



Worcestershire  
Local Enterprise Partnership

# Worcestershire Plan for Growth: 2020-2040

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Strategy Session from 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023  
Feedback

# Key Comments - Skills

- Apprenticeships – the perception that the paperwork processes for the business owners is too difficult, maybe a lack of knowledge about what it does involve. Maybe we can introduce a process to help businesses in this area.
- Do pupils/parents/teachers understand what apprenticeships are and the benefits of this route into a career?
  - UCAS applications have decreased as 18yr demographic has increased – why?
  - Which sectors are suffering the most from a skills shortage and are being prevented from growing?
  - Businesses still have vacancies for apprentices, whereas the problem used to be the other way around.
- Retaining apprentices once they are on the programme has an attrition rate on the employer's investment – example, 10 recruited per year, lose 50% during training then maybe a further 30% that go to other businesses once trained, usually for better money, leaving 20% core value remaining.
- Marketing should be aimed at parents - they can attend meetings or events which can give them a better understanding which in turn supports their advice/guidance to children. (How do we influence parents?)
- Brick layers can earn a significant wage due to the skills shortage – we need more materials that supports employers who attend career advice events which literally shows different trades with speech bubbles declaring earning potential.
- Are the right courses available in the county to help combat shortages for a particular sector?
- Career mapping – we should start to show career paths at schools in the last year of primary – inspiring the young people earlier.

# Key Comments - Skills



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- The volume of low skilled and low paying jobs are an issue in relation to the economic and productivity challenge faced in the county.
- Education and training providers have seen lecturers leave the profession to 'pick up the tools' and go back to the industry because they can earn more money, so maybe a lack of tutors with skills and experience to run the courses that employers are asking for?
- Need a system / programme that can transfer knowledge from experienced people.
- Getting schools to really value careers education – maybe introducing professional career advisors to send to schools that maybe don't have this facility where pupils may not have the option to speak to someone (other than a teacher)
- Funding is short term and not flexible, cannot support those most at risk of NEET, age 15 anymore – very little core funding for this function, all tied to outcomes.

# Skills



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## Existing Current Activity

- Department for Education Skills Bootcamps ( April 2023 – March 2024)
- Worcestershire Apprenticeships ( ongoing)
- Primary Stem Challenge
- Careers and Enterprise Company Programme

## Funding/Resources

- £999k DFE Monies based on performance
- £500k Open for Business and WCC core funding , includes around £45k Business Sponsorship for Apprenticeship Awards.
- £15k WCC monies
- £281k Careers and Enterprise Company Funds £140k WCC sources, £70k other.

## Measures Of Success

- 327 Individuals into programmes
- 80% must complete their course
- 75% into employment
- Increased number of Worcestershire residents participating in apprenticeships.
- No of schools and students participating in challenge (83 in 2023/24)
- Gatsby Benchmark levels
- NEET Numbers
- Levels of young people returning to County to study
- Businesses Engaged
- Increased awareness and understanding with pupils/parents.
- Expansion of courses addressing skills shortage in specific sectors.

# Key Comments – Business Environment



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- We have plenty of businesses, but just not efficiently/economically producing enough value.
- We need to have a new drive on Leadership and Management Programmes to improve the productivity of the local business community – this can be a hard sell
- An example was discussed of investing in employees put on a 7-month leadership course, someone as old as 60yrs old enjoyed it and recognised the value of investing in these skills and the benefits to the business.
- How do we market leadership and management to businesses - instilling the principles of empowering people, learn by experience, help to grow?
- Every sector is becoming more digital, with a skills requirement associated. Whether you are in tourism, manufacturing, retail.
- If we want to encourage businesses to invest in the county, we need to have excellent digital connectivity.
- Limited knowledge/awareness about the Growth Hub
  - Create a marketing piece to educate / raise awareness on what they do
- Business support package needs to be clear and well promoted. Also target the companies that are growing and have the potential to expand
- Increase skills at digital level, within all training courses

# Key Comments – Business Environment



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- Do we have Development Zones – these are locations in the county that have easier planning, better physical and digital connectivity and discounts on business rates.
- Technology and new business development that nationally boasts about MHSP as a location.
- Recognise the District strengths and have physical locations which allows for innovation, networking and co-investment.
- Better planning is required as the business park (Kidderminster) has limited digital connectivity, therefore greater demands on developers to build in digital connectivity and net zero improvements.
- We need to be ready for next growth cycle as generally after a recession a lot of micro businesses start up, we need buildings to support these entrepreneurs with short term leases and accessibility to business support, advice and guidance.
- We need something similar to The Kiln in various locations and for these establishment to be larger scale.
- Get everyone together, landowners etc as collaboration is needed to achieve quality investment in commercial property and fill gaps in the market, particularly those that the market will not deliver.
- Consider International markets – such as the commercial models in Lille which involved business support, networking and advice related to inward investment
- Value Stream mapping, identify, understand waste and bottlenecks

# Business Environment



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## Existing Current Activity

- KAM Account (Key Account Management)
- Professional Business Advisors
- Central Government Funding Contract
- UKSPF Contract

## Funding/Resources

- £57,000
- £120,000
- £261,000
- £419,000

## Measures Of Success

- Support additional investment into UK PLC by FDI companies
- Growth in number of businesses supported by leadership courses
- Positive feedback and testimonials from employees who have done training.
- Improvement of internet connectivity and infrastructure for businesses.
- Increased awareness of the utilisation of the Growth Hub.
- Growth in the Technology and digital sectors within the county.
- Jobs created / safeguarded
- Number of new businesses created
- Number of businesses with improved productivity
- Businesses engaged in new markets
- Number of decarbonisation plans developed

# Key Comments – Innovation



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- Where is the evidence to justify a level of intervention, as the national measures don't really get to a set of KPIs that show impact.
- We currently don't understand what, where, who with and how our businesses are innovating.
- Are our county businesses innovating?
- Fully behind R&D, however,
  - How much impact is it to the industry?
  - How much of a competitive edge is it giving?
- Innovation doesn't only need R&D to rely on:
  - R&D tax credit rules and regulations
  - Rules are too grey – around qualification of the tax system.
  - We can be the convenor
- Change the culture - connecting people - rather than just throwing money to R&D
- Networking is done by professional services which can then sell their wares (which is not what we want)
- We need to get in touch with the right people who do the creating together/ People dont know who is doing what, communicating is key.



# Key Comments – Innovation



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- Can't do everything - what key things can we do?
- Getting groups together (Roundtable), (not competitors, but neutral cohorts that can work together) and discuss whatever maybe the issues, concerns, obstacles but also discuss what went well, what works. (Sounds like a Peer-to-Peer group) - Cross Fertilisation - this can improve so many things:
  - Best Practice and Knowledge Transfer
  - Can we use the Growth Hub to help this?
- SIG ( Share In Growth) this is specifically for the Aerospace Industry, however, we can adopt the principles/Values of it.
  - [Sharing in Growth UK \(sig-uk.org\)](http://sig-uk.org)
  - Values - Inspire/Integrity/Ikigai ( A reason for being, Passion and Purpose)

## Existing Current Activity

- BetaDen

## Funding/Resources

- £506k (£361k via UKSPF and £145k via GPF)

## Measures Of Success

- Increase the number of innovative projects implemented by business.
- Quantifiable improvements resulting from R&D investments.
- Increase in collaboration and networking among relevant stakeholders.
- Success stories and case studies demonstrating the impact of Peer-to-Peer groups.
- Adopted and implemented principles and values.

# Key Comments – Infrastructure



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- Working in partnership – WLEP has been seen to be the investor in physical infrastructure schemes such as Worcestershire Parkway, Southern Link Road, HooBrook Link Road and other key road, rail and digital projects which have had an impact on residents
- These schemes have provided the LEP and other partners to project a positive message and show progress – changes to funding routes has now seen a perceived slowdown (market conditions)
- Future pipeline of county-wide infrastructure schemes is not clear
- Need to factor in investment across energy, digital, road and rail with a new pipeline – is this the LEP responsibility?
- Evaluate the investment in the infrastructure of county and the impact this has made on productivity and return on investment.
- Business research to help develop future projects.
- Improve planning – the content of plan i.e. digital (broadband and mobile) capabilities – quicker/efficient process for plans to be approved
- Updated metrics to show improvement and performance levels / benchmark

# Infrastructure

## Existing Current Activity

- Local Area Energy Planning Mapping (LAEP Mapping)

## Funding/Resources

- 0.8 FTE Project Manager - Resource

## Measures Of Success

- Updated and current metrics
- Speed and reliability of internet connectivity is present at a county wide level.
- Plan of infrastructure concerning energy, renewable? Charging points for electrical vehicles?
- Planning process made more efficient for holistic view and for quicker turnaround for projects, especially for targeted sectors.

# Emerging Priorities to Consider



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## Skills

- Addressing difficulties and lack of knowledge in the apprenticeship process for businesses.
- Identifying sectors that are being prevented from growing due to recruitment and workforce planning issues.
- Consider marketing efforts aimed at parents to provide them with better direction to support their children's career choices.
- Assessing the availability of courses in Worcestershire to address skill shortages in specific sectors or travelling across county borders to learn what Worcestershire doesn't provide.
- Promoting different trades and their earning potential to students through career advice events.

## Innovation

- Recognising the importance of data gathering and understanding barriers to growth.
- Focusing on changing the culture of innovation and promoting collaboration among relevant stakeholders.
- Questioning the impact and competitive edge provided by research and development (R&D) efforts.
- Highlighting the need for clear rules and regulations regarding R&D tax credits and investments.

## Business Environment

- Raising awareness about the Growth Hub service and the support it can broker through marketing efforts.
- Discussing the need for development zones, signposting, and highlighting each District's strengths.
- Identifying and addressing waste and bottlenecks through value stream mapping.
- Introducing more awareness around Legal advice, HR related support
- Clarity on what business support programmes are available?
- WGH team member to do presentation to the board - overview.
- Recognising the need for leadership and management programmes.
- Business research and data on market to support inward investment

## Infrastructure

- The need for updated performance metrics or value for money measures.
- Assessing the energy infrastructure within the county.
- Improving planning to ensure essential infrastructure, such as internet access, is available for business parks.
- Build the pipeline of future schemes to impact the strategy and have business cases ready for government investment
- Commercial property strategy to respond to the evidence base.

# Next Steps – Timeline



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- July Board – consider Skills and associated priorities for focus
- 6 October Board – consider Innovation and Business Environment areas and associated priorities for focus
- October – collate priorities across all PfG areas mapped against resource
- 1 December Board – prioritisation exercise based on outputs of June-October sessions
- December – Finalise delivery plan



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## Worcestershire 2040 Vision:

**“A connected, creative, dynamic economy for all.”**

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