

## **GFirst LEP Business Group Update: February 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 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019. 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.
- Following a group of organisations that have been meeting directly with government to talk about the impact of Brexit, Stephen Tulip, Membership Development Manager at the South West Engineering Employer's Association (EEF) gave a presentation on how Manufacturer's (especially importers and exporters) can prepare. The government have issued some technical notes that have been put into plain English on the EEF website – these are accessible here: <https://www.eef.org.uk/business-support/our-services/brexit>
- Brian Fowler, Gloucestershire College gave an update as to the developments within the Engineering degree programme. There has been a drop in interest in relation to the Mechanical programmes, but an increase in uptake of the Electronics programme and in partnership with the University of the West of England they are able to deliver the level 7 electronics programme as well. They are holding an Apprenticeship open evening on 20<sup>th</sup> March – there is really strong interest in apprenticeships at the College with over 150 students interested in enrolling for the September programme.

The date of the next AEM meeting will be Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April at the University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's 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 Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February. Mally Findlater gave an update on the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and how important the voice of business will be to the development of this. 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.
- The Group is keen to ensure that the Professional Services within the county are fully represented on the group, so it was agreed that until the skills matrix for the group has been completed, these meetings will run a maximum of 4 times per year. The aims and

*The next Business & Professional Services meeting will take place on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019 at University of Gloucestershire School of Business & Technology (where GFirst LEP's offices are based).*

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



- 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 27<sup>th</sup> February. 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.
- Breaking Down Barriers Sub-group met on 7<sup>th</sup> February: Annette Roberts, Tewkesbury Borough Council gave an update on the Planning Development Charter. This will be signed off by Joint Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> March. The group is now working on getting planning applications into the system very quickly, with the idea of colour coded check lists across the county and planning performance agreements – TBC and GC have put forward a template for consideration.
- Cheltenham Borough Council at the hearing said that they would review the JCS. Concern was raised that allocated sites for employment land were not ‘new’ sites and had already been allocated previously, and that new sites need to be found in order to write a statement of common ground.
- Membership: current makeup of the group is very good and represents a diverse range of skills reflective of those within the C&I industry in the county. New member applications will be informed that there are no vacancies at the moment within the group.
- 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 24<sup>th</sup> April 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)*



Over the last couple of months, there have been a number of exciting developments with the proposed Cyber Business Park in Cheltenham and all the project partners are keen to let interested parties know about these developments.

There are plans to hold three specific engagement events to be scheduled in the coming weeks and these dates will be sent to the Cyber Business group members as soon as they are available.

***We have therefore cancelled the proposed date of the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March.***

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 of 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 Retail & High Street business group met on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February at the University of Gloucestershire. This meeting was split into 2 parts – 1<sup>st</sup> part covering Retail and High Street Business Group Meeting agenda items and the 2<sup>nd</sup> half looked at the Future High Street Fund.
- 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.
- The floor was opened to each area representative including guests from the Market Towns Forum for an update on developments:
  - Cheltenham:** the observational wheel is a hit and the contractors want to come back next year. Over 40 businesses have got involved with the ‘Light up’ event, which will run until Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> February. Marketing Cheltenham have several job vacancies as a result of expansion – these are part of their 5 year strategy to grow the visitor economy and assist in regeneration of the region.
  - Gloucester:** Figures released show 500,000 visitors to the Christmas market. They are looking at encouraging more coaches next year to increase footfall further. They have at least one event in the diary every weekend until October.
  - Wotton under Edge:** they have experienced a 6.5% increase in tourism. Emphasised the importance of getting to know the commercial property Landlord which can speed up the process of turning empty property into useable space. As a result of understanding this, Wotton only have 2 commercial properties currently vacant.Other updates included those for the **UK DRIC** (soft launch in March with a more formal launch later in the year). **#WDYT/Maybe\*** - live demo of the new dashboard. Daily webinars are being delivered and a skills gap has been identified as to how to apply the data.
- JCS Review – to review the health of all existing designated centres in the JCS area, including Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Winchcombe and Bishops Cleeve. The authorities have appointed Avison Young (formerly GVA) to prepare the necessary evidence and provide support in preparing the emerging plan. Submission to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination will be in March 2020.
- [Future High Streets Fund](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/675-million-fund-to-transform-high-streets-and-town-centres-opens-to-communities) - ‘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>  
Further information relating to the fund was discussed, including weighting for each of the questions, and the number of applications allowed for each town dependent on population. It was suggested that Towns work together to put in the bids to ensure similar themes are running through them. Consistency will look more professional. Smaller Towns were also encouraged to ‘feed in’ to bids in their local area at this stage, to have the chance to take advantage of funding ‘trickling down’ to their areas.

Laura Hurley from Cities & Local Growth Unit ran a series of roadshow events across the UK. Two venues were chosen to cover the South West: Exeter and Gloucester – this was held at the University of Gloucestershire Oxstalls campus with over 45 attendees from the County as well as the larger South West area. Laura gave more details in relation to the fund and opened the floor to questions.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019** in the Severn Room, Tewkesbury Borough Council, Council Offices, Gloucester Rd, Tewkesbury, GL20 5TT*

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

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