



GFirst LEP Business Groups Update: May 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 the Gloucester Growth Hub on Thursday 23rd May.
- Director of Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) Katie Jenkins gave an update as to our Local Industrial Strategy (LIS). The Call for Evidence closes on 31st May with GFirst Board making the final decisions on LIS priorities to steer evidence base development. A Challenge panel is in place, as well as a task and finish and an evidence base review group. Youth engagement survey has been sent out with the anticipation of between 2000 and 5000 responses from 14-25 year olds. Further engagement throughout the Summer with a planned first draft going to Government in October 2019. Members of the group have already submitted evidence for the LIS.
- Bob Watters provided an RDPE update to the group. All LEADER funding will be committed by the end of 2019. He also reminded the group that when EU funding ends, programmes may continue into 2023/24. There should be some 'small producers' grants available in early Autumn.
- The Martin Collison report: Measuring the Value of the Gloucestershire Rural Economy has been issued to the group members and is available to download from our website: <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/our-vision/agri-food-and-rural-economy-report-for-gloucestershire/> .

- 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. Tamsyn gave an update on the development of the Food Strategy and the work that these three task groups have undertaken: 1) People & Planet 2) Excellence 3) End to End. These are being managed by Gill Reindl, Claire Thayers, Jackie Jobes, Jeremy Davies and Tamsyn Harrod. The group will meet sooner than originally agreed, to continue the work on the Food Strategy.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Monday 15th July** at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester.*

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- The group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 14th May where they agreed on the appointment of Mark Wilton, Relationship Director, HSBC as the new Chair, as Chris Mears stands down but will remain an active member of the group. Chris Mears was thanked for his leadership and support over the last 5 years.
- Stuart Gibson Managing Director of Acorn Business Finance gave the group an overview on their alternative route to funding, working closely with a variety of businesses to offer a flexible approach to funding.
- Andy Kime, Business Guide for the Growth Hub Network gave an update on the Growth Hubs: focus is on high growth companies and group members are encouraged to promote the opportunities the Growth Hub can offer businesses of all shapes and sizes. Cheltenham is due to open in Spring 2020, with Stroud on track for Jan 2020. Forest of Dean Growth Hub is scheduled to open it's doors in July 2019.
- The Access2Finance event on 2nd April was so well received (with over 60 attendees), that the group have scheduled another event for 1st October at the Cirencester Growth Hub. Speakers are confirmed from Loans, Grants and Equity. It's now seen as a high-value networking event with the 2 minute slots working very well, with a senior Director from HSBC saying that it was the best networking event they had ever been to.
- Director of Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) Katie Jenkins gave an update on our LIS. Call for Evidence closes on 31st May with GFirst Board making the final decisions on LIS priorities to steer evidence base development. A Challenge panel is in place, as well as a task and finish and an evidence base review group. Youth engagement survey has been sent out with the anticipation of 2000 and 5000 responses from 14-25 year olds. Further engagement throughout the summer with a planned first draft going to Government in October 2019.

The next Banking & Finance meeting is at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 10th September 2019 and will be preceded by a Banking & Finance clinic. There will be an additional standalone banking & finance clinic in early July in Cirencester Growth Hub.

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 Tewkesbury Growth Hub on Wednesday 22nd May. Steve Dechan was introduced and invited to be a member of this group (Chair – Stroud Business Voice). Terry Lockwood introduced his replacement Russell Warner to the group who will be attending when Terry has other commitments now he has a more regional role.
- Director of Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) Katie Jenkins gave an update on our Local Industrial Strategy. Call for Evidence closes on 31st May with GFirst Board making the final decisions on LIS priorities to steer evidence base development. A Challenge panel is in place, as well as a task and finish and evidence base review groups. Youth engagement survey has been sent out with the anticipation of between 2000 and 5000 responses from 14-25 year olds. Further engagement throughout the Summer with a planned first draft going to Government in October 2019.
- A newly-formed group called the Gloucestershire Rural Organisation as members are keen to ensure that the 'rural voice' is listened to. They are also keen not to duplicate the work that the Agri food & Rural business group are doing.
- Dev Chakraborty, DCEO GFirst LEP gave an update on the Growth Hub Network, with the Forest of Dean due to open in July 2019 and Stroud in early 2020 with the venue to be confirmed shortly. Cheltenham is due to open it's doors in Quarter 1 of 2020. The feedback from a recent BEIS visit gained a very positive response – they were impressed with the standard and support offered across the Growth Hub Network.
- Adam Starkey reviewed the Climate Change summit which took place on 21st May at the Gloucester Growth Hub. This was a joint event with GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire County Council, to promote the County's Energy Strategy. With over 100 attendees, and support from private sector businesses as well as all 6 Districts, it was a very positive, lively day with plenty of actions for private sector as well as Government to take forward. GCC will be issuing a Press Release and plan of action shortly.

- The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) are working on a 'fair pay for fair play' campaign with a piece of work being completed on independent shops.
- The Cheltenham Chamber has over 250 members and are keen to promote the business interests of Cheltenham. The Business Show which took place on 21st & 22nd May held in the town hall was well attended.

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 18th September - venue to be confirmed.

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



Construction & Infrastructure

- The group met on Wednesday 24th April. Chris Lau Acting Head of Inward Investment with GFirst LEP explained the role of the Inward Investment Team within GFirst and how they are working to attract non EU SMEs to the county. A standalone website will be launched in July.
- Katie Jenkins the LEP's Director of Local Industrial Strategy explained how involvement from the business groups is key to obtaining the right quality and quantity of information required to develop the evidence base for the LIS. The Call for evidence is open until 31st May. The Strategy itself is due for completion by the end of 2019 and the timeline is on the GFirst website: <https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/lis-timeline-jgray-kj-edit3.pdf> The group have been invited to meet again before the 31st May, to discuss their response to the call for evidence. This took place on Wednesday 8th May at the Growth Hub, Gloucester, and the group sent in their collated evidence on 31st May.
- Robert Weaver gave an update on the planning vision for a county-wide rail strategy and will organise further discussions with Gloucestershire County Council's future plans for rail.
- 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. Ridge & Partners have now issued a Statement of Common Ground with a view to resolving the situation with Cheltenham Borough Council. <https://www.jointcorestrategy.org/joint-core-strategy-review/>
- The 50,000 Homes Challenge is moving forward: particularly in Cheltenham, Gloucester, Matson and Sharpness. 2000 homes have been delivered with 6000 committed. They have identified a shortage of skilled labour and an increase in the cost of raw materials as a barrier to more swift development.

The next meeting of the C&I group is on Wednesday 26th June at the Gloucester Growth Hub

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



Energy

- The Energy Strategy sub group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub with some members skyping in, on 25th April. This was to choose members for the following task groups to support the development of the strategy: 1) Heat Decarbonisation, 2) Renewable Energy Leadership, 3) Electric vehicle, clean fleet & storage. A 30 minute pre meeting will take place before each of the business group meetings, so the task group chairs can provide a summary of their progress.

- The last Business Group meeting was held at Kiwa Gastec, Bishop's Cleeve on 20th May 2019. General Manager Mark Eldridge gave presentation about the work that KIWA are doing in leading the world in pioneering hydrogen as an energy vector. Mark gave the group a tour of the facilities at the end of the meeting.
- 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. Rachel gave an update on the progress of the Hub and the funding framework. The project pipeline will gain traction once the funding process has been agreed – this is being tested with a couple of projects at the moment.
- Elizabeth Weaver, Business Group Manager GFirst LEP gave an update on the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and a reminder in regards to the Call for Evidence which closes on 31st May with GFirst Board making the final decisions on LIS priorities to steer evidence base development. A Challenge panel is in place, as well as a task and finish and an evidence base review group. Youth engagement survey has been sent out with the anticipation of between 2000 and 5000 responses from 14-25 year olds. Further engagement throughout the Summer with a planned first draft going to Government in October 2019.
- **Climate Change Summit 21st May** – the Growth Hub hosted this joint event with GCC & GFirst LEP on 21st May. With over 100 attendees it was a very popular event to officially launch the Gloucestershire Energy Strategy. Representation from public, private sector and all 6 Districts. This has engaged conversations with housing developers and Government, GCC and environmental students as well as a collaborative approach to what is being done already in the county, by Local Authorities. GCC will follow up to all attendees and send out a Press Release following the event in due course.

The next meeting will take place on 16th July at Sustainable Direction, Gloucester.

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 3rd April at Tewkesbury Council Offices. GFirst confirmed that submissions from within all 6 Districts had put in an Expression of Interest for the Future High Streets Fund and all 6 submissions were given a letter of support from Diane Savory, Chair of GFirst LEP Board. These were from Cinderford, Stroud, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Cirencester.
- The floor was opened to each area representative including guests from the Market Towns Forum for an update on developments:
 - Cheltenham:** 'Cheltenham – Festival Town' is the new strapline for the town for launch at the Science Festival. Marketing Cheltenham has appointed 4 new events staff who start in May. Based in BID offices but employed by the Borough Council. Car Parking charged have gone up again in less than 12 months which makes Cheltenham the most expensive town to park in.
 - Gloucester:** Confirmation that Debenhams have re-negotiated their lease, TBC for how long. They have at least one event in the diary every weekend until October.
 - Chipping Campden:** Business is doing well and there are currently no vacant units. There is a drive to encourage staying visitors who spend more than day visitors who take photos and spend very little.
 - Winchcombe:** Interest to collaborate with other towns such as Chipping Campden to offer incentives / discounts to visit each town. The Co-op are trialing electric ecommerce bikes to deliver goods, may help with congestion and parking issues.
- Other updates included those for the **UK DRIC:** Nick Holyoake has been drafted in to project manage and support the marketing around the launch which takes place on 30th May. **#WDYT/Maybe*** - there will be a physical leaflet drop in the BID area to help with engagement over the Easter holidays and will run a training day for BID members on 15th May.

- Growth Hub updates:
 - Cirencester** – new half day memberships have been introduced which works well for working parents. Membership update remains strong.
 - Tewkesbury** – plans for 2 to 4 events each month. Working with the Growth Hub network to generate more awareness and drive the visitor numbers up.
 - Forest of Dean** - A revised Funding Agreement has been sent to the project promoter, with the aim of getting this completed and signed imminently. We are now looking at a July 2019 opening date.
 - Cheltenham** - A final decision on Planning is scheduled to take place at the end of June. Once this has been confirmed, then a timeline will give a better idea of expected opening dates (anticipated Spring 2020)
 - Stroud** – the partner for the Stroud Growth Hub has not been formally announced and is going through Due Diligence. The project is scheduled to open by Winter 2019. The group will be updated on progress
- Dr Polly Pick (Director of Business Engagement, University of Gloucestershire) is working with businesses to offer jobs to students after graduation within the county. They are also keen to work more closely with each town to offer student placements.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Wednesday 19th June 2019 at the Cirencester Growth Hub**. This will be a joint meeting with the tourism and visitor economy group at their request.*

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



- 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 12th September at Gloucester Growth Hub.

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