

Local Enterprise Partnerships: A Beginner's Guide.

Our eBulletins will lead on [news](#) - but sometimes it's good to be reminded of the basics. Here's a brief explanation of what an LEP is and what they do.

The Government's ambition is to create a more balanced economy - driven by private sector growth and balanced across the country and between industries. It regards Local Enterprise Partnerships, (LEPs) as central to this.

LEPs effectively replace Regional Development Agencies, which are seen as too big and inflexible.

Local?

38 LEPS have been set up around England. Gloucestershire (and this was by no means automatic) has been recognised in its own right.

Enterprise?

LEPs are all about business, creating growth and developing or protecting jobs. The drive comes from the private sector, the opportunity comes from local authority support and a hotline to central Government.

Partnership?

'Partnership' is an overused word, but in fact LEPs are simply that: partnerships. The basic idea is to more effectively bring together businesses with the local agencies that exist to support them. In Gloucestershire this has been done by creating a board of volunteer local businesspeople, under the Chairmanship of Diane Savory (ex Supergroup). Day-to-day support to ensure action comes from GFirst, which in turn is supported by Gloucestershire County Council.

What do LEPs actually do?

Invest. Lobby. Unite

The Gloucestershire LEP partners bring different things to the table: The County Council invests in the economy by backing GFirst, which is the executive and is involved in other projects too - it chases capital or project funding and has a direct role in the tourism economy and inward investment. Another example is rural broadband, where GFirst was an early winner of cash to ensure higher broadband speeds in Gloucestershire.

What takes the LEP to a higher level, however, is the continued, direct involvement of businesses, this is what Government wants to see and, as they route money through the newly formed LEPs, so the LEPs will develop ever sharper teeth. The Gloucestershire LEP's *Construction and Infrastructure* sector group, for example, is now looking at what infrastructure changes would best serve Gloucestershire's economy, with a £5.6m bid against the Government's 'Growing Places' fund.

The ambition for LEPs is high. To find out more about the Government's perspective on LEPs visit: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/economic-development/leps>

If you have questions about the Gloucestershire LEP or how to get involved, please email us on info@glosfirst.co.uk