



## Growth Hub Bi-Annual Report 2019-2020 (1st April 2019 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019)

<b>LEP Accountable Body:</b>	Shropshire Council
<b>Local Enterprise Partnership:</b>	Marches LEP
<b>Growth Hub name:</b>	Marches Growth Hub
<b>Date of Report:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> October 2019
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<b>Deadline for return to BEIS:</b>	<b>Wednesday 16 October 2019</b>

It has been agreed by BEIS that this year's Growth Hub Bi-Annual Report would be a shortened version of that used previously. With LEPs and Growth Hubs playing an increasingly important role with regard engagement with companies and the wider business community, working to provide business intelligence and working in partnership with government on EU Exit issues, BEIS is seeking to ease the reporting burden on Growth Hubs for this funding year. However, BEIS reserves the right to return to a more detailed or amended Bi-Annual Report in future years.

In line with the conditions of 2019/20 Grant Offer Letters the Bi-Annual Report template for 2019/2020 consists of five elements:

1. Overview of progress against Section 3 of Grant Offer Letter;
2. BEIS Grant Spend Data for the 6 months (Q1 & Q2 2019/20);
3. Key Performance Outcomes Q1 & Q2 2019/20;
4. Growth Hub Highlights, including if applicable any changes in the nature or scale of the Project including an assessment of any change in the prospects of technical success; If applicable, any change in the ownership of or beneficial interest in any asset provided for the Project; and
5. Positive news stories, case studies, testimonials.

BEIS requires this information to ensure consistency and transparency and to help demonstrate the impact to HM Treasury and others that the funding provided by BEIS in 2019-2020 has increased the level of take-up of business support and is helping to drive business growth in local places. This information is therefore critical

in helping to inform the future development of Growth Hubs and in helping to shape future local growth and business support policy thinking.

LEPS are therefore requested to submit their Growth Hub Bi-Annual Report to BEIS in word format (not as a pdf). Reports should be submitted to [Growth.Hubs@beis.gov.uk](mailto:Growth.Hubs@beis.gov.uk) no later than **Wednesday 16 October 2019** and copied to your BEIS Local Area Lead.

## 1. Progress of Growth Hub in 2019-20

### High level overview of progress so far against Section 3 of the Grant Offer Letter:

#### Introduction

The Marches LEP area spans 2,300 square miles and is home to 30,755 businesses of which 89% are micro businesses with less than ten employees. To be able to cover such a broad geographical area with limited resources and funding, the Marches Growth Hub (MGH) have had to continuously develop robust strategic partnerships and excellent working links with three Local Authorities (LA's), two Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), three universities, several private sector-led business network groups and government all of which are key to the MGH success.

The MGH receives £205k per annum from the Department for Business, Energy, & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) towards operating costs. The MGH is managed by the MGH Steering Group. Shropshire Council acts as the Accountable Body.

The MGH partnership model includes a virtual growth hub and website [www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk) that is supported by three physical growth hubs situated in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire. Since July 2018, telephone enquiries are handled by the National Business Support Helpline (NBSH) via the virtual hub telephone line 0345 6000 727.

The project is managed by the Marches LEP Business Support Officer (BSO) and supported by the LEP Admin Officer 1 day per week. The BSO role involves government liaison, virtual hub management including the MGH website together with supporting the three physical growth hubs.

The MGH partnership model operates with significant input from the three local authorities and the University of Wolverhampton (UoW).

#### MGH 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; and
- Successful marketing.

The focus of 2019/20 is to continue to increase interactions with businesses and to signpost them to appropriate follow up support, including referrals to EU programmes (grants & loan), local authority business support and, where appropriate, private sector providers. This is encouraged by working with our PR and Marketing Consultants, Be Bold Media Ltd, to maximise engagement via the MGH website [www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk), e-newsletters, PR/Marketing and social media campaigns, advertorials and MGH events.

### High level overview of progress 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019: -

- A total of **3,712** businesses interactions took place through attendance at growth hub events and face to face medium and high intensity support;
- A total **310** individuals have been helped to start a business;
- A total of **464** referral were made to partners including EU programmes (grants and loans), local authority business support and, where appropriate, private sector providers.
- Across the three growth hubs, there was a total of **143** growth hub events (growth hub led and those held in collaboration with partners) with a total of **3,924** attendees of which **2,748** were businesses. Events included **5** high profile events which were delivered in partnership by the MGH with themes including Access to Finance, Skills, Technology, Leadership and Business Expo.
- The MGH acted as the gateway to **22** EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a total financial value of over **£20million**. A further £6m of investment in business support schemes is in the pipeline. 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 **£972,890.70** to Marches businesses between 1 April 2019 and 31 September 2019. The EU investment will lead to the anticipated creation of **29** jobs. The figures are not as high as the previous half-year as a few of the EU projects (BEEP and BGP) were transitioning to a new phase.
- MGH medium to high intensity data returns have identified that **£979,196** 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 physical growth hubs support;
- Light touch engagement with businesses continues to be provided through a user friendly and easy to navigate website [www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk). In the last six months, the website has featured **48** news releases and **52** pieces of online content related to business support on offer, including case studies (links to case studies have been provided in Section 5 of this report). The website received **14,463** website visits (**9,338** unique visitors). **Five** digital newsletters were issued and sent to **555** businesses. 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;
- The £10m Growth Challenge PR & Marketing Campaign was launched in July 2019 to help promote the £10m EU funding available to SME's (includes Midlands Engine Investment Funds);
- Social media statistics show that both followers and reach for Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn have increased since 31 March 2019. Social media reach is organic and not boosted or paid for in this period. More details are provided in Section 4 of this report.
- There were more than **90** separate pieces of Media and PR coverage logged as a result of MGH PR campaigns, content and news releases.
- The MGH has maintained a Brexit advice page for businesses since 2018, and during the early part of 2019, this was developed into a Brexit Toolkit which was updated weekly and more frequently since the launch of the Get Ready for Brexit campaign. Here, businesses can access up to date information on Brexit, sector specific advice and general help and guidance of how they can best prepare for a no deal or a negotiated Brexit process. This toolkit has been supplemented with social media content as well as a dedicated Get Ready for Brexit digital newsletter;

- The MGH is working very closely with Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, both of which have been successful in securing Brexit Readiness Funding;
- Following the successful Access to Finance Summit events and Strategy Workshops across the Marches, the Marches LEP Access to Finance Strategy was approved by the LEP Board on 24 September 2019. 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. This will include building capacity and capability within the MGH teams to support effective business engagement and appropriate signposting and referrals.
- The three physical growth hubs received 1 day each per month PR/Marketing support from the MGH PR/Marketing agency to help raise their profile locally and support outreach activity;
- As part of the 2019/20 MGH evaluation, the MGH has commissioned three impact case studies to help demonstrate value for money and short, medium and longitudinal impact on business growth. The case studies will be included in the Growth Hub Year-end report.
- The Data Sharing Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding between BEIS, National Business Support Helpline and the LEP is still to be finalised. This is impacting on referrals from the NBSH to the Marches LEP;
- Partnership working has continued to be encouraged through the MGH governance and meeting structures, i.e. through the MGH Operational Group (two monthly), MGH Steering Group (quarterly) and MGH Campaign (quarterly) meetings. These continue the sharing of good practice.
- Success continues with collaborative events and workshops with various partners across the Marches. Some of the partners include Shropshire HR, The Telford HR Forum, Hereford Means Business and several EU projects/programmes.
- MGH continues to develop new partner relationships namely the Small Business Commissioner, Be The Business – Business Growth Mentoring Programme, with new EU project managers and many more. Further detailed are provided in Section 4 of this report.

## 2. BEIS Growth Hub 2019-2020 Grant Spend Position

**Please confirm details of the financial position in respect of your 2019-2020 BEIS grant.**

Total BEIS grant for 2019-2020 awarded	<b>£205,000</b>
Estimate of any underspend of the 2019-2020 awarded at this time (please provide reason for underspend)	<b>£0</b>

Please state how much of your 2019-2020 grant has been spent by end of quarter 2 and how much of the remaining grant money has been committed.

Details	£
<b>£ Funding spent in Q1 and Q2</b>	
Q1 – 1 April to 30 June 2019	£29,309.39
Q2 – 1 July to 30 September 2019	£44,369.60
<b>£ Funding Committed For</b>	
Q3 – 1 Oct to 31 December 2019	£44,035.55
Q4 – 1 January to 31 March 2020	£87,285.46
<b>TOTAL GRANT SPENT OR COMMITTED*</b>	<b>£205,000.00</b>

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

<b>Activity as shown on your Schedule 1 form</b> (e.g. marketing, advisor salaries etc)	<b>Q1 and Q2 Spend</b> £
Growth Hub Operation Costs	£ 5,109.16
Steering Groups Ops	£ 140.83
Information Database licences	£30,120.00
PR Marketing	£17,391.96
Physical Hub	£14,417.04
Growth Hub website	£ 0
Skills Site Maintenance	£ 0
Virtual Hub	£ 6,500.00
Evaluation of Growth Hub	£ 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£73,678.99</b>

#### **ADDITIONAL NON-BEIS GRANT FUNDING SOURCES**

Please confirm what sources of additional funding and/or resources have been leveraged in by the LEP and/or Growth Hub in 2019-2020 to add further value to your Growth Hub service?

**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. The Marches LEP area spans 2,300 square miles, so we have established these three sites with partners to ease access to the MGH services.

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 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, light and operating costs related to Marches Growth Hub – Shropshire premises and dedicated staff resource (estimate £130k per year)
- Telford and Wrekin Council – dedicated staff resource at Marches Growth Hub – Telford & Wrekin (estimate £150k per year)
- Herefordshire Council – dedicated staff resource at Marches Growth Hub – Herefordshire estimate £70k per year)

Our Higher Education (HE) partners also contribute financially:

- 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. (To note: The university is currently

carrying out a review of its business engagement activity. As a key MGH partner, we await the outcome of this review to understand possible implications to the MGH service in Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire)

- University Centre Shrewsbury provides rooms for events and conferences – this is estimated to be £2k per year.

#### **ERDF**

The MGH acted as the gateway to **22** EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a total financial value of over **£20million**. A further **£6m** of investment in business support schemes is in the pipeline. Funding and support through the current and planned programmes will continue until June 2023. The four largest ERDF schemes (BEEP, BGP, MBIG and Broadband Grants) awarded a combined **£972,890.70** to Marches businesses between 1 April 2019 and 31 September 2019. The EU investment will lead to the anticipated creation of **29** jobs. The figures are not as high as the previous half-year as a few of the EU projects (BEEP and BGP) were transitioning to a new phase.

An information sharing event is held each financial year to support referrals. An event is scheduled to take place on the 3 October 2019. The event brings EU project managers, growth hub staff, local authority economic development officers and other business support together to support relationship building and alignment of the business and enterprise support landscape. The event provides an opportunity to find out more about new projects as well as providing a refresher on some of the more established projects.

#### **Skills Related Funding Secured by the LEP:**

Work with Careers and Enterprise Company funded Enterprise Co-ordinators has continued in order highlight the importance of links between businesses and schools as part of careers education and guidance.

European Social Fund 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 businesses with less than 250 employees. The training is fully-funded and flexible 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 some of the most 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 systems. The project supports the growth of SMEs and microbusinesses by ensuring they can identify and access skills development options that align with and unlock their growth plans.
- **Life Ready, Work Ready** engages SMEs, young people and schools and colleges to ensure there are easy ways for business and education to come together to share information on skills that employers look for, enable employers to influence activities in schools and to give people a better understanding about the jobs and skills needed in the local area.
- **Marches Centre of Manufacturing & Technology (MCMT) Skills for Growth** is improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems. The project supports SMEs in the manufacturing and engineering sector by assessing and delivering skills solutions essential to help them grow.

Each of the ESF Project Managers has met with the MGH teams in order to encourage referrals to their schemes and to better understand issues affecting the local business community.

### 3. Overview of Key Performance Outcomes

**Key Performance Outcomes.** Provide information on the key outcomes of your Growth Hub linked to the requirements of the 2019-2020 'Metrics and Evaluation Framework'. **Please note that aggregated cumulative performance figures are no longer required.**

Indicator	Local KPIs (where set by the LEP)	Six Month Total (1 April 2019 – 30 September 2019)
Number of businesses that have received 'light touch' triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic)	N/A	3,604
Number of individuals <sup>1</sup> that have received 'light touch' triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic)	4,565 individuals (year-end target)	5,224
Total number of unique visitors to Growth Hub website	N/A	9,338
Number of businesses receiving 'medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support	364 (year-end target for combined medium and high intensity support)	99
Combined turnover (amount £) of businesses receiving 'Medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support.	N/A	£38,521,308.00
Combined employee numbers (FTE) of businesses receiving 'Medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support.	N/A	453.75
Number of businesses receiving 'high intensity' support e.g. account management / intensive support directly provided by the Hub or partner organisation	364 (year-end target for combined medium and high intensity support)	9
Combined turnover (amount £) of businesses receiving 'High intensity' support i.e. sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource.	N/A	£22,850,000.00
Combined employee numbers (FTE) of businesses receiving 'High intensity' support	N/A	232

<sup>1</sup> Number of businesses and individuals are both required as (for example) several individuals from the same business may attend an event.

i.e. sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource.		
Number of businesses receiving 'Medium' and 'High intensity' support that, have the opportunity, ambition and greatest potential to grow (including Scale-Ups)	N/A	62
Total number of individuals who been helped to start a business	N/A	310
Number of businesses referred to a mentoring programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	N/A	47
Number of businesses referred to a skills or training programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	N/A	11
Number of businesses referred to a finance and/or funding programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	182 (year-end target)	71
Number of businesses referred to an innovation and/or R&D programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only).	N/A	10
£Private sector match secured (where linked to Growth Hub)	N/A	£979,196.00

**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/Growth Hub 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.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

#### Medium and high intensity interventions

**“How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of this service?”** rated on a five-point scale with 5 being very satisfied.

<b>1/5</b>	<b>2/5</b>	<b>3/5</b>	<b>4/5</b>	<b>5/5</b>	<b>Total</b>
0	0	0	0	9	9

#### Light-touch interventions

**“How satisfied were you with the service received?”** rated on a standard five-point scale?

<b>1/5</b>	<b>2/5</b>	<b>3/5</b>	<b>4/5</b>	<b>5/5</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	2	34	79	353	469



**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?

<b>1/5</b>	<b>2/5</b>	<b>3/5</b>	<b>4/5</b>	<b>5/5</b>	<b>Total</b>
74	68	124	92	150	508

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

#### 4. Growth Hub Highlights

##### **Summary of Growth Hub Highlights;**

- Please provide details of any governance changes, changes to delivery mechanisms, high profile activities, new services offered, key new engagements/partnerships etc:

##### **2019/20 MGH Governance**

Governance arrangements remain the same since the submission of the 2019-20 Schedule 3.

The Marches LEP Board oversees the setting of the strategic direction for the MGH and receives progress updates from the Chair of the MGH Steering Group. New LEP Chair, Mandy Thorn was announced in September 2019. The last MGH update was presented to the LEP Board on 24 September 2019. Shropshire Council acts as the Accountable Body.

The MGH Steering Group is a sub-group of the LEP Board and meet quarterly. On joining the MGH Steering Group, each member (excluding local authority partners) are 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 Director in line with the LEP Conflicts of Interest Policy. In addition to this, members are asked to declare any interests at the start of all meetings for any relevant agenda items. The group has a very important role to play with regards to governance and provides guidance on key issues such as policy, objectives, budgetary control, marketing strategy and resource allocation.

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

The TOR are reviewed annually, and the election of the Chair takes place every two years. The Chair of the MGH Steering Group is also the Small Business Champion on the LEP Board. MGH Steering Group agendas and minutes are prepared in line with the TOR.

The MGH Operational 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.

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 two LEP Board members, three Section 151 Officers and the LEP Director.

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.

#### **MGH Delivery Update**

Two of the MGH physical hubs are situated in UoW Business Solution Centres. The university is currently carrying out a review of its business engagement activity. As a key MGH partner, we await the outcome of this review to understand possible implications to the MGH service in Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire.

#### **MGH Events including High profile Events**

Across the three growth hubs, there was a total of **143** growth hub events (growth hub led and those held in collaboration with partners) with a total of **3,924** attendees of which **2,748** were businesses. Events included **5** high profile events which were delivered in partnership by the MGH with themes including Access to Finance, Skills, Technology, Leadership and Business Expo. The MGH, through the MGH Campaign meetings, has developed a more focussed and targeted events calendar this financial year which is helping increase engagement with both businesses and partners across the Marches.

#### **Increasing Awareness & Engagement**

Two major PR/Marketing campaigns were launched during the last 6 months, an access to finance campaign being the £10m Growth Challenge and Brexit Readiness for Business. The campaigns were run alongside several mini campaigns targeted at businesses in different sectors and at different stages of the business journey.

The £10m Growth Challenge campaign was developed in response to business feedback about the challenges of accessing finance for growth. The two-tier campaign promotes a £10m pot that includes EU business support programmes (grants and loans) available to help drive business growth and create jobs. The campaign urges companies and entrepreneurs across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin to bid for a share of it. The aim of the campaign is:

- To bring cohesion and clarity to the business support on offer across the region
- To increase the volume of larger SMEs interacting with the MGHs
- To offer a more strategic, joined-up approach to business funding
- To offer specific sector-led activity
- To develop new contacts and leads for individual growth hub teams
- To deepen the alignment of the MGH brand with business support

The benefits to the MGH include: -

- Targeting higher growth, higher output companies
- Development of partner companies for follow-on activity
- New leads/contacts
- Year-long campaign allowing flexibility of approach
- Marches-wide campaign but bespoke activity for individual growth hubs
- Can tie in with events already planned.

The £10m Growth Challenge campaign had a soft launch in April/May 2019 and a formal media launch in July 2019 which included the Chair of the MGH Steering Group, Paul Hinkins, being interviewed by the BBC. This resulted in significant brand awareness for the growth hub and an immediate uplift in enquiries both to the National Business Support Helpline and the physical hub teams. There was a correlating spike in web traffic to the campaign landing page on the MGH website, with 496-page views on launch date, the highest single day figure for this six-month period.

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/10million-growth-challenge-launched-for-the-marches/>  
<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2019/07/30/10m-growth-challenge-launched/>  
<https://www.yourherefordshire.co.uk/all/business/business-the-marches-growth-hub-today-launched-a-10million-growth-challenge/>  
<https://beboldpr.com/10m-challenge-we-can-all-rise-to/>

### **Social Media**

MGH Twitter has a total of 3,600 followers which is an increase of 7% since 31 March 2019. Potential viral reach totals 1.48m.

The MGH Facebook page has received 583 likes and 650 follows which is up 10% since 31 March 2019. The average monthly reach has been 2,585.

The MGH LinkedIn account now has 387 followers, a 19% increase since 31st March 2019 with the average monthly reach being 3,800 impressions. Please note that all social media reach is organic and not sponsored (paid for). All updates are shared across Marches LEP and Hereford Enterprise Zone channels as well as sharing with MGH partners.

### **MGH Outreach**

MGH Shropshire continues to attract more rural businesses from the market towns since they started their outreach '**Growth Hub on the Move**' programme and engaging with more rural partners and key influencers. In July 2019, the hub adopted a new strap line for the Outreach programme '**Let's do Business in .....**'. This is used to market the events. This aligns with the Marches Strategic Economic Plans Opportunity Towns initiative.

Relationships have been further developed with local councillors and Town Clerks to help stimulate MGH interest/signposting and referrals as well as trying to understand the need for a satellite office in the Church Stretton area.

Increased visibility of the MGH team amongst the business network (Business Board, Professional Network) and various fora has helped increase traffic to MGH Shropshire. The team have also actively visited business parks and industrial estates with wider council staff and EU project managers to provide business support in a more collaborative manner.

Drop-in sessions have been delivered jointly with partners at various libraries. This approach was very well received by the community and now forms part of the MGH Shropshire events programme.

A Pop in Shop initiative is planned in parts of Shropshire following the success of the exercise last financial year. Outcomes will be shared in the Growth Hub year-end report.

More and more partners are now hotdesking at MGH Shropshire including EU funding project managers and local DIT teams.

### **MGH Digital Support**

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

MGH Telford & Wrekin strives to become a 'Digital Hub' to help support their local business community. A new ERDF Digital Enterprise Project will play an important part of this. MGH Telford & Wrekin are working with the University of Wolverhampton colleagues to get everything in place for Autumn 2019.

MGH Shropshire is in the process of launching a Digital Skills Academy in November 2019 which will be led by Lucas Karemo from Google's Digital Garage who is one of Google's top digital trainers. The ten-module academy will provide a comprehensive guide to making the most of all forms of digital marketing.

#### **MGH Guru Club**

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 events programme offer.

#### **Partnership Development**

- All three growth hubs are very supportive of FSB, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce and Women In Rural Enterprise (WIRE) activity and events that take place across the county.
- Herefordshire Means Business - MGH Herefordshire have further developed their partnership and supported the Business EXPO in May 2019 which was attended by 600+ delegates. At the event, the growth hub lead had the opportunity to connect with exhibitors and make new contacts. Contact leads will be followed-up to explore possible joint working opportunities.
- Two out of the three Business Boards have received MGH presentations from the growth hub leads during the last 6 months.
- DIT - This financial year has got off to a great start, which has been maintained for the 6-month period, with performance against all contracted targets being exceeded. The ITA teams in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire have supported 119 companies so far with 79 of these declaring Export Wins with a combined estimated value of more than £150m. The ERDF SME International Growth Project provides complementary, additional support to enhance the DIT Core contract, offering grants to SMEs in the Marches. From April 2019 to Sep 2019 this project provided grants to 6 SMEs committing £16,432 of funding to support their Internationalisation aspirations and promising the creation of 8 new jobs. Overall the ERDF project has supported 54 SMEs with ERDF grants committing over £102,000 of ERDF and has created 30 new jobs since the project started. DIT and West Midland Chamber of Commerce continue to work closely with and through the MGH and value this partnership, the MGH has been supportive of the Export agenda and continues to add value both in amplifying messaging and increasing network reach. The MGH is working in partnership with DIT to support the Marches 'Get ready for Brexit' workshop on 18 October 2019 at Shrewsbury Town Football Club. The MGH has been proactive in supporting this agenda and in helping to raise the profile of exports and in providing access to new to DIT businesses. 73 delegates (as of 4 October) are now registered for the 'Get ready for Brexit event', which is the largest single event registration across the West Midlands. DIT is represented on both the MGH Steering Group and MGH Operations Group.
- Marches Buildings Investment Grant - The project manager from the existing EU funded project was invited to present at the July 2019 Operations Group meeting. This was an opportunity for the group to hear about progress to date and plans for Phase 2 of the project. The MGH works very closely with the project manager and this is evident from the number of enquiries and support received by Marches businesses. The project has received 454 enquiries since the start of the scheme in February 2017 (37 during Apr- Sept 2019). The scheme has now supported 24 businesses, 2 of which are start-up businesses. A total of £1.5m has been directly awarded to businesses to date aiming to create an additional 99 jobs, 86 have already been created. The

target for the scheme is to deliver 110 jobs. Despite de-committing £900,000 of this budget due to many businesses changing their business plans as a result of the uncertain economic climate, the average costs per ERDF job has exceeded projects original target. The scheme has secured a 3-month extension and will now complete in December 2019. Herefordshire Council, on behalf on the wider Marches area, has secured in September 2019 an additional £3m of EU funding to continue this scheme for a further 3 years and to provide funds to help businesses with small equipment purchase. The two schemes will aim to go live in November 2019 and there is holding a list of 70 companies that are interested in applying to the two funds. An independent summative assessment has recently been undertaken and the key findings of this report state that: -

- The scheme addresses the issues raised in the Marches Strategic Economic Plan to improve access to finance and to encourage the increase in available employment space
- The net GVA by 2025 from the businesses supported through the scheme will exceed £24m
- By 2025 the ration of GVA increase to ERDF cost will equate to 13.3:1
- Manufacturing Growth Programme (MGP) - Representatives from this EU project sit on the MGH Operations Group. MGP has been operating since October 2016 delivering across 16 LEP areas. Delivered by Economic Solutions, part of Oxford Innovation Services Ltd, the programme supports SME Manufacturers to grow by identifying, understanding and removing barriers to growth and enabling sustainable business improvement. Between October 2016 to March 2019, in the Marches area, the MGP programme has worked with 134 businesses and supported with grants worth £204,912 with 110 jobs created and a further 38 forecasted. The private sector has contributed £319k in private investment. Between April – September 2019, the MGP Programme has worked with a further 20 business and supported with grants worth £52,919. The private sector has contributed £131k in private investment. Delivery of the current MGP programme is scheduled until the end of March 2021. A further extension is planned thereafter and is currently within the final call with MHCLG (30 September 2019). Case studies including a video have been provided in Section 5 of this report.

<http://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/> -

**Some of the key new partnerships/engagements are detailed below: -**

- The Project team from the new EU project 'UK-Centric Supply Chains' managed by Aston University [www.ukcentricsupplychains.co.uk/](http://www.ukcentricsupplychains.co.uk/) were invited to present at the MGH Operations Group meeting in July 2019. This new engagement and partnership has resulted in **8** Marches companies currently enrolled on the project with a pipeline of **10** leads from the Marches ready to join. A workshop is planned in November 2019 at the Marches Centre of Manufacturing and Technology in Bridgnorth which will allow further businesses to enrol and benefit from the project. The project is also looking at holding more targeted small workshops with 1:1 opportunities in the Marches (early 2020) working alongside MGH Shropshire and MGH Telford & Wrekin.
- The project manager from the new EU project CALMERIC <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/business-services/funding-and-support/support-for-inventors/calmeric-project/> presented at the MGH Operations group meeting in September 2019. The outcome of the engagement/partnership will be confirmed in the year-end report.
- Shropshire Wildlife Trust with the MGH Shropshire team is supporting the Meres & Mosses Business Environment Network <http://www.meresandmossesben.co.uk/page/7/events.htm> and working towards an Environmental/Green summit on 29 January 2020.

- Partners for Social Enterprise Networking in Shrewsbury are working with the MGH Shropshire team to support a Social Enterprise Programme including a high-profile event in November 2019.
- As part of the ESF Skills Support for the Workforce project, Rushmore Business Associates will deliver business skills training to improve productivity and efficiency in the workplace. The MGH will be delivering several 1:1 surgery days and training days.
- The development of a pilot Start Up and Growth Accelerator Programme for Shropshire working in partnership with a media company
- Working with partners to deliver 1:1 surgeries for the Charity Sector concentrating on Charity Accounting and Charity Governance, i.e. trustees roles and responsibilities.
- Working with The Entrepreneur Club and a wealth planning specialist to deliver a suite of workshops for growth businesses in the autumn. The workshops will be followed by business 1:1 surgeries at MGH Shropshire.
- CATAX are now sponsoring MGH Shropshire, allowing the team to use their designated meeting rooms at Shrewsbury Town Football club and Shrewsbury Club. The growth hub team are also arranging joint business visits with CATAX to raise awareness of R & D tax relief and Capital Allowances on commercial properties.
- New partner collaboration workshops including 'Getting the most from You Tube' session from Focus Digital Project and 'Creating Videos with Smart Devices' with Connect2Grow <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2019/05/14/get-in-the-picture-with-youtube-sessions-for-businesses/>
- Sector specific events have been delivered with partners. Events included Lean Manufacturing, Supply Chain Optimisation and The Power of Lead Generation. MGH Herefordshire are looking into developing more of these events in the future.
- The first Herefordshire Skills Show took place on 3 July 2019 in partnership with Marches Skills Provider Network <http://www.mspn.co.uk/>. The event was very well organised and attended and received extremely positive feedback. Due to the success, the next event is being planned for October 2020.
- Gemma Bourne and Deborah Norton from NatWest were recently announced by Government as the Marches LEP contacts for the new Expert in Residence Programme. Moving forward, Gemma will be working with MGH Shropshire and MGH Telford & Wrekin and Donna Norton with MGH Herefordshire and both will be supporting the Marches LEP Access to Finance Strategy. MGH Shropshire has arranged for Gemma Bourne to deliver a suite of workshops in the autumn and winter of 2019. The first event will be themed 'Franchising' and will take place on 5 November 2019 at University Centre Shrewsbury.

## 5. Positive news stories, case studies, testimonials.

- Please provide any case studies, news stories, best practice, testimonials or innovative approaches that showcase the Growth Hub best. When choosing case studies in particular please ensure that the 'Case Study' is from the first half 2019/20 where possible. You may also wish to consider case studies that align to the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan priority sectors/planned Local Industrial Strategy.

### MGH £10m Growth Challenge Coverage

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/10million-growth-challenge-launched-for-the-marches/>  
<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2019/07/30/10m-growth-challenge-launched/>  
<https://www.yourherefordshire.co.uk/all/business/business-the-marches-growth-hub-today-launched-a-10million-growth-challenge/>  
<https://beboldpr.com/10m-challenge-we-can-all-rise-to/>

### MGH newsletters between April and September 2019

<https://us3.admin.mailchimp.com/campaigns/show?id=3576797>

<https://us3.admin.mailchimp.com/campaigns/show?id=3511713>

<https://us3.admin.mailchimp.com/campaigns/show?id=3511713>

<https://us3.admin.mailchimp.com/campaigns/show?id=3416393>

<https://us3.admin.mailchimp.com/reports/show?id=3411829>

### Midlands Engine Investment Fund Investments

Stokly secures £200,000 Midven investment <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/hereford-based-stokly-secures-200000-midven-investment/>

Kare Plus secures £910,000 loan from Maven to expand care network

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/kare-plus-secures-910000-loan-from-maven-to-expand-care-network/>

Shropshire based company Maybe Solutions to expand to Birmingham and create new jobs thanks to a six figure funding package from Maven Investment

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/shropshire-company-to-expand-to-birmingham-and-create-new-jobs-thanks-to-funding-deal/>

A Telford-based audio-visual hire company has secured £100,000 from BCRS through MEIF. This case study is due to be released w/c 7 October 2019.



Approved Blue Hire  
BCRS MEIF Case Stu

DIT - Telford based chemical firm clean up in the middle east

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/chemical-firm-clean-up-in-the-middle-east/>

### MGH High Profile Events

Summer Funding Summit with BEIS in attendance to provide an update on BREXIT

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/10-growth-challenge-launched-at/>

Skills Show <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/skills-show-targets-hard-to-reach-workers/>

Leadership Conference <https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2019/10/leadership-conference-2/>



Tech Severn 2019  
conference hailed a



FW\_ Photos.msg

Tech Severn Event –

### **MGH Activity**

MGH Business Guru Programme

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/learn-how-to-lead-your-business-with-telford-guru-chris/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/guru-hollie-to-put-businesses-on-road-to-marketing-success/>

<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2019/07/02/help-on-hand-to-make-the-move-from-mate-to-manager/>

Lets do Business in.... Campaign which aligns with the Marches Strategic Economic Plans Opportunity Towns initiative.

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/lets-do-business-roadshow-heads-to-ludlow-after-wem-success/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/growth-hub-hits-the-streets-with-lets-do-business-in-roadshow/>

HR Essentials Workshop <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/free-workshop-will-help-companies-get-to-grips-with-hr-essentials/>

You Tube Sessions

<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2019/05/14/get-in-the-picture-with-youtube-sessions-for-businesses/>

Make Sure Your Logo has Mojo <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2019/06/11/guru-tristan-will-make-sure-your-logo-has-mojo/>

### **EU Programmes**

Marches Business Investment Grant

[https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/article/868/grant\\_funding\\_boost\\_for\\_ledbury\\_business](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/article/868/grant_funding_boost_for_ledbury_business)

<https://www.shropshirelive.com/business/2019/05/07/cleaning-supplies>

<https://www.rossgazette.com/article.cfm?id=118751&headline=Business>

Manufacturing Growth Programme

Video <https://youtu.be/bHybnlQnTCY>

Motor Design Limited <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/motor-design/>



Hitherbest Limited <https://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/energised-shropshire-manufacturer-defies-brexit-uncertainty-with-20-sales-increase/>

Heelman Limited <https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/specialist-manufacturer-invests-for-growth/>

White Heron Brands Limited <https://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/success-stories/>