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Gloucestershire County Council
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Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments

Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership – GFirst LEP

Gloucestershire UK

1. Overview

Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) or GFirst LEP, is the economic partnership for the county of Gloucestershire. LEPs were established by the UK Government in 2010 to support and encourage growth in their local economies and to deliver the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)[i] agreed with government, for their area. Funding is provided from the UK Government's Local Growth Fund, and is distributed to the LEP via a Growth Deal with Government - over £100m allocated to Gloucestershire so far. The plan will provide new jobs, skills training, support businesses and deliver infrastructure schemes within the county to support economic growth. EU funding is also utilised to support growth as set out in the European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy (ESIF) for Gloucestershire 2014-2020.[ii]

The Gloucestershire LEP is governed by a Board and supported by a dedicated staff team. Gloucestershire County Council is the major local government partner with responsibility for delivering a number of LEP managed projects particularly infrastructure including roads and broadband, whilst also acting as the accountable body for the UK government and EU funding.

A published Assurance Framework is in place to ensure the Partnership is properly managed. Projects are delivered at locations across Gloucestershire to support the economy in both rural and urban areas and/or delivered on a county-wide basis. https://www.gfirstlep.com/

2. Main Challenges

The main challenges faced in supporting and expanding the local economy:

> Demographic challenges – Gloucestershire has an ageing population and there is movement of numbers of young people under 25 who leave/enter the county to study and or work.

> Need for more employment, land and housing. How do we do this when large tranches of the County have physical constraints, including designations such as Areas of

Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), flood zone areas, and the Forest of Dean which limit development?

> The Economy of Gloucestershire 2017 states that 83% of residents in Gloucestershire also work in the county;[iii] showing the reliance on county jobs by county residents from both urban and rural areas. There are also strong links to neighbouring cities such as Bristol and Swindon for employment and leisure. How do we ensure that Gloucestershire is not a place workers simply commute from?

> The county is predominantly rural. Accessibility to appropriate infrastructure (e.g. broadband) and services is increasingly important to businesses and communities in these areas. How to sustain the rural economy when public transport is expensive and subsidised, and young people may not have driving licences or cars?

> Gloucestershire has a diverse and stable economy, but it is important to plan ahead and anticipate important future economic trends. Which employment sectors will become increasingly important in the future and which ones are likely to shrink?

Suburbanization/Urbanization

It is important to plan ahead for the provision of land for housing and employment for Gloucestershire residents and, the infrastructure needed to support these to enable economic growth. Strict government legislation and controls for planning and development are in place, which seek to protect some areas of the county and ensure that development is positioned in appropriate locations. Development is often concentrated in the central urban part of the county known as the Central Severn Vale. Although this area has good or easily expanded infrastructure, the growth does cause increasing urbanization/suburbanization of the outskirts of settlements. For example the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) focusses on the 'Growth Zone' or the area of employment land in proximity to the M5 motorway which goes through the central part of the county. (Please refer to Map at end of document).

3. Main Insights

3.1 Insights related to the broad area of "network governance"

Gloucestershire has the same boundaries for the LEP, County Council, Fire Service, Police Authority, Highway Authority and Health Authority. The LEP brings together business partners with partners from the public, third and educational sectors to support the local economy. Other Gloucestershire partnerships link with the LEP and to other themes within the ROBUST project (e.g. the Local Nature Partnership[iv]) relates to Food Systems and Ecosystem Services. The Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee[v] involves political partners at county and district level, but also involves the LEP. The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) is the document designed to influence planning and development for the central part of the county across three district areas: Cheltenham Borough Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council, Gloucester City Council[vi]. (Please see map at end of document showing JCS area.)

3.2 Insights related to mechanisms of cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation

> The LEP works with neighbouring LEPs on a number joint interests and for reasons of geography. High-speed broadband infrastructure is essential for rural residents and businesses and this is acknowledged and is being addressed by the Fastershire project, which is being delivered through a partnership between Gloucestershire County Council and neighbouring Herefordshire Council. Rural communities in both counties have similar issues with broadband connectivity.[vii] [viii] [ix]

> Additional £10.5m European funding (EARDF) has been secured by GCC and Herefordshire Council in partnership with the Marches LEP, to extend the Fastershire scheme to other rural businesses across the county; in those more remote and hard to reach communities/clusters.[x]

> Without public subsidy from the government, matched by local authority investment, these rural communities would not be able to access the level of coverage and infra-structure needed for high speed broadband from the current commercial suppliers in the market place. The infrastructure is simply too expensive and it is often unviable for commercial suppliers to invest in those areas.

3.3 Insights related to the role of (actual, potential) social, organizational, institutional innovations

The Growth Hub Network, an extension to an existing LEP project, is being rolled out and implemented using Growth Deal funding and building on the foundations established by the original Growth Hub based in Gloucester. The Growth Hub Network will provide business support services across the county, easily accessible to businesses through a range of strategic locations. These include information at 31 established Gloucestershire libraries which will provide an impartial advice, guidance and signposting service.[xi] An 'innovation lab' has recently opened at Coleford library. Larger dedicated facilities with additional services will be constructed at particular locations to offer specialist services within their local area and tailored to their local businesses. For example: Cirencester Growth Hub (15 miles from Gloucester) will provide meeting rooms, offices, co-working space, a business advisory service, workshops, and networking events. Vantage Point Business Village Growth Hub in the Forest of Dean (approx. 20 miles from Gloucester) will provide bespoke incubator units for start-ups, plus other business support infrastructure.

4. Effectiveness Indicators

LEPs are the UK government structure for utilising and managing/monitoring the investment of Growth Funds and stimulating economic growth in their area. Whilst the 38 LEPs may vary across England in terms of size, local plans, and their priorities according to the geography and economic situation within their boundary; the principles about how

3

LEPs are managed and governed are defined in particular government policy documents. This arrangement involves a close working relationship with local partners including: local authorities, businesses, voluntary and community sector organisations, the education sector (such as universities and HE/FE colleges), and the relevant government officials.

The Gloucestershire LEP (GFirst LEP) seeks to ensure that businesses and communities benefit across the County by delivering projects at both rural and urban locations (e.g. Growth Hub Network). Some projects are particularly target rural locations (Cinderford Northern Quarter Spine Road), rural businesses (Fastershire project), urban locations (Gloucester Central Transport Hub), and specific employment sectors (e.g. Green Skills Centre in Berkeley). The LEP relies on a strong partnership to achieve these results. There are links to the use of European funding through the EU Structural and Investment Fund Strategy for Gloucestershire and the two LEADER projects operating within the County.
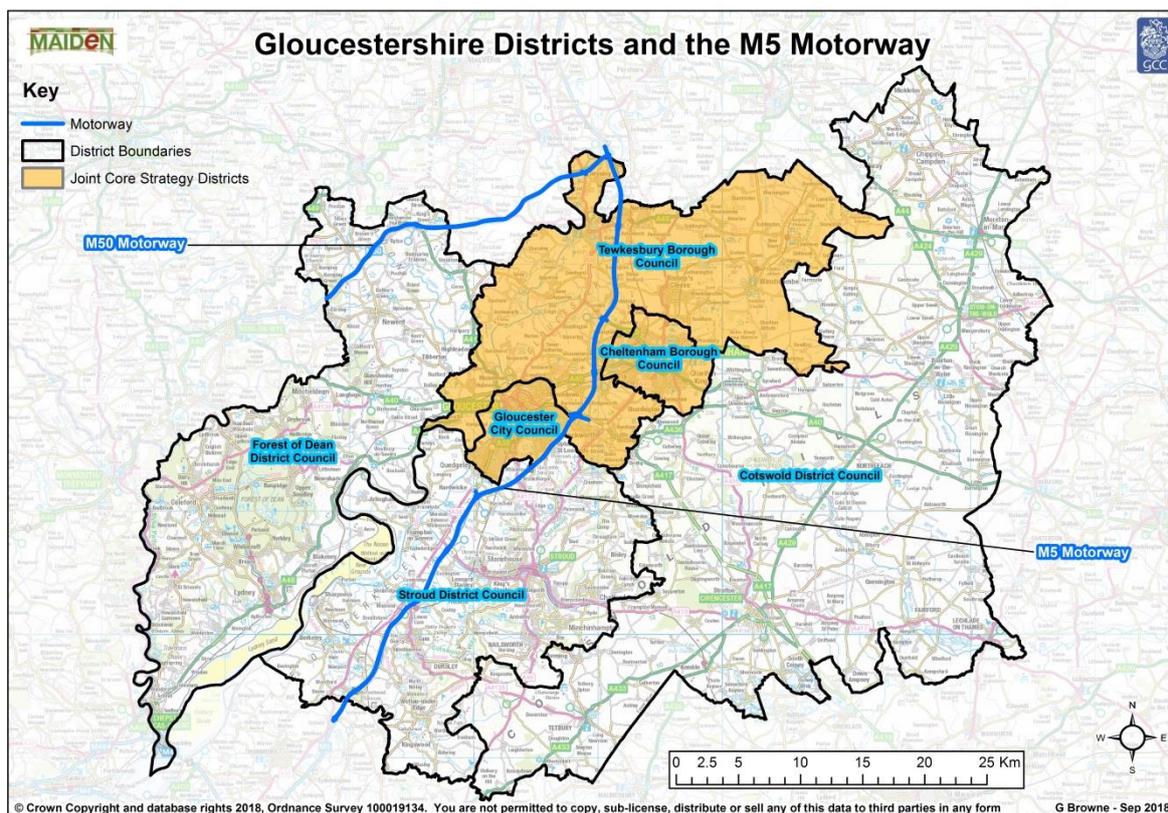
5. Illustration and further information

> Gloucestershire Growth Hub and Growth Hub Network – see above section 3.3 https://www.thegrowthhub.biz/

> GFirst LEP has a number of Business Groups which support particular sectors of the economy within Gloucestershire. For example: Banking and Finance, Energy, Advanced Manufacturing, Construction and Infrastructure, and so on. All groups cover both rural and urban locations for the businesses involved, but one Agri Food and Rural Business Group is specifically focussed on the land based business sector and issues and links to all three themes for the Gloucestershire Communities of Practice: Food Systems, Ecosystem Services and New Business Models/Labour Market. http://www.gfirstlep.com/gfirst-LEP/About-Us/Business-Groups/

Gloucestershire contains two LEADER schemes delivering projects in rural areas via their Local Action Group. Grants are provided to projects that create new jobs and contribute to the economic development of the area.

> Forest and Tewkesbury Borough LEADER which operates in neighbouring districts within Gloucestershire http://forestandtewksleader.co.uk/

> Cotswolds LEADER which operates across much of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and some parts beyond, such as parts of west Oxfordshire. http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/grants-and-projects/cotswolds-leader/

> Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP) - please refer to Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments example.

ROBUST

Gloucestershire Districts and the M5 Motorway

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[i] Gloucestershire's Strategic Economic Plan https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/our-vision/strategic-economic-plan/

[ii] Further information about the LEP ESIF and local Committee https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/our-vision/eu-structural-investment-funds-strategy/

[iii] The Economy of Gloucestershire 2017 https://inform.gloucestershire.gov.uk/economy/overview/

[iv] Gloucestershire Nature Partnership http://gloucestershirenature.org.uk/index.php

[v] Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=725

[vi] Joint Core Strategy https://jointcorestrategy.org/

[vii] Fastershire website http://www.fastershire.com/

[viii] Fastershire is the joint project with Herefordshire to support high speed broadband in rural areas. http://www.fastershire.com/about-fastershire

[ix] Fastershire – Deployment Map http://www.fastershire.com/news/article/116/2018/08/14/stage-4-cluster-rollout-contracts-awarded#home

[x] EAFRD – Fastershire Roll Out   http://www.fastershire.com/news/article/116/2018/08/14/stage-4-cluster-rollout-contracts-awarded

[xi] Information about the Growth Hub Network and Gloucestershire libraries. https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries/library-activities-and-services/library-growth-hub-network/

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