

GFirst LEP Business Group Update: February 2018



Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- The Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group held a lively informative meeting on 22 January. A wide ranging number of issues were covered including apprenticeships, replacement of an ageing workforce, stronger links between schools and businesses, development areas, inward investment and support for businesses within the sector.
- Useful links were provided for the following websites: <https://festomane.co.uk/> is currently advertising countywide apprenticeships for free. 2018 is the Year of Engineering and in a couple of months a website will be launched at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2018-will-be-the-year-of-engineering>. Information about the new T levels is contained at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-announces-first-new-t-levels>

The date of the next AEM meeting will be 12th March 2018. For questions about the group, please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Agri Food & Rural Business

- To engender a spirit of closer cooperation, communications and remove any perceived barriers, the Chairwoman, Jo Price, Vice Chancellor, RAU invited representatives from 2 other Business Groups to speak to this group about their experiences and current offer at the meeting on 26 January
- Stephen Limbrick, Chairman of the Construction and Infrastructure [C&I] Group provided a detailed and fascinating update on the group's history, achievements and progress to date. He emphasised his focus was to so avoid the group becoming just a talking shop and to grasp the opportunity to really make a difference. The C&I group believe that there are real opportunities for economic growth in Gloucestershire and that they had a key role to play in this goal through the LEP.

- Jonathan Powell from the Banking and Finance Group also gave an overview of what the LEP Banking and Finance Business Group were up to. He explained that the members were not only from Banks but also businesses that offered a variety of different sources of funding, including banks, equity, peer to peer, crowdfunding, grant funding, etc and business advice. The group holds clinics on a regular basis (details available on the GFirst LEP website) where start-ups and established business can come to receive free business and financial advice about any funding issues they are having. They have particular expertise in Agribusiness and small rural businesses are currently struggling to obtain funding.

A small sub group is working on creating a strategy for the group following the feedback provided at the workshop held on 24 October.

The date of the next meeting is Friday 16th March 2018 at Hartpury College. For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Banking & Finance

- At their meeting on 20th February the group looked at possible future activities for the group in the wider Access to Finance field, including guest speakers, and how they can use this to support the local economy.
- A sub group was set up to explore the possibility of obtaining a fund to be run by the group similar to that offered by Finance Birmingham. www.financebirmingham.com owned by Birmingham City Council.
- It was agreed that the group will run their annual charity quiz at the Growth Hub on 25th April. The nominated charity is Milestone School in Longlevens. We would urge businesses to support this worthwhile event by providing at least one team of 4 people. It is a great, fun, night out.
- 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.
- Unfortunately the next Banking and Finance Clinic on 24 April is already oversubscribed. We do however hope to arrange one in May, on a date to be determined. Details will be provided on the website shortly.

The next Banking and Finance meeting is at the Growth Hub on Tuesday 24th April 2018. For questions about the group please contact Mike Curran: mike.curran@gfirstlep.com.



Business & Professional Services

- At their last meeting the group was provided with a very interesting update on the Cheltenham Cyber Park project by the project manager, Jeremy Williamson. Funding of £22m is being provided toward the initial infrastructure costs by GFirst LEP through Growth Deal 3. He highlighted potential issues including a possible 18 traffic modelling scenarios alone. The aim is however to get first site occupation by early 2021.
- Geraldine McCullagh also gave an interesting presentation on Gloucestershire's Accelerated Impact Network Support [GAINS]. As part of this package SME's in the county can access 40% of the cost of 4 days of high quality business performance coaching. Further information is available at <https://spcgrowth.com/blog/gloucestershire-gains>.
- Further information was also supplied on 2 more business support packages provided by the University of Gloucestershire. They are: Gloucestershire Research and Innovation Project [GRIP]. This enables to access a package of services that are designed to enable them to accelerate their innovation plans including access to 3D software and printers. The Start and Grow Enterprise [SaGE]. This package is aimed at innovative entrepreneurs and startups in the county. It offers a range of free events, workshops, reviews, and resources, helping to turn ideas into reality and grow successful enterprises. For further information on either of these please see <http://www.glos.ac.uk/for-business/pages/do-business-on-campus.aspx>.

The next meeting will take place at the Growth Hub on Wednesday 23rd May 2018. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran mike.curran@gfirstlep.com or Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Construction & Infrastructure

- At their meeting on 14 February the group was provided with a very interesting insight into the collapse of Carillion by Andrew James from Harrison Clark Rickerbys. This sparked a thought provoking debate on the lessons to be learned by the industry in general.
- Annette Roberts from Tewkesbury Borough Council [TBC] is Chairwoman of the sub group formed to suggest actions arising from “*Consideration of Barriers to Development*” paper prepared by the C&I group. Annette gave an interesting presentation on the work that has been done by sub group and of their last meeting on 5 February. At that meeting the focus had been on Right Development, Right Time & Right Place and covered: the story so far, an initial assessment, issues arising, priorities, common ground, opportunities and a broad action plan.
- The group heard of successful bids made by Districts to the *Housing Infrastructure Fund*. This included £8m allocated to TBC for the rail crossing/bridge at Northway and £3m to Cheltenham Borough Council to unlock the Portland Street development.
- On a general discussion on the impact of Brexit on the sector the general consensus was that businesses were just getting on with it, although the London market was experiencing a slowdown. The help to buy scheme had been a great help but concerns were expressed about its continued viability.

The next meeting is at Roberts Limbrick on 28th March 2018. For questions about the group please contact Mike Curran: mike.curran@gfirstlep.com



Energy

- A meeting was held at Ecotricity, Stroud on 27 February.
- Dave Evans from Schneider gave an interesting presentation providing a fascinating look into the future of innovative work being done on renewable energy projects and how these could provide a more efficient product to the consumer ultimately at a reduced cost.
- Funding has been received from BEIS to procure an Energy Strategy from externals based on the proposal put together by the sub group led by Pete Wiggins. A procurement exercise inviting tenders are on www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk using the Glos County Council protocols.
- BEIS have allocated £2.7m nationally from their Capacity support fund to fund the creation of 5 Local Regional Energy Hubs across the country. Gloucestershire are in the SW Region along with 6 other LEPs: Swindon & Wilts, Solent, Heart of SW, Dorset, Cornwall/Isles of Scilly and West of England. The West of England Combined Authority [WECA] and LEP will host the Hub and 4 staff in Bristol. Details of the key objectives and tasks are being worked on.

The next meeting is on 17 April 2018 at Tidal Lagoon Power, The Quays, Gloucester. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran mike.curran@gfirstlep.com or Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Retail, Tourism & The High Street

- A meeting was held on 21 February at the Cheltenham Campus of Gloucestershire College.
- Jason Smith Marketing Gloucester gave the group an update on the UK Digital Retail Innovation Centre [DRIC] that will be opening up in the Eastgate Shopping centre. This will address such innovative technology such as 3D virtual reality. It was acknowledged that current retailers were woefully unprepared for the digital age. There was excitement that some very big players within the UK are very interested in this project. There had even been interest from as far afield as the USA. It is hoped that the UKDRIC will open in June 2018.
- Polly Barnfield provided an update on the #WDYT campaign. 37% of all retail sales are influenced by digital, by 2020 that figure will go up to 49%! Huge difference between shoppers and retailers. Over 81% of shoppers will use multiple devices to research what they want to buy, but over 90% of retailers can't connect. Feedback has been extremely positive to date, particularly from the current pilot in the Brewery. The Meadows Shopping Centre has recently started trials.

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 18th April at Bruton Knowles, Gloucester. For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com