



# gfirst<sup>®</sup> LEP

growing gloucestershire

## DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023



## GFIRST LEP

### 1. INTRODUCTION

GFirst LEP is a successful LEP, delivering for the Gloucestershire economy, operating in an open and transparent manner and maintaining an ambitious, entrepreneurial approach to all opportunities.

Our core activity to date has been focused on delivery of the **Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)** for Gloucestershire (first published in 2014 and refreshed in 2018) and the priorities set out in the draft **Local Industrial Strategy (LIS)** issued in 2019. Following the outcome of the LEP Review in early 2022 and the updated guidance for LEPs under the “Levelling Up” agenda, we are content that our draft LIS still provides the appropriate strategic focus and broadly that our priorities will not change substantially. We do anticipate however that over the next 12/18 months we will refresh the LIS into the required format as directed by HMGov/DLUHC.

Our current SEP and (draft) LIS can be found here.

[www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/our-vision/strategic-economic-plan](http://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/our-vision/strategic-economic-plan)

[www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gloucestershire\\_draft\\_local-industrial-strategy\\_2019.pdf](http://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gloucestershire_draft_local-industrial-strategy_2019.pdf)

Delivery year 2021-22 brought a welcome return to a degree of normality post the worst impacts of the Covid pandemic. Most businesses and particularly the hospitality sector have started to bounce back and confidence was returning in respect of investment. Locally for example, Cheltenham Borough Council announced the appointment of a development partner for the c£1billion **Golden Valley Development** in August 2021, a massive vote of confidence in the scheme and in Gloucestershire as an investment location. Our Delivery Plan for 2022-23 will look to build on these foundations by seeking to take advantage of some of the shifts in work patterns that have become embedded ‘post covid’. 2022-23 will see the final completion of all Local Growth Fund (LGF) programme projects, with just the **Gloucester Railway station** scheme still in delivery at time of writing. It will also see the completion and opening of the **Minster Exchange** project in Cheltenham, the last of the five Getting Building Fund (GBF) projects to complete. GFirst LEP was successful in 2021-22 of completing on the full £11.3million of GBF programme funds, with both **The Gloucestershire College Cyber Incubation Hub** and the **AccXel Construction Skills Centre**, both open and fully operational in 2021-22.

2021-22 also saw the launch of the **Gloucestershire Skills Strategy** and **Employment Charter**, with a pilot scheme up and running with six schools, one FE college and ten employers.

**From design to reality:**



**AccXel Construction Skills Centre - Architect Plan**



**AccXel Construction Skills Centre - Opening December 2021**

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the LEP Review, there is an element of “business as usual” for GFirst LEP for the coming year, albeit with some additional activities that have arisen as a consequence of the review, the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP) and the wider economic circumstances, including significant global supply chain pressures, energy cost increases and the on-going conflict in Ukraine. A brief summary of the key planned activities is as follows:

- Complete the delivery of the five new Getting Building Fund schemes and the remaining Local Growth Fund funded schemes and see them start delivering their operational outputs and outcomes.
- Continue to deliver the **Gloucestershire Growth Hub network** and the core Growth Hub service and develop a plan for sustainability beyond March 2023, specifically working with the six district/borough councils in Gloucestershire to secure UKSPF funds to support future Growth Hub provision post March 2023.
- To continue to improve our governance and transparency, to increase the diversity of the **LEP Board** as opportunities arise (current board members Neill Ricketts and Russell Marchant will be stepping down in June 2022) and seek to lead by example in the adoption of best practice in respect of Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI).
- To continue to engage with the Private sector and the Education sector to ensure the **voice of business** is heard at government level and on a sectoral basis and that skills and education are developed to maximise opportunities for individuals and meet the needs of business. Key to this will be the roll-out of the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy and Employment Charter, subject to support from UKSPF funds.
- To provide a facilitation and ‘brokering’ service to the local authorities to ensure we collectively develop and promote a viable **pipeline of future investment projects** that will support the drive for truly inclusive green growth, deliver improved productivity and both protect and (where possible) enhance our world class natural capital in Gloucestershire.
- Working with key partners to develop local/regional plans in partnership with business for the journey to **Net Zero**.
- To maintain the **Inward Investment team** to actively promote the inward investment opportunities in Gloucestershire, with the launch and promotion of the Cyber, Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing (AEM) and Agri-Tech propositions for the county where we have world class assets and innovation potential.
- To support the County Council and six District authorities in preparation for a **Devolution Deal** for Gloucestershire.

Key Deliverables for 2022-23 will be:

- Securing commitment of UKSPF funds to support the on-going delivery of The Growth Hub service, The Employment Charter and the Inward Investment project for the next 3 years.
- Roll out of the Employment Charter
- An updated business plan for the Growth Hub operations
- Launch of the Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing Proposition for Gloucestershire and successful landing of new inward investment companies

- Completion and opening of the Minster Exchange in Cheltenham
- Completion of the Gloucester Rail Station Improvements and closure of the LGF programme (notwithstanding the ongoing monitoring requirements)
- Successfully launch a 'Made in Gloucestershire' initiative celebrating the quality and quantity of food and drink producers in the county

In respect of Governance and Board activity, 2021-22 was a year of significant change for GFirst LEP, with a new Chair, Deputy Chair and four new Board members. The new board members have brought a new energy and enthusiasm to the board and post a board "away day" held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022, it was clear that there was a renewed commitment to the LEP and the benefits we can bring to the Gloucestershire economy post the LEP Review.

It was also clear that the Board feel that the LEP is still the preferred mechanism by which businesses in Gloucestershire can both communicate with and influence government.



*Some of the GFirst LEP Board Members - October 2021*

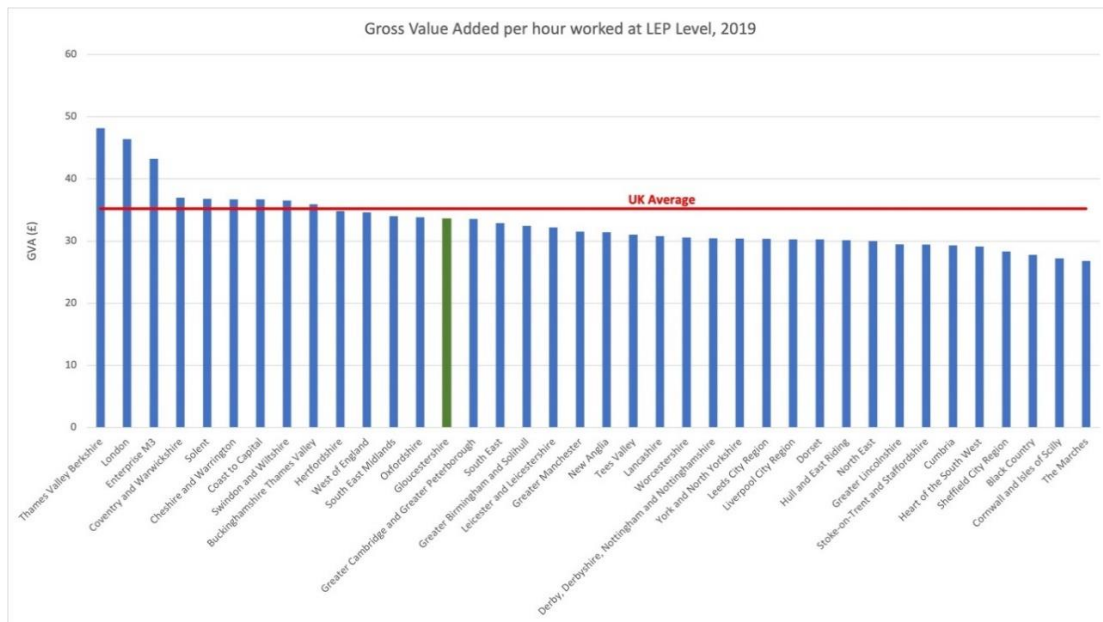
### **Productivity and employment growth**

Since the launch of our SEP in 2014, GFirst LEP has continuously focused on investments and activities that support business growth, innovation and productivity. Gloucestershire is still just below the UK average in terms

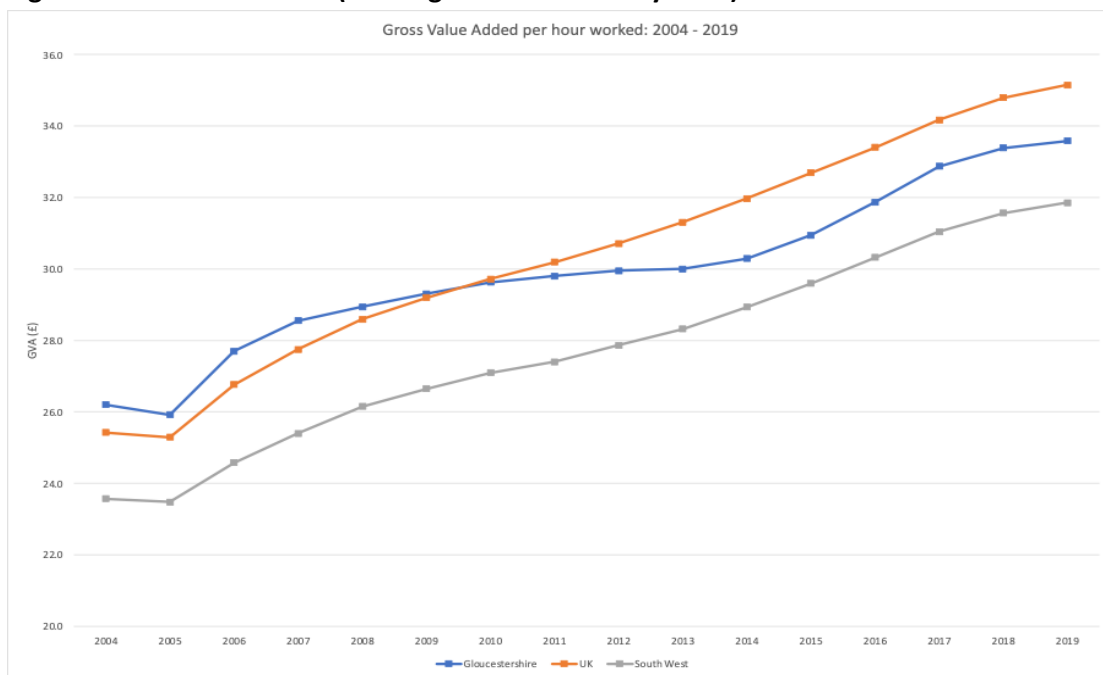
of productivity but punches above its weight relatively and based on the most recent LEP level figures (2019) sits 14th in the rankings.

Gloucestershire has also experienced good growth in productivity over the same period having been ‘flatlining’ previously and seeing a relative decline vs the UK average. Productivity will be a key focus from 2022 onwards as a response to increasing demographic and recruitment challenges.

**Fig. 1 LEP level productivity rankings (2020 figures available July 2022)**



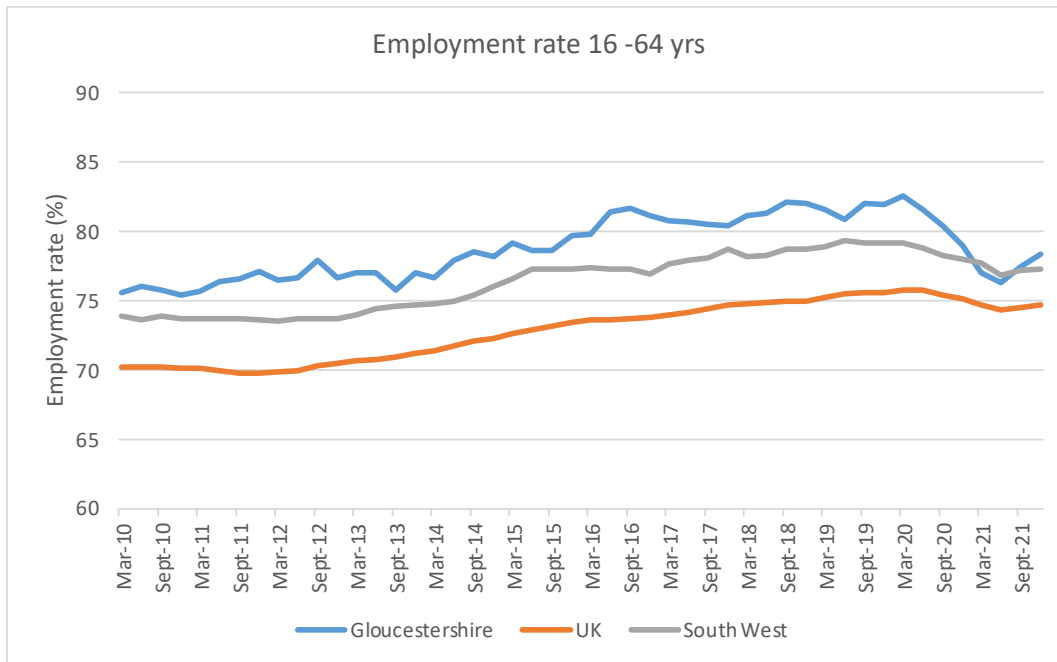
**Fig 2. Gloucestershire GVA (2020 figures available July 2022)**



Gloucestershire employment growth has also been strong over the period, with an employment rate that has remained mostly above that of the UK and South West region and the Gloucestershire rate peaking in March 2020 to 82.6%. The rate started to go down in March 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and by March 2021 the Gloucestershire rate was 77.0% and briefly below the regional South West figure of 77.7%, picking up again in September 2021 to 77.5%. Latest figures show the rate was 78.4% in December 2021.

**Fig.3 Employment Rate**

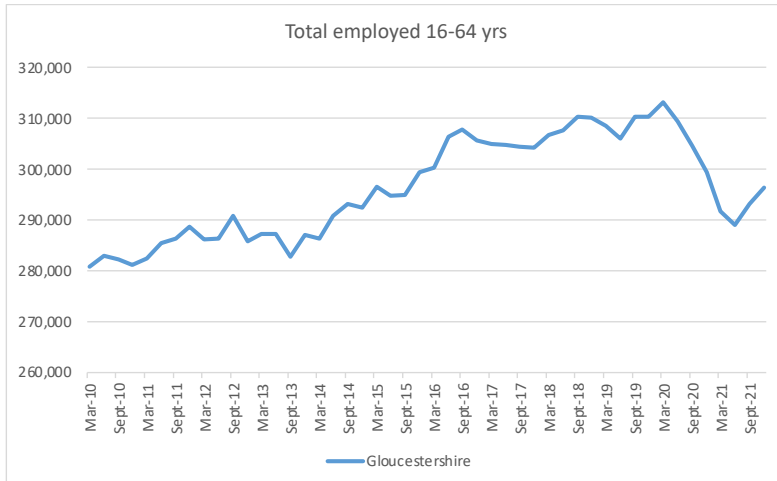
Source: ONS annual population survey



Similarly, when looking at total people employed, Gloucestershire saw consistent growth up until March 2020, which dropped as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This figure peaked in March 2020 to 313,100 people employed (aged 16-64) before falling to a low of 289,000 in June 2021 and recovering to 296,300 by December 2021.

**Fig.4 Total Jobs Growth**

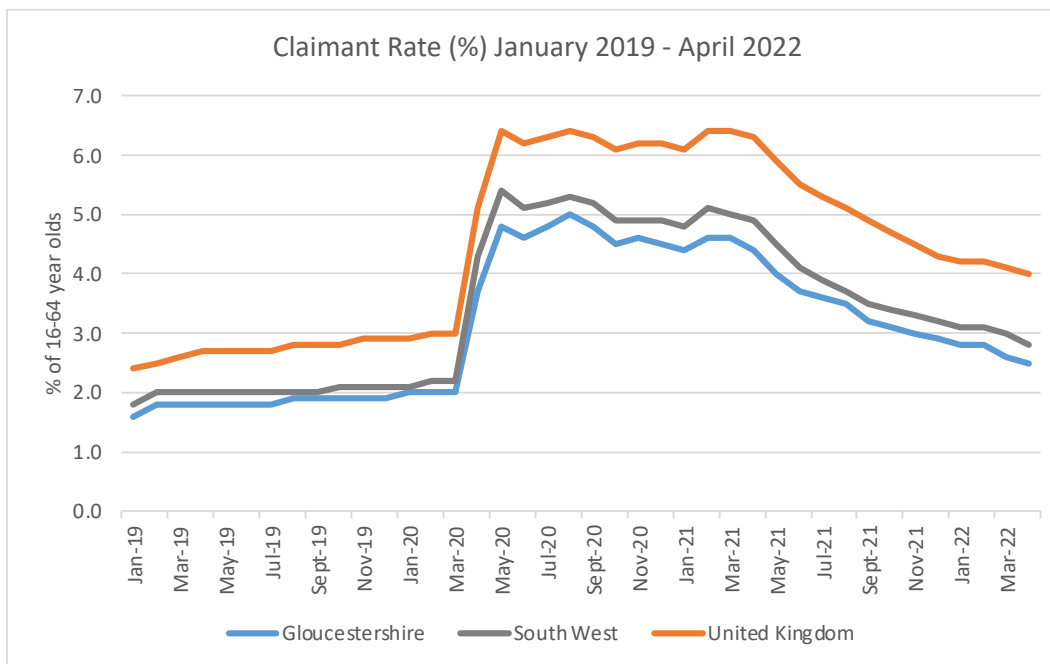
Source: ONS annual population survey



A very positive aspect of the Gloucestershire economy over the period of the Covid restrictions was that our unemployment rate tracked below both regional and national figures and yet recovered at a similar rate, suggesting excellent resilience.

**Fig.5 Claimant Count**

Source: ONS Claimant Count



The Claimant Count is a measure of the number of people who are unemployed and claiming benefits, and the rate is expressed as a proportion of residents aged 16-64 claiming.

The graph shows that throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Gloucestershire rate has stayed below that on the UK and South West region.



Prior to the pandemic in February 2020, the Gloucestershire rate was 2.0% with 7,895 people claiming, peaking in August 2020 to 5.0% and 19,155 people claiming. The most recent April 2022 figure puts the Gloucestershire rate at 2.5% with 9,510 persons claiming while the South West figure was 2.8%, England was 4.0% and the UK figure was also 4.0%.

### **Getting Building Fund Programme**

The GBF programme has been a very successful programme for GFirst LEP. In particular we have demonstrated that the projects funded were genuinely “shovel ready” with two being completed in 2021, a further two achieving practical completion in Q1 2022 and only the Minster Exchange (MEx) still in construction - albeit all of the GBF funds having been claimed and validated and the on-going work being funded by Cheltenham Borough Council. The entire £11.3million fund was out-turned (based on validated claims) by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

The Hartpury Digital Accelerator will be in full operation in June 2022, the Digital Skills Centre (Cirencester College) had its official opening day on 27<sup>th</sup> May and the MEx is planned to open in September. The delay to the MEx is mainly as a result of technical challenges on site and supply chain issues. Despite this, good progress has been made on site recently as the photos below show.



***Opening of Gloucestershire's Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College***



***Gloucestershire's Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College***



***Minster Exchange design and development - View from St Mary's church grounds and the view of the mounting pads for the performance space***



**AccXel – Construction Skills Centre, Cinderford - For more details see: [www.accxel.co.uk](http://www.accxel.co.uk)**



*Hartpury Digital Farm Accelerator units (5 in total)*

## Local Growth Programme

With the exception of the Gloucester Rail Station project 2021-22 has seen the completion of all of the outstanding construction work on LGF projects.

Up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, the LGF programme has achieved the following key outputs;

- 535 homes
- 2,590 jobs
- £205 million in leverage
- 3,094 businesses supported by The Growth Hub
- 18,126 m<sup>2</sup> of new commercial space
- 23,418 m<sup>2</sup> of new skills/education space

This is only a proportion of the totals that will be achieved once the programme matures fully, particularly The Golden Valley Development which has been ‘unlocked’ by the £23.6million investment in transport infrastructure in West Cheltenham along the A40 corridor and at M5 Junction 11.

As a consequence of delays to 'follow-on' development due to planning timescales (eg the Golden Valley scheme), the Covid pandemic and on-going supply chain capacity issues, a significant proportion of the jobs and housing output for the LGF programme will take several years to achieve the forecast totals. For example, the Golden Valley development will deliver c11,000 new jobs and c3000 new homes, but is likely to take around 10 years based on the current rate of delivery.

On completion of all of the schemes funded, we now expect to achieve final totals of **3,115 new homes**, in excess of **16,000 jobs**, **over 100,000m<sup>2</sup>** of commercial space and **c£450 million** of leverage (based on only the first phase of £50 million allocated to The Golden Valley scheme).



*The Golden Valley Development design*

### 3. DELIVERY PLAN 2022-23

This Delivery Plan sets out what GFirst LEP intends to deliver in the coming financial year.

Our absolute focus for 2022-23 will be to continue to support the post Covid-19 recovery (with the added challenges of severe economic headwinds) and to implement the requirements of the LEP Review and the Levelling Up agenda. For GFirst LEP that means completion of the five Getting Build Fund projects alongside the remaining Local Growth Fund project and a focus on three priority areas that will support recovery and growth in the coming years, specifically: -

- The Growth Hub service and network
- Inward Investment
- Roll out of the Employment Charter

Ironically for Gloucestershire, the post Covid-19 working patterns that are likely to become a permanent feature of the economy, ie a hybrid home/office working pattern, are likely to benefit Gloucestershire based on its potential to deliver an exceptional work/life balance in the post Covid-19 'normal'. The start of development on The Golden Valley scheme, un-locked by the £23.6million LGF investment in local transport infrastructure and the start of construction of The Forum in Gloucester, unlocked by the £6.4million LGF investment in the Gloucester Transport Hub means Gloucestershire is ideally placed for our digital future.

We will continue to make the case for LEPs to central government and local authority partners as the best option to engage with the business community and to determine economic growth investment priorities, particularly those related to business support, skills and innovation. We will also continue to make the case that LEPs can provide an effective 'bridge' between employers and the education sector in respect of matching the skills and education being provided to learners and the needs and priorities of business.

A breakdown of the delivery plans for 2022-23 for our key activity areas is detailed below, with reference to the 2021-22 delivery plan and progress made where relevant.

#### 3.1 Governance and the LEP Board

The governance of the LEP met all criteria in our 2021-22 **Annual Performance Review**, and continues to ensure that the LEP operates in a transparent and compliant manner. There is independent scrutiny by GEGJC (Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee) **Scrutiny Committee** on a regular basis to provide democratic scrutiny of LEP decision making. This committee has recently undergone a review in its own right, and is now more effective in this role than previously. Our Articles of Association and our refreshed Assurance Framework (August 2021) provides full details, and are published on our website:

[www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2020/articles-of-association-2020.pdf](http://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2020/articles-of-association-2020.pdf)

[www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2021/assurance-framework---v9-august-2021.pdf](http://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2021/assurance-framework---v9-august-2021.pdf)

[www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2021/annex-c--bodies-in-af-v6-aug-2021.pdf](http://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2021/annex-c--bodies-in-af-v6-aug-2021.pdf)

In 2021, the LEP appointed a new chair and deputy chair, Ruth Dooley and Ian Mean respectively and now have nominated board members for specific focus areas, ie

- **Equality and Diversity** – Deborah Potts - the Equality and Diversity Champion will lead on the development of a more diverse board and to embed processes with our board and operational activities that consider diversity at their heart.
- **Risk** – Ruth Dooley (Chair) - the Risk Champion will lead on the liaison between the Board and Staff regarding risks at organisation and programme level, to ensure that all risks are noted and well understood. They will provide advice and guidance to both, to ensure robust and effective risk management.
- **SME champion** – Nicola Bird – will champion the critical role that SMEs play in the Gloucestershire Economy.
- **Employment and Skills** – Jim Grant (Principal, Cirencester College) will lead on the skills agenda for the board.
- **Net Zero** – Emma Hanby (Campden BRI) will champion the approach to Net Zero.
- **Growth Hubs** – Jenny Raymond will champion the strategic management (in conjunction with the Director of Strategic Growth) for The Growth Hub network.
- **Young people** – Tyler Attwood will lead on ensuring the voice of young people is represented, particularly in relation to the County’s 2050 Vision and the desire to make Gloucestershire a ‘magnet’ county for young people and to reverse the outward flow of young people that has been a consistent theme in recent years.

In addition, board members will also engage more actively in Business Sector Groups and Growth Hubs, by way of ‘sponsorship’ of those activities as follows: -

Board member	Growth Hub ‘sponsored’	Sector Group ‘sponsored’
Ruth Dooley (Chair)	Tewkesbury	Energy
Tyler Attwood	Gloucester	Retail/High Street
Nicola Bird	Forest of Dean	Construction & Infrastructure
Matt Charman	Cheltenham	Cyber Tech
Emma Hanby	Tewkesbury	Agri-Food & Rural
Ian Mean	Cheltenham	Business Membership
Jenny Raymond	Overview	Business & Professional
Neill Ricketts	Libraries	Advanced Engineering & Manf
Joe Roberts	Cheltenham	Banking & Finance
Deborah Potts	Stroud	Tourism & Visitor Economy
Doina Cornell	Stroud	
Mark Hawthorne	Gloucester	
Jim Grant	Cirencester	
Russell Marchant	Forest of Dean	
Richard Cook (LA Observer)	Libraries	



### 3.2 Business Engagement, Support & Recovery planning

Our core mechanism for business engagement is our Business groups. We have 10 groups which we feel best reflects the business and economic strengths in the county:

- Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing
- Agri-food and Rural Businesses
- Banking and Finance
- Business Membership Groups
- Business & Professional Services
- Construction and Infrastructure
- Cyber Tech
- Energy
- Retail and the High street
- Visitor Economy and Tourism

Post Covid, as businesses moved past the transitional period, through recovery and into growth, we are focusing on capturing industry insights in the most effective and informative way possible, and feeding this up to inform local and national policy, whilst contributing to timely and measured decisions at LEP Board level. Based on business feedback, we are reshaping the format of the groups into 2022-23 to capture business-rich, relevant communications in line with LEP priorities and Levelling Up themes.

Key industry considerations include: business support for the Agri-food and rural sector; recruitment challenges and town centre and community engagement in the retail and high street sector; identifying barriers to green energy applications in the Energy sector, and highlighting specialist skills gaps in the advanced engineering sector, to name a handful.

Each business group has been allocated a Board representative, to provide additional sector support and to highlight current and future activities at Board level.

Business needs and economic priorities are not always sector specific; and groups are continually identifying ways of collaborating on cross-cutting themes to make stronger and beneficial connections that apply to all industry areas such as net zero, cyber support, corporate social responsibility, recruitment, and local procurement. Working with the education and skills and Growth Hub teams, the groups are pooling their resources to tackle these cross-sector priorities.

Widening the voice of business even further, we have developed the business groups quarterly E-magazine which highlights the latest group activities, and offers vital Gloucestershire-focussed industry updates to an audience of over 13,000.

[www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/business-groups/](http://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/business-groups/)



## Retail and High Street

**New Chair to lead the group and aid retail recovery across the county**



Dorian Wragg, Partner and Head of the National Commercial Team at Chartered Surveyors Bruton Knowles, has stepped up to the helm of GFirst LEP's Retail and High Street Business Group.

A key player in the county's business arena, Dorian takes over from incumbent Nigel Jobson, Chief Commercial Officer at social media management platform firm, Maybe\*.

The global pandemic has fast-tracked many trends, including the switch to online trading up by around 10% compared to pre-lockdown levels – and the reduction of 40-50% in town and city centre footfall.

Tackling these issues and creating the right climate to achieve re-balance local economies post Covid-19, requires strong local leadership, which Dorian is well placed to deliver given his extensive market knowledge of urban hubs across Gloucestershire.

### Industry Focus:

"We [Gloucester BID] are excited for Spring events. There are several empty buildings going through planning so they won't be empty for long. We feel it will be another couple of years slow growth to go."

"Gloucester Food Dock is progressing well and Lucie Wardingley has been appointed Manager. We are actively recruiting local start up food businesses."

"Kings Square development is on track for completion by April 2022."

"Business was slow in the run up to Christmas due to shielding. We are looking at a regeneration bid for funding the Town Centre [Stroud] and are recruiting for a Tourism Officer"



"We [Gloucester Quays] are in a 5 year development plan now. Several leases have ended but we have new tenants as well as existing ones expanding. Food and beverage spend is stronger than other retail."

**"70% of FSB businesses surveyed said confidence has increased now that restrictions have been lifted.**

**We have also had a record number of entries for the FSB Awards, showing that entrepreneurial spirit is there, but very much under the radar."**



**"The 'prime pitch' market has been boosted with new brands. Franchise operators are diving deeper into the existing commercial landscape before committing, which will hopefully avoid too many similar outlets in one location."**

### New Member:

Jessica Derham is the new Centre Manager at Five Valleys, Stroud. Jessica has been instrumental in the success of the centre and will now take the business forward into the next exciting phase, the development of the new medical centre.

Five Valleys Shopping Centre is a vibrant community where customers receive a warm welcome and consistently good service. Jessica and her team plan to build on this to attract more shoppers, create an even better experience, and continue to provide a unique mix of shopping, eating and leisure all under one roof.



Jessica Derham

### GFirst LEP Business Groups E-magazine example

### 3.3 The Growth Hub

The GFirst LEP Board have defined a number of priorities for The Growth Hub during 2022-23 including support and guidance for business decarbonisation and engaging with larger businesses and under representative business communities. The delivery of these priorities is being set out in a Strategic Development plan which is being co-authored with all Growth Hub partners. In addition to the LEP Board priorities, Network partners have been defining the specialisms they can bring with a view to enriching the offer to businesses right across the county. These include Cyber Tech, Advanced Manufacturing, Skills, rural business, leadership and management and renewables.

ERDF funding for The Growth Hub Network ends in March 2023. GFirst LEP will be presenting a proposal to the six districts setting out the need for funding to support the Network for the two-year period to March 2025. It is understood that the restrictions associated with ESIF around commercial income will not apply to UKSPF and will allow us to consider income generating models for The Growth Hub. To date there has been some success with charging membership fees for some co-working spaces, rental of incubators and offices, and hiring of meeting rooms. However, to maintain a truly impartial service and the central functions of the Network – such as the digital infrastructure – some funding will be needed even beyond 2025.



## THE GROWTH HUB

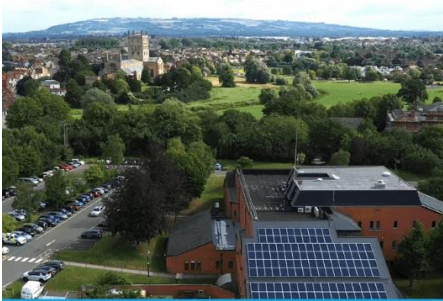
Meet some of The Growth Hub team - [www.youtube.com/c/ThegrowthhubBiz/videos](https://www.youtube.com/c/ThegrowthhubBiz/videos)

GFirst LEP is one of ten “cluster leads’ for Growth Hubs nationally, supporting delivery in Swindon and Wiltshire and West of England. GFirst LEP’s Director of Strategic Growth has overall responsibility for the effective and compliant use of the BEIS Growth Hub grant funding and provides the cluster lead role.

Over the 12-month period 2022-23 The Growth Hub Network within GFirst LEP will deliver the following KPIs;

- 300 light touch interventions
- 400 medium intensity support interventions (minimum 3 hours)
- 120 high intensity support interventions (minimum 12 hours)

Whilst we have seen businesses return to the co-working spaces we will be retaining a level of virtual delivery as this remains a popular option for businesses. All six Growth Hubs are operational, but the Cheltenham Growth Hub is currently based at Hub8 on an interim basis. The dedicated Cheltenham Growth Hub site at the newly constructed Minster Exchange (see image below) will open in September 2022. The Minster Exchange will also be the home for Cheltenham Festivals providing an exciting mix of commercial and creative business activity that should foster innovation and creative thinking.



# THE GROWTH HUB



*The Growth Hub centres in Tewkesbury, Gloucester, Forest of Dean, Cheltenham, Cirencester and Stroud.*

[www.youtube.com/c/ThegrowthhubBiz/videos](https://www.youtube.com/c/ThegrowthhubBiz/videos)



*The Minster Exchange (artists impression – view from Minster Gardens) – Site for Cheltenham Growth Hub, opening September 2022*

### 3.4 Skills & Employment

In January 2022, GFirst LEP, in partnership with a range of key stakeholders, published the **Gloucestershire Skills Strategy 2022-2027**.

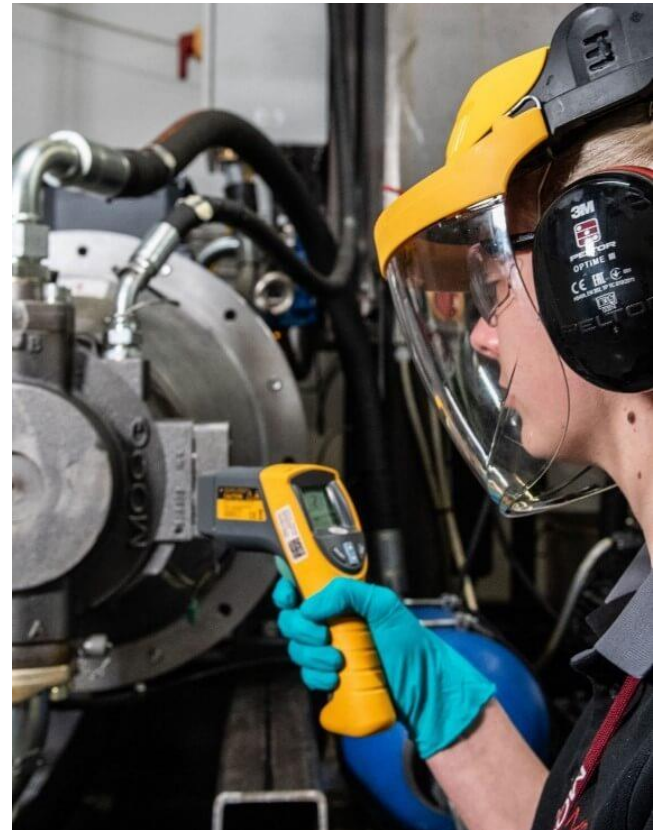
The strategy was drafted by members of staff within GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire County Council, with contributions from local businesses and employers, Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel (GSAP) members, Gloucestershire County Council and District Council members and officers, LEP Board members, DWP/Jobcentre Plus, Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and training providers.

The Skills Strategy can be found here: [Skills Strategy](#)

Alongside the strategy was an **action plan** to ensure that tangible action was taken to implement the strategy so that it was much more than an exercise in 'wishful thinking'.

The action plan focuses on five key workstreams: -

- Help local businesses to attract, retain and upskill employees through apprenticeships
- Help local businesses to attract, retain and upskill employees
- Help businesses and individuals develop their digital skills
- Provide skills and experiences that support individuals to achieve their potential
- Provide skills intelligence, co-ordination and enable investment



Full details can be found here: [Action Plan](#)

GFirst LEP has continued to lead and co-ordinate the work of **Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel (GSAP)**, bringing together local employers, training providers and agencies to help manage and steer an effective path through the complexity of the local skills landscape and has worked with Business West to ensure the **Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer** is relevant for the aerospace, advanced engineering and health and social care sectors in Gloucestershire. The LSIP Trailblazer reports can be found at [www.businesswest.co.uk/local-skills-improvement-plan-lsip-west-england-plus](http://www.businesswest.co.uk/local-skills-improvement-plan-lsip-west-england-plus)

In 2022-23 GFirst LEP will work with whichever organisation is awarded the LSIP contract for Gloucestershire and will continue to work with the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Department of Work and pensions (DWP) on managing the remaining European Social Fund (ESF) funded projects in the County, alongside working with the Districts to advise on their 'people and skills' investments in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, as required.

The other core activity for the Education and Skills team for 2022-23 will be to seek support for initially and then deliver (subject to funding being available) the full roll-out of the **Employment Charter**. This charter was piloted in 2021-22 with six schools, a 6<sup>th</sup> form college and over 20 local employers and will provide a support and brokerage service for young people in education to engage with local employers and for employers to develop recruitment pipelines. This increases the capacity of the Careers Hub and the support involves:

- Researching what education & skills providers and their learners need from industry, when this is needed and who will be involved
- Sharing this information with local employers and establishing what capacity they have to support this
- Brokering sustainable engagement with providers to strengthen and retain talent
- Quality assurance and monitoring for continual improvement

Employer engagement activities include:

- Q&A sessions with employers
- Workplace visits
- Dragon's Den Enterprise events
- Employability, CV and application writing talks by employers
- Practice job interviews
- Work Experience
- Careers Fairs

Through our **Careers Hub**, we will also continue to work with local schools, colleges and alternative provision to improve their performance against the Gatsby Benchmarks and further embed good practice in careers education. More information on the GFirst Careers Hub can be found here: [www.gloscareershub.com](http://www.gloscareershub.com).

We will continue to work closely and collaboratively with Gloucestershire County Council and all six District councils to provide a 'one stop shop' approach for those seeking help with careers, employment, retraining and upskilling via an Employment & Skills Hub. A full overview of the employment and skills work undertaken by GFirst LEP can be found here: [www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business](http://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business)

### 3.5 Local Growth Fund (LGF) Programme

The coming year will see the final completion of the LGF programme with the Gloucester Railway Station Improvements project. The first phase of the project completed in December 2021 with the opening of the new entrance/exit onto Metz Way. The second phase, the new front entrance and improved pedestrian access will start in May 2022, with the main construction contract to be awarded in June and completion expected in early 2023.



***Gloucester Railway Station Metz Way entrance opening 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021***

Two significant projects to complete in early 2022 were the **West Cheltenham Transport Improvements Scheme (WCTIS)** and the new access road to the **CGX Development at Gloucestershire airport**. The specific significance of these two projects are that they both provide access to major new employment sites.

The WCTIS project opens up access to phase one of the Golden Valley development, (a major mixed-use scheme of national significance of c3000 homes and c2m sq ft of commercial space when complete) and the CGX Connect, c6 Hectares of light engineering/aviation or commercial use that will deliver c30,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space that is urgently required by the sector and up to 1,500 jobs on site in the next 3 to 5 years.



**CGX Connect (artists impression) at Gloucestershire Airport - [Gloucestershire Airport CGX Connect](#)**



**WCTIS (West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme) opening event with MP, Alex Chalk  
[Golden Valley Development](#)**



### 3.6 Getting Building Fund (GBF) Programme

<p><b>1</b></p>  <p>The 'Minster Innovation Exchange' with Cheltenham Borough Council</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>  <p>'The Gloucestershire Applied Digital Skills Centre' with Cirencester College</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>  <p>'Cyber Incubation Units' with Gloucestershire College</p>	<p><b>4</b></p>  <p>'The Digital Innovation Farm' with Hartpury University and Hartpury College</p>	<p><b>5</b></p>  <p>'A Construction Education Centre' with the KW Bell Group Ltd in Cinderford</p>
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In 2020 the government announced the 'Getting Building Fund' as part of the Covid-19 Recovery Plan for the UK. GFirst LEP successfully bid for £11.3million from the fund to support five 'shovel ready' projects. An additional £455,581 was allocated to the programme from underspend on the LGF programme, plus the Minster Exchange project included an earlier allocation of £500k for a Tier 2 Growth Hub giving a total fund of £12,255,581.

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, the full £11.3m of GBF grant funds had been awarded and claimed by the respective projects. All five projects will be fully operational in 2022 and contributing to growth and innovation in Gloucestershire and the wider region.

**Fig.6 Getting Building Fund Projects Summary**

Project Title	Category	GBF Award	LGF 'Top-up'	Total Awarded	Project Summary	Status
Minster Innovation Exchange	Employment	£3,114,000	£500,000	£3,614,000	Modular build Cyber Innovation facility, Tier 2 Growth Hub & multi-function events space in Cheltenham	Construction in progress, completion September 2022 and fully open in October 2022
Cyber Incubation Units	Employment	£950,000	£0	£950,000	Cyber Incubation Units and workspace at Gloucestershire College, Cheltenham Campus	Fully open and operating close to capacity
Digital Skills Centre	Skills	£4,030,000	£450,000	£4,480,000	New Build, Digital Skills Learning Centre at Cirencester College	Fully open and operational - opening event hosted on 27 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
Digital Innovation Farm	Innovation	£1,250,000	£0	£1,250,000	Agri-Tech Project incubation centre and workspace Hartpury University	Fully open in June 2022
Construction Skills Accelerator Centre	Skills	£1,956,000	£5,581	£1,961,581	Construction Skills Training Centre and mock site at KW Bell, Cinderford	Fully open and operational
<b>Totals</b>		<b>£11,300,000</b>	<b>£955,581</b>	<b>£12,255,581</b>		

The focus for 2022-23 and beyond will be to monitor performance of the projects in respect to agreed outputs and outcomes and to support the projects where required to ensure they maximise their contribution to the Gloucestershire economy.

### 3.7 Inward Investment

The Inward Investment programme is a collaborative project with the County Council, the six District Councils and DIT, currently supported by ERDF European funding to set up a dedicated team to focus on inward investment in the county, in particular (non-EU) foreign direct investment.

The project aims to promote Gloucestershire as one of the best investment locations in the UK, with a focus on four key sectors;

- Cyber
- Agri-Tech
- Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing
- Renewables

We are now in the fourth year of the EU-funded programme. The current funding for the project is £1million, with 50% coming via ERDF and match-funding from the local authorities until December 2022.

A key activity for 2022-23 is to secure funding through local authority partners (UKSPF) to continue the project at least until March 2025.

2021-22 has seen continued success with the rapid growth of US firm ZeroAvia who are pioneering the manufacturing of zero-emission hydrogen-electric engines for the aviation sector.

May 2022 saw the launch of the Gloucestershire Cyber ‘High Potential Opportunity’ (HPO) slide deck in partnership with DIT. This showcases the County’s national strength in this sector and also highlights opportunities being created at Hub 8 and The Minster Exchange as well those coming on stream via The Forum (Gloucester) and the Golden Valley Cyber Park.



Invest in Gloucestershire LEP

For more information, please visit:  
[www.investingloucestershire.com](http://www.investingloucestershire.com)

Advanced Manufacturing

Cyber-Tech

Renewables

Agri-Tech

@investinglos investinglos



High Potential Opportunity

## Cyber Security

An opportunity to design, develop and commercialise cyber technologies for a variety of applications, in Gloucestershire’s unique cyber cluster.

Gloucestershire

Department for International Trade

GREAT  
BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND

The Forum in Gloucester is now under construction with initial occupancy expected to be available in 2023 and circa 100,000 sq ft of Grade A commercial space available by 2024. Companies engaged in digital technology, especially that related to healthcare are being targeted, to take advantage of the nearby hospital and the adjacent University campus with its healthcare courses.

[www.forumdigital.co.uk/the-forum](http://www.forumdigital.co.uk/the-forum)



***The Forum, Gloucester***

### **Sector Focus**

Pro-active international activity in Cyber will include attendance at the RSA cyber conference in San Francisco in June and a visit with the DIT's cyber specialist to Israel in July.

Regarding Agri-Tech, the LEP has convened the Gloucestershire Agri-tech Group with representation from the Royal Agricultural University, Hartpury University & College, Campden BRI and the University of Gloucestershire. This meets bi-monthly to work in partnership and promote the County's strength in agriculture on an international basis. In June 2022 Gloucestershire will be represented at the Intelligent Farming Summit in Barcelona through Hartpury University & College.

The team will also be working closely with the Royal Agricultural University, DIT and a range of investors to move forward the Innovation Village project on the University Gate site. This was promoted by the team in Leeds at the first UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum in May 2022.

In respect of Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, the county's two airports are key assets. There is the opportunity for the area to take an international lead in the development of zero emission flight through the expansion of the likes of ZeroAvia and Electroflight and the creation of clusters focussed on the use of hydrogen and battery technology. Gloucestershire's 'offer' in aerospace will be promoted through a presence at the Farnborough International Air show in July 2022.

### **Priorities for 2022-23**

- Secure funding to continue the Inward Investment activity to March 2025
- Refine promotional material, including updating the 'Invest in Gloucestershire' website
- Utilise social media to expand our reach to investors and key intermediaries
- Carry out targeted pro-active work to expand the pipeline of inward investment projects
- Identify key UK and overseas events to attend, in partnership with sector-specific colleagues and DIT
- Build up an aftercare support programme for existing companies, working with the six District Councils
- Continue to develop the 'offer', including;
  - Building the investment business case with access to demographics, skills and economic data
  - Sourcing suitable business premises
  - Accessing recruitment, apprenticeship and training support
  - Arranging familiarisation visits with introductions to sector specific contacts
  - Introductions to professional, legal and accountancy services
  - Access to financial support
  - Ongoing after-care business support

For more details of the full programme see our dedicated inward investment website and view our new showcase video:

[www.investingloucestershire.com](http://www.investingloucestershire.com)

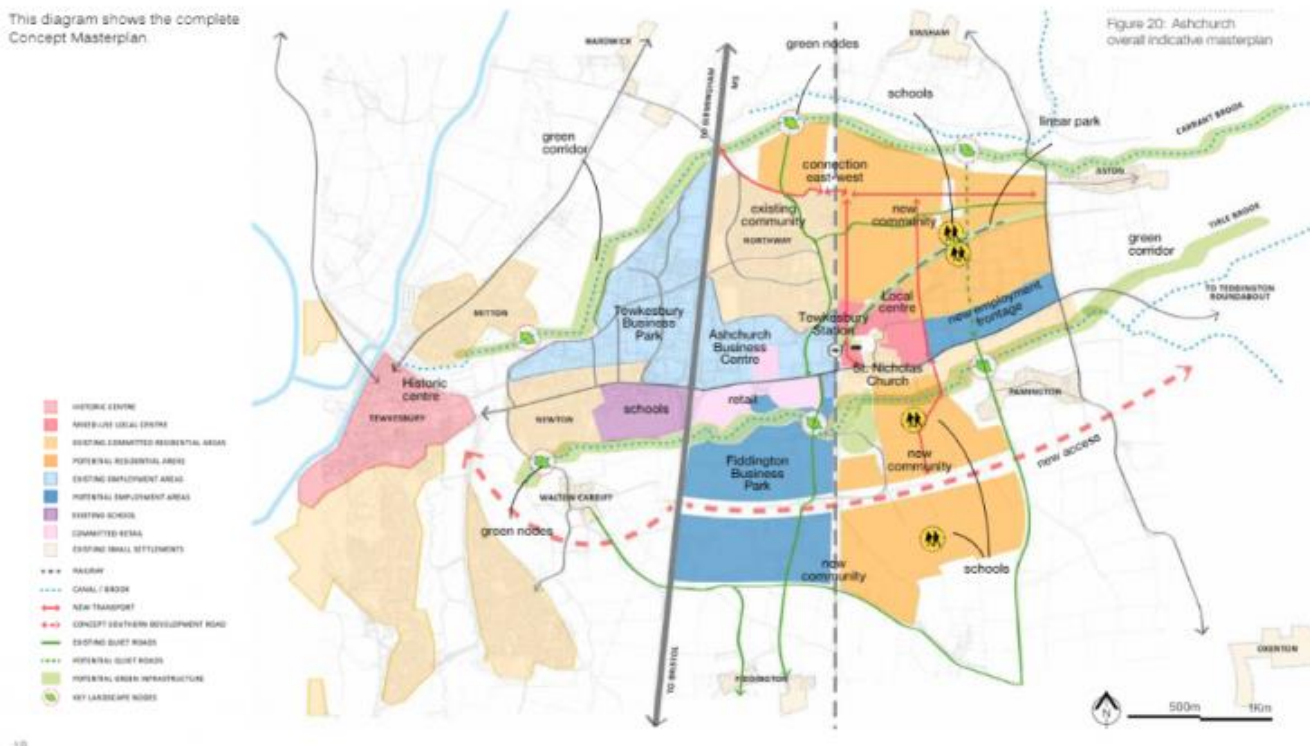
<https://youtu.be/Af1PuYBkOiM>

### 3.8 Major Infrastructure

**M5 J9 and A46 corridor** – we will continue to work with partners to progress this scheme which is critical to improving traffic flows, reliability and air quality of the A46 corridor/M5 J9 interchange and is also essential for the delivery of the Tewkesbury Garden town at Ashchurch. The scheme received a positive boost in May 2022 when it was granted a further £1.5million of funding by DLUHC to help progress the scheme to full Outline Business Case.

Further details can be found here:- [A46-M5 scheme](#)

**Fig 7. Tewkesbury Garden Town concept**



**M5 J10 upgrade** – the project is progressing well, with the scheme now having identified a preferred option and early detail designs being prepared. A non-statutory public consultation was completed in early 2022 and a consultation report has now been issued. See link for details - [M5 J10 report](#)

Some initial property acquisition has already taken place and work is progressing towards a Development Consent Order (DCO) application in early 2023. We will continue to support and advocate for this vital infrastructure in the coming year.

**A417 Missing Link** – This scheme is now in the Development Consent Order (DCO) process. We will continue to engage with Highways England through statutory consultation of the final scheme and will continue to represent the business community with due regard to our low carbon objectives for Gloucestershire. Full consent and treasury approval is expected in late 2022.

**Rail Strategy** - An independent Rail Strategy for the county has now been published with the LEP a key partner and funder, which outlines the means to ensure Gloucestershire becomes better connected, delivering improved links to major employment cities with increased timetabled capacity as a focus for enhanced modal shift.

Our main focus in 2022-23 will be to support the proposals for a station ‘south of Gloucester’ on the Bristol – Birmingham mainline. Our initial preference is the Stonehouse Bristol Road station option, but the decision will be informed by further detailed analysis and modelling. A major benefit of the Bristol Road station option is that it facilitates “commuting in” to the major employment locations to the West of Stonehouse with potential for excellent future connectivity to the planned new Forest Green Rovers ‘Eco-Stadium’ and Eco-Technology park at Junction 13 of the M5.

### **3.9 Strategic Economic Planning**

Our Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) was published in draft form in 2019 and still forms the basis of our economic strategy. The draft successfully passed through the Local Industrial Strategy Analysts Panel (LISA) and although not formally issued it still forms the basis of our strategic focus and sets out the priorities for us. The key sectors/priorities identified in our Local Industrial Strategy were; Cyber-tech, Agri-tech, Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing and Green Energy/Sustainability. It also recognised the value of Gloucestershire’s natural capital and the need to protect and enhance it.

LIS (draft) can be viewed here: [www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2020/gloucestershire\\_draft\\_local-industrial-strategy\\_2019-updated.pdf](http://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2020/gloucestershire_draft_local-industrial-strategy_2019-updated.pdf)

Subject to any further guidance we receive from government following the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper and the outcomes of the LEP Review we will continue to develop our strategic planning for Gloucestershire. Our new chair and new board members will bring a fresh perspective and energy to this process. It is expected that the LEP will play a key brokering and facilitation role in updating our economic plan with a likely publication date of Summer/Autumn 2023.

We will also continue to look at plans and strategies to improve productivity across Gloucestershire, to at least the UK average, but ideally above, based on the evidence develop in the 2019 report:

[www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gloucestershire\\_five-foundations-of-productivity\\_evidence-report\\_2019.pdf](http://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gloucestershire_five-foundations-of-productivity_evidence-report_2019.pdf)

We will also continue to focus on the county’s 2050 vision and work with the emerging ‘City Region’ board and particularly how we ensure that Gloucestershire becomes a ‘magnet’ county for young people:

[www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gfirst-lep-youth-survey-2019v2.pdf](http://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gfirst-lep-youth-survey-2019v2.pdf)

### **3.10 LEP Collaborative working**

**Western Gateway** – we continue to support the work of the Western Gateway initiative. We played an integral role in development of the independent economic review that fed into the CSR in 2021 and continue to support work towards development of strategies for growth for the Western Gateway area. GFirst LEP also continues to play a lead role in development of the innovation strand of work and to play an active role on the Partnership Board and Chief Executive’s Board.

**M4 Corridor New Energy Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI)** looking at both hydrogen (Commercial Goods vehicles & buses) and electric cars, working with SWLEP, Thames Valley Berkshire, Oxfordshire, GFirst and West of England LEPS.

**Fusion Energy** - ‘The Quest for the World’s First Fusion Power Station’

GFirst LEP have been an active member of the working group that has submitted a bid to site the world’s first fusion energy power plant in Oldbury/Berkeley.

The successful site will be home to the construction of **STEP - the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production**. Targeted for completion by 2040, it will become a global hub for fusion energy and associated industries. This could create thousands of local highly skilled jobs during the construction and operation of the plant, as well as for the local supply chain, while attracting a new science and technology hub for the UK. £222million has been allocated to begin the STEP design work. The overall project will attract investment in the region of £3billion to £4billion.

The Gloucestershire/South-west bid has now been shortlisted down to the last 5 locations and work continues to promote the bid and Gloucestershire as an ideal location for it based on our nuclear legacy at Berkeley and Oldbury and the current expertise in the sector within the region.

Alongside this we will continue to be active members of **Nuclear South West** and the **Hinkley Point Steering Group** alongside Heart of the South West and West of England LEPS.

We will find out in late 2022 if the Gloucestershire bid has been selected as the preferred location.

### **3.11 Investment Pipeline**

Following the LEP Review and publication of the LUWP, it is clear that in the foreseeable future, growth capital funds will be directed through local authorities for allocation. Our intention at GFirst LEP is to continue to promote collaborative working, potentially via the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (representing all six Local Authorities in Gloucestershire plus the County Council and GFirst LEP) or a new group yet to be formed, to maintain and develop a viable and deliverable pipeline of capital projects for the county, seeking to maintain a number of ‘shovel ready’ schemes, such as those we were able to select for the GBF fund in 2020. As a LEP we will focus specifically on working with current and new partners, both public and private sector to develop a strong portfolio of deliverable projects focused on Innovation, Skills, Enabling Infrastructure (particularly for the release of employment land), Business Support and Productivity. We will also promote the on-going use of the LEP Investment Panel, a non-political group that can scrutinise and test the viability and economic ‘soundness’ of capital proposals.

Details of the investment panel can be found here: [panel](#)

The current **Gloucestershire Economic Growth Capital Investment Pipeline (CIP)** was developed to identify all capital projects that have the potential to have a transformational impact on the economy of Gloucestershire. The CIP is a living document, actively managed by the Senior Officer Group of the GEGJC which aims to provide a comprehensive view of all capital projects (including infrastructure/regeneration projects) which could make a substantial and well evidenced contribution to economic growth. Identified priorities from this process are used to inform the business case selection process conducted by the LEP Board. The CIP is funding source neutral.

[www.gfirstlep.com/project-pipeline](http://www.gfirstlep.com/project-pipeline)



### 3.12 Communications and Marketing

Our communications and marketing priorities for the coming year are as follows:

- Hold our Annual Review event at Cotswold Airport on 15th June 2022
- Continue to deliver our weekly E-Newsletters
- Continue to develop our social media channels, primarily Twitter and LinkedIn
- Launch our 'Made in Gloucestershire' initiative supporting the county's food and drink sector
- Support the inward investment programme and continue to promote Gloucestershire as an exceptional location (particularly in the post Covid-19 world) to start and grow a business, to live and work and enjoy for leisure for residents and visitors



*Our last GFirst LEP Annual Review held in 2019 at University of Gloucestershire's new Business School*



### 3.13 LGF Programme Evaluation

Given the effective completion of the LGF Programme has now occurred, we plan to prepare a final summary report for the programme in 2022-23 to reflect on what has been delivered with the LGF funding and the outputs and outcomes to date that have been achieved.

This will reference the three full evaluation studies that have now been completed for Growth Hub, GREEN Skills Centre at Berkeley and the C11 Cyber Centre.

The report will also provide a forecast of expected outcomes and timelines for some of the dependent development that will now follow as a result of LGF investments.

### 3.14 Gloucestershire Infrastructure Investment Fund (GIIF)

Our implementation of the “Growing Places” fund, which was established in 2012, continues to be highly successful, with funding having been recycled several times. We utilise the funds as a revolving loan scheme now called the **Gloucestershire Infrastructure Investment Fund (GIIF)** and currently the £8million of funds are fully committed.

In 2019, the LEP Investment Panel and LEP Board approved the award of £3million to Bakers Quay in Gloucester, to enable the second phase re-development for residential and retail/commercial uses, and completion of this important regeneration scheme in Gloucester Docks. Work has now commenced with the site preparation and scaffolding of one of the historic buildings. In June 2021, funding of £1.85million was approved by the LEP Board to support the development of the 270 Climbing Centre, an international standard indoor climbing centre at Bentham.

**Fig 8.0 GIIF Funded Projects to date**

Project title	Category	GIIF Investment	Private Sector Investment	Jobs created
Honeybourne Gate Extra Care Home	Housing	£2.75m	£13.4m	21
Park View (Southgate St) Extra Care Home	Housing	£1.3m	£5.8m	21
Gloucester M5 Services (Southbound)	Infrastructure	£3.0m	£20.34m	575
Dudbridge Estates (Stroud Metal new factory)	Business Support	£3.5m	£6.025m	101
Shield House Secure Data Centre	Infrastructure	£3.0m	£12.66m	12
Merrywalks Shopping Centre re-development (Stroud)	Business Support	£1.0m	£23m	190
Bakers Quay (Phase 2) re-generation	Housing	£2.5m	£39m	70
270 Climbing Centre	Sport/Leisure	£1.85m	£8m	30

Gloucestershire County Council provides the Accountable Body and overall project management of this very successful programme. To date it has provided funding to bring forward and develop a wide variety of projects/schemes that were unable to obtain viable funding through conventional means but have contributed significantly to the economic growth of the county and also provided some key economic assets for attracting further investment, e.g. the Shield Data Centre and the Stroud Metal investment in a new factory.

Activity for 2022-23 will be to continue to manage the fund, managing repayments and loan awards in accordance with our governance arrangements and developing the pipeline of potential projects for future funding.

## 4. OTHER ACTIVITIES

As a LEP we are actively engaged with our local authority partners, government agencies and stakeholders in many initiatives and programmes beyond our capital funding and business engagement and support activities.

Though the coming year we will continue to support our local authority partners on the Levelling Up agenda and work with them on funding bids where appropriate.

We will continue to engage in the emerging **Joint Strategic Plan** (previously the Joint Core Strategy programme) with Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury councils, particularly with respect to the delivery of employment land, the appropriate mix of housing (to support our aspirations for young people and creating a ‘magnet’ county) and sustainable locations for housing. The planning timeframe for the JSP is out to 2041, with a notional focus out to 2050.

We will progress our work with the **Local Nature Partnership** and support the implementation of the Building with Nature standard. We will also continue active involvement in the development of a Natural Capital evaluation and monitoring tool to inform and influence future investment decisions

We will continue to work with key strategic partners from both the public and private sectors to ensure our ambitions outlined in our (BEIS funded) **Energy Strategy** continue to progress as we strive to become a carbon neutral county by 2050.

## 5. SUMMARY

The unprecedented challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past two years have been an opportunity for GFirst LEP (and all the other LEPs across the UK) to demonstrate our flexibility, agility and capacity to deliver rapid, innovative and effective solutions to support the Gloucestershire economy.

2022-23 will be a year of consolidation before what is likely to be a significant re-alignment in 2023-24 as we move towards a Devolution deal for the county.

For the GFirst LEP board, 2022-23 will be a period of ‘finding our place’ in the post LUWP and LEP Review landscape.

In the coming year we will complete the delivery of both the Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund capital programmes, we will complete the roll-out of The Growth Hub network and fully establish the Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel and (subject to funding) roll-out the Employment Charter to support the essential growth in skills and training that both the Gloucestershire economy and the UK as a whole desperately needs.

We will continue to work closely with our local authority partners, particularly in relation to the allocation of UKSPF funds, and will actively promote on-going support for three priority areas:

- The Growth Hub service
- Inward Investment
- The Employment Charter and skills action plan.