



## Growth Hub Annual Report 2017-2018 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018)

<b>LEP Accountable Body:</b>	Shropshire Council
<b>Local Enterprise Partnership:</b>	Marches Local Enterprise Partnership
<b>Growth Hub name:</b>	Marches Growth Hub
<b>Date of Annual Report:</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2018
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<b>Deadline for return to BEIS:</b>	Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> June 2018

This template has been produced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to help aid the production of 2017-2018 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 2017-2018 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](#) no later than **Friday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018** and copied to [Karen Leigh](#) and your BEIS Local Area Lead.

## Growth Hub Executive Summary

**A. Please set out the objectives and priorities of your Growth Hub and its high-level achievements in the last twelve months (1<sup>st</sup> April 2017- 31st March 2018). Include its key features and strengths. [250-300 words maximum]**

### **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](http://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; 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 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017- 31st March 2018 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 eight SME case studies last financial year has helped promote business success and encourage business start-up and growth during the last year. The case studies have been used as part of our #Getgrowing campaign and can be viewed on our website using this link <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/advice-and-support/case-studies/>
- The Marches LEP with the support from MGH and a range of local organisations, successfully delivered two high profile business events in May and June 2017. The aims of the events were to launch the Marches LEP Annual Report 2017 and increase SME awareness of the work of the LEP and MGH. The agenda for the day included an update on the Marches LEP and how hard the LEP is working to remove barriers to business growth, improving skills, speeding up

connections to superfast broadband, opening-up development land for investment and promoting growth in housing. In addition to this, there were inspirational presentations from local business leaders, an exhibition area made up of an array of business and skills partners and workshops providing advice and support around exporting, cyber security, business growth and recruiting and managing apprentices.

The first event took place at the Telford International Centre, Telford on 11<sup>th</sup> of May with **159** attendees and the second on 13<sup>th</sup> June at Hereford Race Course with **107** attendees. At both events, the MGH took centre stage in the exhibiting area with the physical hubs and University of Wolverhampton providing business support clinics. We also had two MGH ERDF projects exhibiting their programmes on the day namely Building Business Confidence (BBC) and Marches Building Investment Grant (MBIG). Exhibitors included LA economic development teams, universities, colleges, Marches Skills Provider Network, Chamber of Commerce/DIT, FSB, Made in The Midlands, local business support groups, Business Growth Programme, Enterprise Europe Network, Marches Centre of Manufacturing and Technology and West Mercia Police. The Telford event commenced with an extremely successful and well received express networking session which was jointly hosted by the FSB and Shropshire Chamber of Commerce. Twelve tables of twelve business people spent two hours exchanging ideas and promoting their business. "Exhausting but brilliant!" was how one participant summed it up.

### **Partnership Development**

- The two monthly MGH Operational Group meeting, helps maintain and further develop the excellent working relationship between the staff at the virtual hub and 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 Industrial Strategy, Brexit and Scale-up. We have also received presentations from existing and new European Development Fund Projects (ERDF) projects and findings from the draft MGH Evaluation and Review report.
- 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 Board sits on the LEP Board. 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 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 Operational and 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. During the last year, we have developed relationships with the Institute of Directors (IOD) and Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE). The meeting with the IOEE resulted in a MGH article in the IOEE newsletter. A copy of the article has been provided in the BEIS 2017/18 Bi-Annual Report.
- We have continued to maintain and develop our stakeholder list to ensure wider engagement through our MGH newsletter.
- Through our sponsorship last financial year, DIT commissioned eight case studies (including video sound bites) to help promote the exporting services available. This material has been used by DIT to deliver a four-week social media campaign starting in the last week in September 2017. DIT has also provided the same material branded MGH which we have used as part of our #Getgrowing campaign. These case studies have already been shared with

Karen Leigh at BEIS.

### Project Development of Additional Support

- The Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) was launched nationally at the end of August 2017. All four funding schemes are now live and have been promoted on the MGH website, through the MGH Operational Group, MGH Steering Group and via our business support networks. Both the LEP and MGH have supported the regional and local MEIF launches which took place in February and March 2018.
- We continue to promote our locally designed and government funded growth and innovation business support schemes.

### Extending Communication & Use of On-line Support

- The MGH hold two monthly Campaign Group 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 last year, we have held three meetings (May, August, January).
- 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
Website users	33,654	13,788	17,070
Total Web visits	58,107	24,340	26,603
Page views	197,400	83,371	83,854
Average time spent	3.51 mins	4.07mins	2.58 mins
Return/new visitors	18%/82%	45%/55%	19%/81%
Most visited pages	Calendar/About Us/Start Up	Calendar/Start-up/About	Calendar/Grants/About Us Shropshire

### Social Media

Twitter followers 2,626 (up 26% from March 31 2017)  
Twitter potential viral reach 2.72 million  
Facebook 370 likes (up 53% from March 31 2017)  
YouTube channel 660 total views

**Newsletters** – Five newsletters between October 2017 and March 2018 have been sent to **1464** businesses 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.

### Social Media Campaigns

- #GEW2018 – Global Entrepreneur Week
- #SmallWonders - designed to showcase and celebrate the huge contribution of small businesses to the UK economy and society
- #NAW2018 – National Apprenticeship Week – launched MGH apprenticeship video
- #GetStarted – campaign to encourage new start-ups
- #Manufacturing - promotion of new skills project plus Manufacturing Growth Programme
- #MidlandsEngine

- #TBE2017 – promoting The Business Events in Shropshire and Herefordshire
- #GetGrowing – aimed at encouraging businesses to grow
- #Access to Funding - ongoing campaign to promote Access to Funding as schemes go live such as Marches Business Investment Grant and Marches Engine Investment Fund and EU funding calls.

#### **Wider Communications**

- Interviews on Free Radio and Radio Shropshire and coverage in both key Marches print titles, 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.
- MGH featured as a double page spread in both Shropshire Star and Hereford Times
- The Business Event 2017 saw direct engagement with MGH stakeholders
- Case studies featured in media plus case study video clips on social media
- Multiple cross-platform coverage of campaigns including launch of Midlands Engine Investment Fund.

#### **High Level Achievements from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018**

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

- **8556** Walk-in, calls or web enquiries to the MGH
- **8687** Businesses supported by the MGH (including support received from Partners)
- **518** events were delivered via the MGH – Shropshire, Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin
- **5641** People attended MGH business support events
- **22 EU** funded business support programmes including grant schemes being delivered
- **£189,000** Grant funding awarded to Marches businesses
- **19** new jobs created thanks to grant support
- **532** enquiries sign posted to third parties.

### **Growth Hub 2017-2018 Final Grant Spend Position**

#### **B. Please confirm your final BEIS grant spend position at end of 2017-2018.**

Total BEIS grant for 2017-18	£205,000
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Please state how much of your 2017-18 grant has been spent by **31<sup>st</sup> March 2018**.

	Quarter spend £	Cumulative spend £
Q1 – 1 April to 30 June 2017	£38,311.47	£38,311.47
Q2 – 1 July to 30 September 2017	£39,254.10	£77,565.57
Q3 – 1 Oct to 31 December 2017	£46,325.58	£123,891.15
Q4 – 1 January to 31 March 2018	£83,023.05	£206,914.00
<b>Total expenditure 2017-2018</b>	<b>£206,914.00</b>	<b>£206,914.00</b>

Please provide a breakdown of the expenditure by category to help inform a BEIS internal audit of Growth Hub budget spend in 2017-2018. **Note**, that this only relates to core BEIS Growth Hub funding and not any other locally accessed funding streams e.g. ERDF):

Category	2017-2018 Spend £
Salary costs (e.g. management and other resources)	£47,138.38
Salary costs (e.g. generalist advisers / business navigators)	£0
Salary costs (e.g. specialists / scale-up account managers)	£0
Travel and expenses of core Growth Hub staff	£2,795.32
Client acquisition (e.g. data purchase)	£0
Quality assurance activity, research and evaluation	£0
Customer engagement (e.g. marketing, printing etc)	£34,383.30
Events (e.g. forums, pop-ups and peer to peer networks etc)	£637.24
Professional development and training (e.g. SFEDI)	£0
IT and website maintenance and development	£8,946.68
CRM maintenance and development	£0
Licences	£31,745.00
Operational and running costs (e.g. rent and utilities)	£73,962.99
Sponsorship	£400.00
Consultancy costs (e.g. scale-up, sustainability planning)	£5,925.00
Legal, procurement advice etc	£0
Audit costs (where not undertaken by Accountable Body)	£0
VAT (where none reclaimable from HMRC)	£0
Match funding (e.g. ERDF)	£0
Any other expenditure	£980.00
<b>Total for year to 31 March 2018</b>	<b>£206,913.91</b>

**Please confirm what sources of additional funding and/or resources were leveraged in by the LEP and/or Growth Hub in 2017-2018 to add further value to your Growth Hub service? What were the benefits of this to the Growth Hub and its customers?**

Our operating model, working with LA and Higher Education (HE) partners, is designed to maximise leverage of public and private sector funds. As previously mentioned, the virtual hub is supported by three physical hubs situated in Hereford, Shrewsbury and Telford & Wrekin. Due to limited core funding and resources, we work in partnership with our three LA's, University of Wolverhampton and University Centre Shrewsbury who provide facilities and Economic Development staff to support the operation of the three physical hubs. These partnership contributions significantly enhance the scope and breadth of MGH services offered.

**LA contributions** are estimated as below: -

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

**HE partners contributions** is estimated as below: -

- University of Wolverhampton provides premises, equipment and covers all rent, heat lighting and staffing costs at MGH – Telford & Wrekin and MGH – Herefordshire – and MGH – Shropshire estimated to be approx. £250K per year.

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

### **EU Funded Projects**

MGH is the gateway to 22 EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a financial value of £22million. This includes the £1.2million ERDF funded MGH Building Business Confidence project led by Telford & Wrekin Council. This provides additional diagnostic support and business advice through the three physical hubs and also enables effective referrals to in-depth business support on offer within the Marches. Information sharing events are held on a regular basis to support referrals. During 2017/18, two events took place in September 2017 and March 2018. The events bring EU project managers, MGH staff and other business support and LA economic development officers together to support relationship building and alignment of the business and enterprise support landscape. The events provide an opportunity to find out more about new projects as well as providing a refresher on some of the more established projects. A full list of projects can be found in **Appendix A**.

### **Funding Secured by the LEP: -**

The Marches LEP has secured £5k funding from the Learning and Work Institute to deliver training to MGH staff and the wider economic development teams in April 2018 to increase their understanding of skills issues and how these can be considered in the delivery of business support programmes. It is hoped that this will lead to better promotion of the importance of staff training and development (including leadership and management, re-skilling and apprenticeships) in driving business growth and increase referrals to Higher Education Funding Council for England, Education and Skills Funding Agency and European Social Fund funded programmes.

## **Progress of Growth Hub in 2017-2018**

### **C: Summary of Growth Hub progress in 2017-2018**

#### **1. Strategic Partnerships**

- Please confirm if your Growth Hub service was delivered in-house or by an external organisation during 2017-2018? Which primary organisation/s delivered the Growth Hub and if there were a public or private sector organisation?

### **MGH Delivery**

The virtual hub service is delivered in-house as part of the LEP team. Previously in place there was one full time member of staff (MGH Coordinator), who managed enquiries, supported Steering Group and Operational Group meetings, was responsible for the collection and management of KPI data and maintained the MGH website. In Autumn 2017 this colleague left the business and as 2018/19 MGH funding was not yet known, temporary cover was arranged with the opportunity to review the position taking into account the findings from the MGH independent Review and Evaluation.

The MGH Coordinator position will not be replaced. Instead, a new higher-level Support Officer post (LEP Data & Marketing Support Officer) has been created to support both the MGH and LEP team and will strengthen the MGH's level of skills to support data collection, website maintenance and marketing. With regards to MGH, the role will continue to support the management of the MGH website, the collection and management of KPI data and support the Steering Group and Operational Group meetings. In addition to this, the role will focus on supporting the physical growth hubs with a Marches-wide events programme and provide PR and marketing support.

The full time Business Support Officer oversees the day to day finance and performance management of the MGH This position remains in place. In October 2017, the LEP team welcomed a Partnership Manager who will oversee the strategic direction of the MGH.

Due to MGH limited resources, we work in partnership with the three LA's and the University of Wolverhampton who provide tier one 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 to projects delivered by the network of public sector organisations.

- If delivered externally, was the organisation/s operating under a contract, memorandum of understanding, service level agreement or informal partnership?

### **Operating Contract**

We do not have a commercial contract in place between the LEP and the partners. We do have a service level agreement (SLA) and data sharing agreement (DSA) in place. These two key documents specify that direct referrals to partners are responded to within 48hrs, data protection protocols are followed and information on the website is maintained and kept up-to-date. In addition to this, marketing protocols are in place to ensure that MGH branding remains consistent.

- What have been the benefits of this approach to the LEP?

### **Benefits to the LEP**

The operating contract is 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.

Due to our partnership model, the MGH leverage in a total of £602k.

- **What opportunities have been explored by the LEP in 2017-2018 to support cross boundary working with other LEPs, Growth Hubs and strategic partners to ensure value for money (e.g. cluster working; joint projects and sharing resources)? Where possible, state how these will support local and Industrial Strategy key sectors.**

**Midlands Business Support Network** - MGH staff 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. The event is very well attended with an average of 40 attendees. Around eighteen attendees are from business support, central government and business representative organisations. Agenda items have included updates from BEIS on Midlands Engine, Industrial Strategy and Growth Hub Network, Innovate UK on the Industrial Challenge Fund and the British Business Bank on the Midlands Engine Investment Fund. Discussions have included business festivals around the Midlands and the need for coordination of future events.

**Midlands Engine** - In March 2017, the Midlands Engine Strategy was launched as a demonstration of the government's commitment to making the Midlands a powerful Engine for economic growth. The Marches LEP is working with the new Midlands Engine Partnership to help the wider region achieve its growth potential, through investment, research and development, innovation and skills and connectivity improvements. One of the strands born from this strategy is the Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) which was launched at the end of August 2017.

The Board, LEP and MGH team will continue to support the implementation of the Vision for Growth Strategy through working with Midlands Connect and its Trade & Investment Group and promotion of the MEIF fund.

**The Business Growth Programme (BGP)** - is a £33m fund which 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 project. BGP grants are available to eligible companies across the Marches area, via the European Regional Development Fund. The scheme is being delivered by Birmingham City Council in partnership with the Marches LEP and Greater Birmingham & Solihull and Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire LEPs. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, **£1,098,714.86** of funding has been awarded to **43** businesses within the Marches area helping to create **115 jobs**.

**European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) Projects** – As previously mentioned in this report, the MGH is the gateway to 22 EU funded business support projects (including grants and consultancy support) with a financial value of £22million.

Based on the information available for the four largest ERDF projects (Business Energy Efficiency Programme, Business Growth Programme, Marches Business Investment Grant and Broadband Grants), in 2017/18 there has been a combined award of **£2m** to Marches businesses. In addition, the Rural Development Programme for England (RPDE) awarded **£800k** to Marches businesses during the year. The investment will hopefully lead to the creation of circa **100 jobs**.

### **Priority Sectors**

The LEP is updating its Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) between May and September 2018 which will help identify its key sectors and will support with the development of a local industrial strategy. Within the current SEP there are four priority sectors: -

- Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering (with auto specialism);
- Agri Food packaging/Agri Tech including food processing and packaging;
- Defence & Cyber Security (emerging sector) and
- Environmental Tech (emerging sector).

### **Advanced Manufacturing/Engineering (with auto specialism)**

- **The Business Growth Programme** – is a £33m fund which 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 project. BGP grants are available to eligible companies across the Marches area, via the European Regional Development Fund. The scheme is being delivered by Birmingham City Council in partnership with the Marches LEP and Greater Birmingham & Solihull and Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire LEPs. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, **£1,098,714.86** of funding has been awarded to **43** businesses within the Marches area helping to create **115 jobs**.
- **Drive Midlands** – provides a central hub for businesses; coordinating local support services for the automotive sector and collaborating more closely with higher and further education to support skills development. The aim is to support the development of SMEs to safeguard the future of the automotive industry. To accelerate success, partners are being brought on board with sector expertise that support the Midlands automotive industry. By working with industry and government, Drive Midlands aims to help develop a robust local supply chain, increase local sourcing levels at Tiers 1 and 2 and improve coordinated working across the entire Midlands area. The Marches LEP along with other Midlands LEPs are supporting and promoting this to local manufacturing businesses that supply the auto sector. A LEP Board member who has recently stepped down sat on the Auto Council LEP Group.
- **The Manufacturing Growth Programme** – This project has been operating since October 2016 and is now working across 15 LEP areas. Delivered by Economic Solutions Ltd, the programme supports SME Manufacturers to grow by identifying, understanding and removing barriers to growth and enabling sustainable business improvement. Progress this year includes **51** grants offered worth **£69,436** to businesses within the Marches. Infographics can be found in **Appendix B**. This project has been extended for a further year and will continue to support

the Marches area. Representatives from this programme are members of the MGH Operational Group.

- **West Midlands Manufacturing Club** - The University of Wolverhampton Business Solutions have continued with the development of their West Midlands Manufacturing Club as the preferred route to market to achieve active engagement with the West Midlands manufacturing and engineering SME community. An online registration system is now in place with new members being offered the opportunity for an initial one-2-one discovery meeting at one of their five geographic locations/growth hubs at Hereford, Shrewsbury, Telford, Wolverhampton Sandwell & Dudley. They are continuing to develop a series of manufacturing themed events aimed to address the shortfall in manufacturing productivity and technology adoption across the West Midlands. The Manufacturing Club also launched their High-Speed Rail (HS2) **Get on Track** Rail Tender Supplier Readiness Programme which was fully subscribed for the initial pilot which was delivered in September 2017. As a result of the initial response, a further programme took place at the end of November 2017. Other areas of support where they can provide tangible support to the manufacturing sector include the promotion of ERDF products. In addition to the above, the University is set to open a Science, Technology and Prototyping Centre in Summer 2018 which is a unique combination of laboratory, workshop and high-tech office space for science and technology-based businesses. The new £10.1m, three-storey centre being created at the University of Wolverhampton Science Park 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.

#### Agri-Tech

- **Agri-tech Growth and Resources for Innovation (AGRI)** - Aston University and Harper Adams University have been part funded by the ERDF to support the delivery of this project. The AGRI initiative assists Marches based SMEs to innovate and develop new products and services in order to exploit growing market opportunities; particularly in agri-tech, food and drink manufacture and specialist food and drink logistics, as well as to break into new agri-food markets. The project will support 90 SMEs in the region over 3 years and to date has worked with 32 companies helping to develop new products and services with both short one-to-one assists and longer-term innovation development collaborations. Additionally, the project has delivered 3 of its targeted 8 specialist workshops; covering areas such as precision agriculture, logistics and measuring and sensing in food processing. Additional project information can be found at [www.agri.org.uk](http://www.agri.org.uk).
- **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 partnership's work programme. A website, [www.agritechwest.com](http://www.agritechwest.com), is due to go live in July 2018 to highlight the sector, to signpost to relevant areas of business support across the partnership and to encourage the use of growth hubs by rural and land-based businesses. ATWA has developed good links with DEFRA and held a launch event in January 2018 to promote the area's strengths in the sector. A series of collaborative events are planned in 2018 and will be delivered across the ATW region. In the Marches area, the project is supporting an Agricultural Innovation Conference and Exhibition which is scheduled in July 2018. 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.

## **Defence & Cyber Security**

- The Marches LEP is working with Worcestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire and Gloucestershire LEPs under the Cyber Resilience Alliance. The Alliance has 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 will help to shape an action plan for the sector and to encourage business growth, specialist and technical skills development and the establishment of the Marches Centre for Cyber Security on Skylon Park in Hereford.
- **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 2017-2018? What have been the successes and have any local challenges been overcome?**

## **Inclusive Strategic Partnerships Across the LEP**

### **MGH Steering Group**

The is a sub-group of the LEP Board which meets on a quarterly basis. The group has a very important role to play as it provides guidance on key issues such as policy and objectives, budgetary control, marketing strategy and resource allocation.

During the last year, we have welcomed a representative from Telford Business Board, University of Wolverhampton and Department for International Trade.

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)
- Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber (private)
- Marches Skills Provider Networks (private)
- Federation of Small Businesses (private)
- Department for International Trade (private)
- University of Wolverhampton (public)
- Telford & Wrekin Council (public)
- Herefordshire Council (public)
- Shropshire Council (public)
- Marches LEP (public/private)
- PR/Marketing consultant (private)

In attendance: - Cities and Local Growth Unit team member

### **Local Challenge**

Recent research carried out by DIT confirms that a high number of businesses within the Marches are still unaware of the DIT offer. We have invited DIT to join the MGH Steering Group to help overcome this challenge. In addition to this, we will be looking at changing the DIT message through our social media campaigns.

### **MGH Operational Group**

This is an officer level working group which meets every two months to ensure that activities are co-ordinated effectively across the virtual hub and the three physical hubs. It reviews business support services from all partners in order to manage referrals, monitor outputs and share information. During the last year, we have welcomed a representative from the British Business Bank and the ERDF

Technical Assistance team.

MGH Operational Group Membership comprises:

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
- British Business Bank

All members are required to provide an update on their service area, level of activity in the Marches area and comply with the SLA that has been developed, so we can monitor progress and make continuous improvements.

Other business support providers (local and national) are asked to attend the Steering and Operational Group as and when required.

As the business support landscape evolves the membership of the Operational group will be amended to ensure all key partners attend the meetings. The Group is Chaired by Chair of the MGH Steering Group.

Monitoring of expenditure and financial performance of the MGH is considered at each MGH Steering and Operational Group meeting ensuring appropriate action can be taken in a timely manner. Both groups received a presentation from the consultants carrying out the Independent MGH Review & Evaluation and were involved in agreeing the delivery of the agreed action plan.

In addition to the above, there are three Business Boards that help to provide direct links to private businesses testing the effectiveness of the MGH service and provide a route to publicise the service.

- During 2017-2018 were the LEP and Growth Hub involved in any cross-boundary partnership working e.g. Oxford, Milton Keynes, Cambridge Corridor, Northern Powerhouse, Midlands Engine, nuclear sector etc?

**Midlands Engine** - In March 2017, the Midlands Engine Strategy was launched as a demonstration of the government's commitment to making the Midlands a powerful Engine for economic growth. The Marches LEP is working with the new Midlands Engine Partnership to help the wider region achieve its growth potential, through investment, research and development, innovation and skills and connectivity improvements. One of the strands born from this strategy is the Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) which was launched at the end of August 2017.

The Board, LEP and Growth Hub team will continue to support the implementation of the Vision for Growth Strategy through work with Midlands Connect and its Trade & Investment Group and promotion of the MEIF fund.

**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 partnership's work programme. A website, [www.agritechwest.com](http://www.agritechwest.com), is due to go live in July 2018 to highlight the sector, to signpost to relevant areas of business support across the partnership and to encourage the use of growth hubs by rural and land-based businesses. ATWA has developed good links with DEFRA and held a launch event in January 2018 for DEFRA, BEIS and other government departments to promote the area's strengths in the sector. A series of collaborative events are planned in 2018 and will be delivered across the ATW region. In the Marches area, the project is supporting an Agricultural Innovation Conference and Exhibition which is scheduled in July 2018. 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.

### **Defence & Cyber Security**

The Marches LEP is working with Worcestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire and Gloucestershire LEPs under the Cyber Resilience Alliance. The Alliance has 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 will help to shape an action plan for the sector and to encourage business growth, specialist and technical skills development and the establishment of the Marches Centre for Cyber Security on Skylon Park in Hereford.

## **2. National and Local Integration**

The co-ordination of local, national, public and private business support is a core role of a Growth Hub; businesses want a seamless, simple customer journey to get to the joined-up support they need. Please set out what activity you have undertaken in 2017-2018 to further join up your Growth Hub offer with national and local business support services, specifically in relation to the following (where applicable):

The following activity has been undertaken in 2017-2018 to further join up the MGH offer with national and local business support services: -

### **Through Sector Deals:**

N/A

### **Innovate UK (Part of UK Research & Innovation):**

Since 2010/11, Innovate UK has awarded **£5.7b** in business-led innovation with **10,400** unique organisations. **87** organisations within the Marches, including **71** businesses have been awarded a total of **£13.4m** of this funding.

There is and will continue to be regular communication between the MGH and Innovate UK's Regional Manager to understand how we can further support those businesses that have already received funding and how we can support additional businesses. We will continue to promote their services and events as well as improve the information on our website in relation to their services and support. A recent example of promotion includes the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

### **Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN):**

MGH refers appropriate businesses to the University of Wolverhampton's Knowledge Transfer Partnerships to help them to improve their competitiveness, productivity and performance through the better use of knowledge, technology and skills.

## **Department for International Trade (DIT)**

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

West Midlands Chamber of Commerce (WMCC) DIT 2017/18 contract resulted in a total of **286** businesses in the Marches being account managed, **164** of these received DIT direct support that resulted in export contracts being won, **54** of which were New Exporters. Together they secured over **£31m** worth of export contracts.

WMCC launched a new ERDF programme namely SME International Growth Project in January 2017. This project complements the DIT core contract, offering grants to SME's. Support is provided by International Trade Advisers operating out of the six West Midlands Chambers of Commerce and is accessible through the growth hubs. Since the launch in January 2017 to March 2018, this project has provided grants to **28** SME's from the Marches area, committing **£55k** of funding to support their internationalisation aspirations and promising **47** new jobs. <http://www.wmchambers.co.uk/about-us/projects/current-business-support-projects/sme-international-growth-project/>

In addition to this, with the support of the MGH, **9** companies from the Marches region attended various trade missions during the last year. DIT and WMCC continue to work closely with and through the MGH and values this partnership in delivering added value both in amplifying their messaging, increasing their network reach and in delivering direct referrals to the DIT or ERDF programmes.

The Global Growth Pilot is progressing well and as at the end of March 2018, teams operating within the Marches have achieved all expected outcomes. Both the Shropshire and Herefordshire teams had a target of 6 companies each to assist with this pilot, making the total for the Marches of 12 and these were achieved.

## **British Business Bank (BBB):**

We will continue to work very closely with the Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) Senior Relationship Manager and four fund managers to help support outreach activity to help raise the profile of the MEIF and BBB funds available. As of March 2018, MEIF investments totalling £1.59m were made to 23 businesses including a Marches based business.

We are in the process of considering a replacement MEIF Strategic Oversight Board Member to act as an alternate. Two members of the MGH team represent Marches LEP on the MEIF Regional Advisory Board (RAB).

## **Intellectual Property Office (IPO):**

We continue to encourage the IPO to deliver events at each of the three physical growth hub locations to ensure that local businesses are able to tap into relevant patent, trademark and intellectual property support. During the year, the IPO has delivered 2 events in April and June 2017. The MGH also supported World IPO day through various social media platforms in April 2018.

## **Be the Business (Productivity Leadership Group):**

We are going to be linking to <https://www.bethebusiness.com/> from <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk> and identify further opportunities for collaboration.

## **ICAEW / Accountants:**

The MGH links into the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales members and other accountants through the Professionals Partnership in Shropshire and Telford which is supported by the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce. The MGH will identify opportunities to work

with a similar network in Herefordshire to support events and business clinics run by accountancy and finance professionals. There are also plans for a Marches wide Access to Finance Working Group in 2018/19.

#### **Angel Networks:**

There are no dedicated Angel Networks within the Marches area but referrals into the Midlands Engine Investment Fund offers access to a range of finance options include venture capital and business angels.

#### **Universities/Business Schools:**

The MGH - Telford & Wrekin and MGH - Herefordshire are sponsored and hosted by University of Wolverhampton which allows access to information on Higher Education including undergraduate, post graduate programmes, degree level apprenticeships and business support projects. Events being run by University Centre Shrewsbury, the University of Wolverhampton and Harper Adams University are promoted on the MGH website's events calendar and information on training providers, Further Education and HE programmes is contained on its skills micro site at <http://skillssearch.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/>. The LEP is also supporting the development of New Model in Technology & Engineering which will provide other HE opportunities for business support.

#### **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. Businesses located on the Enterprise Zone are encouraged to use the MGH for access to business advice and information.

#### **Catapults/Incubators and Accelerators:**

The LEP has met with the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) - part of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult to identify opportunities for joint working. Initial thoughts are concentrating on developing a high-profile event programme potentially hosted at each of the three physical growth hub locations. There are currently no incubators within the LEP region.

#### **Better Business for All (BBfA)/Regulators:**

The LEP is a member of the Better Business for All (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 and will start with conducting surveys to businesses and local regulatory officers who interact with businesses. The results of the surveys will inform our proposal for BBfA in Shropshire and will be the foundation for an event for local businesses and regulators to agree a way forward for BBfA in Shropshire.

#### **Libraries/Business & IP Centres:**

There is limited opportunity to work with libraries across the Marches due to reductions in public funding however, MGH – Shropshire is exploring opportunities for partnership working.

#### **Others (public and private):**

##### **Enterprise Agencies**

The Marches does not have an Enterprise Agency however the MGH works with and often hosts events by organisations that champion business start-up, e.g. Women in Rural Enterprise, Shropshire Youth Support Trust etc.

##### **Local/Combined Authorities**

As detailed earlier, our three LA's are critical to the delivery of the MGH. They provide staffing for the three physical hubs which enables effective referrals to core LA economic growth and business

support services.

### **Business Intermediaries**

The FSB, Shropshire Chamber and Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce are all 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.

### **IOD & IOEE**

We have developed and will further develop relationships with Institute of Directors (IOD) and Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE).

## **3. Governance**

- Please confirm the governance arrangements that were in place in 2017-2018 and the role of the LEP and Accountable Body in providing oversight and ensuring compliance of the Growth Hub. Please include clear line of sight back to LEP Board and LEP Assurance Framework.

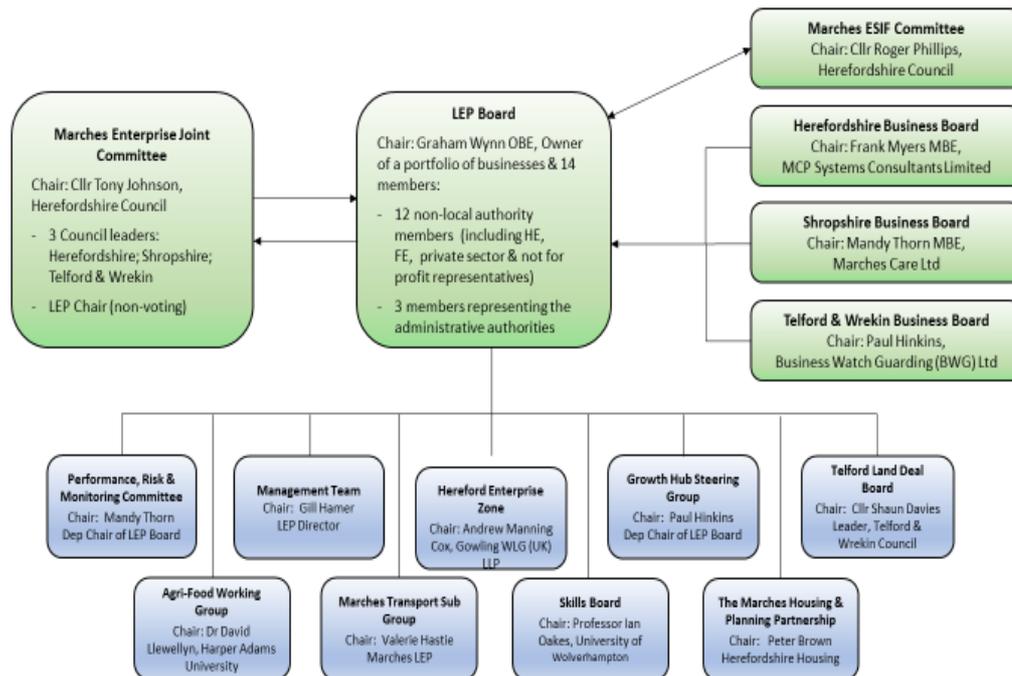
The Marches LEP Board oversees the setting of the strategic direction for the MGH and receives progress updates from the Chair of the MGH Steering Group.

The MGH Steering Group is a sub-group of the LEP Board. On joining the MGH Steering Group each member is asked to complete the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government template of the Register of Financial and Other Interest Form and this is reviewed on an annual basis by the LEP Director. In addition to this, members are asked to declare any interests at the start of all meetings for any relevant agenda items. Monitoring of expenditure and financial performance of the MGH is considered at every MGH Steering Group meeting.

The MGH governance is outlined in the Accountability & Assurance Framework including the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the MGH Steering Group. The TOR is reviewed annually and the election of the Chair takes place every two years. The Chair of the 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, including underspend. 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 three LEP Board members, three Section 151 Officers and the LEP Director. The diagram below sets out how the MGH Steering Group reports into the Marches LEP Board, the reporting structure plus our three Business Boards

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



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.

An audit carried out by the independent audit team at Shropshire Council supports verification of project costs and financial processes.

## 4. Triage, Diagnostics and Signposting

### Local Infrastructure

- What type of Growth Hub delivery model/typology did you operate in 2017-2018 e.g. physical hub; virtual; hub and spoke or other? Why did you take this approach and what have been the benefits to the customer?

### MGH Model

Currently, MGH has a centrally managed virtual hub which includes a website [www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk), a central helpline (0345 6000 727) and a general enquiries e-mail address [enquiries@marchesgrowthhub.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@marchesgrowthhub.co.uk). The virtual hub is supported by three-physical growth hubs.

### Physical Growth Hubs

Due to limited funding and resources, we work in partnership with the three local authorities, University of Wolverhampton and University Centre Shrewsbury who provide well-equipped facilities and Business Support/Economic Development staff to support the operation of the three physical growth hubs.

As well as hosting a programme of events, the three physical growth hubs offer a drop-in service and the opportunity to have face to face appointments. The face to face activity intervention tends to be light touch to medium intensity. Other facilities include hot desking (for business start-ups some of which are sponsored by the FSB and private sector sponsors), meeting rooms, event space, video conferencing and the opportunity to have face to face appointments with public and private sector partner organisations (for example DIT and ERDF supported schemes).

To ensure an efficient and effective service is delivered to our customers, the LEP has devised a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and Data Sharing Agreement with our key delivery partners. These two documents specify that direct referrals to partners are responded to within 48 hours, data protection protocols are followed and information on the website is maintained and kept up-to-date. By creating these documents (agreed by the key partners) we aim to ensure that the service continues to be valued by our customers and the wider business support service network and the MGH is the first port of call for accurate, up-to-date and impartial information on business support and advice.

### **MGH Website**

The website includes information and links to both local and national business support services, training and events. It has been designed with a searchable directory. Local content has been produced and a filter to the search facility has been created to help businesses pinpoint the eligible products and services.

The website is constantly evolving; developments include the creation of an Employer Skills Search Facility. This was developed by the LEP and its Skills Board (which includes business representatives, training & skills providers and universities) to help employers find the right local training for their staff. 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.

The website is fully aligned with the Business is Great Campaign and links to content and tools on GOV.UK and GREAT.GOV. In addition to this, the website links with the national Business Support Helpline (chat) to assist with pre-start and start-up enquiries. We also live data share with the national Business Support Helpline. Dedicated pages are provided on the site for the national business support programmes such as DIT in addition to separate directory enquiries.

As the LEP covers a large geographical area (2300 square miles) this model (virtual and physical) ensures that businesses can easily access 24hr business support as well have opportunities to access face to face support, attend local events and have direct access to national service providers as well as European funded business support schemes.

- **If the Growth Hub has a physical presence, what are the location of the Hub and where appropriate any spokes? Why have you chosen these locations?**

The three physical growth hub offices are situated in key towns in each local authority area being Hereford, Shrewsbury and Telford & Wrekin.

- **Did the Growth Hub employ its own business advisers/navigators/ account managers in 2017-2018 or were they seconded into the Growth Hub?**
  - **How many were employed (number of FTEs) and what were their job titles?**
  - **Were they generalists and/or specialists e.g. sector focussed; access to**

finance; scale-up; inward investment etc? Why have you taken this approach?

- Are they accredited (e.g. SFEDI or other)? If yes, what have been the benefits of the approach?

### **Virtual Hub**

The Virtual Hub previously had in place one full time member of staff (MGH Coordinator), who managed telephone and e-mail enquiries, supported Steering Group and Operational Group meetings, was responsible for the collection and management of KPI data and maintained the MGH website. In Autumn 2017 this colleague left the business and as 2018/19 MGH funding was not yet known, temporary cover was arranged with the opportunity to review the position.

It was decided after a meeting with LA partners in January 2018, that the MGH Coordinator position would not be replaced. Instead, a new higher-level Support Officer post would be created. The new post will support both the MGH and LEP team and will strengthen the level of skills to support data collection, website maintenance and marketing. With regards to MGH, the role will continue to support the management of the MGH website, the collection and management of KPI data and support the Steering Group and Operational Group meetings. In addition to this, the role will focus on supporting the physical hubs with a Marches-wide high-profile events programme and provide PR and marketing support.

The full time Business Support Officer oversees the day to day finance and performance management of the MGH. This position remains in place. In October 2017, the LEP team welcomed a Partnership Manager who will oversee the strategic direction of the MGH.

### **Physical Hubs**

As previously mentioned, due to limited resources we work in partnership with the three LA's. The three LA's 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 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, this team has worked across the Marches and has some capacity and skill sets to work with scale-up potential companies.

### **Digital**

- Has the LEP or Growth Hub developed any innovative online tools or localised on-line content in 2017-2018 that might be of benefit to other Growth Hubs e.g. diagnostic tools; rate and review systems etc? If yes, please provide details.

The MGH website includes information and links to both local and national business support services, training and events. It has been designed with a searchable directory. Local content has been produced and a filter to the search facility has been created to help businesses pinpoint the eligible products and services.

The website is constantly evolving; previous developments include the creation of an Employer Skills Search Facility. This was developed by the LEP and its Skills Board (which includes business representatives, training & skills providers and universities) to help employers find the right local training for their staff. 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.

## Telephony

- Did the Growth Hub utilise any of the services of the Business Support Helpline (e.g. phone, web chat, knowledge bank) in 2017-2018. If yes, what were the benefits?

During the last year, customers have utilised the Business Support Helpline web chat support via the MGH website. In April 2018, we transferred the virtual hub helpline (0345) 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. E-mail enquiries will continue to be received by the virtual hub and will be forwarded to each physical growth hub to action.

- If the Business Support Helpline is not used, what local arrangements are in place?

The Virtual Hub previously had in place one full time member of staff (MGH Coordinator), who managed telephone and e-mail enquiries. In Autumn 2017 this colleague left the business and as 2018/19 MGH funding was not yet known, temporary cover was arranged with the opportunity to review the position.

In April 2018, we transferred the virtual hub helpline (0345) 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. E-mail enquiries will continue to be received via the MGH website and will be forwarded to each physical growth hub to action.

## 5. Business Support Simplification

- What steps has the LEP via the Growth Hub taken in 2017-2018 to ensure that you continue to simplify the business support landscape? Including activity undertaken to minimise duplication of both support and local business support programmes. What approach has been taken and what have been the benefits?

To ensure the business landscape is not populated by duplicate products and services, the LEP officers are working with the Marches ESIF Committee to ensure that any new applications for business support funding are viewed by the MGH Operational Group to ensure that they compliment current business support rather than duplicate.

The MGH Operational Group is an officer level working group which meets every two months to ensure that activities are co-ordinated effectively across the virtual hub and the three physical hubs. The group also review business support services from all partners to help minimise any duplication.

The LEP is a member of the Better Business for All (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.

ERDF Information sharing events are held on a regular basis. The events bring EU project managers, MGH staff and other business support and LA economic development officers together to support relationship building and alignment of the business and enterprise support landscape.

### 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 2016-2018 'Metrics and Evaluation Framework'.

Indicator	Local KPIs	Annual Total (2017-2018)	Cumulative Total (since launch)
Businesses/individuals that have received 'light touch' triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic)	N/A	3414	7053
Total number of unique visitors to Growth Hub website	N/A	16,238	33,646
Businesses receiving 'medium intensity' information, diagnostic and brokerage support	N/A	61	93
Businesses receiving 'high intensity' support e.g. account management / intensive support directly provided by the Hub or partner organisation	N/A	199	245
Businesses receiving 'Medium' and 'High intensity' support that, have the opportunity, ambition and greatest potential to grow (including Scale-Ups)	N/A	127	223
Total number of individuals who been helped to start a business	N/A	21	21
Businesses referred to a mentoring programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	N/A	156	156
Businesses referred to a skills or training programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	N/A	116	116
Businesses referred to a finance and/or funding programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only)	N/A	27	48
Businesses referred to an innovation and/or R&D programme (combined figure for 'Medium' and 'High' intensity interventions only).	N/A	0	0
Total number of jobs created (where linked to Growth Hub)	N/A	19	547
£increase in GVA (where linked to Growth Hub)	N/A	Not Recorded	Not Recorded
£Private sector match secured (where linked to Growth Hub)	N/A	£283,745.67	£401,619.67

Customer satisfaction level “How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of this service” (‘Medium’ and ‘High’ intensive interventions only)	N/A	Not recorded	Not recorded
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## 6. Customer Satisfaction

In line with the requirements of the 2016-2018 ‘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	4	15	19

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 likely would you be to recommend this service to a friend/colleague”**, rated on a standard five-point scale?

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5	Total
117	76	147	143	262	745

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

## 7. Evaluation

*How have you used the ‘firm level data’ collected by the Growth Hub to undertake both qualitative and quantitative assessments of the impact of the Growth Hub on those businesses receiving ‘medium’ and ‘high’ intensity support e.g. what difference has been made to the businesses supported?*

An independent Review and Evaluation of the MGH service was commissioned in summer 2017 which took into account the firm level data collected by the MGH. Key findings are detailed below: -

- Between October 2015 and September 2017, the MGH has delivered a range of business support activities, capitalising on the capabilities and capacity of its major partners;
- A total grant amount of £1,317,120 has been received by local businesses, alongside expert support to develop new products, access new supply chains and export overseas;

- 236 jobs have been created to September 2017 by businesses that have received support of medium intensity (102 jobs) and high intensity (134 jobs). These figures are very likely to underestimate creation of jobs through support received by the MGH given that the MGH only started reporting medium and high intensity data to BEIS from April 2016;
- Customer satisfaction is relatively high (between 4.5 and 5 on a scale 1 to 5, where 1 is poor service and 5 is excellent) across both modes of support, i.e. virtual and physical growth hubs;
- Comparisons with other growth hubs indicate that within a relatively short period of time, the MGH is operating on a par with more resourced and/or longer established growth hubs;
- MGH website is clear and easy to use and includes a Skills portal, which enables employers to find training to support the upskilling of staff and
- On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018, during a meeting between BEIS, LEP and partners, BEIS confirmed that the MGH is placed in the top quartile of growth hubs.

The full report can be found here: -

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/assets/marchesgrowthhubreviewevaluationreport.pdf>

- *How have you measured the impact your Growth Hub has had in terms of businesses (or individuals) acting on the help/advice they received from the Growth Hub and what have you found?*

MGH impact was measured as part of the Independent Review and Evaluation of the MGH service. Details of impact have been provided above in detail.

- *Any key achievements not listed above directly linked to the Growth Hub, which could include for example, overall economic impact and impact of any local programmes delivered by the Growth Hub e.g. ERD funded?*

### **Building Business Confidence (BBC) Programme**

Part funded by the ERDF, the BBC strand of the MGH Project has been delivering coaching and mentoring support for nine months. The BBC programme has 2 strands detailed below: -

**Start2Great** provides access to the skills and knowledge required to develop, start and manage a business through coaching and mentoring support and is aimed at aspiring entrepreneurs and new businesses in their first 12 months of trading.

**Smarter Growth** supports growing and established businesses by equipping owners or key people with the skills and knowledge to support growth objectives through four key themes; exploiting marketing opportunities, high performance working, grow your own work force and operational management.

Since delivery commenced during June 2017, approximately **100** individuals have already taken the opportunity of accessing the Start2Great provision in helping them to plan and develop their business ideas. Already, **21** new enterprises have been supported. Furthermore, in excess of **20** new businesses (sub 12 months trading) have accessed support to aid owner growth aspirations.

Across the Marches, interest has been incredibly high and in particular Shropshire where scheme targets allocated to those at pre-start stage have already been exceeded, whilst both Herefordshire and Telford are making good progress with increasing interest.

The scheme is now having a positive impact on the ground by promoting entrepreneurship and

equipping people with the knowledge, tools and techniques in getting their businesses off to the best possible start.

Furthermore, interest in the Smarter Growth strand is now increasing. Although a total of **13** businesses have completed their support, in excess of **30** additional businesses are currently working their way through the coaching, mentoring and workshop elements of the course; representing a healthy pipeline. Promotional activity continues via a variety of communication channels including the MGH website stimulating further interest.

Over the next three to six months, given a reasonable span of time has now elapsed since launch, emphasis will be placed on client follow-up to begin assessing impact in terms of changes to labour market status, new business launched, new jobs created, where applicable six and 12-month survival and new processes products or innovations etc. For further information please follow the links; [www.start2great.co.uk](http://www.start2great.co.uk) <https://www.smarter-growth.com/>

**The Business Growth Roadshows** which form part of the ERDF funded MGH project, provides a way for the MGH - Shropshire to engage direct with businesses from across the county to identify and promote appropriate business support options to them in supporting their growth ambitions.

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.

So far, since launching in September 2017, a total of **5** events have been held across Shropshire (Oswestry, University Centre Shrewsbury x 2, Bridgnorth and Ludlow) which have seen representatives of over **100** local business taking the opportunity to explore available business support options. <https://www.businessgrowthroadshow.co.uk/>

## 8. Scale-Ups

- *Please describe the local activity that the LEP has undertaken via the Growth Hub to specifically identify, engage and support those businesses with the opportunity, ambition and greater potential to grow (i.e. including scale-ups). This could include:*
  - Any ongoing work with the ScaleUp Institute, Goldman Sachs and other organisation operating in the scale-up space?
  - Further development of local Scale-Up Plan developed in 2016-2017?
  - Identification of growth businesses and those with the potential to scale-up?
  - Introduction of any new local programmes aimed at scale-ups and those businesses with growth potential e.g. via ERDF or other funding streams?

### Scale-up Institute

The Marches LEP Director attended a 3-day Scale-up training course in May 2016 (Birmingham) and receives regular updates from the Scale-up Institute. In addition to this, the MGH supported the Institute with the promotion of their Scale-up Survey to the business community through a recent E-newsletter. <http://mailchi.mp/marchesgrowthhub/august2017grants-scaleup-getgrowing?e=139216812f>. The survey was also pushed out via social media.

The LEP Director has also worked with the Scale-up Institute to support their Deep Dive case study

for the ScaleUp Annual Review 2017.

### **BEIS - Business Engagement roundtables with Professor Tim Dafforn**

The LEP and MGH in partnership with our Shropshire Business Board hosted/facilitated a roundtable event with a cross section of local businesses on 18 September 2017 at Harper Adams University. The aim of the roundtable was for BEIS to get a comprehensive picture on local issues such as EU Exit, business support, data and the wider Industrial Strategy.

Twenty businesses from a broad range of sectors were present and discussions were held around Brexit and the impact of possible changes to regulations. This was a particular concern for our food related businesses. The other concern raised was the access to skills and talent if businesses were unable to retain/recruit non-UK staff and the wider ramifications such as cost of training staff and training in rural areas.

### **MGH - Scale-up Plan**

With the input of each of the three MGH physical Growth Hubs, we produced a Scale-up plan for BEIS in July 2017. The virtual hub will work with each growth hub to review progress. The physical hubs will be asked to and supported to further develop a scale-up plan for 2018/19 considering any identified growth challenges faced by businesses.

The 2018/19 scale-up plans will be aligned with an events programme that will help target businesses with the potential to grow and get ahead. The events will help promote business growth advice as well as business growth interventions available. The events will also be open to those who work closely with the business community (business professionals network and business support intermediaries).

The three physical growth hubs will be encouraged to use national and local data wherever possible to help further develop their plans.

At present, The Marches LEP is currently undertaking research to support the refresh of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). The findings of the SEP will help support the scale-up plan.

### **Database**

We now hold intelligence on the sectors and sizes of Marches businesses that fit into the BEIS pre-scale-up and scale-up definition. This information has been sorted by SIC code and transferred to the virtual hub CRM. This information requires further attention to complete gaps in information. Once this exercise is complete, the information will be used to support targeting activity, event participation and for reporting purposes if GDPR rules allow.

### **Targeted Events**

We have used tools such as MEIF to help identify and target growth/scale-up projects. We are already working very closely the British Business Bank Senior Relationship Manager to support outreach activity. In addition to this, we are linked in with PR and marketing activity driven through the MEIF website, newsletters, press release and social media.

We will continue to work with our partners and networks to support outreach activity. This could include shared events with relevant high-profile speakers.

### **Local Programmes**

Partner organisations have several business growth products/services on offer. In addition to this, we have access to 22 ERDF products/services as well as schemes delivered by the two DIT teams. Examples of some of the ERDF products/services are detailed below: -

**Marches Building Investment Grant (MBIG)** went live in February 2017 following a capital award of £2.5m from ERDF. The scheme aims to provide grants to business across the Marches LEP area

to help businesses extend, reconfigure or renovate commercial premises to increase productivity.

A total of **271** enquiries have been received since the start of the scheme (**179** during Apr- Mar 18). During the last 12-month period four steering group meetings have been held consisting of public and private members. A total of **£726,405** has been directly awarded to businesses to date (29% of the budget), these projects aim to create an additional **51** jobs in the Marches area leveraging in **£1,476,637k** of private sector funding. The scheme currently has grant applications totalling £1m being developed by businesses which should come forward for consideration in the next 6 months.

Please see link for good news stories:-

<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2017/09/26/oswestry-manufacturer-expands-and-creates-five-jobs-after-landing-97k-grant/>  
<http://www.shropshirebiz.com/news/CMYUK-expansion>

### **Building Business Confidence (BBC) Programme**

Part funded by the ERDF, the BBC strand of the MGH Project has been delivering coaching and mentoring support for nine months. The BBC programme has 2 strands being Start2Great and Smarter Growth. **Smarter Growth** - A total of **13** businesses have completed their support, in excess of **30** additional businesses that are currently working their way through the coaching, mentoring and workshop elements of the course; representing a healthy pipeline. Promotional activity continues via a variety of communication channels including the MGH website stimulating further interest.

**The Manufacturing Growth Programme** - This project has been operating since October 2016 and is now working across 15 LEP areas. Delivered by Economic Solutions Ltd, the programme supports SME Manufacturers to grow by identifying, understanding and removing barriers to growth and enabling sustainable business improvement. Progress this year includes **51** grants offered worth **£69,436** to businesses within the Marches. This project has been extended for a further year and will continue to support the Marches area. Representatives from this programme are members of the MGH Operational Group

**Business Growth Programme** - is a £33m fund which 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 project. BGP grants are available to eligible companies across the Marches area, via the European Regional Development Fund. The scheme is being delivered by Birmingham City Council in partnership with the Marches LEP and Greater Birmingham & Solihull and Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire LEPs. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, **£1,098,714.86** of funding has been awarded to **43** businesses within the Marches area helping to create **115 jobs**.

## **Summary of Evaluation Activity for your Growth Hub**

**E. Evaluation. What type of activity has been undertaken by the LEP to evaluate the wider impact of your Growth Hub in 2017-2018? What has the evaluation told you?**

- How have you approached a more in-depth evaluation of your Growth Hub service in 2017-2018? For example, have you worked with organisations such as the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) or Enterprise Research Council (ERC)?

A requirement of the 2017/18 BEIS funding contract was to commission an independent review and evaluation of the MGH to cover economic impact, customer satisfaction, business take up of support and the work of the MGH in continuing to simplify the local business support landscape.

Following a successful tendering process in July 2017, Warwick Economics & Development (WECD) was appointed by the LEP to carry out the review and evaluation of the MGH.

The MGH have not worked with BIT or ERC but both were contacted prior to the tendering process in July 2017.

- **What can you tell BEIS about the findings from the wider evaluation of your Growth Hub on business growth and or productivity?**

#### **Key Findings**

- Between October 2015 and September 2017, the MGH has delivered a range of business support activities, capitalising on the capabilities and capacity of its major partners;
  - A total grant amount of £1,317,120 has been received by local businesses, alongside expert support to develop new products, access new supply chains and export overseas;
  - 236 jobs have been created to September 2017 by businesses that have received support of medium intensity (102 jobs) and high intensity (134 jobs). These figures are very likely to underestimate creation of jobs through support received by the MGH given that the MGH only started reporting medium and high intensity data to BEIS from April 2016;
  - Customer satisfaction is relatively high (between 4.5 and 5 on a scale 1 to 5, where 1 is poor service and 5 is excellent) across both modes of support, i.e. virtual and physical growth hubs;
  - Light touch engagement with businesses has been provided through a user friendly and easy to navigate website [www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk). This has received more than 43,000 website visits (24,000 unique visitors) since launch. 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;
  - Comparisons with other growth hubs indicate that within a relatively short period of time, the MGH is operating on a par with more resourced and/or longer established growth hubs;
  - MGH website is clear and easy to use and includes a Skills portal, which enables employers to find training to support the upskilling of staff and
  - On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018, during a meeting between BEIS, LEP and partners, BEIS confirmed that the MGH is placed in the top quartile of growth hubs.
- **What local performance targets or Key Performance Indicators (KPI) did the LEP set for the Growth Hub in 2017-2018 and were these achieved?**

The MGH model is based on partnership working. As previously mentioned, there is a SLA in place that sets out minimum requirements required from our Partners.

MGH objectives and priorities for the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 included the list below, all of which have been achieved as demonstrated in the impact data provided in this report: -

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

## Lessons Learned

**F. Lessons learned/good practice in 2017-2018.** What lessons have been learned from the experience of further building capability and capacity within your Growth Hub? What areas of innovation and good practice can you share with BEIS and other Growth Hubs?

- What approach has been taken to build further capability and capacity within your Growth Hub?
- Has this approach been successful?
- What challenges has your Growth Hub faced and how they have these been overcome / mitigated?

To avoid duplication of the service offered by the National Business Support Helpline (which is provided to the LEP at no cost), the LEP have taken the opportunity to review the MGH model. The LEP arranged for the virtual growth hub telephone line (0345 6000 727) to be transferred to the National Business Support Helpline as a trial during April 2018. Following a successful trial, the telephone line will be transferred permanently from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018. This will allow the team to focus their attentions on business growth/scale-up and data collection.

The MGH Coordinator left the LEP in Autumn 2017 and a member of the LEP team supported the MGH in the interim. Following the Independent Review of the MGH service, the LEP took the opportunity to review the team skillset in line with the focus of growth hub funding moving forward. It was decided that the MGH Coordinator position will not be replaced. Instead, a new higher-level role was created being LEP Data & Marketing Support Officer to work for both the MGH and LEP. The position will have responsibility for website updating, data analysis and management, overseeing PR/marketing, co-ordinating a programme of LEP and MGH events and supporting meetings.

The Physical Hub lead at MGH – Shropshire left in November 2017. Following the departure, there was a gap in resource until the 2 new team members were in place in January and February 2018. By working closely with the LA, a plan was put in place for the wider Economic Development team to support the growth hub in the interim helping minimise any inconvenience to MGH customers.

ERDF Information sharing events are held on a regular basis to support referrals. The events bring EU project managers, MGH staff and other business support and LA economic development officers together to support relationship building and alignment of the business and enterprise support landscape. The events provide an opportunity to find out more about new projects as well as providing a refresher on some of the more established projects

The two monthly MGH Operational Group meeting, help maintain and further develop the excellent working relationship that we have with the three LA and university partners that manage the 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 Industrial Strategy, Brexit and Scale-up. We have also received presentations from existing and new ERDF projects.

**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.