

GFirst LEP Business Group Update: November 2018

The **Chairs of all the Business Groups** met at the University of Gloucestershire on Monday 15th 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 25th March 2019 at the University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's new offices are based).



Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- The last meeting of the Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group was on Monday 3rd 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

The date of the next AEM meeting will be Monday 3rd 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



Agri Food & Rural Business

- The last meeting of this Business Group was held on Friday 16th November at the University of Gloucestershire School of Business and Technology. Jo Price Chaired the first half of the meeting, and Russell Marchant stepped in to Chair the 2nd half, due to prior commitments from Jo.

The 'Let's Grow: The Future of Rural Business and Communities in Gloucestershire' event took place at the Royal Agricultural University on **Thursday 29th November** from 9.30am – 1.30pm. Despite the inclement weather, more than 60 delegates attended both from the food and farming community as well as from SMEs and local authorities. The workshop introduced 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. The completion of Phase 1 is due by March 2019 when a draft Food Policy Framework will be completed.

It was identified that there is a gap between Agri education and non-farming related skills, such as banking, finance, leadership and Management. It was suggested that the Health & Harmony fund may be able to help. Jan 2019 will see the group bring together work that has already been done in this area in the form of an Action Group. Other speakers that contributed to the discussion were Tamsyn Harrod, Boom Circle (how can we improve access to fresh, affordable, local food in Gloucestershire?), and Tom Andrews, Director of Sustainable Food Cities, Soil Association. A date for the follow-up Spring event will be decided shortly.

- An update was given regarding the DEFRA Meeting – Food & Drink LEP Network, skills and workforce. DEFRA wants LEPs to work more closely with the Food & Drink sector councils, feeding into SMEs. More detailed notes have been sent to the group separately.
- Bob Watters provided a comprehensive update on the LEADER programme – DEFRA has plans in place for Brexit. When EU funding ends, programmes may continue into 2023/24.

The date of the next meeting is on Friday 25th January at the Royal Agricultural University

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 last meeting of the Banking & Finance Group was held at the Oxstalls Campus, University of Gloucestershire on Tuesday 27th November. Matthew Hodges from Kellands (Gloucester) Ltd gave an informative presentation on their holistic financial planning service. Matt is happy to be contacted at Matt.hodges@kelland.co.uk
- Chris Gibbs gave an update on the **Growth Hub**: As awareness has increased so has the traffic to the Growth Hub website: compared with 2000 visitors in the month of May 2018, they received 3200 in November 2018. The Tewkesbury Growth Hub was officially opened by GFirst LEP Chair Diane Savory on 21st November.
- Phil Mitchell spoke to Alex Chalk (MP for Cheltenham) about the SEED fund and it was suggested that this is re visited after the Brexit campaign is finalised in March 2019.
- The group agreed to consider running another two Access to Finance workshops for staff in the financial community – one in March 2019 at the University of Gloucestershire and one in October 2019 possibly in Cirencester. This would be similar to the highly successful event held on 15 May which had attracted circa 30 presenters.
- 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 15th January**. For more information on the Banking & Finance clinics please contact Karen Campbell.

The next Banking & Finance meeting is at the Growth Hub (Oxstalls) on Tuesday 15th January 2019 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



Business & Professional Services

- The group met at the University of Gloucestershire Business School on 28th November and welcomed Matthew Clayton from Willans LLP as the new Business Group Chair. The group agreed to review the aims and objectives as well as undertake a skills audit, with members being asked to answer a few questions to determine where their skills lie and what value they can add to the group. From this a gap analysis will identify new opportunities for knowledge transfer.
- 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 6th February 2019 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



Business Membership Group

- The Business Membership Group met at the University of Gloucestershire on 17th 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 2nd 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 – 22nd May 2019

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 30th 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



Construction & Infrastructure

- The group met on Wednesday 7th November. Esther Croft, Development Director from the Reef Group gave an update on the redevelopment of the Kings Quarter. Pete Barrett, Group Property Manager at SGS Berkeley requested guidance on the best use of additional space at Berkeley for a technology testbed. If anyone knows of a business who would be interested in this opportunity, they are asked to email Karen Campbell (email below) who will pass the information onto Pete.
- Jon Baker, Gloucestershire Strategy Planning Co-ordinator gave an update to the group, including the requirements for one plan to cover the whole of the County, with all of the Local Authorities working together with a good level of political commitment. Jon is considering putting into place a similar type of document to a memorandum of understanding, to allow all of the Local Authorities to sign up to support this. Jon welcomed any suggestions by email: planning@pointconsultancy.net
- A response to the Cheltenham Local Plan has been collated and signed off by David Owen following input from the group. This was sent for approval on 29th November (after a one-day extension to the deadline was agreed) to Cheltenham Borough Council for consideration. Responses to this will be circulated to the group.
- Garry King gave an update regarding the 50,000 homes challenge and commented that Housing Associations are working with Local Authorities to make this happen. Severn Vale, Bromford and 2 Rivers housing groups are piloting a modular housing supply with a wide range of tenure across the piece.

- Breaking Down Barriers Sub-group: 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.

The group identified that more needs to be done around the education piece – it was suggested to run a pilot scheme on the education of planning committees, with these being made up 50 : 50 authorities : professionals, to better understand planning issues and equally the consequences to businesses when plans are delayed. This sub-group are meeting on Wednesday 5th December at the University of Gloucestershire.

The next meeting of the C&I group is on Wednesday 12th December 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



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 18th March 2019 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



Energy

- The last meeting was held at Western Power Distribution, Gloucester on Tuesday 6th November. Interesting presentations were made by Roger Hey, Future Networks Manager for Western Power Distribution and Mike Craggs, Assets and Commercial Director for Severn Vale Housing. John Hewitt, Commercial Director for Hewitt Studios will be invited to speak at the meeting in January 2019 due to time constraints at the November meeting.
- 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 are currently working towards version 3, having collated the feedback from the group and other LEP Board representatives. The sub group next meet on Thursday 6th December to finalise the content. This will then be signed off, designed and final sign off is expected by the second week of January 2019. BEIS commented that this is the first time that Government have had a proper overview of the energy state across the country. BEIS are currently helping Local Authorities and giving advice on how to implement new energy schemes.
- The South West Local Energy Hub, headed up by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is appointing a series of area Project Managers to cover all of the South West LEPs. There will be three project management teams to cover the below LEPs – division is to be confirmed and will need to reflect collaboration of the energy strategies. These appointments will be funded by BEIS for the first two years.
 - 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
- SGS Berkeley is due to sign off the lease with Ecotricity to provide 31 Megawatts capacity battery storage to include a new substation. 1 megawatt will support the campus with SMART metering throughout, and 30 megawatts will support the local area.
- Ecotricity are also in discussions with Network Rail with a view to decarbonising the railways by 2040, with hybrid trains being tested.

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 15th January 2019 at SGS Berkeley.

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



Retail, Tourism & The High Street

- The group last met on Wednesday 10th October in the Tewkesbury Growth Hub. The group had a tour of the new Growth Hub prior to the meeting. 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 City 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: 17th Nov – Lantern Procession in Gloucester, 24th Nov – White Witch procession in Cheltenham, 25th 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.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Wednesday 5th December** 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



Visitor Economy and Tourism

- The group met on Monday 12th November at the University of Gloucestershire. A new Chair is yet to be appointed for this group, as it is still in its early days of establishment. If anyone is interested in Chairing this group, all expressions of interest are to be emailed to Dev.Chakraborty@gfirstlep.com
- Marketing Gloucester are planning on setting up digital booths around the City; a large screen has been put into the new Transport Hub so visitors can access information as they arrive in the City. Marketing Gloucester recently attended the Visit England / Visit Britain event where ancestral tourism was identified as an emerging trend. They are currently filming new videos of Gloucester.
- Courses at the University of Gloucestershire are being realigned to help meet the demand for industry-ready students. They have also recently started an International Hospitality course at the University which is proving very popular and encouraging, as there is a shortage of hospitality staff in Gloucester.
- Marketing Cheltenham recorded 315,000 visitors for 2018 and they are working to upscale their food offering, with Julian Dunkerton.
- The Stroud District Council's Task and Finish Group has completed a report to review the importance of tourism in the Stroud area. The report will go for approval to the Stroud DC Board on 8th December.
- Cotswolds Tourism are testing out the design of a new map covering the Cotswolds and surrounding area: Uncover the Cotswolds project promotes the Cotswolds, Forest of Dean and the wider area to the Scandinavian, Italian and Spanish Markets with promotion at travel trade events. They are working on media visits with representatives from China, Italy and USA.
- Questions for consideration: these were discussed at the meeting, and the majority agreed that there needs to be greater ownership from businesses themselves to promote the area as a destination. Sharing data and intelligence is really important; a SWOT analysis of tourism in the County was suggested. Feedback from these questions was lower than expected, so the group were asked to re-consider them, and feedback their findings to Karen Campbell (email below) for collation and discussion at the next meeting.
- 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.
- A review of the group members will be undertaken, to ensure that we have the correct breadth of knowledge to represent the whole of the county.

The date of next meeting is Thursday 31st January 2019 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