



## GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership

Board Paper – 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

<p><b>Agenda Item 6</b></p>	<p><b>A report on the activities and findings of the Growth Hub’s EU Exit outreach project within Gloucestershire.</b></p>
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<p><b>Supporting Papers</b></p>	<p>Presentation at Board meeting – to highlight key findings</p>
<p><b>Confidentiality</b></p>	
<p><b>Purpose</b></p>	<p>1) To provide an overview of the EU Exit outreach project</p>
<p><b>Summary</b></p>	<p>This paper is written to provide an overview of the EU Exit outreach project launched in December 2020. The project was launched at speed at the request of BEIS and in response to concerns that businesses in the UK were not prepared for the end of the transition period. Although local outreach targets were not applied, we set ourselves an ambitious local target to reach 1,500 Gloucestershire businesses before the end of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. GFirst LEP are managing and delivering this project in support of the Growth Hub.</p> <p><b><u>Background:</u></b></p> <p>The forthcoming end of the EU Transition Period required a ramping up at pace of Growth Hub activity through the deployment of additional targeted resources within each English region to make businesses aware of what they need to do for EU Transition, and to improve business resilience for the end of the EU Transition Period (and the immediate period afterwards) to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.</p> <p>This included: an element of proactive outreach to business to both raise awareness and drive them to the right sources of advice and guidance, with an ambition to <u>reach at least 145,000 businesses</u> in England through proactive outreach by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.</p> <p>The project needs to respond to the needs of businesses approaching the Growth Hub through any channel; to ensure that key developments are communicated quickly and simply to those who need it; and ensure that Government has access to rich information on economic impacts and business needs and concerns relating to EU Transition.</p>

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	<p>In addition, the project is required to provide specialist and more intensive support where needed, including via events and workshops; provide a local intelligence, analysis and monitoring function; and to provide a coordination function for regional and local activity – for Gloucestershire this involves supporting EU Exit work with Swindon &amp; Wiltshire and West of England Growth Hubs (the Cluster).</p>
<p><b>Project delivery and impact</b></p>	<p>Gloucestershire was one of the first areas to start project delivery with the engagement of a project manager on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Engagement of 3 FTE advisory followed, with the team in place by 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Telemarketing support with the aim to survey 1,000 businesses started on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020.</p> <p>A dedicated marketing resource has been in place to promote this new service, build website content and also lead on the work of region wide events. An administrator role is in place to support the project outreach activity and weekly reporting.</p> <p>The team were on call over the Christmas period as we anticipated a rise in the number of incoming calls following an e-shot introducing the team. As it happens, there were only 15 in-bound calls, but this period enabled the team to get to grips with the 300 page ‘script’ for advisors from BEIS and also respond to the 90 plus requests for further support that the telemarketing campaign had already generated.</p> <p>The telemarketing campaign continued throughout January resulting in a total of 13,612 outbound calls, 890 completed surveys and 336 referrals. In conjunction with responding to these referrals the team started work on out-bound cold calls to the GFirst LEP database of businesses.</p> <p>To date (12/02/2021) the team has delivered 2,179 successful outbound emails and telephone interactions.</p> <p>A report of project activity and business preparedness, issues/challenges and opportunities is reported to the BEIS intelligence team weekly. A Cluster level report is collated by GFirst LEP and shared with the BEIS Growth Hub team and a local report is also shared weekly with the county’s All Hazards Local Response Forum.</p> <p>Additional activity -</p> <p>A series of webinars has been developed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules of Origin</li> <li>- VAT</li> <li>- Beyond goods: how the services industry is affected</li> <li>- Beyond the EU: alternative and emerging markets</li> </ul>

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	<p>A series of podcasts has been launched, the first with Randall and Payne, the second with Renishaw and the third with BPE Solicitors, two more will follow.</p> <p>Where it is identified that a solution to business specific issues can be resolved with some bespoke professional advice. The EU Exit team are working with Hazlewoods and HCR to help a small number of business access additional funded support.</p> <p>In addition to the above, the team are supporting MBA students studying International Business at the University of Gloucestershire. The students are unable to participate in their international placements this year. Students are reviewing all EU Exit guidance and then focusing on specific sectors and responding to real life scenarios provided by the advisors weekly. Students can send their responses to the advisors who will provide support and feedback if requested.</p>
<p><b>Business issues</b></p>	<p>Key areas of concern;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VAT</li> <li>• Rules of origin</li> <li>• Increased costs for shipping and significant delays</li> <li>• Goods stuck at the border</li> <li>• Commodity codes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project Risks</b></p>	<p>There is currently no indication of extending funding for this project beyond the end of March 2021. This will present LEPs and Growth Hubs with a concerning resource challenge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The phased plans for EU Exit mean that businesses are likely to require ongoing support until at least the end of 2021.</li> <li>• The project has identified that many businesses are still waiting to see what happens, and inbound enquiries, though increasing, are still a very small percentage of the business engagement activity being undertaken. Proactive outreach activity appears to be the most effective way of building business readiness.</li> <li>• Existing capacity within Growth Hubs continues to be stretched by the ongoing response and recovery activity due to the Covid-19 pandemic and advisors have not had time to upskill with regards to EU Exit advice.</li> <li>• EU Exit enquiries tend to be complex and require multiple advisor interaction.</li> </ul> <p>GFirst LEP has highlighted these risks to BEIS, along with many other areas.</p>

For further information points raised in this Board paper, please contact Sarah Danson  
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