



From the WLEP Chair, Peter Pawsey

There has been much activity within the national LEP network during the past month with even more to come, mainly based around the Lord Heseltine Report on Growth, 'No Stone Unturned', and the positive underlying tone of Government in its response. Together they represent the first steps towards a new model for local economic growth. The general feeling across the 39 LEPs is that the next stage requires a co-creative approach involving both Government and the 39 Business LEP Chairs. The LEP Chairs have therefore offered their assistance to Government in developing the appropriate detailed plans in the context of the forthcoming spending round.

The LEPs and Government both agree with Lord Heseltine that there is a powerful case for a more local focus to economic growth and for more devolved economic powers. A new settlement has the potential to transform our national competitiveness, built more from the bottom up, as it once was. Government is clear in its intention to dramatically decentralise so as to unleash the pent up potential of local economies. The LEP Chairs agree the following with Government:

- * Business led local ambition, commitment and creativity need to be fully tapped;
- * Every part of our country should be set free to fulfil its potential for economic growth;
- * A new model of commitment and collaboration to economic growth is needed between central Government, the LEPs, businesses and our local authority family.

The 39 Chairs of the LEP Boards have therefore formally offered their help to HM Treasury and each Department with a major influence over economic growth, to reach viable conclusions about the quantum of their contributions to the Single Local Growth Fund (the 'single pot'), any necessary prescriptions to be attached to the funding, and the appropriate mechanisms for monitoring progress towards our mutual growth ambitions and outcomes.

We have two key meetings with Government Ministers and Whitehall officials over the next two weeks, so watch this space and I will attempt to keep you all fully informed. Interesting times!

WLEPs Growth Plan and EU Investment Strategy

In order to respond to the 'single pot' funding opportunity outlined in the Lord Heseltine Report and as outlined in the last edition of this bulletin, WLEP is actively addressing the Government's requirement to produce a Growth Plan and EU Investment Strategy and to have draft documents together by this autumn, with final versions in place by Spring 2014.

At the WLEP Board meeting on 23 May, the Government's requirements and timescale for the Growth Plan and EU Investment Strategy were noted. A Task and Finish Group and Terms of Reference were agreed, as was a detailed timeline.

Help to grow your business

If you are aiming to grow your business by 20% year on year, you may be interested in the services of Growth Accelerator. No matter what stage of growth your business is currently at, if your business is registered in England, employs less than 250 people and has a turnover of less than £40 million per annum, Growth Accelerator may help you to reach your target.

Services are tailored to meet individual requirements but may include advice on business development, access to finance, leadership development and even help to spot opportunities for innovation.

If you are interested, the Worcestershire contact is David Ledbury on 07810 654 599 or david.ledbury@growthaccelerator.com.

Forthcoming Business Awards

Herefordshire & Worcestershire Business Awards

Eight categories, including 'Excellence in Innovation' and 'Exporter of the Year'.

Closing date for entries: 31 July 2013.

Awards ceremony taking place on 26 September. More details from <http://www.hwchamber.co.uk/chamberbusinessawards.aspx>

British Chamber of Commerce Awards 2013

Categories include 'Exporter of the year', 'Outstanding personal achievement', 'The sustainability award'. Closing date for entries: 28 June. Awards ceremony taking place in London on 28 November. More details: <http://www.chamberawards.co.uk/>

Meeting with Emma Ward - 13 May

On 13 May Emma Ward, our Senior Whitehall LEP Sponsor, made her second visit to the County. Emma's role is to champion and be our critical friend regarding the development of the county's growth plan.

Emma visited the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park and saw the progress being made on construction She also visited Kidderminster Academy, the Redditch Eastern Gateway and the Longbridge Development, which familiarised her with the key priority projects in the north of the County.

Emma's feedback following her visit was that she now had a better understanding of Worcestershire opportunities and challenges to create economic growth.

Future is looking bright for Manufacturing

We were encouraged to read the news from the latest Manufacturing Advisory Service's research (link to www.mymas.org/news/mas-marometer-q4-report), conducted among over 100 small to medium sized West Midlands manufacturers. Nearly three quarters of those businesses questioned expected to increase sales over the next six months, with 51% reporting a rise in turnover during the first quarter of 2013.

At 14% of the workforce, Worcestershire has one of the highest proportions in the country currently employed in manufacturing. WLEP has identified the sector as one of five key strategic employment areas, alongside cyber security and defence; tourism; horticulture and food production; and environmental technology.

As reported in our previous bulletin, a major research project has recently been commissioned by WLEP. Worcester Research will be contacting businesses in order to create an accurate and up-to-date picture of the manufacturing sector in Worcestershire. The results will inform our ability to further support those businesses and ensure the future survival and prosperity of the sector in the county.

If you are contacted by our researchers, we do hope you will help us by taking part in the survey.

Blow your own trumpet!

Worcestershire is fortunate to have many innovative and successful companies located within its boundaries. We want to encourage more to come and do business here.

We will take every opportunity to trumpet the benefits of investing, working and living in Worcestershire and we hope that you will do the same. With the appointment of our new Communications and PR Executive, Jan Bailey, we are hoping to raise the profile of the county even more as a great place in which to invest, work, live and play.

With this in mind, if you feel that your business has a story to tell – perhaps an innovative new product or process or a recent business success – please do get in touch with Jan. Please also consider entering your organisation for the many business awards that are available. There has recently been a spate of West Midlands Awards and Worcestershire businesses are under-represented. We know that great things are happening in the county, so don't be shy – blow your own trumpet. Or tell us, and we'll blow it for you!

From Good to Great

Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP has announced a new scheme to find 200 of the next generation of Midlands business leaders and entrepreneurs.

Great200leaders is targeted at individuals and companies in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP area, which includes Bromsgrove, Redditch and the Wyre Forest. In essence, it is a personal performance and business growth scheme that offers a 12 month coaching and mentoring programme, part funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

Further details are available from:

www.birmingham.gov.uk/bdp

FORTHCOMING DATES AND EVENTS

18 June

FinditinWorcestershire Breakfast Meeting - Sixways

21 June

LEP Liaison Meeting

27 June

Export Forum Launch

19 July

Access to Finance Event

25 July

WLEP Board Meeting

Pinch Point funding for Hoo Brook Development

We were delighted to hear the announcement from the Department for Transport that it has awarded £4.9m from its 'Pinch Point' fund to support the second phase of the Hoobrook Link Road development in Kidderminster.

The money will be used for the completion of the Link Road between the Stourport Road and the Worcester Road around Kidderminster. This will open up the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park, thus alleviating a local 'pinch point', with serious traffic congestion, and release land for housing

A date for your diary!

Following on from the success of our conference last November, at which our Business Plan was launched, we are delighted to announce that we will be holding another event this year. This will take place on the morning of Thursday 10th October. Further details will follow, but please do reserve the date in your diary.

Does Worcestershire need a top hotel?

Visit Worcestershire is carrying out a research project on behalf of WLEP that asks business owners whether the county needs a top quality hotel.

Although the county has many hotels and a new 120 bed Premier Inn is being constructed at the Worcester Cricket Club, it lacks a major 4 or 5 star option. The survey will ascertain whether or not this lack will prevent the county's tourism industry from developing further in the future.

Does your business have such a requirement for visitors and if so, how many such bed reservations are generally required every year?

Regulations and Business Charter Action Plan

Local Following WLEP's designation as a national 'Better Business for All' champion last November, a sub group has been forging strong alliances with both the two Pathfinder LEPs (Greater Birmingham and Solihull & Leicester and Leicestershire) and other nearby Champion LEPs (Black Country, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, Coventry and Warwickshire) in order to explore collective solutions. WLEP has also been asked to act as a lead mentor to The Marches LEP and to Gloucester/Gloucestershire First LEP.

Working closely with its lead partner, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), a joint Business and Regulators Workshop was held in March 2013 to shape the first joint action Charter Action Plan. This plan identifies actions and next steps to take the Regulations Supporting Business Growth agenda forward in Worcestershire. Key themes and work streams were identified, with a primary focus on a 'Made in Worcestershire' Horticulture and Food Production Sector Pilot, to look at streamlining regulatory experiences and exploring constructive ways to support new and expanding businesses. At the same time, new ideas can be tested which may generate generic solutions to help other business sectors.

The WLEP Business Regulator sub group membership is currently being confirmed and will comprise representatives of the WLEP Business Board, business member organisations and individual businesses. Ed Webb, Chairman of Webbs Garden Centres Ltd, will lead the sub group. Further details are available from Claire Bridges on 07720 593296

Growing Places Fund

The four projects approved last year by WLEP for over £3 million of funding under Round 1 of the Government's 'Growing Places' fund have all seen construction well under way and in one case already completed.

As reported in our last bulletin, Worcestershire's iconic New Road Cricket Ground is a hive of activity, where Growing Places funding supports the development of improved club conferencing, administration and access facilities alongside a new 120 bedroom hotel also under construction.

The fund has also benefited the Hoo Brook Link Road in Kidderminster where construction has begun on the first phase of an enterprise park located at the former British Sugar factory site.

The two other projects approved under the scheme did not go on to use Growing Places funding, but have moved forward at pace. Worcester University's Grove Farm business park and Evesham Vale Growers' development of an anaerobic digester renewable energies plant near Fladbury, Pershore were both subsequently able to negotiate favourable loan agreements in the commercial market. Grove Farm is now well under construction and the roundabout access on the A44 to the Fladbury Plant is completed and open to traffic. This is still a great result for WLEP. The fact that the Growing Places Fund was prepared to make an award provided these two projects with the ammunition they needed to raise the necessary funds commercially. As a result, they have been able to press on with their respective schemes, accelerating their progress to a point which would probably not otherwise have been achievable.

Following the WLEP's Board Meeting last month, up to six further major development projects have been approved and earmarked for over £3 million more of funding under Round 2 of the Fund, subject to due diligence. This is great news for the county, creating more jobs and benefits for the local economy.