

Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	24 November 2020
Subject:	Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub

Summary:

This paper provides an update on activity delivered by the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub and the activity of other business support delivery partners with particular emphasis on the COVID response.

Overall, the Growth Hub is performing well with positive feedback from service users. Within the bounds of available resources, the service is continually developing to respond to the changing needs of businesses and filling identified gaps in provision.

There has been a huge effort from Economic Development officers and contracted suppliers to continue to deliver services through remote delivery models and to ensure appropriate support services are in place for businesses. We have seen a large uptake in demand for services.

Actions Required:

- 1) Note the current progress
- 2) Support the Growth Hub in highlighting services to business contacts
- 3) Provide input to assist the Growth Hub future plans regarding business support needs

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub was launched in April 2015 following a Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) requirement for all Local Enterprise partnerships to facilitate the development of a Growth Hub to provide a single place to go for business support, helping businesses from all sectors at all growth stages.

1.1.2 The Growth Hub provides a single access point to a targeted package of information, diagnostic, advisory, coaching, mentoring and development programmes. Furthermore, the Hub ensures a 'single conversation' is facilitated with local businesses, raising awareness and uptake of both

public and private sector support, by improving coordination, coordination, marketing and signposting to other local and national provision.

1.1.3 The Growth Hub activities are predominantly funded through ERDF funding which has been secured up until May 2022 utilising LCC staff salary budget as match to drawdown the European Funding.

1.1.4 The current £5.28m ERDF Sustainable Business Growth 2 project will enable the Growth Hub to work with 1087 established businesses. They will be provided with at least 3 hours of support with 768 enterprises receiving either 12 hours of support and/or at least £1000 grant funding. Overall the project aims to create 204 jobs whilst increasing productivity and unlocking private sector investment of £775,000. We are awaiting approval on an extension bid which will extend delivery to June 2023.

This is a partnership application between LCC, North Lincolnshire Council, E Factor (on behalf of North East Lincolnshire Council) and the University of Lincoln.

1.1.5 We have also been successful in further funding bids to BEIS for additional core revenue funding of £246,000 for the year 20-21, which funds our Scale Up Support and specialist advisory support for sectors outside of the ERDF funding, as well as PR and Marketing activity, CRM, website, research and evaluation.

1.1.6 There are currently 1,238 businesses enrolled on the Sustainable Business Growth 2 ERDF project, of which 416 have received at least 3 hours of support and 151 have received at least 12 hours of support. 125 Grant Applications with a total value of £533,550 have been approved.

1.1.7 With regard to wider activity delivered under the Business Lincolnshire Banner since the commencement of the Growth Hub, the headline results for this activity can be found in the impact report below.

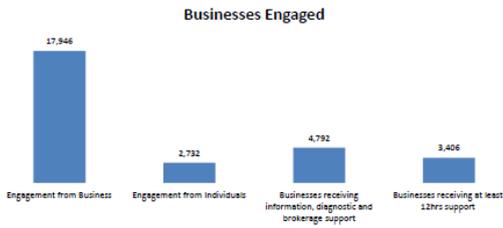
1.1.8 Case studies that indicate the type of businesses the Growth Hub works with and the support provided can be seen in Appendix 1.

Business Lincolnshire Impact Report



Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub Performance & Impact Report

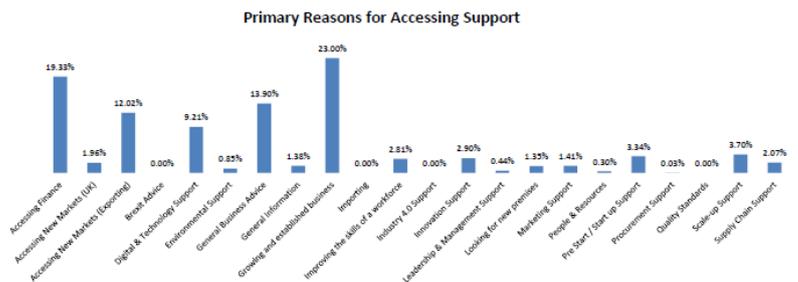
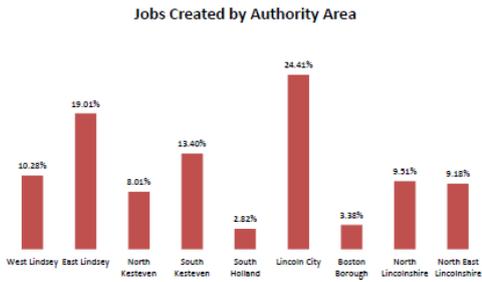
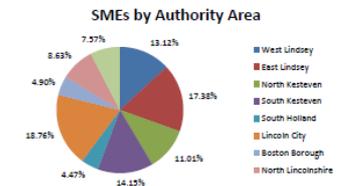
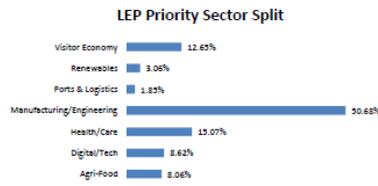
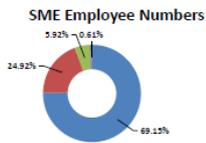
Cumulative from Start of Growth Hub to September 2020



1150 helped to start a business
614 Businesses Created
1467 Jobs Created



Satisfaction with the Growth Hub
89%



1.2 COVID Response Activity

1.2.1 The Growth Hub business support activity and structures have enabled Business Lincolnshire to take a leading role in Lincolnshire's response to the COVID 19 pandemic, working with partners as part of the Greater Lincolnshire Resilience Forum Business and Economy Recovery Cell. This work continues as we continue to working closely with the LEP team to develop the business environment narrative within our Medium Term Recovery plan which will provide our strategic framework for the next 3 to 5 years.

1.2.2 The impact of COVID can be seen in the increased demand from businesses accessing support both digitally and via the Adviser team.

- Individuals accessing the Business Lincolnshire website in the period from 1st April to 30th September 2020 increased to 36,748. An increase from 9539 in the same period last year.
- There have been 32,549 unique individuals access the dedicated Coronavirus website pages to date
- Our enquiry levels from 1st April to 30th September 2020 increased to 1926 from 718 in the same period last year.

1.2.3 Anticipating the increase in demand, the Growth Hub implemented a number of measures:

- A business support helpline was set up via the County Council COVID emergency support line. 1442 telephone enquiries were received through this route. The majority of these calls were in relation to the Local Authority Grant Funding, i.e., the Small Business Grants, Retail Leisure and Hospitality Grants and the Discretionary Grants. This line has recently been reopened to support the 2nd lockdown.
- The Enterprise Growth team worked with colleagues and partners to add capacity to the enquiry response team. This was a fantastic example of partnership working and a no wrong door approach.
- The Enterprise Growth team worked with colleagues to implement an information dissemination system - a single source of business support information updates to Local Authority colleagues, membership organisations and advisers from all ESIF funded projects across the Greater Lincolnshire.

1.2.3 Other COVID response measures included:

- Remote working implemented the Adviser team to ensure continuity of service.
- Development of a business support matrix – a tool for advisers to be able to see the local and national business support which was disseminated to all Local Authority ED colleagues, membership organisations and advisers from all ESIF funded projects across the Greater Lincolnshire.
- Switch over to a remote business event delivery model and new event topics developed to respond to the changing needs of businesses, such as mental health support, remote working, implementing digital solutions, etc. 35

events were delivered to 412 participants between 1st April to 30th September

- 1.2.4 There was extensive work to develop the COVID specific section of the Business Lincolnshire website which contains multiple resources that have been specifically developed to provide a self help tool for businesses.
- This includes access to mental health resources, redundancy support and the HR hub delivered by the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce. <https://www.businesslincolnshire.com/explore/building-business-resilience/covid-19-support/>
 - A COVID secure toolkit was developed which provides a very practical step by step guide for businesses to work through to ensure their businesses are COVID secure. <https://www.businesslincolnshire.com/media/2147/covid-19-toolkit.pdf>
 - Our £1000 ERDF digital grant scheme was adapted to provide homeworking equipment grants.
- 1.2.5 We increased comms activity to businesses through a more regular newsletter, social media channels and through the Survive and Thrive campaign, which highlighted all of the support available to businesses and delivered inspirational business stories to encourage businesses to think innovatively to continue to trade in the pandemic. It also provided a range of guides and resources for businesses to access online
- 1.2.6 Social media followers have steadily grown throughout the pandemic, with a total of 7806 followers across Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. A total of 600+ organic social media posts have been shared across all three platforms, generating 17,304 engagements (likes, clicks, retweets). Facebook advertising campaigns were also developed, using constantly updated text and animated graphics. The campaigns generated 779,740 advert impressions and 3,929 link clicks.
- 1.2.7 In August the ERDF project was extended with a further £776,842 funding to support the delivery of the Kickstarting Grant which provides 100% grants of between £1000 and £3000 to approximately 250 SMEs. We are now working with successful beneficiaries to complete applications and claims.

1.3 COVID Recovery Activity

1.3.1 In July, Growth Hubs were awarded supplementary funding to support with COVID recovery activity and EU Exit / Business Resilience support activity. Business Lincolnshire was awarded £296,000, which has been allocated to additional advisors to work one to one with businesses and other recovery programmes which include:

- Additional Growth Hub Adviser to add additional capacity and support Rutland
- Specialist Advisers for the Agri / Horti Sector, the Visitor Economy
- The [Manufacturing Transformation Programme](#) is designed to help the manufacturers overcome the challenges set by the COVID crisis and adapt to future consequences by improving business performance, innovating product and service offerings or developing new business.

- The [Supply Chain Improvement Programme](#) helps businesses to identify current Supply Chain Gaps through a combination of one to one support and workshops,
- The [Greater Lincolnshire Manufacturing Network \(GLMN\)](#) is a partnership project with University of Lincoln to support the growth and development of SMEs by promoting best practice, new manufacturing processes and partnership opportunities.
- The [Made In Lincolnshire](#) interactive brochure is being updated. This digital brochure will be used as a tool to showcase the strength and diversity of the manufacturing and engineering sector and support local, regional and national supply chain opportunities.
- The [RESTART Support Programme](#) assists businesses who are either exporting or importing and require specialist support and guidance in navigating the complexities of trading and ensuring compliance with trade regulations post EU exit.
- The [Building Business Resilience Programme](#) aims to ensure that businesses in the East Midlands are informed and prepared to deal with any challenges that may result from the UK's departure from the European Union, as well as to help them spot and capitalise upon opportunities that may result.
- [Peer Networks](#) are a national initiative that will be delivered locally through Growth Hubs. The programme will see the creation of a series of peer networks with each group consisting of 8-11 owners or managers. Led by an experienced facilitator, these peer networks will typically meet fortnightly as a group. Individual one-to-one support (coaching, mentoring, or advice) will also be provided. Networks covering a range of sectors are available for businesses to join; High Growth, Manufacturing, Health & Care, Charities, Rural, Visitor Economy, Agri/Horti and general.

1.3.2 Our ScaleUp workshop programmes (tailored to the learning styles of the scale up businesses) continue to be well received. Whilst businesses have understandably been unable to commit time away from operations during the COVID emergency we have delivered two successful programmes remotely in September and October. We have now worked with 134 future/existing ScaleUps to varying degrees (up from 63 12 months ago).

1.3.3 We continue to work with the digital sector to develop a support strategy and we are working closely with colleagues at the new Digital Hub, Mosaic.

Our annual Digital Conference #GoDigital20 will be delivered as a virtual event on Thursday 26th November, with a focus on digital tools to assist recovery and assist businesses to become 'Future Ready'.

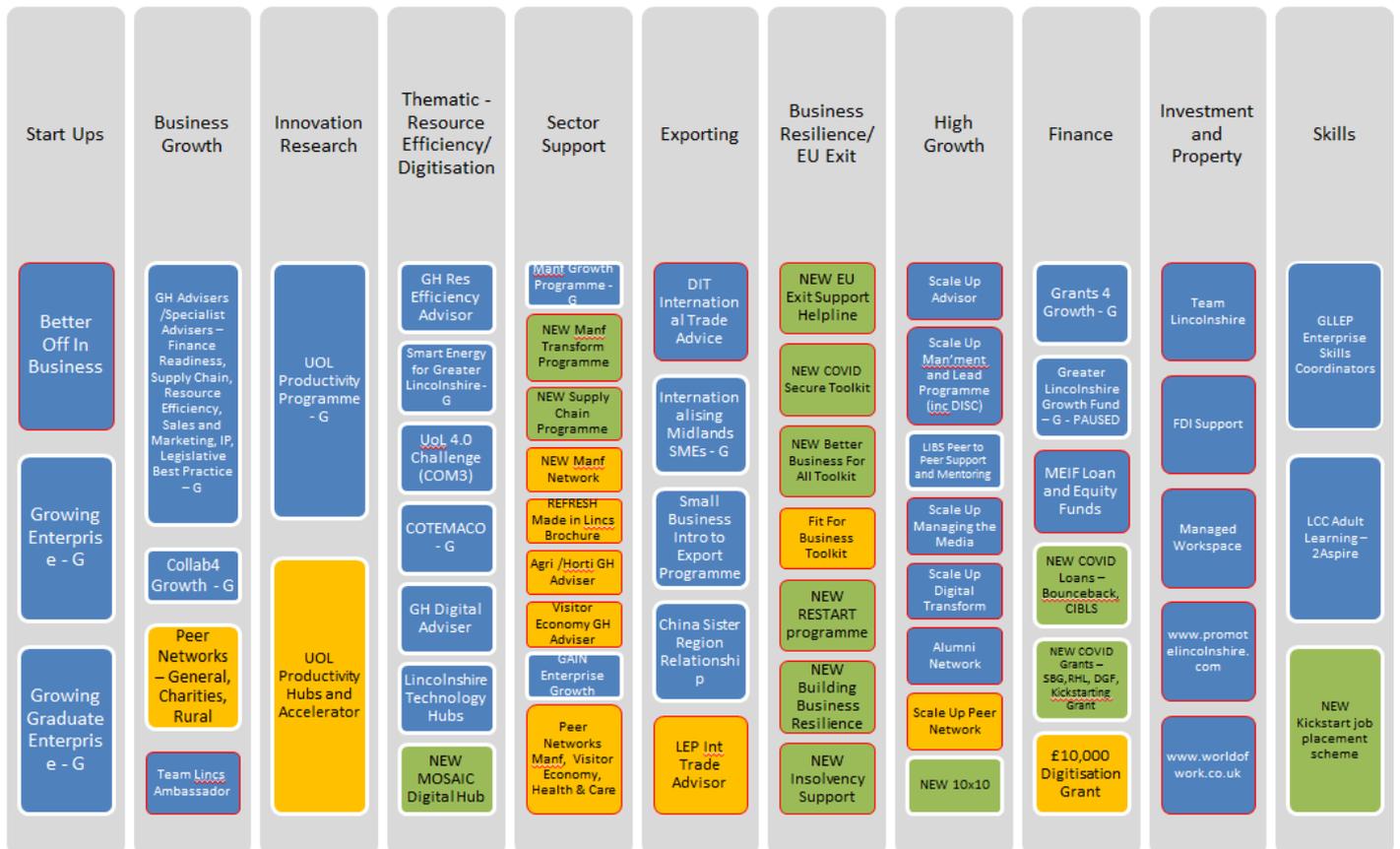
1.4. Other ESIF Activity

1.4.1 The Growth Hub support offers have been designed following a detailed review of other ESIF funded support delivery in Greater Lincolnshire which is delivered by various organisations across the county under the Growth Hub banner. This joined up approach has been implemented to identify gaps in provision and to reduce overlaps.

As a result of the COVID pandemic and the ending of the EU exit transition period, a number of new support measures have been implemented.

The resulting Business Support landscape can be seen below. The blue boxes denote the pre COVID support landscape; the Green boxes highlight new support in delivery and the orange boxes highlight new support being made ready for delivery.

Business Support Landscape Sept 2020



Blue = Scheme live, Orange = Scheme yet to Go Live, Green = New Support Schemes, G = Grant, Red outline = Rutland

2. Conclusion

2.1 For the coming months, the Growth Hub will need to strike a balance in delivery of support. There will be a need to continue to provide business support in response to COVID, whilst also helping businesses to navigate through the end of the EU Exit Transition period. At the same time, we want to maintain an element of focus towards business growth support activities. Our emphasis here will be towards established growing businesses specifically around ScaleUp, internationalisation, utilising modern technology, leadership and management capability, undertaking research and development, embracing skills development and accessing apprenticeships.

We will be implementing new support programmes and adding to our advisor team to support these aims.

- 2.2 Redundancy support is an area which is becoming more relevant as the negative impacts of the pandemic start to be reflected in job losses. It is welcome news that the furlough scheme is being extended after the end of October, but there will still no doubt be redundancies.

The main source of support for Employers and Employees is the Rapid Response Service provided through DWP, but there are other sources of support available through the Business Advisers, the Chamber of Commerce HR Hub, the mental health support tools, etc..

- 2.3 There is already good provision in place for EU Exit support including a local telephone helpline, one to one action planning support for businesses, one to one support advice and webinar events through the Restart and the Building Business Resilience programmes, which we are actively signposting to. BEIS are currently conferring with Growth Hubs about the potential for additional funding to support delivery of additional EU Exit support. We await further advice from BEIS on this.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not Applicable

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Business Lincolnshire Case Studies

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Angela Driver, who can be contacted on 01522552816 or Angela.Driver@Lincolnshire.gov.uk.

This page is intentionally left blank