



Growth Hub Annual Report 2018-2019 (1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019)

LEP Accountable Body:	Shropshire Council
Local Enterprise Partnership:	Marches Local Enterprise Partnership
Growth Hub name:	Marches Growth Hub
Date of Annual Report:	17 th May 2019
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Deadline for return to BEIS:	Friday 31st May 2019

This template has been produced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to help aid the production of 2018-2019 Growth Hub 'Annual Reports'.

LEPs are asked to ensure that information is included that will be helpful to 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 ongoing development of the Network.

LEPs are however; free to use an alternative format for their review (e.g. where part of LEP Annual Report) as long as the key content areas specified within the template are incorporated within final reports. 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.

BEIS also need this information to ensure consistency and transparency and to help demonstrate the impact to HMT and others that the funding provided by BEIS in 2018-2019 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 policy thinking.

BEIS therefore request that LEPs submit their Growth Hub Annual Report to **BEIS in word format (not as a pdf)** and that each section should provide the details requested in a short, informative and concise way without losing the key information. BEIS would also be grateful

if LEPs avoided referring BEIS back to other reports for information, but provided the information needed to answer each question within the body of the template.

Annual Reports should be submitted to Growth.Hubs@beis.gov.uk no later than **Friday 31st May 2019** and copied to your Area Lead.

Executive Summary

A. Please set out the primary objectives and priorities of your Growth Hub for the 2018-2019 funding period and the high-level achievements from the last twelve months demonstrating how these objectives have been met (1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019).

Key Features and Strengths

Engagement & Support

The Marches Growth Hub (MGH) is an important tool used by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to engage with and support entrepreneurs/businesses. The Marches LEP area spans 2,300 square miles and is home to 30,755 SME's 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, we have had to develop robust strategic partnerships and excellent working links with three Local Authorities (LA's), two Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), three universities, several private sector-led business network groups and government all of which are key to the MGH success.

MGH Model

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

- LA Economic Development teams;
- Department for International Trade (DIT);
- Intellectual Property Office (IPO)
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI); and
- A portfolio of European Union (EU) funded programmes delivered by partners.

Marketing Communications

In addition to our up-to-date user-friendly website, we deliver a high level of social media activity via 3 platforms (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn) to help raise the awareness of the MGH service.

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

MGH Objectives and Priorities between 1st April 2018- 31st March 2019 included: -

- To increase MGH awareness and engagement;

- Partnership development;
- Project development of additional support; and
- To extend communication and use of on-line support.

The following are areas of particular success: -

Increasing Awareness & Engagement

- The commissioning of SME impact case studies has helped promote business success and encourage business growth. The case studies have been used as part of our #Getgrowing campaign and publicised through a number of business magazines/supplements during January and February 2019. Links to the case studies are provided below: -

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/wire-electric-supplies-ltd-telford/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/planet-doughnut-shrewsbury/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/galebreaker-group-ltd-herefordshire/>

<http://www.shropshirebusinessmag.co.uk/>

- The MGH with the support of a number of partners, successfully delivered 4 high profile business events across the Marches. The aims and objectives of the events were to increase SME awareness of the work of the MGH, promote business growth support and engage with the non-engaged. Links to the events are provided below and finer details are detailed in the scale-up section (7) of this report: -

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/new-shropshire-business-show-hailed-a-success/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/love-digital-event-proves-a-hit-with-businesses/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/sas-officer-turned-business-leader-to-headline-growth-and-export-show/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/fast-failure-and-reinvention-key-to-business-success/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/panel-revealed-for-survive-or-thrive-digital-event/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/daydream-for-digital-success-says-twitter-chief/>

Partnership Development

- The two monthly MGH Operations Group meeting, helps maintain and further develop the excellent working relationship between the staff at the virtual hub, three LA's and university partners that manage the three physical hubs. The meeting also helps support and develop engagement with key national business support providers and local delivery partners (both public and private). The agenda has allowed for discussions around the Governance, Brexit, and Scale-up activity.
- We have three private sector Business Boards covering Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin which support strong communication with the business base. The Chair of each Business Board sits on the LEP Board. A member of each Business Board sits on the MGH Steering Group. The Business Boards have cross-sector strategic business representation, also including: the relevant Chamber of Commerce; the FSB; other business

sector networks and the voluntary and social enterprise sector. These Business Boards are not LEP sub-groups, they have their own independent function and remit to provide a strategic role in supporting growth across their areas. The inclusion of the Business Board Chairs on the LEP Board and MGH Steering Group is aimed at providing strong; two-way communications on business needs with SME business community; informing strategy development and adding to other direct communication undertaken by the LEP with the wider business community. The MGH Operations and MGH Steering Group Chair also performs a role on the LEP Board in representing the SME business community.

- We have continued to develop and grow the sphere of influence of the MGH. We have done this through continuously building links with a much broader range of SMEs via our accountants and solicitors, the two Chambers of Commerce, FSB and other business representation organisations.
- We have continued to maintain and develop our stakeholder list to ensure wider engagement through our MGH newsletter.

Project Development of Additional Support

- All four Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) schemes are promoted on the MGH website, through the MGH Operations Group, MGH Steering Group, three Business Boards and via our business support networks. A number of events have been held by the three physical growth hubs to help promote the scheme on offer.
- We also continue to promote our locally designed and government funded growth and innovation business support schemes.
- Marches LEP Access to Finance Group - The LEP delivered two Access to Finance Summit events and one Access to Finance Strategy workshop across the Marches in 2018/19. The events were aimed at banks, professional services advisers to small businesses, accountants, solicitors, enterprise support advisers, business finance advisers, finance brokers, insolvency practitioners and alternative finance providers in the Marches area.

The events brought together some of the region's leading experts who explained the various funding streams small businesses can access – including peer-to-peer lenders, equity funds, invoice discounters, crowd funders and locally-based small business loan funds.

The Summit events sought volunteers to help form a **Marches LEP Access to Finance Group** which is led by LEP Board Member and Access to Finance Champion Paul Kalinauckas. A total of 18 individuals across the 2 events expressed an interest in joining the group. The aim of the group is to work towards a LEP Access to Finance strategy to help increase awareness of MGH support and to ensure that the three growth hubs are adequately supported to build capacity and capability around this area of work. The strategy will be presented to the LEP Board in 2019/20 for approval.

Extending Communication & Use of On-line Support

- The MGH hold two monthly Campaign meetings. The group is made up of staff from the MGH virtual hub, three physical hubs including University of Wolverhampton and a representative from the marketing consultancy team. The aim of the group is to share best practice with regards to events, strategically plan future events, share good news stories, support the promotion of events and ensure that we are all aligned with the current marketing campaigns and MGH marketing protocols. During the 2018/19, we have held five

Campaign meetings.

- With limited funding, resources and such a vast geographical area, we have increased social media and communication activity to help support outreach and profile raising resulting in an increase of MGH service take-up. This has proven successful and is demonstrated in the year-end figures below.

Web Statistics	Since launch (Oct 15)	April 2016 - March 2017	April 2017 - March 2018	April 2018 - March 2019
Website users (unique visitors)	50,941	13,484	16,238	17,297
Total Web visits	85,474	24,340	26,603	27,366
Page views	275,944	83,371	83,854	78,542
Average time spent	3.34 mins	4.07 mins	3.24 mins	2.56 mins
Return/new visitors	17%/83%	24%/76%	18%/82%	17%/83%
Most visited pages	Calendar/ About Us Shropshire / Business Support Finder	Calendar/ Start-up support/ About us Shropshire	Calendar/ About Us Shropshire/ Start-up support	Calendar/ About us Shropshire/ Finance and Funding - Grants

Social Media

Twitter followers total 3,400 (up 29% from March 31, 2018)

Twitter potential viral reach totals 2.7m

Facebook 'likes' total 525 (up 42% from March 31, 2018),

Average monthly reach was 14,826. March 2019 saw a total reach of 56,813 due to promotion of the Business Growth & Export Show and Get Digital – Survive or Thrive.

YouTube channel 3 with 107 total views

LinkedIn had 311 followers and 550 page visitors

Note: -YouTube is used as a hosting channel as videos are uploaded and edited directly to Twitter and Facebook where the MGH has an already engaged audience.

Note: - MGH updates are also shared across the Marches LEP and Hereford Enterprise Zone social feeds

Newsletters

Nine newsletters between April 2018 and March 2019 have been sent to a mailing list of **256** businesses. These newsletters are sent direct from the MGH, supplemented by regular joint local authority partner/MGH e-shots promoting events, availability of advice and support and promotion of new grants and initiatives. In addition, the three physical hubs each send out a localised newsletter to their businesses promoting MGH events and projects, this is delivered

to in excess of **7,000** businesses. MGH news is also featured within the separate Marches LEP newsletter

Social Media Campaigns

The MGH has delivered the following mainstream media and social media campaigns promoting available support, funds and projects to its business audience, these include:-

#QueensAward
#Apprenticeships #NAW2019
#GetFinance
#MarchesforGrowth (Strategic Economic Plan development, promoted across MLEP and MGH)
#ExportWebWeek
#IndustrialStrategy – grand challenges
#GreatBritishHighSt
#Scaleup
#thinkselfemployed (FSB)
#GetExporting – Detroit visit; Riga food & drink
#GetGrowing – aimed at scale-ups/encouraging businesses to grow
#BSHelpline (Twitter Q&A)
#GrowthHubGurus
#Brexit
#MTD (Making Tax Digital)
#GetStarted

There is an ongoing campaign to promote Access to Funding such as Marches Business Investment Grant and Midlands Engine Investment Fund and as schemes go live. In addition to this, EU funding calls are promoted.

Wider Communications

- MGH featured as a double page spread in both Shropshire Star and Hereford Times
- Positive media coverage for the MGH and its events as and when released including front page leads, featured picture stories in key daily press targets
- Multiple cross-platform coverage of campaigns
- 62 news releases pitched to the media
- 40 web features
- More than 175 separate pieces of media coverage (we are aware of) including, regional and national print, online and radio.

Case studies

The MGH contains a repository of case study content, demonstrating the impact of MGH work on business growth, whether companies have sought advice and signposting leading to partner delivered support such as accessing finance or expert help or a combination of direct interventions which have led to turnover growth, workplace skills development and job creation. These can be found at <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/>

Brexit

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. 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 continued delay to the Brexit process. This toolkit has been supplemented with social media content and signposting to encourage take up.

High Level Achievements from 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019

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

- **3,268** Walk-in, calls or web enquiries to the MGH
- **4,443** Businesses supported by the MGH (including support received from Partners)
- **266** events were delivered via the MGH – Shropshire, Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin
- **3854** People attended MGH business support events
- **4 high profile events** were delivered by the MGH
- **1,111** enquiries sign posted to third parties.
- The MGH was the gateway to **20** EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a financial value of **£10million**. The four largest ERDF schemes (BEEP, BGP, MBIG and Broadband Grants) awarded a combined **£2.8m** to Marches businesses between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2019. In addition, the RDPE Growth Programme <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rdpe-growth-programme> awarded **£2.5m** to Marches businesses during the same period. The investment will lead to the anticipated creation of **175 jobs**.

Growth Hub 2018-2019 Grant Spend Position

B. Please confirm details of the financial position in respect of your 2018-2019 grant.

Total BEIS grant for 2018-2019 awarded	£205,000.00
Estimate of any underspend of the 2018-2019 awarded at this time (please provide reason for underspend)	£0

Breakdown of grant spend throughout the financial year.

£ Funding spent	
Q1 – 1 April to 30 June 2018	£26,644.26
Q2 – 1 July to 30 September 2018	£55,693.31
Q3 – 1 Oct to 31 December 2018	£50,208.96
Q4 – 1 January to 31 March 2019	£72,453.47
TOTAL GRANT SPENT OR COMMITTED*	£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 2018-2019 (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:	
Per activity as shown on your Schedule 1 form	Full year spend £
Growth Hub Operational costs	60,482.94
Hub website maintenance/hosting/SEO	3,125.00
Skills Site Maintenance/hosting	300.00
Hub CRM	10,250.00
Marketing/advertorials/events	87,492.95
3 Physical Hub development	26,946.27
Information database licences	17,225.00
Evaluation	3,148.00
Steering and Ops Meetings/Sponsorship	748.33
TOTAL	£209,718.49

Please confirm what sources of additional funding and/or resources have been leveraged in by the LEP and/or Growth Hub in 2018-2019 to add further value to your Growth Hub service? Where possible please 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:

£1360.76 contribution from University of Wolverhampton and Telford Council towards a high-profile growth hub event on 20.3.19 – Get Digital

£3357.73 contribution from Marches LEP for operational costs incurred that exceeded the BEIS grant.

Please see inserted attachment (Spend as at 24.4.19) with full breakdown of expenditure



Spend as at
25-4-19.pdf

and income.

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 (UoW) and University Centre Shrewsbury (UCS) who provide excellent facilities for meetings/workshops/drop-in's 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. The total contribution of **£387k** is broken down below: -

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 approx. £35K per year.
- University Centre Shrewsbury provides rooms for events and conferences – this is estimated to be approx. £2k per year.

ERDF

During 2018/19, the MGH was the gateway to 20 EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a financial value of £10million. The four largest ERDF schemes (BEEP, BGP, MBIG and Broadband Grants) awarded a combined £2.8m to Marches businesses between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. In addition, the RDPE Growth Programme <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rdpe-growth-programme> awarded £2.5m to Marches businesses during the same period. The investment will lead to the anticipated creation of 175 jobs.

Skills Related Funding Secured by the LEP: -

In 2018/19 The Marches LEP secured £5k funding from the Learning and Work Institute. The funding was used to deliver two training sessions to the MGH teams to help increase their understanding of skills issues and how these can be considered in the delivery of business support programmes. This has led to better promotion of the importance of staff training and development (including leadership and management, reskilling and apprenticeships) in driving business growth.

Marches LEP have secured £75k funding from Department for Education to support the development of the analytical toolkit for Skills Advisory Panels. This funding will enable a better understanding of current and future skills and employment priorities that will impact on our area. This will result in an evidence-based approach to skills development programmes and may provide further opportunities for integration of business support and skills interventions, particularly in our strategically important sectors.

The Marches LEP also received the following amounts of funding from the Department for Education through the National Apprenticeship Service: -

- £3k to support National Apprenticeship Week 2019, to inform employers and to promote apprenticeship opportunities
- £5k to support Industry Placement Events with employers and to promote T Levels.

C: Summary of Growth Hub progress in 2018-2019

1. Strategic Partnerships

- Please confirm how the Growth Hub was delivered in 2018-19 (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. Please confirm:

MGH Model

MGH has a centrally managed virtual hub which includes a website <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/> and a general enquiries e-mail address enquiries@marchesgrowthhub.co.uk. In July 2018, the virtual hub central helpline 0345 6000 727 was transferred to the National Business Helpline as most of the enquiries received related to pre-start and start-up.

During 2018/19 the MGH virtual hub service was delivered in-house as part of the LEP team. The LEP MGH team included a Business Support Officer, a temporary post managing Data and Marketing (Data and Marketing Officer) and a Partnership Manager. The LEP Board Deputy Chair (Small Business Champion) chairs both the MGH Steering and MGH Operations Group.

The virtual hub was supported by three-physical hubs situated in Hereford, Shrewsbury and Telford & Wrekin. Due to limited funding and resources, we work in partnership with the three local authorities, University of Wolverhampton and University Centre Shrewsbury who provide facilities and Business Support/Economic Development staff to support the operation of the three physical hubs.

For the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, an interim LEP Data and Marketing Officer supported the MGH team to help strengthen data collection and coordinate a Marches wide programme of high-profile growth hub events. The Data and Marketing Officer also continued to support the management of the MGH website, the collection and management of KPI data and supported the MGH Steering Group, MGH Operations Group and MGH Campaign meetings.

After a review of the LEP team resource, it was decided this full-time role could not be afforded within MGH resources and its responsibilities would be divided between other members of the LEP team. The LEP Data and Marketing Officer remained in post until April 26th, 2019 to support year-end reporting.

The LEP Business Support Officer (BSO) oversees the day to day finance and performance management of the MGH. Previously the BSO's time was split between the MGH and the LEP and from 1 April 2019 the BSO will support the growth hub full time and will be funded 100% from growth hub funding. Moving forward, the BSO will pick up duties previously carried out by the MGH Coordinator and will receive 1-day support per week from a LEP admin officer. This new structure will be reviewed to ensure quality is not being compromised as a result of the change.

PR & Marketing support for the MGH is provided by an external agency. The MGH products and

services are proactively promoted through website content, regular MGH e-newsletters, social media, through e-marketing campaigns and advertorials.

- The primary organisation/s delivering the Growth Hub and whether they are a public or private sector organisation?

Due to MGH limited resources, we work in partnership with the three local authorities and the University of Wolverhampton who provide tier one Business Support/Economic Development generalists to support the operation of the three physical hubs. Customers can access 121 face to face support including support with completing funding applications and signposting/referrals to projects delivered by the network of public and private sector organisations.

- 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 to ensure that the documents are fit for purpose and GDPR compliant

- 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 to be the first port of call for accurate, up-to-date and impartial information on business support across the whole of the LEP area. 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 2018-2019 to ensure value for money (e.g. cluster working; joint projects, sharing resources etc)?

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

- West Midlands ERDF funded business support and innovation projects such as Business Growth Programme as well as supporting extensions of projects
- Three other LEPs on Cyber Security (Cyber Resilience Alliance)
- Three other LEPs on Agri Tech (Agri Tech West Alliance) which signpost SME's to growth hubs
- Supporting Midlands Engine (including Midlands Engine Investment Fund, Midlands

Connect and Midlands Engine Trade and Investment Strategic Programme Group including attendance at MIPIM 2018).

- What approach has the LEP through its Growth Hub taken to continue to develop strong, inclusive strategic partnerships across the LEP and/or Mayoral Combined Authority area during 2018-2019?
 - What have been the successes and have any local challenges been overcome?
 - Have any new relationships, networks or clusters been created?
 - What cross-border working has been undertaken?

MLEP has a strong track record in working with other strategic partners: -

- Midlands Business Support Network – The LEP attend the network meeting which occurs four times a year. The network includes West and East Midlands growth hubs along with several national business support providers. Opportunities for cross border working are investigated as well as sharing best practice and coordination of events to ensure value for money is obtained across the wider area.
- Better Business for All (BBfA) - The 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 in Shropshire is currently being worked. 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.
- Midlands Engine Enterprise Sub-Group – The LEP Director is a member of this new sub-group.
- Midlands Engine Investment Fund Regional Advisory Board – The LEP Business Support Officer was voted in as Deputy Chair in December 2018 and will step-up as Chair in June 2019.

In addition to this, the Marches LEP are at present developing an Access to Finance Group. The aim of the group is to work towards a LEP Access to Finance strategy to help increase awareness of MGH support and to ensure that the three growth hubs are adequately supported to build capacity and capability around this area of work. The strategy will be presented to the LEP Board in 2019/20 for approval.

- How has the LEP ensured that the Growth Hub has been embedded in any upcoming Local Industrial Strategies? What progress has been made to date?

Following extensive consultation with partners over 2018, the Marches LEP have now updated their Evidence Base https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic_plans/strategic-economic-plan-update-2019/The-Marches-SEP-Evidence-Base.pdf and Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic_plans/strategic-economic-plan-update-2019/The-Marches-LEP-Strategic-Economic-Plan-2019.pdf.

The SEP was formally approved in March 2019 and will help the LEP concentrate on the right things to grow the economy and build on our strengths to attract investment into the area.

This process has allowed the LEP to look back at what we have achieved since our initial plan was developed in 2014, including attracting more than £104m in Government funding to support economic growth. You can find out more about what we have done in our 2018 annual report https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/annual_reports/2018/The-Marches-LEP-Annual-Report-2018.pdf

The LEP LIS will be developed in 2019 with stakeholders and will set out how we plan to boost productivity, support business to create good quality jobs and increase opportunities across the Marches through investment in skills, innovation and infrastructure.

As part of the development of the LIS, Marches LEP will hold a programme of facilitated consultation events with stakeholders. The MGH Steering and Operations Groups, MGH clients and partner projects will form part of this and some consultation events will be held at the physical hubs.

A planning meeting for board members and partners was held in Ludlow on 11 April 2019 to help determine the process for business engagement activities to help shape priorities.

MGH will continue 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.

Innovation and productivity improvement will be key strands of the Marches LIS. The LEP will 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 MGH will remain central to the delivery of and access to business support and innovation services.

2. National and Local Integration

What approach did the LEP take, via the Growth Hub, to develop strong, inclusive partnerships with all of the local and national players (public and private) involved in the ongoing development and delivery of the Growth Hub? Please provide a summary of working relationship in 2018-2019:

National services and local providers namely, FSB, two Chambers of Commerce, Department for International Trade (DIT), Intellectual Property Office (IPO), Innovate UK, Enterprise Europe Network, and EU funded projects are encouraged to hold events and regular clinics at each of the three physical hubs (free of charge). This increases the opportunity for local businesses to update their knowledge, obtain quality advice and access networking opportunities.

Sector Deals:

N/A

Innovate UK (UKRI):

For period FY 2010/11 to 4th April 2019 the following was achieved in the Marches area: -

159 separate organisations were involved in Innovate UK funded projects, **133** of these were (micro, small, medium and large) businesses and one charity. A total of **£14,604,672** was offered in grant funding, with **£12,517,480** of this going to businesses. (Please note that money awarded does not always equal money spent in the actual LEP area – this is due to the fact that in some cases the money awarded to organisations in an area could be spent elsewhere (in other geographical areas, other locations of company offices etc).

The LEP met with Ewa Bloch, Innovate UK's new Regional Manager for the West Midlands in January 2019. We will work closely with Ewa to 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 continue to promote Innovate UK's services and events as well as improve the information on our website.

Science & Innovation Audit

The Marches LEP is working with Worcestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire and Gloucestershire LEPs under the Cyber Resilience Alliance. The Alliance successfully secured funding for a Science and Innovation Audit to assess the strengths of the cyber security assets across its area in order to determine its competitive advantage. This has helped develop an action plan for the sector to help encourage business growth, specialist and technical skills development and the establishment of the Marches Centre for Cyber Security on Skylon Park in Hereford. The MGH will play a key role in delivering the action plan.

MGH Innovate UK Activity

MGH – Telford & Wrekin in partnership with Coventry University Enterprises Ltd developed **4** bespoke workshops for their local businesses to access free support to take a new product or service to market. **Forty-one** delegates attended the four workshops which took place between September and November 2018.

Innovate 2 Succeed

This is an Innovate UK funded project delivered within the Marches by Coventry University Enterprises Ltd. This is a fully funded programme that is targeted at ambitious SMEs that wish to grow and develop new products and services. The aim of the programme is to help SMEs 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 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, the programme interacted with **15** companies in the Marches area and of these **7** joined the programme with **2** companies pending. All 7 are involved with business growth through innovation (both products and services).

The Innovate 2 Succeed programme has been financed by Innovate UK for a further 3 years until March 2022 and the programme will be looking to further support companies across the Midlands including the Marches LEP area.

Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN):

The growth hub teams refer businesses to the University of Wolverhampton Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) programme.

In September 2018, a meeting took place between the LEP and 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 purpose of the meeting was to discuss collaborative working to better support innovation in the Marches area.

Since the meeting, the MGH website has been updated to reflect the KTN/KTP offer including links to success data and case studies. Mark was also a guest speak at the January 2019 MGH Operations Group meeting. Mark is working closely with the three physical hubs and plans to spend time at each growth hub delivering drop-in sessions/workshops/seminars as well as piggy backing onto MGH events.



Marches case studies

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

We have a DIT presence on both the MGH Steering Group and MGH Operations Group. The three growth hubs continue to have a regular DIT presence which has helped inform the MGH Operations Group on emerging business issues and concerns. In addition to this, events providing practical support to new exporters and new markets are delivered at each of the three growth hubs.

West Midlands Chambers of Commerce (WMCC) finished the DIT 2018/19 contract year successfully having exceeded all West Midlands DIT contracted targets. Local team performance for the Marches overall has been good, the ITA teams in Shropshire and Herefordshire account managed **272** businesses this year, with **139** of these declaring Export Wins with an estimated combined value of **£116m**.

The Marches positioned (out of six)

DIT target	Position
Export Win Value	4 th
Export Win Volume	2 nd
New Exporter Volume	5 th
New to Market Volume	3 rd
MSB Exporters Volume	3 rd

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 2018 to March 2019 this project provided grants to **12** SMEs committing **£33,500** of funding to support their Internationalisation aspirations and promising the creation of **17** new jobs. Overall the ERDF project has supported **41** SMEs with ERDF grants committing over **£79,000** since the project started. In addition to the above, **2** Marches companies attended the ERDF funded mission to Le Mans in June 2018.

DIT and WMCC continue to work closely with and through the MGH and values this partnership in delivering added value both in amplifying DIT messaging, increasing network reach and in delivering direct referrals to the DIT or ERDF programmes. have benefitted from the delivery of two

Export focussed events delivered in partnership with the MGH.

DIT proactively work with partners in the Marches area and beyond. An example of this includes the Head of Business Development & Partnerships delivering an informative presentation to the Telford Business Board on 3rd October 2018.

During quarter 3 and 4, the MGH in partnership with DIT delivered two high profile Business Growth & Exporting events across the LEP at which the DIT Export Hub (Truck) was in attendance. Both events helped to raise the profile of exports and crucially provided ITA teams access to new to DIT businesses. These events tied into an exporting themed e-marketing campaign to help raise the profile of the DIT offer. The Pylon Products case study below was published at the start of the 'Get Exporting' campaign. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcLddIOYVDk>

Referrals are also made to the EEN and the MGH promotes their services and events.

British Business Bank (BBB):

We continue to work very closely with the Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) Senior Relationship Manager (SRM) and four fund managers to help support outreach activity and raise the profile of the MEIF and BBB funds available.

The SRM for West Midlands moved to another internal position on the 1 October 2018. The new SRM attended the MGH Operations Group meeting in March 2019 and has agreed to attend future meetings.

We are in the process of considering a replacement MEIF Strategic Oversight Board Member to act as an alternate.

Two members of the team represent Marches LEP on the MEIF Regional Advisory Board (RAB) this includes a lead and an alternate. The lead was voted in as Deputy Chair by the RAB in December 2018 and has recently been invited to step-up as Chair and this role will commence in June 2019. During April 2018 and March 2019, 4 RAB meeting have taken place. The December 2018 meeting was hosted by the Marches LEP at MGH – Telford & Wrekin.

The three growth hubs work very closely with the MEIF Fund Managers and MEIF SRM. Activity during 2018/19 is summarised below:-

- Introductory meetings with fund managers;
- Presentations received from fund managers to growth hubs teams;
- MEIF exhibiting at growth hub events;
- MEIF SRM attendance at MGH Operations meetings;
- MEIF SRM update meetings with the 3 physical growth hubs; and
- Delivery of Investment Readiness sessions.

MEIF Fund of Funds position for the financial year 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019 has been confirmed as **£23.51m** invested and loaned in **127** investments/loans in **118** SMEs. Of which the following was in The Marches; **£0.71m** invested and loaned in **8** investments/loans in **7** SMEs.

Intellectual Property Office (IPO):

IPO is encouraged to run events at each of the three growth hub locations. In addition to this, the IPO offer free IPO Masterclass spaces to the MGH team when they are able.

The new IPO contact Sophie Walker presented at the MGH Operations Group meeting in March 2019. Sophie is working very closely with the 3 growth hubs to ensure that local businesses can tap into relevant patent, trademark and intellectual property support.

With Sophie's support, IPO events targeting SME's and Business Advisers have been delivered in partnership with the MGH. The events have been well attended and have received very positive feedback. Further events will be delivered during 2019/20. Further details are provided below: -

MGH - Shropshire

- IP workshop for SMEs delivered on 25th March 2019 with 20 businesses in attendance
- 121's with 10 SMEs on 25th March 2019
- IP workshop for Business Advisors on 26th March 2019 with 20 advisers in attendance. Real case studies used as part of the workshop to help 2 businesses on the day
- Promotion via newsletter sent to 3926 businesses and 22 unique clicks.
- IP basic booklets shared with the MGH and is now used as part of the introductory client pack
- The IPO press team are at present putting together an article for their next newsletter promoting how the IP office has worked with the MGH and local SMEs.

MGH - Telford and Wrekin

- Shared IP content with a business delivering branding workshops in partnership with the MGH. The first workshop is scheduled on Wednesday 26th June 2019.
- In discussions with Shropshire Youth Support Trust to deliver a workshop in Telford in partnership with the MGH
- Sharing of IP basic booklets.

Be the Business (Productivity Leadership Group):

We understand that Be The Business (BTB) receives government funding support and that they are an independent charity that was established from the work that came out of the Productivity Leadership Group last year.

The pilot mentoring programme is currently running from October 2018 to October 2019 in Birmingham, Manchester, North East and London only. Growth Hubs are key delivery partners and form part of the BTB team in terms of deployment.

We connected with the local BTB representative Arunima Motilal Dhar early 2019 to understand more about the program and to see how we can be part of the next wave which will be October 2019 to October 2020. Arunima advised that she was no longer part of this project and shared successor details.

The MGH is waiting to hear back Jane Howells (lead) and Oliver Sayers (support) who as we understand are our new points of contact.

Banks:

The LEP delivered two Access to Finance Summit events across the Marches in 2018/19. The first event took place on the 23rd of November 2018 (Telford) and the second on 11th April 2019 (Herefordshire).

The events were aimed at banks, professional services advisers to small businesses, accountants, solicitors, enterprise support advisers, business finance advisers, finance brokers, insolvency practitioners and alternative finance providers in the Marches area.

The events brought together some of the region's leading experts who explained the various funding streams small businesses can access – including peer-to-peer lenders, equity funds, invoice discounters, crowd funders and locally-based small business loan funds.

The Summit events sought volunteers to help form a **Marches LEP Access to Finance Group** which is led by LEP Board Member and Access to Finance Champion Paul Kalinauckas. A total of 18 individuals across the 2 events expressed an interest in joining the group.

The aim of the group is to work towards a LEP Access to Finance strategy to help increase awareness of MGH support and to ensure that the three growth hubs are adequately supported to build capacity and capability around this area of work. The strategy will be presented to the LEP Board in 2019/20 for approval.

In addition to the two Summit events, a LEP Access to Finance Strategy workshop took place on 23rd of January 2019 as a follow-up event to the Access to Finance Summit in November. A second Strategy workshop is being planned for mid-June 2019 in Herefordshire.

A 'Get Finance' e-marketing campaign was launched in preparation for the Access to Finance Summits. The campaign featured a series of events and workshops organised or hosted by the growth hub teams in Telford and Shrewsbury. <http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&pubid=6dcc20e5-68dd-4b2e-9c6b-8859e9f19f4a>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/summit-to-focus-on-finance-for-small-business/>

ICAEW / Accountants:

The MGH links into ICAEW members and other accountants through the Professionals Partnership in Shropshire and Telford which is supported by the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.

In Herefordshire, the MGH links into ICAEW members and other accountants through the various networking events. In addition to this the growth hub supports events and business clinics run by accountancy and finance professionals.

Angel Networks:

The MGH continue to make promote and make referrals into the Midlands Engine Investment Fund who offer access to a range of finance options include venture capital and business angels.

The MGH continue to promote the Regional Angels Programme which was launched by British

Business Banks on 1 October 2018. 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.

Other than the above, there are no dedicated Angel Networks within the Marches area but there are Angel Networks in the West Midlands. The new Marches LEP Access to Finance Group, once developed will help link into the West Midlands Angel Network.

Universities/Business Schools:

MGH Telford & Wrekin and MGH Herefordshire are sponsored and hosted by University of Wolverhampton which allows access to information on HE including undergraduate, post graduate programmes, degree level apprenticeships and business support projects.

MGH - Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin work with the University of Wolverhampton to offer a joint business support service which includes 1-2-1s and events. More recently, MGH Telford & Wrekin have strengthened their links with the University e-innovation centre to ensure that the on-site tenants (approx. 80) have access to growth hub services and support.

Science, Technology and Prototyping Centre

The University of Wolverhampton opened its new £10.1m, three-storey Science, Technology and Prototyping Centre during the Summer 2018. The new centre has been created at the University of Wolverhampton Science Park and will provide 4,000 square metres of space for high specification laboratory and workshop space, as well as a café and space for parking. The unrivalled specialist facilities will be ideal for scientific-based SME businesses and to enhance research and development activities.

The new Science Centre will focus on aerospace, automotive, building technology and life-science sectors along with their associated supply-chains. The specialist facilities are ideal for scientific-based businesses aiming to enhance their research and development activities. It will also allow businesses to access support channels on the Science Park such as the Wolverhampton Business Solutions Centre and the MGH. There are already over 90 businesses based at the Science Park and the new facilities will attract many more bringing with them high-value jobs for the area and graduates, as well as research engagement with the University.

<http://sciencetechcentre.co.uk/>

Events being run by University Centre Shrewsbury (Chester University), the University of Wolverhampton 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 based on Hereford Enterprise Zone (Skylon Park) which is the UK's only Enterprise Zone with a defence and cyber security focus. Business located on the Enterprise Zone are encouraged to use the growth hub for access to business support, advice and information.

<https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/enterprise-zone/>

Shell Store Business Incubation and Innovation Centre

Preparatory work began in January 2018 for the redevelopment of the derelict building on Hereford Enterprise Zone (Skylon Park). This will be the first Incubation Centre in the Marches. The project will help create more than 2,000 square metres of employment space, with room for new and growing businesses to set up and expand alongside facilities for development and innovation, presently earmarked for the new NMiTE University in Herefordshire.

The project is being funded via the European Regional Development Fund, Herefordshire Council and a loan from the Marches LEP's Marches Investment Fund. The incubation centre will provide high quality accommodation and support services to new or young enterprises as well as an application and development centre for NMiTE.

The project will create an interface between the new university and businesses as well as providing space for students to develop their practical projects. The project will provide employment space for approximately 25 businesses when the centre is fully occupied. The intention is that as businesses in the centre grow, they will take larger units as their needs for space and employment requirements increase. Eventually businesses will be of a size where they need to move out of the centre, releasing space for the next generation of businesses and creating a ready source of demand for employment units within the Zone. By 2023, it is anticipated that at least 28 businesses will either be located in the incubator or have "graduated" from the centre and have generated around 128 new jobs. The centre is due to be completed in early 2020. The project will generate more than 460 jobs over the next 12 years and play a vital part in the long-term economic prosperity of the area.

<https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/shell-store-development-to-create-a-business-incubation-and-innovation-centre/>.

<https://vimeo.com/321759350/cab44271de>

Cyber Security Centre

Activity started on a new Centre for Cyber Security on Skylon Park in March 2019 following a joint venture agreed between the University of Wolverhampton and Herefordshire Council.

The new Centre will offer high quality research facilities through the University's Cyber Security Research Institute as well as providing office space for cyber businesses and advanced training facilities designed specifically to tackle threats in cyberspace.

<https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/new-security-centre-marches-ahead-in-fight-against-cyber-crime/>

Catapults/Incubators and Accelerators:

The Marches LEP has met 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.

Incubators:

Please refer to Shell Store Business Incubation and Innovation Centre in Enterprise Zones Section above.

Better Business for All (BBfA)/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 project is in progress for Shropshire at present. It was agreed by the Steering Group that surveys – one for businesses and one for local regulatory officers who interact with businesses will be conducted in the first instance.

The survey designs were agreed in August 2018. The local regulatory officers survey has been completed and findings are currently being analysed. The business survey will be launched as the next step. The results of both surveys will inform the next step for the pilot BBFA in Shropshire.

Libraries/Business & IP Centres:

MGH – Shropshire is continuing to explore the option of a redundant mobile library that can be re-configured to support outreach activity. The Head of Libraries at Shropshire Council alerted the Growth Hub that one was available, but unfortunately, the growth hub was unable to take up the offer due to lack of funds required to take on the project.

Growth Hub on the Move - Shropshire Libraries have agreed with MGH – Shropshire that they can have a place on the mobile library to help support outreach activity in rural areas. The mobile library visits 240 villages during a two-week period. The growth hub is also holding 121 surgeries at different libraries every month. Market Drayton is scheduled for May 2019 and will be supported by University Centre Shrewsbury, Digital Solutions project.

MGH Herefordshire and MGH Telford & Wrekin are currently exploring opportunities with their local libraries.

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 please do so here, including a short summary of the type of activity taking place and how it could benefit the wider Network.

LEP Network

The Marches LEP Chair sits on the board of the LEP Network representing the West Midlands group of six LEP's. The Network sees all 38 of the UK partnerships come together on areas of shared importance, to work with Government and share knowledge and good practice.

BEIS National Growth Hub Conference Events

Attendance provides an opportunity to network and explore models/practices that operate outside the West Midlands area and to share best practice/ resources.

Business Board

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 and local

authorities. A particular focus for the Business Boards during the last year has been how businesses can best tackle the skills gap and as part of this, there have been a number of roundtable events in partnership with the Marches LEP. Each Business Board has a representative that sits on the MGH Steering Group.

<https://www.telfordbusinessboard.co.uk/>

<https://www.herefordshirebusinessboard.co.uk/about-hbb/>

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/shropshire-business-board/about-us/>

Local/Combined Authorities

As detailed earlier, our three local authorities are critical to the delivery of the MGH. They continue to provide staffing for the physical hubs which enables effective referrals to core local authority economic growth and business support services.

Business Intermediaries (e.g. Chambers, FSB etc)

The FSB and Shropshire Chamber are both represented on the MGH Steering Group. Where possible, business events are arranged in partnership with these organisations and information on forthcoming events is shared to avoid duplication.

The MGH teams attend and support business intermediary events where possible. They also work with business intermediaries on joint outreach programme of events/activities including 121 surgeries. Other activity includes case conferencing with the Chamber of Commerce business advisors and joint visits where necessary.

IOD & IOEE

The MGH has developed and plans to further develop relationships with Institute of Directors (IOD) and Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE).

BEIS (Queen's Awards for Enterprise)

Businesses were invited to attend the Marches LEP Queen's Awards for Enterprise launch on 18th April 2018 in Shropshire. Businesses were able to learn more about how winning one of the UK's most prestigious awards can benefit their companies. Graham Wynn OBE, Chairman of the Marches LEP launched the event and delegates heard from Sir Algernon Heber-Percy KCVO, Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, the Deputy Head of the Queens Award Office in the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy as well as former Shropshire winners of a Queen's Award.

Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce were also involved in a number of activities to help promote the Awards.

In addition to the above, the MGH promoted the awards via an e-marketing campaign #QueensAward and via the growth hub newsletter to encourage applications.

It was confirmed by BEIS that 16 applications were received from Marches businesses.

A similar event is planned for 23rd May 2019 to help promote awareness of the 2019's Queen's Awards.

Shropshire Coaches Group and Shropshire Wildlife Trust Partnership

Supported by MGH – Shropshire, this was a new exciting opportunity for businesses to discover

how coaching can help them problem solve, think creatively and increase the bottom line. The NetWalking/Coachwalking took place on a nature reserve, so the businesses could enjoy the therapeutic benefits of the great outdoors and exercise. Time and space to think. **15** delegates attended the event and feedback was extremely positive. Further events have taken place and a Phase 2 meeting is scheduled for early May 2019 to discuss more refinements to the initiative as weather and price are proving a slight barrier to participation.

Retail Collaborations

MGH – Shropshire worked with Shrewsbury Shopping Centres and Buy-From Shropshire on a ‘pop in’ initiative. This initiative involved businesses taking up an empty unit in a shopping centre for free for a set time duration. **Thirty** businesses showed an interest with **20** completed expressions of interest received, out of which **8** businesses successfully secured a unit space. The successful businesses trialled retailing from a unit during Tuesday to Saturday week commencing 23rd October 2018.

MGH - Shropshire also delivered a workshop with Buy-from Shropshire a couple of weeks before the event, so that businesses could make the most of the ‘retail’ opportunity. As a result of the ‘pop in’ initiative, **2** businesses were in discussions to take-up permanent units in the Shopping Centre with **1** business (Planet Doughnut) going on to sign a contract to take-up a kiosk in the shopping centre.

Planet Doughnut had their grand shop opening on Wednesday 14 November. 2018. The business owners continued to work with MGH - Shropshire who also helped to relocate the bakery business to a unit at the Food Enterprise Centre.

The Marches LEP welcomed Laura Hurley - Head of Regeneration, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Cllr Graham Galpin - Member of the High Streets Expert Panel and Simon Quin - Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University on the 19th of September 2018. The visit was part of a review of support to Market Towns.

Marches LEP has received formal notice of the £1.6 billion Stronger Towns Fund from Government. This is a new package of support to strengthen communities and fund ‘Town Deals’ across England. It will be used to create new jobs, provide training opportunities and boost growth and £322m has been allocated to communities in the Midlands. Details of priorities, eligibility and application process are expected after the Local Authority elections.

HR Collaborations

The growth hubs are actively working with local HR specialists and have been delivering workshops and events encompassing the laws that dictates how to form and run a business. The workshops and events have been fully subscribed and have been followed-up with 121 meetings and business surgeries. An example of this is the growth hub team delivering **4** very successful GDPR events with **200** attendees.

Another example is MGH – Telford & Wrekin supporting 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.

Growth Hub Gurus

MGH Telford & Wrekin have launched a Hub Club which will maximise their collaborative work including event delivery and follow on support as an 'extension to the team'.

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/growth-hub-gurus-launched-to-drive-business-success/>

ERDF Programmes

During 2018/19, the MGH was the gateway to 20 EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a financial value of £10million.

The four largest ERDF schemes (BEEP, BGP, MBIG and Broadband Grants) awarded a combined **£2.8m** to Marches businesses between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. In addition, the RDPE Growth Programme <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rdpe-growth-programme> awarded **£2.5m** to Marches businesses during the same period. The investment will lead to the anticipated creation of **175** jobs.

The growth hub teams and project managers continue to very closely to help maximise promotion and up-take. An example of this is working with the Fastershire team. MGH – Shropshire team visited various industrial parks to proactively promote the broadband improvement to infrastructure product. As a result, **18** expressions of interest were received from businesses, with many stating that that they would not have engaged with the growth hub team if they had not been directly approached. Also, since the initial visits a further **14 EOIs** have come in from the Rednall area and a combined solution is being sought.

In addition to this, MGH – Shropshire delivered 121 surgeries to help promote specific products (BEEP) which resulted in the product being fully subscribed within the local authority area. **28** businesses benefited from the programme which was 112% of the target. **£104,509** of grant funding was awarded which was 104.5% of the target. A press article in Shropshire helped promote the first large grant award of 19k to ColdMove in Oswestry. This was a great result for MGH - Shropshire given the short time period for the programme.

ERDF project teams are also encouraged to use the growth hub as their satellite offices to gain greater reach.

Local Authority Town Councils and Town Clerks

The growth hub teams 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.

MGH - Shropshire are working with the Town Clerk for Church Stretton Town Council to help determine the need for a satellite Growth Hub concept in Church Stretton. A survey will help determine both demand and the type of business support required. This will shape a business support offering for Church Stretton. The MGH team are working with Chester University on this research project.

3. Governance

- Please confirm the governance arrangements that were in place in 2018-2019 and

the role of the LEP and Accountable Body 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?

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).

2018/19 MGH Governance Arrangements

Governance arrangements have not changed since the submission of the 2018-19 Schedule 3 and are not set to change within the next 3 months.

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. Shropshire Council acts as the Marches LEP's 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 is 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 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 Management Committee (PRMC) which meet every 2 months and is a sub-group of the LEP Board comprising currently of two interim 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.

The MGH Steering Group Membership comprises:

- Chair (private)- LEP Board Member/ Chair of Telford Business Board (nominated small business champion)
- Herefordshire Business Board (private)
- Shropshire Business Board Representative (private)
- Telford & Wrekin Business Board Representative (private)
- Shropshire Chamber of Commerce (private)
- Marches Skills Provider Networks (private)
- Federation of Small Businesses (private)
- Department for International Trade (public)
- University of Wolverhampton (public)
- Telford & Wrekin Council (public)
- Herefordshire Council (public)
- Shropshire Council (public)
- Marches LEP (private)
- PR/Marketing consultant (private)

In attendance: - Cities and Local Growth Unit Area Lead

MGH Operational Group

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

Local Partners:

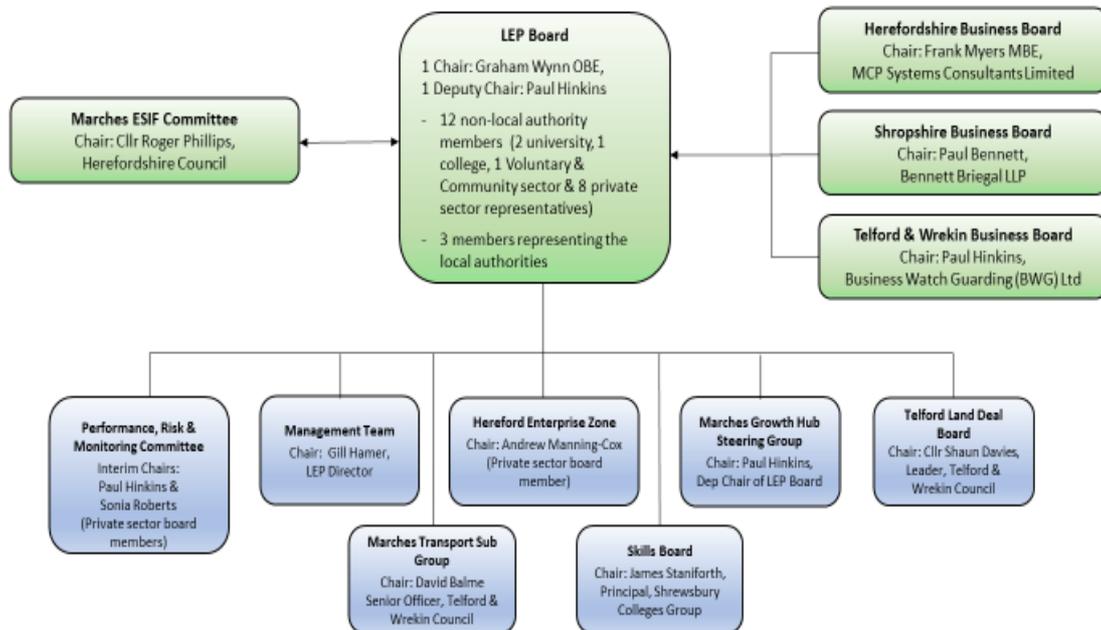
- Herefordshire Council
- Shropshire Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council
- Shropshire Council (European Regional Development Fund Technical Assistance Officer)
- University of Wolverhampton
- Marches LEP
- PR/Marketing consultant

National:

- Department for International Trade
- Economic Growth Solutions (Deliver Manufacturing Growth Programme and work across 15 LEP areas)
- British Business Bank

Diagram 1 on page 27 sets out how the MGH Steering Group reports into the Marches LEP Board, the reporting structure plus our three Business Boards. The LEP Board is made up of the Chair and thirteen members.

Diagram 1: Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Group Structure



- **Triage, Diagnostics and Signposting**

Local Infrastructure

- What Growth Hub delivery model/typology was employed during the 2018-2019 funding period?
 - Was this consistent or did it change during the twelve-month period? Why was this delivery model/typology chosen?
 - What value did it add over other models?

In July 2018, the MGH virtual growth hub helpline was transferred to the National Business Support Helpline as most of the enquiries received related to pre-start and start-up. E-mail enquiries continue to be received via the MGH website and are forwarded to each physical growth hub to action. The benefit of transferring the number is that it will enable generic customer questions to be answered promptly and those clients with more complex issues to access more in-depth support from staff at the relevant physical hub.

- Were any additional physical Growth Hub locations opened in 2018-2019? Please

- provide details (including why these locations were chosen).

We did not open or plan to open any additional physical growth hub locations in addition to the three physical hubs situated in Shropshire, Hereford and Telford & Wrekin.

- Did the Growth Hub employ its own advisers/staff, or were contractors/delivery partners used?
 - How many were employed and what were their job titles/roles?

As detailed earlier, our three local authority partners are critical to the delivery of the MGH. They continue to provide staffing for the physical hubs which enables effective referrals to core local authority economic growth and business support services.

As previously mentioned, the LEP employed a temporary LEP Data & Marketing Support Officer via an agency. This role came to an end on the 26th of April 2019.

- Were Growth Hub staff generalists or did they have a specialism? Did advisers hold any accreditations (e.g. SFEDI)?

Physical Hubs

As previously mentioned, due to limited resources we work in partnership with the three local authorities. The three local authorities provide a total of 4.5 officers to support the operation of the three physical hubs. 3 of the 4.5 are tier 1 Economic Development Officers (generalists), most of which hold or are working towards a Level 5 – Business Support Diploma/Certificate. The other 1.5 officers are of a senior level and oversee the operations of the growth hub.

To note, we do not have an established skilled advisor team in our hubs. We have however recruited with ERDF a more skilled team of advisors (x7) to deliver the Building Business Confidence (BBC) Programme. The BBC programme was designed in 16/17 and is a mentoring scheme for both start-up and growing businesses focusing on sales, improving turnover and developing the workforce. From 1 April 2017 to date, this team has worked across the Marches and has some capacity and skill sets to work with scale-up potential companies.

- Did the Growth Hub use the Business Support Helpline? Please provide details. If the Business Support Helpline is not used please provide details of the local arrangements.

In April 2018, we transferred the virtual hub helpline to the National Business Helpline as a trial as most of the enquiries received relate to pre-start and start-up. The trial went well, and the line will be transferred permanently from 1 July 2018. The Business Support Helpline web chat support is also available via the MGH website.

- 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 website also includes an Employer Skills Search Facility. This was developed by the LEP and its Skills Board (which includes business representatives, training & 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.

During the 2018/19, the MGH website privacy policy was updated in line with GDPR.

The MGH products and services are proactively promoted by the MGH PR/Marketing agency. This is done through website content, regular MGH e-newsletters, social media, through e-marketing campaigns and advertorials. Activity including impact for 2018/19 is detailed below: -

Website Statistics

Web Statistics	Since launch (Oct 15)	April 2016 - March 2017	April 2017 - March 2018	April 2018 - March 2019
Website users (unique visitors)	50,941	13,484	16,238	17,297
Total Web visits	85,474	24,340	26,603	27,366
Page views	275,944	83,371	83,854	78,542
Average time spent	3.34 mins	4.07 mins	3.24 mins	2.56 mins
Return/new visitors	17%/83%	24%/76%	18%/82%	17%/83%
Most visited pages	Calendar/ About Us Shropshire / Business Support Finder	Calendar/ Start-up support/ About us Shropshire	Calendar/ About Us Shropshire/ Start-up support	Calendar/ About us Shropshire/ Finance and Funding - Grants

Social Media

Twitter followers total 3,400 (up 29% from March 31, 2018)

Twitter potential viral reach total 2.7m

Facebook likes total 525 (up 42% from March 31, 2018),

Average monthly reach was 14,826. March 2019 saw a total reach of 56,813 due to promotion of the Business Growth & Export Show and Get Digital – Survive or Thrive.

YouTube channel 3 with 107 total views

LinkedIn had 311 followers and 550 page visitors

Note: -YouTube used as a hosting channel as videos are uploaded and edited directly to Twitter and Facebook where the MGH has an already engaged audience.

Note: - MGH updates are also shared across the Marches LEP and Hereford Enterprise Zone social feeds

Newsletters

Nine newsletters between April 2018 and March 2019 have been sent to a mailing list of **256** businesses. These newsletters are sent direct from the MGH, supplemented by regular joint local authority partner/MGH e-shots promoting events, availability of advice and support and promotion of new grants and initiatives. In addition, the three physical hubs each send out a localised newsletter to their businesses promoting MGH events and projects, this is delivered to in excess of **7,000** businesses. MGH news is also featured within the separate Marches LEP newsletter

Social Media Campaigns

The MGH has delivered the following mainstream media and social media campaigns promoting available support, funds and projects to its business audience, these include: -

#QueensAward

#Apprenticeships #NAW2019

#GetFinance

#MarchesforGrowth (Strategic Economic Plan development, promoted across MLEP and MGH)

#ExportWebWeek

#IndustrialStrategy – grand challenges

#GreatBritishHighSt

#Scaleup

#thinkselfemployed (FSB)

#GetExporting – Detroit visit; Riga food & drink

#GetGrowing – aimed at scale-ups/encouraging businesses to grow

#BSHelpline (Twitter Q&A)

#GrowthHubGurus

#Brexit

#MTD (Making Tax Digital)

#GetStarted

There is an ongoing campaign to promote Access to Funding such as Marches Business Investment Grant and Midlands Engine Investment Fund and as schemes go live. In addition to this, EU funding calls are promoted.

Wider Communications

- MGH featured as a double page spread in both Shropshire Star and Hereford Times
- Positive media coverage for the Marches Growth Hub and its events as and when released including front page leads, featured picture stories in key daily press targets

- Multiple cross-platform coverage of campaigns
- 62 news releases pitched to the media
- 40 web features
- More than 175 separate pieces of media coverage (we are aware of) including, regional and national print, online and radio.

Case studies

The MGH contains a repository of case study content, demonstrating the impact of MGH work on business growth, whether companies have sought advice and signposting leading to partner delivered support such as accessing finance or expert help or a combination of direct interventions which have led to turnover growth, workplace skills development and job creation. These can be found at <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/>

Brexit

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. 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 continued delay to the Brexit process. This toolkit has been supplemented with social media content and signposting to encourage take up.

Growth Hub Events

During 2018/19, across the three growth hubs, there has been a total of **266** growth hub events (growth hub led and in collaboration with partners) with a total of **3854** attendees.

Q & A Twitter Session

On 11 October 2018 the National Business Support Helpline delivered a MGH Q & A Twitter session to help raise the profile of MGH and support on offer. The session went well with a lot of local companies getting involved. **113,436** accounts were reached with **1.5 million** impressions (impressions on Twitter is a total tally of all the times the Tweet has been seen. This includes not only the times it appears in a one of the followers' timeline but also the times it has appeared in search or as a result of someone liking the Tweet).



TweetReach_march
eshub_bshelpline.p

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: -

Please see specific examples which are given below

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

This is supported through referrals to locally delivered DiT programmes and services, including international trade missions, support for new exporters and support for existing exporters that are seeking new international markets. During 2018/19 the MGH delivered 2 high profile Business Growth & Exporting events in partnership with DiT. These events were supported by an exporting e-marketing campaign that helped raise the profile of the events and support on offer. Finer details can be found below: -

Business Growth & Export Show Shropshire - 23rd November 2018

- 43 attendees from the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin area
- 19 stands in the exhibition area and the DiT Hub truck was in the car park hosting sessions on Exporting.
- Guest speaker Jo Fairley, co-founder of Green & Black's took to the stage and was very warmly received.
- From the feedback forms we received, 7 people asked for a meeting with a Growth Hub advisor (to note, the Growth Hub had an exhibition stand so individuals spoke to a Growth Hub advisor on the day) and 4 asked for a meeting with a DiT advisor.
- The joint top reasons for attending were to learn more about business growth and to listen to the guest speaker. Everyone said the event met their expectations and the verbal feedback we had on the day from delegates, exhibitors and DiT confirmed this.

Business Growth & Export Show Herefordshire - 19th March 2019

- 47 attendees
- 8 stands in the exhibition area and the DiT Hub truck was in the car park hosting sessions on Exporting.
- Guest speaker Joff Sharpe, ex-SAS officer and Head of Operations at British Land plc took to the stage. He delivered an interesting and engaging presentation which went down very well with the audience.
- 11 feedback forms were completed by delegates. The most popular reasons for attending the event were to learn more about exporting and attend the sessions on the DiT truck
- When asked what had worked well, the timing and relevancy of the event was mentioned by 4 people. Also praised was the organisation of the event and the quality of the speakers.
 - Improve the take up of modern technologies that improve productivity (e.g. cloud computing, data analytics, CRM, automation/machine learning etc.)

Eligible businesses are encouraged to access in-depth support from relevant ERDF projects and partners. Specific details of relevant ERDF projects are detailed in the Scale-up section of this report. ERDF project managers are also invited to speak at MGH Operations Group meetings. During 2018/19, we have heard from Centre for Research into Environmental Science and Technology (CREST) and Connect 2 Grow project.

Awareness raising events have also been held at the three growth hubs to promote innovative practices. In addition, to these smaller awareness events, the MGH delivered 2 high profile Digital events across the Marches during quarter 4. Finer details of both high-profile events have been provided below: -

Love Digital – Herefordshire 14th February 2019

- 45 delegates attended
- Guest speaker Lucas Karemo from Google Garage
- 31 feedback forms were completed and the top 3 reasons for attending the event as follows: -
 1. Networking
 2. The workshop on taking business videos with smartphones
 3. Keynote speaker
- 29/31 or 94% of respondents said the event had met their expectations.
- Average scores (out of 5) for the following elements of the event were as follows:

➤ Overall satisfaction with event	4.2
➤ Quality of event	4.2
➤ Length of event	4.5
➤ Timing of event	4.4
- When asked what had worked well about the event, the quality of the speakers, in particular Lucas Karemo, was mentioned by 9 respondents. Also, highly commended were the organisation of the event and the food served. The exhibition stands proved popular as was the opportunity for networking.

Get Digital – Survive or Thrive Shropshire 20th March 2019

- 59 delegates attended. In addition to this there were a number of guests from Telford & Wrekin Council, the LEP and Hardip Begol - Director, Integration and Communities, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- The exhibition area was at full capacity with 23 stands.
- Guest speaker Bruce Daisley, European VP of Twitter. His talk was followed by a lively panel discussion answering questions from delegates.
- Delegates visited the exhibition area and has the option to attend 2 of the 4 workshops. Workshops topics included using smartphones for business videos; web development; cyber security and Artificial Intelligence.
- 33 feedback forms were completed by a mixture of delegates and exhibitors and general feedback was received from 2 other exhibitors. The most popular reason for attending the event was to listen to the guest speaker narrowly followed by networking.
- The average score out of 5 for the quality of the event was 4; for the length of the event it was 4.4 and for the time of day the event was held it was 4.5.
- When asked what had worked well, the panel discussion was mentioned more than any other item. This was followed by the quality of the guest speaker and other speakers and the venue.



Social Media
feedback GDST19.doc

- Social media feedback can be viewed in the following document

MGH – Shropshire supported **The TECH Severn 2018 Conference and Exhibition** in July 2018. The event attracted influential speakers from across the globe who discussed how technology may help solve many of the challenges faced by councils and businesses across the UK. **662** delegates heard how the latest innovations may transform their organisation's approach to technology, and how this technology could help them save money, time, and possibly even lives in the future. This event provided delegates with insights into what the future holds for all types of businesses, and how technology will shape their lives, work and businesses.

The latest thinking on artificial intelligence, Digi health, modern methods of construction, green technology, assistive technology, digital marketing and eco energy have influenced the development of two new flagship projects from Shropshire Council: The One Scheme and TECH Gym, which were also launched at the event.

The One Scheme is a multi-phased flagship construction project led by Shropshire Council in partnership with University Centre, Shrewsbury. The first phase is to create 50 hi-tech, hi-spec properties incorporating solar tiles, micro grids, and assistive technology into the fabric of the home and wider community. These will be built quickly and cost effectively.

Working with University Centre Shrewsbury and local businesses, the **Tech Gym** will allow individuals and businesses to pay a fee to access the latest hi-tech equipment, such as 3D printers and laser cutters, as well as training, development, advice and networking sessions, with opportunities to access venture capital.

- Stimulate investment in science, research & development

Eligible businesses are encouraged to access in-depth support from relevant ERDF projects and partners. Specific details of relevant ERDF projects are detailed in the Scale-up section of this report. ERDF project managers are also invited to speak at MGH Operations Group meetings. During 2018/19, we have heard from Centre for Research into Environmental Science and Technology (CREST).

- Adopt leadership & management best practice and Improve workforce skills and access the right talent/apprentices needed to grow

Businesses are encouraged to access MGH website information on the on local training providers to meet their skills needs. Events on skills issues and potential solutions, e.g. traineeships, apprenticeships, recruitment and retention etc, are regularly 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 following skills shows/conferences were delivered in the three local authority areas: -

- Shropshire Careers Show, 15 January 2019 at Shrewsbury Town Football Club with 380 young people in attendance.
- The Telford Apprenticeship Show, 8 March 2019 at Telford International Centre with 3,700 young people in attendance.
- Marches wide Strategic IAG conference in November 2018 in Ludlow with 40 attendees. from local authorities, employers, schools, Marches LEP and providers.
- Plans are currently underway for a Careers Show in Herefordshire in July 2019 at Hereford Racecourse.

In 2018/19 The Marches LEP secured £5k funding from the Learning and Work Institute. The funding was used to deliver two training sessions to the MGH teams to help increase their understanding of skills issues and how these can be considered in the delivery of business support programmes. This has led to better promotion of the importance of staff training and development (including leadership and management, reskilling and apprenticeships) in driving business growth.

The Marches LEP have also received the following amounts of funding from the Department for Education through the National Apprenticeship Service: -

- £3,000 to support National Apprenticeship Week 2019, to inform employers and to promote apprenticeship opportunities
- £5,000 to support Industry Placement Events with employers and to promote T Levels.
 - Increase business awareness and participation in public procurement and major infrastructure projects

Businesses are encouraged to participate in public procurement opportunities and these are promoted on both the LEP the MGH website. In addition, events are held at the three growth hubs to highlight opportunities and increase awareness of good practice in tendering. An example of this is the Get on Track programme from University of Wolverhampton which encourages businesses to tap into contracts associated with HS2.

Shropshire Constructing Excellence delivered a **Meet the Buyer event** on Tuesday 6th March 2018. The event was organised as part of a bid to boost the value of the sector in the region, as millions of pounds are ploughed into infrastructure projects and business park developments. Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council project leaders spoke about opportunities for businesses to bid for contracts, support for companies wanting to tender for public sector work and skills support on offer. Speakers included some of the county's larger development and building companies, looking for sub-contractors for ongoing projects.

On the 28 February 2019 MGH Shropshire delivered a high-profile procurement event **Forging Links with your Local Supply Chain** at the Shrewsbury Town Football Club. The event included **15** exhibitors from the highways, maintenance and construction industry.

The event provided invaluable advice and information about how businesses can develop links with larger contractors and win business within these sectors. Delegates also learnt more about supply chain management, including how public sector organisations in the region do business. The heads of procurement from both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils were on hand to explain how the councils and their suppliers do business, give tips on how to write effective tenders and how organisations in the region do business.

The workshops provided advice on how the lead contractors procure their supply chains, what they look for in a sub-contractor, the importance of social value in contracts and more advice on winning tenders.

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/forging-links-with-your-supply-chain/>

The event was in partnership with Cogs, procurement teams at both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils and MGH Telford & Wrekin. **55** business attended (**80** individuals).

- What action was taken to ensure that the Growth Hub continued to simplify the local business support landscape (e.g. minimising duplication)?

To ensure the business landscape is not populated by duplicate products and services, the LEP officers work with the Marches European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) Committee to ensure

that any new applications for business support funding are discussed at the MGH Operations Group meetings to ensure that they compliment current business support rather than duplicate.

A member of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) technical team is a MGH Operations Group member and helps keep the group informed.

A mapping exercise of the Marches business support offer was carried out in 2018/19 and shared with the Midland Engine Enterprise Sub-Group. This document will be used to help identify any gaps in support as well as possible duplication.

As previously mentioned, the Marches LEP is a member of the Better Business for All (BBFA) Steering Group and a pilot project is currently being developed in Shropshire.

- Has the LEP and/or Growth Hub developed or purchased any new innovative online tools or localised on-line content in 2018-19, 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 growth hubs with the support of the LEP Data & Marketing Support Officer have developed/in the process of developing their CRM systems and have/will set up standard reports to support light/medium/high intensity data collection and reporting.

Overview of Key Performance Outcomes

D. Key Performance Outcomes. Provide information on the key outcomes of your Growth Hub linked to the requirements of the 2018-2019 'Metrics and Evaluation Framework'.

Indicator	Local KPIs (where set by the LEP)	Year-end Total (1 April – 31 March 2019)	Cumulative Total (since launch of Growth Hub)
Number of businesses that have received 'light touch' triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic)	N/A	4,086	11,139
Number of individuals ¹ that have received 'light touch' triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic)	N/A	4,475	11,528
Total number of unique visitors to	N/A	17,297	50,941

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

Growth Hub website			
Number of businesses receiving 'medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support	N/A	299	392
Combined turnover (amount £) of businesses receiving 'Medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support.	N/A	£125,403,022.00	£125,403,022.00*
Combined employee numbers (FTE) of businesses receiving 'Medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support.	N/A	1390	1390*
Number of businesses receiving 'high intensity' support e.g. account management / intensive support directly provided by the Hub or partner organisation	N/A	58	303
Combined turnover (amount £) of businesses receiving 'High intensity' support i.e. sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource.	N/A	£9,522,037.00	£9,522,037.00*
Combined employee numbers (FTE) of businesses receiving 'High intensity' support i.e. sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource.	N/A	200	200*
Number of businesses receiving 'Medium' and 'High intensity' support that, have the opportunity, ambition and greatest potential to grow (including Scale-Ups)	N/A	164	387
Total number of individuals who been helped to start a business	N/A	437	458
Number of businesses referred to a mentoring programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	N/A	111	267
Number of businesses referred to a skills or training programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	N/A	31	147
Number of businesses referred to a finance and/or funding programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	N/A	178	226
Number of businesses referred to an	N/A	35	35

innovation and/or R&D programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only).			
£Private sector match secured (where linked to Growth Hub)	N/A	£3,180,510.56	£3,582,130.23

Notes:

***Indicates this is the first year this data has been requested and recorded**

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.

4. Customer Satisfaction

In line with the requirements of the 2018-2019 '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	20	91	111

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
4	5	37	272	647	965

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
81	85	221	229	293	909

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

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 2018-2019 “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 Tractivity CRM system and the three physical hubs all use Evolutive CRM systems.

The LEP Data & Marketing Support Officer has worked very closely with the three physical hubs to ensure that data collection is in line with BEIS funding contract requirements. The first step involved designing a new excel spreadsheet to match the new BEIS requirements. In addition to this, the LEP Data & Marketing Support Officer worked with the three physical hubs and the CRM software supplier to set-up the collection of aggregated and non-aggregated data so that it can easily be entered into the CRM systems. An online form has also been developed to simplify the process for the three physical hubs 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 have to manually extract data or manipulate data in excel.

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

The three growth hubs are able to 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 but at times the central team have found that the information has been recorded incorrectly.

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.

- 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 continue to collect firm level data. We plan to carry out qualitative and/or quantitative assessments by a data expert during 2020/21 to fully understand the impact on those businesses receiving 'medium' and 'high intensity' support.

- 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?

We completed an independent Review & Evaluation of the MGH in 2017/18. The action plan from this exercise was implemented during 2018/19. This was overseen by the MGH Steering Group.

As part of the 2018/19 evaluation, the MGH commissioned 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: -

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/wire-electric-supplies-ltd-telford/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/planet-doughnut-shrewsbury/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/galebreaker-group-ltd-herefordshire/>

6. Scale-Ups

- There is an enhanced focus on identifying and supporting high growth potential/scale up businesses in 2018-19. Please provide an update on the progress of the LEPs Scale-Up Plan in terms of providing services to scale up businesses through the Growth Hubs as defined in Principle 5 of your Grant Offer Letter. 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: -

1. Scale-Up Institute
2. High Profile Events Programme
3. E-Marketing Campaigns
4. Professional Service Intermediaries
5. In-depth Business Support for SMEs

1. ScaleUp Institute

An update on The Marches activity was included in the 2018 Scale-up Review which was published on 13 November 2018.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-l4Wq94sL0rUXIDY10ZtUhkAFfMTiaiB/view>

In March 2019, the ScaleUp Institute launched a new report on the scaleup landscape analysing the most recent data from the ONS covering 2017. The report confirms the total number of scaleups in the UK has increased and that growth is taking place across the country; the data shows there are now no 'cold spots' remaining in where growth of fewer than one additional scaleup per 100,000 population was being achieved. <http://www.scaleupinstitute.org.uk/research/the-scaleup-landscape/>. To mark this report publication, the ScaleUp Institute issued a local press release for each LEP. The draft press release for the Marches confirmed the following: -

“The number of fast-growing ambitious businesses with leaders hungry for success is increasing across The Marches – new insights from the ScaleUp Institute reveal.

There are now 345 companies in the region that meet the definition of scaleup because they have increased turnover or employment by more than 20% annually. The Marches scaleups are employing a total of 23,000 staff and their turnover is worth £3.6 billion. This is according to new research by the ScaleUp Institute based on the latest 2017 ONS data.

In the area, the top five scaleups by employment growth are Northgate Healthcare, Guestline, S&A Produce, Grainger & Worrall and Dodd Group, while the top five for turnover growth are Wye Valley Group, European Aviation, Shropshire Homes, Northwood and Edmo”.

2. High Profile Events Programme

The MGH delivered a total of 4 high profile events across the Marches during 2018/19. Themes included Business Growth & Exporting and Digital. Details of all four events can be found on page 32 and 33 of this report.

3. E-Marketing Campaigns

The following e-marketing campaigns have been running during 2018/19: -

#GetGrowing – aimed at encouraging businesses to grow

#apprenticeships

#QueensAward

#IndustrialStrategy – grand challenges

#GreatBritishHighSt

#scaleup

#GetExporting

#GetFinance

'Get Exporting', 'Get Digital' and 'Innovation' e-marketing campaigns have helped raise the profile of the business support on offer and help promote the high-profile events. An on-going 'Get Growing' campaign has supported all of the above.

<https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/make-2018-year-scaling-business/>

4. Professional Service Intermediaries

The LEP delivered two Access to Finance Summit events across the Marches in 2018/19. The first event took place on the 23rd of November 2018 (Telford) and the second on 11th April 2019 (Herefordshire).

The events were aimed at banks, professional services advisers to small businesses, accountants, solicitors, enterprise support advisers, business finance advisers, finance brokers, insolvency practitioners and alternative finance providers in the Marches area.

The events brought together some of the region's leading experts who explained the various funding streams small businesses can access – including peer-to-peer lenders, equity funds, invoice discounters, crowd funders and locally-based small business loan funds.

The Summit events sought volunteers to help form a Marches LEP Access to Finance Group which is led by LEP Board Member and Access to Finance Champion Paul Kalinauckas. A total of 18 individuals across the 2 events expressed an interest in joining the group.

The aim of the group is to work towards a LEP Access to Finance strategy to help increase awareness of MGH support and to ensure that the three growth hubs are adequately supported to build capacity and capability around this area of work. The strategy will be presented to the LEP Board in 2019/20 for approval.

In addition to the two Summit events, a LEP Access to Finance Strategy workshop took place on 23rd of January 2019 as a follow-up event to the Access to Finance Summit in November. A second Strategy workshop is being planned for mid-June 2019 in Herefordshire.

A 'Get Finance' e-marketing campaign was launched in preparation for the Access to Finance Summits. The campaign featured a series of events and workshops organised or hosted by the growth hub teams in Telford and Shrewsbury. <http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&pubid=6dcc20e5-68dd-4b2e-9c6b-8859e9f19f4a>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/news/summit-to-focus-on-finance-for-small-business/>

5. In-depth Business Support for SMEs

These programmes are focussed on SMEs with a desire/capacity to grow including creating new jobs.

During 2018/19, the MGH was the gateway to 20 EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a financial value of £10million.

The four largest ERDF schemes (BEEP, BGP, MBIG and Broadband Grants) awarded a combined **£2.8m** to Marches businesses between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2019. In addition, the RDPE

Growth Programme <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rdpe-growth-programme> awarded **£2.5m** to Marches businesses during the same period. The investment will lead to the anticipated creation of **175** 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 Building Investment Grant (MBIG)

MBIG is funded by the European Regional Investment Fund and is a £2.5m capital grant scheme providing grants of up to 45% of project costs (maximum grant £100,000) to business across the Marches LEP area. The grant enables businesses to extend, reconfigure or renovate commercial premises to increase productivity and employment.

A total of **417** enquiries have been received since the start of the scheme in February 2017 (**144** during Apr- March 2019). The scheme has now supported **21** businesses, **2** of which are start-up businesses. A total of **£1.4m** has been directly awarded to businesses to date aiming to create an additional **90 jobs**, **58** have already been created. The target for the scheme is to deliver 110 jobs. The companies in receipt of funding aim to lever in **£2.4m** of private sector investment by September 2019 and develop 9628sqm of workspace. The scheme currently has **2** applications in appraisal to be determined in May, seeking grant support of **£108,000**. Over the last 12 months **6** grant panels have been arranged consisting of public and private members.

Please click on the links below for an example of projects supported this year by the scheme:

<https://www.herefordtimes.com/news/16219630.madley-business-to-expand-following-grant/>

<https://www.foodmanufacture.co.uk/Article/2018/09/26/Food-manufacturer-secures-grant-to-expand-business>

<https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/countdown-commences-on-commercial-premises-funding-scheme/>

https://www.insidermedia.com/insider/midlands/family-manufacturer-expands-after-grants-support?utm_source=westmidlands_newsletter&utm_campaign=westmidlands_news_tracker&utm_medium=property_article

<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2019/02/26/80k-grant-allows-battery-business-to-charge-up-for-growth/>

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/article/790/work-underway-to-expand-local-manufacturer>

Business Growth Programme (BGP)

The fund consists of four strands of business support; namely the Business Development Programme, the Business Innovation Programme, the Green Bridge Supply Chain Programme and the HS2 programme. The package of support is designed to strengthen supply chains, stimulate innovation and grow existing SMEs. Between 1 April to 31 March 2019, **46** BGP applications have been approved totalling **£1,083,961.63** which will help to create **121** jobs. Private sector match totals **£511,396.80** with **£716,863.09** private sector leverage.

<http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/finance-and-funding/business-growth-programme>

BGP Case Studies

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/hilton-and-co-accountants/>



BGP Case Study -
Coopers.pdf

Manufacturing Growth Programme (MGP)

MGP supports SME manufacturers to make improvements by identifying, understanding and removing their barriers to growth. Support is tailored to the manufacturing SME and includes: -

- A dedicated, experienced manufacturing growth manager who will provide on-going support
- A comprehensive business diagnostic tool specifically designed for manufacturers – GROWTH Mapper
- Identify opportunities and create plans for growth and improvement
- Work with the best external experts to implement those plans
- Cover a percentage of the cost of implementing an improvement project
- Connect to wider support to maximise opportunities for growth.

This project has been operating since October 2016 delivering across 15 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 delivered **134** grants worth **£204,912** with **109** jobs created and a further 35 forecasted with £319k private investment. Infographics can be found in the attachment below: -



The Marches_Oct 16
-Mar19 (002) Appen

Progress in the Marches area from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 includes **58** grants offered worth **£101.300** to **58** businesses with **29** jobs created and a further **23** forecasted. Infographics can be found in the attachment below: -



The Marches MGP
Impact Report_Apr18

Delivery of the current MGP programme is scheduled until the end of September 2019, a further extension is planned thereafter and is currently at final submission stage with MHCLG.

Representatives from this programme are members of the MGH Operations Group.

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

MGP Case Studies

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

Hitherbest, which provides sheet metal/punching, folding and powder coating capabilities, is taking advantage of the value of the pound against the dollar, as well as a number of productivity improvements masterminded by its production team from support from the Manufacturing Growth programme <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2018/11/20/shropshire-manufacturer-defies-brex-it-uncertainty-with-20-sales-increase/>

Market Intelligence for the Marches https://www.manufacturinggrowthprogramme.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/The-Marches_Mar19.pdf

The Business Growth Roadshow

The Business Growth Roadshow provides a way for MGH - Shropshire to engage directly with businesses from across the county, identifying and promoting appropriate business support options to support growth ambitions.

The three-hour workshop helps people understand how to accelerate business growth, where to source and how to successfully apply for grant funding, identify opportunities for their business and access fully funded follow up support.

There is a wide range of funding and support available for Shropshire SMEs to aid business growth and these free roadshows offers them tailored and succinct advice, so they can explore the opportunities and support that is relevant to them.

It is a fantastic opportunity to explore the support they need to implement their growth plans, unlock potential in their business and take the relevant steps towards realising their business dreams.

In participating, a given business completes a simple diagnostic tool that seeks to identify support requirements. The sessions are then used to increase awareness of the numerous business support options that are available and crucially how and where it can be accessed. Introductions can also be made. The events try and help businesses navigate what is sometimes seen as a convoluted business support landscape.

Between 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, a total of **4** events have been held across Shropshire, in the market towns of Oswestry, Ludlow and Shrewsbury, with **50** local business taking up the opportunity to explore available business support options and growth potential. Following the events, from the total of 50 businesses, **27** businesses continued to work with Good2Great and accessed the Smarter Growth programme, where the businesses improve their skills and knowledge to grow and develop their enterprise and realise their growth potential.

<https://www.businessgrowthroadshow.co.uk/>

Building Business Confidence (Smarter Growth)

Smarter Growth is targeted at existing or growing businesses (12+ months plus trading) and aims to equip owners, or key people, with skills and knowledge to help grow and develop a company in four key areas; exploiting market opportunities; high performance working practices; growing your own workforce and operational management. Since 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, **65** business have accessed the support to aid owner growth aspirations. Impact of this support is not yet available.

<https://smarter-growth.com>

DIT Core Contract & SME International Growth Project

West Midlands Chambers of Commerce (WMCC) finished the DIT 2018/19 contract year successfully having exceeded all West Midlands DIT contracted targets. Local team performance for the Marches overall has been good, the ITA teams in Shropshire and Herefordshire account managed **272** businesses this year, with **139** of these declaring Export Wins with an estimated combined value of **£116m**.

The Marches positioned (out of six)

DIT target	Position
Export Win Value	4 th
Export Win Volume	2 nd
New Exporter Volume	5 th
New to Market Volume	3 rd
MSB Exporters Volume	3 rd

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 2018 to March 2019 this project provided grants to **12** SMEs committing **£33,500** of funding to support their Internationalisation aspirations and promising the creation of **17** new jobs. Overall the ERDF project has supported **41** SMEs with ERDF grants committing over **£79,000** since the project started. In addition to this, **2** Marches companies attended the ERDF funded mission to Le Mans in June 2018.

DIT and WMCC continue to work closely with and through the MGH and values this partnership in delivering added value both in amplifying DIT messaging, increasing network reach and in delivering direct referrals to the DIT or ERDF programmes. have benefited from the delivery of two Export focussed events delivered in partnership with the MGH.

DIT proactively work with partners in the Marches area and beyond. An example of this includes the Head of Business Development & Partnerships delivering an informative presentation to the Telford Business Board on 3rd October 2018.

During quarter 3 and 4, the MGH in partnership with DIT delivered **2** high profile Business Growth & Exporting events across the LEP at which the DIT Export Hub (Truck) was in attendance. Both events helped to raise the profile of exports and crucially provided ITA teams access to new to DIT businesses. These events tied into an exporting themed e-marketing campaign to help raise the profile of the DIT offer. The Pylon Products case study below was published at the start of the 'Get Exporting' campaign. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcLddIOYVDk>



Pyon Products.pdf

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

DIT Case studies: -

Department for International Trade supported Bronze Labs.

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/bronze-labs-telford/>

Department for International Trade enabled Kadai Firebowls to gain new stockists and expand their exports. <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/kadai-firebowls-shropshire/>

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. The 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.

The AGRI project will support 90 SMEs in the region over 3 years and to date has worked with **67** companies, **39** of which have completed, helping to develop new products and services with both short one-to-one assists and longer-term innovation development collaborations - **15** of these companies have moved on to longer term innovation development support, which **5** have now completed. Additionally, the project has delivered **6** of its targeted 8 specialist workshops; covering areas such as precision agriculture, logistics, innovation in food and drink production and measuring and sensing in food processing. Additional project information can be found at www.agri.org.uk and on Twitter via @agritechsupport.

Agri Tech West Alliance (ATWA)

Since 2016, The Marches, Stoke & Staffordshire, Cheshire & Warrington and Worcestershire LEPs have been working together to raise the profile of the agri tech sector and its opportunities for growth across the partnership area. Having jointly commissioned baseline research to inform its work, the ATWA partnership has now broadened to include business, FE and HE representatives and a Strategic Board has been established to drive and develop the partnerships work programme. In addition to this, a collective response to DEFRA's consultation 'The future for food, farming and the environment' was provided by ATWA and the partnership has since been involved in consultation meetings with DEFRA representatives.

During the period 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018, ATWA further developed its offering through the following activity: -

- Website launch www.agritechwest.com, marketing material and social media presence through Twitter helping the project to become more visible and accessible to help encourage the use of growth hubs by rural and land-based businesses. Additional branding was developed through the partner network to help have a presence at multiple events and locations throughout the alliance region.
- ATWA was involved in DEFRA's round tables and workshops for the Future Farming consultation with a specific focus on the alliance views toward agri-tech, agri-food and innovation opportunities.
- ATWA finalised its partnership agreement and formed its Strategic Board to include industry representatives from the alliance region. The Strategic Board will operate at a higher level and advise on key topics and objectives.
- ATWA sponsored and supported on the planning, running and execution of the first Agricultural Innovation Conference and Exhibition held at Harper Adams University which

focused on autonomous processes within precision farming.

- ATWA was involved in a number of other sector specific round table and focus group events representing the collective region and feeding back to the partners.

During the period October – December 2018, ATWA work has been ongoing with the following activity taking place: -

- Talk at the Agri Food Sector Challenges and Technology Opportunities event held at Pershore College. The event was well attended, and the talk was very well received by food companies within the region who showed an interest in being involved with the alliance.
- Exhibited at the Big Bang event in December 2018 held at Harper Adams University. The event provided opportunity to interact with school age children from across the region who have an interest in STEM activity and associated careers including agri-tech.
- The alliance continued to support agri-tech and agri-food initiatives across the collective region with potential for further collaborative working in 2019.

During the next 12 months, ATWA is planning to look at the most effective ways to continue to deliver on the projects aims and objectives.

Aston Programme for Small Business Growth

This programme takes small businesses to the next level by helping them to develop leadership skills and build a targeted growth strategy in the company of other ambitious business leaders. **12** Marches businesses have been supported to date. Job declaration as a result of the programme includes the creation of **4** full-time jobs and **3** part-time jobs. The majority of businesses from The Marches were in the last cohort therefore impact is yet to be requested from the businesses.

<http://www.aston.ac.uk/aston-business-school/business/centre-for-growth/aston-programme-for-small-business-growth/>

European Bioenergy Research Institute (EBRI)

EBRI supports businesses to apply for collaborative research funding to develop new products, processes and technologies and take them to market. From March to 30 September 2018, 10 companies from the Marches have been supported – 6 from transitional area and 4 from developed. www.bioenergy-for-business.org.

System Analytics for Innovation

This fairly new project enables businesses to make better use of their data, empowering them to better understand and control their domain, through the use of leading-edge Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and analytics techniques.

The project works alongside businesses supporting them to develop new services and products, to leverage large public datasets (e.g. data.gov.uk) and to develop a workforce that is highly skilled in leading-edge techniques.

To date, **2** companies have been supported. Both projects received consultancy-based support. Recommendations were based on individual business requirements and are detailed below: -

Company A - An initial investigation was carried out into the feasibility of using machine learning to improve the prediction of sales, and distribution of “items”, from RFID location data. The report also

looked at the feasibility of mapping routes taken for delivery/collection, with a view to providing a ground truth for optimising routes.

Company B – an investigation was carried out on ways to implement an interactive dashboard to enable the company’s clients to access and analyse data in a more efficient way. Different users require different data access for each example in a high-level format or with drill down functionality – all of these options were explored.

www.thinkbeyonddata.com

Innovate 2 Succeed

This is an Innovate UK funded project delivered within the Marches by Coventry University Enterprises Ltd. This is a fully funded programme that is targeted at ambitious SMEs that wish to grow and develop new products and services. The aim of the programme is to help SMEs 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 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, the programme interacted with **15** companies in the Marches area and of these **7** joined the programme with **2** companies pending. All 7 are involved with business growth through innovation (both products and services).

The Innovate 2 Succeed programme has been financed by Innovate UK for a further 3 years until March 2022 and the programme will be looking to further support companies across the Midlands including the Marches LEP area.

<http://www.cuebusinesssolutions.com/innovate2succeed-i2s/>

Innovation Vouchers

The Innovation Vouchers scheme targets SMEs and aims to develop new processes and systems to improve efficiency and to bring new products and services to market. The £1500 - £2,500 offered to eligible companies by the ERDF needs to be matched by the company’s own funds to spend on business innovation and business growth activities.

Between 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, the project received **27** applications from businesses in the Marches area, out of which **21** have been awarded with their Innovation Voucher totalling **£50,500** with the equivalent private sector match. **18** SMEs are from the Marches transitional area and **3** from the more developed area.

Case study: - <http://www.innovation-vouchers.com/case-studies/>
<http://www.innovation-vouchers.com>

Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF)

MEIF aims to transform the finance landscape for SMEs in the Midlands and to realise the region’s potential to achieve economic growth through enterprise. It provides commercially focussed finance through the following products: -

- Debt Finance Business loans from £100,000 - £1.5 million
- Small business loans from £25,000 - £150,000
- Equity finance from £50k - £2 million
- Equity finance for proof and concept

MEIF Fund of Funds position for the financial year 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019 has been confirmed as £23.51m invested and loaned in 127 investments/loans in 118 SMEs. Of which the following was in The Marches; **£0.71m** invested and loaned in **8** investments/loans in **7** SMEs.

<http://www.meif.co.uk/> / https://youtu.be/ppcm_4R4xpl

Case Study:- <https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/trailer-manufacturer-on-the-road-to-international-success-following-cash-injection/>

Centre for Research into Environmental Science and Technology (CREST)

In partnership with Reaseheath College, CREST which is based at University Centre Shrewsbury focuses on innovation and research support to the Marches' Environmental Science, Technology (and related sectors) SMEs, to help to address the Marches' productivity challenges.

The project helps SMEs 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. The aim of the project is to: -

- increase the proportion of SMEs that are innovation active
- increase the number of businesses actively innovating to bring new products or new processes to the market.

Since the official launch in February 2018, CREST has built a growing pipeline of businesses that have expressed a desire to innovate and obtain research support.

To date, **45** SMEs in the Marches have applied for innovation or research support. Of those, **33** have received different types of either innovation support or have been assisted with expert research. Of the 33, **24** have received the standard package of support under ERDF which is a minimum of 12 hours support and they have come from the following areas: -

- Renewable Energy – 2 companies
- Software/Geospatial – 5 companies
- Manufacturing – 3 companies
- Waste (reuse, recycle, repurpose) – 7 companies
- Planning/development/construction – 4 companies
- Land Contamination/pollution – 1 company

Some examples of impact to date include delivery of the following: -

- A geospatial data driven interactive food poverty map, used to inform strategy and locate hotspots (waste)
- Development of website, which will lead to the development of an environmental training package hosted on a Virtual Learning Environment (waste)
- Research and training on use of free datasets to reduce costs and increase efficiency (planning)
- Specialist research into datasets and methodologies (planning)
- Development of GIS and remote sensing workflow (planning)
- Advice and initial scoping into the feasibility for the development of in-field bioreactors (contamination)

- Drop testing carried out by a CREST consultant (manufacturing)
- GIS training for team members to facilitate computerised data collection and interpretation (planning)
- Supporting with development of a circular economy around green waste (waste)
- Research into how brewers spent grain can be utilised (waste)
- Support on developing funding and grant applications (renewable energy)
- Information and expertise on the concept of Smart Rural, with case studies of it in practise.

CREST have supported **4** enterprises in their first year of trading and they now have **7** collaborative research projects with SMEs in the region, with a potential **17** more to sign-up. www.crestatucs.com

Advanced Materials Characterisation and Simulation Hub (AMCASH)

AMCASH is a business support service for SMEs. It allows access to key facilities and expertise within Metallurgy and Materials. The core offer is for 2-days work fully funded through ERDF in the areas of Polymers, Microscopy or Modelling of metallic alloys. Examples of work completed so far on behalf of SMEs include Polymer characterisation and mechanical testing, microscopic imaging of damaged components and simulation of material performance at high temperatures (mirroring the factory processes involved).

www.amcash.co.uk

Focus Digital

The Focus Digital project is managed by Coventry University Enterprises Ltd and operates in 4 LEP areas including the Marches (more developed and transition). The overarching objective of the project is to encourage businesses to innovate and use more digital activity and technology within their own business and with clients.

Focus Digital project helps eligible SMEs to 'step up' the digital ladder by accessing a range of workshops, one to one support and capital and revenue grants to help improve the use of digital technology and services within a business.

Progress to March 2019 has been summarised below: -

- **1** Social Media Marketing workshop in August 2018 with a total of **9** attendees.
- One to one support is actively being provided to **5** clients providing graphic design support. Of these, **1** has been completed (branding and logo design), **1** has decided not to proceed further and **3** are currently being supported.
- Grant payments have been made to **10** businesses totalling **£49,578**. Funding has supported drone and camera purchases, development of a CRM system and website development including video images, systems integration between website and back office systems, specific app development for new product launch and purchase of CAD product design software. Grant offers have been made to a further **2** businesses and projects are yet to be completed.
- The total grant offer to SMEs (assuming all projects complete costings as expected) will be **£67,050** and this will provide match of **£105,995**.

<http://www.cuebusinesssolutions.com/focus-digital/>

Digital Solutions

The Digital Solutions project was launched in January 2018 but did not become fully active until the

end of 2018/early 2019.

The project supports Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin SMEs working in the digital sector and beyond to raise the level of research and development in digital innovation.

The main focus is on how developments can be used to unlock growth in the health sector, helping to de-risk (for example, making it more affordable) the exploration of digital innovations; other sectors may also be eligible (technology transfer and commercialisation).

Support can include: one-to-one advice from digital technology specialists, facilitation of knowledge exchange and technical transfers, demonstrations of the latest digital innovation, research collaborations, bringing products to market, masterclasses and workshops.

Progress to date is detailed below: -

- **32** SMEs have expressed an interest in receiving support
- Of those, **7** have or are currently receiving innovative support
- Of the **7**, **2** have completed their support package

Some examples of recent impact include: -:

- A new digital service for an SME which provides businesses with a health check which will then direct them to appropriate legislation and provide data intelligence for further services. (new innovation to the SME)
- Market Research into the demand for a Health Product concept
- Knowledge Exchange and technical transfer support.

The project has supported 1 new business and have a number of SMEs in the pipeline with the potential to become longer term collaborations once the initial 12-hour assistance has been provided.

Work is currently being carried out on project branding/publicity to allow for a stronger visual presence.

www.digitalucs.co.uk

University of Wolverhampton ERDF Projects include the following: -

Built Environment Climate Change Innovation (BECCI)

BECCI works with SMEs to develop innovative climate change solutions within the built environment. It specifically focuses on products associated with the retrofitting of housing.

<https://www.wlv.ac.uk/business-services/funding-and-support/becci-project/>

Connect 2 Grow (C2G)

The C2G project aims to raise digital awareness and increase the levels of digital skills within SME businesses in the Marches region. The project provides opportunities for companies to benchmark their proficiency in the digital arena by completion of a Digital Review and Digital Skills analysis, thus highlighting areas needing support or advice & guidance in the following areas: Web design management, e-commerce and social media Cyber Crime and Cyber Security (including a basic cyber check-up) Data Protection regulation, Data Storage and Cloud Computing Hardware & Networking, Programmes and software Drone technologies CAD and BIM services.

The project also supports businesses by delivering a range of funded workshops across the region and the opportunity to take on a placement to help support the implementation of any new products or services identified through the project by supporting up to 50% of the cost (to a maximum grant value of £1,875).

At present Connect2Grow has engaged with over **45** business, of which **17** are presently undertaking digital assistance and **10** business have successfully completed the process with positive outcomes.

<https://businesssolutionscentres.co.uk/connect2grow/>

Innovative Product Support Services (IPSS)

The IPSS programme supports businesses through the early stages of developing a new product or process. The programme is specifically designed to support businesses developing: -

- Advanced manufacturing and engineering
- Building Technologies
- Defence & Security
- Environmental technologies and low carbon
- Food & Drink (Agri-food)
- Photonics
- Digital technologies
- Transport technologies
- Electronics
- Medical technologies

Businesses benefit from staged support, from an initial 2-day review through further, more intensive stages of assistance with design, engineering and intellectual property where there is good potential for placing the new product on the market. For the most compelling opportunities, there is the possibility of a funded research collaboration to progress the development of the technology.

<https://www.wlv.ac.uk/business-services/funding-and-support/ipss---innovative-product-support-service/>

The Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise Networks (KEEN)

KEEN works by putting a recent graduate into an organisation to work on a strategic growth project, with ongoing support from the university. Companies benefit from part funding by the ERDF, allowing them to recruit graduates and access university knowledge throughout the duration of the project.

<http://imkeen2.co.uk>

Smart Concept Fund

The Smart Concept Fund is a grant scheme offering up to 60% of approved project cost (maximum value of grant £30,000) towards demonstrating 'Proof of Concept' and bringing a product or technology innovation closer to market.

The grant is awarded against capital and/or revenue costs incurred in carrying out an approved project and is available to qualifying SMEs located in the Marches. Applicants benefit from support provided by a specialist new product development consultant to help them define a programme of work that will demonstrate 'Proof of Concept' for their new product or technology innovation,

supported by a Business Plan justification.

<https://www.wlv.ac.uk/business-services/funding-and-support/the-smart-concept-fund/>

Enterprise Action

Enterprise Action (part funded by ERDF) support entrepreneurs to start up their own business across a wide geographical area that includes the Black Country (Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Sandwell) and the Marches LEP (Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin) areas of the West Midlands. Marches impact to September 2018 is detailed below: -

- 36 enterprises supported
- 19 received financial support (grants)
- 24 received business support
- 6 new business created
- 7 jobs created
- £56,774.40 SME match funding

www.e-action.org.

SPEED

SPEED is the extension to the Enterprise Action project and is being delivered in Shropshire & Telford from January 2019 – December 2021. SPEED will support 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.

Attached is a copy of the July 2018 Marches ESIF Funding Newsletter which showcases a number of ERDF programmes and the businesses benefiting from the support.



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Lessons Learned/Further Activity

Lessons learned/good practice in 2018-2019.

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 additional skill set in the team (LEP Data & Marketing Support Officer) has allowed for improvements to be made with data collection/reporting and outreach/engagement through the high-profile events programme. In addition to this, the three growth hubs received 2 days each per month PR/Marketing support from the MGH PR/Marketing agency to help raise the profile locally and support outreach activity.

- What has not worked well?

The delay in finalising the Data Sharing Agreement between BEIS and the NBSH has meant that customer enquiry contact details cannot be shared with the LEP and MGH. We have had to rely on

the customers to make contact with the relevant growth hub and there is a risk that we have lost out on customer contact.

- 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?

Data collection has previously been a challenge as the CRM systems have not been fully utilised by the three growth hubs. This has resulted in not fully being able to report impact of the growth hub service. By identifying this as an improvement area and a skills need within the team, we now have implemented all the planned improvements allowing for full data collection and reporting in-line with BEIS requirements.

EU Exit

Please provide details of how the LEP and the Growth Hub are supporting the local business community in the context of EU Exit:

The Marches LEP since January 2019 has been and is still currently conducting an on-line Brexit survey and feedback on responses is being shared with partners and BEIS on a weekly basis.

We have designed a Brexit advice page on the MGH website which has been further developed into a BREXIT toolkit. This is regularly updated to support businesses as they prepare for Brexit. Content is also shared via social media platforms (Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook) and via the e-newsletter. <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/brexit-advice-for-businesses/>

Amongst our growth hub business support calendar of events, we have paid particular attention on delivering Brexit related topics such as Access to Finance, Business Growth, Innovation and Exporting. There have also been pre and post Brexit vote debates with panel discussions.

MGH Shropshire are planning a high-profile Access to Finance Event in July 2019. BEIS – Small Business Team are arranging for Government colleagues to attend to provide a Brexit update at the event.

Case Studies/Best Practice

Please provide up to three case studies that showcase the Growth Hub best. When choosing please ensure the Case Study is no more 12 months old. You may also wish to consider case studies that align to the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan priority sectors/planned Local Industrial Strategy.

Please see links to case studies and PDF's below: -

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/wire-electric-supplies-ltd-telford/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/planet-doughnut-shrewsbury/>

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/galebreaker-group-ltd-herefordshire/>

<http://www.shropshirebusinessmag.co.uk/>



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s-Right (1) (1).pdf s-Left (1) (1).pdf -3-reduced (1).pdf

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.