

GFirst LEP Business Group Update – January 2018



Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing

- The Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Business Group held a lively informative meeting on 22 January. A wide ranging number of issues were covered including apprenticeships, replacement of an ageing workforce, stronger links between schools and businesses, development areas, inward investment and support for businesses within the sector.
- Useful links were provided for the following websites: <https://festomane.co.uk/> is currently advertising countywide apprenticeships for free. 2018 is the Year of Engineering and in a couple of months a website will be launched at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2018-will-be-the-year-of-engineering>. Information about the new T levels is contained at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-announces-first-new-t-levels>

The date of the next AEM meeting will be 5th March 2018. For questions about the group, please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Agri Food & Rural Business

- To engender a spirit of closer cooperation, communications and remove any perceived barriers, the Chairwoman, Jo Price, Vice Chancellor, RAU invited representatives from 2 other Business Groups to speak to this group about their experiences and current offer at the meeting on 26 January
- Stephen Limbrick, Chairman of the Construction and Infrastructure [C&I] Group provided a detailed and fascinating update on the group's history, achievements and progress to date. He emphasised his focus was to avoid the group becoming just a talking shop and to grasp the opportunity to really make a difference. The C&I group believe that there are real opportunities for economic growth in Gloucestershire and that they had a key role to play in this goal through the LEP.

- Jonathan Powell from the Banking and Finance Group also gave an overview of what the LEP Banking and Finance Business Group were up to. He explained that the members were not only from Banks but also businesses that offered a variety of different sources of funding, including banks, equity, peer to peer, crowdfunding, grant funding, etc and business advice. The group holds clinics on a regular basis (details available on the GFirst LEP website) where start-ups and established business can come to receive free business and financial advice about any funding issues they are having. They have particular expertise in Agribusiness and small rural businesses are currently struggling to obtain funding.

A small sub group is working on creating a strategy for the group following the feedback provided at the workshop held on 24 October.

- *The date of the next meeting is Friday 16th March 2018 at Hartpury College. For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com*



- At their last meeting the group looked at possible future activities for the group in the wider Access to Finance field, including guest speakers, and how they can use this to support the local economy.
- It was agreed to set up a sub group to explore the possibility of obtaining a fund to be run by the group similar to that offered by Finance Birmingham. www.financebirmingham.com owned by Birmingham City Council.
- It was also agreed that the group will run their annual charity quiz on a date to be determined in March or April 2018. The nominated charity is Milestone School in Longlevens.
- The meeting was preceded by another Banking and Finance clinic which provided advice to 3 separate businesses. Once again these were extremely successful and the feedback received was very positive.
- Another **free** Banking and Finance Clinic will be held on **Tuesday 20 February at the Growth Hub**. In a 30 minute, one-to-one session, the panel will be able to offer advice on a variety of funding issues to help businesses grow. Further information, including an application form for a **free** session, can be found at [HERE](#)

The next Banking and Finance meeting is at the Growth Hub on Tuesday 20th February 2018. For questions about the group please contact Mike Curran: mike.curran@gfirstlep.com.



Business & Professional Services

- At their meeting on 24 January the group was provided with a very interesting update on the Cheltenham Cyber Park project by the project manager, Jeremy Williamson. Funding of £22m is being provided toward the initial infrastructure costs by GFirst LEP through Growth Deal 3. He highlighted potential issues including a possible 18 traffic modelling scenarios alone. The aim is however to get first site occupation by early 2021.
- Geraldine McCullagh also gave an interesting presentation on Gloucestershire's Accelerated Impact Network Support [GAINS]. As part of this package SME's in the county can access 40% of the cost of 4 days of high quality business performance coaching. Further information is available at <https://spcgrowth.com/blog/gloucestershire-gains>.
- Further information was also supplied on 2 more business support packages provided by the University of Gloucestershire. They are: Gloucestershire Research and Innovation Project [GRIP]. This enables to access a package of services that are designed to enable them to accelerate their innovation plans including access to 3D software and printers. The Start and Grow Enterprise [SAGE]. This package is aimed at innovative entrepreneurs and startups in the county. It offers a range of free events, workshops, reviews, and resources, helping to turn ideas into reality and grow successful enterprises. For further information on either of these please see <http://www.glos.ac.uk/for-business/pages/do-business-on-campus.aspx>.

The next meeting will take place at the Growth Hub on Wednesday 21st March 2018. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran mike.curran@gfirstlep.com or Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Construction & Infrastructure

- At their meeting on 29 November the group was provided with 3 separate interesting presentations by representatives of the Highways Authority, Highways England and the Destination Cheltenham Project.
- A sub group had met on 9 November with representatives of the Senior Officers Group [SOG] to discuss the “*Consideration of Barriers to Development*” approved by the LEP Board. It was an extremely positive meeting. They had jointly agreed to focus initially on Performance Planning Agreements [PPAs] and Pre Applications. The next meeting of this joint *Barriers* group is on 5 February.
- There was some concern that the Gloucestershire Development Investment Forum [see [HERE](#)] initiated by the County Council via Middlemarch Communications, may duplicate the work the C&I group was doing following their *Barriers* Paper. Cllr Nigel Moor, who had attended the first GDIF meeting was confident there would be absolutely no conflict or overlap.
- On a general discussion on the impact of Brexit on the sector the general consensus was that businesses were just getting on with it, although the London market was experiencing a slowdown. The help to buy scheme had been a great help but concerns were expressed about its continued viability.
- Rob Weaver from Tewkesbury BC has spoken to, and will represent, the Districts on the C&I group in the future. The county council already has representation on the group.

The next meeting is at Roberts Limbrick on 14th February 2018. For questions about the group please contact Mike Curran: mike.curran@gfirstlep.com



Creative

- It was discussed and agreed at their last meeting that the Creative Group takes a step back and take a more county-wide vision in terms of strategic intent and activity and be inclusive of the whole cultural scene and not focus on the already well established activity alone. Work has commenced on putting together a county wide database of creative and culture within the county.
- We are working on engagements to increase the membership of the Group from the entire cultural sub-sectors across Gloucestershire with the ambition of re-energizing the Creative Business Group with plans for a future summit to be hosted by the LEP.
- The Group is keen to work closely to enhance the strength, richness and diversity of the county's cultural heritage and offerings and is looking to embed activity with other sector groups to widen its reach to enliven the cultural economy and its impact on Gloucestershire.

The date of the next meeting is yet to be scheduled. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran mike.curran@gfirstlep.com or Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Energy

- A meeting was held at SGS Berkeley GREEN on 9th January.
- Mike Unsworth from Tidal Lagoon gave a very interesting presentation on tidal technology based on harnessing the power of tides. They are currently waiting for positive Government action following the publication of the Hendry report on 12 January 2017 to enable development of the Swansea Bay project. This would be followed by development of Cardiff tidal lagoon to maximise the benefit from second highest tidal range in the world.
- Funding has been received from BEIS to procure an Energy Strategy from externals based on the proposal put together by the sub group led by Pete Wiggins. Steps will be taken shortly to put the procurement exercise on www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk. using the Glos County Council protocols.
- BEIS have allocated £2.7 nationally from their Capacity support fund to fund the creation of 5 Local Regional Energy Hubs across the country. Gloucestershire are in the SW Region along with 6 other LEPs: Swindon & Wilts, Solent, Heart of SW, Dorset, Cornwall/Isles of Scilly and West of England. The West of England Combined Authority [WECA] and LEP will host the Hub and 4 staff in Bristol. Details of the key objectives and tasks are being worked on.

The next meeting is on 27th February 2018 at Ecotricity, Stroud. For questions about the group please contact either Mike Curran mike.curran@gfirstlep.com or Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com



Retail, Tourism & The High Street

- At their last meeting a round table discussion on the sector identified the different challenges from each of the Districts covering areas such as rents, transport and recruitment. The latter is a particular problem given pay rates and the fact that the county has the 2nd highest employment rate in the country.
- There was exciting news about the location of UK Digital Retail Innovation Centre. It has finally been agreed that this will be in the top floor of the Eastgate Shopping Centre. Capital funding of £400k is available to provide advice, training and incubation space for both new retailers and for established retailers wishing to develop new products and ways of working. Further information including the tender process for the structural improvements will be made shortly.
- The Group continues to focus on retail as a serious career. The work that the Group members have been doing in their own areas and as project collaborations is very positive and many synergies were detected and several initiatives need to be morphed to align activity and objectives for a stronger cohesive approach and effect, which will also avoid duplication of effort.
- In November 2017, employees from Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire District Councils, transferred into Publica although they continue to provide services for local residents. The Councils will continue to be responsible for the standard of services that are provided as well as setting strategy, policy and making decisions

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 21st February 2018 – Gloucestershire College, Cheltenham Campus, Princess Elizabeth Way, Cheltenham. For questions about the group please contact Karen Campbell karen.campbell@gfirstlep.com

