Cirencester and are looking to create over 60 new jobs before the end of 2021.

Another notable success achieved with the support of the project was the decision by MOOG Controls to commit to a 35 year lease on a new 184,000ft² design and manufacturing centre in Tewkesbury.

<https://www.businessinnovationmag.co.uk/tewkesbury-aerospace-company-to-develop-new-40-million-facility/>

Priorities for 2021-22

- Develop the 'Invest in Gloucestershire' website, including a live property search page, featuring available commercial space and employment land in the region.
- Continue to develop the offer to support inward investment, including;
 - Free and confidential consultation by one of our dedicated business advisors
 - Building the investment business case with access to demographics, skills and economic data
 - Sourcing suitable business premises and hosting site visits
 - Access to recruitment, apprenticeship and training support
 - Familiarisation visits with introductions to sector specific contacts
 - Introductions to professional, legal and accountancy services
 - Soft-landing packages for new investors to Gloucestershire
 - Ongoing after-care business support
 - Access to Invest in Gloucestershire grants scheme
- Develop and promote the Gloucestershire Cyber Sector proposition by December 2021



- Develop and promote the Gloucestershire Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing proposition
- Develop current FDI prospects to secure additional commitments to Gloucestershire

The Golden Valley Development, home to Cheltenham's Cyber Park, at West Cheltenham and The Forum development in Gloucester are both huge opportunities for inward investment, particularly from the USA.

On the back of our strength in the Cyber sector, Gloucestershire will be promoted by the Department for International Trade (DiT) as a High Potential Opportunity (HPO) globally, with a likely launch date of October 2021.



GROWTH DEAL

Cheltenham Cyber Park

<https://www.goldenvalleyuk.com/>

The recent announcement by Cheltenham Borough Council of the preferred developer for the scheme, HBD & X Factory provides certainty for investors that the scheme will now come forward in good time. For more details see: <https://hbd.co.uk/news/hbd-x-factory-announces-jv-targeting-uk-tech-sector-and-lands-first-major-project/>

The Forum in Gloucester is now under construction with occupancy expected to be available in 2023.

<https://www.forumdigital.co.uk/the-forum>

For more details of the programme see our dedicated inward investment website:

<https://www.investinggloucestershire.com/>

3.8 Major Infrastructure

M5 J9 and A46 corridor - working with all local authorities along the route and Midlands Connect to develop investment priorities and both the strategic and more local business cases for interventions along the route from the M5 J9/A46 junction to M1/M69 junction for Leicester. Our priority for 2021-22 is to continue to progress the Strategic Outline Business Case subject to the strategic steer we are given by DfT (likely to be in the autumn).

M5 J10 upgrade – the funding agreement for £249million has now been signed with Homes England, the preferred design option confirmed and detailed design and planning work is now in progress. We will continue to support the programme board and maintain communication channels with business.

A417 Missing Link – This scheme is now in the Development Consent Order (DCO) process. We will continue to engage with Highways England through statutory consultation of the final scheme and will continue to represent the business community with due regard to our low carbon objectives for Gloucestershire. Full consent and treasury approval is expected in Autumn 2022.

Rail Strategy - An independent Rail Strategy for the county has now been published with the LEP a key partner and funder, which outlines the means to ensure Gloucestershire becomes better connected, delivering improved links to major employment cities with increased timetabled capacity as a focus for enhanced modal shift.

The next steps are to identify and plan the main priority projects for the county, particularly the potential site of a new railway station to the south of Gloucester/Stroud/Stonehouse to serve the growing population in this area, particularly in relation to travel to Bristol. Signalling and track upgrading work has been completed in Bristol. This will provide significant extra capacity and there is an intent to introduce a half-hourly MetroWest service between Gloucester and Bristol in early 2022 as a result.

In 2020 the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan Revision 4 was adopted by the County Council. GFirst LEP will continue to work with the council to prioritise investment to deliver the plan and support funding bids where appropriate

3.9 Strategic Planning

Our Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) was published in draft form and sits on our website. The draft successfully passed through the Local Industrial Strategy Analysts Panel (LISA) and although not formally issued it still forms the basis of our strategic focus and sets out the priorities for us. The key sectors/priorities identified in our Local Industrial Strategy were; Cyber-tech, Agri-tech and Green/Sustainability.

See the draft here: https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2020/gloucestershire_draft_local-industrial-strategy_2019-updated.pdf

Subject to the guidance we receive from government, as a result of the LEP Review and the outcome of the CSR, we will continue to develop our strategic planning for Gloucestershire. Our new chair and new board members will bring a fresh perspective and energy to this process.

We will continue to look at plans and strategies to improve productivity across Gloucestershire, to at least the UK average, but ideally above, based on the evidence develop in the 2019 report:

https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gloucestershire_five-foundations-of-productivity_evidence-report_2019.pdf

We will also continue to focus on the county's 2050 vision and work with the emerging 'City Region' board and particularly how we ensure that Gloucestershire becomes a 'magnet' county for young people:

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gfirst-lep-youth-survey-2019v2.pdf>

3.10 LEP Collaborative working

Western Gateway – we continue to support the work of the Western Gateway initiative. We have played an integral role in development of the independent economic review and continue to support work towards submissions for the comprehensive spending review and the further development of strategies for growth for the Western Gateway area. GFirst LEP also continues to play a lead role in development of the innovation strand of work and to play an active role on the Partnership Board and Chief Executive's Board.

M4 Corridor New Energy Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) looking at both hydrogen (Commercial Goods vehicles & buses) and electric cars, working with SWLEP, Thames Valley Berkshire, Oxfordshire, GFirst and West of England LEPS.

Fusion Energy - 'The Quest for the World's First Fusion Power Station'

GFirst LEP have been an active member of the working group that has submitted a bid to site the world's first fusion energy power plant in Oldbury/Berkeley.

The UK government called on local communities across the country to put forward proposals to host the UK's prototype fusion energy power plant. The announcement follows Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and the UK's ambition to be the first country in the world to commercialise fusion energy technology.

The successful site will be home to the construction of **STEP - the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production**. Targeted for completion by 2040, it will become a global hub for fusion energy and associated industries. This could create thousands of local highly skilled jobs during the construction and operation of the plant, as well as for the local supply chain, while attracting a new science and technology hub for the UK. £222million has been allocated to begin the STEP design work. The overall project will attract investment in the region of £3billion to £4billion.

We will find out in December 2021 if the Gloucestershire bid is on a shortlist.

3.11 Investment Pipeline

Working with the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee Officers Group (representing all 6 Local Authorities in Gloucestershire plus the County Council and GFirst LEP) to maintain and develop a deliverable pipeline of capital projects, seeking to maintain a number of 'shovel ready' schemes, such as those we were able to select for the GBF fund in 2020. As a LEP we will focus on working with current and new partners, both public and private sector to develop a strong portfolio of deliverable projects focused on Innovation, Skills, Enabling Infrastructure (particularly for the release of employment land), Business Support and Productivity.

Currently the pipeline consists of c35 projects with c£250million funds required with no current funding source confirmed.

The Gloucestershire Economic Growth Capital Investment Pipeline (CIP) was developed to identify all capital projects that have the potential to have a transformational impact on the economy of Gloucestershire. The CIP is a living document, actively managed by the Senior Officer Group of the GEGJC which aims to provide a comprehensive view of all capital projects (including infrastructure/regeneration projects) which could make a substantial and well evidenced contribution to economic growth. Identified priorities from this process are used to inform the business case selection process conducted by the LEP Board. The CIP is funding source neutral.

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/project-pipeline/>

3.12 Communications and Marketing

Our communications and marketing priorities for the coming year are as follows:

- Produce and distribute our Annual Report
- Hold our Annual Review event (subject to any on-going Covid-19 restrictions) with a likely date of March 2022
- Continue to deliver our weekly E-Newsletters
- Continue to develop our social media channels, primarily Twitter and LinkedIn
- Continue to hold our MP 'Roundtables' where we connect each MP with local business leaders from their constituency
- Support the inward investment programme and continue to promote Gloucestershire as an exceptional location (particularly in the post Covid-19 world) to start and grow a business, to live and work and enjoy for leisure for residents and visitors



GFirst LEP Annual Review 2019 at University of Gloucestershire's new Business School

We will also be working with the LEP Network to communicate the benefits and expertise that LEPs provide to central government and to our key stakeholders in response to the on-going LEP review.

3.13 LGF Programme Monitoring and Evaluation

LGF Evaluation – final reports

- Growth Hub Final due December 2021
- GREEN Final due December 2021
- C11, Berkeley Final due January 2022
- Transport schemes – Q1 2022
- Programme overall in 2022 - in early preparation (based on Scrutiny committee reports and full evaluations as above)

3.14 Gloucestershire Infrastructure Investment Fund (GIIF)

Our implementation of the “Growing Places” fund, which was established in 2012, continues to be highly successful, with funding having been recycled several times. We utilise the funds as a revolving loan scheme now called the **Gloucestershire Infrastructure Investment Fund (GIIF)** and currently the £8million of funds are fully committed. In 2019, the LEP Investment Panel and LEP Board approved the award of £3million to Bakers Quay in Gloucester, to enable the second phase re-development for residential and retail/commercial uses, and completion of this important regeneration scheme in Gloucester Docks. Work has now commenced with the site preparation and scaffolding of one of the historic buildings. In June 2021, funding of £1.85million was approved by the LEP Board to support the development of the 270 Climbing Centre, an international standard indoor climbing centre at Bentham.

Fig.10 GIIF Funded Projects to date

Project title	Category	GIIF Investment	Private Sector Investment	Jobs created
Honeybourne Gate Extra Care Home	Housing	£2.75m	£13.4m	21
Park View (Southgate St) Extra Care Home	Housing	£1.3m	£5.8m	21
Gloucester M5 Services (Southbound)	Infrastructure	£3.0m	£20.34m	575
Dudbridge Estates (Stroud Metal new factory)	Business Support	£3.5m	£6.025m	101
Shield House Secure Data Centre	Infrastructure	£3.0m	£12.66m	12
Merrywalks Shopping Centre re-development (Stroud)	Business Support	£1.0m	£23m	190
Bakers Quay (Phase 2) re-generation	Housing	£2.5m	£39m	70
270 Climbing Centre	Sport/Leisure	£1.85m	£8m	30

Gloucestershire County Council provides the Accountable Body and overall project management of this very successful programme. To date it has provided funding to bring forward and develop a wide variety of projects/schemes that were unable to obtain viable funding through conventional means but have contributed significantly to the economic growth of the county and also provided some key economic assets for attracting further investment, e.g. the Shield Data Centre and the Stroud Metal investment in a new factory.

Activity for 2021-22 will be to continue to manage the fund, managing repayments and loan awards in accordance with our governance arrangements and developing the pipeline of potential projects for future funding.

4. OTHER ACTIVITIES

As a LEP we are actively engaged with our local authority partners, government agencies and stakeholders in many initiatives and programmes beyond our capital funding and business engagement and support activities.

Though the coming year we will continue to support our local authority partners on the Levelling Up agenda and work with them on funding bids where appropriate.

We will engage in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) programme, particularly with respect to the delivery of employment land, the appropriate mix of housing (to support our aspirations for young people and creating a 'magnet' county) and sustainable locations for housing.

**The JCS is a co-ordinated strategic development plan for the Councils of Gloucester City, Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Boroughs that sets out how the area will develop between 2011 and 2041.*

We will continue to develop ideas and strategies locally and with government for future funding (specifically The UK Shared Prosperity Fund) that would deliver continuity and sustainability of successful initiatives, e.g. The Growth Hub service.

We will continue to be active members of **Nuclear South West** and the **Hinkley Point Steering Group** alongside Heart of the South West and West of England LEPs. To ensure the south west receives its fair share of funding as an outcome of the Nuclear Sector Deal.

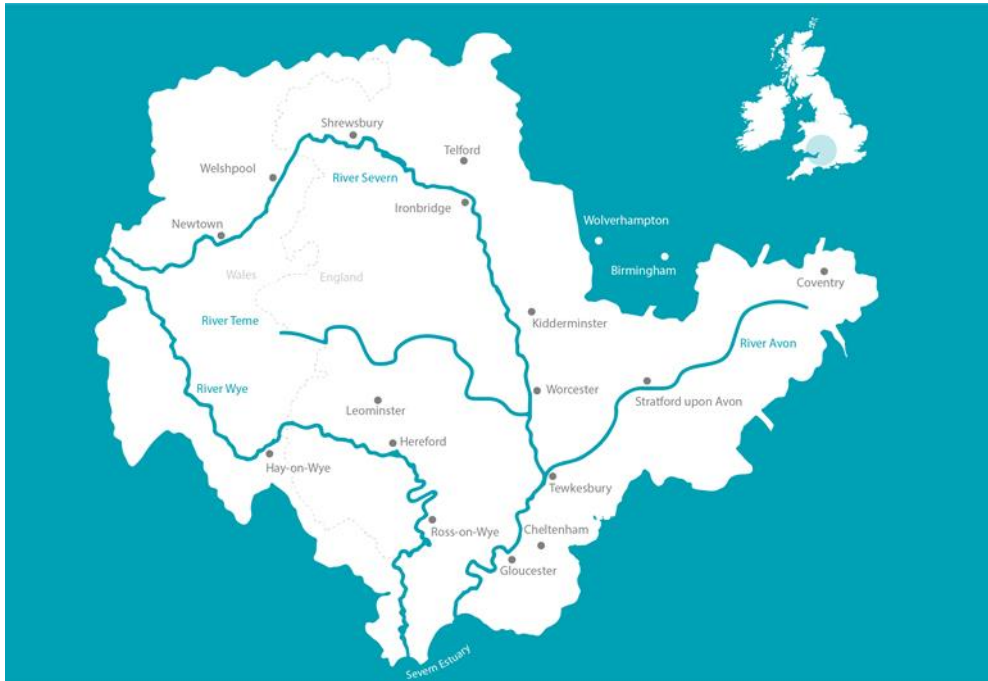
We will progress our work with the **Local Nature Partnership** and support the implementation of the Building with Nature standard. We will also continue active involvement in the development of a Natural Capital evaluation and monitoring tool to inform and influence future investment decisions

We will work with key strategic partners from both the public and private sectors to ensure our ambitions outlined in our (BEIS funded) **Energy Strategy** continue to progress as we strive to become a carbon neutral county by 2050.

We will engage with the new River Severn Partnership, a collaboration of local authorities, the Environment Agency, the relevant LEPs, Severn Trent Water and a number of other key stakeholders within the Severn catchment area. The Severn Partnership has the following vision;

“To make the Severn Catchment Britain’s most vibrant and resilient river network; where an exceptional quality of life, prosperous local economies and an outstanding natural environment is driven by a programme of innovation to reduce flood risk, secure future water resources and improve and deliver shared natural assets.”

Fig.11 The Severn Catchment Area



<http://www.riversevernpartnership.org.uk/>

5. SUMMARY

The unprecedented challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past year have been an opportunity for GFirst LEP (and all the other LEPs across the UK) to demonstrate their flexibility, agility and capacity to deliver rapid, innovative and effective solutions to support the Gloucestershire economy.

2021-22 will be a year of transition for GFirst LEP - a new chair, four new private sector board members and one new local authority member provide a great opportunity for new challenge and ambition to be developed for the LEP.

In the coming year we will complete the delivery of both the Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund capital programmes, we will complete the roll-out of The Growth Hub network and fully establish the Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel and deliver an Employment Charter to support the recovery plan.

We look forward to the outcome of the LEP Review and CSR to set a clear direction of travel for the LEP family. Our board: private, public, education and VCS representatives; are committed to the concept of a partnership across those four sectors leading on local growth and the vital role that the LEP will play in recovery and building back better. We look forward to revising our Local Industrial Strategy for Gloucestershire to align with the government's expectations.

Our over-riding plan this year will be to firstly ensure Gloucestershire recovers successfully and then returns to growth and continues to improve its economic performance year on year.

Appendix A

Project Name	Growth Fund	Category	Status	Homes	Total jobs	Private Leverage £m's	Public Sector Leverage £m's	Commercial Floorspace m²	Employment Land Ha	Skills Capital m²	App'ships
Growth Hub Amalgamated	£ 9,400,000	Business Support	Complete	0	6644	£0.00	£26.0	2127	0	3800	0
Merrywalks Centre, Stroud*	£ 3,000,000	Business Support	Complete	0	500	£27.0	£0.0	20292	1.37	0	0
Farm 491	£ 2,920,000	Business Support	Complete	0	207	£0.8	£0.0	1380	0	0	0
Glos Airport Anson Park Development*	£ 1,885,000	Business Support	In delivery	0	85	£7.0	£0.0	7500	4	0	0
Glos Airport South Camp	£ 550,000	Business Support	Complete	0	106	£9.7	£0.0	12000	6.8	0	0
UK Digital Retail Innovation Centre	£ 400,000	Business Support	Complete	0	50	£0.2	£0.0	550	0	150	0
Cheltenham Cyber Park (WCTIS) *	£ 22,000,000	Enabling Infrastructure	In delivery	1100	7500	£50.0	£0.0	40000	45	0	0
Cinderford Northern Link Road	£ 3,800,000	Enabling Infrastructure	Complete	110	0	£0.0	£5.3	0	2	0	0
Gloucester Railway Station Improvement	£ 4,300,000	Enabling Infrastructure	In delivery	200	300	£7.7	£0.6	10000	5.3	0	0
A40 Innsworth Gateway*	£ 4,530,000	Housing	In delivery	1300	630	£3.3	£0.0	5000	8.3	0	0
Blackfriars & Quayside	£ 4,130,000	Housing	Complete	250	45	£85.0	£12.0	4000	2.5	0	0
Hartpury College, Tech-to-Plate	£ 1,000,000	Innovation	Complete	0	0	£0.0	£0.0	0	0.0	1415	0
GREEN Skills Centre	£ 5,000,000	Skills	Complete	0	125	£19.5	£15.1	0	10.7	4401	300
Berkeley Green Cyber Security Centre	£ 3,000,000	Skills	Complete	0	129	£4.0	£0.4	1461	0	1461	213
Cinderford - New Gloscol Campus *	£ 2,600,000	Skills	Complete	55	150	£0.0	£12.5	0	0	6000	0
Gloucestershire STEM centres	£ 2,096,000	Skills	Complete	0	0	£0.0	£3.8	0	0	6141	1064
Elmbridge (Tail-end Major road scheme)	£ 9,070,000	Transport	Complete	0	0	£0.0	£5.2	0	0	0	0
Gloucester Transport Hub **	£ 6,400,000	Transport	Complete	100	0	£40.0	£105.0	1000	0	0	0
A419 Stonehouse Improvements	£ 4,360,000	Transport	Complete	0	0	£0.0	£0.0	0	0	0	0
A40 Over Roundabout **	£ 2,230,000	Transport	Complete	0	0	£0.1	£0.5	0	0	0	0
Gloucester South West By Pass	£ 2,000,000	Transport	In delivery	0	0	£0.1	£5.3	0	0	0	0
Berkeley Bridge Replacement	£ 1,990,000	Transport	Complete	0	0	£0.0	£1.0	0	0	0	0
West Cheltenham Walking and Cycling	£ 1,600,000	Transport	In delivery	0	0	£0.0	£0.0	0	0	0	0
Cheltenham Spa Railway Station **	£ 1,497,000	Transport	Complete	0	0	£1.8	£0.2	0	0	0	0
Lydney Cycling Improvements	£ 1,000,000	Transport	Complete	0	0	£0.0	£0.0	0	0	0	0
Abbeymead /Metz Way **	£ 500,000	Transport	Complete	0	0	£1.0	£1.2	0	0	0	0
Forecast Totals*	£ 101,258,000			3115	16471	£257.2	£194.1	105310	86.0	23368	1577
Full Programme Commitment				2255	14280	£285.8		N/A	75.3	N/A	1014