



## Growth Hub Bi-Annual Report 2017 (1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> September)

<b>LEP Accountable Body:</b>	Shropshire Council
<b>Local Enterprise Partnership:</b>	Marches Local Enterprise Partnership
<b>Growth Hub name:</b>	Marches Growth Hub
<b>Date of Bi-Annual Report:</b>	6th October 2017
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<b>Date:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> October 2017
<b>Deadline for return to BEIS:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> October 2017

This template has been produced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) at the request of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to help with the production of the Growth Hub Bi-Annual Report. This is a guide to the type of information that BEIS expects to be included.

LEPs are however; free to use an alternative format for their reviews as long as the key content areas specified within the template are incorporated within final reports.

This will ensure consistency and transparency to help evaluate the impact of the funding provided for the development of Growth Hubs in 2017-2018 and allow BEIS to publish an overarching Growth Hub summary, drawing on the information provided in individual Growth Hub Bi-Annual Reports.

We request that the Bi-Annual Report should be completed and **returned to BEIS in word format (not as a pdf)** and that each section should provide the details requested in a short and concise way.

Bi-Annual Reports should be submitted to [Growth.Hubs@beis.gov.uk](mailto:Growth.Hubs@beis.gov.uk) no later than **16<sup>th</sup> October 2017** and copied to your BEIS Local Area Lead for information.

**Note:** The requirement for each Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to produce a Growth Hub Bi-Annual Review is set down in Schedule 3 of individual Grant Offer Letters and is also a requirement of the common 'Metrics and Evaluation Framework' which all LEPs have signed up to.

## Growth Hub Executive Summary

**A. Please set out the objectives and priorities of your Growth Hub and its high-level achievements in the last six months (1<sup>st</sup> April 2017- 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017). Include its key features and strengths. [250-300 words maximum]**

### Objectives

#### Engagement & Support

The Marches Growth Hub (MGH) is an important tool used by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (MLEP) to engage with and support entrepreneurs/businesses. The Marches LEP area spans 2,300 square miles and is home to 29,800 SME's. To be able to cover such a broad geographical area with limited resources and funding, we have had to develop robust strategic partnerships and excellent working links with three Local Authorities (LA's), two Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), three universities, several private sector-led business network groups and government all of which are key to the MGH success.

#### MGH Model

Through the virtual hub [www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk), central helpline 0345 6000 727 and the three-physical hub situated in Hereford, Shrewsbury and Telford & Wrekin, the MGH is supporting thousands of businesses by linking them to national, regional and local support including: -

- LA business support teams
- Department of International Trade (DIT)
- Intellectual Property Office (IPO)
- Business Growth Programme (BGP)
- Manufacturing Growth Programme (MGP) and
- European Union (EU) funding programmes.

#### Marketing Communications

In addition to our up-to-date user-friendly website, we deliver a high level of social media activity to help raise the awareness of the MGH service. Please see achievements in Section C on page 13.

A monthly digital news digest is issued to a growing number of users keeping them up-to-date on existing and new products and services as well as promoting achievements and events. A flexible MGH marketing plan is in place with the aim of building the profile of the MGH as a single point of access for business and skills support across the LEP area.

### Priorities

#### Partnership Development

- The two monthly Operational Group meeting, helps maintain and further develop the excellent working relationship that we have with the three LA partners that manage the physical hubs. The meeting also helps support and develop engagement with key national business support providers and local delivery partners (both public and private). The agenda has allowed for discussions around the Industrial Strategy, Brexit and Scale-up. We have also received presentations on new ERDF projects and findings from the draft MGH Evaluation and Review report.
- We have three Private Sector Area Business Boards covering Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin which support strong communication with the business base. The Chair of

each Board sits on the LEP Partnership Board. The Area Business Boards have cross-sector strategic business representation, also including: the relevant Chamber of Commerce; the FSB; other business sector networks; the voluntary and social enterprise sector; and the rural farming network. These Area Business Boards are not LEP Sub Groups, they have their own independent function and remit to provide a strategic role in supporting growth across their areas. The inclusion of the Area Board Chairs is aimed at providing strong; two way communications on business needs with SME business community; informing strategy development and adding to other direct communication undertaken by the LEP with the wider business. The MGH Operational and Steering Group Chair also performs a role in representing and engaging with SME business community.

- We have continued to develop and grow the sphere of influence of the MGH. We have done this through continuously building links with a much broader range of SMEs via our accountants and solicitors, the Chambers of Commerce, FSB and other business representation organisations. During the last six months, we have developed relationships with Institute of Directors (IOD) and Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE). The meeting with the IOEE resulted in a MGH article in the IOEE newsletter. A copy of the article has been provided in Appendix A.
- We have continued to maintain and develop our stakeholder list to ensure wider engagement.

### **Improving Marketing Communications**

- The MGH hold two monthly Campaign group meetings. The group is made up of staff from the MGH virtual hub, three physical hubs including University of Wolverhampton and a representative from the marketing consultancy team. The aim of the group is to share best practice with regards to events, strategically plan future events, share good news stories, support the promotion of events and ensure that we are all aligned with the current marketing campaign and MGH marketing protocols. During the last six months, we have held two meetings (May and August).

### **Encouraging Business Start-up and Growth**

- The commissioning of twelve SME case studies last financial year has helped promote business success and encourage business start-up and growth during the last six months. Six out of the twelve case studies have been used as part of our current #Getgrowing campaign. These case studies can be viewed on our website using this link <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/>
- The Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) was launched at the end of August 2017. The two schemes have been promoted on the MGH website, through the MGH Operational Group and MGH Steering Group and via our business support networks.
- We are continuously promoting our locally designed and government funded growth and innovation business support schemes.
- The Marches LEP with the support from MGH and a range of local organisations, successfully delivered two high profile business events in May and June 2017. The aim of the events was to launch the Marches LEP Annual Report 2017 and increase SME awareness of the work of the LEP and MGH. The agenda for the day included an update on the Marches LEP and how hard the LEP is working to remove barriers to business growth, improving skills, speeding up connections to superfast broadband, opening up development land for investment and promoting growth in housing. In addition to this, there were inspirational presentations from local business leaders, an exhibition area made up of an array of business and skills partners and workshops providing advice and support around exporting, cyber security, business growth and recruiting and managing apprentices.

The first event took place at the Telford International Centre, Telford on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May with **159** attendees and the second on 13<sup>th</sup> of June at Hereford Race Course with **107** attendees. At both events, the MGH took centre stage in the exhibiting area with the physical hubs and University of Wolverhampton providing business support clinics. We also had two MGH ERDF projects exhibiting their programmes on the day namely Building Business Confidence (BBC) and Marches Building Investment Grant (MBIG). Exhibitors included Local Authority

economic development teams, universities, colleges, Marches Skills Provider Network, Chamber of Commerce/DIT, FSB, Made in The Midlands, local business support groups, Business Growth Programme, Enterprise Europe Network, Marches Centre of Manufacturing and Technology and West Mercia Police. The Telford event commenced with an extremely successful and well received express networking session which was jointly hosted by FSB and Shropshire Chamber of Commerce. Twelve tables of twelve business people spent two hours exchanging ideas and promoting their business. "Exhausting but brilliant!" was how one participant summed it up.

### Improving Export

- Through our sponsorship last financial year, DIT commissioned eight case studies (including video sound bites) to help promote the exporting services available. This material has been used by DIT to deliver a four-week social media campaign starting on the last week in September 2017. Impact/results will be reported in the BEIS year-end report. DIT has also provided the same material branded MGH which we will use as part of our #Getgrowing campaign. These case studies have already been shared with Karen Leigh at BEIS.

### Achievements from 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017

The awareness of the MGH service is increasing month on month and this is highlighted by the bi-annual results below: -

- **4311** Walk-in, calls or web enquiries to Marches Growth Hub
- **4314** Businesses supported by the Marches Growth Hub (including support received from Partners)
- **269** events were delivered via the March Growth Hubs – Shropshire, Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin. The full list of events has been provided in Appendix B
- **2767** People attended Marches Growth Hub business support events
- **18 EU** funded business support programmes including grant schemes now being delivered. The full list has been provided in Appendix C
- **£95,420** Grant funding awarded to Marches businesses
- **9** new jobs created thanks to grant support.
- **226** enquiries sign posted to third parties. Evidence has been provided in Appendix D

With limited funding, resources and such a vast geographical area, we have increased social media and communication activity to help support outreach and profile raising resulting in an increase of MGH service take-up. This has proven successful and is demonstrated in the 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 figures below. Further information on achievements are detailed in Section C on page 14.

- **7794** website users
- **2281** twitter followers
- **5#** campaigns

### Growth Hub 2017/2018 final grant spend position

**Please state how much of your 2017/2018 grant has been spent to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017. How much do you anticipate being spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018?**

£77,566.00 has been spent to 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2017. We anticipate £205k to be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

### Summary of progress of your Growth Hub to date

**B: Summary of Growth Hub progress [100 words maximum per question]**

- **Strategic Partnerships**

- **Which organisations are delivering the Growth Hub activity? Are they a public or private sector organisation? Are they operating under a contract or partnership arrangement? What have been the benefits of this approach?**

### **MGH Delivery**

The Marches Growth hub has one full time member of staff (Helpline Manager), who manages the helpline, e-mail enquiries and maintains the website. This person is supported by the Marches LEP Business Support Officer. Due to limited resources, we work in partnership with the three local authorities (LA's) and the University of Wolverhampton who provide tier one Business Support/Economics Development generalists to support the operation of the three physical hubs.

### **Operating Contract**

A service level agreement (SLA) and data sharing agreement (DSA) is in place. These two key documents specify that direct referrals to partners are responded to within 48hrs, data protection protocols are followed and information on the website is maintained and kept up-to-date. In addition to this, marketing protocols are in place to ensure that branding remains consistent.

### **Benefits**

The SLA and DSA ensures that the service continues to be valued by our local businesses and the wider business support services network. It also helps ensure that the MGH service remains to be the first port of call for accurate, up-to-date and impartial information on business support across the whole of the LEP area.

- **What opportunities have been explored by the LEP to support cross boundary working with other LEPs, Growth Hubs and strategic partners to ensure value for money (e.g. cluster working; joint projects and sharing resources)? Where possible, stating how these will support local and Industrial Strategy key sectors.**

**Midlands Business Support Network** - MGH staff attend the network meeting which occurs four times a year. The network includes West and East Midlands Growth Hubs along with several national business support providers. Opportunities for cross border working are investigated as well as sharing best practice and coordination of events to ensure value for money is obtained across the wider area. The Helpline Manager and Business Support Officer attended the meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in Birmingham. The event was a very well attended with **41** present. Eighteen attendees were from business support, central government and business representative organisations. The agenda included an update from BEIS with regards to Midland Engine/Election/Industrial Strategy and Growth Hub. We also heard from Innovate UK regarding the Industrial Challenge Fund and the British Business Bank gave an update on Midlands Engine Investment Fund. Discussions included the various business festivals around the Midlands and the need for coordination of future events.

**Midlands Engine** - The Marches LEP is a key partner in the Midlands Engine (a long-term strategy for economic growth for the wider region). The LEP has been working with other LEPs to develop this plan. The ambition of the Midlands Engine is to improve the economy of the Midlands and the UK, deliver enhanced quality of life for citizens/community and to become a globally recognised driver of the economy.

In March 2017, the Midlands Engine Strategy was launched as a demonstration of the government's commitment to making the Midlands a powerful Engine for economic growth. The Marches LEP is working with the new Midlands Engine Partnership to help the wider region achieve its growth potential, through investment, research and development, innovation and skills and connectivity improvements. One of the strands born from this strategy is the Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) which was launched at the end of August 2017.

The Board, LEP and Growth Hub team will continue to support the strategy and delivery of this fund. Progress during the last six months includes the LEP Director working with partners on a

response to the Midlands Engine strategy.

**The Business Growth Programme (BGP)** - is a £33m fund which consists of four strands of business support; namely the Business Development Programme, the Business Innovation Programme, the Green Bridge Supply Chain Programme and the HS2 project. BGP grants are available to eligible companies across the Marches area, via the European Regional Development Fund. The scheme is being delivered by Birmingham City Council in partnership with the Marches LEP and Greater Birmingham & Solihull and Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire LEPs. During the last six months, **£30,000** of funding has been awarded to businesses within the Marches area. A further **£124k** of funding is pending a decision.

**European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) Projects** - In partnership with the University of Wolverhampton, the Marches LEP supports several ERDF projects namely; Innovative Product Support Service (IPSS), Knowledge Exchange & Enterprise Network (KEEN) and Built Environment Climate Change Innovations (BECCI). These are delivered across the Black Country and the Marches LEP areas. Progress evidence has been provided in Appendix E.

### **Priority Sectors**

The Marches Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) identifies four priority sectors: -

- Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering (with auto specialism);
- Agri Food packaging/Agri Tech including food processing and packaging;
- Defence & Cyber Security (emerging sector) and
- Environmental Tech (emerging sector).

### **Advanced Manufacturing/Engineering (with auto specialism)**

- **The Business Growth Programme** – please see details above.
- **Drive Midlands** – Drive Midlands provides a central hub for businesses; coordinating local support services for the automotive sector and collaborating more closely with higher and further education to support skills development. The aim is to support the development of SMEs to safeguard the future of the automotive industry. To accelerate success, partners are being brought on board with sector expertise that support the Midlands automotive industry. By working with industry and government, Drive Midlands aims to help develop a robust local supply chain, increase local sourcing levels at Tiers 1 and 2 and improve coordinated working across the entire Midlands area. The Marches LEP along with other Midlands LEPs are supporting and promoting this to local manufacturing businesses that supply the auto sector. A MLEP Board member sits on the Auto Council LEP Group.
- **The Manufacturing Growth Programme** – This project has been operating since October 2016 and is now working across 16 LEP areas. Delivered by Economic Solutions Ltd, the programme supports SME Manufacturers to grow by identifying, understanding and removing barriers to growth and enabling sustainable business improvement. Progress to date includes 42 grants offered worth £57,466 to businesses within the Marches. Infographics and a case study has been provided in Appendix F.
- **West Midlands Manufacturing Club** - The University of Wolverhampton Business Solutions have continued with the development of their West Midlands Manufacturing Club as the preferred route to market to achieve active engagement with the West Midlands manufacturing and engineering SME community. With membership of the club now approaching 350+ SME's the club has an ambitious target for the registration of over 500+ businesses by March 2018. An online registration system is now in place with new members being offered the opportunity for an initial one-2-one discovery meeting at one of their five geographic locations/growth hubs at Hereford, Shrewsbury, Telford, Wolverhampton Sandwell & Dudley. They are continuing to develop a series of manufacturing themed events aimed to address the shortfall in manufacturing productivity and technology adoption across the West Midlands. The Manufacturing Club has recently launched their High-Speed Rail (HS2) **Get on Track** Rail Tender Supplier Readiness Programme which has been fully

subscribed for the initial pilot which was delivered in September 2017. As a result of the initial response, a further programme is now scheduled to take place at the end of November 2017. Other areas of support where they can provide tangible support to the manufacturing sector include the promotion of ERDF products. In addition to the above the University is now set to open a Science, Technology and Prototyping Centre in Summer 2018. A unique combination of laboratory, workshop and high-tech office space for science and technology-based businesses. The new £10.1m, three-storey centre being created at the University of Wolverhampton Science Park will provide 4,000 square metres of space for high specification laboratory and workshop space, as well as a café and space for parking. The unrivalled specialist facilities will be ideal for scientific- based SME businesses and to enhance research and development activities.

### **Agri-Tech**

- **Agri Project** is a food and drink sector project that will support Marches SME's in the sector. This is an ERDF funded project being delivered by Aston University and Harper Adams University. It will support about 100 SMEs in the Marches over the next 2-3 years to innovate to help exploit market opportunities, particularly in agri-tech/agri-food. It will deliver both short and long-term one to one assistance, workshops and innovation collaboration opportunities.
- **Agri-Tech West (ATW) Project** is a food and drink sector project. This project is funded by 4 LEPs – the Marches, Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Stoke and Cheshire and Warrington. The project is currently being developed. The project will have a website and information service and will work in partnership with the Growth Hubs. The website will support/include: -
  - Showcasing the geographical region as being an area of leadership for Agri Tech, Agri Food and related innovation;
  - An information point/one stop shop for anything with an Agri Tech focus or agenda. (like a virtual growth hub but focused on Agri Tech);
  - A tool to evidence the collaboration between all partners and cross LEP workings as well as the external interest and interaction; and
  - Increase the visibility and awareness of ATW as a whole – regionally, nationally and globally.

Over the next 6-12 months a series of collaborative events will run across the ATW region which will start to launch ATW and build momentum and awareness. The project will then look to have a standalone ATW event. The website and marketing material should be in place by the end of 2017.

- **Agri Tech West Alliance** - In 2016, The Marches, Stoke & Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Cheshire & Warrington LEPs, worked together to explore the detailed footprint of the Agri-Tech Sector within their geography, with the aim of developing an effective working partnership (called the Agri Tech West Alliance) that will drive business growth and productivity, delivering a step-change in business competitiveness that will extend beyond the geographies of these four LEPs. Since then, the LEPs have produced The Agri Tech West Scoping Study Final Report (November 2016). This provides an understanding of the agri-tech sector asset base, including sub-area strengths, commonalities, comparative advantages and opportunities. Our response to the Industrial Strategy included a proposal from this group.

### **Defence & Cyber Security**

- The Marches LEP along with Worcestershire LEP and Gloucestershire LEP is developing a programme to support new and growth potential businesses that support the new and emerging defence and cyber sector in the Marches. The Marches LEP has recently commissioned a sector needs assessment.

We have or are developing a number of projects that will address the needs of growth potential businesses in these sectors that in turn will support the Industrial Strategy.

- **What approach has the LEP through its Growth Hub take to continue to develop strong, inclusive strategic partnerships across the LEP area and what plans have been put in place to ensure that any local conflicts (where they exist) are overcome?**

## **Inclusive Strategic Group**

### **Growth Hub Steering Group**

The is a sub-group of the LEP Board which meets on a quarterly basis. The group has a very important role to play as it provides guidance on key issues such as policy and objectives, budgetary control, marketing strategy and resource allocation.

During the last six months, we have welcomed a private representative from Telford Business Board and the University of Wolverhampton. The group are due to meet at the end of October to hear and discuss the findings of the Independent Review & Evaluation of the MGH.

Steering Group membership includes: -

Local Partners

- Chair (Private)- LEP Board Member/ Chair of Telford Business Board (nominated Small Business Champion)
- Herefordshire Business Board (private)
- Shropshire Business Board Representative (private)
- Telford Business Board Representative (private)
- Shropshire Chamber of Commerce (private - non-secretariat)
- Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce (private – non-secretariat)
- Marches Skills Provider Networks (private)
- University of Wolverhampton (public)
- Federation of Small Businesses (private)
- Telford & Wrekin Council (public)
- Herefordshire Council (public)
- Shropshire Council (public)
- Marches LEP (public/private)
- Women in Rural Enterprise (private)
- Be Bold (private)

In attendance: - BEIS

### **Growth Hub Operational Group**

The Operational Group meet every two months. The aim of the group is to manage referrals and outputs from the virtual hub and the three physical hubs and to ensure inclusivity of key national business support providers and local delivery partners. There have been no changes to the group during the last 6 months.

The membership includes: -

Local Partners:

- Herefordshire Council
- Shropshire Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council
- University of Wolverhampton
- LEP Growth Hub staff

National:

- DIT
- Economic Growth Solution Ltd.

All members are required to provide an update on their service area, level of activity in the Marches



area and comply with the SLA that has been developed so we can monitor progress and make continuous improvements.

Other business support providers (local and national) are asked to attend the Steering and Operational Group as and when required.

As the business support landscape evolves the membership of the Operational group will be amended to ensure all key partners attend the meetings. The Group is Chaired by Chair of the Growth Hub Steering Group.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

On joining the Growth Hub Steering Group each member is asked to complete a detailed Register of Financial and Other Interest Form and this is reviewed on an annual basis by the LEP Director with the Chair of the Growth Hub Steering Group. In addition to this, they are asked to complete a Declaration of Interest Form at the start of all meetings for any relevant agenda item. The LEP Director with the Chair of the Growth Hub Steering Group monitor any conflicts of interest in line with the LEP Conflicts of Interest Policy.

## **1. National and Local Integration**

- **The co-ordination of local, national, public and private business support is a core purpose of a Growth Hub; businesses want a seamless, simple customer journey to get to the help they need. Please set out what activity you have undertaken to join up your Growth Hub offer with other national business support programmes e.g. Department for International Trade; Innovate UK and the Enterprise Europe Network; Intellectual Property Office; Better Business for All and British Business Bank etc. What have been the benefits of the approach?**

National service and local providers namely, FSB, Chamber of Commerce, DIT, Intellectual Property Office (IPO), Innovate UK, Enterprise Europe Network, and ERDF funded projects are encouraged and have been holding regular clinics at our three physical hubs (free of charge) to increase the opportunity for local businesses to update their knowledge, obtain quality advice and access networking opportunities.

### **DIT**

All three physical hubs have a regular DIT presence which has helped inform the Operational Group on emerging business issues and concerns. Referral to DIT are highlighted in the data on Page 13.

During the last six months, West Midland Chamber of Commerce launched a new ERDF programme namely SME International Growth Project. Support is provided by International Trade Advisers operating out of the six West Midlands Chambers of Commerce and are accessible through the Growth Hubs. Since the launch, DIT has received **10** enquiries from the Marches area, one of which has completed their activity, claimed and have been paid **£2k**.

<http://www.wmchambers.co.uk/about-us/projects/current-business-support-projects/sme-international-growth-project/>

In addition to this, the MGH has and will continue to support and promote the programme of Trade and Investment missions between the Midlands and US between 2017 and 2018. During the last 6 months, nine companies from the Marches region attended various missions.

### **Innovate UK**

Since 2010/11, Innovate UK has awarded £359.5m in business-led innovation with 1622 unique organisations. Businesses within the Marches have been awarded total of £11.5m of this funding.

There is regular communication between the Marches LEP and Innovate UK's Regional Manager to understand how we can further support those businesses that have already received funding and how we can support additional businesses.

The MGH also works very closely with Innovate UK's Regional Manager to promote their services and events as well as improve the information on our website in relation to their services and support. Recently, we have supported the promotion of Innovate UK's flagship Innovation showcase which is on 8 + 9 November in Birmingham - [Innovate 2017](#).

### **British Business Bank**

During the last six months, we have worked very closely with the Marches Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) Senior Relationship Manager and supported outreach activity. As a result, the Relationship Manager has carried out the following activity to help raise the profile of the £120m MEIF which was launched at the end of August 2017: -

- Meetings with MGH - Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Growth Hubs;
- Meeting with ERDF Technical Assist Team, Shropshire Council;
- Exhibiting at the MGH Business Event 2017 at Hereford Racecourse;
- Attendance at "We're Backing Herefordshire" Event;
- Meetings with financial intermediaries in Hereford and Shrewsbury;
- Presented at the Midlands Business Support Network Meeting; and
- Meeting between LEP/MGH and MEIF fund managers.

We are in the process of considering a replacement MEIF Strategic Oversight Board Member to act as an alternate. Two members of the MGH team will represent Marches LEP on the MEIF Regional Advisory Board (RAB). The first RAB meeting took place in September and will occur quarterly.

## **2. Governance**

- How have the LEPs governance arrangements aided the establishment and development of the Growth Hub? What have been the benefits of the approach?

Please see Inclusive Strategic Groups on Page 4.

### **Governance Benefits**

The benefits of the governance structure are that the LEP Board can assist with the setting of strategic direction for the Growth Hub. The private sector led Board mirrors the Growth Hub boundaries and ensures that the Growth Hub is a useful tool to assist with the LEP's overall strategy for growth. The three LA's and three Area Business Boards are members of the LEP Board and therefore fully support and endorse the Growth Hub and have become key members in assisting in the delivery and success of the Growth Hub. Three LA members and a Business Board representative attend the Growth Hub Steering Group and/or Operations Group and each LA provides personnel to help operate the Hub at these physical locations. The Business Boards help to provide direct links to private businesses testing the effectiveness of the service and provide a route to publicise the service.

## **3. Triage and Diagnostics**

### **MGH Model**

The MGH model adopted by the Marches LEP includes a 'virtual' support centre that is supported by three physical Growth Hubs.

The Virtual hub has one dedicated Helpline Manager supported by the Marches LEP Business Support Officer. Both the Helpline Manager and the Business Support Officer are based at the LEP office. The Helpline Manager has a wealth of business experience with a background in Business Banking and currently is working toward a Level 5 – Business Support Diploma.

Due to limited resources, we have worked in partnership with the three local authorities who have provided officers to support the operation of the three physical hubs. These tier 1 officers are business support/economic development generalists providing a signposting service. Most of this team are working towards a Level 5 – Business Support Diploma/Certificate. To note, we do not have an established skilled advisor team in our hubs. We have however recruited with ERDF a more skilled team of advisors (x7) to deliver the Building Business Confidence (BBC) Programme. The BBC programme was designed in 16/17 and is a mentoring scheme for both start-up and growing businesses focusing on sales, improving turnover and developing the workforce. From 1 April 2017, this team has worked across the Marches and has some capacity and skill sets to work with scale-up potential companies. Please refer to page 18 for BBC programme progress.

To ensure an efficient and effective service is delivered to our Businesses the Marches LEP has devised a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and data sharing agreement with our key delivery partners. These two documents specify that direct referrals to partners are responded to within 48 hours, data protection protocols are followed and information on the website is maintained and kept up-to-date. By creating these documents (agreed by the key partners) we aim to ensure that the service continues to be valued by our local businesses and the wider business support service network and the Marches Growth Hub is the first port of call for accurate, up-to-date and impartial information on business support.

As the Marches LEP covers a large geographical area (2300 square miles) this model (virtual and physical) ensures that businesses can easily access 24hr business support as well have opportunities to access face to face support, attend local events and have direct access to national service providers as well as European funded business support schemes.

#### **Virtual Growth Hub**

This is serviced by a business-friendly website ([www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk)), a single local contact number helpline (0345 6000727) along with an email address. The service is managed by a dedicated Helpline Manager 08.45-5pm every weekday who provides general advice and a signposting service. In addition to this, the Coordinator ensures that the information on the website is maintained and kept up to date.

#### **Website - [www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk)**

The website includes information and links to both local and national business support services, training and events. It has been designed with a searchable directory. Local content has been produced and a filter to the search facility has been created to help businesses pinpoint the eligible products and services.

The website is constantly evolving; developments include the creation of an Employer Skills Search Facility. This was developed by the LEP and its Skills Board (which includes business representatives, training & skills providers and universities) to help employers find the right local training for their staff. This search facility brings together in one place all the providers delivering training, skills and qualifications in the Marches for the first time. As well as detailing, more than 1000 courses on offer, it is designed with employers in mind. It offers businesses a chance to search directly for courses, training and skills adding value to their staff and their businesses. In addition to this the website homepage was revamped in time for the first-year Anniversary in October 2016.

The website is fully aligned with the Business is Great Campaign and links to content and tools on GOV.UK and GREAT.GOV. In addition to this, the website links with the national Business Support Helpline to assist with pre-start and start-up enquiries. We also live data share. Dedicated pages are provided on the site for the national business support programmes such as DIT in addition to separate directory enquiries.

#### **Physical Growth Hubs**

As well as hosting a programme of events, the three physical hubs offer a drop-in service and the opportunity to have face to face appointments. The face to face activity intervention tends to be light touch to medium intensity. Other facilities include hot desking (for business start-ups some of which

are sponsored by the FSB and private sector sponsors), meeting rooms, event space, video conferencing and the opportunity to have face to face appointments with public and private sector partner organisations (for example DIT and ERDF supported schemes).

The three physical growth hub offices are situated in key towns in each local authority area i.e. Hereford, Shrewsbury and Telford & Wrekin. The MGH -Telford & Wrekin was the first to open on 21 October 2015 followed by the MGH - Herefordshire on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2015 and MGH - Shropshire on 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2016 with space also available within the University Centre Shrewsbury at no cost.

The Hereford and Telford & Wrekin hubs are situated within buildings operated by the University of Wolverhampton. The Chamber of Commerce has now co-located with the Hereford hub. The Shropshire Hub is co-located with the Chamber of Commerce and DIT within the LA owned building on Battlefield Enterprise Park. The aim of the co-location of the physical hubs at the University sites is to improve links with graduates and the wider business community, encouraging innovation and helping universities to understand the needs of the local business community. All three physical hubs also have a regular presence from DIT.

#### **4. Business Support Simplification**

To ensure the business landscape is not populated by duplicate products and services, the LEP officers are working with the Marches ESIF Committee to ensure that any new applications for business support funding are viewed by the Growth Hub Operational Group to ensure that they compliment current business support rather than duplicate.

#### **5. Growth Hub Sustainability**

- How are you ensuring that your Growth Hub is deliverable and sustainable when the current round of Government funding ends and ensuring that core services continue to remain free to business at first point of contact?

The Marches Growth Hub financial model is relatively low cost providing a virtual hub (based in the LEP office) which is funded 100% by the BEIS annual funding, with three physical hubs, supported by both staff and financial resources by our three local authority partners and University of Wolverhampton. In addition to this, we are supported by University Centre Shrewsbury, Chambers of Commerce and the FSB. The three physical hubs are located in buildings either owned or leased by the University of Wolverhampton and one Local Authority and they bear the bulk of the cost of these well-appointed facilities.

The Virtual Growth Hub was launched in October 2015 and the three physical hubs opened between October 2015 and March 2016. Our focus, this financial year is to build on the business support services for the Marches area provided by the Marches Growth Hub and to increase/maximise the awareness of this offer and the brand within the local business community.

We feel that the brand and services of the Growth Hub are starting to embed in the local business support landscape and the benefits of these services are being acknowledged by local stakeholders and businesses alike. We now aim to investigate opportunities to seek financial support from a variety of sources, both public and private to sustain the service via the three physical hubs. We have however secured ERDF funding to deliver more face to face support via our three physical Growth Hubs and we are willing to investigate and adopt best practice from other Growth Hubs that have been operating for a longer period.

We have allocated some funding from the 2017/18 BEIS funding for an independent evaluation of the Growth Hub service to demonstrate to stakeholders the worth of the service to the business community. The findings of this exercise will help support making the case to partners of the value and impact of the service. This final draft report will be presented to the MGH Steering Group on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October for comments. We will then look to deliver a workshop with the Marches LEP

Management Team around self-sustainable options moving forward.

The Marches LEP is of the opinion that to enable the website and helpline to remain free, continued BEIS core funding for this operation would be required.

### Overview of Key Achievements

**C. Key Achievements.** Provide information on the key achievements of your Growth Hub linked to the requirements of the 2016-2018 'Common Metrics and Evaluation Framework', providing high level overview figures and customer satisfaction rates for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and cumulatively reflecting the total impact of the Growth Hub since launch.

**6. Performance Metrics**

Indicator	1 <sup>st</sup> April – 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2017 Total	Growth Hub Cumulative (since launch)
Total number of businesses engaged	4470	14081
Total number of individuals (pre-starts and start-ups (trading less than one year) engaged	42 Virtual Hub	239 Virtual Hub
Total number of referrals to public/private support	52 Virtual Hub	244 Virtual Hub
Total number of referrals to national programmes e.g. DIT/UKTI, Innovate UK, IPO, Start-Up Loans etc	2 to Economic Growth Solutions (EGS) 1 to DIT 3 Total	2 to EGS 8 to DIT 10 total
Total number of businesses receiving diagnostic & brokerage support	N/A	N/A
Total number of businesses that have received intensive face to face support	98 intensive assists	144
Total number of individuals who have been helped to start a business	Not recorded	No recorded
Total number of mentoring or business to business relationships created	2 referrals to Manufacturing Growth Programme	13 referrals to MGP since programme launched 10/16
Total number of jobs created (if applicable)	10	538
Total number of jobs safeguarded (if applicable)	Not recorded	37
£increase in GVA (if applicable):	Not recorded	Not recorded
£Private sector match secured (if applicable):	158,354	276,228

Evidence of this data has been provided in Appendix G.

**Web Statistics**

	<u>Since launch (Oct 15)</u>	<u>April 2017 - September 2017</u>
Website users	24,766	7,794
Web visits	43,669	12,164

Page views	154,555	41,007
Average time spent	4.09 mins	3.54 mins
Return/new visitors	43%/57%	40%/60%
Most visited pages	Calendar/Start-Up/ About Us	Calendar/About Us/Directory

### Social Media

Twitter followers	2,281 (gained 334 followers since March 31, 2017)
Twitter potential viral reach	3.10 million
Facebook	276 likes, up 150% with monthly reach average 8,600

**Newsletters** – Eight newsletters between April and September 2017 have been sent to 1,521 businesses direct from the Marches Growth Hub, supplemented by regular joint local authority partner/MGH e-shots promoting events, availability of advice and support and promotion of new grants and initiatives.

### Campaigns

#GetStarted – campaign to encourage new start-ups

#Manufacturing - promotion of new skills project plus Manufacturing Growth Programme

#MidlandsEngine

Ongoing campaign to promote Access to Funding as schemes go live such as Marches Business Investment Grant and Marches Engine Investment Fund and EU funding calls.

#GetGrowing – aimed at encouraging businesses to grow

#TBE2017 – promoting The Business Events in Shropshire and Herefordshire

### Wider Communications

- Interviews on Radio Shropshire for The Business Event and Building Business Confidence and coverage in both key Marches print titles, the Shropshire Star and Hereford Times
- Positive media coverage for the Marches Growth Hub and its events as and when released.
- MGH and The Business Events featured as a double page spread in glossy business magazine 'Shropshire Business'.

## 7. Customer Satisfaction

In line with the requirements of the common 'Metrics and Evaluation Framework' for 'medium' and 'high' intensity interventions only, please also provide the tabulated responses to the satisfaction question set out below:

**"How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of this service?"** rated on a five-point scale

For 'light-touch' interventions, a survey approach is sufficient. Questions that could be included based on standard questions asked of customers by all Growth Hubs.

**"How likely would you be to recommend this service to a friend/colleague"**, rated on a standard five point scale?

**Note:** (1 Very Dissatisfied- very poor, 2 Somewhat Dissatisfied - poor, 3 Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied)

**Customer Satisfaction Survey Results**

		Customer Satisfaction Surveys												
Month	Hub	Number Sent	Number returned	How Satisfied Were You With The Service Received?, 1 being very dissatisfied, 5 being very satisfied.					In The Absence Of Growth Hub Support How Likely Are You To Undertake Same Activity?, 1 being very Likely, 5 being very Unlikely.					
				1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
April 2017	Hereford	15	15	0	0	0	10	5	0	0	0	8	7	
	Telford	0												
	Shrewsbury	59	31	0	2	3	4	22	0	1	9	7	13	
	Virtual	20	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	
May 2017	Hereford	13	0											
	Telford	22	22	0	0	0	8	13	21	0	0	0	0	
	Shrewsbury	22	19	0	0	2	6	11	0	3	1	10	5	
	Virtual	19	0											
June 2017	Hereford	6	0											
	Telford	0	0											
	Shrewsbury	11	7	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	3	4	
	Virtual	21	2											
July 2017	Hereford	0												
	Telford	6	6	0	0	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	
	Shrewsbury	46	25	0	0	2	5	18	0	0	3	12	10	
	Virtual	34	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	2	
Aug-17	Hereford	0												
	Telford	0												
	Shrewsbury	79	19	0	0	0	4	15	0	0	2	5	12	
	Virtual	15	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	
Sep-17	Hereford	0	0											
	Telford	6	6	0	0	0	1	0	6	0	0	0	0	
	Shrewsbury	100	37	0	0	1	1	29	0	0	7	10	20	
	Virtual	38	5	0	0	0	0	5	3	2	0	0	0	

**8. Evaluation**

- How else have you measured customer satisfaction and what else have you found?  
N/A
- How have you measured the impact you have had in terms of businesses (or individuals) acting on the help/advice they received from the Growth Hub and what have you found?

The MGH went live on the 19th of October 2015. The focus for the first twelve months was to launch

and set-up the three physical hubs, develop referral systems and to raise awareness.

The next phase of the development of the MGH is to examine the impact and therefore we have allocated funding from the 2017/18 BEIS funding allocation for an independent evaluation of the Growth Hub service to demonstrate to stakeholders the worth of the service to the business community. This work was commissioned in summer 2017 and we are currently in receipt of the draft report which will be presented to the MGH Steering Group on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2017 for final comments.

- Any key achievements not listed above directly linked to the Growth Hub, which could include for example, overall economic impact and impact of any local programmes delivered by the Growth Hub?

See Growth Hub achievements in Executive Summary

## 9. Scale-Ups

- Has the Growth Hub undertaken any local activity from 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> September to directly address the scale-up challenge? This could include:
  - Attending the ScaleUp Institutes and Goldman Sachs “Driving Economic Growth through Scale-Up Businesses and Ecosystems Programme” Identifying and targeting scale-up businesses.
  - Developing a local Scale-Up Plan (and/or incorporating within LEPs Strategic Economic Plan)
  - Identifying growth businesses and those with the potential to scale-up?
  - Introduced any new local programmes aimed at scale-ups and those businesses with growth potential e.g. via ERDF or other funding streams?

### Scale-up Institute

The Marches LEP Director attended a 3-day Scale-up training course in May 2016 (Birmingham) and receives regular updates from the Scale-up Institute. In addition to this, the MGH supported the Institute with the promotion of their Scale-up Survey to the business community through a recent E-newsletter. <http://mailchi.mp/marchesgrowthhub/august2017grants-scaleup-getgrowing?e=139216812f>. The survey was also pushed out via social media.

At present, The LEP Director is working with the Scale-up Institute to support their Deep Dive case study for the ScaleUp Annual Review 2017.

### BEIS - Business Engagement roundtables with Professor Tim Dafforn

The Marches LEP and Growth Hub in partnership with our Shropshire Business Board hosted/facilitated a roundtable event with a cross section of local businesses on 18 September at Harper Adams University. Twenty businesses from a broad range of sectors were present and discussions were held around Brexit and the impact of possible changes to regulations. This was a particular concern for our food related businesses. The other concern raised was the access to skills and talent if businesses were unable to retain/recruit non-UK staff and the wider ramifications such as cost of training staff and training in rural areas.

### MGH - Scale-up Plan

With the input of each of the three MGH physical Growth Hubs, we produced a Scale-up plan for BEIS in July 2017. At present, The Marches LEP is currently undertaking research to support the refresh of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). The findings of the SEP will help support the scale-up plan.



## Database

We now hold intelligence on the sectors and sizes of Marches businesses that fit into the BEIS pre-scale-up and scale-up definition. This information has been sorted by SIC code and transferred to the virtual hub CRM. This information requires further attention to complete gaps in information. Once this exercise is complete, the information will be used to support targeting activity, event participation and for reporting purposes.

## Targeted Events

We will use tools such as the Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) to help identify and target growth/scale-up projects. We are already working very closely the British Business Bank Senior Relationship Manager to support outreach activity. In addition to this, we are linked in with PR and marketing activity driven through the MEIF website, newsletters, press release and social media. The British Business Bank with the support of MGH will be looking to hold two regional events targeted at business intermediaries in January 2018.

We will continue to work with our partners and networks to support outreach activity. This could include shared events with relevant high-profile speakers.

## Local Programmes

Partner organisations have several business growth products/services on offer. In addition to this, we have access to 18 ERDF products/services as well as schemes delivered by the two DIT teams. Progress of some of the programmes are detailed below: -

**Marches Building Investment Grant (MBIG)** is a MLEP ERDF project (£2.5m capital award) that is delivered by Herefordshire Council. The programme went live in February 2017. The scheme aims to provide grants to business across the Marches LEP area to help business extend, reconfigure or renovate commercial premises to increase productivity. A total of 73 enquiries have been received during the period April to Sept 2017, against a total for the scheme of 166. During this six-month period, two steering group meetings have been held consisting of public and private members. A total of £367k has been directly awarded to businesses to date (15% of the budget), these projects aim to create an additional 25 jobs in the Marches area leveraging in £448k of private sector funding. The scheme currently has grant applications totaling £1.1m being developed by businesses which should come forward for consideration in the next 6 months. Please see link for good news story:- <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2017/09/26/oswestry-manufacturer-expands-and-creates-five-jobs-after-landing-97k-grant/>

**Building Business Confidence (BBC)** is a MLEP ERDF programme that is delivered by Good2Great. BBC provides access to coaching and mentoring provision under two strands Start2Great and Smart2Great. **Start2Great** seeks to equip aspiring entrepreneurs and new business start-ups with the skills and knowledge to launch a new business or to further develop one that has recently commenced trading. **Smart2Great** is targeted at existing or growing businesses and aims to equip owners or key people with the skills and knowledge that will hopefully enable the company to grow and develop through four key themes; namely exploiting marketing opportunities, high performance working, grow your own work force and operational management. Since commencing in May 2017, 39 individuals from across the Marches have completed Start2Great with a numerous others currently accessing the workshops. Subsequently, 13 new businesses have already been supported. Furthermore, 15 established businesses have accessed support via one of the two strands. The table below summarises levels of output activity against location of the event to August 2017.

Geographic Location	Event	Attendees/Confirmed Output
Herefordshire	May	6
Herefordshire	June	7

Shropshire	May	3
Shropshire	June	6
Shropshire	July	6
Telford	May	5
Telford	June	3
Telford	June	6
Telford	July	5
Telford	August	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>

**The Manufacturing Growth Programme** delivered by Economic Solutions Ltd. Please refer to Page 6.

**Business Growth Programme** delivered by Birmingham City Council. Please refer to Page 6.

### Summary of Evaluation Activity for your Growth Hub

#### **D. Evaluation. What type of activity has been undertaken to evaluate the wider impact of your Growth Hub? What has the evaluation told you?**

- How have you approached a more in-depth evaluation of your Growth Hub?
- What can you tell BEIS about the findings from the wider evaluation of your Growth Hub?
- What local performance targets were set for your Growth Hub and were these achieved. If yes, please provide details
- What are your plans for a more formal evaluation at the end of 2017-2018?

Please refer to Section 8 on page 16.

### Lessons Learned

**E. Lessons learned/good practice.** What lessons have been learned from the experience of building capability and capacity within your Growth Hub? What areas of innovation and good practice can you share with BEIS and other Growth Hubs?

- **What approach has been taken to building capability and capacity within your Growth Hub? Has this approach been successful?**

Please see Section C on Page 13.

- **What challenges has your Growth Hub faced and how they have these been overcome/mitigated/**

The Virtual Hub Manager is leaving on 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2017. A LEP team member will be supporting the Virtual Growth Hub 2 days per week. Progress will be monitored before any further action is considered with regards to further resourcing.

The Physical Hub Economic Growth Coordinator is leaving the Marches Growth Hub – Shropshire in November. There is a risk that there may be a gap in resource from the current colleague leaving and the new colleague starting. We are however, working with Shropshire Council to ensure a plan of action is in place should this occur.

- **Has your Growth Hub participated in any of the BEIS partnership pilots (e.g. HMRC export data/communications; Better Business for All; British Business Bank and ICAEW or other). If yes, please provide details.**

**Better Business for All** (BBFA) is currently being investigated. Three meetings have taken place with the Project Lead with attendees from Economic Development team representatives from the three local authorities, trading standards Herefordshire and Shropshire fire service. In addition to this, a second meeting included attendees from FSB, Shropshire Chamber, and Telford Council.

The project in the Marches area will take 4-6 years overall. The initial planning stages, agreeing terms of reference, governance and aims will take at least 6 months. Programme delivery stage; 3 – 5 years including 4 -6 years to get the programme embedded across the partners.

**Note:** If you have any additional material that you think would further illustrate the typology and impact of your Growth Hub please attach these, listing what you are sending within your covering email. This could include info-graphics, diagrams and flow charts or case studies.

Other information could include quotes from businesses you have assisted and any innovative or collaborative activity with intermediaries. Please note that this material should be a Hyperlink.

**Appendix information to be provided separately with a covering e-mail.**