

GFirst LEP Business Groups Update: January 2020

The following Business groups met in January 2020:

Retail & the High Street

Energy

- The **Chairs of the Business Groups** met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Monday 9th December 2019. Dev Chakraborty, Deputy Chief Executive, gave a brief summary of business activity within the LEP.
- Elizabeth Weaver, Business Group Manager, mentioned that a skills audit is being undertaken for all groups, and Chairs are encouraged to look at what skills are required and missing from their sector group and to take this into consideration when recruiting for new members.
- Terms of Reference have been drafted for the Business Groups, as a written guide to defining the purpose and structure of the meetings as well as confirmation on longevity of service of Chairpersons and members, conflicts of interest, etc. This will be sent round to the Chairs for amends/approval before being sent to all of the business group members.
- The Chairs of the following groups gave an update:
 - Banking & Finance:** Up to 50% of the week is taking up with dealing with internal and external company fraud. Some industries banks are reluctant to get involved in it due to the risk.
 - Business & Professional Services:** Recruitment is a challenge as office space, especially in Cheltenham, is in short supply. There are big changes occurring in legal profession in relation to AI and digital. Graduates into law profession are not necessarily coming from a University graduate route.
 - Retail & Visitor Economy:** companies who have good combined e-commerce and physical platform did better over Black Friday than those without.
 - Cyber-tech:** the cyber industry are reluctant to recruit people with no previous experience despite them having the skills – a culture of innovation & entrepreneurship is lacking. Cyber-tech needs to be seen as an enabler – giving companies the highest level security rather than a reactive solution to a problem.

*The date of the next Business Group Chairs Meeting will be **Monday 9th March 2020 at the Gloucester Growth Hub.***



Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- The Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group met on Monday 2nd December 2019 at the Gloucester Growth Hub.
- An update was given on the timeline of the planned Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages, they plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. A breakdown of visitor stats for each Growth Hub will be sent to all Business Group members.
- The group were asked to consider the future of advanced engineering and manufacturing in advance of an exercise to be undertaken at the next meeting. With key stats on the industry, the group, with the assistance of a consultant, will discuss what the current landscape looks like, where it needs to be and what actions need to be taken in order to get there. This will help to identify the challenges and opportunities for growth.
- Guest speakers included **Tony Gee**: providing innovative engineering designs for both temporary and permanent works in all construction industry sectors, and Operations Director Martin Clegg from **Severn**: the UK's most progressive and ethical print supplier. Peter Doyle from **The Growth Company** updated the group on his work mentoring with several Advanced Engineering companies – seeing productivity improvements in excess of 15% within a 12-month period of starting the programme. Dr Polly Pick from the University of Gloucestershire updated the group on the Senior Leadership and Management Programmes with 2020 seeing the development of a Project Management and Professional Engineer Level 7 Masters.
- The Engineering industry is looking at diversification, with sustainability becoming a hot topic within the Aviation sector in particular, with significant changes needed rather than just a reduction in current activities. Export is on the increase with some companies experiencing a 17% increase year on year. Staff retention within the sector is good, but steady.

*The date of the next Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing meeting will be **Monday 2nd March 2020 at the University of Gloucestershire's new Engineering Department, Park Campus, Cheltenham.***

For questions about the group, or if you would like to be considered to become a member, please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Agri-Food & Rural Economy

- The Agri Food & Rural group met at Hartpury College & University on Thursday 14th November 2019. Specific feedback for the Agri-Tech sector of the Local Industrial Strategy has been submitted by the food strategy sub group. The links between RAU, Hartpury and Campden BRI have been clearly identified in the LIS, however there was concern as to how the work being done by them trickles down to the land-based users and benefits consumers. Businesses need to identify ways of working with education establishments to build these connections and enable the trickle down into businesses and the end consumer.
- The Chair asked members to ask their customers: “*What do they see 2030 looking like in the industry?*” We can then start to build a framework to support these answers, including support with diversification, succession planning, scale-up, etc.
- Katharine Cripps, Barclays Bank mentioned that bringing farmers together had been a very positive idea-sharing exercise in the past, and the idea of holding an event in one of the Growth Hubs to showcase farmers who have diversified was discussed with the group.
- The Tech to Plate project at Hartpury will be launched in February 2020 – this could be a good opportunity to invite some Farm491 businesses to discuss how they have directly benefitted the rural economy, and to strengthen the connections between Farm491 and Tech to Plate Projects.
- The recent flooding of farmland and road networks in the Maisemore area has impacted on the local farming economy: productivity losses from damaged crops, grazing land and from the wider economy following road network disruptions. The flooding of the roads is a Highways issue, which was initially raised in 2015. NFU are working with Government to maintain levels of farm funding over a longer term which will include flood damage support.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Thursday 6th February 2020 at Gloucester Growth Hub.***

For questions about the group, or if you would like to be considered to become a member, please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Banking & Finance

- The group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 19th November 2019, this was preceded by a banking and finance clinic. Several guest speakers updated the group:
 - Peter Doyle from the Growth Company is working with SMEs to encourage mentoring, with an increasing amount of “reverse mentoring” taking place, where the smaller SME mentees mentoring Corporate Mentors (such as John Lewis Partnership, BAe Systems, Rolls-Royce, Amazon, GSK) - about how SMEs can be agile, creative and innovative. Peter compliments the work that Rod Horrocks is undertaking for GFirst LEP.
 - Dr Polly Pick, Director of Business Engagement at the University of Gloucestershire gave an update on the latest Business degrees, degree apprenticeships and work-based training programmes, which can be part funded through the Apprenticeship Levy for larger companies.
 - Charles Dodwell, Start and Grow Enterprise – support for start-ups and new entrepreneurs in Gloucestershire in the form of free training events, networking and resources. Charles explained that they have completed a funding bid to run the programme for a further 3 years.
- Andy Kime, Business Guide for the Growth Hub Network gave an update on the Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020, Stroud plan to open officially in February 2020 and Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. Funding for the Growth Hub (revenue) has been extended for a further 3 years until 2022. More workshops are taking place to find new clients, and several Director Strategy workshops are being held, to de-mystify business jargon.
- The group fed back on the draft Local Industrial Strategy, commenting that physical and digital connectivity should be a priority. Can we better connect the Growth Hubs with the Banking & Finance businesses? Overall very positive comments about the LIS which have been passed onto the LIS team.

*The next Banking & Finance meeting is at the **Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 11th February 2020** and will be preceded by a Banking & Finance clinic.*

For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Business & Professional Services

- The group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Wednesday 2nd October 2019. An update was given on the timeline of the planned Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages. They plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. [Hub8](#) an incubation space for cyber-tech startups has now opened in the Brewery Quarter, providing Cheltenham with a co-working space. Tewkesbury, Cirencester and Gloucester are going from strength to strength, with Gloucester considering reaching out to businesses with a view to sponsorship, enabling start-ups to use the office space for free.
- Members were also advised to inform businesses about the Growth Hubs, to continue to spread the word about the services that they offer for free. It was mooted that current networks and larger private digital companies could be encouraged to use the Growth Hub spaces for their events which would raise the Growth Hub profile, as a solid digital infrastructure is important.
- Katie Jenkins, Director of Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) gave an overview of where we are with feedback following the launch of the draft LIS. To summarise, the members thought that the draft LIS was a good synthesis of the strengths and of the opportunities in the county. A key theme that emerged was that we need to be able to offer easy access to upskilling, to ensure businesses of all sizes are equipped for challenges and changes for an increasingly digital economy with cyber-tech protection capabilities. The group's feedback has been sent to the GFirst LEP LIS team.

*The next Business & Professional Services meeting will take place on **Wednesday 4th March 2020 at Gloucester Growth Hub.***

For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Business Membership Groups

- The Business Membership Group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Wednesday 27th November 2019. Peter Doyle from the Growth Company talked to the group about his work with SMEs to encourage mentoring, with an increasing amount of “reverse mentoring” taking place, where the smaller SME mentees mentoring Corporate Mentors (such as John Lewis Partnership, BAe Systems, Rolls-Royce, Amazon, GSK) - about how SME’s can be agile, creative and innovative. Peter compliments the work that Rod Horrocks is undertaking for GFirst LEP.
- Dr Polly Pick, Director of Business Engagement at the University of Gloucestershire gave an update on the latest Business degrees, degree apprenticeships and work-based training programmes, which can be part funded through the Apprenticeship Levy for larger companies. The group were especially keen to develop the relationships between businesses and schools/Higher education establishments, to get students more interested in business at an earlier age.
- An update was given on the timeline of the other Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean and Stroud due to open in Spring 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. Funding for the Growth Hub (revenue) has been extended for a further 3 years until 2022. More workshops are taking place to find new clients, and several Director Strategy workshops are being held, to de-mystify business jargon.
- The group fed back on the draft Local Industrial Strategy, and comments have been given to the LIS team for inclusion. They reiterated the importance of the voice of young people and the need for a good public transport system throughout the county, and the group welcomed the rail strategy as part of this. A good transport infrastructure will be imperative to support the development of Cyber Central. Housing affordability and availability will be another key factor in retaining young people and this needs to be addressed.

*The next meeting will take place on **Thursday 5th March 2020 at the Tewkesbury Growth Hub.**
For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com*



Cyber-tech

- The Cyber Security Business group met on Monday 21st October 2019 at the Gloucester Growth Hub. Dr Polly Pick, Director of Business Engagement at the University of Gloucestershire spoke about how the University is keen to work with businesses to ensure UoG students are 'business ready' when they complete their studies. Cyber Security Degree Apprenticeship is a work-based qualification, tailored to meet the specific needs of business. These can be offered to existing employees and nurture and retain the talent that businesses already have.
- Neil Hopwood, from Cheltenham Borough Council, gave an update on the developments of Cyber Central, the Cyber Business Park. Avison Young will be producing the planning document as concept designs have now been commissioned. Project will go before GFirst LEP Board in October for the first two phases of the transport plan. Public consultation will be launched mid-November/December and run for 6 weeks.
- Dev Chakraborty, Deputy Chief Exec of Gfirst LEP, gave an update on the Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages. They plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. [Hub8](#) an incubation space for cyber-tech startups has now opened in the Brewery Quarter, providing Cheltenham with a co-working space.
- The group also discussed the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and main themes were collated: Need to resolve the gap between skills and businesses. One unified approach, with clarity on the 'how'. There is a unique depth of cyber-tech knowledge in the county and we need to pool this to have a collected hub of knowledge – to give companies a reason to relocate to Gloucestershire. All LIS feedback has been collated and sent to the LIS team for consideration.
- Bruce Gregory, Director Hub8 gave an update on the space: there has been lots of uptake, with several cyber-tech companies working out of here – this is the start of the cyber central movement. Companies are looking to hold events in the space, which will further strengthen the brand and its association with the cyber community.

*The next meeting of the Cyber Security Business Group is on **Monday 20th January 2020 at the Gloucester Growth Hub.***

For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Construction and Infrastructure

- The group met on Wednesday 11th December 2019 at the Gloucester Growth Hub. Dr Polly Pick from the University of Gloucestershire updated the group on the Senior Leadership and Management Programmes with 2020 seeing the development of a Project Management and Professional Engineer Level 7 Masters. They are also looking at developing Construction related programmes in 2021 and would welcome private sector input into these.
- Elizabeth Weaver, Business Group Manager, gave an update on the Growth Hubs: funding has been confirmed until 2022. Stroud and Forest of Dean are due for opening in Feb 2020 with Cheltenham scheduled for September 2020. Business Group Terms of Reference will be circulated to group members shortly.
- The group were asked to consider the future of their sector - an exercise to be undertaken at the next meeting. With key stats on the industry, the group, with the assistance of a consultant, will discuss what the current landscape looks like, where it needs to be and what actions need to be taken in order to get there. This will help to identify the challenges and opportunities for growth. The group have scheduled an interim meeting for February to look at this in more detail.
- The Joint Core Strategy has a deficit of 40 hectares and a consultation between the 3 Districts (Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and Gloucester) will take place to ensure this is found. Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Local Plan comments from this group have been submitted to the consultation. The Gloucester Local Plan consultation period has been extended and a comment by the group will follow. Updates were also given on Local Plans for Stroud, Forest of Dean and Cotswold District Councils.
- The GFirst LEP Board has approved Phases 1 and 2 of the West Cheltenham Highways scheme: Arle Court roundabout (phase 1) and M5 Junction 11 (phase 2).

*The next meeting of the C&I group is on **Wednesday 12th February 2020 at the Gloucester Growth Hub.** For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com*



Energy

- The Energy Business group met on Tuesday 21st January at C11, Berkeley. This group were chosen to continue the work from the Local Industrial Strategy; using a logic chain approach the Energy Group were asked to identify where they see the industry now, where they want to be in the future, and what steps are required to get there. Key discussion points from this were the Energy Strategy implementation, future-proofing the infrastructure of Cyber Central, and the application of green solutions into new housing. There needs to be a cross-sector approach to the greening of the county. Consultant Nick Holyoake managed the session and will feedback on the results before the end of March 2020.
- Following the successful launch of Gloucestershire County Council's Climate Strategy on 13th December, Pete Wiggins gave the group a presentation on the key themes.
- Felix Ritchie from Energy Catapult Birmingham also gave a presentation on how they offer tailored incubation and acceleration support for innovators to help address systemic barriers, de-risk innovation, help businesses scale and secure investment.
- It was mentioned that there seems to be a lack of guidance for businesses who want to become greener. Official Government-led advice on areas where companies need to reduce energy consumption, waste, carbon emissions etc. as well as 'green financing' to guide businesses on initial outlay versus ROI.
- A South West Energy Hub meeting was held the following day at West of England Combined Authority, Bristol. Monthly activity reports will be sent to Board members and LEP Chief Execs. It has been agreed at the meeting that projects submitted through the Hub requiring more than £25,000 investment will go to LEP Chief Execs for final approval. Those under £25,000 investment will be approved by a LEP representative. The South West Hub received 43 project proposals in the quarter Sept to Dec 2019 making a total of 92 project proposals received.

The objectives of the Energy Hubs are to:

- Increase number, quality and scale of local energy projects being delivered
- Raise local awareness of opportunity for and benefits of local energy investment
- Enable local areas to attract private and/or public finance for energy projects
- Identify working model for teams to be financially self-sustaining after first two years

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 21st April 2020 – venue to be confirmed.

For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Retail and High Street

- The Retail and High Street Business Group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Wednesday 15th January 2020. The group will no longer be combined with the Visitor Economy and Tourism group. Chair, Nigel Jobson mentioned the current audit of the Business Groups and the Terms of Reference which have been approved by the Chairs and will be sent round to all members.
- Nigel opened the floor to suggestions for a focus for the group over the next 12 months. Gathering best practices and sharing knowledge from each area will avoid repetition as there is a lot of crossover. The Retail environment needs to change in line with customers more holistic retail 'experience' habits. The High Street needs to attract smaller independent businesses to provide this level of interest to the consumer.
- Town centre buildings need to be re-purposed – a lot of the spaces above shops are empty so Cheltenham BID have formed a landlord group to encourage landlords (who often do not live in the area or the country) to consider change of use from business to residential for their properties.
- A few updates from the group included:
 - Cheltenham: Newer shops have done well over Christmas but the already established shops not so well. Shop owners with an online presence do much better than those without – Maybe* and StreetPin are online tools that can help with this.
 - Cirencester: parking continues to be an issue. Council are considering a future-thinking resolution of a 'car free' centre, or an incentive to shop by getting a discount on parking when using the shops. A multi-function flexible space is also being considered.
- Sam Hoad, the LEP's Growth Hub Development Manager, gave an update on the Growth Hub Network: Forest of Dean Growth Hub opening April 2020, Stroud Growth Hub opening March 2020, Cheltenham Growth Hub opening September 2020.
- John Lewis are trialling pop-up shops for gifting, food & fashion from end February. More details are available by contacting Martin Bundy, General Manager John Lewis Cheltenham. Martin is contactable via GFirst LEP.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Wednesday 29th April 2020 - venue to be confirmed.**
For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com*



Tourism and Visitor Economy

- The group met on Thursday 28th March at the Gloucester Growth Hub. Elizabeth Chaired the meeting in Dev's absence. If anyone is interested in Chairing this group, all expressions of interest are to be emailed to Dev.Chakraborty@gfirstlep.com
- Round table updates included: **Marketing Gloucester**: US Ancestry increasing interest, work on Tall Ships Festival, accommodation in the City Centre. **Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale Tourism Network**: attempting to join up smaller Market Town areas with integrated Tourism offering. **Stroud District Council**: looking at joining up websites to local areas and to add value to overnight visitors. **Cotswolds Tourism**: feedback from 'uncover the Cotswolds' project funded by Visit England's Discover England Fund. More details are available on the www.Cotswolds.com website.
- Guest speakers Hannah McDonnell from Creative Sustainability gave an update: working with Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway (GWR) to add value to each station stop. They are also developing a tourism strategy for the Stroud canal restoration project. Wendy Walton from Sudeley Castle and Gardens also gave an update: realisation that the Castle was working in solo to the rest of the town. They are now connecting up and adding events that encompass the town into their portfolio.
- Elizabeth gave an update on GFirst developments: Future High Streets Fund, the Inward Investment team, the development of the Energy Strategy and the Call for evidence for the Local Industrial Strategy which closes on 31st May.

*The date of next meeting is **Thursday 19th March 2020 at the Gloucester Growth Hub.***

For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com