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Annual Report of **THE MARCHES** **LOCAL ENTERPRISE** **PARTNERSHIP** **2017**

 **The Marches**
Local Enterprise Partnership
Herefordshire - Shropshire - Telford & Wrekin

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01
FOREWARD



Graham Wynn LEP Chair with Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, now Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

DID YOU KNOW?

The Marches LEP is a business-led organisation working in partnership with the public sector.

Herefordshire Council, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council are part of the Marches LEP.

Among the LEP Board, we have 8 local business people

The Marches is one of 38 LEPs across the UK tasked with growing the regional economy.

The Marches LEP aims to deliver 70,000 houses and 40,000 jobs by 2031.

We have open and transparent governance in place to ensure we are accountable and get value for money.

The LEP directs government and European funding to priority projects which will boost economic growth – these include key infrastructure projects such as transport improvements and broadband connectivity.

The Marches LEP works with further and higher education providers to ensure we have a workforce equipped with the right skills for the future.

LEPs were created to give decision making back to the regions, with local areas best placed to understand and to address the opportunities and obstacles to economic growth in their own communities.

The Marches LEP developed the Marches Growth Hub – the one-stop-shop for business support across the region and operates www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk and its helpline on 0345 6000 727

PARTNERSHIP WORK IN ACTION

Business sets the agenda for the work of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership. And the voice of the business community is heard loud and clear.

We are working hard to remove the barriers to growth – improving skills, speeding up your connections to superfast broadband, opening up development land for investment and promoting growth in housing.

We are delivering on our promise of growth and investment, deciding on what the priorities for funding are based on what you are telling us, and rolling out a schedule of work which in the coming years will see the creation of 70,000 homes and 40,000 jobs.

But we needed to put the building blocks in place first. Our initial Growth Deals with Government resulted in more than £83m being ploughed into infrastructure projects. If we want to attract more investment, more jobs, more homes for the people who live and work here – then we need to make sure our transport system can cope with the increase in traffic and our land is shovel-ready for developers.

This work is in evidence across the Marches and you can read about

the progress in this report. As the infrastructure is being put in place, we are also focusing on creating the conditions for our businesses to grow and our regional economy to prosper.

Earlier this year we secured our third Growth Deal with Government. Nearly £22m is to be invested in job-creating projects and initiatives designed not only to enhance the training opportunities available to employers but to develop the skills of our young people so they are work-ready.

Our businesses are being supported through the Marches Growth Hub, which offers a central point of help, advice and information. It also promotes European funded business support projects to our SMEs – with 11 programmes launched since last year and eight more due to go live in the next few months. Nearly £800,000 has been received by businesses in grant funding and hundreds more have received expert support to develop new products, access new supply chains and export overseas.

Of course, businesses will also benefit from the strategic partnerships we are developing for our region. We are continuing to work with our colleagues in the Growing Mid Wales Partnership to develop opportunities around shared priorities including transport and skills.

We are a key cog in the Midlands Engine. We are driving the Midlands Connect transport strategy to improve road and rail connectivity, investing our funding in supporting our businesses through the new Midlands Engine Investment Fund, promoting our area to inward investors and working regionally as well as locally with our public sector partners as a non-constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

I hope you enjoy reading this report. This is your LEP in action.

Graham Wynn OBE
Chairman, Marches LEP

02 THE MARCHES GROWTH DEAL

In March 2017, the Marches LEP secured a third Growth Deal, bringing £21.9m of Government funding into the region, and attracting more than £9m of private sector investment.

"This Government is backing Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin with this new £21.9 million funding pot. Exciting projects to benefit include a new university in Hereford, and a new enterprise and science park in Newport. This new funding will help create jobs, boost skills and give businesses support."

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Communities Secretary

As well as funding to support the development of a new university for Herefordshire and a Centre for Cyber Security, the funding will see a new enterprise and science park built in Newport bringing 950 high value jobs. It will also support the ongoing redevelopment of the Flaxmill, in Shrewsbury, providing training facilities for young people and incubator space for start-up businesses.

Our first Growth Deal, in 2014, focused on key transport and infrastructure projects. This was to open up land for development, and to create the conditions for investment. We also worked with our partner, Telford & Wrekin Council, to clinch the Telford Land Deal. This is a ten year programme which will see 3,000 new homes and more than 300,000 sq m of employment land developed and 8,500 jobs created. A percentage of the receipts from land sales will be re-invested by the LEP to support other projects across the Marches region.

The second Growth Deal in January 2015, provided £7.7m to speed up the rollout of superfast broadband and has already enabled access for more than 66,000 additional homes and businesses.

All of our initial infrastructure projects are well under way and delivering on time and on budget – which means the 2017 Growth Deal is focused on how we can best develop the workforce we need to do the jobs being created, and make sure the skills employers need are available here too.

Take a look at what's being delivered, and the difference it is already making to the economic growth of our region.



£83m
**EXISTING GROWTH
DEAL INVESTMENT**



£21.9m
**NEW FUNDING
FOR 2017-2021**



8,088
**NEW HOMES
BEING BUILT**



15,934
**NEW JOBS
BEING CREATED**



1,498
**NEW
APPRENTICES**



140,000
**ADDITIONAL
PREMISES WITH
ACCESS TO
SUPERFAST
BROADBAND**

PROGRESS, PROGRESS



SHREWSBURY INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PACKAGE

The Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package (SITP) aims to create 1,100 jobs and 1,100 homes through a £12.1m package of measures designed to improve the transport system in the town. By 2020/2021, the current highway infrastructure in Shrewsbury will have been upgraded, including new traffic signals to improve vehicle capacity and pedestrian and cycle facilities, with the aim of reducing congestion.

“The package of transport measures are designed to ensure that Shrewsbury’s transport network is not merely fit for anticipated employment and housing growth but measurably enhanced for residents and visitors, however they wish to travel.”

Matt Johnson - Project manager
Shropshire Council

£6m of Growth Deal funding

6 Year programme to upgrade Shrewsbury roads

Better cycle and pedestrian routes in the town centre



HEREFORD CITY CENTRE TRANSPORT PACKAGE

A four year project, including a new link road between the A465 and A49, the £33.5m Hereford City Centre Transport Package will open up land for development including a new urban village, with an integrated transport hub and investment opportunities in leisure, retail, tourism and employment uses while regenerating the Commercial Road, Newmarket Street and Blueschool Street.

“A new city link road is helping to transform the centre of Hereford, easing traffic congestion and opening up areas of land for development which were previously inaccessible.”

Mairead Lane - Project manager
Herefordshire Council

£16m of Growth Deal funding

Project on course for completion in 2020

Aims to deliver 800 homes and 760 jobs



TELFORD EASTERN GATEWAY PROJECT

A £5.2m infrastructure project to improve Junction 4 of the M54, opening up 31 hectares of employment land nearby, including at the T54 site, where automotive sector company Magna International is already investing in a new 225,000 sq ft facility. The project will also support better links to the i54 Enterprise Zone, the home of the Jaguar Land Rover complex, just a few miles away.

“This is a project which sees both improvements to Junction 4 of the M54 and upgrades to the Telford 54 site – removing the barriers to growth for businesses which are based here and those which want to invest here.”

Dominic Proud - Project manager
Telford & Wrekin Council

Unlocks 31 ha of employment land

Delivers 1,400 houses and more than 3,400 new jobs

Reduces journey times by 20.1%

PROJECTS UNDER WAY... AND IN THE PIPELINE

OXON LINK ROAD SHREWSBURY

Opens up 12 hectares of employment land
Aims to create 2,800 new jobs
750 new homes to be built
£4.2m Growth Deal funding

TELFORD BUS STATION TELFORD

Unlocks 8,800 sq metres of commercial floorspace
365 new jobs through development of the town centre
Creating an attractive gateway to the town centre
£1.3m Growth Deal funding for a new bus station

SOUTH WYE TRANSPORT PACKAGE HEREFORDSHIRE

3.6km new link road between A49 and A465
Improved access to the Hereford Enterprise Zone
Aims to deliver 1,000 new jobs and 1,000 new homes
£27m of Growth Deal funding

NEW MODEL IN TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING HEREFORDSHIRE

Development of a new university
350 new graduates each year
Will support 230 companies in the first 5 years
At least £8m Growth Deal funding

NEWPORT ENTERPRISE & SCIENCE PARK NEWPORT

950 new high value jobs
1,000 new houses including starter homes
Provide high tech business start-up and incubation
At least £6.34m Growth Deal funding

CENTRE FOR CYBER SECURITY HEREFORD

Built on the only Enterprise Zone with a defence and security sector focus
Provides innovation workspace for new businesses
185 new jobs
At least £2.82m Growth Deal funding

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE MARCHES-WIDE

Capital investment in training facilities in our further education colleges
Better employment opportunities for 3,700 learners
360 additional employers involved
£2.75m of Growth Deal funding

FLAXMILL SHREWSBURY

Redevelopment of main mill for training facilities
Remediation of two hectares of brownfield land
120 new homes
£1.9m of Growth Deal funding

£44.5m LAND DEAL SEES INVESTMENTS SECURED

Through a unique growth deal with the Homes & Communities Agency, secured as part of the Marches Growth Deal with Government, Telford & Wrekin Council is driving the promotion of more than 200 acres of employment land and residential sites for close to 3,000 new homes.

With £44.5m being ploughed into site preparation and essential infrastructure to make the land development ready, the deal is already delivering on its potential. Companies such as Magna Cosma, Polytec and Filtermist have already announced investments – with a percentage of receipts generated from the sale of land going to the Marches Investment Fund – which will support growth projects in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

In the first year the Land Deal has delivered the sale of six commercial sites and six sites for residential properties. The sites will deliver employment floor space of 35,504sqm, accommodating up to around 400 jobs and 260 new homes.

Six further commercial sites and two residential sites are currently being negotiated to be delivered in 2017. They are anticipated to deliver a further 51,250sqm of employment space and 320 new homes.

CONNECTING YOU TO SUPERFAST

More than 215,000 premises can now access high speed broadband – but with many businesses still struggling to access the fibre network, Growth Deal funding has been secured to help speed up the rollout.

Delivered through Superfast Telford, Connecting Shropshire and Fastershire, an extra £7.7m has been invested to give even more homes and premises access to superfast broadband, with more than 66,000 additional premises having access so far. Here’s how the Fastershire project in Herefordshire, part funded with £1.67m of Growth Deal funding, is progressing.



CASE STUDY

EXPECTED TO BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY BY £420m OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS

“Fastershire has already connected more than 96,000 homes and businesses to superfast broadband. It is also a project designed to not only connect thousands of premises but help small and medium size businesses get the most from fibre broadband and be more competitive. In fact, it is expected that Fastershire will help to boost the local economy by £420m over the next ten years.”

Matt Smith
Project Manager, Fastershire

A pioneering and award-winning project, Fastershire was set up to overcome the market failure to provide high speed broadband across large parts of Herefordshire.

In partnership with local authorities in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, it is one of four pilot schemes in the UK and one of the first to contract with BT – a contract which has delivered more than 30Mbps superfast broadband to more than 35,000 premises in Herefordshire to date.

It also became the first project to contract with a provider other than BT in 2015 when it joined forces with Gigaclear to deliver superfast broadband to 8,000 of the most difficult to reach premises in the county.

£1.67m Growth Deal funding

8,000 homes and businesses reached

600kms of fibre laid



03 TACKLING THE MARCHES SKILLS CHALLENGE

LEPs across England have been given responsibility for skills, both through its Growth Deals and through the European Social Fund.

This year saw the launch of a new Marches LEP Skills Action Plan, developed as the Government announced its target of 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020 and as it introduced the new Apprenticeship Levy.

The new plan is also responsive to employer needs and takes on board the outcomes of a major reform of post-16 education and training. It also addresses the Marches skills challenge – an ageing workforce; a lack of higher level skills and a need for more vocational routes to employment.

We are working with schools and employers on the skills needed for the world of work. This includes investing in supporting training providers and colleges through our Growth Deals with Government to increase apprenticeship take-up by young people and employers and the range of apprenticeships on offer via private providers, colleges and universities.

WHAT'S IN THE SKILLS PLAN?

- Supporting new and emerging higher education provision working with Harper Adams University, the University of Wolverhampton, University Centre Shrewsbury and New Model in Technology and Engineering in Hereford.
- Looking to appoint two more Careers and Enterprise Company Enterprise Co-ordinators to improve careers choice and better engagement between schools and employers in Herefordshire and Shropshire. A co-ordinator is already in place in Telford and linking schools and businesses.
- Increasing apprenticeships take-up by young people and employers and the range of apprenticeships on offer via private providers, colleges and universities.
- Further develop the Skills Portal on the Marches Growth Hub website to showcase the skills provision to young people, parents, teachers, employers, advisors and community groups
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programmes with schools promoting career progression into priority sectors such as advanced manufacturing, agri-tech and defence and securities.

WHAT ARE WE DELIVERING THROUGH OUR GROWTH DEALS?

- £83,267 to Herefordshire Group Training Association (HGTA) to invest in up to date engineering equipment.
- £197,400 to Hereford and Ludlow College to fit out the vehicle engineering workshop at the Holme Lacy Campus.
- £50,000 to SBC Training for a new engineering and manufacturing training centre in Shrewsbury.
- £1.9m to Marches Centre of Manufacturing & Technology CIC to develop an employer-led Advanced Manufacturing Hub, regional training centre in Bridgnorth.
- £464,763 to Hereford and Ludlow College and Hereford Group Training Association to develop a centre for excellence for engineering and manufacturing in Hereford.
- £425,166 to Shrewsbury Colleges Group to develop the Shropshire Advanced Manufacturing Skills Hub working with employers including Caterpillar Remanufacturing.

WHAT ARE WE DELIVERING THROUGH THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND?

- The £1.5m Employees Support in Skills project sees businesses access free training for their staff including apprenticeships at all levels; support to improve English, Maths and IT skills; support for learners with disabilities and development of leadership and management skills.
- The £3.3m Together project, part of the Building Better Opportunities programme funded by the European Social Fund and the Big Lottery Fund, is aimed at tackling poverty by supporting people into work and training. The programme will see people in deprived areas who are struggling to find jobs receive one-to-one help and support to gain confidence and learn new skills.
- Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) are being supported through a £1.9m project in the LEP region. A programme of activities and training is improving the employability, vocational, personal and functional skills of young people.



CASE STUDY

MARCHES CENTRE OF MANUFACTURING & TECHNOLOGY

Opening this summer, the new £3m Marches Centre of Manufacturing & Technology (MCMT) in Bridgnorth will provide a high-tech environment for individuals to learn from engineering experts on the latest technology – all geared towards giving them opportunities to apply their new found skills on real life manufacturing situations.



Supported by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, work started on fitting out the 36,000 sq ft building on the Stanmore Industrial Estate in January with the centre looking to support 2,020 learners between now and 2020.

Matt Snelson, of consortium partner Grainger & Worrall and Managing Director of the centre, said: “This is one of the most exciting developments seen in manufacturing training provision in the area for many years.

“We believe the MCMT is critical to closing the skills gap for businesses, but we are under no illusions that we will need the rest of local industry, education and training to play their part. This could be through informing how the provision develops, using the services and even offering time and expertise to help with delivering some of the learning.”

The centre will develop apprentices in advanced manufacturing and engineering, giving employers a strong pool of skills to tap into as they continue to compete globally.

In addition to this, there will also be capacity to work with 400 companies on developing existing manufacturing professionals up to Level 7 qualifications.

04

SUPPORTING BUSINESS

Our businesses are the lifeblood of our regional economy. We want them to grow and prosper. We want to know what challenges they face, what opportunities we can help them seize and we need them on board with our programme of work to help us tackle issues on their behalf.

“Support from the Marches Growth Hub saw us not only access £24,000 of funding to extend our manufacturing offer, we were also signposted to specialist help to create an app to track equipment out on hire.”

Harish Chander
New Cabinet Division Director, Bond Group

BUSINESS FIRST

The Marches LEP is led by business. It has a private sector board including its Chairman, the three area business board chairs who all run their own enterprises in the Marches, as well as manufacturing, education, housing and third sector champions.

Together they work with businesses across a variety of sectors and of various sizes which feed into the LEP's work – to make sure the voice of business is heard not just in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, but in the wider Midlands region and in central Government too.

The Marches Growth Hub is an important tool used by the LEP to engage with and support business. It is a one stop shop offering business support, signposting businesses to help, information and advice on a range of issues from start-up to skills and export to access to finance and funding.

DELIVERING BUSINESS SUPPORT THROUGH THE MARCHES GROWTH HUB

£1,221,700 GRANT FUNDING
awarded to Marches businesses

4,053 PEOPLE
attended Marches Growth Hub
business support events

**2,779 WALK-INS, CALLS
OR WEB ENQUIRES**
to Marches Growth Hub

2,795 BUSINESSES SUPPORTED
by the Marches Growth Hub

128 NEW JOBS CREATED
created thanks to grant support

11 EU FUNDED BUSINESS
support programmes
including grant schemes

The LEP and Marches Growth Hub also work with businesses by:

- Building strong strategic partnerships and working links between all of the institutions involved in providing support and advice to help businesses start, scale-up and grow in their area. These include the local authorities, Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), universities, business schools, the private sector-led business network groups and government.
- Working with key business sectors including the four main priority sectors identified in the Marches Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) advanced manufacturing & engineering (with auto specialism); agri-tech including food processing and packaging; defence and cyber security and environmental technologies.
- Identifying and targeting businesses with the potential to scale up with support; those already growing, linking them to the right services to make that growth process successful and provide sustained impact.
- Developing a £50,000 project to understand how energy supply can be improved across the Marches with grid capacity an issue across the region, blocking expansion plans for existing employers and inward investors on some commercial sites.
- Through its virtual hub at www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk, central helpline on 0345 6000 727 and network of advice centres in Hereford, Shrewsbury and Telford, the Marches Growth Hub is supporting thousands of businesses across the region, linking businesses to intensive support from partners including the Manufacturing Growth Programme, Department of International Trade, local authority business support teams and EU funding programmes.
- Designing and developing programmes using European funding to support businesses including the Marches Business Investment Grant and soon to be launched Building Business Confidence across the Marches mentoring project.



APPRENTICESHIP AND RECYCLING SUPPORT FROM HUB FOR MANUFACTURER

Magiboards, in Telford, has been manufacturing visual display products in the UK for more than 50 years. It is the leading supplier of long lasting, high performance presentation products to a number of industries and sectors and the company boasts an unrivalled support package of service, quality and experience.

"We would recommend businesses contact the Marches Growth Hub if they are looking for support or information. The team has put us in touch with contacts which have directly benefitted our company."

Erwin van der Stap - Managing Director
Magiboards

**Leading manufacturer
of whiteboards and
notice boards in the UK**

**Grant support received to
take on new apprentices**

**Support has helped reduce
waste costs and increased
recycling**



HUB SUPPORT INVALUABLE TO GROWTH OF £3m MULTI-USE SITE

The four-storey Rent A Space is a new business investing in the Marches and currently offers around 50,000 sq ft of space with potential to grow to 80,000 sq ft and provides storage solutions from as small as a locker to the size of half a football pitch, with a total of 300 storage rooms available. It opened in Battlefield Road, Shrewsbury, in 2016 and already houses 15 tenant businesses and around 90 domestic and commercial customers who are using the storage facilities.

"The Marches Growth Hub has been fantastic. The wealth of knowledge available through the hub allowed me to access targeted and appropriate guidance at all stages of the project."

Leah Whitley - Sales Director
Rent A Space

**New £3m business incubator
and self-storage facility**

**Aiming for 500 customers
within 5 years**

**15 tenant businesses
within six months**



ENTREPRENEUR SCALES NEW HEIGHTS WITH UNIQUE BUSINESS

Mountain Perspective is a Herefordshire-based start-up offering a unique approach to business coach and leadership training. Developed by Jon Johnson, the company takes business leaders into the mountains to literally gain a "mountain perspective" of their lives and businesses, allowing them to see a bigger picture and develop a new vision based on what they discover.

"When I was introduced to the Marches Growth Hub I was amazed that we had such an incredible facility for new and growing businesses. It's been an amazing support."

Jon Johnson - Director
Mountain Perspective

**Delivers unique business
development and leadership
consultancy**

**Moved from being home-based
to office space at the Marches
Growth Hub**

**Expansion of business network
thanks to professional working
environment**

The Marches LEP set the strategic priorities for use of the region’s allocation of circa £90m of European Union funding between now and 2020, from three funding streams including the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Rural Development Programme for England.

The LEP, through its European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy, decides on the priority areas where ERDF and RDPE money should be spent, which include Research and Innovation, Information Communication Technology, Business Support and the Environment.

Businesses have benefitted from more than £790,480 in grant funding so far. As well as direct financial support, the EU-funded schemes include programmes to help manufacturing businesses grow; support new and existing exporters to develop new markets overseas and help improve energy efficiency and productivity in business operations.

Projects are approved by government following consultation with the Marches European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF) Committee.



SUCCESS ROLLS IN FOR GOURMET FOOD PRODUCERS

Ivan Watkiss and his wife, Sue, started their business out of a deli in Oswestry, producing and selling gourmet sausage rolls. Spotting a gap in the market for locally sourced and produced gourmet food, the family business moved into commercial production in Shrewsbury and now operates from a new facility at Roden with a staff of 25.

“We’ve received significant funding support not once, but twice, through the Marches LEP and Marches Growth Hub. We’re now based in a new state-of-the-art food processing facility and investing in new equipment to improve productivity.”

Ivan Watkiss - Managing Director
Coopers Gourmet Food, Telford

New processing facility thanks to £45,000 grant

5 to 25 staff in 5 years

Predicted £1.2m turnover in 2017



SWEET TASTE OF SALES IN JAPAN PROMPTS NEW EXPORT PLANS

Jacqueline Champion and Andrew Reeves started their confectionery business from their kitchen, as Andrew experimented with recreating the quality of nougat he remembered as a boy. When market research revealed a demand for his recipes, the couple decided to turn the hobby into a larger business, launching a crowdfunding bid which achieved a £165,000 boost from 67 investors. The company now operates from a commercial food processing facility in Shrewsbury and employs dedicated kitchen and administrative staff.

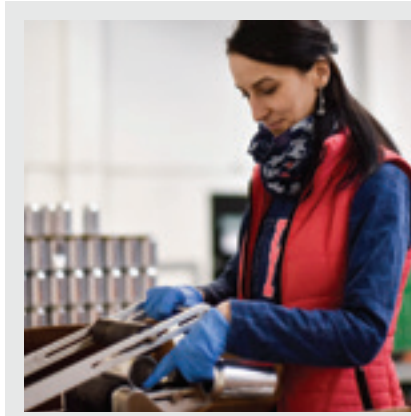
“We are selling at the House of Commons, local shops and premium delis across the UK and have also exported to Japan. We see America as being a great place to export and are looking to create a new marketplace for ourselves out there.”

Jacqueline Champion
Champion & Reeves, Shrewsbury

Kitchen enterprise transformed into exporting food producer

Export deal secured with Japan and prospects in the USA following a trade mission

Growth plans include new equipment to increase production and range



LARGER CONTRACTS IN THE CAN

WeCan Solutions provides contract canning services for small to medium-size beverage producers by taking the canning line to their production site. It also offers a full service to include labelling – from design to application on the cans themselves – as well as packing at the brewery or manufacturing site.

“We were able to guide WeCan through funding options which were available to them to support capital investment at their canning facility. We’re delighted their application was successful and that they have now created new jobs as a result.”

Lyndsay Francis
Marches Growth Hub, Hereford

£30,000 grant support from the Business Growth Programme

2m extra cans a year filled thanks to investment in new machinery

New jobs created as the company fulfils larger orders

05

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.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROPOSED NORTH MAGAZINE SITE



200,000 sq ft of new development has been built to date at 13 separate developments, with a construction investment of over £11m. Eleven of the investments are by business owner occupiers, and two are direct developments led by Herefordshire Council. Those two developments, Skylon Court and Skylon Place are both fully let.

Within the last 12 months, two new land sales have been completed, covering seven acres, giving lifetime totals for the Zone of 27 acres sold and developed.

The 22 companies occupying premises on the Zone have identified 750 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 50 acres of developable land on the Zone sold by the end of 2017/18.



HEREFORD CENTRE FOR CYBER SECURITY

The University of Wolverhampton is developing a Cyber Security Centre project to be based on the Zone, reinforcing its stature as the only Enterprise Zone in the UK with a defence and security focus.

The project has been awarded £2.82m from the latest Growth Deal fund.

The centre will be located on the South Magazine and will provide:


- Accommodation for businesses working in the cyber security sector with potential space for up to 20 tenant businesses
- Secure training and educational facilities to provide specialist cyber security training for businesses and organisations
- A base for undertaking research in the field of cyber security

In particular, the centre will have specially equipped laboratories which will enable users to simulate cyber attacks and test responses in a secure environment.

Professor Ian Oakes, the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, said: "The University has already formed strong, collaborative relationships with key companies to engage with cyber research, training programmes and enterprise development and has a number of research teams associated with the development of cyber security.

"Our strategy is to bring together our collective expertise in a centre of excellence with partners both in the UK and internationally. It will organise, facilitate and support the development of cyber security on a global scale."

Hereford Enterprise Zone's aspiration is for the cyber security centre to be the centrepiece of a larger cyber campus for businesses. This supports the growing cluster of related businesses in the area.



06 HOW THE PIECES FIT

Influencing policy, celebrating collaboration and promoting partnerships – The Marches LEP is led by the private sector. It operates in partnership with public sector partners, Herefordshire Council, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, academic centres with business, housing and third sector champions.

But the work it does is not confined to this region. The Marches LEP is making a case for the area on a national and regional stage; lobbying for investment from central government and working in partnership with other Midlands LEPs to drive the heart of the UK economy.

POWERING AHEAD WITH THE MIDLANDS ENGINE

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 covers a huge swathe of the Midlands Engine region, which stretches from Shropshire in the west to Lincolnshire in the east and is home to a £217.7 billion economy.

The LEP, which is also a non-constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority, is working with the new Midlands Engine Partnership to help the wider region achieve its growth potential, through investment, research and development, innovation, skills and connectivity improvements. The Marches LEP chairman Graham Wynn is a member of the Midlands Engine Strategic Board and also sits on the Board of Midlands Connect.

The Midlands Engine Strategy builds on the wider government commitment to rebalance the economy through spreading growth across the whole country unveiled in its new Industrial Strategy.

Together, we are influencing policy and helping to shape the way this region meets the challenges ahead and makes the most of opportunities as the country heads into Brexit negotiations. LEP Chairman Graham Wynn also represents the six West Midlands LEPs at a national level on The LEP Network. He also recently joined other LEP chairs and Prime Minister Theresa May for discussions on the Plan for Britain, published by the government as it triggered Article 50 - the first official step in leaving the European Union.

MIPIM

The Marches LEP joined a Midlands Engine delegation exhibiting together for the first time at the global property and real estate show MIPIM in 2017. Investment sites in the Marches, including Telford 54 and the Hereford Enterprise Zone, were showcased in Cannes to the exhibition's 23,000 attendees – from potential investors and developers to property agents and the media.

MIDLANDS ENGINE INVESTMENT FUND

A new £250m Midlands Engine Investment Fund is aiming to boost the region's economy and support the growth ambitions of its 460,000 smaller businesses.

The fund, a joint agreement between the British Business Bank and eleven Local Enterprise Partnerships including the Marches LEP is expected to bring together legacy funding from existing programmes, new funding from the British Business Bank and new European funding. The fund, launching in June 2017, will provide a suite of business loan options available to companies across the Marches."

MIDLANDS CONNECT

Midlands Connect, a pan-Midlands partnership which includes the Marches LEP and the Department for Transport, has developed a transport strategy that identifies the major infrastructure projects needed to improve connectivity. These include: road and rail investment priorities between Birmingham and the Marches; connections to Wales and the South West; prioritising the Hereford bypass scheme and development of a Midlands Rail Hub to increase capacity for an extra 10 trains per hour, including the Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton line.

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

The Marches LEP, its partners and businesses have recently responded with the region's views on the proposed Industrial Strategy, in which the government sets out its flexible approach to the different challenges that different places face.

The Marches LEP very much welcomed the fact that the Government is proposing a new, long term, industrial strategy and the importance that it has given to place in helping to drive the future of the UK economy.

The Marches LEP's offer to Government is:

- To continue to get local political, business, University and College leaders round the table to set strategic plans that make a reality of all pillars of the Industrial Strategy locally.
- Co-ordinate and influence local public and private investment, using £104.9m of local growth funding and influencing other funding streams so that individual investments act across as many of the pillars as possible.

The Marches region is one of the largest LEP areas, with a diverse business base, a resilient economy but connectivity, both in terms of digital and physical infrastructure, is a barrier to our economic growth.

It is vital that the new Industrial Strategy reflects our unique challenges and opportunities - which is why we have consulted widely with our partners and area business boards.

OUR NEIGHBOURS

We are working with other regions on developing our sector strengths specifically through agri-tech and cyber security.

We are part of the developing Agri-Tech West Alliance (ATWA) which is supported by four LEPs – The Marches, Cheshire and Warrington, Stoke and Staffordshire and Worcestershire plus leading sector businesses and specialist research/academic institutions. The Alliance aims to support business growth by facilitating sector innovation throughout the supply chain, through applied technology and collaboration.

And The Marches LEP has also joined forces with LEPs Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire working with QinetiQ and GCHQ plus partners in Wales to form the Cyber Sector Consortium. It has recently forwarded a sector deal proposal to Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to develop and grow established businesses and their supply chains in the cyber sector.

In 2016, the Marches LEP hosted an event with the Growing Mid Wales Partnership to explore the challenges and opportunities that the two regions have in common. As a result, we are jointly working on a freight strategy given the importance of both Welsh and Irish marketplaces to our businesses as well as ongoing work on agri-tech, skills and workforce development.

07 ROAD MAP TO BUILDING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Developing the economy – through delivering houses, training, new investment sites and jobs – requires an integrated and resilient transport network.

People who choose to visit, live and work in the Marches need to have confidence that there are transport options that meet their lifestyle needs. Businesses need a transport network that quickly and reliably connects the major employment centres with markets; allows business to collaborate and develop supply chain and customer relationships and gives the workforce options on how to travel to work.

In the last year, the Marches LEP has published its Strategic Transport Corridors report (May 2016) on the investment needed in our major transport routes so that the region can achieve its economic growth potential. It outlines strategic road and rail investment priorities from improvements to the A49 spine which runs from Whitchurch to Hereford; rail frequency between Shrewsbury and Birmingham, junction improvements on the A49/A5 in Shrewsbury and relief roads in Hereford and Shrewsbury,

We are developing our Freight Strategy working with the National Assembly for Wales and the Growing Mid Wales Partnership in a bid to shorten journey times and find ways to support businesses moving goods from A to B.



NORTH WEST RELIEF ROAD

The Marches LEP, working with its partner Shropshire Council, has secured £1m from the Department of Transport to develop an outline business case for the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (NWRR) in 2017/18.

The NWRR would see a four-mile bypass, running from the Ellesmere Road Roundabout at Battlefield in the north of the town to the A5 at Churncote Island. The case is expected to be presented to the Department of Transport in Spring 2018.

HOUSING FOR THE FUTURE

The Government has a target to build one million new homes by 2020 and has set out how it intends to help house builders increase the number of units they build in the recent Housing White Paper.

The Marches LEP is already working with its local authority partners and the Homes & Communities Agency on the level of housing need and how it can support local house builders. This work, and the result of research with developers across the region, will form the basis for a focused Marches housing approach.

“We want to champion our local house builders and this is a chance to set the priorities of your Local Enterprise Partnership. We have a direct line of communication with Government to discuss what is needed by our construction community to help them to prosper, increase productivity, create jobs and build more homes so it’s important we get the feedback from the builders themselves.”

Peter Brown - LEP Housing Lead
Marches Local Enterprise Partnership

CASE STUDY

UNLOCKING INVESTMENT POTENTIAL

The Marches Investment Fund aims to support stalled projects which are ready to start and create economic growth and those needing assistance to complete final stage feasibility studies.

It recently funded the transformation of a dilapidated four-hectare site in Telford into a state of the art industrial facility, providing up to 240 jobs.

The LEP’s pioneering fund provided the loan to Mold-based developer, Dicentra, last year so that the former Brintons carpet factory on Halesfield, can be brought back into productive economic use.

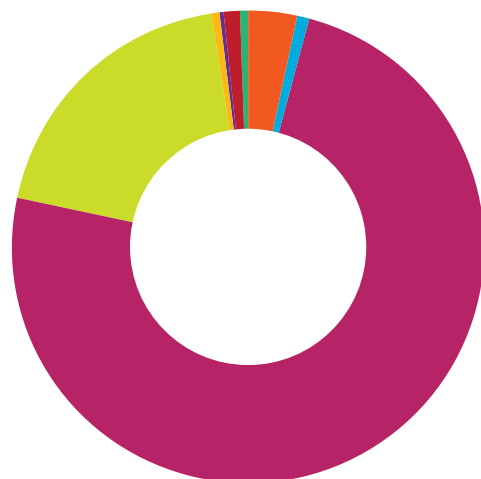
Paul Hinkins, Deputy Chair of the Marches LEP and Chair of the Telford Business Board, said the loan was the first to be made to the private sector from the fund, which has more than £4 million available to support projects.

He said: “The LEP is focused on how it can support the private sector to build businesses and create jobs and the Marches Investment Fund is a very real way of doing this.”

08 FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE

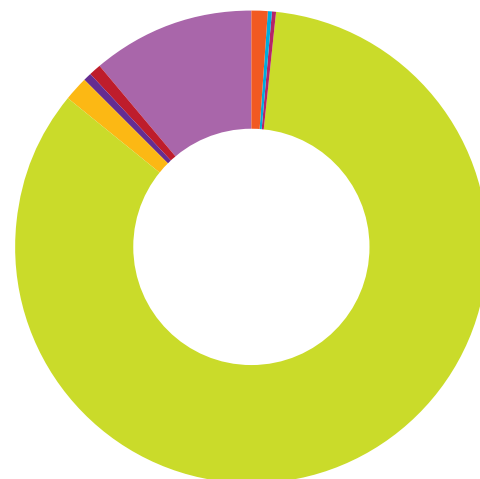


MARCHES LEP FUNDING AND INCOME 2016/17



Total Projected Funding Available to LEP in 2016/17
£41,207,429

MARCHES LEP EXPENDITURE 2016/17



Total Projected Expenditure by LEP in 2016/17
£36,705,196
with **£4,502,233** held in balances for commitments in 2017/18

Formal arrangements have been put in place to ensure fast and effective decision-making together with democratic accountability for the substantial public funds that are required to deliver the Marches Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and Growth Programme, including European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and Single Local Growth Funds. The LEP's Accountability and Assurance Framework, available on our website, sets out the key practices and standards of The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership in managing growth in the Marches, in decision-making around agreed priorities and in ensuring decisions over funding are proper and value for money is achieved.

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. The LEP produced annual accounts for 2015/2016 and these can be found on the website and are in the process of drawing up their 2016/2017 accounts.

The LEP is required by government to spend against its Growth Deal annual allocation. The 2016/17 profile was significantly higher and more challenging than other years. Where possible, the LEP encouraged projects to bring forward programmed spend from future years to ensure full spend. This has resulted in some overspend being shown in this financial year which will be redressed in future years.

THE MARCHES LEP BOARD

The Marches LEP Board is private sector-led, working in partnership with the three local authorities, education, business, housing and third sector champions.

The Marches LEP operates as an informal partnership of private and public sector leaders, with a streamlined structure developed in the interests of minimising bureaucracy, cost and duplication; achieving speedy decision making and delivery; and sharing expertise and resources.

Working with the LEP Board are sub-groups including the Hereford Enterprise Zone Board; Marches Skills Board, Marches Transport Sub-Group; Marches Housing & Planning Partnership, the Agri-Food Working Group, the Marches Growth Hub Steering Group and the Marches Performance, Risk and Monitoring Committee.

Front, from left

MANDY THORN, MBE
GRAHAM WYNN, OBE
SONIA ROBERTS
CLLR MALCOLM PATE
DUNCAN VARNES

Back, from left

BILL JACKSON
PAUL HINKINS
CHRISTIAN DANGERFIELD
PROF IAN OAKES
IAN PEAKE
CLLR TONY JOHNSON
FRANK MYERS MBE
DR DAVID LLEWELLYN
PETER BROWN

Not pictured

CLLR SHAUN DAVIES

Annual Report of
**THE MARCHES
LOCAL ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP**
2017

