



STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORT

NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY	Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee
DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED	15 March 2023

BRIEF REPORT:

1. Aligning Gloucestershire's Food and Farming Policies

A request for £20,000 of Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) money for the Countryside and Community Research Institute to research and map farming and food-related policies in the county was deferred as further information to support the proposal had been requested from the Senior Officer Group.

2. GFirst LEP – Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership

The second six-month tranche of £125,000 SEDF matched core funding for the GFirst LEP for 2023-24 was agreed. At the November 2022 GEGJC meeting, a first six-month tranche of £125,000 was agreed with the second tranche deferred until Government funding for the LEPs was known and there was enough in the SEDF pot to be able to provide the match funding.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the LEP and councils would be corrected to include reference to SDC (omitted in error) and delete reference to the capital programme as this no longer exists.

3. National Grid's Visual Impact Provision Project in the Cotswolds National Landscape

Stuart Fox, Robbie Griggs and Mohammed Farooq of National Grid gave a presentation on the project for information.

National Grid is responsible for the electricity transmission network and this project is about putting high voltage lines underground in nationally protected landscapes. Between 2013-2021, £500m had been provided for 4 projects from the national shortlist of worst-affected areas, in Dorset, North Wessex, Snowdonia and the Peak District. Ofgem has signposted a further £465m for projects in 2021-2026 including a section of high voltage line between Postlip Mill, near Winchcombe at its northern end and the Cotswold plateau above Dowdeswell Farm near Cheltenham at its southern end, cutting through Cleeve Common. This represents a small proportion of the overhead line in the Cotswolds National Landscape, which totals 98km, more than any other protected landscape in England and Wales.

The visual impact of the Sealing End Compounds (SECs), where the cable transfers from overhead to underground, is one of the biggest issues. It was confirmed that the project would



STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MEMBER REPORT

be linking with the 'missing mile' road development programme to minimise the overall impacts in the area.

Preliminary work has been carried out to identify constraints, map stakeholders and set up a stakeholder reference group (including the local councils affected), carry out preliminary surveys, contact 120 landowners, hold briefings, and appoint an engineering contractor. Further engagement is planned for 2023, with the planning submission scheduled for 2024, and construction programmed to start in 2025-26 and complete in 2029 with restoration of the landscape to leave it in better condition.

This is a major construction project to sink the encased cable in ducting 1.5m underground. It will take up a wide swathe and look like the construction of a motorway including a central haul road and will be constructed in challenging topography. The cables, then the towers will be removed once the underground cable is in place. It will be marked by overground posts in a similar way to underground gas and oil pipelines.

Further engagement this year will include setting up a website and community helpline, landowner and school engagement, public drop-in events in June and formal public consultation in October. Landowner engagement has been excellent to date with 100% agreeing access for surveys. A community grant programme will be set up for the vicinity of the electricity line and National Grid plan to use a local supply chain for much of the non-specialist activity such as cleaning, catering and management of compounds so there will be economic opportunities and benefits. There will also be local upskilling, investment in school STEM subjects and apprenticeships.

There are no detailed project costs yet but a similar 8.8km length of cable in Dorset cost £116m. The £465m for 2021-26 is ring-fenced by Ofgem for this project and cannot be used to address other issues such as grid capacity. It is paid for by all householders' electricity bills, the cost is about £20 per household per year.

4. Cirencester – Kemble Transport Study Report

Hannah Fountain and James Brain of Cotswold DC reported on the options evaluation funded by SEDF. Two-thirds of the £65,000 awarded had been spent on the work so far which has included:

- Cirencester interchange hub study, given that Cirencester has no bus station. 6 locations had been evaluated.
- Route options study, which had included looking at going out to Tetbury and encompassing the schools and college west of Cirencester.
- An access and movement study is still to be completed.



STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORT

Of the public transport options evaluated in accordance with DfT modelling, light rail and guided bus routes had been discounted as poor value for money, and the preferred options were scheduled hourly bus services between Cirencester, Kemble and Tetbury (two electric buses) with bus / rail integration or a combination of hourly scheduled bus services between Cirencester and Kemble and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) onwards to Tetbury.

The estimated balance of SEDF is £889,000, with £710,000 already allocated and £179,000 currently unallocated for the year ahead.

5. GFirst LEP Update

Dev Chakraborty introduced a written update. Main points were:

- The LEP will now be working with GCC on the development of an Economic Development Strategy as a priority.
- It will be completing the delivery of the last three infrastructure projects (Gloucester railway station, Minster Interchange and SW bypass).
- The inward investment service will carry on for the next 12 months and then wrap up.
- Made In Gloucestershire branding is progressing well and now has 125 members.

6. Covid-19 and Economic Intelligence Dashboard

Katherine Martin of GCC tabled an update on GCC's Economic Dashboard. She highlighted:

- Unemployment has increased by 5.3% (430 people) since October 2022 to 8,740.
- Job postings are at a record high as of January 2023 at 24,888 (4,000 greater than any other figure at any other point)
- Recruitment / filling jobs is an issue. Broken down by 4 skill levels (where 1 is school leaver level, 2 is school leaver level plus some experience, 3 is post-school education and 4 is degree experience), the biggest driver of job postings is 2, school leaver level plus some experience which led to a discussion about whether another Kickstart programme was needed.
- The number of claimants (8,740) + the number of economically inactive (26,000) = 34,740 relative to job postings of 24,888 which suggests there are enough people to fill posts but may not be the right people and may not want to work.

Link to the meeting papers:

<https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=725&MId=11202&Ver=4>

FUTURE MEETINGS	30 May 2023 10am 7 September 2023 10am
REPORT SUBMITTED BY	Cllr Catherine Braun, Leader & Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive
DATE	22 March 2023