



GFirst LEP Business Groups Update: November 2019

The following Business groups met in November 2019:

Retail & Visitor Economy (combined)

Banking & Finance

Agri-Food & Rural Economy

Business Membership Groups

- The **Chairs of the Business Groups** met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Monday 14th 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. These will be drawn up and sent to each group for discussion at each meeting in the New Year.

- The majority of the groups had met since the launch of the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) on 19th 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 9th December 2019 at the Gloucester Growth Hub.***



Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- The Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group met on Monday 7th 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 29th 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 2nd 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



Agri-Food & Rural Economy

- The Agri Food & Rural group met at Hartpury College & University on Thursday 14th November 2019. Specific feedback for the Agri-Tech sector of the Local Industrial Strategy has been submitted by the food strategy sub group. The links between RAU, Hartpury and Campden BRI have been clearly identified in the LIS, however there was concern as to how the work being done by them trickles down to the land-based users and benefits consumers. Businesses need to identify ways of working with education establishments to build these connections and enable the trickle down into businesses and the end consumer.
- The Chair asked members to ask their customers: “*What do they see 2030 looking like in the industry?*” We can then start to build a framework to support these answers, including support with diversification, succession planning, scale-up, etc.
- Katharine Cripps, Barclays Bank mentioned that bringing farmers together had been a very positive idea-sharing exercise in the past, and the idea of holding an event in one of the Growth Hubs to showcase farmers who have diversified was discussed with the group.
- The Tech to Plate project at Hartpury will be launched in February 2020 – this could be a good opportunity to invite some Farm491 businesses to discuss how they have directly benefitted the rural economy, and to strengthen the connections between Farm491 and Tech to Plate Projects.
- The recent flooding of farmland and road networks in the Maisemore area has impacted on the local farming economy: productivity losses from damaged crops, grazing land and from the wider economy following road network disruptions. The flooding of the roads is a Highways issue, which was initially raised in 2015. NFU are working with Government to maintain levels of farm funding over a longer term which will include flood damage support.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Thursday 6th February 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



Banking & Finance

- The group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 19th November 2019, this was preceded by a banking and finance clinic. Several guest speakers updated the group:
 - Peter Doyle from the Growth Company is working with SMEs to encourage mentoring, with an increasing amount of “reverse mentoring” taking place, where the smaller SME mentees mentoring Corporate Mentors (such as John Lewis Partnership, BAe Systems, Rolls-Royce, Amazon, GSK) - about how SMEs can be agile, creative and innovative. Peter compliments the work that Rod Horrocks is undertaking for GFirst LEP.
 - Dr Polly Pick, Director of Business Engagement at the University of Gloucestershire gave an update on the latest Business degrees, degree apprenticeships and work-based training programmes, which can be part funded through the Apprenticeship Levy for larger companies.
 - Charles Dodwell, Start and Grow Enterprise – support for start-ups and new entrepreneurs in Gloucestershire in the form of free training events, networking and resources. Charles explained that they have completed a funding bid to run the programme for a further 3 years.
- 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 plan to open officially in February 2020 and Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. Funding for the Growth Hub (revenue) has been extended for a further 3 years until 2022. More workshops are taking place to find new clients, and several Director Strategy workshops are being held, to de-mystify business jargon.
- The group fed back on the draft Local Industrial Strategy, commenting that physical and digital connectivity should be a priority. Can we better connect the Growth Hubs with the Banking & Finance businesses? Overall very positive comments about the LIS which have been passed onto the LIS team.

*The next Banking & Finance meeting is at the **Gloucester Growth Hub on Tuesday 11th February 2020** 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 Gloucester Growth Hub on Wednesday 2nd October 2019. 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 4th March 2020 at Gloucester Growth Hub.***

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



Business Membership Groups

- The Business Membership Group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Wednesday 27th November 2019. Peter Doyle from the Growth Company talked to the group about his work with SMEs to encourage mentoring, with an increasing amount of “reverse mentoring” taking place, where the smaller SME mentees mentoring Corporate Mentors (such as John Lewis Partnership, BAe Systems, Rolls-Royce, Amazon, GSK) - about how SME’s can be agile, creative and innovative. Peter compliments the work that Rod Horrocks is undertaking for GFirst LEP.
- Dr Polly Pick, Director of Business Engagement at the University of Gloucestershire gave an update on the latest Business degrees, degree apprenticeships and work-based training programmes, which can be part funded through the Apprenticeship Levy for larger companies. The group were especially keen to develop the relationships between businesses and schools/Higher education establishments, to get students more interested in business at an earlier age.
- An update was given on the timeline of the other Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean and Stroud due to open in Spring 2020. Cheltenham is planned to open in Summer 2020. Funding for the Growth Hub (revenue) has been extended for a further 3 years until 2022. More workshops are taking place to find new clients, and several Director Strategy workshops are being held, to de-mystify business jargon.
- The group fed back on the draft Local Industrial Strategy, and comments have been given to the LIS team for inclusion. They reiterated the importance of the voice of young people and the need for a good public transport system throughout the county, and the group welcomed the rail strategy as part of this. A good transport infrastructure will be imperative to support the development of Cyber Central. Housing affordability and availability will be another key factor in retaining young people and this needs to be addressed.

*The next meeting will take place on **Thursday 5th March 2020 at the Growth Hub, Gloucester.**
For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com*



Cyber-tech

- The Cyber Security Business group met on Monday 21st October 2019 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 its association with the cyber community.

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

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



Construction and Infrastructure

- The group met on Wednesday 16th October 2019 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 13th 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 11th December 2019 at the Gloucester Growth Hub**
For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@qfirstlep.com*



Energy

- The Energy Business group met on Monday 15th October 2019 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 3rd December 2019 at the Gloucester Growth Hub.**
For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com*



Retail and High Street

- The Retail and High Street Business Group combined with the Tourism and Visitor Economy Business Group met at the Gloucester Growth Hub on Thursday 14th November 2019; Elizabeth Weaver Chaired the meeting in Nigel's absence.
- Clair Greenaway Senior Lecturer in Events Management and Marketing at the University of Gloucestershire gave a presentation on the degree courses that they offer in Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management, with an emphasis on working with local businesses as an integral part of the Degree programme. Several of the members already offer placements with students, and if anyone else would like to get more involved, they should contact Clair directly.
- The group discussed the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and main themes were collated:
 - A real need to join up social media between Market Towns and a strategic co-ordination physically, to join up the thinking and the offering.
 - Concern that the Cotswolds and Forest Rural areas could be 'left dormant'. There is a need for high quality businesses in these areas and high value jobs.
 - Industrial sites on the edges of marketing towns encourage small businesses to the rural areas and are in demand.
- A few updates from the group included:
 - Berkeley Vale Tourism has been established, giving access to local information online. They are looking to roll out a similar strategy for other areas
 - A contractor has been appointed for A38 works to the Canal to start in December. The Canals Trust are due to take delivery of their first all-electric boat operational in March.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Wednesday 15th January 2020 at the Gloucester Growth Hub.***

The Tourism & Visitor Economy and Retail & High Street groups will split back out in 2020.

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



Tourism and Visitor Economy

- 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 19th March 2020 at the Gloucester Growth Hub.***

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