

## DORSET PERFORMANCE AND INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

<b>Meeting Date</b>	7 July 2021		
<b>Security Level:</b>	<b>Confidential</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Commercially Sensitive</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Unclassified</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Paper Title</b>	Dorset LEP Programmes - Delivery Update		
<b>Papers are provided for:</b>	<b>Decision</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Discussion</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Information</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### SUMMARY OF RECCOMENDATIONS AND NOTES:

#### Local Growth Fund

- **Note:** The Committee notes the Local Growth Fund financial and programmatic update, including risks identified.

#### Getting Building Fund

- **Note:** The Committee notes the Getting Building Fund financial and programmatic update.

#### Growing Places Fund

- **Note:** The Committee notes the Growing Places Fund financial and programmatic update, including risks identified.

### 1. PURPOSE

This paper gives an overview of Dorset LEP programme delivery. It is accompanied by several annexes, which are all classified as confidential due to containing commercially sensitive information:

- Annex 1: May 2021 meeting minutes – confidential
- Annex 2: Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund – grant programme overview – confidential
- Annex 3: Growing Places Fund – loan programme overview - confidential
- Annex 4: Growing Places Fund – 5-year forecast – confidential

### 2. SUMMARY/BACKGROUND

#### A) LOCAL GROWTH FUND PROGRAMME

**Annex 2** provides a high-level overview of Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund projects; outlining risks and progress.

#### Recently Closed LGF Projects – End of Project Reports

The projects below have now submitted their End of Project Reports. You can read about the success of the projects and future projected outcomes on our Dorset LEP website.

- Bournemouth & Poole College – [Remote Access to Resources](#)
- BCP Council – Boundary Roundabout – [Boundary Roundabout](#)
- BCP Council – Port of Poole Programme - [Port of Poole](#)
- BCP Council – Cabot Lane/ Broadstone Way - [Cabot Lane/ Broadstone Way](#)
- BCP Council – Townside Access - [Townside Access](#)
- BCP Council – FWP Corridor - [FWP \(A348-A3049\) Corridor](#)

**Note:** The Committee notes the Local Growth Fund financial and programmatic update, including risks identified.

#### B) GETTING BUILDING FUND

**Annex 2** provides a high-level overview of Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund projects; outlining risks and progress.

All nine GBF projects are progressing at pace. Out of nine GBF projects, two have now fully spent their Dorset LEP grants. (Remote Management of Hypertension – DCCG & Higher Education Centre – WC).

**Note: The Committee notes the Getting Building Fund financial and programmatic update.**

### **C) DORSET GROWING PLACES FUND**

**Annexes 3 and 4** provide high level overview of Growing Places Fund projects.

#### **Growing Places Fund Financial Overview**

To date, the Fund has invested into 11 projects, 10 of which are loans and 1 is a grant. As of today, 7 projects are complete with loans repaid. There are currently 3 outstanding loans and 1 grant (Ultrafast).

**Note: The Committee notes the Growing Places Fund financial and programmatic update, including risks identified.**

### **D) DORSET GATEWAY**

#### **Funding 2021/22**

Dorset LEP's growth hub, Dorset Gateway, has secured core funding of £462,000 to provide business support for the current financial year. In addition, we also secured £300,000 to deliver the Peer Networks programme as well as £50,000 of funding via BCP Council to provide a tailored package of support for BCP Council businesses. Dorset Gateway's key delivery areas will focus on, but not limited to:

- Promoting opportunities for new business and international trade
- Supporting take-up of apprenticeships
- Supporting innovative, high-growth businesses
- Improving the resilience of Dorset businesses and helping them recover
- Delivery of Peer Networks programme
- Extending key sector support
- Promoting Net Zero agenda

#### **Enquiry management**

An overview of business engagements recorded for the period between 1 April 2018 and 31 May 2021 is presented below in **figure 1**. The targets have been agreed with the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy and are reflected in the delivery contracts issued to partners. These figures do not include any enquiries relating to Peer Networks as these are captured elsewhere.

Engagement Level	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2020/21		Progress against target
	No. Businesses Engaged	Target	No. Businesses Engaged	Target	No. Businesses Engaged	Target	No. Businesses Engaged	Target	
Light touch	679	600	1,099	900	1,410	800	133	800	17%
Medium intensity	219	120	483	180	359	150	93	150	62%
High intensity	55	60	85	90	64	50	3	50	6%

**Figure 1: Business engagements by intensity for period 01/04/18 – 31/05/21.**

#### **Peer Networks Programme**

The Peer Networks Programme for 2021/22 has started with our three delivery partners – Dorset Chamber of Commerce, Evolve Members and Dorset Business Mentors – all commencing a number of cohorts. In total, we have funding to support 220 businesses. As of 18 June 2021, 110 eligible businesses had registered successfully onto the Peer Networks programme. Business can find out more and register to take part in this year programme by visiting: [www.dorsetlep.co.uk/peernetworks](http://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/peernetworks)

### **Net Zero: Together for Our Planet 'Business Climate Leaders' campaign**

Net Zero is one of the key policy areas for Government over the next 10 years. The Together for Our Planet 'Business Climate Leaders' campaign encourages small and micro businesses to commit to cutting their emissions in half by 2030 and to net zero by 2050 or sooner through the new UK Business Climate Hub.

Small businesses can use the hub to find practical tools, resources and advice to understand their emissions and develop a plan to tackle them, as well as providing ideas for steps they can take. We have been asked to support the campaign by sharing information from the stakeholder toolkit with the SMEs we work with.

#### **Key messages for business**

- Taking action on climate change will help businesses grow, seize new opportunities, create new jobs, encourage investment and adapt against the challenges of a changing planet.
- Reducing emissions can also lower businesses' running costs, save them money and attract new customers – ultimately helping them maintain a competitive advantage locally and globally.
- Signing up to the official SME Climate Commitment via the UK Business Climate Hub means small businesses will get access to assets and promotional materials to publicise their pledge, so they can show prospective customers evidence of their climate credentials. They will also be included on the UK Business Climate Hub's list of businesses who have signed up and have the chance to feature in the campaign.

For more information, visit: <https://businessclimatehub.org/uk/>

### **Support for small businesses**

We have continued to promote the opportunity for Dorset's retail and service businesses in six town areas across Dorset to register for free with e-commerce platform, **ShoppAppy**. The e-commerce platform offers retailers and service providers the opportunity to make sales as part of a local digital community whilst encouraging customers to rediscover and re-connect with their high-streets.

As part of our COVID-19 additional support response, Dorset LEP (through Dorset Gateway) have offered businesses in Bournemouth, Bridport, Gillingham, Poole, Sherborne, Sturminster Newton and Wimborne the opportunity to trade online for free, with a year's access to the ShopAppy 'virtual high street'. To date 302 businesses have enquired about the platform and 80 businesses are currently live on the platform.

ShopAppy has recruited a new local account manager to support the further roll out of the programme. This person will also be able to do more on the ground which will increase engagement with businesses and consumers. ShopAppy is also planning to run launch events in the towns taking part in July, starting with Wimborne, as they currently have the most businesses listed on the website. The launch event is scheduled to take place in the market square, in the middle of July – exact date to be confirmed.

### **Back to Business: BCP Council's Bounce Back Challenge Fund**

In May, we were successfully awarded £50,000 by BCP Council to deliver a project aimed at helping businesses in the BCP area recover stronger from the impacts of the COVID-19

pandemic. This project was funded through their Additional Restrictions Grant round 3 (ARG3) which included an invitation for business support organisations to submit project proposals.

In total, BCP Council has awarded £3 million to over 100 projects to help BCP's economy bounce back from the pandemic. Projects were assessed against the following criteria;

- helping the economy to bounce back,
- pride in place,
- innovation and deliverability.

BCP has delivered this project at speed to enable them to receive further funding from government. In addition, BCP has also delivered an Exceptional Circumstances Fund, which has seen more than 500 businesses that have not had support from previous grant schemes, receive funding.

### **Back to Business: about the project**

Businesses have had to endure a huge amount of disruption and uncertainty over the last year. In that time, the very nature of some businesses has changed, perhaps forever. Many businesses have had to make decisions quickly without the luxury of time to necessarily consider the long-term implications.

Once the dust settles and the anticipated boom of the summer months has passed, many businesses will be faced with potentially more uncertainty (potential further restrictions, etc.) as well as obligations for VAT, furlough claims, etc. There are also questions for many SMEs around changes in employment terms, implications of redundancy and other matters relating to HR.

The core objectives of the programme are to help businesses to:

- reflect on decisions made during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- evaluate the current health of their business, including winter cash flow; and
- consider and implement improvements and grow their business

The different aspects of the programme will help to address these challenges, and will include the following:

- **Business Health Checks:** an online diagnostic tool to help business leaders and decision makers assess what actions and decisions they need to be thinking about.
- **Finance clinics:** focused on assessing VAT/tax obligations (termination payments), and furlough claims – all connected with COVID-19.
- **HR Clinics:** the overhaul of Employment Law legislation may have slipped under the radar for some businesses due to the pandemic. However, all employers have a responsibility to ensure implementation of the relevant Good Work Plan changes
- **SME business improvement workshops:** themed workshops helping businesses to assess current and future working practices.

Whilst the programme is for BCP Council businesses only, its legacy will hopefully create a template for future support programmes of this nature.

Further information will be published in due course with the programme expected to get underway in August and be concluded by March 2022.

### **Support for innovative SMEs in Dorset**

More than 80 businesses and organisations joined us for our Advancing Dorset in Defence, Security and Innovation event on 28 May. A summary of speakers and copies of the presentations are available to download on our website:

<https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/advancing-dorset-in-defence>

The presentations prompted an enthusiastic Q&A which showed us there's a keen appetite for more support from Dorset Gateway for our defence sector. In response, we have partnered with the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) to offer a two-hour virtual defence bid-writing masterclass on 28th June.

### **Bid Writing Support**

Having helped Dorset businesses secure more than £900,000 in 2020/21, we have continued to provide our specialist Bid Writing Support Service (BWSS) to SMEs in Dorset. The BWSS is currently working with six businesses with Smart grant applications with a total grant value of approximately £800,000.

### **Skills and workforce**

We have continued to develop a range of support services aimed at helping local businesses to find, attract and develop talent. Existing challenges in this area had been amplified in recent months due to COVID-19 and Brexit with many businesses struggling to recruit people and fill vacancies.

- **Skills Brokerage:** As part of our on-going support for local business, Dorset Gateway now offers specialist support to help businesses find and develop the talent they need. This includes comprehensive guidance around apprenticeships and connecting you with educational institutions. <https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/workforce-planning-and-recruitment>
- **Midlife MOT:** We've created the Midlife MOT to help employees aged 45+ to look at their skills, health and finances with the intention of making the next 10-20 years of working life the most productive. This project was delivered in partnership with the Dorset Careers Hub, who successfully secured funding from the Department for Education to run a pilot programme with employers back in April. <https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/midlifemot>

### **Helping SMEs to trade internationally**

We have continued to support and work with businesses as they seek advice and information about new trading rules following the end of the EU/UK transition period at the start of January. Feedback from businesses who have received the EU transition support has been very positive and has helped to support 55 Dorset SMEs. The funding for this specific programme of support came to an end on 31 March but we are continuing to steer people towards the SME Brexit Support Fund which comes to an end on 30th June; this offers grants of £2,000 for SMEs who only trade with EU countries to spend on training or professional advice/

- **SME Internationalisation Fund**  
To date, 20 Dorset SME's have applied for and been accepted onto the **SME Internationalisation Fund (SMEIF)**, which offers match-funded grants of between £1,000 and £9,000 to help support future export activity. Our target is to help up to 95 Dorset SME's successfully apply for this fund between now and December 2021. The focus of this support is around high growth potential (HGP) SME businesses that also have high potential to succeed or grow in international markets or can bring new products and services to new international markets. Whilst there is a focus on businesses with annual sales of £500K+ there is scope to support smaller companies. To find out more, visit: <https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/business-support-international-trade#InternationalisationFund>
- **Export Academy**  
Alongside the SMEIF, we have continued to work with DIT to promote the Export Academy programme. The programme is primarily designed for owners and senior managers of businesses with a turnover of less than £2 million and are located in the

South West. As of the end of May, a total of 27 Dorset businesses had enrolled in this support programme.

#### **E) DORSET INNOVATION PARK**

The Enterprise Zone Committee met to discuss Cushman & Wakefield's review and assessment report for the Enterprise Zone. Following this discussion, Dorset Council prepared a draft Investment Plan for the site which was discussed at the beginning of June. The focus for the Innovation Park is currently strongly on defence and security.

Further detail of the plan will be discussed at the next Committee meeting in July and the next stage will be to discuss details and map out activities to ascertain if the funding requirements can be achieved and to turn it into a plan of action.

Marketing of the site will be fundamental to making the Innovation Park successful, whilst creating a community feel.

Memorandum of Understanding between Dorset LEP and Dorset Council is being finalised.

#### **F) CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE COMPANY – CARRERS HUB**

The Dorset Careers Hub is now in the final term of the academic year. The operating context has been challenging due to the pandemic, which has greatly affected our school partners on which we depend to achieve impact. Despite this, the Hub has made good progress in many areas.

All six main projects are now underway and are on track to deliver their goals. Some of the highlight activities and impacts are as follows:

Project	Activities
Programme Planning	Intensive support and CPD provided to new schools, and Benchmark scores are positive. Some schools are struggling to have time to engage fully, mainly to do with teacher assessment and marking for GCSE and A level results.
Activation Fund	33 school bids funded, to kick start new school careers activities. Activities are being delivered by the end of the academic year.
Inclusive Careers	Steering group formed, comprising businesses, parent groups, DWP, FE colleges, special school and learning centres.
Virtual Work Experience	Pilot underway, and summer programme offering placements to 1500-2,000 students on track. The programme will deliver on the 15 <sup>th</sup> Jun and 30 <sup>th</sup> June.
Online Careers and Apprenticeships Show	Major event with 60 companies, 7 universities, 15 colleges and thousands of students delivered in May 2021. 20,000 students joined businesses, education providers and schools to showcase the opportunities available. Over 50% of the attendees were Dorset students.

Looking forward, The Careers & Enterprise Company have received confirmation for programme funding from the Department for Education and grant awards have just been received.

The Government released the Skills for Jobs white paper which affirms its commitment to the Careers Hub model and a commitment to the Skills agenda as a driver of economic growth and renewal. The key themes of the white paper are;

1. Business taking a central role in all skills proposals and investments
2. The elevation in status of technical education
3. Local Skills Improvement Plans to drive investment in local economic priorities
4. Identification of careers education as a key driver



There is now a consultation process underway, which will lead to legislation which will clearly be very relevant to the LEP and Careers Hub.

Financially, the Careers Hub has been able to deliver its main project with less than the budgeted expenditure, and is therefore currently considering new proposals for projects which can be initiated this year.

### Skills Programme

In March 2021 we published the Department for Education Local Skills Report, with full data analysis and reporting on the DLEP Skills Actions Plan and activities across the county. The report forms the complete guide to skills strategy and actions for Dorset, and aims to be the 'go to' document for skills providers and employers. The SAPB contribution has been critical to the success of skills across Dorset, and this report is our demonstration to the DfE of the vital work being undertaken by public and private providers to be the benefit of the population of Dorset.

In addition to delivering this report, the skills team are delivering:

- **Skills Boot Camps** – we have secured places on these free training opportunities for Dorset residents in wave 1 and 2, working in partnership with Heart of the SW LEP. These are digital and technical skills courses, funded by the DfE and designed to enable a change of skill set. Each participant is guaranteed a job interview at the end of the course. Wave 1 is currently delivering the learning, wave 2 digital courses started delivery on the 1<sup>st</sup> April, with technical courses currently being contracted to start in the summer or autumn term.
- **LMI training for Dorset Job Centres and Work Coaches** – we have continued to delivery training for the 3 job centres in Dorset, and the 100 Dorset work coaches employed to support those who are looking for work. Our training enables work coaches to advise and guide people back to sustainable work, based on the statistics relevant to Dorset around required skills sets, employers and future opportunities.
- **Restart Programme** – DWP are investing £2.9bn in a Restart programme to help those who have been out of work for 1yr+ get back into work. We are now aligned to the programme lead for Dorset and will be ensuring that Dorset residents are support into work opportunities relevant to the local economy.
- **Local Skills Improvement Plan and Strategic Development Funding** – Working with the Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Dorset's three FE colleges, we have submitted a bid to the DfE to be a trailblazer for the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) opportunity and its associated Strategic Development Fund. Under the DfE Skills for Jobs white paper, the DfE will be moving towards a model of LSIP's led by business organisations across the country. The bid aligns to Dorset's Local Industrial Strategy and Local Skills Report.
- **T level support** – Ferndown Upper School will offer Dorset's first T level qualification in Sept 2022, and we are supporting the school as they move to this target date.
- **Apprenticeship myth busting** – we have secured funding from the CEC to complete a programme of work to increase the number of apprenticeships offered in Dorset and support decision making in schools around apprenticeships. This work is funded to Aug 2022.
- **Community Renewal Fund** – under the opportunity offered by Dorset Council, we have supported a bid from the Young Enterprise organisation seeking to build confidence, knowledge and experience with young people setting up their own businesses.
- **ESFA bidding** – we have been encouraging organisations to bid for specific project funding to being people closer to the work place. Grants of up to £16,000 are available for small, bespoke projects that encourage those who are furthest from the workplace, to move towards potential employment.

## Labour Market Information

The [latest labour market and skills insight report and dashboards](#) have been published, reflecting on a first quarter of highs and lows. Employment rates declined, unemployment increased and there was a rise in furloughed employments, but also a noted increase in vacancies. The pandemic also had noted impact on inequalities, skills gaps and future projections for the world of work nationally and in Dorset.

Please check [www.dorsetlep.co.uk/labour-market-and-skills-research](http://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/labour-market-and-skills-research) for all figures and analysis and [read the full Q1 report](#). Key findings include:

- Unemployment, furlough, out-of-work benefits increased

[The ONS subnational employment statistics for 2020 have been released](#), showing employment rate in Dorset fell by almost 2 percentage points and unemployment increased at a similar rate over the past year. While employment remained higher in Dorset than the national average (76.7% Dorset; 75.4% UK), the decline was more pronounced (1.9 ppt vs 0.4 ppt UK average). This represents an estimated 8,400 fewer people in employment at the last quarter of 2020 compared to 2019 and 3,600 fewer than the previous quarter. In fact, the BCP area has seen a more significant 4 ppt decline in employment rate with 11,000 fewer people in employment, while surprisingly Dorset Council marked an increase of .7ppt and 2,700 more people in employment compared to 2019.

*There were 24,910 people claiming job or income support in March in Dorset, which continues to be almost 2.5 times higher than the same time last year, accounting for 5.5% of residents (6.5% UK reference) and 7.7% of those aged 18-24 (9.1% UK).*

*56,000 people in Dorset were furloughed at the end of February – 17% of the eligible employments, over twice as high as November last year and higher than the 15% UK average. Almost half (26,000) of furloughed employments were in Tourism, Hospitality, Retail.*

*26,600 self-employed received Self Employment Income Support - increase of 4,000 on the previous month, 62% take-up (65% in UK).*

[The Centre for Economic Performance analysis](#) shows movements from self-employment to employment were at their highest levels for 20 years. Also in January, 57% of self-employed workers were reporting incomes of less than £1,000 per month, up from 31% in January 2020.

[Visit Dorset LEP's Employment in Dorset Dashboard.](#)

- Recruitment activity picking up

There were better news on the recruitment front. Over 16,300 vacancies were advertised in Dorset in the first quarter - 95% of 2020 and 97% of 2019 levels. Throughout March and April, vacancies overtook both their 2020 and 2019 levels with over 6000 vacancies advertised each month. This marks a positive development after a turbulent 2020 and a wobbly start of 2021 - in January alone vacancies were down by a fifth on last year.

Sectors with increased employment demand were:

*ICT, property, public administration and defence, construction, financial and other services as well as health and social care. Demand also grew for a number of occupations:*

*Agriculture, Horticulture and the Outdoors | Construction, Building, Architecture | Marketing, Media, PR, IT, HR, Finance, Planning and Analysis*

[Visit Dorset LEP's Vacancies and Opportunities in Dorset Dashboard.](#)

- Chart spotlight: Apprenticeship finder

The Dorset Apprenticeship Finder dashboard was developed in collaboration with the Dorset and Somerset Training Providers Network and allows direct access to latest apprenticeship vacancies and statistics. Apprenticeship opportunities were on the rise with 88 vacancies in Dorset in March 2021 – 20% higher than the same time last year.

[Visit Dorset LEP's Apprenticeship Finder Dashboard.](#)



- Key reports related to Dorset's skills strategy

Place: COVID 19 effects on inequalities  
[OfS report](#) shows notable disparities in Higher Education (HE) participation across areas. There were parts of Dorset where a 100% of young people participated in HE, while in other parts participation was as low as 13%.

Recovery: Skills bridges to support career change  
[New research](#) reveals that while a third of Britons want to change careers, only 16% understand how their skills are useful in another career. Skills bridges could be the key. Read [our report](#) to find how skills bridges link to our priorities for recovery.

Futures: The digital skills gap  
The demand for digital skills is soaring, but those taking IT subjects as GCSEs have dropped by 40% since 2015. Upskilling today's young people in digital technology is vital as well as providing the knowledge about the range of job opportunities available. [Read our report to find the digital skills most in demand in Dorset.](#)

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