

## **GFirst LEP Business Groups Update: September 2020**

The following Business groups met 'virtually' in September 2020:

**Business Group Chairs | Business & Professional Services | Cyber-tech | Construction & Infrastructure  
Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing | Energy | Retail & the High Street | Visitor Economy & Tourism**

- **The Business Group Chairs met virtually on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020.** GFirst LEP's DCEO, Dev Chakraborty updated the Chairs on the launch of the Economic Recovery 'Reimagine & Restart' Plan and also the Business Recovery Toolkit. The LEP has been successful in securing £11.3 million to help the county recover. The funding is part of central Government's £900million nationwide 'Getting Building Fund'. The 'shovel ready' projects will create 959 jobs, aid recovery and support the green agenda. One of GFirst's priorities now is to pull together the Skills Strategy including Apprenticeships and re-skilling opportunities.
- 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. Main points raised were:
  - **Visitor Economy** reported a good bounce-back for August, helped by the 'Eat out to help out' scheme. Staycations have increased however, some honeypot areas have received bad press for being too busy – messaging has changed to ask people to enjoy, but stay safe. The use of outdoor space for diners to socially distance is going to be an issue in the colder months. **Retail** has undoubtedly suffered although now could be the time to trial something radical in the county to initiate real change.
  - **Banking & Finance:** central government has extended the CBILS scheme until end of November. Waiting time is approx 12 weeks due to high demand. Concern over businesses ability to pay back loans in 6 months time. Medical, IT & cyber industries doing better than retail, energy, oil & gas.
  - There is concern over the 40+ age group who are facing redundancy especially in the **engineering** sectors – valuable skills will be lost if they are not passed on or these people are not re-employed.
  - The Gloucestershire Food Strategy to improve local supply chains and give everyone access to local, affordable food is a key focus of the **Agri food & rural** group. There are a lot of multi-industry benefits in the strategy which will improve the connectivity between the groups as their expertise & support will be vital.
- The Leadership team at GFirst together with the Chairs, agreed that Business Group meetings will be held virtually until the end of the year. The situation will be reviewed in January 2021.

*The date of the next Business Group Chairs Meeting will be 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020.*



## Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- **The Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group** met virtually on 17<sup>th</sup> September. Chair Rob Loveday welcomed guests Andrew Peaty (DASA), Lorrin White (Bamboo technology) Marc Funnell (NCC) and Matthew Large (Stroud Metal) to the meeting.
- Karen Campbell gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Recovery and Restart plan was published at the end of July with interventions identified to help support the restarting of the Gloucestershire economy. 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 'shovel ready' projects will create 959 jobs, aid recovery and support the green agenda. We have compiled both a Redundancy support pack and a business recovery toolkit covering some essential solutions for businesses re assessing their practices. Our 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign continues through September to encourage individuals and business to think locally for supply chain procurement and staycations. A 'Good news' stories campaign started in September with some really great business stories coming through.
- Marc Funnell, Head of Digital for DETI, National Composites Centre, Bristol (NCC) gave a presentation on the digital transformation of engineering, and the skills and innovation required for its development. Marc has offered members the opportunity to visit NCC to see Test Bed 5G. The DETI team is available to industry for diagnosis of digital transformation i.e. a free virtual survey to SMEs if needed.
- Andrew Peaty from UK Defence & Security Accelerator (DASA) gave an update on their latest funding announcements for Defence and Security projects. They have competitions open currently for project ideas based around unmanned air systems, robotic and autonomous systems, and explosives and weapon detection.
- Lorrin White from Bamboo Technology gave a presentation on 'Industry 4.0 and how to approach digital transformation'. Lorrin talked about the ongoing automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices, using modern SMART technology, gathering and analysing data across machines, enabling faster, more flexible, and more efficient processes to produce higher-quality goods at reduced costs.
- Members were asked 'round the table' to share with the group how the pandemic has impacted on businesses, and their plans for recovery:
  - From a recruitment perspective, the market is buoyant with demand for recruitment within IT and Engineering sectors. There is growing concern on the impact on the labour market at the end of the furlough scheme as well as Brexit.
  - A better recovery within the automotive and aviation industries is encouraging, however tariffs associated with Brexit is a concern especially amongst businesses who currently export up to 50% of their goods overseas. Cutbacks in production of civil aviation production has had major impacts financially.
  - There is concern as to how manufacturers of EV vehicles and components can keep up with consumer demand for EVs. A lack of government funding to aid innovation combined with a reduced workforce will mean new ways of working. On a positive note the blended approach has helped the industry to become more inclusive and is encouraging for enabling more diversity in the future workforce for innovation.
  - There is a strong desire from employers to offer virtual work experience to young people. A blended approach to training and development is helping both parties to become more inclusive which is encouraging for enabling more diversity in the future workforce.

*The date of the next Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing meeting will be 9<sup>th</sup> November 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](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Agri-Food & Rural Economy

- **The Agri Food & Rural Business group** met virtually on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> 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. We have just come through an extremely busy time after the announcement of Local Infrastructure Stimulus Fund - another round of Growth Deal funding for shovel ready projects. We submitted 15 projects with a combined value of £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 3/4, 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 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 models

Immediate 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 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020.***

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## Banking & Finance

- **The Banking & Finance Business group** met ‘virtually’ on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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.
  - Highbury 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 & the 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com)*



## Business & Professional Services

- **The Business & Professional Services group** met virtually on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Recovery and Restart plan was published at the end of July with interventions identified to help support the restarting of the Gloucestershire economy. GFirst LEP have secured £11.3 million to help the county recover. The funding is part of central Government's £900million nationwide 'Getting Building Fund'. The 'shovel ready' projects will create 959 jobs, aid recovery and support the green agenda. We have compiled both a Redundancy support pack and a business recovery toolkit covering some essential solutions for businesses re assessing their practices. Our 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign continues through September to encourage individuals and business to think locally for supply chain procurement and staycations. A 'Good news' stories campaign started in September with some really great business stories coming through.
- Growth Hub Activity: over 200 businesses have received support since lockdown. Support in the form of workshops and one to ones has continued virtually, working alongside Local Authorities to ensure our signposting is aligned, accurate and relevant. Gloucester and Cirencester Growth Hubs are open by appointment only. Tewkesbury and Stroud are in the planning stages to open their doors safely in October. Half of the library sites are open by appointment with the remaining half due to open by October.
- This group has been identified in offering support to two of the interventions in the Recovery plan: Digital transformation, and mentoring support. Initial thoughts on how to progress these were discussed:
  - There needs to be a clearer definition of 'digital transformation' as this will mean different things to different businesses. Once this has been identified, specialist expertise can be utilized to see this through, varying from basic to specialist support.
  - Identifying what is happening on a national level in this area is important, to ensure we are aligned with this offering.
  - How do businesses overcome financial barriers to develop their digital platforms? Does this group's advice need to include signposting for this?
  - Mentoring needs to be clearly defined with expected outcomes. It's likely that this won't be the top of businesses' agendas as they come out of recovery.
- The group will meet again before the next meeting, to brainstorm exactly how these interventions can be defined and applied to businesses with a full understanding from them.

*The next Business & Professional Services meeting will take place on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020.*

*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 'virtually' on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> 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 was 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 been launched. 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 1<sup>st</sup> September. Events will be held virtually until at least 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2 metre would reduce the operating capacity of firms by over one quarter on average, or by 15% under 1 metre.
  - 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 businesses 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 themselves 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 central 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 15<sup>th</sup> October.***

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



## Cyber-tech

- **The Cyber-tech Business group** met on 21<sup>st</sup> September via Zoom. Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Recovery and Restart plan was published at the end of July with interventions identified to help support the restarting of the Gloucestershire economy. GFirst LEP have secured £11.3 million to help the county recover. The funding is part of central Government's £900million nationwide 'Getting Building Fund'. The 'shovel ready' projects will create 959 jobs, aid recovery and support the green agenda. We have compiled both a Redundancy support pack and a business recovery toolkit covering some essential solutions for businesses re assessing their practices. Our 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign continues through September to encourage individuals and business to think locally for supply chain procurement and staycations. A 'Good news' stories campaign started in September with some really great business stories coming through.
- Neil Hopwood gave an update on the **Golden Valley development**, home of Cyber Central UK. Gloucestershire has the second largest cluster of cyber companies in the UK after London. The Cyber Leadership Board has been formed. Elements of the scheme will need to be developed in a cohesive way that encompasses all aspects of the park: academic, historic, educational, Garden Village status. Businesses and academia are being approached to feature in a video to promote the opportunities in the cyber sector - due for launch in October.
- Lorrin White, CEO of Bamboo Technology gave a presentation on operational resilience for businesses: the ability of an organisation to absorb and adapt in a changing environment will enable it to deliver its objectives and survive. The decision for a business to be more resilient is often only undertaken as a reaction. With the right marketing and support, businesses of all sizes can have a resilience plan in place and therefore act on it much quicker when needed. This is even more crucial in the current climate and with Brexit.
- Steven Murray from Harrison Clark Rickerbys gave a presentation on the legal perspectives of cyber in context. It is important for businesses to monitor homeworking employees by only allowing access to certain areas of the network as necessary. Remote working – where does a company stand legally if employees are using a less secure VPN on their own PCs? HCR are able to offer advice to companies where employees are working remotely / from home to ensure that legal compliances are met whilst preventing security breaches.
- This group will look at producing a workshop for small businesses in early 2021 covering the basics of doing business safely online, operational resilience, top tips for basic online protection (cyber and legal), myth busting on the 'scary' nature of cyber.

*The next meeting of the Cyber Security Business Group is on **23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020***

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



## Construction and Infrastructure

- **The Construction & Infrastructure Business group** met virtually on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September. Chair, Stephen Limbrick welcomed guests David Oakhill, Rupert Waters and Sandra Ford.
- Karen Campbell gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Recovery and Restart plan was published at the end of July with interventions identified to help support the restarting of the Gloucestershire economy. GFirst LEP have secured £11.3 million to help the county recover. The funding is part of central Government's £900million nationwide 'Getting Building Fund'. The 'shovel ready' projects will create 959 jobs, aid recovery and support the green agenda. We have compiled both a Redundancy support pack and a business recovery toolkit covering some essential solutions for businesses re assessing their practices. Our 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign continues through September to encourage individuals and business to think locally for supply chain procurement and staycations. A 'Good news' stories campaign started in September with some really great business stories coming through.

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- 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. Subjects for urgent consideration are: Section 106 agreement process, and Viability of projects. Rupert Waters (Gloucestershire County Council) has employed contractors to investigate these and other issues causing delays with a plan to go back to Cabinet at the end of 2020 and has requested group members to send in their concerns over delays with applications.
- There is concern over a general 'slowing-down' of business decisions in relation to planning, which is a concern when the county has been tasked with building 3,000 homes a year. There is a determination to come out stronger the other side to keep building and creating jobs.
- Business impact comments included:
  - There is an increasing demand for shared ownership houses. Government has announced support of £12billion to assist in the building of affordable housing to meet demand. Housing marketing in general is buoyant.
  - A number of key strategic allocations within the Joint Core Strategy are being taken forward. There is still a lot of work still to do here.
  - Most offices have a 'necessity only' office working policy, and now that most staff members are set up to work from home, they have been advised to do so, with planners advised not to attend physical meetings, but to re-arrange virtually.
- A draft Statement of Common Ground will be issued to all Local Authorities over the next month.

***The next meeting of the C&I group is 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020.***

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





## Energy

- **The Energy Business group** met virtually on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Simon and Rachel welcome Neil Stovold to the meeting in place of Bethan Winter (Wales & West Utilities).
- Karen Campbell gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Recovery and Restart plan was published at the end of July with interventions identified to help support the restarting of the Gloucestershire economy. GFirst LEP have secured £11.3 million to help the county recover. The funding is part of central Government's £900million nationwide 'Getting Building Fund'. The 'shovel ready' projects will create 959 jobs, aid recovery and support the green agenda. We have compiled both a Redundancy support pack and a business recovery toolkit covering some essential solutions for businesses re assessing their practices. Our 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign continues through September to encourage individuals and business to think locally for supply chain procurement and staycations. A 'Good news' stories campaign started in September with some really great business stories coming through.

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- A smaller task force group met prior to the meeting to discuss progress against the Gloucestershire Energy Strategy. Whilst the work being done in this sector is in line with the strategy, there is greater scope to join up with Local Authorities to deliver outcomes. There are also opportunities to connect with other business group sectors even more, to deliver sector-specific sustainable energy solutions. Members agreed with the two proposed additional objectives for the group, offering a strategic approach to future-proofing projects. (These will soon appear on the Energy business group section on the GFirst LEP website): <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/energy/>
- Members were asked 'round the table' to share with the group business updates. General comments:
  - New developments in the county are now beginning to include strong sustainable energy criteria for zero carbon emissions such as Cyber Central and the Tewkesbury Garden Village developments. With electric being the main source of energy, there is some concern over capacity on the grid, especially with both developments including a high volume of new homes, and around the Berkeley site.
  - A more difficult concern is the retrofitting of renewable energy solutions in the domestic market.
  - EV strategy for the county is in progress. GCC are working with several partners across the county, including developers, to take their report on tree planting to Cabinet in November.
  - University of Gloucestershire are about to update their Carbon Management Plan; there is a lot of demand from students to reach net zero by 2035. Severn Wye are keen to assist in the application of the plan, having previously worked with the Student's Union. The University have a reputation for being one of the most sustainable universities in the country and support from businesses on this group is forthcoming.
  - Bromford Housing are encouraging employees with a car allowance to lease an EV and is working with GCC on EV deployment.
  - Fuel poverty solutions including gas/hydrogen hybrid systems are being piloted.
- **South West Energy Hub** update: deadline for the next round of funding for the Rural Community Energy Fund is December and then March 2021. Up to £40,000 per project is available. A new website has been launched for the Hub: <https://www.swenergyhub.org.uk/> The Green Homes Grant scheme will be launched in phases: phase 1 up to £200m. Phase 2 £300m next April 2021 together with a large scheme around retrofit for vulnerable customers.

**The next meeting will take place on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 via Teams.**

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 virtually on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020. Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Recovery and Restart plan was published at the end of July with interventions identified to help support the restarting of the Gloucestershire economy. GFirst LEP have secured £11.3 million to help the county recover. The funding is part of central Government's £900million nationwide 'Getting Building Fund'. The 'shovel ready' projects will create 959 jobs, aid recovery and support the green agenda. We have compiled both a Redundancy support pack and a business recovery toolkit covering some essential solutions for businesses re assessing their practices. Our 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign continues through September to encourage individuals and business to think locally for supply chain procurement and staycations. A 'Good news' stories campaign started in September with some really great business stories coming through.

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- Members shared their thoughts as business face more changes in light of the pandemic:
  - **Coffee house chain (Chelt, Glos and Nationwide):** Arcade stores are slow to build back up business with 2 stores yet to re-open. Railway station store is trading 30% above forecast and will soon have first store in Bristol airport. Brewery Quarter store doing well.
  - **Cheltenham:** some stores have closed and will not return. A couple of new shops opening within the food & beverage offering. A bigger Christmas market was planned this year which has now been cancelled. Now looking at family attractions and interactive trails to keep up footfall in the town.
  - **Gloucester Quays:** The 'Eat out to help out' scheme saw restaurants have their best trade in months, and some have continued with their own promotions on the back of it, to maintain trade. Four new businesses coming into the Quays, with a high demand for temporary space. Overall sales down 30% year on year. Christmas markets and ice rink cancelled.
  - **Gloucester City:** Larger proportion of people back working from home has hit cafes with a drop in lunchtime trade again. Customer service is hugely important to maintain the consumer confidence. Driving footfall around the city with street art attractions.
  - **Tewkesbury BC:** The council has engaged with local businesses through surveys keeping the two way communication open. The opening of the caravan park has had a positive impact on footfall in the town. Heritage Zone Action Funding has been awarded to the town which will help towards shop front improvements.
  - **Wotton under Edge:** Independent shops with an online presence continue to do well. Five new businesses waiting to open with no vacancies in the town. Landlords have changed terms from 6-12 months instead of 2-5 years.
- There is concern from the 'honeypot areas' that a high footfall is not translating into high spend.
- Maybe\* identified that online interaction dropped off over lockdown and has only just started picking up again. Offering a comms plan and social media assets to Cotswold District Council. Business need to get online and start the conversations to attract footfall towards Christmas, as with attractions such as markets and ice rinks being cancelled, this will have a big impact on sales.

***The date of the next meeting is 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020***

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



## Tourism and Visitor Economy

- **The Tourism & Visitor Economy Business group** met virtually on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Chair Steve Collins welcomed Alex Cottrell, Growth Hub Manager to give an update on the Tourism grant funding applications.
- Elizabeth Weaver gave an update on the activities of the LEP over the last month: our Recovery and Restart plan was published at the end of July with interventions identified to help support the restarting of the Gloucestershire economy. GFirst LEP have secured £11.3 million to help the county recover. The funding is part of central Government's £900million nationwide 'Getting Building Fund'. The 'shovel ready' projects will create 959 jobs, aid recovery and support the green agenda. We have compiled both a Redundancy support pack and a business recovery toolkit covering some essential solutions for businesses re assessing their practices. Our 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign continues through September to encourage individuals and business to think locally for supply chain procurement and staycations. A 'Good news' stories campaign started in September with some really great business stories coming through.

Gloucester and Cirencester Growth Hubs are open by appointment only. Tewkesbury and Stroud are in the planning stages to open their doors safely in October. Half of the library sites are open by appointment with the remaining half due to open by October.

- Alex Cottrell Growth Hub Manager gave an update on the Tourism grant funding process. Grant application opened on 28<sup>th</sup> September, with over 200 applications within 1 hour. Taking into consideration the total amount of funding available (£210,000) and the value of grants being between £1,000 and £3,000, 39 applications that met the criteria are currently being considered: 3 from Cheltenham, 12 from Cotswold, 6 from Forest of Dean, 2 from Gloucester and 8 each from Stroud and Tewkesbury. The majority were applying for tech solutions or support for improved use of outdoor space. With such a high volume of applications compared with the amount to be allocated, only 20% of those applying are likely to be successful; with this in mind, it is the Growth Hub's priority to get in touch with those that have not been successful to offer up alternative support. This group's advice regarding eligibility criteria will certainly come into play.
- Representatives of DMOs and market towns were asked for their business updates:
  - **Hospitality:** Hotels were generally fully booked up until October and then these drop off drastically. The Staycation campaign is picking up pace with a second meeting scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> October – keen to start putting plans into action before the end of the year.
  - **Cheltenham:** Strong summer and a good September but Oct – Dec is not looking positive for group/corporate bookings. A new enquiry management system for 'meet Cheltenham' is planned for launch in October. The impact of cancelling physical shows and events has had a drastic knock-on effect on footfall to other parts of town. A 'Great Taste of Cheltenham' campaign is just about to be launched.
  - **Cotswold:** Working with Adam Henson (Cotswold Farm Park) to encourage Oct-Dec visits to the area aiming at local market. Starting a marketing campaign to promote a less well-known town to visit each month, to try and take some pressure off the honeypot areas. The 'what's new for 2021' campaign hasn't gained much traction due to customer uncertainty.
  - **Forest of Dean:** A new website is to be launched in October. This will coincide with the 'autumn colours' and 'escape the everyday' campaigns to drive visitors to the area over winter. Are putting in a bid for Discover England Emergency funding.
  - **Stroud:** 'SiverFestival' encourages local people to shop in the town and spend £5 each in an independent shop – a campaign backed by Stroud Chamber. An increase in last minute overnight bookings, especially from people looking to buy property in Stroud and staying to explore the area.
  - **University of Gloucestershire:** An increase in Indian students arriving. They continue with a blended learning approach and have launched a new module: Special Interests Tourism which is gaining popularity. The University are preparing for a second lockdown but are also preparing field trips.
- Gloucestershire County Council and partners have been successful in achieving funding from Discover England for their Connections project: repurposing US content for the domestic market over the next 6 months.

**The date of next meeting is 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 via Zoom**

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