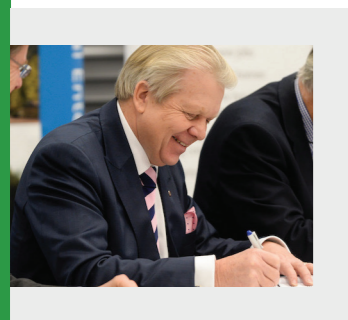


Annual Report of
**THE MARCHES
LOCAL ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP**
2016

01 FOREWARD



Graham Wynn OBE
Chairman, Marches LEP

When the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership was launched five years ago, the vision of the LEP's private sector-led board, in partnership with our three unitary authorities and the Government, was to create the conditions for economic growth across the Marches.

It aimed to remove barriers to growth and work with businesses to develop a vibrant regional economy, where sustainable jobs were being created.

It pledged to put business at the heart of its work and find solutions for better connectivity, whether transport infrastructure or the availability of high speed broadband and mobile technology.

And it committed to working with central Government, to ensure that as Westminster devolved power and decision-making to the regions, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin secured its fair share of the national funding pot.

So how are we doing? Well, we are delivering on our promises, and at the same time, being ambitious in our aims of how much more we can do. And there is *still much to be done*.

In 2014/15, we secured more than £83 million from Government for our Growth Deal projects. These are now being delivered and you can read about them later in this annual report.

In March 2016, one of the commitments agreed in our Growth Deal came to fruition – a land deal worth more than £44 million with the Homes and Communities Agency. The first deal of its kind in England, it will see receipts from sale of public sector land

in Telford invested not only back into the town, but a percentage of the proceeds will also come to the Marches LEP for investment in projects across the Marches.

Another significant milestone in the last year has been the launch of our Marches Growth Hub, offering a single point of access to support for our businesses. Connected to this, we are also tackling the skills issues facing employers head-on.

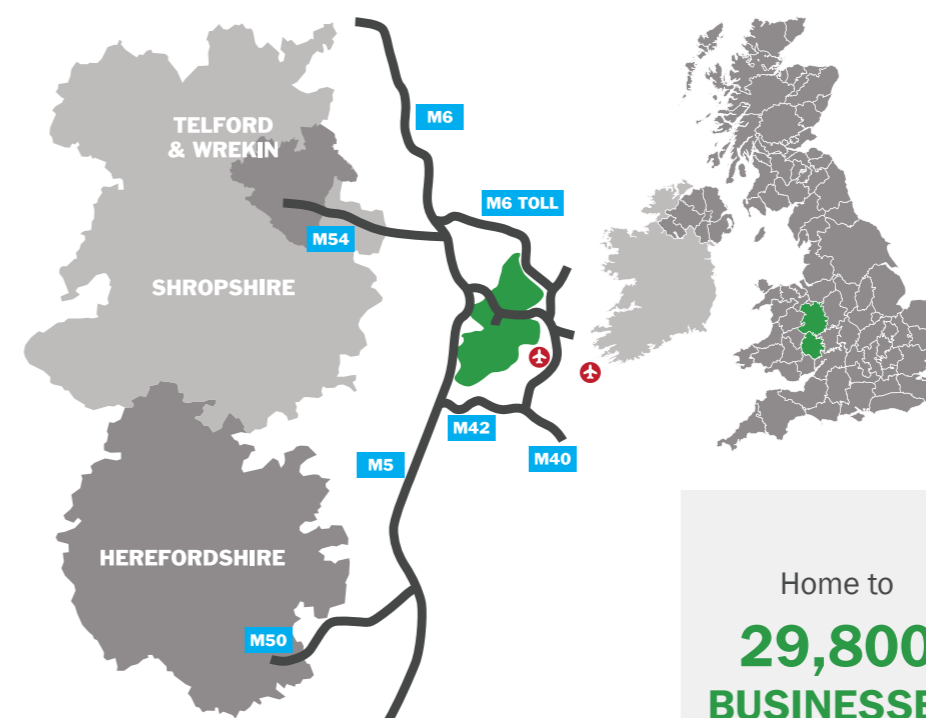
By working directly with employers and training providers we are focused on making sure that workforce development is relevant for business needs, both now and in the future.

The LEP is also a key partner in the Midlands Engine – a long-term strategy for economic growth for the wider region, launched in December 2015. We've been working with other Midlands' LEPs to develop this plan, which will see significant job creation and billions of pounds of private sector investment.

Our regional economy is a work in progress. But the Marches is playing an increasing role and the LEP, its local authority partners and the business community are working together to create opportunities now for our businesses and residents and for the next generation.

The Rt. Hon Greg Clark MP
Secretary of State for Department for Communities and Local Government,
LEP Network Conference,
March 2016

"We've come a long a way since the invitation was first issued for businesses and local councils to come together and propose a different way of working. There have been some fantastic successes in that time and it has been five years, half a decade, of innovation and growth you've brought to your local economies."



666,700
PEOPLE
Live Here

Home to
29,800
BUSINESSES

Contributes
£12.3
BILLION
to the UK Economy

12,300
BUSINESSES
Created Since
2011

Business
Survival Rates
2nd
HIGHEST
Out of 39 LEPs

Marches Start-up
Business Rate
8th
HIGHEST
Out of All LEP Areas

8%
GROWTH
in SMEs in
Last 5 Years

26%
GROWTH
in Business &
Professional
Services Sector

17%
GROWTH
in Information
Service Sector

1,988
INWARD
INVESTMENT
Projects Attracted in
2014/15, up 12%

02 OUR BIG PROJECTS

Major infrastructure projects are under way in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin which will create thousands of homes and jobs.



In 2014/15 the Marches LEP signed a Growth Deal with Government which will see more than £83 million pumped into the region's economy over the next five years. The deal brings together different funding streams designed to support local growth in the region, and will generate up to £30 million in private investment.

As well as key transport projects, designed to open up development sites for homes and business investment, more than £7.7m is being invested in the roll-out of superfast broadband.

There is also more than £3 million being ploughed into skills schemes to help the region address the growing skills gap.

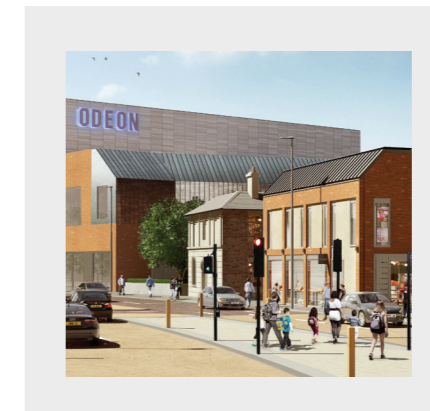
And earlier this year, we agreed unique working arrangements with Government, requested in our 2014 Growth Deal, which will result in the delivery of up to 2,800 homes and 8,500 jobs in the Telford area. Up to £44.5m of funds from the sale of Homes and Communities Agency land in Telford will be invested locally, as well as the wider region, as the LEP will secure a percentage of these receipts for reinvestment in our economy.



Telford Growth Point Package

Upgrades to a series of junctions located along the strategic highway network in Telford to increase capacity on the network ready for business growth and open up additional housing and employment sites at Muxton, Shawburch and Hortonwood. Work began in 2015, and is due to be completed by Spring 2017.

£17.37m	Total project cost
£13.9m	Growth Deal funding
5,369	Jobs
2,848	Homes



Hereford City Centre Transport Package

A four year project, including a new link road between the A465 and A49, which enables a major mixed-use development, integrated with the city centre and maximising the potential of a significant area of under-utilised land in a highly sustainable location for both Hereford and the county.

£40.65m	Total project cost
£16m	Growth Deal funding
760	Jobs
800	Homes



Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package

The Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package is a five year programme which improves network capacity, including improvements to road junctions, sustainable transport and traffic management measures, and enhancements to the public realm in the commercial centre of the town.

£12.1m	Total project cost
£6m	Growth Deal funding
1100	Jobs
1100	Homes



PIPELINE PROJECTS STARTING IN APRIL 2016

Oxon Link Road, Shrewsbury

The Oxon Link Road will be a strategic, single carriageway linking the A5 to the B4380 Holyhead Road. A £12.9m project, with £4.2m from the Local Growth Fund, will support the growth of Shrewsbury through two large green-field urban expansions accelerating the release of land for employment and housing.

Telford Bus Station

Work to relocate Telford Bus Station as part of the wider shopping centre redevelopment, opening up new retail space and improved connectivity. It will also unlock 9.1 hectares of retail development land. This project will cost a total of £1.9m with £1.3m from the Local Growth Fund.

Eastern Gateway Package

A £5.2m project, including £3.6m from Local Growth Fund, which is key to maximising the opportunity linked to the Jaguar Land Rover site just 12 miles to the east of Telford. It opens up the potential of the 31ha T54 development site immediately next to J4 of M54 and brings wider economic benefits to the automotive supply chain. The project aims to deliver 3,438 new jobs and 1,400 homes.

South Wye Transport Package

A package of improvements to the southern elements of the Hereford transport network, linking the Hereford Enterprise Zone and A49 with the A465, opening up land for a new development of 1,000 homes and easing traffic congestion. This scheme will cost a total of £34.9m including £27m from the Local Growth Fund.

SPEEDING UP THE ROLL-OUT



More than 215,000 homes and businesses can now access high speed broadband – but many businesses are still struggling to access the fibre network.

The Marches LEP secured an extra £7.7m as an extension to its Growth Deal funding to support the roll-out of the super fast service.

Agricultural supplier Morris Corfield, with two sites in the region, is one business which has benefitted from the ongoing work to connect premises in the region to high speed broadband.

The company's IT Director, Oliver Morris, explained:

"As a business, the main difference has been the faster upload speeds. Here in Broseley we're pushing download speeds of 30mbps now, and our Craven Arms site is regularly seeing speeds of up to 60mbps, but the upload speed has risen from 0.5mbps to 8mbps."

"We used to experience time consuming little problems and while these problems didn't stop us working, they did slow us down. Thankfully we've not had any of those issues in the six months since we upgraded to fibre."

£44.5 MILLION LAND DEAL IS FIRST IN ENGLAND



Up to 2,800 homes could be built and 8,500 jobs created thanks to a new deal which will see Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) land in Telford sold, with the receipts generated invested locally and across the wider Marches region.

Telford & Wrekin Council announced in March 2016 it was poised to seal the land deal with the Homes and Communities Agency, which formed part of the Marches Growth Deal secured by the Marches LEP from central Government in 2014.

The Government has given its agreement in principle to the deal, which will see up to £44.5m of receipts generated from the sale of HCA land in Telford invested locally.

A percentage of these receipts will go to the Marches LEP's new Marches Investment Fund – which will support growth projects in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

The deal offers the council the opportunity to take responsibility for the marketing and disposal of all HCA land holdings in Telford. It will enable the council to work with existing businesses looking to expand and attract new investors offering new jobs for local people.

The 2,800 homes that will be delivered by the deal form part of the 15,500 new homes already planned for the borough through the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan.

03 TACKLING THE SKILLS GAP

We want to support our employers who are looking to grow and create sustainable private sector jobs.

Employers know that they cannot invest without access to a workforce which is equipped with the skills not only for today, but for the coming decades.

To do this we need to tackle the skills gap head on, aligning employer need with higher and further education provision in the region. And we need to do this amid a demographic crunch which has the potential to have a profound effect on the labour market of the Marches.

The Marches Skills Board brings together employers, colleges and training providers to deliver the Marches Skills Plan. And we are also working with our higher education partners, which include the University of Wolverhampton, Harper Adams University and University Centre Shrewsbury.

Together, we want to support vocational and technical paths to employment, alongside academic routes, which allow our future and existing workforce to develop the high level skills valued by employers.

The demographic challenge

An ageing population with **a shrinking pool of working age people.**

Between 2012 and 2037, the number of over 65s **will increase by 92,300.**

Between 2012 and 2022, there will be total of **139,000 job openings** across all industries.

42,000 new workers needed to replace retiring members of the existing workforce.

11,400 residents in the 16-54 age group will leave the Marches to work elsewhere.

20,000 higher skilled jobs will be created – The Marches needs to train and develop its workforce to meet the demand.

The skills challenge

44% of employers identified lack of skills as a barrier to growth.

Most common skills shortage is in science, engineering and manufacturing sectors **according to 58% of employers.**

45% of companies found it a challenge to recruit for a role in the last year.

74% of businesses have arranged training to actively improve workforce skills.

Fewer than one in ten employers in the LEP area, **(9%) offer formal Apprenticeships.**

SUPPORTING
EMPLOYERS

The Employer Skills Search was launched at the start of 2016 – a dedicated online resource within the Marches Growth Hub for employers searching for skills training support.



Employers can search a database of more than 1,000 training courses and apprenticeships listed on the site, find information about the Marches Skills Provider Network and our universities and discover more about Apprenticeships and other vocational training courses available for their employees.

SKILLS CAPITAL
FUNDING

Four projects in the Marches have secured a share of £461,000 of Marches Growth Deal Skills Capital funding.

Spread across the entire region, these projects cover a range of skills related challenges across advanced engineering, manufacturing, agriculture and environmental sustainability.

A project at **Herefordshire and Ludlow College** is being supported to address the challenge which the college currently faces to replicate fast-moving technological developments in the agricultural engineering sector. It aims to boost apprenticeships, including advanced and higher level programmes, in the poultry and cider fruit growing industries.

Herefordshire Group Training Association is investing in specialist equipment to increase the number of Advanced Apprenticeships and Level 3 qualifications achieved in engineering.

The project ensures the Centre of Vocational Excellence for Engineering continues to meet the skill needs of Herefordshire and the wider region's modern manufacturing sector.

The funding received by **Derwen College** will allow it to develop farm buildings which have been redundant since closure during the foot and mouth crisis. These will be used to meet the increased curriculum demand for Land Based Studies.

And the grant received by **SBC Training** in Shrewsbury will be used to improve facilities for training within the advanced manufacturing and engineering sectors. The investment will cover both workplace relevant machinery and class-room based training equipment and bespoke courseware.

INVESTING TO BUILD
THE SKILLS BASE

Manufacturers in the Marches have identified a lack of available skills as the top barrier to their growth. Additional capital investment is needed to support the sector in developing their skills base, equipping them to maximise future opportunities.

A £2.8m project is being launched this year which will see the development of Advanced Manufacturing Hubs in the Marches region - regional training centres for advanced manufacturing skills.

These could be partnership led, comprising consortia of employers and educational providers including higher education, further education and private sector training providers working together.

The Hubs are planned to commence operation, delivering training courses and apprenticeships, from April 2017.



04 SUPPORTING BUSINESS

Supporting our diverse business base is one of the Marches LEP's strategic priorities. We aim to create an exceptional business support environment for aspiring growth businesses through access to finance and incentives to innovate. We are promoting the Marches as a business investment location and helping to safeguard and create jobs.

Marches Growth Hub



Launched in October 2015, the Marches Growth Hub provides a single point of access to support for businesses, whatever sector they operate in and whatever size they are.

The virtual hub at www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk is a business-friendly website, with a searchable database of more than 100 business support products and services, from grants and loans to mentoring networks and export advice.

It has an up-to-date calendar of events and information and three physical hubs, in Hereford, Telford and Shrewsbury, which offer a face-to-face extension of the Marches Growth Hub services. There is also a dedicated helpline on **0345 6000 727**.



European Structural and Investment Funds

More than £92 million of European funding has been allocated to the Marches region for business support projects running between now and 2020. This includes £48m from the European Regional Development Fund; £37m from the European Social Fund and £7m of Rural Development Programme for England funding.

The first projects to receive funding are due to be approved by May 2016 and include business grant programmes and support programmes for young people not in education or employment.

The previous round of EU funded programmes saw more than 800 jobs created or secured in the region, with more than 500 businesses supported.

Attracting investment and supporting export

Recent foreign investments in the Marches are creating more than 350 jobs and securing another 680 posts. The investments total more than £59.4m and include expansions and acquisitions as well as companies new to the Marches choosing to base their operation here.

Working with our local authority partners, and their Invest in Telford, Invest in Herefordshire and Invest in Shropshire brands, we aim to make the region an attractive proposition for investors. And our Enterprise Zone, Skylon Park, is also seeing investment from both overseas and home-grown companies looking for a dynamic business environment.

Latest figures from UK Trade & Industry also show that businesses in the Marches secured more than £31.5 million of export orders between April 2015 and November 2016. Nearly 160 companies have been supported with specialist services.

Unlocking investment potential

The **Marches Investment Fund (MIF)** was launched in July 2015 to bring forward development projects and create much needed homes and jobs across the Marches. Made possible via an award from the Government's Growing Places Fund, the fund is focused on stalled projects that will be able to quickly start and create economic growth and those needing assistance to complete final stage feasibility studies.

Funding is provided in the form of a loan, equity or joint venture and is subject to interest charges and an arrangement fee. Investments made by the fund are repayable at a competitive market rate using the EC reference rate. The first projects to receive support will be confirmed late Spring 2016.

BREATHING LIFE BACK INTO REDUNDANT BUILDINGS

The Marches LEP secured £1.5m from Regional Growth Fund (RGF) Round 2 in 2012 to launch the Redundant Buildings Grant scheme.



The idea of the initiative was to support small and start-up businesses by bringing redundant buildings back into productive economic use for businesses and create or safeguard jobs.

The LEP secured a further £1.5m from RGF Round 4 to continue the initiative in the Marches and extend the offer into the neighbouring Worcestershire LEP area.

By March 2016 **65 projects** have been supported across the Marches with **grants of £2.49m**, which are on track to create over **400 new jobs** and safeguard **a further 37**

05 CHAMPIONING THE MARCHES

Nationally. Regionally. Locally...

The Marches LEP is working with stakeholders both here in the Midlands and across England to champion the Marches within and outside its borders. Alongside our partners, Herefordshire Council, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council and our private sector Business Boards in each of the three areas, we are working to make sure the voice of our region is heard.

LEP Network



Marches LEP Chairman Graham Wynn sits on the board of the LEP Network, representing the West Midlands group of six LEPs. The Network sees all 39 of the UK partnerships come together on areas of shared importance, to work with Government, and share knowledge and good practice. By working together, LEPs have secured a total of £5bn of private sector leverage to date, created 115,000 new jobs and 71,000 new businesses, built 16,000 new homes, and spent £945m on infrastructure.

Growth Deals



The Marches LEP negotiated its initial Growth Deal with Government in 2014 – securing £75.3 million. It had to compete for a share of a £12 billion Local Growth Fund pot and achieved a significant settlement for the Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin region. It secured an extension to the deal in January 2015, with £7.7m being ploughed into boosting the roll-out of superfast broadband.

The Midlands Engine



The Midlands is setting out its stall to win £14 billion from global investors as part of its plan to turn itself into one of the world's leading regional economies. Never before has the Midlands come together on such a large scale in order to attract investment, with the Marches LEP uniting with 10 other LEPs to convince global investors that the region represents one of the most attractive propositions anywhere in the world.

The prospectus for the Midlands Engine was launched by the Rt Hon. Sajid Javid MP Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills in December 2015, setting out the scale of the region's ambition. It is estimated that the Midlands economy could grow by £34 billion by 2030 if it matched the predicted growth rate for the UK as a whole.

The ambition of the Midlands Engine is to improve the economy of the Midlands and the UK, deliver an enhanced quality of life for our citizens and communities and become a globally recognised driver of the economy. And the Marches is proud to be playing its part.



Midlands Connect

The Marches LEP is also at the forefront of work to develop a transport blueprint to unlock economic growth across the Midlands.

Chairman Graham Wynn is on the board of Midlands Connect, a partnership of 26 local authorities and 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships from across the East and West Midlands which have come together to speak with one voice on the need for better transport links.

Midlands Connect is working with Network Rail, Highways England, HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport, as an associate member of the partnership, as they develop a strategy to speed up journey times across the Midlands which could boost the regional economy by more than £1billion a year, create an additional 300,000 jobs and save businesses nearly £500 million.

Good Neighbours

Located in central England, the Marches is bordered by the industrial heartland of the West Midlands to the east and Wales to the west and provides a strategic logistics gateway for European and UK businesses through to Welsh and Irish business markets.

Our geography means we are also able to link in to the Northern Powerhouse and we have major trunk roads which directly connect us to both the north west and the south west of the UK. Our geography is one of our key strengths, and we are working with our neighbours to make sure we capitalise on our central location.

Business Boards

To ensure that the LEP genuinely has the voice of its business community at its heart, it engages with its diverse business base through three Area Business Boards in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford.

These boards provide an underlying, combined 60-strong business constituency that contributes experience and local intelligence to support LEP decision-making and are chaired by a Board Member of the Marches LEP.

The Area Business Boards have representation from larger strategic businesses across the area, such as Cargills, Caterpillar Remanufacturing, Grainger & Worrall and Ricoh, smaller SMEs that are central to our economy and key business networks such as Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and the National Farmers Union.

The LEP Board also draws on the experience of a small number of important sub groups which provide an opportunity for engagement and input from around a further 20 businesses. The engagement of the business community is vital for the LEP to effectively focus on driving economic growth in the Marches.



06 ENTERPRISE ZONE

A world class business landscape...



Skylon Park is the site of the Hereford Enterprise Zone, and a catalyst for growth across both Herefordshire and the wider Marches. Building on the area's wealth of defence expertise and on the deep rooted association Hereford has with UK special forces, it is the only Enterprise Zone in the UK with a defence and security focus.

More than 172,000 sq ft of new development has been built to date at 10 separate developments, with a construction investment just short of £10m. Eight of the investments are by business owner occupiers, and two are direct developments led by Herefordshire Council.

Within the last 12 months, four new land sales have been completed, covering eight acres, giving lifetime totals for the Zone of eight sales and 18.5 acres sold.

Companies occupying premises on the Zone have identified 670 job opportunities in their investment commitments. And the Zone is in advanced negotiations for a number of other plots of land, with a target of 30 acres of developable land on the Zone sold by the end of 2016/17.

In order to maintain sales progress, the Zone continues to invest in infrastructure in order to make plots development ready, including access roads, additional electricity capacity, duct infrastructure for a fibre network, and ground and remediation works.



SKYLON COURT

The construction of Skylon Court, a 12,200 sq ft courtyard development of 10 units designed to offer flexible accommodation for growing companies, was completed in September 2015.

The £1.8m development, funded by Herefordshire Council and the European Regional Development Fund, was officially opened by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

One block, 40% of the space, has been let to the University of Wolverhampton's Business Solutions Centre which provides a range of services and facilities for local businesses including incubation space for start-ups. This Centre also hosts Marches Growth Hub, Herefordshire.

The remaining six units have all been let, ahead of target.

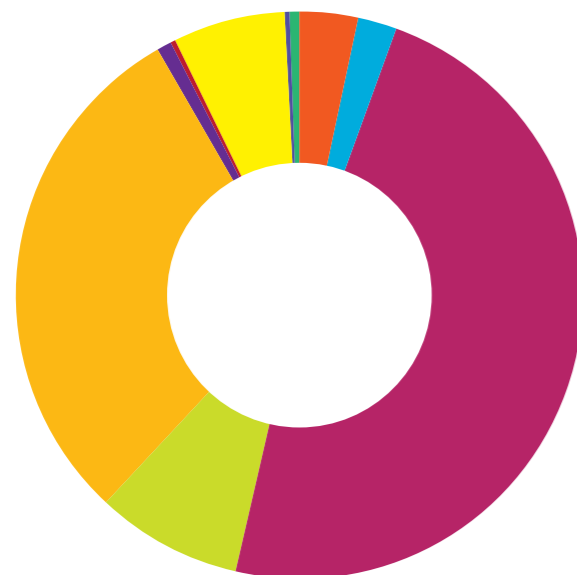
"We want the rural economy to be fired up and wired up, and this is exactly what is happening here."

Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP

Secretary of State for
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

07 FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE

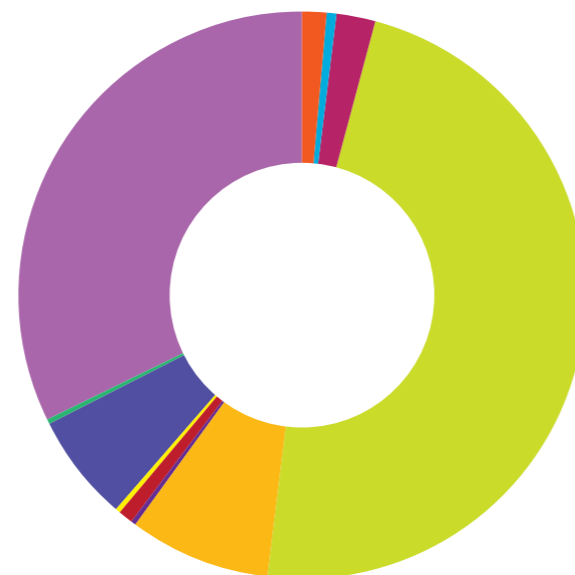
MARCHES LEP FUNDING 2015/16



Core Funding	3.6%
Capacity Funding	2.2%
Growth Deal Funding	48%
Department of Transport Funding	8.2%
Marches Investment Fund	29.7%
Growth Hub	0.9%
Enterprise Zone Skills Pot	0.2%
Redundant Buildings Schemes	6.5%
Local Transport Body Revenue Funding	0.2%
Interest on Balances	0.4%

Total Funding Available to LEP in 2015/16
£26,640,283

MARCHES LEP EXPENDITURE 2015/16



Core Team Costs	1.5%
Core Project Spend	0.7%
Capacity Funding Projects	2.2%
Growth Deal Projects	47.6%
Department of Transport Project	8.1%
Marches Investment Fund	0.3%
Growth Hub	0.9%
Enterprise Zone Skills Pot	0.2%
Redundant Buildings Schemes	6.2%
Local Transport Body Revenue Funding	0.2%
Balances carried forward 2016/17	32.1%

Total Projected Expenditure by LEP in 2015/16
£18,090,245
with **£8,550,038** held in balances for commitments in 2016/17

All of the Marches LEP funding is received and managed via our local authority partners, in line with the governance arrangements set out in our Accountability and Assurance Framework. **This document can be found on our website www.marcheslep.org.uk**

As the LEP is not a legal entity, there has been no requirement for the Marches LEP to produce its own set of accounts since it was formed in 2010. However due to the significant increase in funding received by the Marches LEP in 2015/16, with Growth Deal Funding now being processed through the LEP, it has been agreed that accounts should be prepared in order to be fully transparent about how funding is being committed and spent. Therefore the statement of accounts for the 2015/16 financial year will be produced in June 2016.

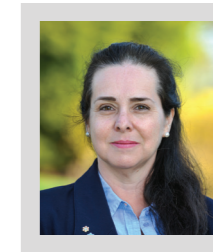
THE MARCHES LEP BOARD



Graham Wynn OBE
Chairman, Marches LEP
Represents the 6 W Midlands LEPs on the national LEP Network & Midlands Connect
Chairman, The TTC Group



Paul Hinkins
Deputy Chair, Marches LEP
Chair of Telford Business Board, Chair of the Marches Growth Hub Steering Group
Managing Director, Business Watch Guarding Ltd



Mandy Thorn MBE
Deputy Chair, Marches LEP
Chair of Shropshire Business Board, Chair of the LEP Performance, Risk and Monitoring Committee
Managing Director, Marches Care



Frank Myers MBE
Chair of Herefordshire Business Board
Managing Director, MCP Systems Consultants Ltd



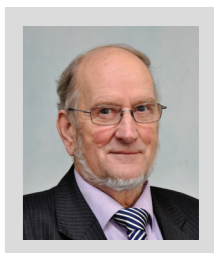
Bill Jackson
Chairman of the Hereford Enterprise Zone Board
Chairman & Director, Jackson Property. Director, Jackson International



Councillor Tony Johnson
Leader, Herefordshire Council



Councillor Kuldip Sahota
Leader, Telford & Wrekin Council



Councillor Malcolm Pate
Leader, Shropshire Council



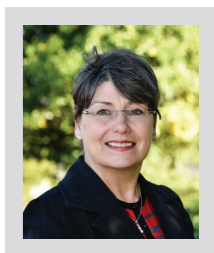
Professor Ian Oakes
Chair of the LEP Skills Board
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Wolverhampton



Dr David Llewellyn
Chair of the LEP Agri-Food Working Group
Vice-Chancellor, Harper Adams University



Peter Brown
Chair of the Marches Housing & Planning Sub-Group
Chief Executive, Herefordshire Housing Group



Sonia Roberts
Social Enterprise & Third Sector champion
Charity Manager, Landau Limited



Christian Dangerfield
Finance Champion & Member of West Midlands LEP Finance Group
Portfolio of Company Directorships, Hedge Fund Manager



Steve Wain
Post 16 Skills & Further Education Champion
Principal, Shrewsbury College



Duncan Varnes
Manufacturing Champion
Site Operations Director, GKN PLC

08

OUR BUSINESS STRENGTHS

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING



Manufacturing accounts for 14.1% of all employment across the Marches, and is one of our key business sectors, making a sizeable contribution to the LEP area's economy (16% of GVA) and exceeding the national average.

More than 36,600 people are employed in a wide range of manufacturing industries, including fabricated metal productions, rubber, polymers and machinery/equipment manufacturing, with automotive manufacturing alone employing 3,400 people in the region.

The region already boasts a number of vehicle component manufacturers, machinery and equipment manufacturing and metal fabricators including: BAE Systems (Engineering, Combat Vehicles UK); GKN plc; Bridgnorth Aluminium; Caterpillar; Denso; Doncasters Group Ltd; GEA Denco; Grainger & Worrall; Holden Aluminium Technologies, Special Metals Wiggins and Stadco.

The Marches benefits from the availability of quality sites; its proximity to the M54 which links to the rest of the national motorway network and the nearby i54 site, home to Jaguar Landrover's (JLR) new engine plant, which represents a major opportunity for Marches manufacturers, a number of whom are already tier one suppliers, to do more business with JLR.

"Manufacturing is one of the Marches key industry sectors and it needs to be supported if businesses are to invest and grow here. We're working with other manufacturers and the LEP to make sure barriers to growth in our region are removed so that not only our existing businesses prosper, but that the conditions are right for new companies to invest here too."

Matt Bulley - Managing Director, Caterpillar Shrewsbury

AGRI-FOOD & AGRI-TECH

Worth at least £1.89 billion to the Marches economy (2011) and claiming almost a quarter of all Marches manufacturing jobs, the thriving agri-food and drink sector employs 42,700 people, contributing 22% of total GVA

Boasting both multinationals and home-grown names including ABP, Arla, Bulmers (Heineken); Cadbury (Mondelez); Cargill Meats; Dairy Crest; Faccenda; Heinz (Single Service); Müller Wiseman Dairy; Palethorpes (Pork Farms); Tyrrells and Westons Cider, the size and scope of the food and drink sector in the Marches cannot be underestimated.

The region also boasts a well-established supply chain in food packaging, manufacturing, processing, materials innovation testing and development and specialist logistics and preservation solutions.

The Marches also has more people employed in Agri-Tech than any other LEP area. Key players include McConnel, the world leader in Vegetation Maintenance; Fullwood, a world leader in robotic milking parlours; GKN Land Systems in Telford and JCB in our neighbouring LEP.



DEFENCE & SECURITY



Harper Adams University, the leading UK institution specialising in agriculture and agricultural engineering, is an internationally recognised Centre of Excellence in this sector.

It boasts a Food Innovation Centre which opened in April 2016 – a unique multi-million pound collaboration project with Dairy Crest which puts the centre of excellence at the forefront of innovation in British food.

It also developed the £2.93m Precision Agriculture and Engineering Innovation Centre, which was part-funded by a loan from the Marches LEP Development Fund.

"The Agricultural Engineering Innovation Centre, which was supported by the LEP, is a catalyst for research and education, innovation, knowledge transfer and skills development within the agri-tech sector. It is playing a critical role in developing new technologies for farming practice, and in bringing together expertise from the agricultural engineering industry, the farming sector and the wider academic community."

David Llewellyn - Vice-Chancellor, Harper Adams University

Defence and security businesses employ approximately 4,000 people across the Marches and aside from the operational bases, key private sector companies already operating in the sector here include: BAE Systems (Engineering, Combat Vehicles UK); Caterpillar Remanufacturing; DrazaH Solutions Limited; Fujitsu; G4S; Global Radio Data Communications and Smartwater Technologies.

As home to the UK Special Forces, Herefordshire has a heritage that has led to it already being the location for a cluster of companies in this sector, many of which have been set up by ex-military personnel. These companies, building on the worldwide reputation that the British Army has for quality and expertise, are able to exploit the growing export market for the supply of security and defence services.

In Shropshire, meanwhile, RAF Cosford houses the Defence College of Aeronautical Engineering and other technical training operational units, alongside the award-winning RAF museum. Whilst Telford, with its concentration of aero and defence companies and supply chain around MOD Donnington, is an expanding defence gateway and centre of logistics excellence.

"BAE Systems is committed to developing the skills needed in our sector, and working with LEPs is important in achieving this. Their unique business-led approach ensures that business leaders play a critical part in shaping local economies, and LEPs do a great job in forging that role."

Nigel Whitehead - Group Managing Director, BAE Systems

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