



Growth Hub Annual Report Financial Year 2020-2021

(1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021)

(Covering 2020-2021 Growth Hub Core, Supplementary and EU Transition Funding)

LEP Accountable Body:	Shropshire Council
Local Enterprise Partnership:	Marches LEP
Growth Hub name:	Marches Growth Hub
Date of Annual Report:	April 2021
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Deadline for return to BEIS:	Friday 4th June 2021

This template has been produced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to help aid the production of 2020-2021 Growth Hub 'Annual Reports' and is divided into four sections.

Section 1 - Executive Summary, an overview of primary objectives, priorities and high level achievements across the three funding streams;

Section 2 - Reporting on 2020-2021 £12m Core Growth Hub Grant Funding;

Section 3 - Reporting on 2020-2021 £10m Supplementary Growth Hub Grant Funding;

Section 4 - Reporting on 2020-2021 £6.4m EU Transition Business Readiness Growth Hub Grant Funding.

In line with the three S3 documents agreed with BEIS, this report should detail how each stream of grant funding was spent and confirmation of the activities that took place.

LEPs should ensure that information included will enable BEIS to assess how individual Growth Hubs are progressing and to aid the identification of best practice and local innovation to help inform the future development of the Network. This information will shape future policy thinking, to ensure consistency and transparency of funding and activity across the network, and to help demonstrate impacts. The details provided should include how the 2020-2021 core and supplementary funding provided has increased the level of take-up of business support, and is helping to drive business growth in local places. BEIS is also required to account for how LEPs and their Growth Hubs contributed to the EU Transition campaign.

LEPs should submit their Growth Hub Annual Report to **BEIS in MS Word format (not as a pdf)** and that each section should provide the details requested in a short, informative and concise way without losing key information. All relevant information should be contained within the report

template, and information provided should not rely simply on references to other reports or sources of information e.g. via weblinks.

LEPs may, if necessary, use an alternative format for their Growth Hub report, e.g. where the information will also be included as part of the LEP Annual Report, so long as the key content areas specified within the template are covered, and that the information is consistent across all reports and does not rely on cross-referencing. This will ensure a level of consistency in order that BEIS and any externally contracted evaluation organisations are able to compare and contrast information presented by different Growth Hub models and typologies.

The Annual Report should be submitted to Growth.Hubs@beis.gov.uk no later than **Friday 4th June 2021** and copied to your CLGU Area Lead. All reports will be acknowledged on receipt by the CLGU Growth Hubs team, who will provide feedback and also follow-up as required.

SECTION 1

Executive Summary

Details of the primary objectives and priorities of your Growth Hub for the 2020-2021 funding period and the high-level achievements demonstrating how these objectives were met. **This should be across core, supplementary and EU Transition funding.**

The Marches Growth Hub (MGH) partnership model includes a virtual growth hub and website www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk that is supported by three physical growth hubs situated in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire. Since July 2018, telephone enquiries have been handled by the Business Support Helpline (BSH).

MGH offers a single point of access to information and guidance on business support (including business grants, loans, information and in-depth advice) across the region, regardless of sector or size. Its delivery model ensures that it is strategically integrated with the wider economic growth agenda led by the Marches LEP and delivered with local partners.

Core Funding - MGH primary objectives and priorities between 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021:

- Increase interactions (telephone/e-mail/face to face) with individuals/businesses and to signpost them to appropriate follow-up support, including one-to-one business advice, EU Exit business support project, referrals to EU programmes (funding and consultancy support), local authority business support and, where appropriate, private sector providers. This is encouraged by working with our PR and Marketing Consultants to maximise awareness and engagement via the MGH website www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk, e-newsletters, social media campaigns, advertorials and promotion of MGH events.
- Extend communication and use of on-line support.
- Partnership development.
- Project development.

Supplementary Funding - MGH primary objectives and priorities between 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021:

- Sponsored social media campaign promoting 1:1 business advice.
- To provide 1:1 business advice to 77 businesses.
- 38 business referrals to finance/funding programmes.
- Strengthening the Marches LEP central team supporting the MGH.
- Strengthening Growth Hub Model.

EU Transition Business Readiness funding – West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster primary objectives to 31st March 2021 included:

- Target - Successful engagement with 24,000 businesses.

Core funding high level achievements:

- A total of **30,277 business** interactions took place through light touch, medium and high intensity growth hub support.
- A total of **782** individuals have been helped to start a business.
- A total of **13,980** referrals were made to partners including EU programmes (grants and loans), local authority business support and, where appropriate, private sector providers.
- Across the three physical growth hubs, there were a total of **235** virtual growth hub events (growth hub-led and those held in collaboration with partners) with a total of **5,930** attendees of which **5,919** were businesses.
- MGH SME businesses had access to **19** EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a total financial value of over **£19.5million**. Funding and support through the current and planned programmes will continue until June 2023. The four largest ERDF schemes (Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP), Business Growth Programme (BGP), Marches Buildings Investment Grant (MBIG) and Broadband Grants) awarded a combined **£3.5m** to Marches businesses between 1 April 2020 and 31st March 2021. The EU investment will lead to the anticipated creation of **210** jobs.
- MGH medium to high intensity data returns have identified that **£1,651,160.08** private sector match was secured.
- Customer satisfaction was **consistently high** (between 4.5 and 5 on a scale 1 to 5, where 1 is poor service and 5 is excellent) for support received.
- Light touch engagement with businesses continues to be provided through a user-friendly and easy to navigate website www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk. During this period, the website featured **149** news releases and **91** pieces of online content related to business support on offer, information pages and case studies. This has resulted in a 35% increase in web visits on the previous year. A link to all MGH case studies can be found here: <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/>
- The national Business Support Helpline (BSH) handled a total of **1457** Marches calls.
- The website received **45,990** website visits (**30,663** unique visitors) and **588** enquiries. **14** digital newsletters were issued and sent to a mailing list of **2,057** each time. These newsletters were supplemented by regular joint local authority/partner/MGH e-shots promoting events, availability of advice and support and promotion of new grants and initiatives delivered to in excess of **7,000** businesses.
- PR and communication activity focussed on support available to flooding, Coronavirus and EU Exit/Transition-hit businesses and how the MGH service can help them recover.
- Social media statistics show that both followers and reach for Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn have **increased** since 31 March 2020.
- There were more than **261** separate pieces of media coverage secured as a result of MGH PR campaigns, content and news releases.
- The MGH website Coronavirus and EU Exit advice pages featured daily updates on the latest advice, government information and support, as well as signposting to regional support via local authority partners and other business support networks. Information from this was also shared widely on social media platforms. The MGH became an essential part of the region's toolkit for tackling the pandemic/EU Exit and quickly became a focal point for businesses seeking a trusted source of information.

- More than **500** businesses responded to the Marches LEP survey in April 2020, with **98%** saying they had been affected by the outbreak. Evidence has been used by the Marches LEP to support Government lobbying for targeted support for the region.
- Marches LEP Recovery Week - The LEP led a week of activity focussing on the action needed to rebuild the regional economy in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Marches Business Recovery Week ran from 12-16 October and brought together businesses, chambers of commerce, the FSB, NFU and public and third sector organisations to map the road ahead for the region. The week included: the publication of the LEP's annual report, a new digital strategy for the region, an extensive focus on skills and training with the launch of a new triage website to support people looking for work and employers looking for workforce training, a press and stakeholder day at the £7.3m Shell Store business incubation hub project and a major virtual Economic Recovery Summit attended by more than 110 people. Discussion and poll results from businesses at this meeting have been fed back to MHCLG & BEIS. The Marches Business Recovery Week received positive feedback from stakeholders and the wider business community, helping generate considerable interest in both LEP work and recovery issues. Engagement went up **430%** on Twitter and **240%** on Linked In and an amazing **1,305%** on MGH Facebook. Web traffic to the MGH increased by 40%, building on LEP efforts to engage with more businesses and communities than ever before in its programme of work.
- Successful project development and delivery included the Marches Small Business Recovery Grant Scheme funded by ERDF COVID 19 Kickstart Funds, Peer Networks Programme both of which are detailed in the scale up section of this report. In May 2020, the Marches LEP injected **£1.58m** into the regional economy to support tourism and businesses affected by February's floods and the Covid-19 outbreak which followed shortly afterwards. The three local authorities devised innovative schemes to help businesses hardest hit in their areas. <https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/marches-lep-approves-1-58m-injection-to-support-crisis-hit-regional-economy/>.
- Successful project development included the Marches Step-up Programme (EU funded project) which was launched in January 2021. Finer details of this project are provided in the scale-up section of this report.

Supplementary funding high level achievements:

- Successful delivery of sponsored social media campaign promoting 1:1 business advice support.
- Access to a pool of **45** new business/specialist advisers (contractors called upon when required) supported 1:1 business engagement with **178** businesses. Of which **85** businesses received **12 hours support** exceeding the target of 77.
- As a result of the above, **95** business referrals were made to finance/funding programmes exceeding the target of 33.
- The Marches LEP successfully recruited a temporary full-time LEP administrator to support the Marches LEP Business Support Lead. This support was in place between October 2020 and January 2021.
- Successful evaluation exercise of the Business Support Lead position.
- Procurement of Beauhurst business information platform. Access to this platform has allowed the LEP and growth hub teams to access Marches company data (and the ecosystem around them) to help support both recovery planning and outreach activity.

EU Transition Business Readiness funding high level achievements:

- The West Midlands Growth Hubs worked collaboratively to deliver business support across the region for SMEs with questions about international trading, import, VAT, GDPR, movement of people and other challenges presented by the UK's new trading relationship with the EU. As part of this project, SMEs were able to access fully funded, expert advice and general business support to help them understand and comply with the new rules. The project successfully

engaged with **25,260** businesses out of 149,147 attempts. Therefore, the cluster exceeded the 24,000 outreach engagement target agreed with BEIS. The report bringing together the results and findings of the project may be found here: <https://www.wmgrowthhubs-eusupport.co.uk/the-west-midlands-cluster>.

1. Strategic Partnerships

- Confirmation of how the Growth Hub was delivered in 2020-2021 (i.e. in-house, external, consortium of partners). **Please confirm if this delivery model will continue or if there are plans to change this/re-procure in the next twelve months – if service is contracted out when do current contract dates end/need to re-procured?** To be confirmed
 - The primary organisation/s delivering the Growth Hub and whether they are a public or private sector organisation?
 - If delivered externally, the relationship under which the Growth Hub is delivered? (i.e. memorandum of understanding, service level agreement, informal arrangement etc.)
 - What do you perceive to be the benefits of this approach to the LEP and your Accountable Body?

MGH 2020/21 Model

The MGH partnership model included:

- Centrally managed virtual hub including a general enquiries e-mail address enquiries@marchesgrowthhub.co.uk and a website <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/>
- Telephone enquiries handled by the NBSH.
- The virtual hub was supported by three physical growth hubs situated in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire.
- West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster supported the delivery of the EU Business Support Project (funded by EU Transition Business Readiness funding).

Virtual Hub

During 2020/21, the MGH virtual hub service was delivered in-house as part of the LEP team. The team included 1 FTE Business Support Lead who was supported by the LEP Administrator 1 day per week. The Marches LEP successfully recruited a temporary full-time LEP administrator to support the Marches LEP Business Support Lead. This support was in place between October 2020 and January 2021.

The BSL role involves managing the day-to-day operation of the MGH contract, managing the virtual hub (including the website), Government/West Midland Cluster liaison and reporting, budget management, supporting the three physical growth hubs and leading on Access to Finance Policy. In addition to this, the BSL organises and provides secretariat support to MGH Operations Group, MBS Steering Group, MGH Campaign Group and Marches LEP Access to Finance Group. To note, the BSL is the Chair of the MGH Operations Group. Representing the MLEP, the BSL is Chair of the MEIF Regional Advisory Board which meets quarterly.

Physical Growth Hubs

Due to limited funding and resources, we continued working in partnership with the three local authorities and University of Wolverhampton who provided facilities and generic Business Support/Economic Development staff (8.5 FTE) to support the operation of the three physical growth hubs.

The 8.5 FTE local authority staff, which will be referred to as the physical growth hub team, hosted a programme of on-line events and worked with individuals and businesses to identify their key needs and signposted and made referrals to appropriate in-depth support including our EU funded programmes, 1:1 business advice (funded by growth hub supplementary funding) and EU Business Support project (delivered by West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster using EU Transition Business Readiness funding).

The University of Wolverhampton continued to provide premises, equipment and covered all rent, heating and lighting costs at MGH Telford & Wrekin and MGH Herefordshire. MGH Herefordshire moved premises in Q4 and is now based at the Shell Store Incubation Centre situated on the Skylon Park, the LEP's Enterprise Zone.

PR & Marketing support for the MGH was provided by an external agency via an annual contract. The MGH products and services are proactively promoted through website content, regular MGH e-newsletters, social media and through e-marketing campaigns and advertorials. The tender for continued support went live on 12 April with a closing date of 12 May 2021.

The same delivery model will remain in place during 2021/22. Funding will help support the much-needed additional resource to support the BSL (1 FTE admin support). It will also allow the physical growth hubs to continue delivering an events programme, broker in business/specialist advisers and administration resource to support the delivery of the growth hub service and maximise interactions with businesses

The West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster will support the Made Smarter West Midlands Project which will be launched in June 2021. This project is funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority but support is available to Marches based businesses.

This model will help the MGH consolidate its quality driven model which in turn will support business growth and productivity.

- If delivered externally, the relationship under which the Growth Hub is delivered? (i.e. memorandum of understanding, service level agreement, informal arrangement etc.)

We deliver an internal growth hub service with partners and have in place a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and Data Sharing Agreement (DSA). These two key documents specify that direct referrals to partners are responded to within 48hrs, data protection protocols are followed, information on the website is maintained and kept up-to-date and KPI reporting requirements are met. In addition to this, marketing protocols are in place to ensure that MGH branding remains consistent. The SLA and DSA are under review at present by the MLEP.

- What do you perceive to be the benefits of this approach to the LEP and your Accountable Body?

This model is extremely cost effective and recognises the strength of our partners. It 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 the first port of call for accurate, up-to-date and impartial information on business support across the whole of the LEP area. The model also aligns with local authority account management system and ties in with wider economic growth initiatives championed by the LEP.

- How did the LEP explore and support cross-boundary working with other LEPs, Growth Hubs and strategic partners in 2020-2021 to ensure value for money (e.g. cluster working; joint projects, sharing resources, joint procurement etc)?

- What approach has the LEP through its Growth Hub taken to continue to develop strong, strategic partnerships across the LEP and/or Mayoral Combined Authority area during 2020-2021?

The LEP has a strong track record in working with other strategic partners and work continues with:

- West Midlands EU funded business support and innovation projects, such as Business Growth Programme, as well as supporting extensions of projects such as Manufacturing Growth Programme.
 - WM LEPs, where the MLEP contributes to and supports the work programme sharing information on common issues and to develop joint approaches.
 - Three other LEPs on Cyber Security (Cyber Resilience Alliance). This is a shared vision to support the development of the cyber security sector with Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Swindon & Wiltshire. This is being developed under the auspices of 'Cyber Triangle' and discussions have been held with BEIS, the Home Office and DCMS to raise awareness of assets and initiatives.
 - Worcestershire LEP to better understand the needs of the food and drink sector.
 - Worcestershire LEP to help deliver Defence & Cyber Security Cluster Adviser support in the Marches.
 - Supporting Midlands Engine (including Midlands Engine Investment Fund, Midlands Connect and Midlands Engine Trade and Investment Strategic Programme Group including attendance at MIPIM).
 - Welsh partners on identifying opportunities for potential collaboration.
 - Better Business for All (BBfA) - The BSL is a member of the BBfA Steering Group which includes economic development and regulatory services representation from across the Marches, as well as business representation. A pilot BBfA in Shropshire has had to be put on hold due to COVID 19. The pilot will help develop a co-ordinated approach to deliver greater consistency of advice, make it simpler for businesses to understand regulatory support available, improve communication with business and demonstrate how good regulation is good business.
 - In order to share best practice and understand areas for development, the MLEP participated in a Peer Review session with Dorset LEP in March 2021. This has enabled a better understanding of some operating practices that could be adopted by the MLEP across a largely rural geography.
 - West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster Group supported the delivery of the West Midlands EU Business Support Project funded by EU Transition Business Readiness funding. Support from the cluster helped mobilise the project in a timely manner, access much needed resource, provided value for money with procurement and helped meet (exceed) targets agreed with BEIS. Activity from this project dovetailed with support delivered by local/regional DIT teams. Plans to deliver the West Midlands Made Smarter Programme are already underway with a launch in June 2021.
- How has the LEP ensured that the Growth Hub has been embedded in any agreed Local Industrial Strategies/Local Economic Plans?

The Marches LEP Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) were developed with partners and aligned with areas of specialism across the Marches region and the economic growth plans that each of the local authority partners have developed. As part of the development of the LIS, Marches LEP held a programme of facilitated consultation events with stakeholders. This included MGH Groups, MGH clients and partner projects.

MGH continues to provide information on, and access to, a range of business support programmes, including those that are designed to support the LEP's key sectors as defined in its SEP and LIS.

Innovation and productivity improvement form part of the key strands of the Marches LIS. The LEP continues to work with strategically important companies (and their supply chains) to identify innovative projects that increase efficiency, reduce costs and drive productivity in our core and emerging sub sectors.

The LEP's Economic Recovery Plan provides an overarching framework which enables alignment of the three local authorities' individual detailed plans. The MGH remains central to the delivery of, and access to, business support and innovation services across the Marches geography.

2. National and Local Integration

What approach did the LEP take, via the Growth Hub, to develop strong, inclusive partnerships with all of the following local and national players (public and private) involved in the ongoing development and delivery of Growth Hub activity? Please provide a summary of the working relationship in 2020-2021:

Sector Deals: N/A

Innovate UK (IUK):

The LEP continued to work with Ewa Bloch, Innovate UK's Regional Manager for the West Midlands, to help understand how we can further support those businesses that have already received funding and how we can support additional businesses. In addition to this, we continued to promote IUK services and events and continuously improved their information on the MGH website.

During 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, in the Marches, IUK offered grants to 124 organisations, of which 101 were businesses. Ignoring grants which were withdrawn or otherwise not given, grants were given to 118 organisations, of which 115 were businesses. This represents 189 grants (which were given) totalling £26,720,869.38 and, of this, businesses represented 163 grants totalling £23,474,816.88. The reason for the large jump in value is because of a single grant to Veolia for ISCF smart sustainable plastic packaging demonstrator projects. Details of Round 1 are as follows:

PET full loop - kickstarting the UK recycling capability to close the loop on all PET packaging.

This collaborative project, led by Veolia, will result in the development and demonstration of the UK's first dual PET bottle and tray recycling facility, capable of recycling 100% of clear rigid PET in a closed loop system. In line with the UK plastics pact, the project and resultant facility will achieve the following innovations:

- The piloting of the first UK dedicated recycling line for trays and non-food bottles, unlocking the UK tray recycling capability and avoiding the downcycling of food bottles into lower grade applications.
- The development of packaging manufacturing technologies able to include this new PET grade into new trays and non-food bottles.
- The delivery of a food grade PET bottle recycling process, implementing the state-of-the-art technology to achieve 100% recycled content in food bottles.
- The development and deployment of an AI driven 'digital twin' of the facility to support the design, commissioning and operational optimisation of the line.

To deliver the above, Veolia is partnering with Unilever, Charpak and HSSMI in the consortium. The total project size is £34.7m and will take place over 3 years. The grant is for £7,714,742.57.

Science & Innovation Audit

The Marches LEP is working with Worcestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire and Gloucestershire LEPs, under the Cyber Resilience Alliance, following the completion of the Science and Innovation Audit in 2018/19 https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/industrial_strategy/A-Science-and-Innovation-Audit-for-the-Cyber-Resilience-Alliance-270618-MASTER-VERSION.pdf. Actions to develop 'Cyber Triangle' maximise the competitive advantage of this sector have been included within each area's LIS. The establishment of Cyber Quarter – the Midlands Centre for Cyber Security on Skylon Park in Herefordshire is a key asset for the Marches and the MGH plays a key role in delivering business engagement and business support activities.

Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN):

The MGH refer businesses to the University of Wolverhampton Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) programme. The LEP and growth hub teams continued to work closely with Mark Matchett who is the KTN lead supporting the 'Place' based innovation agenda in the West Midlands and a Knowledge Transfer Adviser - West Midlands.

The MGH website is kept up to date to reflect the KTN/KTP offer including links to success data and case studies.

Department for International Trade (DIT) / Enterprise Europe Network (EEN):

MGH continued to promote DIT services and events on the MGH website and via social media platforms. Partnership development continued, examples of which include the LEP supporting DIT additional resources allocated in the Marches during 2020/21 (Food & Drink Cluster Adviser, Defence & Cyber Security Cluster Adviser and Export Academy Adviser).

The West Midlands EU Business Support Project activity dovetailed with events and support delivered by local/regional DIT teams.

DIT, Head of Business Development & Partnerships – West Midlands Regional Delivery Partner is a member of both the MGH Operations Group and Marches Business Support (MBS) Steering Group which helps inform the groups on emerging business issues and concerns.

British Business Bank (BBB):

The MGH actively promoted the Coronavirus Interruptions Business Loans and Bounce Back Loans on the MGH website, via the e-newsletter and through social media platforms.

The MGH continued to work very closely with the Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) fund managers and MEIF Senior Relationship Manager (now known as Senior Manager, UK Network - West Midlands).

LEP Board Member and Access to Finance Champion, Paul Kalinauckas, is a member of the West Midlands MEIF Strategic Oversight Board. The BSL is the Chair of the West Midlands MEIF Regional Advisory Board (RAB). The MEIF Senior Relationship Manager, Ryan Cartwright, is a member of the MGH Operations Group and Marches LEP Access to Finance Group.

Intellectual Property Office (IPO):

The MGH continued to work with the Marches IPO contact and promote support available to both business advisers and businesses. Collaborative events helped ensure local businesses were able to tap into relevant patent, trademark and intellectual property support.

Be the Business (Productivity Leadership Group):

The Mentoring for Growth Programme continued to be promoted to Marches SMEs. All three growth hubs continued working closely with the Marches Mentoring Adviser, exploring collaborative working where possible.

Banks:

All three growth hubs continued to work with partners from the banking sector and the Marches LEPs Experts in Residence. Collaborative Marches wide events were considered and delivered where possible with NatWest Bank and this activity continues during 2021/22.

Marches LEP Access to Finance Strategy - The main objective of the Access to Finance Strategy is to promote the availability of external finance to local businesses seeking to grow thereby adding value to the local economy. The Access to Finance Group delivered a consultation session on 28 January to consider current conditions and contribute to the LEP's economic recovery plan.

ICAEW / Accountants:

The MGH continued to link into ICAEW members and other accountants through their established networks. In addition to this, the MGH teams linked with this group through events and business clinics run by accountancy and finance professionals. An accountant has been identified to join the Marches Business Support Steering Group.

Angel Networks:

The MGH continued to promote the Regional Angels Programme (British Business Bank). The programme is designed to help reduce regional imbalances in access to early-stage equity finance for smaller businesses across the UK. It aims to address this issue by increasing the availability, supply and awareness of angel and other early-stage equity investments across the country, particularly in areas where this type of finance is less readily available.

Referrals continued to be made into the Midlands Engine Investment Fund which also offers access to a range of finance options include venture capital and business angels. At present, there is no dedicated Angel Networks within the Marches area.

PBS sector (including local specialist advisors and support via a pool of Legal and Professional sector partners):

The MGH continued to link with this sector via their established networks.

During 2020/21, with the support of Growth Hub Supplementary Grant funding, the growth hub teams developed relationships with specialist advisers, some of which are from the PBS sector. These relationships will continue to be further developed during 2021/22.

The MBS Steering Group currently has 1 PBS sector representative and a further position yet to be filled.

Universities/Business Schools:

MGH Telford & Wrekin and MGH Herefordshire (until Q4) were sponsored and hosted by University of Wolverhampton, which allowed access to information on Higher Education including undergraduate, post graduate programmes, degree level apprenticeships and business support projects.

Events being delivered by University Centre Shrewsbury, the University of Wolverhampton, NMITE and Harper Adams University are promoted on the MGH website's events calendar and information on training providers, FE and HE programmes is contained on its skills micro site at <http://skillssearch.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/>.

Enterprise Zones:

MGH – Herefordshire is now based in the Shell Store on Skylon Park (www.skylonpark.co.uk), Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ) which is the UK's only Enterprise Zone with a defence and cyber security focus. Businesses located on the Enterprise Zone are encouraged to use the growth hub for access to business advice and information. Marches LEP investment in the Midlands Centre for Cyber Security, NMITE and the Shell Store have contributed to the ongoing development of the HEZ.

Catapults/Incubators and Accelerators:

The Marches LEP works closely with the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC), part of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult, to identify opportunities for joint working. The MGH promotes events delivered at MTC and other Catapult sites in the UK.

Hereford Shell Store Business Incubation and Innovation Centre - Shell Store is the first Incubation Centre in the Marches. The project creates more than 2,000 square metres of employment space, with room for new and growing businesses to set up and expand. [The Shell Store Incubation Centre - Skylon Park](#). MGH Herefordshire is now based within the Shell Store and will encourage residents to use the growth hub to access business advice and information.

Better Business for All (BBfA)/Local Regulators:

The Marches LEP is a member of the BBFA Steering Group which includes economic development and regulatory services representation from across the Marches, as well as business representation. A pilot BBFA Shropshire project is currently on hold until further notice.

Libraries/Business & IP Centres:

MGH Shropshire have a place on the Shropshire Libraries mobile library to support outreach activity in rural areas across the county. The mobile library visits 240 villages during a two-week period. Activity has been on hold due to COVID 19 and will commence again in 2021/22 when it is safe to do so.

MGH Shropshire previously held 1:1 surgeries at different libraries every month in the market towns. These sessions will recommence when it is safe to do so.

MGH Herefordshire and MGH Telford & Wrekin will explore opportunities with their local libraries in due course.

**Government Departments (e.g. DCMS, HMRC, DWP, etc)
Made Smarter (where applicable)**

Business support funding/services from government departments continued to be promoted by the MGH and collaborative working/events continue to be explored.

DWP

The Marches LEP has set up a strategic working group with DWP Leads with a focus on current unemployment/claimant numbers, Kickstart scheme, Youth Hubs and sharing of information on current economic conditions. In addition to this, operational working groups have been developed with the ESF contract holders, DWP and the three local authorities in response to the increase in unemployment across the Marches as a result of Covid 19. This enables local intelligence to be shared at an early stage to support businesses and employees.

Department for Education - Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) and Local Skills Report

The Marches LEP secured £75k from Department for Education in 2020/21 to finalise its evidence base and dataset for use by partners. Funding has been used to update analysis of skills needs and demand, potential growth areas, labour market challenges and sector specific opportunities and to evidence the impact of the SAP.

The LEP was required to produce a Local Skills Report for submission to DfE by the end of March 2021 [Marches Local Skills Report](#). Work was commissioned to conduct a review of the SAP and compile the Local Skills Report, supported by the LEP's Skills Project Manager, with The Black Country Consortium providing additional data support and input to economic recovery planning. In addition to this, the LEP has invested in EMSI Analyst as a data analysis and curriculum planning toolkit for the LEP, three General

FE Colleges, the three Local Authorities and Marches Skills Provider Network. This toolkit with help to ensure that training and skills development programmes are closely aligned with employers' needs.

Department for Education - Marches Careers Hub

A Careers Hub Lead was appointed by the LEP in November 2020. The role is to manage the Careers and Enterprise Company contract, which involves the setup of the Marches Careers Hub. This forms part of the Department for Education's Careers Hub expansion plans announced in June 2020 to support skills for Covid-19 recovery. The Marches Careers Hub will draw on best practice and learning from earlier Wave 1 and Wave 2 Hubs, which has proven the critical role Career Hubs play in supporting local skills development.

The Marches LEP Careers Hub was formally launched on 28 April 2021, celebrating its vision of transforming career education for young people across the Marches. The launch also demonstrated the Hub's commitment to supporting post-Covid-19 economic recovery, increasing student, parent and carer access to the latest labour market information to shape informed career decision-making in uncertain times and increasing meaningful encounters with employees.

A Steering Group has been established and a network of Cornerstone companies is being formed to act as advocates for careers education and business engagement, all of whom who are committed to supporting young people to access the career opportunities they need. The Cornerstone Employers are experienced in engaging with education and giving strategic support to secondary schools and colleges to empower careers provision. They will support the Careers Hub to meet key objectives, including expansion of the employee-based volunteer Enterprise Advisers network. Enterprise Advisers work with Career Leaders to gain traction in their schools and colleges and drive implementation of the Gatsby Benchmarks of excellent careers education. The Careers Hub Lead will be working with our Enterprise Advisers to ensure they can support schools and colleges in developing their approach to careers education delivery, focusing on activities most effective in motivating young people and providing employer perspective and insight. The Marches Careers Hub will be supported with access to bursaries for individual schools and colleges to train Career Leaders, as well as a Central Hub Fund, equivalent to £1k per school or college to drive performance.

Made Smarter West Midlands

During 2020/21 Q4 the West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster started discussions/planning for the Made Smarter West Midlands Project. The cluster aim to launch this project in June 2021.

Others (public and private):

BEIS are particularly keen to know about any good examples of partnership working with the private sector. If there are any key private sector partners that you wish to mention do so here, also include any local business networks/groups you run or are part off, including a short summary of activities.

The Marches LEP is private-sector led - it has the voice of its business community at its heart and engages with employers through the three Business Boards in Shropshire, Telford and Herefordshire. As well as engaging with individual businesses, the Business Boards also work with organisations including the Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, National Farmers' Union and local authorities.

Midlands Energy Hub

MGH continues to help raise awareness of projects/programmes available through the hub. Outputs and outcomes are included in the Scale-up section of this report.

IOD & IOEE

The MGH continues to work closely with the Institute of Directors (IOD) and Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE).

Shropshire Wildlife Trust Partnership

MGH Shropshire team is supporting Shropshire Wildlife Trust with the Meres & Mosses Business Environment Network.

Partners for Social Enterprise Networking

MGH Shropshire continues to support a Social Enterprise Programme which includes collaborative events.

The Entrepreneur Club

Work will be picked up in due course with The Entrepreneur Club and a wealth planning specialist to deliver a suite of workshops for growth businesses. The workshops will be followed by business 1:1 surgeries with MGH Shropshire.

Ladder for Shropshire

MGH Shropshire has been working closely with [Ladder for Shropshire](#) and making employer referrals to support the take-up of apprenticeships. The Ladder for Shropshire is a one-stop-shop providing impartial advice and support to employers on apprenticeships, with the aim of encouraging more employers to offer opportunities.

The Ladder for Shropshire was launched six months ago and has been actively promoted by the MGH, with 26 employer referrals from MGH Shropshire. A number of these referrals are still being developed into opportunities, however 6 apprenticeships have been offered, with some already starting their journey with employers.

Two of the MGH Shropshire contracted consultants have also actively engaged with the project and have referred 4 employers, resulting in 2 apprenticeships being offered and a further 2 in the pipeline.

In total, 30 employers have now been referred/signposted at the Ladder linked with training providers across the Marches to offer apprenticeships, thanks to great partnership working with MGH Shropshire.

Council Public Protection Team and Shrewsbury BID

MGH Shropshire, in collaboration with Shropshire Council Public Protection team and Shrewsbury BID, started to deliver business opening-up on-line events from 22 March 2021, with activity continuing during April 2021.

[Shropshire businesses invited to free re-opening webinars](#)

HR Collaborations

The growth hubs continue to work with local HR specialists and deliver workshops and events encompassing employment and company law.

MGH Telford & Wrekin supports the local HR Forum which is a private sector-led networking and discussion group made up of HR professionals from the area's larger employers. This enables referrals to the MGH's events programmes and wider support.

MGH Shropshire, in partnership with Shropshire Council and Shropshire HR, delivered a successful HR Conference around Leadership & Performance in 2020 following a successful event in 2019. A further event is planned during 2021/22.

Growth Hub Gurus

MGH Telford & Wrekin's Growth Hub Guru Club is an extension to the growth hub team and delivers a series of free interactive workshops based around each stage of the business journey. The gurus share their expertise and work with businesses to help them overcome barriers. The initiative has become a core part of MGH Telford & Wrekin's events programme offer.

Local Authority Town Councils and Town Clerks

The growth hub teams will continue to actively work with the Town Councils and Town Clerk teams to help support outreach activity. This includes growth hub presentations at Town Clerk meetings to help raise awareness of the MGH service.

Collaborative Events - Success continued with collaborative events and workshops with both existing partners (public & private) and newly developed partnerships across the Marches. Links to some of the 2020/21 examples are provided below:

- Marches Economic Recovery Summit meeting recording: <https://youtu.be/7ilaYuopdw0>
- Marches Summit news release and poll results - <https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/marches-lepsummit-launches-economic-recovery-work/>
- Creativity Bootcamp <https://www.innovationbeehive.co.uk/creativity-bootcamp-registration/>
- The Friday Hub (every Friday) success [Friday hub marks 12-month anniversary with new networking record \(marchesgrowthhub.co.uk\)](https://marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/friday-hub-marks-12-month-anniversary-with-new-networking-record/)
- The Business Health and Vitality Hub <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-business-health-vitality-hub-tickets-105400297126?aff=ebapi#>
- 21 Days to Start-Up https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/calendar/view/2801_21_Days_To_Business_Start-up_Success
- Returning to Work Safely and securely <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/returning-to-work-securely-safely-compliantly-tickets-11149354712?aff=ebapi#>
- Bouncing Back Why your Supply Chain needs to adapt
- Marketing Your Business during COVID 19
- Buy From <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-buy-from-marketing-surgery-tickets-110679802268?aff=ebapi#>
- The Bitesize Digital Academy (Digital Marketing Strategy) https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/calendar/view/2893_WEBINAR_Bitesize_Digital_Academy
- The Art of Brilliance and Shropshire HR - Bounce Back Ability
- Special Forces Mindset - Resilience During Periods of Transition
- Small Business Commissioner Webinar - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-small-business-commissioner-webinar-tickets-114544449532#>
- Boost your business in Hereford in partnership with NatWest - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-support-clinic-hereford-natwestboost-tickets-89040240757?aff=ebapi#>
- Funding Business Growth in partnership with Business Growth Programme 2 - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-growth-programme-2-funding-business-growth-tickets-96972091135?aff=ebapi#>
- Telford Women's Networking Meeting - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/april-2020-telford-womens-networking-meeting-tickets-100420384072?aff=ebapi#>
- Business Survival Workshop, Ideas and Government Response <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-survival-workshop-ideas-and-government-response-tickets-101704316348?aff=ebapi#>
- Hereford Means Business Expo 2020 - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hereford-means-business-expo-2020-visitor-ticket-tickets-90953052027?aff=ebapi#>

- Herefordshire Economic Development Forum - Talk Community Business - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/herefordshire-economic-development-forum-talk-community-business-wellbeing-and-future-developments-tickets-103504883894?aff=ebapi>
- Financial Hot topics during COVID 19 - <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/calendar/view/2774> Financial Hot Topics during Covid-19
- Building Strengths that Build Resilience - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/building-strengths-that-build-resilience-tickets-114243826360>
- Grants for Growth in partnership <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/calendar/view/2960> WEBINAR Grants for Growth

3. Governance

- Please confirm the governance arrangements that were in place in 2020-2021 for: Core, Supplementary Funding and EU Transition funding; and the role of the LEP and Accountable Body played in providing oversight and ensuring compliance of the Growth Hub. If your governance arrangements changed during the funding period/or are set to change in the next three months, please provide details of:
 - Why governance arrangements were/need to be change(d)?
 - What new measures were/will be put in place?
 - Any changes as a result of the supplementary funding?

Please ensure you include the role of the LEP and Accountable Body in providing oversight and compliance of the Growth Hub (including line of sight back to LEP Board and national LEP Local Growth Assurance Framework). Do include charts/diagrams if possible.

The Marches LEP (MLEP) has operated as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) since February 2019 and the LEP Board [LEP Board](#) (comprising both public and private sector partners) is the ultimate decision-making authority.

The Marches LEP can confirm that all appropriate LEP governance, transparency and accountability arrangements were in place in 2020-2021 and compliant with the national LEP Local Growth Assurance Framework.

During 2020-2021, the Marches LEP appointed a Director of Corporate Services who is responsible for LEP governance and compliance with the responsibilities associated with the LEP becoming a company limited by guarantee in 2019. During the next three months, the LEP Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will be stepping down and will leave the LEP on 30 July 2021. The Board has commenced a recruitment exercise to identify a successor.

The Marches LEP Board oversees the setting of the strategic direction for the MGH and receives progress updates from the Chair of the Marches Business Support (MBS) Steering Group. Shropshire Council acts as its Accountable Body.

The MBS Steering Group is a sub-group of the LEP Board and meets quarterly. This group has a very important role to play with regards to governance and provides guidance on key issues such as policy, partnership working, objectives, budgetary control, marketing strategy and resource allocation. To reflect this broader role, the terms of reference were updated in 20/21.

The election of the MBS Steering Group Chair takes place every two years. Following open advertisement, a new private sector Chair was appointed in January 2021 [MBS Chair](#). The Chair of the MBS Steering Group is also the Marches LEP Small Business Champion. MBS Steering Group agendas and minutes are prepared in line with the TOR.

On joining the MBS Steering Group, each member (excluding local authority partners) is asked to complete the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government template of the Register of Members' Interest Form and this is reviewed on an annual basis by the LEP CEO and Chair of the MBS Steering Group, in line with the LEP Conflicts of Interest Policy. Register of Members' Interest Form were last updated in April 2021, covering the period February 2021 to February 2022. In addition to this, members are asked to declare any interests at the start of all meetings for any relevant agenda items.

The TOR are reviewed annually with the last review taking place in April 2021. The MBS Steering Group TOR has been broadened to incorporate a more strategic view of business support in anticipation of BEIS' Business Support Reform programme and changes to funding, including the impending end of EU funding for business support projects.

The MGH governance is outlined in the Accountability & Assurance Framework [Accountability-and-Assurance-Framework](#) including the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the group. [TOR](#)

The MGH Operations Group is an officer level working group which meets every two months to ensure that activities are co-ordinated effectively across the LEP-managed virtual hub and the partner-led three physical hubs in Shrewsbury, Telford & Wrekin and Hereford. The group reviews business support services from all partners in order to manage referrals, monitor outputs and share information. Its membership includes:

Local Partners:

- Herefordshire Council
- Shropshire Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council
- University of Wolverhampton
- Marches LEP
- PR/Marketing consultant

National:

- Department for International Trade
- Economic Growth Solutions (Deliver Manufacturing Growth Programme)
- British Business Bank

The Marches LEP team meets with the Accountable Body (finance team) monthly to review spend against profile and to discuss any concerns. The information from this meeting is used to update the Performance Risk and Monitoring Committee (PRMC) which meet every 2 months and is a sub-group of the LEP Board comprising four LEP Board members, three Section 151 Officers and the LEP CEO.

BEIS quarterly claim deadline dates are noted at the beginning of the financial year. Internal deadline dates are agreed with the finance team to ensure that quarterly claims are checked and submitted on time with the appropriate evidence.

The MGH Audit report is carried out by Shropshire Council and the audit team are given sufficient notice to carry out the work required. This helps ensure the year-end reporting deadline is met. The audit service provided by Shropshire Council is a chargeable service.

This [link](#) sets out how the MBS Steering Group reports into the Marches LEP Board, the reporting structure plus the area's three Business Boards. The Business Boards help to provide direct links to

private businesses testing the effectiveness of the service, provide a route to publicise the service and enable the LEP to gather intelligence from the business community.

- **Triage. Diagnostics and Signposting**

Local Infrastructure

- What Growth Hub delivery model/typology was employed during the 2020-2021 funding period?
 - Was this consistent or did it change during the twelve-month period? Why was this delivery model/typology chosen?
 - If applicable what is the contract period with the current provider?
 - What value does this model add over other models and why?
 - What was the benefit of this chosen model to businesses using the Growth Hub?

The MGH partnership model remained in place during 2020/21 and did not change during the twelve-month period. The MGH model included a virtual growth hub and website www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk that was supported by three physical growth hubs situated in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire. Since July 2018, virtual hub telephone enquiries have been handled by the NBSH. The MGH supports individuals and businesses by linking them to national, regional and local support including:

- GOV.UK (including EU Exit and COVID 19 Business Support)
- DIT
- IPO;
- UKRI
- LA Economic Development teams and
- A portfolio of European Union (EU) funded programmes delivered by partners.

MGH model benefits from:

- A low-cost high return model due to partner contributions (Local Authorities, University of Wolverhampton and University Centre Shrewsbury).
- Sound public sector and private partnerships.
- Effective co-ordination of business support provision.
- Highly regarded physical premises.
- Efficient one-stop-shop and signposting.
- Successful marketing.

During 2020-21, MGH and its partners flexed delivery to meet the needs of business and incorporated additional services including 1:1 business advice (supported by growth hub Supplementary funding), Peer Networks, Small Business Recovery Grant Scheme (supported by ERDF COVID 19 Kickstart Funds), WM EU Business Support project (supported by EU Transition Business Readiness funding) and signposting to the local authorities grant schemes etc.

The WM growth hub cluster supported the delivery of the WM EU Business Support project as it allowed for the project to be mobilised quickly by using central resources, support procurement and demonstrated economies of scale.

- Were any additional physical Growth Hub locations opened in 2020-2021 Please provide details (including why these locations were chosen).

MGH did not open any additional physical growth hub locations in addition to the existing three physical growth hubs situated in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin. Due to Covid 19, events and support were delivered virtually to meet business needs.

- Number of FTEs employed by or contracted to work on behalf of the Growth Hub as an organisation and specify roles/job titles, **irrespective of funding stream.**

Physical Growth Hubs

As previously mentioned, owing to limited resources, we work in partnership with the three local authorities. The three local authorities provided a total of 8.5 officers (generalists and 1 skills specialist) to support the operation of the three physical hubs during 2020/21. These posts are funded by the LA partners.

MGH Shropshire

- 1 FTE Growth Hub Manager - oversees strategic and operational delivery, supports businesses, and manages events programme.
- 1 FTE Growth Hub Officer - supports businesses and events programme delivery. This colleague has been off sick since 10 December to date.

MGH Telford & Wrekin

- Part time Growth Hub Manager who oversees strategic and operational delivery.
- 1 FTE Growth Hub Coordinator – key tasks include data reporting, submitting spend claims, enquiry handling and online marketing.
- Part time Business Support Officer – key tasks include managing the extended team of consultants in delivery of an events programme and projects such as additional business /specialist support.
- 1 FTE Business Adviser (retired at the end of March 2021 and is not being replaced).
- 1 FTE Project Officer - responsible for the management and delivery of Marches-wide Growth Hub Project (Step-up Programme that supports start up and growth businesses) also managed and delivered the Marches Small Business recovery Grant funded by ERDF COVID 19 Kickstart Funds
- 1 FTE Business Support Officer – skills specialist that also supports start-up enquiries.

MGH Herefordshire

- 1 FTE Growth Hub Manager who oversees operations, supports businesses and manages the events programme.
- Part-time Economic Development Officer who supports the Growth Hub Manager supporting business and admin tasks.

Supplementary Growth Hub funding supported the following:

- 1 FTE Admin Officer was contracted via an agency during October 2020 and January 2021.
- A framework of 45 business/specialist advisers (contractors) who were called upon, as and when required, to support 1:1 business/specialist advice.

EU Transition Business Readiness funding supported the following role:

- Access to 2 FTE General Business Adviser to support Marches businesses.
- Access to six Specialist Advisers who supported businesses, as and when required, through the WM EU Business Support Project. Specialisms included Data/GDPA, HR, International Trade/Imports/exports/Customs, Service sector, VAT and employment & Skills.
- The number of FTEs employed by or contracted to work on behalf of the Growth Hub as an organisation and specify roles/job titles, **funded only by BEIS core funding.**

Core funding supported the following role:-

- 1 FTE Business Support Lead who manages the growth hub contract and day-to-day operations (employed)
- 1 day per week admin support from Marches LEP Administrator.
- The number of FTEs employed by or contracted to work on behalf of the Growth Hub as an organisation and specify roles/job titles, **funded in part by BEIS core funding and other funding streams.**

N/A

- Did the Growth Hub use the Business Support Helpline to provide initial inbound telephone /email enquiry capability? If so provide details. If the Business Support Helpline is not used give details of local arrangements for inbound telephone/email enquiries.

In July 2018, the LEP transferred the virtual hub helpline to the Business Support Helpline. NBSH web chat support is also available via the MGH website. During 2020/21 the helpline received **1457** Marches calls.

- How did the LEP ensure that the Growth Hub continued to proactively promote both public and private sector support services and programmes that provide businesses with access, and information to:

Website - www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk

The website includes information and links to national, regional and local business support services, training, events and tender opportunities. It has been designed with a searchable directory. A filter to the search facility has been created to help businesses pinpoint eligible products and services. The MGH website is currently being upgraded and redesigned to help enhance user experience and the new website will be launched in the coming months.

The website also includes an Employer Skills Search Facility. This was previously developed by the LEP and its Skills Board (which included business representatives, training and skills providers and universities). 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.

All programmes are proactively promoted by the MGH PR/Marketing consultants. This is done through website content, regular MGH e-newsletters, social media platforms, through e-marketing campaigns and advertorials. PR/Marketing details and impact are provided below:

MGH Communication Strategy

Never have communications to businesses about support available from the MGH been so important as in the last year.

The Covid crisis saw the MGH communications strategy pivot to delivering urgent daily updates via social media on Government guidance from BEIS and Public Health England, developing a brand new online resource library signposting to gov.uk and promotion of grants and other support available via PR & media coverage, e-newsletters and digital marketing. A similar campaign was rolled out in Q2 & 3 promoting end of EU Exit Transition readiness and updated in Q4 with a focus on Check, Change and Go.

The MGH has seen a significant increase in its reach and engagement with its target business audience during the past 12 months. Figures for the year show the number of unique visitors to the Marches Growth Hub website was up 37% on the previous 12 months, while overall hits to the website rose by 35%.

The hub's social media channels also saw growth across the board, with a 93% increase in LinkedIn followers and 19% increase in the number of likes on Facebook.

The success has been as a result of a number of factors including:

- Focus on establishing the MGH as a trusted and informed source of accurate, up-to-date information, support and advice around the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Increased brand awareness as the go-to source of updates and advice regarding the UK's exit from the EU.
- Alignment and partnership working with the Marches LEP and its Business Recovery campaign.
- Targeted PR around significant support schemes such as extra 1:1 adviser support and access to finance and collaborative working with partners such as DIT, chambers of commerce and the FSB.

The impact of Coronavirus on the region's businesses is reflected in the both the swift retargeting of communications via the MGH and the use of its media channels during this period.

The strategy to align more closely the communications of the Marches LEP and its business support service has resulted in an increased awareness of the work the LEP delivers to help business growth, evidenced through increased engagement on both organisations' social media channels.

Communications during this period have focused on dedicated Covid-19 resources online and signposting of PHE, BEIS and DHCS communication to support employers and partners:

- Availability of coronavirus related grants and business support measures to help businesses via gov.uk and through the LEP's Marches Investment Fund.
- Working with finance and funding partners, including the British Business Bank, to signpost to loans and grants e.g. CBILS.
- Working with the West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster to support EU Exit, the end of Transition and new trading arrangements.
- Business Recovery campaign as the region starts to emerge from the pandemic.
- Case studies illustrating the success of funding and support schemes available through the MGH and partnership schemes such as the new Export Academy and the food and drink and defence, security and cyber clusters.

Media relations, PR & Press (online and offline coverage)

More than 261 separate pieces of media coverage have been secured as a result of MGH PR campaigns, content and news releases between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

These have appeared in the key print titles for the region, including the daily Shropshire Star newspaper, the Midlands News Association weekly titles and other Shropshire and Herefordshire weekly titles, including the Hereford Times.

Regular features have appeared in both Shropshire Business magazine, Hereford Business Times magazine, the Business Matters magazine of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and Business Direction, the magazine for Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce.

BBC local radio headlines, breakfast and drivetime shows have covered the work of the MGH Coronavirus support with Marches LEP Chair, Mandy Thorn, and MBS Steering Group Chair, Dave Courteen, both being interviewed on a number of occasions.

Campaigns

The PR & communications activity during this period has continued to focus on support available for coronavirus-hit businesses and how the MGH services can help them recover. As well as launching new funding programmes, MGH comms has supported Government messaging on test and trace, help for employers with risk assessments ahead of getting staff back to work and sharing best practice, case study and webinar content to help businesses get back to work.

The Covid related pages on www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk have been revamped to focus on recovery support and work has continued with partners to support a range of online events hosted by hub teams and advisers, chambers of commerce and the FSB.

In July, the Government requested support for its Transition campaign, issuing new messaging and a social media toolkit urging businesses to get ready for the end of the transition year. The MGH comms approach to this has been to share Government owned channels and relevant events. This has continued beyond the transition period with a multi-channel campaign to raise awareness of new trading arrangements and the actions business needs to take.

MGH communications has worked closely with colleagues in the West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster to ensure consistency of messaging and the widest possible engagement with the target audience. In December, the MGH launched its Check Change Go campaign to raise awareness of the new trading arrangements at the end of the transition period.

Figures from the West Midlands Growth Hub cluster show the success of this campaign, with 64% of businesses in the MGH area saying they had used the Brexit transition tool checker being promoted compared to an average 42% in the region as a whole.

In October 2020, the Marches LEP staged a Business Recovery Week which included a specific emphasis on the work of the MGH and how it could help businesses during the pandemic.

This included showcasing 150 different support programmes available, digital, skills, Covid recovery and EU transition programmes and the sharing of project content, case studies and videos from the MGH and LEP websites. In total, more than 300 updates across all platforms were delivered.

The communications work resulted in a huge spike in engagement for both the LEP and MGH. Throughout the week social media updates reached around 240,000 accounts on Twitter alone. Engagement rose 430% on Twitter and 240% on LinkedIn and 1,305% on MGH Facebook. Web traffic to the MGH increased by 40% compared to the previous week.

In February 2021, the MGH ran a targeted campaign around the additional 1-2-1 business adviser support available within the region. A set of adverts promoting business support available from the hub was targeted to business owners, CEOs, MDs and any audiences which had previously looked or been interested in business support. Figures for the week when compared with the same period 12 months previously showed reach:

- 156,209 accounts reached, increase of 744%
- Video views: 38,639, increase of 206%
- Engagement: 34,002 up 727%. (34k people clicked, shared, liked or commented)

As a result of the call to action - Contact your local growth hub today - 271 people clicked through to the website, which saw a 17% increase in visits.

New MBS Steering Group Chair, Dave Courteen, was appointed in Q4 and a campaign developed to further raise awareness of the MGH, its business support and the chair himself.

Between January and March, Dave Courteen was interviewed on three separate occasions by the BBC and was profiled across the local news and B2B media.

Website Statistics

In the last year, 149 news releases and 91 pieces of online content related to business support on offer, plus information pages and case studies, have featured on the MGH website. This has resulted in a 35% increase in web visits on the previous year.

Web Statistics	April 2016 - March 2017	April 2017 - March 2018	April 2018 - March 2019	April 2019 - March 2020	April 2020 - March 2021
Website users (unique visitors)	13,484	16,238	17,297	22,382	30,663
Total Web visits	24,340	26,603	27,366	34,044	45,990
Page views	83,371	83,854	78,542	92,805	128,154
Average time spent	4.07 mins	3.24 mins	2.56 mins	2 min 35 secs	2 min 30 sec
Return/new visitors	24%/76%	18%/82%	17%/83%	17%/83%	16%/84%
Most visited pages	Calendar/ Start-up support/ About us Shropshire	Calendar/ About Us Shropshire/ Start-up support	Calendar/ About us Shropshire/ Finance and Funding - Grants	Calendar/Finance and Funding and MGH Shropshire	Finance and funding Advice and support for Coronavirus MGH Shropshire

Social Media

MGH Twitter had a total of 4,182 followers, which is an increase of 6% since 31 March 2020. Potential viral reach totalled 4.2m. @marcheshub

The MGH Facebook page received 800 likes and 1,043 follows, which is up 19% since 31 March 2020. The average monthly reach was 52,975 (including 2 paid for campaigns) with average organic monthly reach at 3,216. <https://www.facebook.com/marchesgrowthhub/>

LinkedIn had 1,202 followers (up 93% since March 31, 2020) with 6,212 average monthly impressions. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/marches-growth-hub/?originalSubdomain=uk>

Note – All updates are shared across Marches LEP and Hereford Enterprise Zone channels, as well as significant sharing via MGH partners.

Newsletters:

14 Business Support from the Marches Growth Hub e-newsletters were issued to a mailing list of 2,057 each time. These newsletters are supplemented by regular joint local authority partner/MGH e-shots promoting events, availability of advice and support and promotion of new grants and initiatives, delivered to in excess of 7,000 businesses. MGH updates are also promoted within the dedicated Skylon Park e-newsletter, which is distributed to businesses on the LEP's Hereford Enterprise Zone.

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/coronavirussurvey-3956897>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/signupforgovukwebinars>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/funding-for-tourism-and-business>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/guidance-for-reopening>

<https://mailchi.mp/marchesgrowthhub/recoverysupport>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/launch-event-sign-up>

<https://mailchi.mp/marchesgrowthhub/millions-secured-for-jobs>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/what-support-do-you-need>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/employer-covid-testing>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/new-support-available>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/new-covid-grants-and-brexit-rules>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/brexit-transition-steps-to-take>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/more-grant-support>

<https://mailchi.mp/marcheslep/launch-event-sign-up>

Case studies

Case studies on businesses which have been supported by the MGH or one of the projects which the MGH has promoted to its businesses in 2020/2021 include:

EMS, Hereford

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/ems-launches-first-lab-of-its-kind-in-herefordshire-with-marches-growth-hub-help/>

Planet Doughnut, Shrewsbury

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/planet-doughnut-heads-into-orbit-with-help-from-marches-growth-hub/>

Global Minds, Telford

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/global-minds-focus-on-expansion/>

Ludlow Brewing Company, Ludlow

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/brewing-company-toasts-success-of-green-energy-grant-scheme/>

Kudos Blends, Cleobury Mortimer

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/shropshire-company-targets-global-growth-thanks-to-new-grant/>

Golden Bear, Ironbridge

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/golden-bear-invests-in-digital-thanks-to-grant-help/>

Wild Edric, Ludlow

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/film-production-company-set-for-growth-thanks-to-new-grant/>

Midland Alloy, Telford

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/new-jobs-at-telford-manufacturer-thanks-to-grant-help/>

Earth Rover, Newport

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/agri-robotics-start-up-raises-250k-from-meif-for-revolutionary-system-to-improve-crop-yields/>

My Workwear, Telford

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/25000-investment-puts-telford-workwear-specialist-back-on-course-for-2m-sales/>

T3DMC, Bridgnorth

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/shropshire-company-expands-thanks-to-grant-help/>

Stok.ly, Hereford

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/winner-of-innovate-uks-covid-19-technology-grant-to-launch-a-community-ecommerce-project/>

Beaverfit, Shrewsbury

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/shropshire-manufacturer-fit-to-grow-thanks-to-grant-help/>

Fabweld Steel <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/working-safely-fabweld-steel-products/>

Corbetts the Glavanizer <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/working-safely-corbetts/>

Speller Metcalfe <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/working-safely-speller-metcalfe/>

- Enable them to trade internationally/any other internationalisation activity beyond trade support

MGH continued to promote DIT services and events via the MGH website, newsletters and social media platforms. Referrals continued to be made to DIT programmes and services, including international trade missions, support for new exporters and support for existing exporters that are seeking new international markets.

We continued to work very closely, and seek innovative ways, to build and strengthen the partnership as demonstrated by supporting DIT additional resource allocated in the Marches during 2020-21 and the West Midlands EU Business Support Project, which referred into DIT webinar events and 1:1 clinics.

DIT, Head of Business Development & Partnerships – West Midlands Regional Delivery Partner is a member of both the MGH Operations Group and MBS Steering Group which helped inform the groups on emerging business issues and concerns. DIT, Head of Business Development & Partnerships delivered a very informative presentation to the MBS Steering Group in March 2021 feeding back the excellent partnership working with both the MGH and WM Growth Hub Cluster. DIT outputs and outcomes relating to the Marches is detailed in the Scale Up section of this report.

- Improve the take up of modern technologies that improve productivity (e.g. cloud computing, data analytics, CRM, automation/machine learning etc.)

All three growth hubs delivered a suite of digital support with partners through their events programme.

More details on partners' programmes are detailed within the Scale-Up section of this report.

MGH Shropshire & Tech Severn 2020 - The planned event [Tech Severn 2020 event](#) was cancelled due to COVID 19 restrictions. Plans for the 2021 are detailed in the following link [Tech Severn 2021 Event](#).

MGH Shropshire continued with the delivery of the Digital Skills Academy, which was launched in November 2019 led by Lucas Karemo from Google's Digital Garage, who is one of Google's top digital trainers. The ten-module academy provides a comprehensive guide to making the most of all forms of digital marketing.

<https://www.shropshirelive.com/business/2020/02/17/google-backed-digital-academy-hailed-a-huge-success/>

[Event information](#)

MGH Telford & Wrekin continue to strive to become a 'Digital Hub' to help support their local business community. A new EU Digital Enterprise Project, [SOLVD](#) has played an important part in this by supporting Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire SMEs in the adoption of digital technologies to improve productivity and profit.

Marches LEP Digital Strategy 2020-2025 was launched during LEP Recovery Week. The strategy includes the need for investment in digital infrastructure to support businesses, the digital skills agenda and the importance of high-speed broadband to rural areas.

[The-Marches-Digital-Strategy](#)

[Press relating to launch](#)

- Stimulate investment in science, research & development

Eligible businesses continued to be encouraged to access in-depth support from relevant EU projects and partners, e.g. through the AGRI, Manufacturing Growth Programme, KTN etc. Specific details of relevant EU projects are detailed in the Scale-Up section of this report.

New EU project managers were invited to speak at MGH Operations Group. During 2020-21 we heard from Hereford Centre for Cyber & Security, SOLVD and AMCASH www.amcash.co.uk.

Awareness raising events are also held in the 3 physical growth hubs to promote innovative practices.

- Adopt leadership & management best practice

All three growth hubs delivered a suite of leadership and management support with partners through their events programme.

MGH Shropshire supported a high-profile virtual Leadership Conference that took place on 4 November 2020 with 324 delegates in attendance. The business event was organised by Shropshire HR – part of Shropshire Council. The day included a day of inspiring talks and workshops delivered by several internationally renowned figures. [The Leadership Conference Shrewsbury \(tlcshrews.co.uk\)](http://tlcshrews.co.uk)

- Improve workforce skills and access the right talent/apprentices needed to grow

Businesses were encouraged to access MGH website information on local training providers to meet their skills needs. Events on skills issues and potential solutions, e.g. traineeships, apprenticeships, recruitment and retention etc were held at each of the three growth hubs. In-depth programmes, e.g. the Manufacturing Growth Programme, allow businesses to attract consultancy support for leadership and management skills development.

The Herefordshire Skills Show in 2020 was cancelled due to COVID 19.

LEP Recovery week included a Skills Day to highlight ESF-funded activities, apprenticeships and workforce development.

- Increase business awareness and participation in public procurement and major infrastructure projects.

Businesses were encouraged to participate in public procurement opportunities, and these are promoted on the MGH Tenders & Opportunities and LEP website Tenders and Vacancies .

In addition, the three growth hubs continued to increase awareness of good practice in tendering when speaking to businesses.

Due to COVID 19, MGH procurement/supply chain events were put on hold and will be picked up during 2021/22.

- What action was taken to ensure that the Growth Hub continued to simplify the local business support landscape (e.g. joining up activities or service provision, hiding the wiring for customers)?

To ensure the business landscape is not populated by duplicate products and services, the LEP/MGH works with partners to ensure that any new business support projects complement current business support rather than duplicate.

A representative of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) technical team was a member of the MGH Operations Group which helped keep the group informed.

Moving forward, projects funded by the new Community Renewal Fund in Herefordshire will be encouraged to work through, and with, the MGH to help align provision.

- Has the LEP and/or Growth Hub developed or purchased any new and/or innovative online tools or localised on-line content in 2020-21, that might be of interest/benefit to other Growth Hubs e.g. diagnostic tools; benchmarking tools, rate and review systems etc? If yes, please provide details.

The three physical growth hubs further developed their CRM systems to allow for additional data reporting linked to supplementary funding outputs.

The MLEP are currently exploring investing in Power BI system to support data collection and the more effective use of data including identifying gaps in service take up.

Additional temporary admin resource helped develop the light touch data dashboard which is presented to the MGH Operations Group. Moving forward, we look to further develop this information by using Power BI.

- What other England wide activities has the Growth Hub engaged in/supported in 2020-21 e.g. targeted ERDF provision, the Made Smarter programme, Peer Networks, etc?

Small Business Recovery Grant Scheme (supported by ERDF, COVID 19, Kickstart Funds)

The scheme has been highly successful with, so far, 198 businesses from 228 approved applications successfully accessing grant funding, totalling circa £500k following the completion of their recovery project. Recovery projects have been varied and have funded a wide range of business specific interventions, from consultancy support focusing on business planning, to developing new on-line trading platforms to the purchase of IT equipment to small CNC Machines.

Early feedback on the grant support impact is incredibly positive from businesses, with 88% of recipients reporting that it has helped them to recover, whilst 81% advised that it has assisted with job protection.

Where positive impact has not been reported, it is more to do with certain types of businesses being restricted on trading at the point of claim, or where they have not been open long enough to assess impact. Much of the project's successes have derived from the grant funding enabling businesses to trade differently, to adopt new working practices, to buy equipment and to enable access to new markets etc.

The scheme is on track to complete on schedule on 31 May 2021, which is the date that all remaining approved businesses applicants must complete their project and submit their claim forms for re-imburement through the grant.

Peer Networks Programme

Three providers delivered 5 sector-based cohorts across the Marches, adopting the recognised group Action Learning approach, complemented by a series of 1:1 support sessions for each participant, to meet the outcomes of the programme.

This resulted in 51 businesses formally engaging with the programme, with 45 subsequently commencing attendance at the fortnightly group sessions which commenced during December 2020 and delivered virtually. During the course of the programme, for a variety of reasons, 6 participants were unable to continue attendance and left the programme. This reflected the drop-out rate nationally, which proved lower than anticipated.

In total, 39 participants completed the Marches programme, which concluded on 31 March 2021, with all receiving 18 hours of group Action Learning sessions and a minimum of 3.5 hrs 1:1 support from delivery partners. Of these, 95% were either very satisfied, or satisfied, with the programme.

The Marches LEP have been granted funding to deliver a further 3 cohorts during the second year of the programme in 2021-22.

MADE Smart West Midlands

Discussions around supporting this project started during March 2020. Recruitment of advisors started in April 2021. The WM Growth Hub Cluster aim to launch this project in June 2021.

4. Customer Satisfaction

In line with the requirements of the 2020-2021 'Metrics and Evaluation Framework' for 'medium' and 'high' intensity interventions only, please 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.

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5	Total
0	0	0	14	118	132

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 satisfied were you with the service received?", rated on a standard five point scale?

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5	Total
6	7	7	83	524	627

Note: (1 Very Dissatisfied- very poor, 2 Somewhat Dissatisfied - poor, 3 Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied- average, 4 Somewhat Satisfied - good, 5 Very Satisfied – excellent)

“In the absence of Growth Hub support, how likely would you be to undertake the same activity?”, rated on a standard five point scale?

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5	Total
49	97	224	157	107	634

Note: (1 Very Likely, 2 Somewhat Likely, 3 Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 4 Somewhat Unlikely, 5 Very Unlikely)

(Customer satisfaction data from MGH Shropshire and MGH Telford & Wrekin)

5. Data, monitoring, reporting, evaluation and value for money

- How has the LEP ensured that the systems and processes were in place for the Growth Hub to comply with the metrics and evaluation standards as laid out in the 2020-2021 “Monitoring & Evaluation Framework”?
 - Please include information on the processes for accurately collecting both aggregated and non-aggregated (firm-level) data categories.

The MGH consists of a central team which sits within the LEP and is supported by three physical growth hubs all of which use separate CRM systems. The MGH central team use the Tractivity CRM system and the three physical hubs all use Evolutive CRM systems.

To support physical growth hub data collection, data capture processes, in-line with the BEIS Metrics & Evaluation Framework, were developed for use by the local authority partners in each of the three physical growth hubs.

CRM provider Evolutive also supported the three physical hubs to set-up the collection of additional aggregated and non-aggregated data so that it can easily be entered into their CRM systems, including an online form to simplify the process and reduce the number of keystrokes and clicks. In addition to this, dashboards and reports have been created to automate the extraction of both the aggregated and non-aggregated data from the CRM systems. This means that colleagues at the three growth hubs no longer need to manually extract data or manipulate data in Excel.

Part of the 2020/21 physical growth hub allocation was ringfenced to support further CRM development to enable better data recording and analysis.

- Please detail your experience in collecting unique business identifiers (e.g. Companies House Registration Number, VAT/PAYE and postcode), is the LEP and/or Growth Hub able to do this?

The three physical growth hubs collect business identifier information when collecting medium to high intensity data, but not from every business. Some businesses are more aware of this information than others. If the growth hub requests the information from the business, they very rarely come back to them once they have left the face-to-face meeting. The growth hub then tends to complete the blanks by carrying out research on the internet via Companies House etc. There is no concern with regards to collecting post code information.

It should be noted that there is a significant number of micro businesses in the Marches, many of which are sole traders, therefore the proportion of businesses supported that appear on Companies House records due to incorporation, will be low. In addition, micro businesses will often be below the VAT threshold level.

- Have there been any challenges faced in collecting the requested data? Please provide detail.

There have been no challenges in collecting the 6-monthly medium/high intensity data from the physical growth hubs. At times, monthly light touch data was not received on time and this was due to pressures relating to COVID 19 impact and the delivery of LA discretionary grants. Light touch data is used for reporting purposes at the MGH Operations Group.

- Are you currently using, or planning to use the 'firm level data' collected by the LEP and/or Growth Hub to undertake qualitative and/or quantitative assessments of the Growth Hubs impact on those businesses receiving 'medium' and 'high intensity' support?
 - If so, what will these assessments examine? E.g. economic impact, operational efficiency, business productivity, customer satisfaction etc.

We have continued to collect firm level data but, owing to the lack of 2020/21 core budget, we were unable to carry out any qualitative and/or quantitative assessments. We did hope to use supplementary grant funding toward this exercise, but this was confirmed by BEIS as an ineligible cost.

- How are you measuring the impact your Growth Hub has had in terms of businesses (or individuals) acting on the help/advice they received from the Growth Hub? Have you undertaken specific local evaluation and what have you found?

With BEIS' approval, 2020/21 MGH evaluation included the commissioning of three impact case studies to help demonstrate value for money and short, medium and longitudinal impact on business growth. Links to the case studies are listed below: -

EMS, Herefordshire

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/ems-launches-first-lab-of-its-kind-in-herefordshire-with-marches-growth-hub-help/>

Planet Doughnut, Shrewsbury

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/planet-doughnut-heads-into-orbit-with-help-from-marches-growth-hub/>

Global Minds, Telford & Wrekin

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/global-minds-focus-on-expansion/>

- **Scale-Ups**
- The on-going focus on identifying and supporting high growth potential/scale up businesses continued in 2020-21. Please provide an update on the progress of the LEP's Scale-Up Plan in terms of providing services to scale up businesses through the Growth Hubs as defined in your Grant Offer Letter(s). How has this developed and built on local Scale-Up plans? Please provide details of any 'high-growth or scale-up' programmes that you are either delivering or promoting via the Growth Hub and what can you tell us about their impact?

LEP Scale-up Plan Progress

This section includes Marches Scale-up activity comprising a number of strands:

- Scale-Up Institute
- Professional Service Intermediaries
- In-depth Business Support for SME's.

ScaleUp Institute

The BSL worked with the Scale-Up Institute to provide a Marches update for the 2020 Scale-up Review which was published in November 2020. The Review can be found

here: <https://www.scaleupinstitute.org.uk/scaleup-review-2020/introduction/> With the piece on The Marches featured here: <https://www.scaleupinstitute.org.uk/scaleup-review-2020/the-marches-2-2/>

In-depth Business Support for SMEs

These projects/programmes provide in-depth business support for SMEs and are focussed on SMEs with a desire/capacity to grow, including creating new jobs. Some of the high-growth/scale-up programmes that are delivered/promoted via the MGH are detailed below, including impact information where it has been provided.

Peer Networks Programme

Peer Networks programme completed in March 2021. This is a national government initiative funded by BEIS and delivered locally in England through the LEP network and their respective Growth Hubs. The programme's longer-term aims are focused on reducing the UK productivity gap by helping business leaders find practical solutions to strategic and operational challenges. It also forms part of the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and EU transition, seeking to improve the resilience of SMEs, their capability to adapt their business models to the "new normal" and position themselves for future success, driving longer-term productivity gains.

Following procurement in November 2020, 3 providers were contracted to deliver 7 sector-based cohorts across the Marches, adopting the recognised group Action Learning approach, complemented by a series of 1:1 support sessions for each participant, to meet the outcomes of the programme. A national marketing campaign, supported by local initiatives, was implemented to publicise and attract potentially eligible businesses to engage with the programme and eligibility established by means of a formal onboarding process. Given the prevailing business environment and constricted delivery timescales, recruitment of participants proved more challenging than first envisaged and, with BEIS agreement, the Marches LEP's delivery was reduced to 5 cohorts overall in order to maintain the minimum number of participants commencing on each. This resulted in 51 businesses formally engaging with the programme, with 45 subsequently commencing attendance at the fortnightly group sessions which commenced during December 2020 and delivered virtually. During the course of the programme, for a variety of reasons, 6 participants were unable to continue attendance and left the programme. This reflected the drop-out rate nationally, which proved lower than anticipated.

In total, 39 participants completed the Marches programme, which concluded on 31 March 2021, with all receiving 18 hours of group Action Learning sessions and a minimum of 3.5 hrs 1:1 support from our delivery partners. Of these, 95% were either very satisfied, or satisfied, with the programme.

Topics covered during the delivery sessions ranged from EU Transition to digitalisation and supported participating businesses in moving forward in terms of recovery, developing new business models and implementing change. Many reported tangible benefits as a direct result of their participation in the programme, with many forging new professional links and networks and some undertaking business with each other from their interaction during these sessions. The necessary virtual nature of delivery, perhaps seen by some initially as a negative aspect of the programme, eventually became one of its many benefits, particularly given the geography of the Marches, and allowed businesses to collaborate that would otherwise not have interacted with each other and made it easier for participants to give the required time commitment to sessions. This mutual support was evident during quality observations of delivery, and in feedback from both participants and delivery partners, and highlighted the legacy of the programme in these relationships continuing once delivery had concluded. This is borne out by case studies compiled by each of the delivery partners.

The overall success of the programme nationally, with over 4300 businesses receiving support, has seen BEIS secure funding for delivery of the programme for 2021/2022 with the aim to reach a further 5,700 SMEs. The Marches LEP has been granted funding to deliver a further 3 cohorts of 11 participants during the second year of the programme and we will be issuing a tender to select a provider for 2021/22 in May



Case Study - Martin
& Jones Marketing.pc



Case Study - M3
Consulting.pdf



Case Study - RJ
Joinery & Equestrian !

2021. Case studies have been provided here:

EU Project/Programme Development

MGH SME businesses had access to 19 EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a total financial value of over £19.5million. Funding and support through the current and planned programmes will continue until June 2023. The four largest ERDF schemes (Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP), Business Growth Programme (BGP), Marches Buildings Investment Grant (MBIG) and Broadband Grants) awarded a combined £3.5m to Marches businesses between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. The EU investment will lead to the anticipated creation of 210 jobs.

Some of the high-growth/scale-up programmes that are delivered/promoted via the MGH are detailed below including impact information where it has been provided: -

- **Marches Small Business Recovery Grant Scheme funded by ERDF COVID 19 Kickstart Funds**
Telford & Wrekin Council, on behalf of the Marches LEP and partners, applied for and gained further ERDF funds which were allocated to support SME business recovery from the effects of the pandemic. The funding, which opened for applications during October 2020, targeted Micro businesses across the Marches by offering small 100% funded grants of up to £3k towards equipment or specialist consultancy support to aid their recovery.

The scheme has been highly successful with, so far, 198 businesses from 228 approved applications successfully accessing grant funding totalling circa £500k following the completion of their recovery project. Recovery projects have been varied and have funded a wide range of business specific interventions from consultancy support focusing on business planning to developing new on-line trading platforms to the purchase of IT equipment to small CNC Machines.

Early feedback on the grant support impact is incredibly positive from businesses with 88% of recipients reporting that it has helped them to recover, whilst 81% advised that it has assisted with job protection. Where positive impact has not been reported is more to do with certain types of businesses being restricted on trading at the point of claim, or where they have not been open long enough to assess impact. Much of the project's successes have derived from the grant funding enabling businesses to trade differently, to adopt new working practices, to buy equipment, to enable access to new markets etc.

The scheme is on track to complete on schedule on 31 May 2021 which is the date that all remaining approved businesses applicants must complete their project and submit their claim forms for re-imbursement through the grant.

- **Midlands Energy Hub & Marches Renewable Energy (MarRE) Project** - MGH continues to help raise awareness of project which is designed as a straightforward grant scheme allowing any eligible applicants to apply for a 50% grant for the installation of eligible renewable technologies on their premises. Funding for MarRE ends in December 2021. MarRE funding for Herefordshire is now fully allocated and is no longer accepting applications. It is expected that Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin will be in the same situation by the end of July 2021. When all of the project installations are installed, MarRE will have helped to fund over 2,000kW of new renewables. Further information and case studies can be found on Herefordshire Council's website. Midlands Energy Hub Projects are detailed below:-
 - **Low Carbon and Environmental Goods and Services.** A study was commissioned by the Midlands Energy Hub to understand the scale of the low carbon sector of the economy across the Midlands. The report calculates that in the Marches LEP region alone, the Low Carbon and Environmental Goods and Services (LCEGS) sector was worth £1.8bn to the Marches LEP's economy in 2019/20. These sales were generated by over 700 businesses that employed over 12,500 people in the sector in 2019/20. All of the LCEGS reports can be downloaded from Sustainability West Midlands' website. The reports also identify a number of recommendations to support the growth of the sector.
 - **Parish Carbon Calculator.** A new carbon foot-printing tool for local communities is now available. The Impact tool has been developed by the CSE and the University of Exeter, with help from Parish Councils from across England. The project was funded by BEIS via the Midlands Energy Hub, CSE's charitable reserve, and the UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund.
 - **Low Carbon Transport Hubs.** The Midlands Energy Hub commissioned CENEX to identify and rank sites across the Midlands that have the potential to support the development of a strategic network of low carbon, multi-modal transport hubs. This information is now being used to build the business case for a site in Shrewsbury.
 - **Rural Community Energy Fund.** The Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) is a scheme to support rural communities across England wanting to set up renewable energy projects in their area. RCEF is being run by five regional local energy hubs. Currently, there are two phase one projects in the Marches Region.
 - **The Green Homes Grant LAD2.** The Midlands Energy Hub are distributing £59.95m as part of Phase 2 of the LAD scheme. All three local authorities in the Marches LEP region are now drawing up plans to spend their allocations. To assist delivery, two Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) to enable Local Authorities to procure both Installers and Professional Services have been set up.



Energy News -
Winter 2021.pdf

<https://www.sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk/resources/midlands-low-carbon-sector-study/>

- **West Midlands Chambers of Commerce (WMCC) summary of DIT and ERDF contracts**

DIT Core performance

Overall performance in the 2020/21 financial year in The Marches has been excellent considering the challenges of Covid-19 and EU Transition which have directly impacted on West Midlands International Trade (WMIT) and Chambers as delivery partners and the businesses they support. ITAs teams have had to adapt to a completely different way of working with all DIT staff working from home and having to engage and support businesses purely via online means.

The early part of the year focused on providing support to businesses to help them deal with Covid-19 impact, providing crucial support to navigate the range of government support designed to assist with their survival. The multiple lockdowns have continued to ensure that Covid support requests continued throughout the year but as things improved, the team have seen increases in the more traditional export support requests. The UK/EU trade deal and Transition period has driven a high volume of enquiries to the ITA teams. Initially these tended to be where to find information and help with understanding the new rules but as time went on, the team received enquiries change to be more complex in nature.

2020 has been quite a year, a year like no other so team performance against targets have been exceptional, all things considered. The ITA teams in Shropshire and Herefordshire managing to end the contract year ahead of profile in virtually all target areas, achieving a massive 174% of their Export Win value target and 255% of Export Win volume target.

When compared to other West Midlands regions the Marches ranked as follows (out of six):

DIT Target	Position
Export Win Value	1 st
Export Win Volume	2 nd
New Exporter Volume	6 th
Unique Exporter Wins	5 th

The above table shows The Marches position has improved significantly since September 2020.

ERDF Enhanced Export Growth Project

The ERDF Enhanced Export Growth Project which started on 1st April 2020 has had to adapt immediately to the Covid-19 impact. The team shifted their approach to SME support being delivered completely online and still achieved the project outputs. This has been challenging but the need to be responsive to SME needs and flexible in approach has seen the project effectively engage and support SMEs and with fine tuning, the team are finally delivering project outputs.

ERDF project delivery over the year has seen the ERDF funded Channel Manager resource merge with the newly introduced DIT Export Academy which has firmed up the SME support offer providing specific support for none and novice micro and small SMEs. The Marches Export Academy Adviser – John Wigley has worked hard to gain traction with Marches SMEs. He has and continues to work in partnership with the MGH on this agenda. The Marches Export Academy Adviser ended the contract year as follows:-

Export Academy:

DIT Output	Target	Achieved
EA Delivery Plan	1	1 (100%)
Business Engagements	50	80 (160%)
EA Activities	5	6 (120%)
Significant Assists	0	42
ERDF Output		
Business Assists	21	15 (71%)
12hr Assists	21	15 (71%)
3hr assist	11	16 (145%)

To the end of March 2021, the ERDF project had engaged with 96 SMEs in the Marches and has collected SME declaration forms from 58 of these and has managed to achieve the following progress:-

- No. of Enterprises with 1-4 hrs of support = 44
- No. of Enterprises with 5-8 hrs of support = 16
- No. of Enterprises with 9-12 hrs of support = 20

The ERDF targets are shown in the table below:

ERDF Output	Target	Achieved
C1 Number of Businesses Assisted	21	15
C4 Number of Businesses receiving 12 hr assists	21	15
P13 Number of enterprises receiving information, diagnostic and brokerage support	11	16
C5 Number of New Enterprises Supported	1	0
C8 Number of New Jobs Created	2	0

Although the project had a slow start, which was down to Covid-19 however, the team have worked to respond positively to these challenges and have managed to turn the project around with the help of a recently approved Project Change Request (PCR). The PCR has secured a six month extension to the project to end of September 2021. It has also provided an opportunity to re-profile spend and output achievement. The project is now ahead of profile on outputs for the first time and has a full programme of activity planned.

ESIF Internationalisation Fund

Launched in December of 2020, the ESIF IF offers grants to SMEs for internationalisation activities. Grants are available between £1,000 and £9,000 offered on a match funded basis with a 50% intervention rate for More Developed areas and 60% intervention rate for Transitional areas. To the end of March 2021, the project has seen one application approved for a £9k grant for an SME in Herefordshire.

LEP Cluster Adviser project

As part of the Governments Levelling up Agenda, WMIT were tasked to deliver a short LEP Cluster project which involved the recruitment of two LEP Cluster Advisers to work in the Marches region. As agreed with the Marches LEP and Worcestershire LEP two Advisers were successfully recruited:

- David Caine – Food & Drink Cluster Adviser
- James Vithanage – Defence & Cyber Security Cluster Adviser

David and James were tasked with delivering a number of one-to-many events which were designed to engage with the sectors and to bring them together and link to DIT and broader support. The following summarises their achievements in the short time they worked to end of March 2021:

David Caine, Food & Drink Cluster Adviser:-

DIT Output	Target	Achieved
Cluster Campaign Plan	1	1 (100%)
Business Engagements	50	230 (370%)
Service Deliveries	20	17 (85%)
Case Studies	2	2 (100%)
Cluster Events/Activities	4	7 (175%)

James Vithanage, Defence & Cyber Security Cluster Adviser:-

DIT Output	Target	Achieved
Cluster Campaign Plan	1	1 (100%)
Business Engagements	50	185 (460%)
Service Deliveries	20	68 (340%)
Case Studies	2	2 (100%)
Cluster Events/Activities	4	4 (100%)

Over the course of the year to end of March 2021, DIT has supported 209 businesses in the Marches through 142 separate online activities. No trade mission activity has taken place during the period due to COVID-19, but on-line market information has been provided.

Case Studies developed by the LEP Cluster Advisers can be found below:



Champion & Reeves



Belton Farms Case



Portion Solutions
Case Study - David Caine

Unfortunately, the funding for these posts was withdrawn by DIT at the end of March 2021.

West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster EU Business Support Project

DIT West Midlands worked closely with the West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster EU Business Support project to ensure that their work complemented that of DIT and to make sure that clients were able to access the full suite of support available through our combined channels. We positioned our Export Academy Advisers to be the point of contact to handle any enquiries generated through the cluster project and worked with the cluster to make sure that the bespoke specialist support offered by the project was accessible by all our ITA teams in support of their clients.

Our work with the Growth Hubs during the life of the EU Business Support project has served to strengthen our partnership and increased cross referrals. Ultimately the work led to:

- Improved visibility on plans/activities

- Event collaboration and joint delivery
- Transition Training
- Effective referral process
- and a positive experience for businesses.

DIT and WMCC value their partnership with Marches LEP/MGH and continue to seek innovative ways to build and strengthen their work as demonstrated by the LEP Cluster Adviser project and the ongoing work of the Export Academy and West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster EU Business Support Project.

- **Business Growth Programme 2 (BGP2)** Effective from April 2019, BGP2 offers grants of £2,500 - £1,000,000 and is designed to strengthen supply chains, stimulate innovation and help businesses grow. The programme is available to:
 - Start-Up B2B Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) moving into or located in the MLEP Partnership area only; and
 - Existing B2B SMEs moving into or located in The Greater Birmingham & Solihull and the MLEP Enterprise Partnership areas.

Part funded by the European Regional Development Fund and managed by Birmingham City Council, BGP2 builds on the successful delivery of the £33m Business Growth Programme which closed in December 2018. Between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, 31 BGP applications were approved totalling project costs of £2,071,533.77, grants allocated of £1,091,638.00, which will help to create 112 jobs. Private sector match totals £747,419.02 with private sector leverage £197,656.45. [Global Minds Case Study](#)

- **Agri-tech Growth and Resources for Innovation (AGRI)** Aston University and Harper Adams University have been part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support the delivery of AGRI. AGRI initiative assists Marches based SMEs to innovate and develop new products and services in order to exploit growing market opportunities; particularly in agri-tech, food and drink manufacture and specialist food and drink logistics, as well as to break into new agri-food markets. Having met its initial output targets, the AGRI project has been successfully extended and will now complete in October 2022, supporting 173 SMEs in the region over 5 years. The extension support from March 2020 will be delivered in the Shropshire and Telford and The Wrekin transitional area of the Marches LEP region, and to date has worked with 116 companies, 95 of which have completed and 10 are currently in progress. Helping to develop new products and services with both short one-to-one assists and longer-term innovation development collaborations - 26 of these companies have moved on to longer term innovation development support, of which 22 have now completed. We have also assisted 4 of the 11 start-up business support target that the project has. In addition to the project's delivery of 7 specialist workshops: covering areas such as precision agriculture, logistics, innovation in food and drink production and measuring and sensing in food processing using photonics, we have also delivered a further 7 online business support workshops in response to the changing requirements brought about by the pandemic. Additional project information can be found at www.agri.org.uk, on Twitter via @agritechsupport, Instagram via @agri_project, Facebook via @AgriProjectShropshire and LinkedIn via <https://www.linkedin.com/company/agri-tech-growth-and-resources-for-innovation>.



AGRI SME CASE
STUDIES.pdf

Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) Current MEIF Fund of Funds position at the end of March 2021 - £116.71m invested and loaned in 540 investments/loans in 392 SMEs of which, £3.17m invested and loaned in 30 investments/loans in 24 SMEs was in the Marches.

MEIF Fund of Funds position for the financial year (1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021) is £51.96m invested and loaned in 221 investments/loans in 135 SMEs of which £1.34m invested and loaned in 11 investments/loans in 7 SMEs in the Marches.

Case study <https://www.meif.co.uk/agri-robotics-start-up-raises-250k-from-meif-for-revolutionary-system-to-improve-crop-yields-2/>

- **Marches Buildings Investment Grant (MBIG) and Small Equipment Grant (SEG)** In September 2019 Herefordshire Council secured a further £3m of ERDF funding for Marches Business Investment Programme. This programme contains two schemes, the extended MBIG and the SEG. MBIG was launched in November 2019 and provides an improved offer to businesses under this programme. Businesses can access grants of up to £150,000 (maximum 50% contribution) to extend /reconfigure commercial properties and can now also access funding for new build developments. The Small Equipment Grant (SEG) went live in March 2020 and provides funding for capital equipment purchases up to £10,000 (50% contribution). The programme since launching has received 592 enquiries (of which 420 between April and March 2021). A total of £1,737,027 has been allocated to businesses to date, of which £1,354,779 has been approved between April 2020 to March 2021. Grants have been approved to 64 businesses to date who aim to achieve 130 jobs (56 business and 98 jobs between the period April 2020 to March 2021). The programme has also secured an additional £500k ERDF in November 2020 and the programme delivery period has been extended June 2023. The private sector leverage for the 64 businesses that have secured funding equates to £1,843,240.00.

[Planet Doughnut Case Study](#)

- **Digital Solutions** at University Centre Shrewsbury has been initially funded through the European Regional Development Fund as a Priority 1b project promoting digital research and innovation initially to December 31st, 2020 but now extended until June 2023. The project builds on existing expertise and resources to deliver targeted support to SMEs, aligning with the MLEP growth plans for its digital and related sectors, particularly how digital developments can be used to unlock growth in the health sector. Innovation activity in areas such as health and digital advancements are positioned as focus areas that will drive productivity. The project activities address digital innovation from two angles:
 - Working with SMEs to develop new digital innovations – (research and innovation)
 - Working with SMEs users of these technologies, particularly SMEs in the health sector, but open to any sector – (technology transfer and commercialisation).

Although the project started in January 2018, delays and issues with recruitment resulted in the project only becoming fully active towards the end of 2018/early 2019. The project team have been working remotely since March 2020 due to COVID 19 restriction and continue to work from home. Phase 1 of the project ended in December 2020 and Phase 2 started in January 2021. Phase 2 of the project has funding approved until June 2023. The project has the following outputs to achieve up to June 2023. Output achievements during 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021:-

- A total 175 SMEs have expressed an interest in support.
- Of those, 50 have or are currently, receiving/received innovative support.
- Of the 50, 45 have completed their support package.
- Of the 45 completed 12 are currently receiving or about to engage in long term collaborative support from University Centre Shrewsbury.
- The project has already exceeded both the 'new product to firm - C29' target by 6 (17 claimed, target 11) and 'new businesses -C5' by 7 (14 claimed, target 7).

- Fully met C1/C4 target of 40 business support outputs by the end of December 2020
- Due to Covid19 the New job (C8) output was not met, however the project anticipates to catch up by June 2023.
- Collaborations C26 – Anticipate meeting this target by June 2023.

Case studies for some of the businesses supported can be found here:

<https://www.digitalucs.co.uk/case-studies> / www.digitalucs.co.uk.

- **European Bioenergy Research Institute (EBRI)** supports businesses to apply for collaborative research funding to develop new products, processes and technologies and take them to market. The Marches results for period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021:-
 - LEP enrolments – 12 (Transitional - 7) (More Developed – 5)
 - Total businesses claimed in period – 5 (Transitional – 3) (More developed – 2)
 - Outputs claimed in period - C1 – 5 (Transitional – 3) (More developed – 2)
C26 – 1 (More developed)
C29 – 1 (Transitional)

Case study links - [Edenviro Biomass - EBRI \(bioenergy-for-business.org\)](#) / [Case Studies - EBRI \(bioenergy-for-business.org\)](#)

- **System Analytics for Innovation (SAfi) / Think Beyond Data (Aston University)** - The aim of the SAfi project is to help businesses use their data to automate and scale business processes, find better and more efficient solutions and gain a deeper understanding and new business insights. Think Beyond Data enables businesses to make better use of their data, empowering them to better understand and control their domain, through the use of leading-edge AI, machine learning and analytics techniques. Businesses supported between 1 April 2020 30 September 2020 include:
 - Whichchoice Limited - Investigated potential product APIs and databases that can be used as part of Choice Master development and testing. The report also includes some initial recommendations for Choice Master design and evaluation strategies.
 - Therapyaudit Limited - Investigated and provided recommendations regarding predictive healthcare analytics for monitoring rheumatoid arthritis (RA).
 - Business Education Projects Ltd - Produced a report for Biz Ed to provide the system analysis of the Work Experience Placement (WEP) Builder system. The system analysis is done from the viewpoint of the system users: Admin, Employer, and Learner.
 - The Marches Energy Agency - Explored various Customer Relationships Management (CRM) systems that could be used for managing their customer data as well as Energy Property Efficiency (EPC) data.
 - DPO Plus – investigation into information extraction to aid business processes.
 - Six Ticks – development of client in-house CRM system to improve functionality.
www.thinkbeyonddata.com
- **Advanced Materials Characterisation and Simulation Hub (AMCASH)** is a part-ERDF funded programme that supports West Midlands-based SMEs to improve and create new products and processes, with a specific focus on materials - including metals, plastics, ceramics and composites. SMEs gain access to key facilities and expertise within the School of Metallurgy and Materials at the University of Birmingham. The core offer is for a minimum of two days fully funded technical support through ERDF in the areas of Polymers, Microscopy or Modelling of metallic alloys.

In the financial year April 2020-2021 AMCASH delivered 4 SME outputs (C1, C4 and C26). R&D work is ongoing to deliver on some current outputs, while there is a pipeline of further business assists due for delivery during quarter two and quarter three 2021, as a result of our ongoing intensified activity in The Marches (Transition) region.

2020 has been a challenge for AMCASH to deliver the services due to COVID-19. One of the key challenges has been the lockdown period during which the project had limited access to the University's laboratories in the School of Metallurgy and Materials. From July, the project was able to regain limited access as the University implemented plans for a staged increase in access to laboratory facilities. SME activity, and efforts to engage them, has been limited by government restrictions and also furlough of many of the project contacts. The project response has been to use digital meeting platforms (Teams, Zoom) to increase engagement activities with SMEs, in order to at least scope projects during the lockdown period.

Having made adaptations to their engagement strategy, the project has increased their online direct contact with SMEs and has participated in four successful webinars, in collaboration with industry organisations. The project has also delivered informative sessions to various stakeholders, including the MGH Operation Group.

- Cast Metals Federation - <https://www.castmetalsfederation.com/news/2020/06/cmf-waste-foundry-sand-and-ic-shell/>
- Confederation of British Metal forming - <https://thecbm.co.uk/events/cbm-amcash-workshop-10am/>
- Plastics Network – Launch Event (20 Jan) – <https://www.ps-partnerships.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Plastics-network-flyer-1.pdf>
- Marches Growth Hub Operations Group Meeting (18 Feb 2021)
- Shrewsbury Networking B2B (20 April) – <https://networkb2b.co.uk/>

www.amcash.co.uk

- **The Manufacturing Growth Programme (MGP)** has been operating since October 2016 and is now working across 18 LEP areas. Delivered by Economic Growth Solutions, part of Oxford Innovation, the programme supports SME Manufacturers to grow by identifying, understanding and removing barriers to growth and enabling sustainable business improvement. The project provides free advice and support to manufacturing SMEs to help them: -
 - Identify opportunities and create plans for growth and improvement.
 - Work with the best external experts to implement those plans.
 - Cover 33% and 43% (Transitional areas) of the cost of implementing the plans through a growth/improvement grant.
 - Connect to wider support to maximise opportunities for growth.

Progress in the Marches from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 includes work conducted with 47 clients (Strategic Business Reviews) with grants offered to the value of £108,124 to businesses. Delivery of the current programme will continue until March 2023.

A representative from this programme is a member of the MGH Operations Group. <http://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/>.

A list of case studies and market intelligence can be found below: -

- Motor Design <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/motor-design/>
- White Heron Drinks <https://youtu.be/bHybNIQnTCY>
- Hitherbest <https://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/energised-shropshire-manufacturer-defies-brexit-uncertainty-with-20-sales-increases/>
- Fabdec Limited - <https://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/an-ellesmere-manufacturer-has-seen-a-jump-in-productivity-after-gaining-external-support-and-grant-funding/>

Program performance October 2016 – March 2021

https://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/The-Marches-MGP-Insight-Report_03-2021.pdf

Manufacturing Barometer Reports 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

[SWMAS-National-Barometer-Q3-2021.pdf \(manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk\)](https://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/National-Manufacturing-Barometer-Q2-2020.pdf)

<https://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/National-Manufacturing-Barometer-Q2-2020.pdf>

<https://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Q1-2020-Manufacturing-Barometer-National-Report-1.pdf>

- **The Centre for Research into Environmental Science & Technology at University Centre Shrewsbury (CREST@UCS)** supports SMEs with research and innovation to develop and test new products, processes or services. The support includes research collaborations, bringing products to market, feasibility and testing, lab facilities on site, masterclasses and workshops. CREST has always been in partnership with Reaseheath College, and since December 2020, University of Birmingham ARLI and ATETA programmes have joined the cohort. This has further increased our offer to businesses in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. During April 2020 to March 2021, 60 SMEs have received the standard package of support under ERDF, which is a minimum of twelve hours support. Of these 60, 13 have been start-ups less than a year old. 28 enterprises have received, or are receiving, longer term research and innovation support. This has resulted in 3 new jobs being created, 1 new product to market and 2 new products to firms. However, from the feedback received, the project believe that more jobs have been created within businesses they have supported.

Some examples of impact of business support:

- Research into water escape damage carbon costs in support of new plumbing product being designed
- Support with UKRI funding opportunity
- Research into alternative fuels and their suitability to be used either alongside or as a replacement for a standard diesel combustion engine
- Technical and literature review on vermiculture, plus market research leading to land based trials to develop a new product to firm
- Land based trials to determine the efficiency of a new plant growth product
- Business model canvas on reuse of material and impact
- Research regarding reuse of brewery spent grain into a new product
- Ongoing research projects into indoor air quality and links to health and wellbeing
- Helping businesses apply for LOCOP funding
- Development of a prototype linked to lift sharing
- Waste assessments on both a manufacturing and construction site
- Building networks and contacts for start-up companies
- Market information on biochar and associated products – now developed into a longer term research project to demonstrate impact of biochar on crop growth
- Investigate nesting patterns of certain birds, and identify technology that can detect their nests
- Successful Innovate UK bid through Sustainable Innovation Fund

Other successes:

- Hosted our fourth and fifth Smart Rural events. In November we held one on Transport and Mobility in Rural Areas, and April's was on Water and the Environment. Both are available to

watch through our YouTube channel -

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxqMRiXjljKBBFTK-9DJfYA>

- Creation of a third business support network – the PLASTICS netWORK. We hold bimonthly events that are regularly fully booked

Link to case studies: <http://crestatucs.com/case-studies/>

Link to testimonials: <http://crestatucs.com/testimonials/>

- **Innovate 2 Succeed** is an Innovate UK funded project (until March 2022) delivered within the Marches by Coventry University Enterprises Ltd. This is a fully funded programme that is targeted at ambitious SME's that wish to grow and develop new products and services. The aim of the programme is to help SME's bring products and services to market more quickly and with less risk. In addition to this, the programme helps to improve innovation and growth capabilities.

Between April 2020 and March 2021, the programme interacted with 12 companies in the Marches area and of these 4 joined the programme with another 3 being supported through the business assistance launched at the start of the COVID pandemic. All are involved with business growth through innovation (both products and services) and 1 company has received a funded IP audit which has helped them enormously. There are no formal case studies as such at present but the one company the programme is working with has not just weathered the storm but is going stronger than ever with record sales over the past year (approx. +50% sales growth). The programme has helped them to take the right steps to drive their approach to a changing market. Others have now got new products ready to be launch in the coming year. The support (both through Innovate 2 Succeed and Business Growth Expansion) continues to operate with most of the delivery being virtual, however the project will be looking to move to a mixed delivery model when they are safely able to.

- **UK-Centric Supply Chains (UCSC)** ERDF project offers free business support to eligible SME businesses in the transitional area of the Marches to food and drink, automotive and associated manufacturing sectors. UCSC assists SMEs to map, assess and improve the capabilities of their supply chains with the view to maximising UK content and gain a better understanding of their supply chain in terms of geography/location and relationships with suppliers/customers. A unique Supply Chain Readiness Level (SCRL) diagnostic tool developed by Aston University is used to assess the companies supply chain maturity and support managers' decision-making processes for future supply chain activity. The diagnostic results are analysed, and a plan proposed for the identified needs, followed up with support from academic supply chain experts on a one-to-one basis or one to many, as well as offering workshops.

The project which commenced on the 1st of October 2018 is on the final run down to completion by the 30 September 2021. April 2020 to March 2021 has seen the project operating during the unprecedented global Covid-19 pandemic of three lockdowns. Staff have worked remotely from home and engagement and delivery has continued online using virtual platforms. Q2 and Q3 of 2020 met the budgeted deliverable outputs as delivery support continued and the full impact of the pandemic was only being realised. At the other end of the spectrum, some businesses have adapted and innovated so have been very busy so have also had to pushback and delay meetings. As the duration of the lockdown was initially unknown, some business owners took advantage of the time at home to look at their businesses and supply chains strategically and to speak to the Business Engagement Manager (BEM). Overall, the devastating impact on many businesses slowed activity, particularly engagement onto the program but fortunately with a large pipeline of SME's already at various levels of dialogue, the project was able to progress but at a slower pace.

Dedicated Marches BEM, Jamie Pratt is very active and has attended 62 virtual networking events and other events held by the Marches Growth hub and other regional events in the year to March 2021. Marketing activity on social media has been increased in the latter half of the year and a series of short engagement videos launched promoting the understanding of Supply Chains and how the project can assist businesses to improve their supply chains within their businesses.

Supply chain challenges faced by many manufacturers and food and drink producers have been accentuated by the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit and shown a need for programs such as UK-Centric Supply Chains to help address issues and build resiliency. Positive impact from the project to 2 SME's has resulted in wider research opportunities to enable Knowledge Transfer Partnerships to increase staff and grow the businesses. www.ukcentricsupplychains.co.uk/ An application for an extension to extend the project to June 2023 is currently being appraised by MHCLG and confirmation will be known by June 2021.

The total project forecast is to support a total of 28 SMEs within the Marches LEP (transitional area), four of which are start-up companies. To the 31st of March 2021, 25 SMEs in the Marches have been completed and received 12 hours of supply chain C1, C4 support, of which 3 are C5 newly registered start-up companies. This leaves the project with 3 further outputs to achieve in the final 6 months of the project and these are enrolled so a great achievement for the project. www.ukcentricsupplychains.co.uk/

- **Marches Step-Up Programme**

Telford & Wrekin Council, along with partners Herefordshire and Shropshire Councils, are utilising £303k of further ERDF and council funding to continue a highly successful coaching & mentoring scheme aimed at supporting both business start-ups and businesses with growth aspirations across the Marches LEP area. The Marches Step Up programme builds on the successes of an earlier phase of the scheme. The start-up strands offer a mix of 1:1 support and access to workshops to help aspiring entrepreneurs get off to the best possible start whereas bespoke consultancy support is available to trading businesses in aiding their growth aspirations. The intention is that the business will use the support as a catalyst to deliver an improvement or growth project.

Following a tendering process, Good2Great deliver across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Council and IBD Ltd in Herefordshire. The scheme officially launched in January 2021. Pleasingly, the first cohorts of beneficiaries are now beginning to complete their respective packages of support and await with great interest what impacts, and outcomes will materialise.

University of Wolverhampton (UoW) ERDF Project/Programme Development - Some projects are delivered in other areas as well in the Marches and their data is included as it is difficult to split out. The information below covers Q2 2020 to Q1 2021 for ERDF projects and Q1 – Q4 of Local Growth Funding projects.

- **Built Environment Climate Change Innovations (BECCI)** benefits SMEs in the Black Country and Marches LEP areas of the West Midlands, by providing free support in the development of products and services that reduce carbon usage.
 - Supports inventors to get their products and processes adopted by industry.
 - Linking academic research into business, driving innovation in areas such as smart grid, battery storage, heating and cooling controls, social landlord engagement and property developer support.
 - Testing and measuring of products, with access to a variety of technology including thermal comfort sensors, energy loggers, air tightness kits, ventilation measuring kits and a portable weather station.

- Hosting technology showcases, challenges and workshops, providing SMEs with exhibition opportunities.
- Strategic research in energy efficiency with social housing providers, developers and commercial organisations.

www.wlv.ac.uk/BECCI

C1. No. of enterprises receiving support	9
C5. No. of new enterprises supported	1
C26. Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	2
C29. No. of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	4

- **Composite & Additive Layer Materials Engineering Research & Innovation Centre (CALMERIC)** project supports SMEs to carry out research & innovation projects in the field of advanced engineering materials, in collaboration with specialist staff and resources in the Centre.
 - Composite materials
 - Additive manufacturing (3D printing)
 - Engineering, Research and Innovation
 - Industrial Research Collaborations
 - Product optimisation (using less or lighter weight materials)

www.wlv.ac.uk/Calmeric

C1. No. of enterprises receiving support	3
C4. Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	3
C25. Number of researchers working in improved research infrastructure facilities	2
C26. Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	1

- **Smart Concept Fund** offers a Proof of Concept grant designed to support the commercialisation of new technologies.
 - Product Development
 - Prototyping
 - Testing
 - IP Protection
 - Market research

www.wlv.ac.uk/smartconceptfund

C1. No. of enterprises receiving support	5
C2. Number of enterprises receiving grants	5
C6. Private investment matching public support to enterprises (grants) (£)	£12,163.05
C5. Number of new enterprises supported	2
C26. Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	1
C29. No. of enterprises supported to introduce new products to the market	2
C29. No. of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	1

- **SPEED** is the extension to the Enterprise Action project and is being delivered in Shropshire & Telford from January 2019 – December 2021. SPEED supports entrepreneurs to start up their own

business through one to one support, workshops and an opportunity to apply for a grant up to 50% of the total cost.

C1. No. of enterprises receiving support	7
C2. Number of enterprises receiving grants	0
C4. Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	7
C5. Number of new enterprises supported	7
C6. Private investment matching public support to enterprises (grants) (£)	£0
C8. Employment increase in supported enterprises	5.5
P11. Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	23

- **Science in Industry Research Centre (SIRC)** supports companies in the West Midlands to develop new science-based products.
 - IP Review and guidance
 - IP Grants
 - Scientific Research
 - New product design
 - Laboratory testing

www.wlv.ac.uk/SIRC

C1. No. of enterprises receiving support	10
C2. Number of enterprises receiving grants	1
C4. Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	9
C25. Number of researchers working in improved research infrastructure facilities	
C6. Private investment matching public support to enterprises (grants) (£)	£2,115
C25	8
C26. Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	1
C29. No. of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	1

*This project is working in multiple LEP areas of which the Marches is one but a breakdown by LEP area is not available.

- **Cyber Quarter** acts as a Midlands Centre for Cyber Security, a Police RCCU Hub and proactive network facilitation service.
 - Provides a Cyber Range designed to immerse the business in a real-world customer network that can be used for educational training and for testing response procedures to known or simulated threats.
 - Strategic insights and planning to address their cyber and security needs.
 - Live demo environment to test & develop cyber defence and attack measures alongside leading cyber security academics.
 - Hub and facilitator for the cyber, security, blue-light and defence communities.

www.cyberquarter.co.uk

C1. No. of enterprises receiving support	14
C4. Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	14
C5. No. of new enterprises supported	1
C8. Employment increase in supported enterprises	3
C26. Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	0

C28. Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	1
C29. No. of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	1

Local Growth Outputs

Jobs connected to the intervention	2
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- **Elite Centre for Manufacturing Skills (ECMS)** offers SMEs in the manufacturing and engineering industry short courses and training to up skill the ageing workforce.
 - Hire of facilities and rooms for meetings, events, conferences, training etc.
 - Manual & Commercial training and short courses
 - Material testing and analysis
 - Specialist training provision at the National Foundry Training Centre
 - State of the art equipment (Labs, Foundry workshops, CAD IT Suite)www.theecms.co.uk

Businesses Assisted	2
Apprenticeship Starts	25
Learner Assists (Bite size)	69

*This project is working in multiple LEP areas of which the Marches is one but a breakdown by LEP area is not available. .

- **Solutions for Digital Enterprises (SOLVD)** Accelerating growth in digital businesses through opportunities, challenges and innovative solutions.
 - Assist digital leaders with their technology, digital & security strategies.
 - Solving commercial problems through digital technologies.
 - Accelerating digital and technology companies by accessing new markets.
 - Consultancy and support to enable the development of products or services and bring these into their business or to market.

www.wlv.ac.uk/solvd

C1. No. of enterprises receiving support	8
C4. Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	8
C8. Employment increase in supported enterprises	1
C26. Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	0
C28. Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	0
C29. No. of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	0

- **The Marches Centre of Excellence in Healthcare, Allied Health & Social Care** - the aim of the project is to create a nationally recognised centre of excellence in Health, Allied Health and Social Care at the University of Wolverhampton Telford Campus (Priorslee). This will be achieved through the development and refurbishment of state-of-the-art teaching and office space within the Angad Paul building and in doing so provide specialist facilities and technologically enabled infrastructure.

Jobs Connected to the Intervention	0
Refurbished Training/Learning Space (Sqm)	1151

Lessons Learned From Cluster Working

Lessons learned from current Cluster working?

Please indicate what lessons you have learned around cluster working and how this has helped the LEP improve the Growth Hub service.

- What is your cluster role National Co-ordinator, a Cluster Lead or Cluster member?

The Marches LEP is a member of the West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster led by Coventry & Warwickshire LEP.

- What has worked well?

Weekly cluster calls have kept the LEP up to date on feedback from BEIS weekly calls.

Cluster intelligence gathering exercises have helped inform local business support policy :- COVID 19 Impact [WM GHUB Telemarketing Analysis v2.pdf \(marchesgrowthhub.co.uk\)](#) / [The Marches Growth Hub Summary.pdf](#)

West Midlands Trends Q2 [West Midlands Business Trends \(marchesgrowthhub.co.uk\)](#) and Q3



West Midlands
Business Trends Q3 .pdf

WM EU Business Support Project supported by EU Transition Business Readiness Growth Hub Grant Funding - The West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster agreed to collaborate and 'pool' funding from their separate allocations to help deliver a central West Midlands EU Business Support Project. This collaborative approach had a proven track record following the successful delivery of the BREXIT project during 2019-20.

This approach was approved by BEIS and helped mobilise the project quickly and identify businesses to meet project delivery timescales and targets set by BEIS. This coordinated approach also helped with project management capacity and costs, procurement, data collection/reporting and supported economies of scale. It also ensured consistency and helped maximise outreach and business/specialist advice to businesses. <https://www.wmgrowthhubs-eusupport.co.uk/the-west-midlands-cluster>

- What has not worked well?

There is a risk of MGH being fragmented with the cluster partnership. Therefore, consideration must be given moving forward to how Marches Growth Hub support is framed.

- How has the LEP learnt from challenges with the cluster working arrangements it has faced in delivering its Growth Hub and how has this helped to improve capability and delivery of the Growth Hub?

Collaborative projects mentioned above have enabled projects that need to be mobilised at pace. MADE Smarter West Midlands, which is funded by WMCA, is currently being shaped by the WM cluster for a June 2021 launch.

Lessons Learned/Further Activity

Lessons learned/good practice in 2020-2021.

Please indicate what lessons you have learned to date and how this has helped the LEP improve the Growth Hub service.

- What has worked well?

The support from the West Midlands growth hub cluster model has worked well, especially with intelligence gathering and delivery of WM EU Business Support Project.

Supplementary funding has allowed for the much needed 1:1 business/specialist advice.

Additional projects (Peer Networks and ERDF COVID 19 Kickstart Funds) have been mobilised with the support of additional resource within the wider LEP Team as funding could be drawn from these projects to cover staff costs.

- What has not worked well?

Impact on MGH Resource and Delivery

Late receipt of the supplementary grant funding offer letter meant that the planned 1:1 activity could not begin until late Q2/early Q3. This impacted on the spend position for 1:1 business advice provision.

Late receipt of EU Transition Business Readiness Growth Hub Grant Funding gave the WM Growth Hub Cluster only 3 months to deliver the project.

Growth Hub Funding Bi-Annual reports were submitted on time and the LEP still await feedback/sign off.

The MGH central LEP team do not have sufficient resource to mobilise and deliver additional projects (examples Peer Networks and ERDF COVID 19 Kickstart Funds). These projects were delivered with the support of additional resource within the wider LEP Team.

Additional funding allocated to local authority partners for business recovery activity has challenged resources across the wider LEP partnership. The growth hub team at MGH Herefordshire supported the delivery of LA Discretionary grants which impacted on the delivery of growth hub service, in particular, events and data collection around customer satisfaction surveys.

The allocation of funding on a short term/one-year basis limits the LEP's ability to develop longer term activity plans and consider staffing and delivery resources in a more strategic way.

Payment of VAT

Following incorporation of the LEP (Company Limited by Guarantee) in April 2019 and following legal advice, the LEP is now required to pay VAT on goods and services.

In 2020, the LEP was able to cover the cost of MGH VAT incurred during 2019/20. The LEP budgeted to pay MGH VAT incurred during 2020/21 for core growth hub funding only (£205k).

VAT incurred with the Supplementary and EU Transition Business Readiness Growth Hub Grant Funding needed to be paid for by the MGH as part of the spend.

This has been taken into account for 2021/22 funding and will need to be taken into account when planning budgets in the coming years.

- How has the LEP learnt from challenges it has faced in delivering its Growth Hub and how has this helped to improve capability and delivery of the Growth Hub?

The LEP has learnt that there is a need to review resources supporting the Growth Hub.

The confirmed £462k in 2021/22 is very much welcomed, as there is a need to ensure sufficient resource (with the right skill set) is in place to support the BSL moving forward, allowing the planning and management of a much larger budget (£462k instead of £205k) and to support the cluster model moving forward including collaborative project activity.

Additional business/specialist contracted resource will also enable in depth support for businesses across the wider MGH team – supporting businesses as they move to economic recovery.

In addition to this, the LEP has learnt that remote working, virtual events/meetings need to be adopted as part of the growth hub delivery strategy moving forward. This enables effective coverage of the LEP's largely rural geography.

Case Studies/Best Practice

Please provide up to three case studies that showcase the Growth Hub at its best. These can include examples of initiatives, Growth Hub activity and individual business case studies. When choosing please ensure the case study relates to 2020-21.

EMS, Herefordshire

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/ems-launches-first-lab-of-its-kind-in-herefordshire-with-marches-growth-hub-help/>

Planet Doughnut, Shrewsbury

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/planet-doughnut-heads-into-orbit-with-help-from-marches-growth-hub/>

Global Minds, Telford & Wrekin

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/global-minds-focus-on-expansion/>

Note: If you have any additional material that you think would further illustrate the work and impact of your Growth Hub on driving business growth and/or increasing productivity 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.

SECTION 2 - Reporting on 2020-2021 £12m Core Growth Hub Grant Funding

Growth Hub 2020-2021 Core Grant Spend Position

Confirmation of the financial position in respect of your 2020-2021 grant.

Total BEIS core grant for 2020-21 awarded	£ 205,000.00
Details of any underspend of the 2020-21 award (please provide reason for underspend)	£ 0.00

Breakdown of grant spend throughout the financial year.

£ Funding spent	Funding spent in 2020-21 for other activities
Q1 – 1 April to 30 June 2020	£ 52,858.21
Q2 – 1 July to 30 September 2020	£ 46,174.90
Q3 – 1 Oct to 31 December 2020	£ 36,620.12
Q4 – 1 January to 31 March 2021	£ 69,346.77
TOTAL GRANT SPENT	£ 205,000.00

Please provide a breakdown of the expenditure by activity to help inform a BEIS internal audit of Growth Hub budget spend in 2020-2021 (this can be taken from the Excel spend spreadsheet which accompanies every claim submitted to BEIS).

Note that this only relates to core BEIS Growth Hub funding and not any other locally accessed funding streams e.g. ERDF, etc:

Per activity as shown on your Schedule 1 form	Full year spend £
Growth Hub Operation Costs	54,511.06
Steering Group Ops	0.00
Information Database licences	24,806.00
PR / Marketing	62,000.00
Physical Hub	46,252.94
Growth Hub website	8,605.00
Skills Site Maintenance	300.00
Virtual Hub	8,525.00
TOTAL	£205,000.00

Route of BEIS Grant Funding through to paying of salaries/suppliers:

- A short paragraph on the route the funding takes once it has been paid by BEIS to the Accountable Body should be provided here. We are interested to learn details such as who actually pays the supplies invoices, staff salaries etc.

The Growth Hub grant is paid direct to Shropshire Council (Accountable Body) who hold the grant monies on behalf of Marches LEP, Shropshire Council also run the financial management system on behalf of Marches LEP, payment to suppliers and salaries are submitted to the financial system and then paid by Shropshire Council. Shropshire Council, within the financial system, records all payments made on behalf of Marches LEP and also the cash held, at the end of the year cash balances are calculated. All payments made are subject to the policies of Shropshire Council.

- Confirmation of sources of additional funding and/or resources that have been leveraged in by the LEP and/or Growth Hub in 2020-2021 to add further value to your Growth Hub service? Where possible provide top line detail on how this funding and/or resource is being used. What are the benefits of this to the Growth Hub and its customers?

Funding and other resources:

The MGH includes a virtual hub which is supported by three physical growth hubs situated in Hereford, Shrewsbury and Telford & Wrekin.

Due to limited core funding and resources, we work in partnership with our three local authorities (Shropshire, Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin), University of Wolverhampton and University Centre Shrewsbury who provide excellent facilities for meetings/workshops/drop-ins and Business Support/Economic Development staff (total of 8.5 FTE) to support the operation of the three growth hubs. These partnership contributions significantly enhance the scope and breadth of growth hub services offered. The MGH operating model is designed to maximise leverage of public and private sector funds and enable effective referrals to wider economic growth initiatives.

Local authority contributions to the MGH are estimated as below:

- Shropshire Council – heat, lighting and operating costs related to Marches Growth Hub – Shropshire premises and dedicated staff resource (estimated £130k per year)
- Telford and Wrekin Council – dedicated staff resource at Marches Growth Hub – Telford & Wrekin (estimated £242k per year)
- Herefordshire Council – dedicated staff resource at Marches Growth Hub – Herefordshire estimated £70k per year)

Our Higher Education (HE) partners contributions are estimated below:

- University of Wolverhampton provides premises, equipment and covers all rent, heat and lighting costs at Marches Growth Hub – Telford & Wrekin and Marches Growth Hub – Herefordshire – estimated to be £35K per year.
- University Centre Shrewsbury provides rooms for events and conferences – this is estimated to be £2k per year. At present this support is not being utilised due to virtual events.

EU Funding

- MGH SME businesses had access to 19 EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a total financial value of over £19.5million. Funding and support through the current and planned programmes will continue until June 2023. The growth hub teams with partners deliver information sharing event each financial year to support referrals. The events help support relationship building and alignment of the business and enterprise support landscape.

Marches LEP Funding and Resources:

- **Marches Investment Fund** - In May 2020, the Marches LEP injected £1.58m into the regional economy to support tourism and businesses affected by flooding and the coronavirus. The money was allocated across the region to help with the recovery from February's terrible floods and the Covid-19 outbreak which followed shortly afterwards. The three local authorities devised innovative schemes to help businesses hardest hit in their areas. <https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/marches-lep-approves-1-58m-injection-to-support-crisis-hit-regional-economy/>
- **Getting Building Fund (GBF)** - The Government has made £900 million available through the new GBF for investment in local, shovel-ready infrastructure projects to stimulate jobs and support economic recovery across the country. In August 2020, The Marches LEP was allocated £14m from the GBF for a wide-ranging package of projects that will deliver a much-needed boost to the local economy. The funded projects are expected to deliver new zero carbon housing and unlock housing at key sites in Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin; support enabling works for redevelopment of Pride Hill shopping centre in Shrewsbury; accelerate

building work for New Model Institute for Engineering and Technology in Hereford; and provide new investment in the streetscape of Hereford, supporting active travel and increasing air quality. More than 800 new jobs and 1,600 homes could be created. These six projects align with the LEP's key priorities and will support the LEP area's recovery from Covid-19. A briefing sheet with more information projects can be found [here](#).

Additional Department for International Trade (DIT) Resource

DIT was awarded additional funding through the Chancellor's Budget Statement last year to support more International Trade Adviser (ITA) resources within the Northern Powerhouse, Midlands Engine and Western Gateway super-regions. The funding was part of the Government's wider 'Levelling Up' agenda. Essentially, DIT was awarded budgets for 2020/21 recruiting more people in three key areas of activity: -

- **An Enhanced ITA service** that will flow through the DIT Regional teams and recruit 12 additional ITAs that will bolster current regional arrangements (e.g. focusing on cross regional sector priorities or gaps in current provision for example in services exporting or in customs or logistics)
- **A Regional Growth Service** that will provide a one-to-many services to work intensively with exporters that require a significant level of direction in order to fulfil their export potential and who then graduate to other more concentrated DIT or wider trade services
- **LEP Level Trade Advisory Resource** that is designed to the help support the implementation of Regional Growth Service by utilising the local targeting arrangements by being a dedicated resource to support LEP priorities.

Marches LEP DIT additional resource is detailed below. Activity delivered from the additional resource allowed SMEs to access export and international trade services delivered locally and regionally. The Cluster Advisers enabled dedicated sector-specific support delivered through workshops and events to the Food & Drink sector and Defence & Cyber Security. Further details are provided in the Scale-up section of this report:-

- ERDF Enhanced Export Growth Project - Marches LEP Export Academy Adviser
- Marches LEP Specialist Cluster Adviser for Food and Drink
- Marches LEP Specialist Cluster Adviser for Defence & Cyber Security.

Skills Related Funding Secured by the LEP:

MLEP was successful in their bid for £75K funding from Department for Education to support the development of the analytical toolkit for Skills Advisory Panels. This, and related research undertaken by the SAP, will continue to drive an evidence-based approach to business focussed skills programmes.

Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC):

The newly developed Marches Careers Hub drive work with CEC funded Enterprise Co-ordinators and continue to highlight the importance of links between businesses and schools as part of careers education and guidance.

European Social Fund (ESF) funding has been allocated to the following projects:

- **IN2 Youth Support Partnership** works with young people aged 15-24 not in education, employment, or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET to support them into further learning or work.
- **Skills Support for the Workforce** provides training for employees in SMEs to develop their skills, improve their prospects and support the growth plans of the business. The project also supports people affected by redundancy with upskilling and reskilling.
- **Building Better Opportunities** works with disadvantaged people in Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin aged 19+ to help them overcome barriers to social and economic inclusion.
- **Building Skills and Growth Capacity** is improving the labour market relevance of education and training to support the growth of SMEs and microbusinesses.
- **Life Ready, Work Ready** engages SMEs, young people, schools and colleges to enable business and education to share information on skills that employers need.

- **Marches Centre of Manufacturing & Technology (MCMT) Skills for Growth** supports SMEs in the manufacturing and engineering sector with skills development by assessing and delivering skills solutions essential to help them grow.

Each of the ESF Project Managers continued working with the MGH teams to encourage referrals to their schemes and to better understand issues affecting the local business community.

Key Performance Outcomes

Provide information on the key outcomes of your Growth Hub linked to the requirements of the 2020-2021 'Metrics and Evaluation Framework'.

Indicator	Local KPIs (where set by the LEP)	Annual Total (1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021)	Cumulative Total (since launch of Growth Hub)
Number of businesses that have received 'light touch' triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic)		29,792	50,831
Number of individuals ¹ that have received 'light touch' triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic)		30,082	52,851
Total number of unique visitors to Growth Hub website		30,663	103,986
Number of businesses receiving 'medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support		400	1,056
Combined turnover (amount £) of businesses receiving 'Medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support.		76,115,770.00	491,708,058.00*
Combined employee numbers (FTE) of businesses receiving 'Medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support.		36,387.5	43,642*
Number of businesses receiving 'high intensity' support e.g. account management / intensive support directly provided by the Hub or partner organisation	Target 77	85	408
Combined turnover (amount £) of businesses receiving 'High intensity' support i.e. sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource.		23,547,751.00	83,427,788.00*
Combined employee numbers (FTE) of businesses receiving 'High intensity' support i.e. sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource.		306.5	848.5*

¹ Number of businesses and individuals are both required as (for example) several individuals from the same business may attend an event; may contact a Growth Hub separately via different routes on different issues.

Number of businesses receiving 'Medium' and 'High intensity' support that, have the opportunity, ambition and greatest potential to grow (including Scale-Ups)		155	740
Total number of individuals who been helped to start a business		782	1,910
Number of businesses referred to a mentoring programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)		33	371
Number of businesses referred to a skills or training programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)		26	190
Number of businesses referred to a finance and/or funding programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	Target 33	280	688
Number of businesses referred to an innovation and/or R&D programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only).		15	75
Number of referrals to an export/import support programme (e.g. DIT) (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only).		4	20 (collection from 19/20)
£Private sector match secured (where linked to Growth Hub)		1,651,160.08	7,853,464.31

- Indicates that collection of data started from 2018/19

Notes: Measures such as “combined turnover” or “combined employee numbers” should only include the local business office receiving support (in the case of multi-site businesses). They will be calculated by aggregating the values recorded at firm-level. They should be the most recent values held by the LEP/GH at the point of reporting.

Measures such as “total number of businesses referred” do not need to reflect whether (or not) the referral was taken up.

Section 3 - Growth Hub 2020-2021 Supplementary Grant Funding

The additional £10m of funding announced in the March 2020 Budget aimed to improve productivity and growth across all English regions, helping small businesses and businesses with high growth potential to seize the opportunities for growth and increase their productivity. Also to support levelling up in those regions where LEPs and their respective Growth Hubs have had fewer funding opportunities, historically received the lowest levels of core Growth Hub funding and where productivity is at its lowest.

Growth Hub 2020-2021 Supplementary Grant Spend Position

Please confirm details of the financial position in respect of your 2020-2021 BEIS Supplementary Growth Hub grant.

Total BEIS core grant for 2020-21 awarded	£ 257,000.00
Details of any underspend of the 2020-21 award (please provide reason for underspend)	£ 63,609.83 Not spent, to be returned

Referring to the breakdown of activities on the S1 form, please state how much of your 2020-2021 grant has been spent for COVID-19 specific related activities and other activities

Funding spent in 2020-21 for COVID-19 specific activities	
Q1 – 1 April to 30 June 2020	£ 0.00
Q2 – 1 July to 30 September 2020	£ 0.00
Total direct Covid related spend 2020-21	£ 0.00
Funding spent on other activities	
Q1 – 1 April to 30 June 2020	£ 0.00
Q2 – 1 July to 30 September 2020	£ 5,378.40
Q3 – 1 Oct to 31 December 2020	£ 9,825.80
Q4 – 1 January to 31 March 2021	£ 178,185.97
Total Supplementary funding spent 2020-21	£ 193,390.17

Breakdown of Supplementary monies spent 2020-21 per activity

Note that this only relates to this BEIS Growth Hub funding and not any other locally accessed funding streams e.g. ERDF:

Per Activity Expenditure	COVID-19 specific activities 2020-21 £	Other activities 2020-21 £	£ Total
Additional Business/Specialist Advisers	17,992.50	97,874.38	115,866.88
Growth Hub Extension project	0.00	10,992.50	10,992.50
Sponsored Social media	0.00	5,900.00	5,900.00

Additional Resource for the 3 Physical Hubs	5,850	11,000	16,850.00
Marches LEP central team	0.00	11,968.61	11,968.61
Strengthening Marches Growth Hub Model	0.00	31,812.18	31,812.18
Totals	£ 23,842.50	£ 169,547.67	£ 193,390.17

Route of BEIS Grant Funding through to paying of salaries/suppliers:

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Each of the ESF Project Managers continued working with the MGH teams to encourage referrals to their schemes and to better understand issues affecting the local business community.

Overview of Key Performance Outcomes – Supplementary funding

Key Performance Outcomes. Provide information on the key outcomes of your Growth Hub Supplementary Funding in relation to the S1 and S3 forms in your Grant Offer Letters.

Indicator	Local KPIs/Targets as appropriate (where set by the	Total (2020-21)
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	LEP and if referenced in Condition 2 of S3)	
Number of new specialist/sectoral advisers or resources (or FTE equivalents) – add any supporting/explanatory text as necessary		MGH Shropshire – framework of 14 with 10 active advisers. MGH T & W – framework of 28 with 12 active advisers. MGH Herefordshire – 3 active advisers. Access to a framework of 45 new advisers called upon as and when required of which 25 actively supported 1:1 advice.
Number of new account managers (or FTE equivalents) - add any supporting/explanatory text as necessary		N/A
Number of businesses engaged directly by the new specialist/sectoral advisory resources		MGH Shropshire 101 MGH T & W 51 MGH Herefordshire 26 Total 178
Number of businesses new to the Growth Hub engaged directly as a result of new specialist/sectoral advisory resources		MGH Shropshire 85 MGH T & W 12 MGH Herefordshire 20 Total 117
Number of additional/new events, webinars, etc, funded by supplementary grant, non-Covid-19 related		MGH Shropshire 6 Total 6 on-line events
Number of additional/new events, webinars, etc, funded by supplementary grant Covid-19 related		MGH Shropshire 66 Total 66 on-line events
The number of companies directly supported/assisted in Q1 & Q2 as result of additional Covid-19 funding		MGH Shropshire 193 (1:1 and events) MGH T & W 13 (1:1) Total 206 companies

Please add any explanatory text as necessary e.g. if all metrics have been included in the Key Performance Outcomes – Core Funding table

All of the interactions above have been included in Key Performance Outcomes – Core Funding table.

Growth Hub Supplementary Funding Highlights

Summary of Growth Hub Highlights.

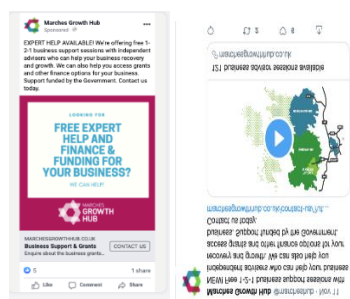
Sponsored Social Media

Funding was ringfenced towards boosted social media campaigns to help promote 1:1 business advice. A targeted social media campaign promoting the new business adviser support was delivered over quarter 3 and 4. Target audiences included business owners, CEOs, MDs and any audiences which had previously looked or been interested in business support. The campaign ran across the Marches on 3 social platforms (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) and included a series of adverts being shown to target audiences. PR activity further promoted the support on offer. Social messaging was set out as below:-

- The Marches Growth Hub is the gateway to support which can help your business
- Through your local hub, you can book a free 1-2-1 session with an independent business advisor
- We can also help you find grants, loans and other funding sources to help your business recover and grow.

<https://fb.watch/1K9QtjELRn/>

<https://www.facebook.com/1649795915306630/posts/2977668245852717/>



Screen shots of Twitter and LinkedIn:

Stats when compared with the same period 12 months previously showed:-

- Reach: 156,209 accounts reached, increase of 744%
- Video views: 38,639, increase of 206%
- Engagement: 34,002 up 727%. (34k people clicked, shared, liked or commented).

As a result of the call to action - *Contact your local growth hub today*, 271 people clicked through to the website, which saw a 17% increase in visits.

Additional Business/Specialist Advisers

During Q2 MGH and its partners flexed growth hub delivery and successfully incorporated a new 1:1 business advice framework. As a result, the MGH had access to a framework of **45** new business/specialist advisers (contractors called upon when required) to support 1:1 business advice. Breakdown of 45 new advisers: MGH Shropshire 14, MGH Telford & Wrekin 28 and MGH Herefordshire 3). Nineteen out of the 45 were new growth hub partnerships.

Of the 45, **25** advisers actively delivered 1:1 support to a total of **178** businesses. Of which, **85** (MGH Shropshire 46, MGH Telford & Wrekin 34 and MGH Herefordshire 5) businesses received **12 hours support**, exceeding the target of 77 (MGH Shropshire 46, MGH Telford & Wrekin 34 and MGH Herefordshire 5).

Ninety five business referrals were made to finance/funding programmes exceeding the target of **33** (MGH Shropshire 72, MGH Telford & Wrekin 8 and MGH Herefordshire 15).

Adviser specialisms included:-

- Business planning, management and development
- Business Strategy
- Leadership/management/mentoring
- Creative agency offering significant support to the retail sector around marketing, digital, copy-writing, social media, retail, editorial, events and communications.
- Sales & Marketing
- Sales training and growth
- Digital marketing and website creation
- Health and Safety
- HR, employment Law, Access to Work, Inclusivity
- Legal
- Access to Finance including access to Accountants.
- Raising Finance
- Data Protection/GDPR/Cyber Security
- COVID 19 recovery
- Technology, IT, telecoms /internet
- Manufacturing
- Selling on Amazon
- Developing Products and Services
- Management Information, Targets & Measurement
- Financial Planning, Risks & Opportunities
- Project Management & Stakeholder Engagement
- Environmental Sustainability
- Customer Care
- Lean Operations
- ISO Certification
- Supply Chain
- Pricing products & services

Delivery of Additional Events

The MGH team delivered an on-line suites of events rather than one off events and created hubs with various themes/sectors in response to business demands and trends (start-up and business recovery/resilience). Some examples of hubs include the Business and Vitality Hub which addressed health and wellbeing of business owners and their staff, funding hub which brought together various financial organisations and the Friday Hub which offered peer support.

The teams were very mindful of webinar fatigue and carefully planned themes/topics and timings of events to ensure events were not being duplicated and remain interesting/relevant with good attendance.

A total of **72** on-line events were delivered with a total of **2339** attendees. Details have been provided below:-

Non Covid 19 related events:-

- The Applied Psychology of Sales Success delivered by Alan Adams & MGH Shropshire on 11 November 2020 with 30 delegates

- The Applied Psychology of Sales Success delivered by Alan Adams & MGH Shropshire on 18 November with 31 attendees.
- The Applied Psychology of Sales Success delivered Alan Adams & MGH Shropshire on 25 November with 31 attendees.
- The Psychology of Sales - The Follow Up delivered by Horizons on 2 December 2020 with 22 attendees.
- Green Grants for Growth on 9 December 2020 with 56 attendees
- International Women's Day event on 8 March 2021 with 49 attendees.

COVID 19 related events helped businesses to adapt to the new norm, diversify and become more resilient. :-

- The Friday Hub and The Friday Hub Lite - 35 events were delivered in total from 17 July to 26 March 2021 with a total of 1236 attendees.
<https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2021/03/friday-hub-anniversary/>
- Better Digital Meetings with 5 attendees.
- How to Get your message across included 2 on-line webinars with a total of 38 attendees.
- How to create Podcasts with 23 attendees.
- Top Tips to tendering/grant applications and sourcing opportunities (series) included 4 webinars with a total of 101 attendees.
- Better use of LinkedIn with a total of 21 attendees
- What's in a Blog with a total of 14 attendees.
- Deep Dive into Digital Marketing, Social Media and websites (series) -4 webinars with a total of 133 attendees.
- Health, Wellbeing and Mindfulness (series) included 4 webinars with a total of 111 attendees.
- Unconscious Bias in the Workplace with a total of 21 attendees.
- Running Better Digital Meetings, timing and resilience (series) included 4 webinars with 80 attendees.
- How to get amazing results through social media with a total of 70 attendees.
- How to optimise your website with a total of 48 attendees.
- How to write Award Winning press releases, content and articles with a total of 46 attendees.
- Ask the expert panel with a total of 22 attendees.
- The Importance of a Clear Brand with a total of 33 attendees.
- Maximising Instagram and Instagram shop with a total of 49 attendees.
- Social E-Commerce and online shops with a total of 41 attendees.
- Why Having a Website is more important than ever with a total of 30 attendees.

New Partnerships

MGH Shropshire reported the following organisations as new partnerships as a result of the activity delivered through the events programme or general support with information and guidance for businesses:-

- The Innovation Beehive
- Remote Media
- Clear Design
- Radio Active
- Sam Warner
- Dyke Yaxley Accountants
- NFU
- Enable
- Ladder for Shropshire

- Horizon Consultancy
- RTQ
- Emma Alston
- Margurite Adcock.

Strengthening the Marches LEP central team supporting the MGH

- The Marches LEP successfully recruited a temporary full time LEP administrator to support the BSL. This support was in place between October 2020 and January 2021.

Strengthening MGH including Intelligence Gathering

- Successful evaluation exercise of the BSL position.
- Following two product demonstrations of the Beauhurst platform, the MGH team and partners agreed to move forward with the purchase of the licence <https://www.beauhurst.com/>. Access to this platform has allowed the LEP and growth hub teams to access Marches company data (and the ecosystem around them) that has helped support both recovery planning and outreach activity.
- West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster Intelligence gathering exercises have helped inform share information with BEIS on a weekly basis and help inform local business support policy. Links and copy reports have been provided below:
COVID 19 Impact WM GHUB Telemarketing Analysis v2.pdf (marchesgrowthhub.co.uk) / The Marches Growth Hub Summary.pdf
West Midlands Trends Q2 West Midlands Business Trends (marchesgrowthhub.co.uk) and Q3



West Midlands
Business Trends Q3 .p

Links to some of the events activity can be found below:-

- Creativity Bootcamp <https://www.innovationbeehive.co.uk/creativity-bootcamp-registration/>
- The Business Health and Vitality Hub <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-business-health-vitality-hub-tickets-105400297126?aff=ebapi#>
- 21 Days to Start-Up
https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/calendar/view/2801_21_Days_To_Business_Start-up_Success
- Returning to Work Safely and securely <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/returning-to-work-securely-safely-compliantly-tickets-111149354712?aff=ebapi#>
- Marketing Your Business during COVID 19
- Buy From <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-buy-from-marketing-surgery-tickets-110679802268?aff=ebapi#>
- The Bitesize Digital Academy (Digital Marketing Strategy)
https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/calendar/view/2893_WEBINAR_Bitesize_Digital_Academy
- Grants for Growth in partnership
https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/calendar/view/2960_WEBINAR_Grants_for_Growth
- Launch of the Business Health & Vitality Hub as part of Mental Health Week
<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/blog/free-events-will-boost-wellbeing-at-work/>
- Shropshire Newsroom - Coronavirus: Further support to local businesses with GRANTfinder <https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2020/05/coronavirus-business-grants-2/>
- <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2020/05/05/expert-online-events-to-help-businesses-recover-from-covid-19-lockdown/>

- Sarah from Salopian Health and Safety was interviewed by BBC Radio Shropshire regarding the MGH workshop we were delivering. Great mention of the Growth Hub.
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08bs836> Sarah can be heard at 1:07:00 and 2:04:03 hours in.
- <https://www.shropshirebiz.com/news/Expert-online-events-to-help-businesses-recover>
- <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2020/06/29/marketing-expertise-on-offer-at-free-webinars/>
- <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2020/07/09/marketing-expert-returns-for-shropshire-digital-skills-workshops/>
- The Friday Hub (every Friday)
https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/calendar/view/2872_Friday_Hub_-_Shropshire_Business_Zoom_Room

SECTION 4 - Growth Hub 2020-2021 EU Transition Business Readiness Growth Hub Grant

Growth Hub 2020-2021 EU Transition Business Readiness Growth Hub Grant Spend Position

Total BEIS EU Transition grant for 2020-21 awarded	111,438.74
Details of any underspend of the 2020-21 award (please provide reason for underspend)	5,000.60 unspent, to be returned

Breakdown of grant spend throughout the financial year.

£ Funding spent	Funding spent in 2020-21 for other activities
Period 1 – to 31 st December 2020	£ 68,024.40
Period 2 – 1 st January 2021 to 31 st March 2021	£ 38,413.74
TOTAL GRANT SPENT	£ 106,438.14

Please provide a breakdown of the expenditure by activity to help inform a BEIS internal audit of Growth Hub budget spend in 2020-2021 (this can be taken from the table in the S1 claim form for the Period 2 grant submitted to BEIS).

Note that this only relates to EU Transition BEIS Growth Hub funding and not any other locally accessed funding streams e.g. ERDF, etc:

Per activity as shown on your Schedule 1 form	Full year spend £
Salaries and on-costs of additional temporary Advisors for Outreach and Advice. Based on share of £2.4m Note that the £2.4m is ringfenced money and cannot be used on any other activities.	£ 56,126.30
Salaries and on-costs of additional temporary Specialist and/or General Advisors	£ 20,554.72

Intelligence, Analysis, Monitoring & Evaluation	£ 20,087.47
Regional Coordination & Targeting	£ 9,669.65
TOTAL	£ 106,438.14

Route of BEIS Grant Funding through to paying of salaries/suppliers:

- i. A short paragraph on the route the funding takes once it has been paid by BEIS to the Accountable Body should be provided here. We are interested to learn details such as who actually pays the supplies invoices, staff salaries etc. **Please also detail where specific payment routes were put in place, e.g. where payments to other LEPs were made or funding passed on/shared.**

The Growth Hub grant is paid direct to Shropshire Council (Accountable Body) who hold the grant monies on behalf of Marches LEP. Shropshire Council also run the financial management system on behalf of Marches LEP, payment to suppliers and salaries are submitted to the financial system and then paid by Shropshire Council. Shropshire Council, within the financial system, records all payments made on behalf of Marches LEP, and also the cash held, at the end of the year cash balances are calculated. All payments made are subject to the policies of Shropshire Council.

- Confirmation of sources of additional funding and/or resources that have been leveraged in by the LEP and/or Growth Hub in 2020-2021 to add further value to this programme?

Pooling of allocated funds from the other 6 growth hubs added value to the programme.

Details of any other funding and resources:

Growth Hub EU Transition Business Readiness Growth Hub Funding Highlights

The key aims of the Growth Hub EU Transition programme was to make a target of 145,000 businesses aware of how they needed to prepare for the end of the EU Transition, and to help improve business resilience at the local and regional level for the end of the EU Transition Period and the period afterwards to 31st March 2021.

Please outline what was achieved to meet the programme's objectives and to secure successful outcomes for these activities.

- What steps did the LEP take to ensure that the following were undertaken:

Advisors for Outreach & Advice:

- Engagement in outbound telephone and email contact with businesses on EU transition and fielding top level questions emerging from those interactions.
- Please reference the numbers of additional staff or FTE equivalents outreach advisers you deployed over the period of funding, how identified target businesses, and how you sought to maximise the number of businesses reached to contribute to the overall programme ambition of 145,000 businesses by 31 March 2021.

West Midlands EU Exit End Of Transition Period (EOTP) Project

The West Midlands Growth Hubs worked collaboratively to deliver business support across the region for SMEs with questions about international trading, import, VAT, GDPR, movement of people, and other challenges presented by the UK's new trading relationship with the EU. As part of this project, SMEs were able to access fully funded, expert advice and general business support to help them understand and comply with the new rules. The project successfully engaged with 25,260 businesses out of 149,147 attempts. Therefore, the cluster exceeded the 24,000 outreach engagement target agreed with BEIS. This link <https://www.wmgrowthhubs-eusupport.co.uk/the-west-midlands-cluster/> takes you the cluster website. The final project report that brings together the results and findings of the project can be found here [Final report](#).



BEIS Report
2020-2021 EU Data.docx

Cluster impact figures can be found in the word document attached.

Advisors for Outreach & Advice

Following open procurement by the WM Cluster lead, an experienced telemarketing company was appointed to carry out outbound engagement activity with SMEs. The company used their own Marches business intelligence to target businesses. There was a total team of 30 outreach personnel of which 5 were assigned to the Marches.

A second contractor was appointed to carry out outbound engagement with large employers (>250 employees). This contractor also used their own Marches business intelligence to target businesses. This included a team of 6 of which 1.6 team members were assigned to the Marches.

Cluster engagement results for period November 2020 – 31st March 2021 are detailed below for the Marches. Please note that surveys were carried out between 12th December 2020 - 31st March 2021.

Calls/E-mails/Surveys	The Marches	Cluster Total
Total number of calls (attempts)	4,185	53,162
Total number of successful calls	568	9,217
Total number of E-mails sent	113	8,234
Successful e-mail - engagement: Conversion rate – 70% to 80%	79 - 90	5,763 – 6,586
Surveys Completed by businesses	93	859

1. What steps did the LEP take to ensure that the following were undertaken:

Specialist & General Advisors

- Please reference the numbers of specialist and generalist advisers or FTE equivalents you deployed, over what timescale, and detail the balance achieved between specialist, general and outreach activity, where relevant the focus of specialist advisors, and how this activity contributed towards the overall programme ambition of reaching 145,000 businesses over the funding period.

General Advisers

The Marches had access to 2 FTE general advisers over the lifetime of the project. Matthew Woodhead and Graham Morgan was assigned to the Marches area, however, the Marches had access to all advisers listed below depending on the needs of the business.

Forename	Surname	LEP Area
Nigel	Davis	Coventry & Warwickshire
Mike	Allen	Greater Birmingham & Solihull
Shane	Stark	The Black Country
Jason	French	Worcestershire
Matthew	Preece	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire
Matthew	Woodhead	The Marches
Graham	Morgan	Floater as Needed

Number of Referrals allocated to General Business Advisors (Marches)

Referrals	General Business Advisor							Total
	Nigel Davis	Mike Allen	Shane Stark	Jason French	Matthew Preece	Matthew Woodhead	Graham Morgan	
No. of Referrals to General Advisors	0	0	0	1	0	39	-	40

Number of Businesses supported by General Business Advisors (Marches)

General Adviser	The Marches
Jason French	1
Matthew Woodhead	25
Total	26

Specialist Advisers

The Marches received funding to support 2.5 FTE specialist advisors. The cluster project allowed the Marches to access 6 FTE specialist advisers depending on the needs of the business. Details have been provided below:-

Name	Specialism
Helen Barge	Data/GDPR
Tracy Hudson	HR
James Ahearne	Intl Trade/Import & Export
Alvaro Parra	Service Sector
Kevin Hall	VAT
Richard Hales	Employment & Skills

Number of Marches Referrals to Specialist Business Advisors

Cluster Specialist Adviser	The Marches
James Ahearne	2
Kevin Hall	2
Total	4

Number of Marches Businesses Supported by Specialist Business Advisors

No. of Businesses that received Specialist Support	The Marches
Kevin Hall	2
Total	2

Marches Referral Summary (1st January 2021 – 31st March 2021)

	The Marches
No. of Referrals to Allocated General Advisor	39
No. of Businesses Supported by a General Advisor	25
No. of Referrals to a Cluster Specialist Adviser Pool	4
No. of Businesses that received Specialist Support	2
No. of Referrals to DIT Support	2
No. of Businesses Referred back to the Local Growth Hub (For Contact)	7
No. of Businesses Referred back to the Local Growth Hub (For Information)	31
Total	110

Total number of businesses joining Cluster Webinar Events & Cluster High Profile Events (1st November 2020 - 31st March 2021)

Webinars & Events	LEP Area								Total
	Coventry & Warwickshire	Greater Birmingham & Solihull	The Black Country	Worcestershire	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire	The Marches	Outside West Midlands	Not Specified	
No. of Businesses that joined cluster webinar events	28	13	7	8	-	-	-	-	56
No. of Businesses that joined cluster high profile event	65	61	32	23	7	11	21	32	252

2. What steps did the LEP take to ensure that the following were undertaken:

Intelligence, Analysis, Monitoring & Evaluation

- Was robust and timely information on business needs and concerns, economic activity and impacts relating to EU Transition, and on LEP activities carried out under this programme provided to Government? Detail as necessary.
- Was detailed and accurate weekly reporting provided to BEIS using the templates provided, including enhanced information on business priorities and demographics, the intensity and reach of engagement and dissemination activity. The provision to BEIS of any datasets from survey activity.
- If appropriate please detail any bought-in services or activities, and the numbers of additional staff or FTE equivalents that were devoted to this activity.

The WMs Growth Hub Cluster existing project team led on the intelligence gathering, analysis and reporting at the frequency required by BEIS. Two FTE were recruited by the cluster lead, (started 4th January 2021) to support the

Project Manager and projects team in this work. Each growth hub contributed towards the costs of this additional resource.

Work carried out was coordinated and synchronised across the WMs Cluster to ensure a consistent approach. Feedback from the cluster was included in the BEIS weekly report and included engagement numbers and business feedback.

3. What steps did the LEP take to ensure that the following were undertaken:

Regional Co-ordination & Targeting

- Local coordination of activity and materials to maximise readiness activity inc. outreach & engagement, workshops & events, resource balancing and cluster support.
- Coordination of local web content, dovetailing local transition activity and services with Gov.uk and other central Government portals, and deployment of agreed brand identities.
- Collation of local events and workshops (including those provided by the Growth Hub, local partner organisations and third parties) to feed into Cluster leads and National Coordinator.
- Working with your Cluster Lead with regard to cross-cluster planning and activities, or cross-border engagement and activities with other Growth Hubs outside of your cluster.

Early WM's Growth Hub Cluster activities commenced in December 2020 to help mobilise the project, including promotion of tenders for both outreach activity and general/specialist adviser capacity.

Several meetings were held between the Cluster Lead and DIT West Midlands, Local Authorities, LEPs and Business Support organisations to ensure alignment and coordination to help maximise impact.

The cluster launched an EU Exit microsite on the 13 January 2021. The microsite:

- Acted as the go-to place for all businesses and advisers, with all relevant information/ checklists/links to help businesses prepare.
- Cluster Lead project team maintained the microsite on a daily basis and distributed updates to each Cluster Growth Hub.
- A dedicated project page was created with a focus on a community forum. This was led and monitored by the cluster procured specialists as well as the project team.
- The community forum allowed businesses to post questions relating to the transitional period who in return received real time answers from specialists and were able to access additional 121 support.
- Promoted all cluster and partner events.

In addition to this, the cluster PR/Marketing colleague coordinated and managed cluster website content, newsletters, press releases and social media assets.

The MGH shared cluster activities on the MGH website, via the e-newsletter and on social media platforms. Information was also cascaded to partner organisations. This helped avoid duplication of activity locally and maximise outreach/uptake/impact.

