

## **GFirst LEP Business Group Update: January 2019**

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 are running a number of sessions for businesses to attend throughout the first quarter of 2019 and a LIS planning timeline is in production.

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 offices are based).*



## **Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing**

- The Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group met on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December. Professor Stefaan Simons from Brunel University with Andy Slaney from SGS College gave an update on Berkeley projects, and bringing university research, education and training capability into the region, for the benefit of local companies, but also with potential to showcase British expertise in China. Stefaan Simons is happy to be contacted regarding this at: [stefaan.simons@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:stefaan.simons@brunel.ac.uk)
- The Drone event held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January in the Growth Hub was a great success, with over 40 attendees from businesses and the public sector attending. A range of speakers included Gloucestershire Police, the Agri-tech Innovation centre, Drone control security & surveillance, and becoming a drone pilot and the application of drones into Industry. There will be a follow-up event in due course, with a narrower focus on drone application in Industry – more details to follow.

It was felt that the most important challenge within the sector was skills and the shortage of the STEM skills within this industry sector. The GFirst Education team have been invited to give an update on the work that the Employment and Skills Board are doing to fill the gap, with the potential for a workshop in 2019.

*The date of the next AEM meeting will be Monday 4<sup>th</sup> February 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)*



## Agri Food & Rural Business

- The Agri Food & Rural group met at the Royal Agricultural University on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> January. Mally Findlater gave an update on the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and how important the voice of business will be. Ideas should be focused around the 5 Foundations of productivity: Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Places. We will ensure that all of the business groups are kept informed of the LIS timeline and their expected involvement.
- Amie Burke, Skills specialist from the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board gave a presentation on what the AHDB offer and specifically their contribution to skills and working groups. Presentation slides have been sent to the group.
- Follow up to the 'Let's Grow: The Future of Rural Business and Communities in Gloucestershire' event will take place on **27<sup>th</sup> March** – venue to be confirmed. The first 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 will be available for discussion by the 27<sup>th</sup> March event, when a draft Food Policy Framework will be completed. Additional speakers are being mooted: Sarah Dunning (Gloucestershire services)
- Will Frazer from NFU gave an update on FramVention – introducing rural skills, and food production to primary school children which is proving really popular. It was also identified that the rural economy needs to link up more closely with the health sector.
- Bob Watters provided an RDPE update to the group. He also reminded the group that when EU funding ends, programmes may continue into 2023/24.

*The date of the next meeting is on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March at Hartpury 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](mailto: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 15<sup>th</sup> January. Mally Findlater gave an update on the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and how important the voice of business will be. Ideas should be focused around the 5 Foundations of productivity: Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Places. We will ensure that all of the business groups are kept informed of the LIS timeline and their expected involvement.
- Jules Peck gave a presentation on Avon Mutual Bank and their growth into county – a Community Savings Bank Association planning on launching 18 regional banks across the UK. They are an ethical and sustainable alternative to the big banks and plan to open their first 3 banks by 2020.
- Chris Elliott-Jones from Close Brothers Asset Finance gave a presentation, who support SMEs, Sole Traders and start-ups who's access to finance can often be restricted. Chris's details were sent to the group following the meeting.

- Chris Gibbs gave an update on the **Growth Hub**: due for opening this year: Forest of Dean – April 2019, Cheltenham – Summer 2019. Calls for prospective Stroud Growth hub closed on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> January. A list of growth hub events has been emailed to the groups separately.
- Date for the first Access2Finance event has been confirmed as Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April at the University of Gloucestershire. This is proving again very popular with over 20 speakers confirmed and another 20 attendees registered already.

*The next Banking & Finance meeting is at the Growth Hub (Oxstalls) on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology and will be preceded by a Banking & Finance clinic.*

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



- The group met at the University of Gloucestershire Business School on 28<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Business Membership Group

- The Business Membership Group met at the University of Gloucestershire on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> January. Mally Findlater gave an update on the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and how important the voice of business will be. Ideas should be focused around the 5 Foundations of productivity: Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Places. We will ensure that all of the business groups are kept informed of the LIS timeline and their expected involvement.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update to the group on other GFirst LEP highlights, including the Future High Streets funding package where expressions of interest are being collated prior to the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, the Gloucestershire Energy Strategy, and the development of an Inward Investment team for the county.

Bruce Gregory will attend the next meeting to give an update on the Cheltenham Growth Hub. 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 27<sup>th</sup> March at the University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology.*

*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 12<sup>th</sup> December. 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 to Cheltenham Borough Council for consideration. Responses to this will be circulated to the group. The aim is to work with Cheltenham Borough Council to resolve any concerns over employment land, before the hearing in Feb 2019.
- The Tewkesbury Local Plan Employment Strategy was praised by the group which shows available employment sites clearly and concisely. It was agreed that Cheltenham need to produce a similar document to show a detailed analysis of what is needed.
- 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 sub group met at Oxstalls Campus on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. Concern was raised about pre start conditions holding up work on sites. A Strategic vision is key to ensure everyone is working to a similar system. Errors with completion of applications was identified as a contributor to delays, and the simplicity of these forms is to be addressed.

- Joint Core Strategy issues and options have been published and are available to view here: <https://www.jointcorestrategy.org/joint-core-strategy-review/>

*The next meeting of the C&I group is on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 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)*



- 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).*

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



## Energy

- The last meeting was held at C11 at Berkeley GREEN on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January. Mally Findlater gave an update on the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and how important the voice of business will be. Ideas should be focused around the 5 Foundations of productivity: Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Places. We will ensure that all of the business groups are kept informed of the LIS timeline and their expected involvement.
- Simon Roberts (Centre for Sustainable Energy) gave a synopsis on the county's energy strategy which has just been finalised. The Energy business group has an important part to play in the delivery of the projects outlined in the strategy. A link to an online version if the strategy can be found here: <https://www.gfirstlep.com/content/?contentID=926>
- 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 6 of the South West LEPS. There will be three project management teams to cover these LEPS. The appointments will be funded by BEIS for the first two years and interviews will take place in March.
  - 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
  - Swindon and Wiltshire LEP and Wiltshire Council
  - GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire County Council
  - West of England LEP and West of England Combined Authority
- John Hewitt, Hewitt Studios LLP, gave a presentation on the development of dappled light reflective electric car charge point covers and their adaptability into the county. A copy of John's presentation, K:Port & the EV challenge, was circulated with the minutes and John has been asked by the Chair to sit on the group from now on.
- The group were invited to visit Green Fuels – the World's leading manufacturer of distributed scale biodiesel equipment. They have their research facilities based at Berkeley.
- WITT energy also showed the group their FANUC robot – to be used in manufacturing processes such as automotive body shop assembly, welding, painting etc.

*The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at the University of Gloucestershire.*

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



## Retail, Tourism & The High Street

The government has announced a £675 million [Future High Streets Fund](#) to help improve infrastructure and access to high streets, put historic buildings back to use and make town centres fit for the future. Following this, GFirst LEP Board Chair Diane Savory chaired an Extraordinary High Street Meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January at the Growth Hub. This was an opportunity for businesses and local authorities to hear more about the fund and to discuss ideas and options together.

The importance of sharing ideas amongst the districts was encouraged and to join the dots between some of the smaller towns to facilitate a joined-up style of thinking. Individual bids / expressions of interest with threads of similar items will show that neighboring high Streets have worked together and will have a stronger case for bids within the County.

Having projects 'shovel ready' (planning permission and sound business case in place) will have huge advantages in progressing to Phase 2 with an option for them to be fast-tracked. More guidance will be released at the end of January and will include the scoring system.

Although the LEP has to remain impartial it would be happy to promote/facilitate and share information and to be kept up to date with details of individual bids, as DS would like to be able to reference work ongoing within Gloucestershire when she visits government.

The 'call for proposals' document can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/675-million-fund-to-transform-high-streets-and-town-centres-opens-to-communities>

There is also another smaller funding opportunity for High Streets: a £500,000 British Improvement Districts (BIDs) Loan Fund will support business owners and local leaders to set-up a BID, which allow communities to come together to deliver additional local services and upgrade commercial areas for the benefit of business. More details can be found here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-funding-to-help-town-centres-and-high-streets-thrive?utm\\_source=2af7c82c-e0d4-4cf4-8ed9-149652eeb46a&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=weekly](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-funding-to-help-town-centres-and-high-streets-thrive?utm_source=2af7c82c-e0d4-4cf4-8ed9-149652eeb46a&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=weekly)

*The date of the next meeting is on **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019** at University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology.*

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



## Visitor Economy and Tourism

- The group met on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> November at the University of Gloucestershire. If anyone is interested in Chairing this group, all expressions of interest are to be emailed to [Dev.Chakraborty@gfirstlep.com](mailto: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 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

*February's meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. The date of next meeting is therefore Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March at University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology.*

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