

## **GFIRST LEP Business Group Update: October 2018**

The **Chairs of all the Business Groups** met at the University of Gloucestershire on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October.

David Owen outlined the importance of working collaboratively with the Business Groups in the development and delivery of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS). GFirst LEP has 75% private company representation on its Board, which provides a great foundation because the LIS is to be business-lead, whilst also getting the local Government areas engaged in the Strategy.

The LIS needs to focus on the business priorities and how we can increase productivity and grow the Gloucestershire economy. In order to get the groups fully engaged with the LIS, we will be running a number of sessions for businesses to attend throughout the first quarter of 2019 and a LIS planning timeline is in production.

Nigel Jobson (Retail & High Street Group Chair) and Jo Price (Agri, Food & Rural Group Chair) both gave updates as to their respective business groups.

It was identified that whilst each of the groups have discussions relevant to their own business areas, there are several topics discussed that are relevant to every sector area. GFirst will encourage discussions and presentations from other sector groups, to encourage 'cross-pollination' of topics and avoid any silos.

*The date of the next Business Group Chairs Meeting will be Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at the University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's new offices are based).*



- The last meeting of the Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group was on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Rod Horrocks from Gloucestershire Research & Innovation Project (**GRIP**) gave an update as to developments: with over 130 companies under his wing, Rod provides eligible SMEs with access to a package of services designed to enable them to accelerate their innovation plans.
- It was identified that there is a skills mis-match between the advanced manufacturing technologies sector and education and training within this area, and it was suggested that Pete Carr from the Employment and Skills Board give the group an update on the work being undertaken in this area.

- In the next meeting it was agreed that the group focus on the following questions:
  - What is required to encourage businesses into Gloucestershire? (companies want to grow their business so we need space for them to expand to)
  - Companies want to retain skilled personnel, how do they encourage them here?
- Following exciting discussions with Drone Control, part of the Drone Innovation Centre of Excellence (DICE) and the Growth Hub, it was decided to organise a Drone Innovation event in January 2019 at the University of Gloucestershire, to highlight how drone technology can have cost and time benefits across all business sectors. For more information and to attend / participate in the event, please contact Elizabeth Weaver, Business Group Manager: [Elizabeth.weaver@gfirstlep.com](mailto:Elizabeth.weaver@gfirstlep.com)

*The date of the next AEM meeting will be Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December at the University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's new offices are based)*

*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](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



- The last meeting of this Business Group was held on 21 September at Hartpury University. Once again it was a lively, informative and productive meeting chaired by Jo Price, Vice Chancellor of the Royal Agricultural University.
- The main focus of the meeting was to discuss the agenda / invitees list for the workshop **'Let's Grow: The Future of Rural Business and Communities in Gloucestershire'**. It was agreed that the hands on workshop would measure two key topics:
  - To measure the value of the 'rural economy'
  - How we increase the promotion, purchase and understanding of locally produced food

The event will take place at the Royal Agricultural University on **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November** from 9.30am – 1.30pm and is free to attend. Register your attendance here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lets-grow-the-future-of-rural-business-and-communities-in-gloucestershire-tickets-50537330516>

- The workshop will also spark interest in the 'value' project which Martin Collison has been asked to undertake. Phase 1 will target areas of value and importance to the rural economy. Phase 2 will be a mapping exercise showing major developments to support the rural economy
- Bob Watters provided a comprehensive update on the LEADER programme.
- Concern was expressed about the impact of Brexit on the Farming Community.

*The date of the next meeting is on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November at the University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where Gfirst LEP's new offices are based)*

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## Banking & Finance

- The last meeting of the Banking & Finance Group was held at the Oxstalls Campus, University of Gloucestershire on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September.
- Alison Whistance from **Thin Cats** gave an interesting talk on their 'alternative to banks' lending. They help SMEs domiciled within the UK. Alison covers South Wales and the South West and is happy to be contacted at [Alison.whistance@thincats.com](mailto:Alison.whistance@thincats.com)
- Rod Horrocks from Gloucestershire Research & Innovation Project (**GRIP**) gave an update as to developments: with over 130 companies under his wing, Rod provides eligible SMEs with access to a package of services designed to enable them to accelerate their innovation plans. Access to Research and Knowledge resources, Supply Chain Engagement workshops, Clustering and Networking, Innovation Teams, Product/Service development, Commercialisation and Bid Management. Rod can be contacted via email: [rhorrocks@glos.ac.uk](mailto:rhorrocks@glos.ac.uk)
- Andy Kime gave an update on the **Growth Hub Network**: Cirencester and Tewkesbury are now fully open. It is hoped to have the Growth Hub in the Forest of Dean open by Spring 2019.
- The Banking & Finance Funding sub group are putting the finishing touches to a letter to go to Alex Chalk MP to seek funding for a Seed Fund to be overseen by the main LEP Banking & Finance Group. Alex had been extremely supportive in recent discussions and had agreed to Champion the proposal with the Business Secretary Greg Clark - Phil Mitchell agreed to revisit the SEED-type funding pot on behalf of the group following changes in the funding stream. He will pursue Alex Chalk MP as necessary.
- The group agreed to consider running another Access to Finance workshop for staff in the financial community later this year. This would be similar to the highly successful event held on 15 May which had attracted circa 30 presenters. Ideally it would take place in one of the new Growth Hubs which are starting to be rolled out.
- The meeting was preceded by another **Banking & Finance clinic**, which provided advice to diverse businesses, all with excellent potential. Once again these were extremely successful and the feedback received was very positive. Another **free** Banking & Finance Clinic will be held on **Tuesday 27 November 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. For more information on the Banking & Finance clinics please contact Karen Campbell.

*The next Banking & Finance meeting is at the Growth Hub (Oxstalls) on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018 at University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's new offices are based).*

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## Business & Professional Services

- It has previously been agreed that the group act as a critical friend in the development of Business Cases for Growth Deal projects where funding is being provided through the LEP. This had been very successful on the Farm 491 Project with the Royal Agricultural University.
- At their meeting on 11 July they critically reviewed the draft Business Case for Hangar development at Gloucestershire Airport with the scheme promoters. Once again the promoters expressed their thanks for the invaluable advice provided.
- The group have been penciled in to provide similar assistance to the Cheltenham Cyber park project when the time was ripe, as well as assisting with other projects in the pipeline.
- Since its inception, Ruth Dooley has done a sterling job in chairing the group. Ruth has decided to step down and has handed over the reins to Matthew Clayton, Partner with Willans Solicitors LLP. We would like to extend a huge 'Thank you' to Ruth for her support over the years, from everyone at Gfirst LEP.
- The aims and objectives of the group will be reviewed and discussed prior to the next meeting.

*The next Business & Professional Services meeting will take place on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> November at University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's new offices are based).*

*For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Business Membership Group

- The Business Membership Group met at the University of Gloucestershire on 17<sup>th</sup> October. Newly appointed LEP Board Member and 'Small Business Champion' Ian Mean has agreed to Chair this group. Meetings will be one hour and will be a report on actions completed from the previous meeting.
- Tom Duke, British IP attaché in Beijing gave an interesting and informative speech on Intellectual Property and exporting to China on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. Several contacts from the Growth Hub, either breaking into the Far Eastern market, or thinking about it were invited. This event was a collaboration between Business West, the Growth Hub and GFirst LEP. It was agreed that the invites for any further export-based events taking place in the University should again be extended out to the Business Groups and Growth Hub members.
- The priorities of the group were listed as:
  - Brexit
  - The 2050 Vision
  - The Skills / Apprenticeship Levy
  - What help GFirst LEP can offer SMEs
- The Gloucestershire Business Show takes place at the Cheltenham Town Hall on 21 – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019

*The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 at the University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's new offices are based).*

*For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Construction & Infrastructure

- The group met on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September. There is now a final agreed action plan on “*Breaking Down Barriers to Development*” paper. The five agreed action headings being taken forward by the joint sub-group are:
  - Early wins
  - Pre-applications
  - Planning Performance Agreements (PPA)
  - Community Led Planning
  - Legal agreements.
- Paul Fong provided a draft PPA which is being considered by the Local Planning Authority – the group welcome all feedback on this.
- Work on the Tewkesbury Area Concept Masterplan and associated transport issues are well underway with Tewkesbury BC. It is hoped that they will be able to make a presentation to the C&I group in the near future.
- A presentation was given by the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) team from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. The focus was primarily on the ‘Building with Nature’ Charter. This was received enthusiastically by the group who were invited to participate and attend the **Green Infrastructure workshop on 26<sup>th</sup> October** 9.30 – 16.00 at Francis Close Hall, University of Gloucestershire (Cheltenham). Mally Findlater from GFirst LEP and Paul Fong (Ridge and Partners) made up half of the panel at the event on 26<sup>th</sup> which was a full day with a selection of speakers, workshops and Q&A sessions.
- Paul Fong invited all those present and LPA representation to a ‘Planning Matters’ Forum on 28th September. The main aim was to discuss the implications of the NPPF on both businesses and Local Authorities.
- Jeremy Williamson from Cheltenham Development Task Force gave an update on the progress of Junction 10 and the Housing Infrastructure bid (HIF) to fund this. Jeremy will seek help and support from the group as required.

*The next meeting of the C&I group is on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November at the University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP’s new offices are based).*

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The group last met on the 25 June

- Currently there is a lot of discussion and negotiation about the Cyber Park Project not currently in the public domain. There is however, a huge amount of positive activity taking place. As soon as we are able to provide details of this, we will do so and call a meeting to update all members.

*A date for a follow up meeting has been set – Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's new offices are based).*

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- The last meeting was held at Berkeley Green on Tuesday 17 July. Interesting presentations were made by:
  - Prof Jeremy Miller on Home Energy Resources Unit: [www.myheru.com](http://www.myheru.com).
  - Peter Dirken on Innovate UK funding opportunities: [www.innovate-uk](http://www.innovate-uk)
  - Ian Griffiths on BPE Solicitors: [www.bpe.co.uk](http://www.bpe.co.uk)
- The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) is leading a small subgroup in writing an Energy Strategy for the county. The new strategy will set out how Gloucestershire can contribute fully to the national shift to a very low carbon, affordable and resilient energy system while maximising the benefits for local businesses and citizens. The sub group met at Spirax Sarco on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> September to discuss the detail for the Stakeholder workshop.
- This Energy Strategy Stakeholder workshop took place on **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October at SGS Berkeley Green**. The workshop gave stakeholders from across the county a unique opportunity to shape the development of the energy strategy. It will offer a chance to contribute your knowledge of what's already happening in the county and explore the challenges which need to be overcome for the county to succeed in securing an economically-rewarding sustainable energy future. The first draft of the Energy Strategy is in discussion stage with the stakeholder group.
- A South West Local Energy Hub is being created, headed up by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to cover the following LEPS:
  - Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly LEP and Cornwall Council
  - Heart of the South West and Somerset County Council
  - Dorset LEP and Dorset County Council
  - Solent LEP and Portsmouth City Council
  - Swindon and Wiltshire LEP and Wiltshire Council
  - GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire County Council
  - West of England LEP and West of England Combined Authority

- The Hub is being hosted by, and staff will be located in Bristol, at the West of England LEP and West of England Combined Authority (WECA). The Chair of the SW Hub is Helen Edelstyn from WECA. Funding for the Hub is being provided by BEIS for the first two years. They have recently appointed Jon Rattenbury as Programme Manager who is organising one to ones with all of the LEPs and Councils. GFirst LEP and GCC meeting with Jon is planned for November.
- The aims and objectives of the GFirst LEP Energy Group were revisited, agreed and will be updated on the GFirst website. Berkeley GREEN will host the prestigious Sustainable Energy & Environmental Protection (SEEP) global conference in September 2019. Further details will be announced in due course.

*The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November at WPD, Gloucester.*

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- The group welcomed guests Nick Holyoake (Holyoake Training Ltd), Aaron Corsi (Project Manager, Infrastructure & Regeneration, Warwickshire County Council), & Yesim Nicholson (Cirencester Growth Hub).
- **Business Overviews:** Eastgate Shopping Centre is 3% up on sales compared to October last year. There are more students living in Gloucester Centre and they are being incentivised to use the offers associated with the GL Card. The Kingswalk area is being re-developed with work commencing 2019. Lower Eastgate Street is set for a makeover to bring it up to the more modern standards of popular areas of Gloucester. Nick Holyoake is working with Cotswold District Council to help regenerate Cirencester High Street. A date is to be set in the New Year for a meeting to discuss this. Aaron gave the group an overview of Warwickshire retail activity: From May 2017 – May 2018 400 more businesses are now digitally engaged with 1,000 more to become engaged.
- Jason Smith gave an update of **UKDRIC** – this is to be used as a test-bed for technology providers. To see how the area will look over the next 4 weeks, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nRE48McvhM>
- The remodelling of Boots Corner is still causing controversy, however the Brewery Quarter have reported an increase in overall sales due to the increased footfall. The opening of John Lewis should also increase footfall to the centre as well. The group gave an overview of Christmas activities in the District: 17<sup>th</sup> Nov – Lantern Procession in Gloucester, 24<sup>th</sup> Nov – White Witch procession in Cheltenham, 25<sup>th</sup> Nov – Christmas Lights switch on in Tewkesbury.
- **Growth Hub updates:** Tewkesbury has a lot of interest and a waiting list for start-up office space. Official opening date Wednesday 21st November. Cirencester are keen to encourage a regular clientele to pay to use the space, as a real alternative to home/lone-working. Cheltenham will be an office space / Growth Hub (first floor) and leisure / food & drink (ground floor) space combined. Current office / commercial space ratio in Cheltenham is 52% / 48% with the ideal being 70% / 30%. It is hoped that the office space within the Growth Hub will increase footfall into the shops. The Growth Hub is planned to open in Spring 2019 subject to LEP Board approval in December 2018.
- Maybe\* #WDYT campaign is about to launch a new platform – a self-service solution so businesses can pull as much or as little data as they like and engage with their customers with relevant, real-time information using messenger software.

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## Visitor Economy and Tourism

- The group last met on 4 July. A successful bid has been made by Cotswold and West Oxfordshire to the Discover England Fund. They have been allocated £250k which was worth £308k with match-funding. It was agreed to make a county based bid to the Arts Council Cultural Development Fund. GFirst LEP had recently made a bid for £1m to provide dedicated resources to support inward investment in the county. A response was expected shortly.
- The highlights of a brief update around the districts highlighted the positive impact that the Royal Wedding had provided, particularly in the Cotswolds. The Forest of Dean were working on a campaign to maximise the impact of when the Severn Bridge tolls were removed completely. Cheltenham were working on a “Branding” Cheltenham exercise to improve visual identity. Gloucester reported huge success with both their zip wire event and the 1100 anniversary of the death of Aethelflaed. The latter alone had attracted in excess of 10k visitors.
- It was agreed to explore the need for a Regional Business Plan [RBP] at a future meeting having regard to existing district strategies, visions, the SEP and the requirements of the Local Industrial Strategy [LIS] which have yet to be determined. The RBP would look at shared priorities and aspirations such as the need and location for additional hotels/bedrooms. In this connection it was agreed to invite Andrew Stokes, Director of Visit England, and Sally Balcombe, CEO of Visit Britain to provide assistance on the input into an RBP.

*The date of next meeting is on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> November at University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's new offices are based)*

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