

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee

9 March 2023

Draft Update

Report of The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership

Organisation:	Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (Marches LEP)
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1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

1.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee on activity over the last 12 months and the current priorities of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and how these support the economic growth agenda within Telford & Wrekin.

3.0 Background

3.1 This report provides an update on the Marches LEP, including its purpose and priorities, and on LEP funded projects which are benefitting the Borough, including those directly delivered by Telford & Wrekin Council.

3.2 The Marches LEP last presented to this committee on 3 November 2021. Since then, the economy has experienced a number of economic shocks driven by the ongoing impact of Covid 19, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and domestic political upheaval.

3.3 The LEP Review, referenced in last year's report, was concluded in March 2022. This, along with the Levelling Up White Paper, outlined the future role of LEPs in supporting local businesses and the local economy with specific roles in:

- embedding a strong, independent and diverse local business voice into local democratic institutions in line with the Government's devolution agenda.

- Carrying out strategic economic planning in partnership with local leaders to clearly articulate their area's economic priorities and sectoral strengths.
- Delivery of specific projects and functions on behalf of a number of government departments.

3.4 Further clarity on this role (and the LEP's funding for the Growth Hub, Key Account Management and Marches Careers Hub projects) is still awaited. In the absence of this, the Marches LEP and partners are continuing to focus on the delivery of contracted projects and the development of a new Marches-wide strategic economic plan. This will articulate shared economic opportunities and challenges and areas for intervention.

This report highlights significant success within the borough of Telford & Wrekin to draw to the Committee's attention, including:

- An update on the delivery of Local Growth Fund (LGF) and Getting Building Fund (GBF) funded Stronger Communities projects and the Fuel Poverty through Zero Carbon Innovation scheme (section 4.1)
- Delivery of business support services, including the Marches Growth Hub (section 4.2)
- New project development to support the net zero agenda (section 4.3)
- Delivery of the Marches Careers Hub to improve careers education in local secondary schools and colleges and other skills support (section 4.4)
- Transport policy, research and strategy development (section 4.5).

3.5 Finally, section 4.6 provides an update on Marches LEP Governance demonstrating its strong business voice through public, private and third sector Board membership.

3.6 Work within this report is undertaken within Marches LEP resources. This includes an annual revenue contribution from each of the Marches LEP's partner local authorities (£23k from Telford & Wrekin in 2022/23). This enables the drawdown of BEIS/DLUHC core funding for the LEP. Financial risk to Telford & Wrekin Council and other local authority partners is limited through the appointment of Shropshire Council as the Marches LEP's accountable body (managed through a service level agreement) and Marches LEP governance processes which ensure that budgets are managed effectively to meet all financial liabilities.

4.0 Key Information and Priorities

4.1 **Local Growth Deal Fund (LGF) 3 and Getting Building Fund (GBF) investment** was allocated to two Stronger Communities projects (£9.38 million) and to the Fuel Poverty through Zero Carbon Innovation scheme (£1 million).

The LGF Stronger Communities project, led by Telford & Wrekin Council, comprised three sub projects with the LEP funding alongside Council and other partner's investment delivering the regeneration of brownfield sites and new, mixed tenure housing in key locations across Telford, including sites at Donnington Wood, New College and within Station Quarter. The LEP investment aims to deliver 147 housing units, unlock 479 housing units due to successfully

securing additional funding, create 49 jobs and unlock 3 acres of employment land.

The GBF funded project, led by Telford & Wrekin Council, is supporting the regeneration of sites at New College and Glebe Street, Wellington, directly delivering 18 housing units, unlocking a further 95 housing units funded through other partners, supporting the development of a community sports facility and enabling 40 construction jobs. The LEP Board recently agreed to output changes for both Stronger Communities projects in order to enable additional external funding to be secured providing significant added value.

The GBF Tackling Fuel Poverty through Zero Carbon Innovation has supported Wrekin Housing Group in producing zero carbon homes across Telford & Wrekin using a combination of energy technologies being retrofitted to existing homes and fitted into brand new homes. The project has concentrated on the retrofit of 68 homes (PV and Battery Storage) and 11 non-Passivhaus new builds where planning permissions had already been granted. It also established a new national training programme backed by the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) to upskill the existing workforce and train apprentices in battery storage installation, with Telford College becoming the first college in the country to pilot and roll out the training.

4.2 **Business Support, including the Marches Growth Hub, Access to Finance and DIT funded Key Account Management**

Although the LEP's core funding has continued to reduce it has remained committed to supporting the local growth hubs across the Marches. As a result of savings made by the LEP following a staff reorganisation during 2022/23 an additional £7k was passed onto the Telford & Wrekin Growth Hub bringing the total supported to £34,710. This included £19,000 of direct financial support, £6,198 on annual licence fees for business databases, £8,970 on PR and £722 on the growth hub website.

From April 2022 to January 2023, the number of enquiries received via the Marches Growth Hub website and referred on to the Telford Growth Hub was 175. The number of visits to the 'About Us Telford & Wrekin' page on the Marches Growth Hub website was 658, placing it 13th in the list of most visited pages on the website, preceded largely by funding/grant programmes such as Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP) and events and support-finder pages. Given the profile and number of businesses in Telford & Wrekin, the number of enquiries and page views compared to other growth hubs is significant. Examples of support for businesses provided by Telford & Wrekin Council who operate the Telford Growth Hub in partnership with the LEP, can be found at *Appendix B*.

The LEP organised an Access to Finance (A2F) event aimed at intermediaries at Telford College on 1 December 2022. This was heavily over-subscribed and attended by 40 people in-person, plus an additional 10 attendees online. This increased awareness of current business growth funding schemes amongst local accountants, solicitors and other professional advisers. Information on the event and a case study on a business that successfully secured Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) funding is at *Appendix B*.

To maximise the business voice within the Marches LEP, funding has been allocated to support the secretariat services for the Telford Business Board. This seeks to build additional capacity within the (volunteer) Board and ensure good governance.

To complement the work of [Enterprise Telford](#), the Marches LEP has again secured funding from Department for International Trade (DIT) to identify and engage hard-to-reach foreign-owned businesses, understand their plans for local investment and how these can best be supported. This resource supplements the Council's Inward Investment Team increasing capacity to gather information regarding local economic growth potential, identifies and unblocks constraints to investment and enables signposting to appropriate local, national and global support services through the DIT network. Through the combined work the programme is currently supporting 18 foreign-owned businesses within Telford & Wrekin and has identified 7 associated investment projects. The first of these projects was realised in December 2022 with confirmation of a £2.2 million investment in a new production line at a Swedish owned company in Telford, creating 4 new jobs and safeguarding 150 others.

4.3 **New project development to support the net zero agenda**

The LEP ERDF allocation has funded the Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP) in the Borough. Over the last 12 months a total of 36 businesses have been supported through BEEP. Of these 12 have gone on to claim grants totalling £96,000. The rest have had an assist and not yet come forward for a grant. There is still about £25k left in the Telford pot, but this looks likely to be utilised with projects that are still in the pipeline.

Overall, 102 businesses have been supported in Telford & Wrekin by the programme and 38 have received funding totalling £327,288. Examples of support for businesses through BEEP can be found at *Appendix B*.

The new Marches Energy Grant (MEG) was launched in December 2022 and has received more than 300 enquiries across the Marches (the LEP received more enquiries in two days than the whole of the previous quarter). This clearly demonstrates business demand for such grant funding and the LEP will consider topping up the scheme subject to the LEP Board approving additional funding. Revenue match funding is being provided by the Council through its UKSPF Investment Programme.

Low voltage substation sites are being identified across Telford & Wrekin where monitoring equipment can be located under the new LEP funded Network Monitoring to Support Community Decarbonisation project. This aims to identify faults, better understand changing energy demands and assess where grid reinforcement may be required. Analysis of monitoring information will assist in easing current grid constraints which are a barrier to business investment.

The LEP's Principal Net Zero Project Officer, Tim Yair, has continued to support the implementation on the Marches Energy Strategy and help Telford based businesses to better understand their sustainability and energy efficiency options.

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An example of this was when he spoke at the Energy: Navigating the Market and Delivering Resilience event in January 2023 and the Energy Efficiency and Resilience event in February 2023.

4.4 **Marches Careers Hub and skills support projects**

The Marches Careers Hub currently supports 19 institutions located within Telford & Wrekin. Through its Steering Group and Strategic Planning Group, where Telford & Wrekin Council is represented, it ensures that its work aligns with other borough initiatives such as Life Ready Work Ready, Future Focus and Aspire to HE. The Marches Careers Hub has also provided co-sponsorship for the Apprenticeship, Employment and Skills Show to be held on 16 March 2023.

Overall schools and colleges across Telford & Wrekin are performing well against the national Gatsby Benchmarks. The Hub is actively supported by Capgemini, SaTH and Wrekin Housing Group, who, as Cornerstone employers, are exemplars of early careers planning and school engagement and support the recruitment of Enterprise Advisers (business volunteers) to drive strategic work with schools.

The Marches Careers Hub has recently secured funding from the University of Wolverhampton to trial a NEETs prevention project through targeted support within Telford. This will act as a pilot and the learning from it will be shared across the Marches area.

The Marches LEP Skills Advisory Panel, chaired by Graham Guest - Principal & CEO of Telford College, who also acts as the LEP Board's Skills Champion, includes representation from across Telford & Wrekin from organisations such as the local authority, Telford Business Board and Harper Adams University.

The local authority and Telford College both benefit from LEP-funded licences which give access to the online Lightcast Analyst data platform. This supports an evidence-based approach to strategy and planning through the analysis of the latest labour market information. This access has recently been extended to Shropshire Chamber who, as a nominated Employer Representative Body, is leading the development of a Local Skills Improvement Plan on behalf of the Department for Education.

4.5 **Transport policy, research and strategy development**

As part of the Transport Officers Group (TOG) Telford & Wrekin Council is benefitting from the work being delivered by AECOM Ltd appointed by the Marches LEP. AECOM have been tasked with identifying strategic transport projects that address the priorities of the Marches Strategic Economic Plan and wider government policy priorities (growth, levelling up, rural mobility and decarbonisation). As a part of subgroup of the TOG, Telford & Wrekin Council is assisting AECOM to identify a list of five potential projects that would be in a strong position to attract future investment. AECOM will then develop the early stage business case and set out the roadmap needed to progress the transport projects. It is hoped that the work will be completed by early April 2023.

The LEP is currently funding a land use study to outline opportunities for renewable energy production and carbon capture. This will enable land owners to understand potential investment opportunities and ways in which the area can make the most of its natural capital.

The Marches LEP is currently updating its Strategic Economic plan to highlight opportunities to drive inclusive growth. This will be informed by current economic data and shaped by the local authorities' strategies, including the Telford Vision 2032. It will outline areas for potential investment and underpin partnership approaches which best position the area to benefit from future funding.

4.6 **Marches LEP Governance**

The Marches LEP became a company limited by guarantee in February 2019. Its Board membership is set out in Appendix A including representation from Telford & Wrekin Council, Telford Business Board and other organisations based in the Borough. The newly elected Chair, Sonia Roberts, heads up Landau, based in Wellington and Will Westley, the newly appointed Deputy Chair, is the Chair of Telford Business Board.

5 **Alternative Options**

5.1 N/A for this report

6 **Key Risks**

6.1 Clarity on the future mandate of the LEP and associated funding for projects is still to be confirmed which severely limits the organisation's ability to forward plan. That said, the LEP continues to focus on contracted delivery and on supporting the area in making the case to government for increased local investment. To this end the LEP is currently updating the Marches Strategic Economic plan to highlight opportunities to drive economic growth and is working with partners to best position the area for future funding.

7.0 **Council Priorities**

7.1 The work of the Marches LEP contributes directly to the ambitions outlined in the Telford Vision 2032 and the priorities within the Council Plan 2022.

8.0 **Financial Implications**

8.1 The LEP as part of its core funding allocation, which has been reduced further this year, is required to secure local authority match funding, which for Telford & Wrekin Council totals £23k.

9.0 **Legal and HR Implications**

9.1 N/A for this report

10.0 **Ward Implications**

10.1 The work of the Marches LEP impacts across the Borough in supporting businesses of all sizes and sectors. Major investment programmes are supporting projects in the following wards:

- Ketley & Overdale: The Stronger Communities Project (Station Quarter) received £2.1million GBF funding.

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- Arlestone: The Tackling Fuel Poverty through Zero Carbon Innovation project received £1 million GBF funding.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 To date across the Marches the LGF and GBF projects have created/safeguarded 2,517 jobs, provided 4,508 housing units, 14,245m² of commercial floor space, 41 hectares of employment land and 1,541m² of new/improved training floorspace. 68 properties have been retrofitted and 11 new homes have used new energy technology.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The LEP has an Inclusive Economy and Diversity [Policy](#) and action plan which contains key principles for the Board and staff to consider. The Chair of the LEP, Sonia Roberts, also acts as the LEP's Equality and Diversity Champion.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 Net carbon savings from BEEP projects supported in T&W are: 625.74 tonnes. Sustainability considerations have been built into project appraisal processes. LEP Board member Gordon Coppock acts as the LEP's Energy and Net Zero Champion.

14.0 Background Papers

N/A

15.0 Appendices

- A Marches LEP Board Members
- B Case studies to illustrate support delivered

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Marches LEP	17/02/2023	17/02/2023	RL

Appendix A

Marches LEP Board Members

Sector	Name	Job Title and Organisation
Private Sector Chair	Sonia Roberts	CEO, Landau
Area Business Board Chairs	Frank Myers MBE	Chair of Herefordshire Business Board
	Will Westley	Chair of Telford Business Board CIC (Deputy Chair of LEP)
Marches Business Support Steering Group Chair	Dave Courteen	MD, Mosaic Spa and Health Clubs
Enterprise Zone	Andrew Manning Cox	Chair of Hereford Enterprise Zone (Skylon Park)
Higher Education	Dr Catherine Baxter	University Secretary, Harper Adams University
Food & Drink/Agri Tech	Christine Snell	Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell
Financial/Professional Services	Paul Kalinauckas	Midland Engine Investment Fund Strategic Oversight Board
Post 16 Skills & Workforce Development	Graham Guest	CEO and Principal of Telford College
Manufacturing	Sara Williams	Marketing Manager, Protolabs
Construction/environmental technologies	Clare Fenton	Director, Fenton Partners
Health & Social Care	Alex Green	Director, Radfield Home Care
3 Local Authority Representatives	Cllr David Hitchiner (Alternate - Cllr Ellie Chowns)	Leader of Herefordshire Council
	Cllr Lezley Picton (Alternate - Cllr Dean Carroll)	Leader of Shropshire Council
	Cllr Lee Carter (Alternate - Cllr Richard Overton)	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street, Telford & Wrekin Council
Co-opted Member	Gordon Coppock	Energy Champion

Appendix B

Case studies to illustrate support delivered

The following case studies demonstrate examples of support delivered, including that accessed through the Marches Growth Hub:

- The impact of a successful application to BEEP by Hitherbest, a manufacturer of sheet metal fabrication products is provided [here](#)
- Details on grant funding and business support accessed by Telford-based MassTech Solution, may be found [here](#)
- A case study on support provided by the Council's Business Support Team through the Growth Hub to Bridge Cheese to access the Made Smarter scheme can be found [here](#)
- Details of grant funding accessed by Aceon may be found [here](#)
- A write up on the December 2022 Access to Finance event is provided [here](#)
- The impact of a successful application to the Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) is found [here](#)
- A video demonstrating the impact of the Getting Building Fund Fuel Poverty through Zero Carbon Innovation project is provided [here](#)