

GFirst LEP Business Groups Update: August 2020

The following Business groups met 'virtually' in August 2020:
Business Membership groups | Visitor Economy & Tourism

- **The Business Group Chairs met virtually on Monday 29th June.** GFirst LEP's CEO, David Owen gave an update on the activities of the LEP including the Economic Recovery Plan for Gloucestershire, responses to the Growth Hub's Business Intelligence Survey and outbound business calls to the largest 200 businesses in the county. The update also included various collaboration activities: partnering with [Glosjobs.co.uk](https://glosjobs.co.uk), and supporting Punchline with their Business Champions feature.
- Nine of the ten business group Chairs were present at the meeting, and each gave an update on the current state of affairs in their sector. The main areas of concern following COVID-19 were:
 - a reduction of up to 40% in the demand from civil aerospace industry
 - Unemployment and re-training will be major issues over the next 3-12 months as businesses fail to recover
 - The cyber and digital industry is stronger than ever before, and is relevant to all sectors
- David Owen thanked the Chairs for their support in the development of the Economic Recovery Plan. The LEP and its business 'voice' is all the more richer with a diverse, knowledgeable support network, and by feeding this knowledge into the *economic* recovery plan, we have created a business-rich report which will compliment the *place-based* recovery plans being produced by the local authorities and will collectively support Gloucestershire to move forward.

The date of the next Business Group Chairs Meeting will be early September 2020 date to be confirmed.



Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- The Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group met virtually on Monday 6th July. Chair Rob Loveday welcomed guest speaker Leah Rider from the National Composites Centre (NCC).
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Covid-19 business support updates have started to reduce as the focus changes to recovery, however we will continue to issue weekly newsletters with latest news and information from the county as well as Government updates as they happen. Nick Holyoake will be finalising the information gathered from businesses for the Gloucestershire Economic recovery plan. We believe that we have developed an economic recovery plan for Gloucestershire that reflects the county's character, business needs and economic priorities as informed by stakeholder consultation, the Local Industrial Strategy and the Skills agenda.
We have just come through an extremely busy time after announcement of Local Infrastructure Stimulus Fund - another round of Growth Deal funding for shovel ready projects. We submitted 15 projects worth up to £52million.
Growth Hub updates: Forest of Dean – Construction has now resumed. The recruitment process will follow when appropriate and an opening date planned for quarter 2/3, dependent on COVID recovery.
Cheltenham – Planned opening by April/May 2021. Cheltenham Borough Council are fully supportive of the scheme and see it as a vital element of their economic recovery activity so have ringfenced the funding required to ensure the Hub can open.
- Leah Rider gave the group an overview of what the NCC has to offer businesses. NCC Connect offers dedicated SME training support to generate impact through partnerships and connections. Through access to their facilities they can offer support for small scale projects or technical consultancy. They also offer a line walk service, innovation workshops, training, match funding for UK SMEs to develop composite technologies, as well as an SME affiliate scheme which offers affordable access to a year of benefits including training, equipment and access to the wider BCC network.
- Members were asked 'round the table' to share with the group how the pandemic has impacted on businesses, and their plans for recovery:
 - The NCC are expecting a 50% reduction in aerospace business (in South West). Make UK (driving competitive advantage for the UK) are expecting a 21% drop in output. The South West region is the least confident currently.
 - From a recruitment perspective, businesses are trying as hard as possible to hold onto their staff because they know how hard it is to find people with the right specialist skills.
 - Financially there is an increasing likelihood of a liquidity crisis – customers are reluctant to place orders when they are unsure of their returns. This is likely to continue until at least Christmas 2020.
 - There is likely to be a real drop off after pipeline orders have been completed and throughout 2021. The MOD will be leading a cross-government review into the UK's defence and security industrial strategy this year. It will suggest how defence in particular might better drive investment and prosperity across the UK.

*The date of the next Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing meeting will be **early September 2020 date to be confirmed 2020.***

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 virtually on Thursday 9th July. Chair of the group Jo Price welcomed Tom Mason from CLA as a new member, and Carey Ives as interim representative from Gloucestershire County Council.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Covid-19 business support updates have started to reduce as the focus changes to recovery, however we will continue to issue weekly newsletters with latest news and information from the county as well as Government updates as they happen. Nick Holyoake will be finalising the information gathered from businesses for the Gloucestershire Economic recovery plan. We believe that we have developed an economic recovery plan for Gloucestershire that reflects the county's character, business needs and economic priorities as informed by stakeholder consultation, the Local Industrial Strategy and the Skills agenda.
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Cheltenham – Planned opening by April/May 2021. Cheltenham Borough Council are fully supportive of the scheme and see it as a vital element of their economic recovery activity so have ringfenced the funding required to ensure the Hub can open.
- Members were asked 'round the table' to share with the group how the pandemic has impacted on certain areas of the industry, and plans for recovery:
 - The Co-operative have seen a 40% uplift in sales and the more rural neighbourhood based shops have seen up to 50% uptake in sales – these rural stores tend to sell more local produce. Unfortunately, smaller local farm shops don't have the produce or the infrastructure to upscale with the demand so were running out of items that the consumer is used to having 'on tap'. This became less of an issue as initial demand (and panic-buying) flattened out.
 - Agri-tech advances need to offer a longer-term solution to support the distribution of local, healthier produce to those that need it most, including food banks. The education and means to prepare and cook fresh food needs to be taught / made available as well.
 - Rural communities including farmers are suffering from 'social starvation' – whilst many have adapted to a more virtual world, a blended approach to both physical and virtual interaction is important.
- Tamsyn Harrod-Beck gave an update on the Food strategy which is completed in its draft stage. The three key strands are:
 - **Transform Demand** – create opportunities for farmers to sell produce locally into public sector and food catering contracts
 - **Food culture** - Help people live happier & healthier lives in a county that values food and its producers
 - **Food Security** - Help farmers and land managers prosper: support regenerative farming and sustainable business modelsImmediate short-term funding is required of up to £5k for the development of the Hive and finalisation of the Strategy in its draft stage through to the end of 2020.
- From an academic perspective, students are looking at returning to campus in September. They are currently benefitting from a blended approach to learning and this may continue beyond September. The students and staff are keen to get back up to speed as quickly as possible and to have face to face contact.

*The date of the next meeting is on **Thursday 8th October 2020.***

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 ‘virtually’ on Tuesday 19th May. Chair, Mark Wilton welcomed John Peters from South West Investment Group (SWIG) Finance.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the work of GFirst LEP at this time: We continue to issue regular updates in relation to support for businesses and all of this information is available in bite size chunks on our website. We had over 570 Growth Hub Business Impact Surveys completed as of beginning of May. As of 18th May this has been re-issued to include questions on more of a recovery theme. To date more than £114million of business grant payments to Gloucestershire businesses have been confirmed by our six Local Authorities to help counter the impact, assisting more than 10,600 businesses in the county. Nick Holyoake is continuing his work with GFirst LEP to co-ordinate the county's recovery plan. The aim is to develop an economic recovery plan for Gloucestershire that reflects the county's character, business needs and economic priorities as informed by stakeholder consultation. Nick will be attending the business group meeting as a guest in order to support his work to gather relevant, timely stakeholder recovery plans. Delivery of the final report will be by early July 2020.
- Members were asked ‘round the table’ to share with the group how the pandemic has impacted on businesses, how they have coped / adapted, and their plans for recovery:
 - Agri-business banking** – general agricultural business is holding up well, however arable and livestock farmers are struggling. Furloughed staff has meant farmers are having to work twice as hard with fewer staff. The pandemic combined with a wet autumn and dry Spring has hit crop production very hard.
 - Commercial banking** – cashflow is the biggest issue businesses have identified. Have seen a huge increase in number of businesses looking for advice on how to stay afloat.
 - Wholesale food business** – supply lines have all closed: schools, airlines and football stadiums. Have taken a further 25% off 2021 projections. We have moved forward 2 years in 2 months. Online delivery and working from home have been the biggest changes in this short timescale, and businesses that can adapt to accommodate this new way of working/living will have the most success. An industry guess would be that up to 20% of businesses would go bust as a result of COVID-19.
 - British Business Bank** – they are looking to have a scheme to help up to 96% of SMEs find the funds they need to survive. The CBILS loan scheme has now increased from £50m to £200m.
 - HIGHSTREET BANK** – a complete change of business model will be required moving forward. Liquidation of businesses 3-6 months from now and issues repaying loans are the main areas of concern that they are encouraging businesses to consider in the long-term.
 - Growth Hub finance guide** – demand for office space has reduced, as firms look to reduce overheads and as more people work remotely/from home. Larger companies are looking further ahead whereas smaller companies are struggling to keep afloat
- John Peters gave an update on **SWIG finance** – offering small business loans to businesses in the South West from £50,001 - £100,000 and businesses up to £250,000 in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly. Funds are designed for those who are unable to secure all their requirements from traditional sources. SWIG Finance can often lend when the bank can't. Have had enquiries of £30 million in first week of CBILS launch. Currently lending approx. £300,000 per month. On average 8 out of 10 applications are being approved <https://www.swigfinance.co.uk/>

The next Banking & Finance meeting will take place on Tuesday 13th October, with a Finance clinic to be held at the end of June 2020.

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



Business & Professional Services

- The group met virtually on 8th July 2020. Matthew Clayton welcomed Sarah Taylor from Career Voyage to the group.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Covid-19 business support updates have started to reduce as the focus changes to recovery, however we will continue to issue weekly newsletters with latest news and information from the county as well as Government updates as they happen. Nick Holyoake will be finalising the information gathered from businesses for the Gloucestershire Economic recovery plan. We believe that we have developed an economic recovery plan for Gloucestershire that reflects the county's character, business needs and economic priorities as informed by stakeholder consultation, the Local Industrial Strategy and the Skills agenda.
We have just come through an extremely busy time after announcement of Local Infrastructure Stimulus Fund - another round of Growth Deal funding for shovel ready projects. We submitted 15 projects worth up to £52million.
- Sam Hoad gave an update on the Growth Hubs: Forest of Dean – Construction has now resumed. The recruitment process will follow when appropriate and an opening date planned for quarter 2/3, dependent on COVID recovery. Cheltenham – Planned opening by April/May 2021. Cheltenham Borough Council are fully supportive of the scheme and see it as a vital element of their economic recovery activity so have ringfenced the funding required to ensure the Hub can open.
- Members were asked 'round the table' to share with the group how the pandemic has impacted on businesses, and their plans for recovery:
 - There doesn't seem to be a lot of use being made of the flexible furlough scheme which would help businesses who are facing challenges encouraging employers back to work off the full time furloughing scheme
 - Businesses need support in the positioning of readiness for virtual working.
 - Global passenger air travel will have a slow recovery – this is having a direct impact on those in the supply chain e.g Safran (supply landing gear to major airliners)
 - The impact of COVID-19 could set businesses back years – it's affecting all levels of workers from senior managers through to cleaning staff.
 - Mental health is of a real concern as a blended approach of physical and virtual interaction is essential. Government's approaches in getting youngsters back to work is welcomed.
 - Infrastructure investment is very slow. Bigger businesses seem to be coping better with virtual working (and are possibly better equipped to adapt to it?). SMEs are now accepting this as a way of working moving forward which could lead to more opportunities for Gloucestershire businesses of all sizes to get more involved in projects further afield as connectivity has evolved.
 - As people come back to work off furlough, this could cause resentment between staff that have been working throughout the crisis – support needs to be offered to businesses where this has happened, to maintain a team culture. 'Water-cooler' chats and off the cuff conversations don't happen in a virtual world – this could create silos amongst staff. Some companies have adapted very well to virtual working – are there lessons here that could be shared with those companies that are struggling?
 - Re-training and identifying transferable skills amongst those that will be made redundant is key.

The next Business & Professional Services meeting will take place towards the end of September once the review of shovel-ready projects has been announced.

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



Business Membership Groups

- The group met 'virtually' on Wednesday 5th August 2020. Chair, Ian Mean welcomed guest speaker Nicky Williams from the CBI the UK's premier business organisation.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: Recovery 'replan and restart' strategy published on 22nd July. It consists of three reports: a sector analysis report, an economic modelling report and a list of interventions that enable the county's businesses to reimagine and restart. Link to full reports on our website: <https://www.gfirstlep.com/news/economic-recovery-reimagine-and-restart-plan-is-launched/>.
GFirst LEP has secured £11.3 million to help the county recover. The funding is part of central Government's £900million nationwide 'Getting Building Fund'. The project team worked tirelessly over an expedited 6 week window to ensure that the 'shovel ready' projects would create jobs, aid recovery and support the green agenda. More details about the 5 projects that were successful can be found on our website here: <https://www.gfirstlep.com/news/shovel-ready-steady-go/>.
Our marketing campaign to 'Think Gloucestershire' has taken off. The basis behind the campaign is to encourage people to shop locally, holiday locally and to encourage businesses to think locally with their supply chain procurement. The advertising campaign will be promoted through our regular newsletters, via Twitter, Facebook, Punchline, SoGlos, Business & innovation Magazine and other media channels.
Gloucestershire's Growth Hubs will be opening shortly, and will be accessible by appointment only to start with. Gloucester Growth Hub opens on 1st September. Events will be held virtually until at least 1st October.
- Nicky Williams representing the CBI South West gave an update on the recent CBI July Growth Indicator and surveys which included several questions around how and when firms are returning staff to offices. The most notable findings are:
 - Social distancing at 2metre would reduce the operating capacity of firms by over one quarter on average, or by 15% under 1metre.
 - Increased remote working nonetheless means that more than one third of companies are conducting or planning to conduct conversations with landlords/managing agents to review office space requirements.
 - Considering both social distancing and remote working, almost half of companies believe that 70% or less of current office space is essential
- Members were asked 'round the table' to share with the group their recovery journeys:
 - **Business West / Gloucestershire Chamber** – the hardest hit are likely to be those in the retail and hospitality sectors. There are still vacancies within the Agri sectors, and a separate meeting is to be arranged to look at these two sectors to join up the dots, and offer signposting and training to these specific sectors. Job Centres have had a recruitment drive to help with the expected influx of people looking for work.
 - **University of Gloucestershire** – clearing will be open until mid September providing access to courses for those that want to study instead of work. Business incentives from government for taking on apprentices just announced with interest from digital, online and care sectors.
 - **CLA & FSB** – have had lots of enquiries for office space, especially from small start ups.
 - **Cheltenham Chamber** – general retail initially struggled but overall feeling from members that business is slowly picking up.

*The next meeting will take place on **Thursday 19th November.***

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



Cyber-tech

- The group met on Monday 20th April via Zoom. Due to the Coronavirus outbreak we have decided to hold the business group meetings virtually where possible. It is vital that we continue to hear the voice of businesses in the county, now, more than ever, and to disseminate messages up to central Government. Likewise, it's vitally important that we keep the lines of communication open, to filter down information from central Government to businesses. During this time, the meetings took place for one hour, and members were asked to share with the group how the pandemic has impacted on businesses, how they have coped / adapted, and their plans for recovery.
- Madeline Howard, Director of CyNam gave an update on Cyber First: connecting cyber businesses with students and encouraging schools to get involved with teaching cyber skills. They are planning an event later in the year with over 1,000 students and are keen to get more businesses involved.
- Brian Fowler gave an update on Gloucestershire College's first Cyber degree apprenticeship programme which launched online in April. The University of Gloucestershire also hold a professional cyber security degree apprenticeship level 6.
- Since the outbreak of Coronavirus, businesses have seen an increase in the number of phishing and spam emails, aimed not just at businesses, but to individuals who have for example claimed free school meals. CSA (Cyber Security Associates) together with GFirst LEP have sent out a handy guide on staying safe online, especially with so many people now working from home.
- Cheltenham Borough Council will be formally launching the search for a development partner for Cyber Central in early May. The launch will be via the OJEU portal on the basis of a competitive dialogue process, with the initial expressions of interest phase open until 10th July. The promotional website is up and running at: www.goldenvalleyuk.com

*The next meeting of the Cyber Security Business Group is on **Monday 21st September 2020 at C11 Cyber Security & Digital Innovation Centre, Berkeley.***

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



Construction and Infrastructure

- The group met virtually on Wednesday 15th July 2020. Chair, Stephen Limbrick welcomed guest John Baker who has recently finished as Strategic planning co-ordinator for the county.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Covid-19 business support updates have started to reduce as the focus changes to recovery, however we will continue to issue weekly newsletters with latest news and information from the county as well as Government updates as they happen. The Gloucestershire Economic recovery plan has been approved by the Board and will be issued in the next couple of days. We believe that we have developed an economic recovery plan for Gloucestershire that reflects the county's character, business needs and economic priorities as informed by stakeholder consultation, the Local Industrial Strategy and the Skills agenda.
We have just come through an extremely busy time after announcement of Local Infrastructure Stimulus Fund - another round of Growth Deal funding for shovel ready projects. We submitted 15 projects worth up to £52million. We have started our 'Think Gloucestershire' promotional campaign to 'think local' encouraging people to shop locally, holiday locally and to encourage businesses to think locally with their supply chain procurement.
Growth Hub updates: Forest of Dean – Construction has now resumed. The recruitment process will follow when appropriate and an opening date planned for quarter 2/3, dependent on COVID recovery.
Cheltenham – Planned opening by April/May 2021. Cheltenham Borough Council are fully supportive of the scheme and see it as a vital element of their economic recovery activity so have ringfenced the funding required to ensure the Hub can open.
- John Baker gave an overview of the work he has completed to produce a Statement of Common Ground for the county, to include a strategic spatial plan with Local Plans continuing to be developed alongside. The Statement used spatial planning as a contributor to a low carbon future, looked at the development of a 'city region', dedicated transport connectivity and a review of the airport and greenbelt. A draft was issued on 31st May.
- Philippa Lowe, from Cotswold District Council, gave an update on the 'Breaking Down Barriers' work in relation to faster planning application processes. This ongoing work has been identified as a key innovator for the Economic Recovery Plan. The group are looking for transformational planning and placemaking projects to use as case studies. Cross connections are to be made between this group and digital connectivity and the high street to ensure a holistic input into the planning procedures. Tewkesbury Borough Council have appointed a new planning co-ordinator and Philippa will take the work forward with them.
- Business impact comments included:
 - Planning policies regarding change of use, especially from business to residential in high street areas needs to happen quickly. COVID-19 has accelerated the demise of the high street shops and the repurposing of retail buildings needs to happen swiftly to reflect this.
 - Furloughed staff are finding it difficult to get mortgages approved due to uncertainty of job security.
 - Building confidence around the housing market will have a positive impact on planning & development decisions.
- Update on Local Plans:
 - Transport Plan has been put on hold whilst government make decisions on more sustainable (walking and cycling) solutions and decarbonisation of transport.
 - Gloucestershire Local Plan: several other letters raising the same concerns as this group had done regarding the potential for duplication of charges through S.106 and CIL.
 - The Sharpness Project has put in a bid for the 'Restore your Railway' fund which is designed to help develop proposals to build or reopen railway lines and stations to help restore rural connectivity. It will submit again in November.

The next meeting of the C&I group is mid September 2020

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



Energy

- The group met virtually on Tuesday 14th July 2020. Elizabeth Weaver welcomed elected co-chairs Rachel Brain and Simon Pickering into their new roles. The group had previously showed their support for the co-chairing partnership in response to the suggestion via email. Elizabeth also welcomed Tom Scott as a guest to the group to discuss the UKAEA nuclear programme.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Covid-19 business support updates have started to reduce as the focus changes to recovery, however we will continue to issue weekly newsletters with latest news and information from the county as well as Government updates as they happen. Nick Holyoake will be finalising the information gathered from businesses for the Gloucestershire Economic recovery plan. We believe that we have developed an economic recovery plan for Gloucestershire that reflects the county's character, business needs and economic priorities as informed by stakeholder consultation, the Local Industrial Strategy and the Skills agenda.
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- Members were asked 'round the table' to share with the group how the pandemic has impacted on businesses, and their plans for recovery:
 - Hewitt Studios:** EV transport hub in Woolwich to be completed in December for Transport for London. Working on a second in Portishead.
 - GE Aviation:** French are supporting Airbus to generate hydrogen as a future aviation fuel
 - Kiwa:** Domestic and commercial hydrogen ovens are in development working with Bosch. Working with local and national expertise to repurpose the gas network to carry hydrogen
 - Bromford:** Development is back in full swing despite taking a multimillion pound hit. 6 x modular houses approved for Cotswold development. Reducing office space by 40,000 sq ft which has reduced carbon footprint and has allowed them to connect with the local community more as they work remotely/through hubs
 - Severn Wye:** Working on a retrofit (housing) development project and to work with community groups and schools to ensure local community buy-in and local contractors are used
 - Berkeley GREEN:** Green Fuels were one of the 5 project partners to win the FlexJet EU project of the year for the conversion of waste fats into aviation fuel. Gloucestershire Police training academy have now moved into their new facility at Berkeley – they are proposing the use of solar panels on the building and are the greenest Police force in the country.
 - GCC:** A county-wide climate change co-ordinator role has recently been approved and will be hosted by Gloucester City Council. GCC have committed to be carbon net zero by 2030 (80% reduction, 20% offset) and have reduced their carbon emissions by 73% as of end of March 2020.
 - Ecotricity:** have experienced a 20% drop in commercial energy use due to very few people working in offices at present. This shortfall has not been made up by the domestic market.
- **Tom Scott** (University of Bristol) spoke about the STEP – an advanced modular reactor project. The group were keen to hear the parameters around the building of the first fusion power plant, with a nuclear-savvy workforce, EDF Energy HQ and Berkeley all based in Gloucestershire. Tom is already in discussion with WECA and South West LEPs. There needs to be a strong argument made for the South West versus investment into the Northern Powerhouse.
- **South West Energy Hub** update: the next round of funding for the Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) is in September. Philip Morris is the Project Co-coordinator for Bristol and Gloucestershire, working with Local Authorities and LEPs to identify energy projects for assistance via the Hub for funding.

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 15th September 2020.

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



Retail and High Street

- The Retail and High Street Business Group met virtually on Thursday 16th July 2020. Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Covid-19 business support updates have started to reduce as the focus changes to recovery, however we will continue to issue weekly newsletters with latest news and information from the county as well as Government updates as they happen. The GFirst LEP Board have just signed off the Gloucestershire Economic recovery plan. We believe that we have developed an economic recovery plan for Gloucestershire that reflects the county's character, business needs and economic priorities as informed by stakeholder consultation, the Local Industrial Strategy and the Skills agenda. Our 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign has just started, encouraging business to think locally with their supply chains, and encouraging visitors to have a staycation in the county and to stay local, eat local and shop local. We will be rolling out the campaign over the next few weeks.
Growth Hub updates: Forest of Dean – Construction has now resumed. The recruitment process will follow when appropriate and an opening date planned for quarter 2/3, dependent on COVID recovery.
Cheltenham – Planned opening by April/May 2021. Cheltenham Borough Council are fully supportive of the scheme and see it as a vital element of their economic recovery activity so have ringfenced the funding required to ensure the Hub can open.
- Following the opening of 'non-essential' shops on 4th July, the group went 'round the table' to share their thoughts:
 - Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum (GMTF):** There needs to be more join-up with smaller towns as they don't benefit from support of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).
 - John Lewis:** There was initial excitement in the first week when the flagship London store re-opened for the first week and then plateaued after this. There is pent up spend especially in homeware, and a high demand for IT equipment (worldwide) which has led to a supply shortage.
 - Visit Gloucestershire:** It would be good to see the stats on browsers vs spenders as some areas are experiencing a much higher volume of spenders than others, but with similar footfall ratio.
 - Federation of Small Businesses (FSB):** smaller shops have opened to show support but many are unlikely to survive. The wearing of PPE could be an issue for younger age group who are reluctant to wear them. Older age group (50+) are reluctant to venture out at all.
 - Tewkesbury BC:** Shoppers are spending and using #shoplocal. Setting up a retail support group to work with smaller towns. Submitted a bid to the DCMS digital fund getting local businesses to connect better.
 - Hospitality:** room occupancy is 60-70% over weekends. Lunchtime F&B offering is suffering
 - Forest of Dean DC:** The Town Centre performance report shows that footfall figures are down across Cinderford, Lydney & Coleford. Working with Dean Wye Tourism on their social media campaign.
 - Property consultants:** Currently analysing the needs of units for business / residential following enquiries from users about repurposing property or subletting to get the best ROI (business to residential as requirements for office space diminishes).
 - Maybe*:** Working with Googlemaps to identify companies in 'place' and to monitor their social media platform. Primark couldn't sell over lockdown as they do not have an online platform, but because they kept the conversation going with their customers, they maintained their loyalty and there was queueing once shops began to open.
 - Cirencester Growth Hub:** opened w/c 6th July for members only. Small eateries are concerned about the non-existent lunchtime trade as people work from home.

The date of the next meeting is mid September 2020

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



Tourism and Visitor Economy

- The group met virtually on Wednesday 19th August 2020. Chair Steve Collins welcomed Alex Cottrell, Growth Hub Manager and Sandra Ford from Tewkesbury Borough Council.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: Recovery 'replan and restart' strategy published on 22nd July. It consists of three reports: a sector analysis report, an economic modelling report and a list of interventions that enable the county's businesses to reimagine and restart. Link to full reports on our website: <https://www.gfirstlep.com/news/economic-recovery-reimagine-and-restart-plan-is-launched/>.
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Gloucestershire's Growth Hubs will be opening shortly, and will be accessible by appointment only to start with. Gloucester Growth Hub opens on 1st September. Events will be held virtually until at least 1st October.
 - Representatives of DMOs and market towns were asked for their business updates:
 - **Hospitality:** Activities around August are going well. 70% occupancy into September. Average spend per person is £30 up on this time last year. 'Eat out to Help out' scheme has helped.
 - **Cotswold:** Outdoor attractions are experiencing their highest visitor numbers ever e.g Westonbirt. Indoor attractions not yet open. Looking further afield, Three Counties Showground (outside) events are booking up fast. Canal Trust – visitor numbers are up 100% on last year.
 - **Market Towns:** Demographic of visitors have a higher spend – would normally have gone abroad so this is good for the towns as they are staying, spending and eating here instead.
 - **Gloucester:** Restaurants reporting they are fully booked Mon – Weds. Food markets (outdoor) have been well attended too. Guildhall and museum to be opening early September. Recent Press Trip went well, but masks are proving difficult to 'network' in!
 - **Cheltenham:** Town is quieter towards the end of the week, without the 'Eat out' campaign. The town is also missing the trade from office workers who would spend money on their lunch breaks, as people work from home. Accommodation businesses are experiencing their best ever July with August on track to be the same. Working to reach the overseas markets with Cotswolds DMO in preparation for lifting of restrictions.
 - **Severn Vale:** All major attractions open and experiencing good footfall. There are concerns about paying back loans in 6 months time - if business haven't made enough money they may go under.
- Alex Cottrell gave an update on the Kick-start Tourism grant scheme. It is likely to be end September before any funds can be issued, due to criteria clarifications from central government. The funding will not be advertised in any detail until the criteria is in place. Alex thanked the group for their contribution to the criteria questions. Alex was invited back to the next meeting, when all criteria should be in place and the scheme is ready to launch.
- There was concern in relation to a lack of clear guidelines regarding large gatherings. Has enough provision been made to support businesses to provide outside structures for diners as weather worsens? July / August is when businesses organise Christmas parties – there is concern that people will not have the appetite to celebrate or even if large gatherings will be permitted, should a second spike occur.

The date of next meeting is Tuesday 29th September 2020 via Zoom

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