



## **GFirst LEP Business Groups Update: October 2019**

The following Business groups met in October 2019:

**Business & Professional Services**  
**Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing**  
**Energy**  
**Construction & Infrastructure**  
**Cyber-tech**  
**Business Group Chairs**

- The **Chairs of the Business Groups** met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019. David Owen gave a brief summary of business activity within the LEP.
- Elizabeth Weaver reviewed the diversity within the groups, and encouraged Chairs to keep this in mind when recruiting new members. The make-up of the groups needs to be an accurate representation of the diversity within the current sector(s) and of the wider county. A skills audit is being undertaken throughout each group to ensure there is a balanced representation of skills as well, whilst re-iterating that contribution and commitment is very important, especially as group membership is on a voluntary basis.
- The Chairs of the following groups gave an update:
  - Banking & Finance
  - Business & Professional Services
  - Retail & Visitor Economy
  - Business Membership
  - Energy
  - Construction & Infrastructure
  - Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

GFirst will encourage discussions and presentations from groups to be shared with all members, to ensure a joined-up approach, and to avoid 'silo' mentality. The Chairs will therefore meet in December 2019 to agree Terms of Reference and contribution to the LIS holistically.

- The majority of the groups had met since the launch of the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) on 19<sup>th</sup> September. The feedback from businesses is imperative, as it is a co-written document with Government, the more business responses we can feed into the LIS, the more likely the case for these issues to remain in the final version.

*The date of the next Business Group Chairs Meeting will be **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December** at the Gloucester Growth Hub.*



## Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- The Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group met on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at GE Aviation, Bishop's Cleeve, with thanks to Rob Loveday for hosting the meeting.
- An update was given on the timeline of the planned Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages. They plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. [Hub8](#) an incubation space for cyber-tech startups has now opened in the Brewery Quarter, providing Cheltenham with a co-working space. Tewkesbury, Cirencester and Gloucester are going from strength to strength, with Gloucester considering reaching out to businesses with a view to sponsorship, enabling start-ups to use the office space for free.
- Members discussed the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and gave their feedback. As several of the group were not able to make the meeting, the Chair was keen for the group to meet separately to highlight the importance of the advanced engineering and manufacturing sector to the county and to ensure that this is sufficiently identified in the draft LIS. The group are especially keen for the draft LIS to identify the cross-over of themes within AEM – in particular Green Gloucestershire and the Skills gaps. The group will feedback to the LIS team after 29<sup>th</sup> October.
- There is still a mixed response within the industry as the uncertainty of Brexit has led to some orders being stalled and even cancelled. It was mentioned that the aerospace industry is however, more of an International brand, and therefore whilst there may be some uncertainty in relation to specification of component parts, orders are on the increase.

*The date of the next AEM meeting will be **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020** at 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](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Agri-Food & Rural Economy

- The Agri Food & Rural group met at the Royal Agricultural University on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019. Tamsyn Harrod and the sub-group team gave an update on the Gloucestershire Food Strategy. The Agri-tech strand in the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) has helped to shape the direction of the Food Strategy. The Strategy will look at a 'whole system' food chain approach with the aim of creating value and reducing costs whilst identifying productivity gains. It is intended that a relevant proportion of the food strategy will be included into the draft LIS. Additional funding and non-monetary support options were discussed in support of the delivery of the Food Strategy.
- Elizabeth Weaver from GFirst LEP gave an update on the Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages. They plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. [Hub8](#) an incubation space for cyber-tech startups has now opened in the Brewery Quarter, providing Cheltenham with a co-working space. Tewkesbury, Cirencester and Gloucester are going from strength to strength, with Gloucester considering reaching out to businesses with a view to sponsorship, enabling start-ups to use the office space for free.
- The group were informed about the Brexit Readiness Grant – a £10 million fund for Businesses to help them prepare for the impacts associated with a No Deal Brexit. The funding call closed on 30<sup>th</sup> September.
- The group discussed the Agri-tech piece of the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) with a round table discussion forming most of the meeting. The draft LIS is open for consultation from 19<sup>th</sup> September, so due to the timeframe of the draft LIS being launched, and the date of the meeting, the group agreed to read the draft LIS as a complete document, and will feedback before the consultation closes at the end of October. Feedback can be sent to [LIS@gfirstlep.com](mailto:LIS@gfirstlep.com)

*The date of the next meeting is on **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November** 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 group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019, this was preceded by a banking and finance clinic. There was also a 'standalone' clinic run at the Cirencester Growth Hub in July, to accommodate start-ups in the area. It was considered to bring in a cyber/digital expert to offer advice in these clinics as an increasing number of start-ups are emerging who have a digital focus to their business.
- Andy Kime, Business Guide for the Growth Hub Network gave an update on the Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages. They plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. [Hub8](#) an incubation space for cyber-tech startups has now opened in the Brewery Quarter, providing Cheltenham with a co-working space. Tewkesbury, Cirencester and Gloucester are going from strength to strength, with Gloucester considering reaching out to businesses with a view to sponsorship, enabling start-ups to use the office space for free.
- The group were informed about the Brexit Readiness Grant – a £10 million fund for Businesses to help them prepare for the impacts associated with a No Deal Brexit. The funding call closed on 30<sup>th</sup> September.
- Dr Polly Pick, Director of Business Engagement for the University of Gloucestershire updated the group on the various relevant degrees being offered, as well as incentives for businesses to host an apprentice which can be supported partially by Levy funding. Apprenticeships are a flexible way for people already in work to upskill in management, finance, offering study solutions alongside their day job.
- Access2Finance offers alternative funding solutions to businesses and individuals who have been refused a loan elsewhere. The events offer a short, sharp 'get-to-know what else is available' networking event, so lenders of all shapes and sizes can refer clients to the most appropriate form of funding. It's now seen as a high-value networking event with the 2-minute slots working very well, so the next event will be held in the Cirencester Growth Hub on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2019.
- The draft Local Industrial Strategy had not been launched at the time of the meeting, so the group will review and comment on the draft LIS at the next meeting, commenting via the [LIS@gfirstlep.com](mailto:LIS@gfirstlep.com) email in the interim.

*The next Banking & Finance meeting is at the Gloucester Growth Hub on **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019** 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)*



## Business & Professional Services

- The group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October. An update was given on the timeline of the planned Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages. They plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. [Hub8](#) an incubation space for cyber-tech startups has now opened in the Brewery Quarter, providing Cheltenham with a co-working space. Tewkesbury, Cirencester and Gloucester are going from strength to strength, with Gloucester considering reaching out to businesses with a view to sponsorship, enabling start-ups to use the office space for free.
- Members were also advised to inform businesses about the Growth Hubs, to continue to spread the word about the services that they offer for free. It was mooted that current networks and larger private digital companies could be encouraged to use the Growth Hub spaces for their events which would raise the Growth Hub profile, as a solid digital infrastructure is important.
- Katie Jenkins, Director of Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) gave an overview of where we are with feedback following the launch of the draft LIS. To summarise, the members thought that the draft LIS was a good synthesis of the strengths and of the opportunities in the county. A key theme that emerged was that we need to be able to offer easy access to upskilling, to ensure businesses of all sizes are equipped for challenges and changes for an increasingly digital economy with cyber-tech protection capabilities. The group's feedback has been sent to the GFirst LEP LIS team.

*The next Business & Professional Services meeting will take place on **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020** at Gloucester Growth Hub.*

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



## Business Membership Groups

- The Business Membership Group met at the Cirencester Growth Hub on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2019. Yesim Nicholson gave an update on the Cirencester Growth Hub which has over 30 businesses as paying members. They are averaging 3 workshops a week open to members and non-members.
- An update was given on the timeline of the other Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages. They plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. [Hub8](#) an incubation space for cyber-tech startups has now opened in the Brewery Quarter, providing Cheltenham with a co-working space. Tewkesbury, Cirencester and Gloucester are going from strength to strength, with Gloucester considering reaching out to businesses with a view to sponsorship, enabling start-ups to use the office space for free.
- The draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) is open for consultation from 19<sup>th</sup> September, so due to the timeframe of the draft LIS being launched, and the date of the meeting, the group agreed to read the draft LIS as a complete document, and will feedback before the consultation closes at the end of October. Feedback can be sent to [LIS@gfirstlep.com](mailto:LIS@gfirstlep.com)
- Business Member groups gave updates:
  - Cheltenham Chamber are supporting Alex Chalk MP in the campaign to protect Cheltenham Hospital from being downgraded. A conversation needs to take place as to how Cheltenham Chamber and the Cheltenham Growth Hub will co-ordinate events to ensure there is joined-up thinking and reduced repetition, as well as quality rather than quantity.
  - Wotton-under-Edge, Charfield to Kingswood green walking / cycling route has been approved. The town are finding it difficult to secure contractors for e-charge points for the car park as it's a small project (8 points for an 80 space car park) and installers are facing a backlog as larger projects take priority.
  - Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) looking at Business Rate Review as second premises get no relief at all, no matter how small. This can restrict growth of businesses. Growing Gloucestershire conference to take place in the Pump Rooms, Cheltenham on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2019.
  - Stroud Business Voice are looking for new Directors and are considering creating a Stroud Chamber. Their Enterprise Plan is looking at organic growth 'hub' for small businesses. Stroud DC are looking at developing the Tourism offering from a business perspective.
  - Country Landowner's Association (CLA) have a new Regional Director for the South West: Ann Maidment who is hosting 'younger generation' evenings.
- The group were informed about the Brexit Readiness Grant – a £10 million fund for Businesses to help them prepare for the impacts associated with a No Deal Brexit. The funding call closes on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

*The next meeting will take place on **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November** at the Growth Hub, Gloucester. For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Cyber-tech

- The Cyber Security Business group met on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October at the Gloucester Growth Hub. Dr Polly Pick, Director of Business Engagement at the University of Gloucestershire spoke about how the University is keen to work with businesses to ensure UoG students are 'business ready' when they complete their studies. Cyber Security Degree Apprenticeship is a work-based qualification, tailored to meet the specific needs of business. These can be offered to existing employees and nurture and retain the talent that businesses already have.
- Neil Hopwood, from Cheltenham Borough Council, gave an update on the developments of Cyber Central, the Cyber Business Park. Avison Young will be producing the planning document as concept designs have now been commissioned. Project will go before GFirst LEP Board in October for the first two phases of the transport plan. Public consultation will be launched mid-November/December and run for 6 weeks.
- Dev Chakraborty, Deputy Chief Exec of Gfirst LEP, gave an update on the Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages. They plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. [Hub8](#) an incubation space for cyber-tech startups has now opened in the Brewery Quarter, providing Cheltenham with a co-working space.
- The group also discussed the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and main themes were collated: Need to resolve the gap between skills and businesses. One unified approach, with clarity on the 'how'. There is a unique depth of cyber-tech knowledge in the county and we need to pool this to have a collected hub of knowledge – to give companies a reason to relocate to Gloucestershire. All LIS feedback has been collated and sent to the LIS team for consideration.
- Bruce Gregory, Director Hub8 gave an update on the space: there has been lots of uptake, with several cyber-tech companies working out of here – this is the start of the cyber central movement. Companies are looking to hold events in the space, which will further strengthen the brand and it's association with the cyber community.

*The next meeting of the Cyber Security Business Group is on **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020** at the Gloucester Growth Hub.*

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



## Construction and Infrastructure

- The group met on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October at the Gloucester Growth Hub. Stephen Limbrick, Chair, congratulated Board representative Mike Warner on his Lifetime Achievement Award at the recent Gloucestershire Business Awards.
- Elizabeth Weaver requested that the group keep in mind the current diversity of the group, and questioned if the current 90% male 10% female split is an accurate representation of the industry as a whole. The skills make-up of all of the business groups is currently being audited and new member applications will be considered with this in mind.
- Katie Jenkins, Director of Local Industrial Strategy, gave an update on the current status of the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and the timeline. Members of the group will meet separately on 13<sup>th</sup> November to feedback on the LIS having identified that transport solutions and the infrastructure surrounding this, as well as the Green Planning Framework are of significant importance to the group's industry areas.
- The Joint Core Strategy has a deficit of 40 hectares and a consultation between the 3 Districts will take place to ensure this is found. Smaller sites of up to 5 hectares tend to be more attractive to SMEs for example Business Parks, and it was agreed that this is what is lacking in the county. Updates were also given on Local Plans for Stroud, Forest of Dean and Cotswold District councils.

*The next meeting of the C&I group is on **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December** at the Gloucester Growth Hub  
For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@qfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@qfirstlep.com)*



## Energy

- The Energy Business group met on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October at Western Power Distribution, Gloucester. Katie Jenkins, Director of Local Industrial Strategy, gave an update on the current status of the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and the timeline. Individuals are encouraged to respond if not done so already. The group feel that 'Eco Central' could be the opportunity to promote the area in the same way as 'Cyber Central' in Cheltenham. The Berkeley area was identified as being an area with the potential to grow and be self-sufficient with its energy needs: good rail/road links, housing allocations and over river links identified.
- The circular economy and minimizing waste are key items on the agendas of Local Authorities - current economic thoughts point to this mindset instead of a linear 'soil to sewer' lifecycle. This needs to be considered within the LIS. Other feedback has been sent to the LIS team at GFirst LEP.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the South West Energy Hub – currently looking to recruit a Programme Manager for the Bristol and Gloucestershire area to identify and support energy projects. Pete Wiggins from GCC, is currently working with the Hub on a battery storage and Electric vehicle project.

The objectives of the Energy Hubs are to:

- Increase number, quality and scale of local energy projects being delivered
- Raise local awareness of opportunity for and benefits of local energy investment
- Enable local areas to attract private and/or public finance for energy projects
- Identify working model for teams to be financially self-sustaining after first two years

The SW Energy Hub also administers the Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF). The RCEF provides grants up to £40,000 to community groups to undertake feasibility studies and up to £100,000 towards project development, such as planning and legal fees. There is a total fund of £1.8m for community led energy projects in the South West Region which is available via the South West Energy Hub. This has been promoted through various channels at GFirst LEP.

- The three Energy Strategy task group chairs gave an update on their groups: The Brunel Project at Berkeley will become the focus of the heat decarbonisation group. Pete Wiggins has been working with the EV group on progressing battery storage facility.

*The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December at the Gloucester Growth Hub.***

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



## Retail and High Street

- The Retail and High Street business group met on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2019 at the UK Digital Retail & Innovation Centre, (UKDRIC), Eastgate Shopping Centre, Gloucester.
- The group were reminded to register their attendance for the Annual Review on 19<sup>th</sup> September. This will mark the launch of the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and its consultation period. The group will have the option once they have read the draft LIS to discuss in more details at the following meeting which is scheduled for Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November.
- An update was given on the timeline of the Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean is due to open in Spring 2020. Stroud have decided to complete the work in stages. They plan to open officially in February 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. [Hub8](#) an incubation space for cyber-tech startups has now opened in the Brewery Quarter, providing Cheltenham with a co-working space. Tewkesbury, Cirencester and Gloucester are going from strength to strength, with Gloucester considering reaching out to businesses with a view to sponsorship, enabling start-ups to use the office space for free.
- The group were informed about the Brexit Readiness Grant – a £10 million fund for Businesses to help them prepare for the impacts associated with a No Deal Brexit. The funding call closed on 30<sup>th</sup> September.
- Dr Polly Pick, Director of Business Engagement for the University of Gloucestershire updated the group on the various relevant degrees being offered, as well as incentives for businesses to host an apprentice which can be supported partially by Levy funding. Apprenticeships are a flexible way for people already in work to upskill in management, finance, offering study solutions alongside their day job.
- The floor was opened to each area representative including guests from the Market Towns Forum for an update on developments:

**Gloucester:** Sales going well in the Gloucester Quays, however footfall levels in the city as a whole are 4% down on last year. Various events are being mooted to bring more people into the city as this has a direct impact on sales; Henson's Trail and a 'What's on' city-wide year planner is being produced.

Lots of filming taking place in **Cotswolds** area with 'gardens' as the latest project. The Cotswold's are preparing for a large media visit in collaboration with Visit Britain later in the year.

**Stroud** Tourism forum are completing a feasibility study as to what locals want to see on the website, with funding having been approved through the Community Infrastructure bid for an Information Room.

Heritage Action Zone Funding – Gloucester (Westgate and the Fleece Inn) and Tewkesbury have both bid for this funding. We will hear more before the end of the year if they have been successful.

- Talks from Will Foster and Matthew Lee from the Cotswolds Canals Trust, Stroud: updates on the latest developments in particular for the 'missing mile' of canal work, with 33,000 boats now registered with the Cotswold Canals Trust; Peter Allan from Surple gave an interesting talk on how businesses can make changes to become carbon neutral and reduce their energy costs – Surple have the software to enable companies to make these changes with minimum disruption.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at the Gloucester Growth Hub**. This will be a joint meeting with the tourism and visitor economy group.  
For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell [karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Tourism and Visitor Economy

- The group met on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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](http://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 31<sup>st</sup> May.

*The date of next meeting is **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> November** – a joint meeting with the Retail & High Street group.*

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