



GFirst LEP Business Group Update: March 2019

The **Chairs of all the Business Groups** met at the University of Gloucestershire on Monday 25th March 2019.

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 sector 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 call for evidence for data to support the Local Industrial Strategy went out on 21st March and is open until 31st May.

Other updates from GFirst included:

- ERDF funding for an Inward Investment Team who will work to identify non EU SMEs looking to locate into the county, as well as county-based companies who are looking to expand overseas.
- The expansion of the Education team to include Enterprise Co-ordinators and a SEND co-ordinator
- The recruitment of a Senior Research Manager Jute Blackmon to support the Local Industrial Strategy data collation.
- The development of the county's sustainable energy strategy
- Update on the growth hub network
- Future High Streets funding

GFirst will encourage discussions and presentations from other sector groups, to encourage 'cross-pollination' of topics and avoid any silos. The majority of the meeting was used to discuss the Local Industrial Strategy, so more detailed discussions from the Chairs in relation to their group summaries will be prioritized for the next meeting.

*The date of the next Business Group Chairs Meeting will be **Monday 14th October 2019** at the Gloucester Growth Hub.*



Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- The Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group met on Monday 4th 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 on 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.
- Due to increasing overseas commitments, Neill Ricketts has agreed to step down as Chair of this business group. Rob Loveday (GE Aviation) has agreed to take over the role of Chair.

The date of the next AEM meeting will be Monday 3rd June at Star Hydraulics, Tewkesbury.

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 Agri Food & Rural group met at Hartpury University on Friday 29th March. Tony Solomon from the GEM Project (Going the Extra Mile) gave a presentation. The GEM Project aims to engage with and support individuals within Gloucestershire who are currently dealing with circumstances that are potentially causing barriers to work and aims to move these people closer towards education, training, volunteering or work, including self-employment.
- The 2nd 'Let's Grow' event took place at the Royal Agricultural University on Wednesday 27th March: Measuring the value of the rural economy, and was very well attended. Elizabeth gave a reminder about the call for evidence in support of the Local Industrial Strategy and Martin Collison reviewed his findings as well as future identified strengths and opportunities. Tamsyn from BoomCircle is looking at the need for a Gloucestershire food group as a result of Martin's findings, to include food policy and strategy.
- Following on from the 'Let's Grow' event, the group identified the need for three task and finish groups to drive forward the key areas identified in order to develop the food strategy.
- 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 Thursday 23rd May at the 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 last meeting of the Banking & Finance Group was held at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 26th March. Andy Kime gave an update on the Growth Hubs with the Forest of Dean hub due to open in July 2019. Stroud is going through Due Diligence and Cheltenham is awaiting Planning Permission (April / May 2019).
- Speakers were confirmed for the Access 2 Finance event on 2nd April. As well as representation from banks and alternative lenders, 2 minute slots were given to Start & Grow, GAINS, GRIP and GFirst LEP. The event was hosted at the Gloucester Growth Hub and was very well received as a high value networking event with the 2 minute slots working very well. A date for early October is to be considered for the next event, at Cirencester to include investors as well as lenders and media coverage.
- The GFirst LEP Inward Investment Team introduced themselves to the group – funded by ERDF to attract non EU SMEs to the County.

The next Banking & Finance meeting is at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 14th May 2019 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 University of Gloucestershire Business School on Wednesday 6th 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 5th June 2019 at Gloucester Growth Hub.

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



Business Membership Group

- The Business Membership Group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Wednesday 27th March. Elizabeth gave an update to the group on GFirst LEP highlights, including:
 - the Future High Streets funding submissions
 - the Gloucestershire Energy Strategy
 - an update on the Growth Hubs
 - the development of an Inward Investment team for the county
 - the Local Industrial Strategy call for evidence.
- Bruce Gregory gave an update on the development of the Cheltenham Growth Hub. Planning permission is due to be approved on the site in April/May.
- Jon Leamon gave an update on the Cheltenham Chamber and reminded the group that the Gloucestershire Business Show takes place at the Cheltenham Town Hall on 21 – 22nd May 2019.

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 22nd May at Tewkesbury Growth Hub, Council Offices, Gloucester Rd, Tewkesbury, GL20 5TT

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



Construction & Infrastructure

- The group met on Wednesday 27th 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 7th February: Annette Roberts, Tewkesbury Borough Council gave an update on the Planning Development Charter. This will be signed off by Joint Committee on 20th 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 24th April at the Gloucester Growth Hub
For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com*



Energy

- The last meeting was held at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 19th March. The group was informed of the Local Industrial Strategy's Call for Evidence open from 21st March until 31st May 2019. All business groups will be informed of the LIS timeline and their expected involvement.
- The South West Local Energy Hub, headed up by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) have now appointed a Project Manager, Rachel Brain, for the Gloucestershire and West of England area. Their role will be to liaise with stakeholders who are pushing forward energy projects that support the Local Energy Strategy and support their development through the South West Energy Hub's funding stream. They will be employed by WECA. Further updates in the development of the SW Energy Hub and emerging projects in the South West will be distributed to the group following the Board Meeting at the end of April.
- Amy Willcocks, Marine Planning Manager (South West) Marine Management Organisation (MMO) gave an overview on marine planning, licensing, monitoring and enforcement. They cover 2000 nautical miles of coastline from Gloucester to Dartmouth and Over 84 000 nm² of sea to 200nm offshore.
- Bethan Winter, Systems Operations Manager Wales & West Utilities gave a presentation on latest developments. A copy of both presentations is available by emailing Karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com
- GCC in partnership with GFirst LEP will be hosting a Climate Change Summit on 21st May at the Gloucester Growth Hub 10-4pm. This event will be to officially launch the Gloucestershire Sustainable Energy Strategy.

The next meeting will take place on Monday 20th May 2019 at Kiwa Gastec, Bishop's Cleeve.

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



Retail, Tourism & The High Street

- The Retail & High Street business group met on Wednesday 13th February at the Gloucester Growth Hub. This meeting was split into 2 parts – 1st part covering Retail and High Street Business Group Meeting agenda items and the 2nd 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 24th 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 3rd 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



Visitor Economy and Tourism

- 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 16th May at Gloucester Growth Hub.

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