



On 24<sup>th</sup> November, Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) held its Annual Conference and AGM.

Prior to and during the event, delegates submitted questions. Many of the questions were asked during the panel sessions and AGM. However, we have posted below information and responses to a range of questions below.

Should you require further information, please contact [press.office@gslep.co.uk](mailto:press.office@gslep.co.uk)

### **Delivering Business Support**

#### **Do GBSLEP, or will they, provide support for social enterprises?**

Yes, we do. Any business (social enterprise or mainstream business) can access help through the Hub. However, we do have specialist advisers for social enterprises who can work through with you the best legal framework, for example Community Interest Company or Charitable Incorporated Organisation, or look at how to raise more traded revenue. Our partners Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs (ISE) also run a start up programme and host early stage female-led businesses in their Enterprise Hub. Contact on 0800 032 3488 or [info@gslepgrowthhub.co.uk](mailto:info@gslepgrowthhub.co.uk)

#### **How does GBSLEP financial support differ from that of business grants from High Street banks?**

We would normally provide advice and guidance after banks have turned down your request for funds. However, there are many great businesses that won't be given funds by the banks because their ideas or plans don't meet the bank's criteria. If that's the case, we can help you seek alternative finance and look at what kind of funding is best suited for your business. We can help you access grants (where they are available and according to eligibility) or work with you on your pitches to funders to get investment! To register your interest or for further information, please see our Funding and Finance section: <https://www.gbslepgrowthhub.co.uk/funding-finance/business-finance-finder>

#### **As we cut our own furrow away from The EU, what grants are planned ahead for 2022-5 to help local Manufacturing SMEs grow their businesses? How can we develop a cross network pathway from different support sources to enable them to do this?**

We will have access to residual EU funded grant programmes into 2023, this includes locally the Business Growth Programme administered by Birmingham City Council and the Manufacturing Growth Programme, which runs nationwide through Oxford Innovation. There are no guarantees of any grant or sector-based funding post-2022. The government is launching the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from 2022 to replace EU funds, however exactly how this will operate and what criteria will be used have not been announced. We hope to extend Made Smarter to 2024, with the support of BEIS, which is funding and expert consultancy for manufacturers to invest and adapt. However, the

point that all key players including businesses, manufacturers' organisations like Make UK and SMMT, LEPs and others should come together to build consensus about programmes to replace EU funded ones is a good one and as a LEP we will champion this approach over the coming months.

**If I have a suggestion regarding how best to help businesses (in turn to help the UK economy): who and where can I submit my suggestion?**

Please contact GBSLEP Growth Hub – Contact on 0800 032 3488 or [info@gsblepgrowthhub.co.uk](mailto:info@gsblepgrowthhub.co.uk)

**What funding is available for solopreneurs?**

To understand the range of support available at GBSLEP Growth Hub, please contact on 0800 032 3488 or [info@gsblepgrowthhub.co.uk](mailto:info@gsblepgrowthhub.co.uk)

**How and where to present a mega innovative project and to get kick-start funding.**

This depends on the type of project that you are looking to fund. GBSLEP puts out regular 'Funding Calls' for organisations to submit ideas and proposals. This can range from supporting our young people or driving the low carbon agenda. If you would be interested in discussing your project, please contact GBSLEP [hello@gsblep.co.uk](mailto:hello@gsblep.co.uk)

**Skills delivery**

**We are finding recruitment very difficult in the Planning Sector. We are keen to work with school and educate school leavers about planning and offer apprentice type roles. How could we best facilitate this?**

Recruitment across several sectors is proving particularly difficult at the moment. As the economy recovers from the pandemic, supply chains (including the labour supply) are not reacting quickly enough, creating a disconnect between vacancy and unemployment levels. This is only exacerbated by the effects of Brexit, individuals realising their worth in the labour market and a need for new and agile skills in almost all market sectors.

Through the [GBSLEP Skills and Apprenticeship Hub](#) and the Careers Hubs we support across the GBS geography, we have created pathways to employment for young people that both equip individuals with the high level skills they need to access high quality employment opportunities, and support employers to take on young people and create the high quality jobs both they and the recovering economy need.

This is done through a package of skills training with local high quality providers (including apprenticeships, traineeships etc.), appropriate grants and wage subsidies to employers, careers support, advice and guidance to young people, and the support of a skilled GBSLEP Skills Hub business adviser who will help you complete a bespoke Training Needs Analysis and design a package of support to meet both your business needs and the career aspirations of young people and school leavers.

**Supporting our Young People**

**What opportunities or support does GBSLEP have by way of, for example, tasters or work experience placements, that will raise the aspirations of those young people who have additional barriers to overcome?**

GBSLEP has established and funded careers hubs in both Birmingham and Solihull that connect young people with careers guidance and information as well as tasters, placements and progression

opportunities. Specialist schemes exist across our growth sectors including in Business, Professional and Financial Services with our key partner Ahead Partnership.

We are also looking to develop similar taster, placement and work experience schemes (aligned with high quality training opportunities) in sectors of current high demand and growth; such as digital, construction, logistics, hospitality etc.

We have also developed links with Speakers for Schools to offer careers support and work experience opportunities with some of the top 100 companies across our region and the whole country; virtual tasters and work experience can open up opportunities that were not available to all young people before the pandemic.

The integration of our careers support into our Skills and Apprenticeship Hub has enabled us to provide access to practical tasters and placement support through our advisers included in some of the additional support we offer through our schemes. This integrates into our Kickstart placement creation pipeline and our Young Persons' Jobs Fun that can take a young person from a taster, to a placement, to an apprenticeship, to a full-time high skilled and high quality job in a growth sector.

### **How will you ensure it will be an inclusive future for all young people?**

The future of our young people is a core strategic aim of GBSLEP and their needs are hard-wired into every intervention of ours going forwards. This includes ensuring that all of the major capital investments and developments that GBSLEP is heavily involved in afford employment and training opportunities for young people. Where possible these will be prioritised through appropriate social value interventions.

The offers of our Skills and Apprenticeship Hub are available to all young people, no matter of background, and we will ensure we look to overcome socio-economic barriers and discrepancies wherever possible. These include specialist interventions to improve apprenticeship participation in BAME communities, to overcome gender imbalances in the skills market and workplace, to develop appropriate interventions to support the graduate market and retain high-level skills etc.

We are ensuring that the needs of all young people are aligned to the areas of greatest demand within our economy. This includes ensuring that the skills and abilities of young people are maximised in response to the climate crisis, green recovery and growth. Here we understand that our young people are our most valuable resource as they will be the generation that must address the environmental mistakes of the past. GBSLEP investment in green skills infrastructure will ensure that the opportunity exists for our young people to gain the skills necessary to win the climate war within their lifetimes.

### **Driving a Low Carbon recovery**

#### **Are there plans to consider implementing a method to calculate carbon footprint savings within projects, to ensure carbon savings are clearly demonstrable rather than theoretical and potentially prone to manipulation?**

Yes we have developed a 10-point action plan at the LEP and Councillor Courts, leader of Solihull Council and GBSLEP Board Director, is our Net Zero Champion. He is responsible for taking us to task on this! The work delves into how we are monitoring and evaluating our own projects and investments.

This year's Delivery Plan is also very much focused on decarbonisation. Our Enterprise Zone Investment Plan is currently being updated to respond to a greater need to contribute towards regional and national decarbonisation targets. We're also doing this across our sectors e.g. creative/cultural e.g. by working with our partners on initiatives such as the Whole Places Zone.

In addition to this, we have also appointed a 'Sustainability Policy Officer' to take responsibility for reviewing how we can make carbon savings.

### **In the West Midlands area what is the split of emissions by sectors? Are all sectors being supported by GBSLEP?**

The Government produce emissions data for the various regions, which has a breakdown of the emissions per sector. The data is usually lagging by around two years as it is collated and verified, with the most recent update below which includes 2005 to 2019 data.

<https://data.gov.uk/dataset/723c243d-2f1a-4d27-8b61-cdb93e5b10ff/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2019>

Further data is also available in the WMCA 5-year plan: <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/4871/wm-net-zero-fyp-summary-tech-report.pdf>

GBSLEP are targeting support all sectors in a variety of ways, from investment in capital projects, project grants and through to 'pivot and prosper' reports. Examples include the Tyseley Energy Park which GBSLEP have supported throughout, which has created a green hydrogen refuelling station which is powering clean buses in Birmingham; along with the Green grant scheme we launched which was designed to help the Food Manufacturing industry to decarbonise.

As you will have seen, we launched the Clean Growth Programme which is designed to help SMEs (11 to 249 employees and three years of trading) of all sectors to have a Building Decarbonisation Report and/ or a Green Pivot Report carried out. These will help businesses to realise the ways in which they move towards a low carbon future.

### **Retrofitting our existing housing stock is key to meeting net zero. How can connect learners, education and employers?**

There is various work going on here to develop the roles needed for future retrofitting, as well as the knowledge and experience needed for when large scale retrofitting takes off. The West Midlands has a Retrofit Academy which can help learners to get the qualifications needed to lead retrofit projects and then there is the Low Carbon Homes company which conducts conferences around the country to share experiences, share resources as well as connect professionals on their forums:

- <https://www.retrofitacademy.org/home/>
- <https://www.lowcarbonhomes.uk/>

The WMCA has also recently launched a pioneering project to create low carbon neighbourhoods - <https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/pioneering-project-announced-to-create-the-low-carbon-neighbourhoods-of-the-future/>

### **Could we lead the UK In trialling green hydrogen to heat our existing homes?**

There is every possibility that we, as a region, could lead on this; though there is a lot of detailed thought that has to go into this. The West Midlands Combined Authority with Energy Capital and the three LEPs, which includes GBSLEP have already launched a West Midlands Energy Strategy and

given the Government's recent hydrogen strategy; these could be the types of projects that we see going forward.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-hydrogen-strategy>

One of the projects that GBSLEP funded – Tyseley Energy Park in Birmingham – is also leading the way in delivering low and zero carbon fuel for vehicles <https://www.tyseleyenergy.co.uk/tyseley-refuelling-hub/>