



The Marches Three Year Skills Plan

2017 – 2020

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Appendix A - List of Stakeholders Consulted

1. Introduction

Context

Why do we need a Skills Plan?

- 1.1 A competitive skills base is critical to raising productivity and achieving economic growth in the Marches. The Skills Action Plan is a key component in the Marches Strategic Economic Plan to ensure a skilled and flexible workforce is in place to support the growth agenda. The LEP has an important role to play in facilitating a demand-led skills infrastructure system given their ability to bring partners together in support of local economic growth.
- 1.2 LEPs have been given responsibility for skills capital funding and the 2014-20 European Structural Funds. Further devolution of skills funding is also anticipated. The Skills Action Plan will play an important role in guiding the investment of funding to meet identified LEP priorities.
- 1.3 The Skills Action Plan is set in the context of the prevailing national policy environment which includes areas of major reform in the post-16 education sector aimed at raising productivity and achieving economic growth. These include:
 - Expansion of the Apprenticeship programme with a target of 3 million Apprenticeship starts in 2020 and the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017 to facilitate the achievement of this target.
 - More responsiveness to local employer needs and economic priorities through local commissioning of adult skills and skills capital and a major reform of post-16 education and training through a programme of area-based reviews aimed at enhancing collaboration, greater specialisation and supporting progression to higher levels. It is also anticipated that a new network of Institutes of Technology (IoT) will provide the higher level skills that employers demand, primarily at levels 3-5, and it is anticipated that there will be one IoT per LEP area.
- 1.4 The introduction of policies aimed at addressing barriers to work and making work pay such as the introduction of the National Living Wage from 1st April 2016 and the introduction of Universal Credit have a role to play in supporting more Marches residents into sustained employment.

Purpose

- 1.5 The Skills Action Plan establishes the rationale for intervention and provides a strategic framework to focus resources and strategic decision-making. Broad action areas are identified where the Marches LEP has a lead role to play in partnership with key stakeholders including employers, local authorities and providers of education and training.
- 1.6 The Skills Action Plan will be a live document that is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it remains relevant to the local context and that resources are deployed where there is the greatest need for intervention and to maximise opportunities for growth.

The Marches Skills Challenge

- 1.7 Analysis of the Marches Labour Market and Skills Position was undertaken in Spring 2016. It identified the challenges facing the Marches economy and provides the rationale for intervention in the Skills Action Plan. (See separate Data document)

Attracting and Retaining the Economically Active

- 1.8 The demographic changes expected across the Marches over the coming decades present clear challenges for the LEP area. A contraction in the working age population, combined with large increases to the retired population, threaten the economic and social sustainability of the Marches.
- 1.9 To attenuate these pressures, the LEP should focus on attracting working age residents by providing suitable employment opportunities across the Marches. These are likely to be created in, but should not be limited to, the LEP's priority sectors. Strategies including inward investment, enterprise and innovation, and skills have a role to play. There is a need to develop the proposition of the Marches as a place to live, work, study and invest.

Demand for Higher Level Skills

- 1.10 The Marches is currently under-represented on higher skilled occupations such as managers, professionals and associate professionals and a below average proportion of workers employed in the sub-region have Level 4+ qualifications. This has an impact on earnings, with residents and workers in the Marches earning below the England average. These limitations play a part in contributing to the productivity gap which the Marches suffers from. This relative skills shortage is a concern as skills forecast data suggest that demand for higher skilled occupations will increase substantially in the LEP area over the next decade.
- 1.11 It is vital that skills infrastructure in the sub-region is responsive to these needs to combat skill shortages and gaps and the corresponding impact these have on productivity and competitiveness. Recent and proposed investment in Higher Education in the sub-region is a positive but this offer needs to continue to be strengthened to ensure alignment with the skills needs of both priority sectors such as advanced manufacturing, food manufacturing and processing, and defence and securities; the aspirational sectors of environmental technologies and digital and creative; and enabling sectors such as health and social care, construction, and professional services.

Boosting Vocational Pathways

- 1.12 The Government agenda is focused on boosting vocational skills through traineeships, apprenticeships and work experience and providing pathways to higher level technical skills. To date the Marches has only participated to a modest degree in traineeships although there has been growth over time and it is considered that there is scope to enhance this position. There is an improving picture of participation in Apprenticeships but participation in higher level apprenticeships is slightly below the national average. Apprenticeships play a valuable role in meeting the needs of priority sectors such as advanced manufacturing, and enabling sectors such as professional services and health and social care. Driving up participation and ensuring the infrastructure is in place to facilitate progression will help to meet the forecast skills demand in these key sectors.

Addressing Barriers to Participation

- 1.13 The Marches has a strong sub-regional labour market as illustrated by performance on indicators such as economic activity, employment and unemployment. However, whilst the area has a relatively low economic inactivity rate there is a high proportion (28.5%) who want a job. There are pockets of need within the Marches where an over-representation of issues such as the incidence of those Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) or unemployed can be found such as within Telford & Wrekin.
- 1.14 There is a need to address barriers to effective participation to maximise the economic contribution of those who can work and want to work. Target groups include those young people who are NEET and the unemployed. Furthermore, there is a need to enhance the productivity of those who are in work through providing opportunities for career progression through upskilling, for example, or reskilling into occupations in demand.

Enhancing Education-Industry Interaction

- 1.15 The Marches performs well on indicators of entrepreneurship such as self-employment, business start-ups and survival rates. However, indicators of innovation are less favourable, with low patent activity and a weak performance on the ERC analysis of innovation performance by LEP area in areas such as process innovation, product and service innovation, and engagement in R&D.
- 1.16 The growth potential of businesses could be furthered by strengthening links between industry and education to encourage spin-outs, research and development and graduate placement.

Improving FE Provision

- 1.17 The Marches is part of the second wave of post-16 Area Reviews and completed its review in May 2016. The review assessed the economic and educational needs of the area and the implications for post-16 education and training provision including sixth form colleges and further education colleges.
- 1.18 The formal report identified the need for the colleges to respond more effectively to local employer/key sector employment needs to create strong education and training institutions which have high status and are genuine centres of expertise able to offer high quality provision based on the current and future needs of learners and employers within the local area.

Improving HE Provision

- 1.19 Participation in higher education historically has been relatively low across the Marches, particularly throughout Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin, where there are pockets of extremely low participation. Participation in higher education is vital to provide the workforce with the necessary skills to meet businesses' needs and increase the availability of highly skilled labour to meet demands. Analysis of HESA data suggests that some of the LEP priority sectors are not well covered by HEIs in the Marches. There is a strong level of alignment between agri-tech and Harper Adams, and emerging strengths between the University of Wolverhampton (Telford campus) and the advanced manufacturing sector, and between the University Centre Shrewsbury and health and social care and professional services.
- 1.20 Growth in the key sectors could be stymied if there is a shortage of suitably qualified workers to take up employment opportunities. If HE provision does not play a role in providing the workforce with the skills required, the demand for higher level occupations will be unmet.

2. Strategic Framework

2.1 Figure 2.1 illustrates the Strategic Framework for the Marches Skills Action Plan.

Figure 2.1 Strategic Framework



Source: Regeneris Consulting

Vision

2.2 Our vision is one where:

“The Marches will be home to a skilled and flexible workforce which meets employers’ needs to ensure they can compete effectively to prosper and grow”

2.3 This requires education and training provision to be responsive to the needs of both employers and individuals and provide a clear progression route to enable the improvement and enhancement of skills to help drive productivity and growth.

Strategic Objectives

2.4 There are four Strategic Objectives around which the Skills Action Plan is framed.

SO1 - Inspiring young people

2.5 Demographic changes expected across the Marches over the coming decades identify that the Marches has a shrinking supply of labour which will impact upon hard-to-fill vacancies, suppress business growth and deter investment. Interventions aimed at attracting and retaining individuals of working age are therefore vital. The young resident population of the Marches is the labour force of the future and provides an audience to engage with, to inspire to participate and to progress in education, training and employment to meet the needs of the local economy.

SO2 - Skills for growth and competitiveness

2.6 The productivity gap in the Marches can be explained by a number of factors, including skills, enterprise, innovation, investment and competition. The role of skills in facilitating economic growth and competitiveness cannot be understated. The Marches is currently under-represented on the proportion of workers with higher level skills and employers are reporting skill shortage vacancies and that skill gaps are now a barrier to growth. The incidence of these skill shortage vacancies were noted amongst key sectors in the Marches. Looking forward, changes in the occupational and qualification profile of employment shift further towards higher level occupations and skills.

2.7 This strategic objective establishes the importance of skills for growth and competitiveness and the need to ensure a responsive demand-led approach to ensuring provision is in place to meet these needs. There is a need to support upskilling and retraining of the existing workforce as well as attracting new entrants into the workforce to meet demand.

SO3 - Boosting vocational pathways

2.8 Apprenticeships provide a mechanism for delivering economic growth aspirations. They have a role to play in providing a skilled workforce, meeting skill shortages and gaps, and encouraging growth in higher level skills. They also support social mobility through the pathways in place to facilitate progression from craft to technician, to professional and managerial job roles. The Marches has a role to play in contributing to the national 2020 Apprenticeship target of 3 million starts. This strategic objective highlights the importance of boosting apprenticeship participation by employers and learners alike to meet the skills needs of the economy.

SO4 - Addressing barriers to participation

2.9 The Skills Action Plan seeks to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are equitable and that all residents in the Marches have the opportunity to realise their aspirations. This Strategic Objective seeks to ensure that support is in place to enable residents to enhance their skills and access to employment.

Cross Cutting Themes

- 2.10 There are three cross cutting themes which form core principles to the implementation of the Skills Action Plan.

Collaboration

- 2.11 Partnership and collaboration between providers and employers is key to enhancing education-industry interaction and ensuring that provision is demand-led and responsive to economic priorities in the Marches.

Specialisation

- 2.12 There is a need to develop specialist skills which are aligned to employer demand, particularly in identified sectors and to meet specific training needs. The development of specialist skills provision and Centres of Excellence will respond to the skills needs of identified sectors and facilitate the achievement of growth aspirations. The clear identity of specialist provision will support employer and learner understanding of the skills offer and facilitate take-up and progression to higher level skills.

Progression

- 2.13 Progression is a key principle of the Skills Action Plan, whether this is vertical or horizontal progression up or across learning levels or career advancement. It applies to new entrants to the labour market, those in employment seeking to reskill or enhance their position, and those progressing from economic inactivity into education, training or employment.

3. Action Plan

- 3.1 Six broad action areas have been identified as a focal point for the LEP to play a role in facilitating investment and activity in over the next three years. These broad action areas will be developed by the LEP Skills Board and key stakeholders. These broad actions are outlined in this section of the Plan. See Annex 2 for the more detailed Action Plan.

A1 – Attract and Retain Talent

Rationale

- 3.2 The working age population accounts for 61% of the total population in the Marches. Population change in the future is anticipated to be driven by changes in the retired population with an anticipated growth of 30% in the 65+ cohort by 2022. By contrast, the working age population is projected to fall by around 4,700 or 2%. This compares with a 3% growth in working age residents in England as a whole. A decreasing pool of working age residents poses a substantial threat to the economic performance of the Marches which could widen the productivity gap as businesses struggle to recruit. Employment forecasts identify that demand for workers will rise between 2012 and 2022.
- 3.3 The main urban centres of the Marches need to fulfil their potential as nodes of economic and cultural activity. These centres have a key role to play in attracting and retaining higher skilled individuals and their families to the sub-region.

Overview

- 3.4 The Marches is an attractive and varied sub-region offering a range of opportunities to live, work and invest in urban and rural contexts. This action establishes the potential to develop a live, work, study and invest proposition for Marches to help maintain the working age population. This includes:
- **Place marketing** – the promotion of the Marches including its location and lifestyle attributes, supportive business environment, recreation and housing offer.
 - **Inward investment** – a focused strategy on key sectors and enterprise to stimulate jobs and business growth.
 - **Education** – ensuring a high quality school offer to attract families to the Marches with a clear progression route to Further and Higher Education. There is a need to continue to develop higher education in the sub-region as a mechanism for retaining and attracting young people to the sub-region.
 - **Lifestyle** – building on the locational attributes of the Marches to develop a recreation and culture offer which meets the needs of young working age individuals and families.

Measures of Progress

Indicator	Marches Baseline Position	Source	Frequency of Update
WAP as a % of total population	61%	ONS Mid-Year Estimates (2014)	Annual
% with Level 4+ Qualifications	35%	Annual Population Survey (Dec. 2014)	Annual
% of workers in higher skilled occupations	39%	Annual Population Survey (Dec. 2014)	Annual

A2 - Careers advice and guidance

Rationale

- 3.7 The Careers & Enterprise Company has identified the areas of greatest need in order to prioritise geographic areas. Analysis of employer engagement from the UKCES Employer Perceptions Survey (EPS) identifies 'cold spots' which exist. The Marches is in the bottom third of LEPs on the proportion of employer establishments who have had anyone in on work experience which stands at 28% (UKCES EPS 2014) although it is in the top third of LEPs on the proportion of employer establishments who offered any work inspiration (16%). This may partly reflect the business size characteristics of the Marches as employer engagement is shown to be lower amongst micro and small sized companies (UKCES EPS).
- 3.8 Consultation with employers highlighted the importance of young people being 'life ready/work ready'. Young people need to be well rounded both in terms of having the academic skills and employability skills which take into account the personal, social and transferable skills seen as relevant to all jobs. The UKCES EPS 2013 identifies the proportion of employers in the Marches answering 16-year-old school leavers as 'poorly' or 'very poorly' prepared for work at 27%, and 23% of Marches employers answered that 17-18 year olds recruited to first time job from school are 'poorly' or 'very poorly' prepared for work.
- 3.9 Consultation with stakeholders identified 'confusion' and 'inconsistencies' in the quality of provision and volume of advice and guidance available. There is a need to co-ordinate and focus provision to provide a coherent offer.

Overview

Young People

- 3.10 This action emphasises the need to raise aspirations amongst young people to encourage progression into an education, training or employment destination and to raise awareness of the career options presented by local employment opportunities. Initiatives such as ambassadors, role models and skills champions have a role to play here.
- 3.11 This action seeks to ensure that schools and colleges in the Marches provide a comprehensive and high quality careers advice and guidance service which provides clear guidance on the routes to education, training and employment. Models of good practice from elsewhere which provide standards for schools and colleges to aspire to in providing information advice and guidance such as gold, silver and bronze standards should be considered.
- 3.12 A key aspect of this action is to enhance school-business engagement to ensure routes to local employment opportunities are promoted. Opportunities to maximise participation of the Marches LEP in the new Careers and Enterprise Company should be sought including a focus on 'cold spots' where school-business engagement is currently limited and in schools in areas of deprivation.
- 3.13 Innovative ways for inspiring young people to consider careers in the Marches key sectors should be considered. For example, in the advanced manufacturing sector, schemes such as 'Fab Labs', 'Making it', industrial cadets, Primary Engineer and science festivals could be considered.

Adults

- 3.14 This action also recognises the need for adult information advice and guidance to support re-employment, re-skilling and upskilling. This is particularly relevant for middle and older aged workers to maximise their economic contribution.
- 3.15 This action proposes the development of resources and capability to deliver a targeted and bespoke careers guidance package on pathways to key sectors of growth and skills need. This will raise awareness of local opportunities as a mechanism for retaining the economically active and for encouraging the reskilling and upskilling of adults to meet the changing shape of demand.

Measures of Progress

Table 3.2 Baseline Position and Measures of Progress

Indicator	Marches Baseline Position	Source	Frequency of Update
% of employers stating 16-year old school leavers very well prepared or well prepared	76%	UKCES Employers Skills Survey (2013)	Bi-Annual
% KS4 leavers progressing into education, training or employment	91.7%*	DfE (2013/14)	Annual
% KS5 leavers progressing into education, training or employment	72.7%*	DfE (2013/14)	Annual

* The Marches position is the average of the 3 local authority figures

A3 - Priority Sector Skill Plans

Rationale

- 3.16 The SEP Evidence Base Refresh report identifies those sectors which have the capacity to grow employment, enhance productivity and enable economic growth. These are categorised as:
- **Priority sectors:** the sectors that differentiate the Marches from other locations and are driving employment and productivity growth. These include established sectors such as advanced manufacturing, food manufacturing and processing, and defence and securities.
 - **Aspirational sectors:** with potential for growth and to enhance productivity but are currently under-represented in the Marches. These include environmental technologies, and digital and creative.
 - **Enabling sectors:** the sectors that underpin employment and business base of the Marches and meet population needs. These sectors include health and social care, construction and professional services.
- 3.17 A proactive response to meeting the skill needs of these sectors is required in order to support the potential of these sectors and ensure that growth is not constrained by skill shortages and gaps.

Overview

- 3.18 This action proposes the development of a skills investment plan for each of the Marches priority sectors to include advanced manufacturing, food manufacturing and processing, and defence and securities. Where resources permit, this model should be rolled out to the aspirational sectors of environmental technologies, digital and creative, and professional services, as well as the enabling sectors of health and social care and construction. The Skills Investment Plans could be part of a wider sector Investment Plan aimed at stimulating jobs growth and the GVA contribution of the sector, including not only skills but inward investment, innovation and enterprise, and business support.
- 3.19 The Sector Skills Plans will provide an overview of the trends and drivers shaping skill needs in each sector and identify the demand and supply situation for skills in the sector. A gap analysis will reveal where workforce gaps exist by qualification level and occupation type and identify the adequacy of skills infrastructure to meet identified need. Obtaining employer views will be an important part of the plan to ensure that recommendations are responsive to their needs. It is recommended that the Marches Growth Hub identifies skill needs and skills support as part of its core service to inform this action.
- 3.20 The Sector Skill Plan will provide a strategy for addressing skill gaps and shortages and opportunities to enhance the competitiveness and contribution of the sector to the Marches economy. This will include recommendations for aligning skills capital investment with the needs of priority sectors, and opportunities to influence skills budgets to ensure a responsive curriculum offer. The development of specialist provision with a clear identity and progression route to higher level skills will be sought. The potential of specialist provision such as University Technical Colleges, Institutes of Technology, and HEI Centres of Excellence should be explored in line with identified sector specific needs.

Measures of Progress

Indicator	Marches Baseline Position	Source	Frequency of Update
% of establishments that have skill gaps	13%	UKCES Employers Skills Survey (2013)	Bi-Annual
% of employers with one or more SSVs	3%	UKCES Employers Skills Survey (2013)	Bi-Annual

A4 - Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Rationale

- 3.21 The Marches economy need to become more resilient and growth of the private sector is a central objective to make this happen. Stimulating entrepreneurship and innovation are key mechanisms which can drive growth in employment and added value. The Marches performs well in business start-ups and has good survival rates. Performance has been particularly strong in professional services, agri-tech, digital and creative and construction. This provides a strong foundation to build upon.
- 3.22 The Marches does not perform as well when it comes to innovation. Marches businesses generate a relatively small share of UK patents (less than 1% in 2012) and a ERC report on innovation levels in LEPs in 2013 ranks the Marches at 36 out of 39 and highlighted relatively

weak performance in terms of businesses engaging in product and service innovation, process innovation, strategic and marketing innovation and R&D.

- 3.23 Six Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) have been identified by the EU which have wide range of applications and these include developing low carbon energy technologies, improving energy and resource efficiency, and creating new medical products. They drive innovation in a wide range of industries such as automotive, food, chemicals, electronics, energy and pharmaceuticals and have significant potential to drive economic growth and provide jobs. They have particular relevance to the Marches key sectors of advanced manufacturing, agri-tech and environmental technologies. There is a general shortage of entrepreneurs and skilled labour capable of handling the multi-disciplinary nature of KETs. Skill requirements include technical skills, quality, risk and safety, management and entrepreneurship, communication, innovation and intelligence. In meeting the specific needs of key sectors in the Marches there may be a need to forge links with national initiatives in order to gain the critical mass required.
- 3.24 Digital technologies are a key theme across sectors as companies seek to exploit the advantages offered by ICT. This requires a workforce with the knowledge and skills to use these technologies efficiently with key attributes including creativity, innovation and higher-level conceptual skills. A national shortage of medium and higher level digital skills is identified and addressing this is key to future productivity. Initiatives to boost ICT skills in the workforce are therefore critical.

Overview

- 3.25 This action seeks to stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation as a mechanism for growing employment and productivity. Opportunities to enhance activity, particularly within the Marches priority and enabling sectors, should be sought. Areas of focus include:
- Developing enterprise skills amongst young people through initiatives with schools, colleges and universities to develop a feedstock of young entrepreneurs.
 - Developing leadership and management skills to foster innovation, unlock the potential of the workforce and ensure businesses have the right strategies in place to drive productivity and growth. The Marches needs to raise the quality of leadership and to promote a strong culture of ambition. Business support structures such as the Marches Growth Hub will facilitate industry-education linkages to fulfil this need.
 - Enhancing digital technology skills to enable individuals and businesses to compete effectively in technologically driven markets. This could include for example encouraging the provision of bite size CPD and training solutions targeted at smaller businesses. These could provide increased flexibility and agility for the existing workforce, maximising the potential of technology transfer and innovation. They will also help employers to realise the potential of digital technologies in product design, process and sales.
 - University-industry engagement including:
 - Encourage HEIs to engage with employers to embed skills needs in course content, provide targeted careers advice, provide internship and placements to develop practical skills, engage students in live workplace projects and offer mentoring schemes.
 - Facilitating graduate placement in Marches firms as a mechanism for retaining and attracting graduates to the sub-region and embedding them in the local business base.

- Developing R&D collaborations between industry and HEIs such as the Harper Adams Agri Engineering Centre for Innovation.
- Providing a supportive business environment to encourage start-ups including links to employment and training infrastructure.

Measures of Progress

Table 3.4 Baseline Position and Measures of Progress

Indicator	Marches Baseline Position	Source	Frequency of Update
Business enterprise rate per 1,000 population	45	UK Business Counts 2015; ONS Population Estimates 2015	Annual
Self-employment rate	17%	ONS, Annual Population Survey 2015	Monthly
Business survival rate (at least 2 years)	78%	ONS, Business Demography 2014	Annual
No. of patents	26	OECD Patents 2012	Annual
% of firms engaging in R&D	14%	UK Innovation Survey 2013	Every two years

A5 - Apprenticeship Strategy

Rationale

- 3.26 There is strong policy support for growth in apprenticeships with a national target set for 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020. The Marches has a role to play in contributing to this target. In 2014/15 (Q4) the Marches had 7,600 starts indicating that the sub-region's contribution to this target is currently low.
- 3.27 Learner participation in apprenticeships in the Marches has improved in the past two years although the scope for improvement may be held back by below average employer participation in providing apprenticeships. The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy is anticipated to facilitate employer investment in apprenticeships but there are concerns that it may leave out and disengage smaller employers.
- 3.28 The majority of apprenticeships are intermediate and advanced level, with only a minority of starts at higher levels, which reflects the national picture. Policy interventions are underway to stimulate the supply of higher level apprenticeships and the Marches needs to embrace these opportunities in key sectors for growth. The opportunity for growth in apprenticeships is particularly strong in the Marches key sectors of advanced manufacturing, health and social care, and professional services where the model of apprenticeships is well established.
- 3.29 The number of traineeships is relatively small scale in the Marches and with a low success rate suggesting there is scope for improvement.

Overview

- 3.30 This action proposes the development of a Marches Apprenticeship Strategy aimed at increasing the number of apprenticeship starts as part of the national policy drive. This should be targeted at the Marches key sectors to meet growth aspirations and skill shortages. There are a number of strands for consideration:
- Promoting the parity of vocational courses to learners as a viable alternative to academic routes.
 - Developing provider capacity to deliver apprenticeships, particularly the provision of apprenticeships at advanced and higher levels.

- Provide clear progression routes through the apprenticeship framework to encourage progression to higher skill levels.
- Encouraging participation by Marches businesses, particularly SMEs, to provide places and addressing barriers to business participation.
- Promote the uptake of relevant trailblazer standards to enable employers to tailor elements to their needs.
- Identify where Higher Apprenticeships can play a role in workforce development, facilitate provision to support this and promote these opportunities to employers.
- Promote the apprenticeship route to education, training and employment to learners e.g. National Apprenticeship Week, Apprenticeship Ambassador schemes.

3.31 Traineeships have a role to play in providing a route to apprenticeships and opportunities to enhance the provision of traineeships should be sought.

Year 1 Actions

Measures of Progress

Indicator	Marches Baseline Position	Source	Frequency of Update
No. of traineeship starts	119	SFA (2014/15)	Annual
No. of apprenticeship starts	7,600	SFA (Q4 2014/15)	Quarterly
No & % of apprenticeship starts – advanced	22,300 43%	SFA (Q4 2014/15)	Quarterly
No & % of apprenticeship starts – higher	900 3%	SFA (Q4 2014/15)	Quarterly
% of employers providing formal apprenticeships	9%	UKCES Employer Perspectives Survey (2013)	Bi-annual

A6 – Widening Participation and Access to Employment

Rationale

- 3.34 The Marches Skills Action Plan seeks to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are equitable in impact and that all residents have the opportunity to realise their aspirations. There are pockets of multiple deprivation in the Marches which can be attributed to relatively low levels of income, employment, and education and skills in these areas. There are also areas of low participation in higher education where deprivation is concentrated. Accessibility to employment and training is a key consideration given the large geography and rurality of the Marches.
- 3.35 Mobility and flexibility need to be encouraged in the workforce to enable people to change jobs and careers in response to changing circumstances. The ageing of the workforce in the Marches and the scale of replacement demands highlights the importance of reskilling older workers to ensure they have the skills to meet expansion opportunities and the changing shape of skills demand.

Overview

- 3.36 This action recognises the support needed to enable residents and workers to realise their skills potential and access employment. Target groups include NEET individuals, unemployed, under-employed, those with disabilities, those with English as a Second Language, and older workers.
- 3.37 From a supply perspective, the Marches need to ensure education and training offer matches the local labour market to provide residents with the opportunity to enhance their skills.
- 3.38 Clear progression pathways need to be in place to enable low skilled/low paid workers to progress to attain higher skills/higher pay. This includes ensuring that effective information advice and guidance is in place, for young people as well as adults, to facilitate upskilling, reskilling and support for lifelong learning to help provide a more flexible workforce.
- 3.39 This action recognises the important role played by the Voluntary and Community Education (VCE) sector in delivering learning provision that meets the needs of individuals. These organisations offer targeted support and are particularly effective at engaging with hard-to-reach learners. These organisations make an important contribution to learning and skills development and supporting community cohesion and sustainable community agendas. There is a need to support the VCE sector to maximise the contribution it can make.

Measures of Progress

Table 3.6 Baseline Position and Measures of Progress

Indicator	Marches Baseline Position	Source	Frequency of Update
Unemployment rate	4%	APS (2015)	Annual
Economic activity rate	81%	APS (2015)	Annual
% NEET	5.7%*	DfE (2015)	Annual
% of JSA claimants aged 16-24	16.7%	ONS (2015)	Quarterly
% KS5 leavers continuing into education, employment or training	72.7%*	DfE (2013/14)	Annual
% of residents qualified to L2 or above	76.1%	APS (2015)	Annual

* Marches figure is an average of the three LAD's

4. Monitoring and Delivery

Delivery Structures

- 4.1 Implementation of the Skills Action Plan will be driven forward by the Marches LEP. The LEP Skills Board will be responsible for ensuring the Skills Action Plan is taken forward, agreeing priorities for action, developing the operational detail, and monitoring implementation. The Skills Board is responsible for overseeing the selection process and making recommendations to the LEP Board on the projects to be funded with Growth Deal Skills Capital Funding and also identifying the activities to be funded under the ESIF programme in partnership with the Skills Funding Agency and making recommendations to the LEP Board and ESIF Committee on the allocation of ESIF funds.

Monitoring

- 4.2 The Marches Skills Board meets quarterly and progress against the Skills Action Plan will be reported upon. Each broad action area has identified tracking indicators against which progress can be measured. The Skills Board will agree targets to be set.

Funding

- 4.3 There are a number of funding sources which the Skills Action Plan can draw upon. The details of these are being drawn up into a summary document for use by partners and will be maintained by the Skills Lead in the LEP Team .

Appendix A - List of Stakeholders Consulted

Workshop Attendees

Table A.1 List of Attendees to Marches LEP Skills Workshop on 2nd February 2016

Name	Role	Organisation
Alexia Heath	Local Authority Representative	Herefordshire Council
Andy Jones	Director	Harper Adams University
Chris Scott	Principal	TCAT
Claire Smout	Workforce Development Manager	The Care Workforce Development
David Williams	Deputy Principal	Herefordshire and Ludlow College
Janine Vernon	Local Authority Representative	Shropshire Council
Michael Burke	JARDU	SFA
Paul Hinkins	Deputy Chair	Marches LEP Board
Paul Kirkbright	Deputy Provost	University Centre Shrewsbury
Paul O'Neill	Director	The Marches Skills Provider Network
Rob Gready	Chairman	Herefordshire Care Provider Group
Sonia Roberts	Charity Manager	Landau Ltd
Sue Marston	Local Authority Representative	Telford and Wrekin Council

- A.2 Presentations were also made each of the three Business Boards: Telford & Wrekin, Herefordshire, and Shropshire.

Other Stakeholders Consulted

Table A.2 Other Stakeholders Consulted

Name	Role	Organisation
Alexia Heath	Senior Advisor Post 16 Learning and Skills	Herefordshire Council
Nick Webster	Economic Development Manager	Herefordshire Council
Frank Myers MBE	Chair	Herefordshire Business Board MD, MCP Systems Consultants Ltd
Mark Pearce	Hereford EZ	Hereford EZ
Kathy Mulholland	Inward Investment & Business Support Service Delivery Manager	Telford & Wrekin Council
Katherine Kynaston	Business & Development Planning Manager	Telford & Wrekin Council
Paul Hinkins	Chair/ Deputy Chair	Telford Business Board / Marches LEP Board MD, Business Watch Guarding Ltd
Clare Cox	Business Relationship Manager for Economic Growth	Shropshire Council
George Candler	Director of Commissioning	Shropshire Council
Mandy Thorn MBE	Chair/ Deputy Chair	Shropshire Business Board / Marches LEP Board MD, Marches Care
Prof. Ian Oakes	Chair	Marches LEP Skills Board Deputy Vice Chancellor, Wolverhampton University

Graham Wynn OBE	Chair	Marches LEP Board / Chairman, The TTC Group
Dr David Llewellyn	Chairman	Marches Agri-Food Working Group Vice Chancellor, Harper Adams University
Sonia Roberts	Social Enterprise & Third Sector Champion	Marches LEP Board / Charity Manager, Landau Ltd
Peter Brown	Chair	Marches Housing & Planning Sub-Group Chief Executive, Herefordshire Housing Group