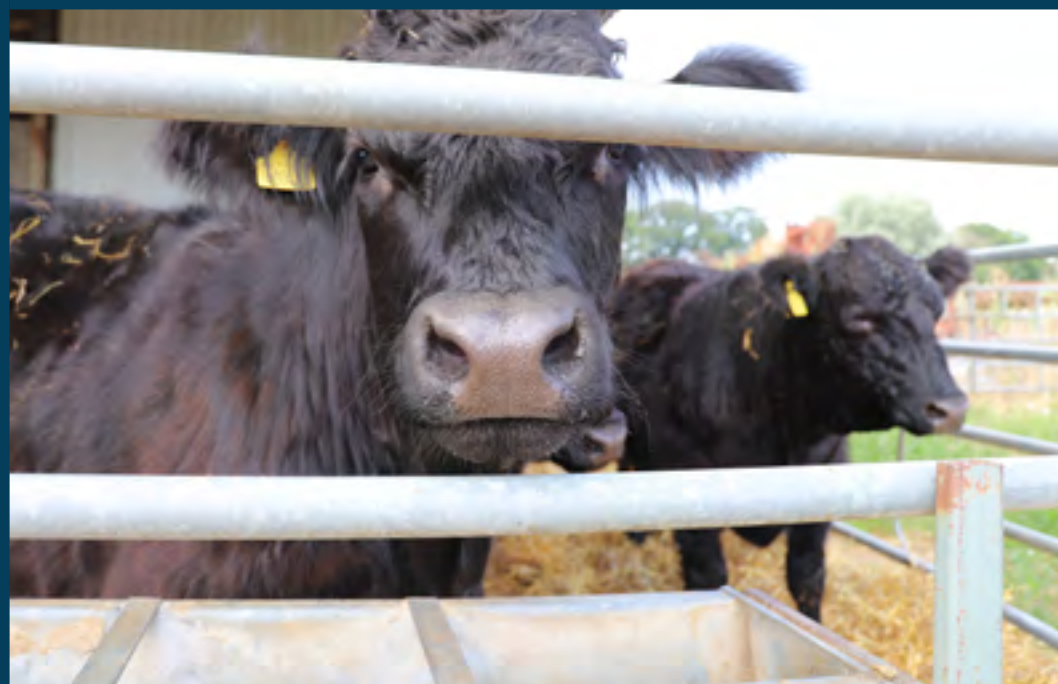




**Swindon & Wiltshire**  
LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022/23



# CONTENTS

3



Foreword from the Chair

4



Note from the CEO

10



Draft Income Statement  
2022-23

11



Skills and talent

12



Ideas, infrastructure and  
places

13



Business environment

6



Review 2022/23

7



Our area's economy

15



Growing Places Infrastructure  
Fund (GPIF)

16



Looking ahead

8



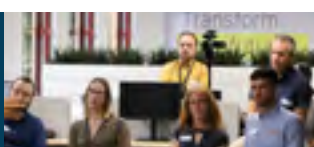
The SWLEP Board

9



Accountability and  
transparency

17



Get involved







# FOREWORD

## FROM THE CHAIR



One of the joys of being Chair of the SWLEP is regularly meeting other bodies, partnerships and organisations that comprise the vibrancy of the Swindon and Wiltshire economy. There is so much to be proud of across our region, from our rich history to our exciting future.

Our objective is to help to bring about the sustainable economic growth of Swindon and Wiltshire. We continue undaunted on that mission, delivering Government priorities directly into our local economy. Demand for our services remained high during the year, indicating that there is much left to do.

Since becoming Chair in April 2020, SWLEP has served under three Prime Ministers and their administrations. We provide well-founded real-time intelligence and insights into how our local economy is fairing, what challenges are being faced by our businesses and what we see as emerging trends.

We have not only highlighted areas such as people and skills shortages, but also changes in workforce age, working patterns and the resilience of our overall business mix.

The global economy faced strong headwinds during the year, predominantly energy prices and supply chain disruption. Much of our local economy rebounded strongly during 2022/2023. One area of concern remains our hospitality and entertainment sectors which continue to face significant challenges.

As a nation, we are fully engaged in reorganising our national economy into the era of Industry 4.0. This presents challenges for our local businesses, whether that is industry retooling with the most modern equipment or our services sector skilling up. It also presents opportunities for future growth.

The opening of the Swindon and Wiltshire Institute of Technology (IoT) in November provided much needed extra capacity, giving young people the best possible start.

Our work with The Western Gateway on Hydrogen continues apace and is attracting a lot of attention internationally. From powering our ports to powering heavy industry, Hydrogen can have a place in our energy mix. We will need some initial investment to provide the infrastructure to launch this new era. We continue to press

the case to investors and to policy makers. I am immensely grateful to those engaging with the SWLEP, including elected officials, community groups and business groups. Our LEP also sits on the Board of The Western Gateway Pan Regional Partnership and England's Economic Heartland Board, both vitally important partnerships for our businesses, their goods and services. Our Board members are all local business people, volunteering their time reading briefing papers, meeting and listening to local businesses, attending meetings and formulating strategies that deliver our core mission. Their dedication is highly valued, and I thank them for their ongoing contribution.

I also would like to congratulate our CEO, Paddy Bradley, MBE who was recognised in the 2023 New Years Honours list for his contribution in developing the local economy and community in Swindon and Wiltshire.

It is widely known that the Government has set out priorities to help improve our national productivity, facilitate new trading opportunities and boost the national skills base. It has also prioritised increasing

the amount spent on research and development. Part of that work looks at how to deliver those priorities across the UK. The Government is currently reviewing the role of LEPs going forward. We continue to engage in that work. We have also set out a clear strategy to a self-sustaining budget, giving us several options moving forward as the review concludes. Some of that work is set out in this annual report. Please do let me know if we can help you in any way.

**Paul Moorby, Chair  
Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise  
Partnership, 2023**



# NOTE FROM THE CEO

The highlight of the year for me occurred in the first half of 2022/23. On 10 May 2022, the Right Honourable Michelle Donelan MP for Chippenham, then Minister of State for Higher and Further Education and now Secretary of State for Science Innovation and Technology, opened our state-of-the-art Business Cyber Centre (BCC) in Greenways Business Park, Chippenham. The building and what it offers is a stand-out achievement for our company, SWLEP Ltd.

We were very grateful to receive £3.7m from the Government's Getting Building Fund to deliver the facility and to have the support of Defence Digital at MoD Corsham, the University of Bath and central government. We have many years' experience of direct delivery of business support services and have expanded to an emerging paid for business support in addition to our highly rated government funded free at point of delivery service. The

BCC project was our first venture into direct delivery of a capital project involving design, build and management with cyber related goods and services on offer to our tenants and wider business community.

Thankfully, it has worked out tremendously well. We refurbished the three-storey building to create 21,000 square feet of quality office and event space supported by high-specification and fully integrated communication and display technology. The whole project was completed within six months and 12 days during the pandemic and has been recognised as the best refurbishment and fit-out in the south-west in the region's property awards.

The BCC is a statement of our company's intent and capability to deliver on time, on budget and to a high standard. We are no longer in receipt of capital funds as we once were when the Local Growth Fund operated. During that period, close



to ten years, the SWLEP undertook the programme management of local investment overseeing the performance of organisations delivering the projects. The BCC development was a conscious move by SWLEP Ltd to step into direct delivery of capital projects.

Our purpose as a not-for-profit company continues to be to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic development in Swindon and Wiltshire. Our use of the Growing Places Infrastructure Fund (GPIF) as a source of debt finance for small and medium size enterprises is an example of

our significant impact on businesses based in our area. We have had direct operational control of GPIF since 2016. During this time, we have made 30 loans totalling £19m, leveraged £48m from other public and private sector sources with an estimated creation of 1,177 jobs. Our priority to support sustainability is demonstrated by our allocation of £5.35m in loans to support companies with projects directly related to carbon reduction products. During 2022-23 we experienced our first, and so far, only loss when one of our customers went into administration. In this year we have agreed



# NOTE FROM THE CEO

(CONTINUED)

ten loans to the value £4.58m, leveraging £15.5m.

We also continue to focus greatly on skills. Two examples of this are the projects we are developing to encourage a greater emphasis on physical computing in schools and helping companies who have never done so to take on an apprentice. We have been an active participant in the process of developing a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for our area, providing data and insight to Business West which has been charged by Government to produce the plan. The SWLEP's Skills and Talent Subgroup is scheduled to provide the governance structure to oversee the implementation of Local Skills Improvement Plan and its future iterations.

Our commitment to Swindon and Wiltshire is shown by our full engagement in partnership groups established to deliver on priorities for a local area, for example, in the Place Partnership Groups for Salisbury and Trowbridge and the Advisory and Engagement Group in Swindon. We also continue to convene groups bringing together employer representative organisations, local authorities, trade associations, government agencies and departments and a specialist group looking at the needs of the rural economy.

We continue to provide detailed analysis of the labour market, the financial health

of companies and the growth potential of those companies. Our data analysis provides essential information about job vacancies and the skills required with analysis available from 2012 until the day before we publish it. This is shared with all our partners and is used to analyse particular strengths and weaknesses of our economy in these somewhat challenging times.

There is an ongoing focus on the role of local enterprise partnerships with the preferred position of the government being that these functions are transferred to local government. A major task in the 2023-24 financial year will be to manage the transfer of these responsibilities and maintain our currently effective role in the inclusive and sustainable economic development of Swindon and Wiltshire. Personally, I will miss this involvement as I will be retiring in July 2023. Thank you to all for your support of our work.

*Paddy Bradley*

**Paddy Bradley, Chief Executive Officer,**

**Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, 2023**







# REVIEW

## 2022/23



Part of the role of Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) Ltd is to support and develop the sustainable economic development of our area. The Swindon and Wiltshire area is home to 29,200 registered businesses, with 99.6% of them being classed as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) employing less than 250 people.

The past year has seen many businesses returning to a growth mindset after the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit. However, some have continued to struggle to stay afloat with increased energy costs, inflationary pressures and a drop in customer confidence. SWLEP's Growth Hub has continued to offer wide-ranging business support on topics such as access to finance, skills, digital capability, de-carbonisation, and health and wellbeing. Delivery has been via one-to-one telephone or video meetings, in-person workshops as well as digital and online group sessions. Networking breakfasts were introduced, held within the 'co//working' space at the BCC, which have received excellent feedback from attendees.

The Swindon & Wiltshire Growth Hub continues to be the go-to business support

service in the SWLEP area and a barometer for the trading environment. As a SWLEP-led programme, the Growth Hub continued to be flexible in meeting the needs of the business community and continued to take a demand-led approach to the delivery of its business support services. It continued to mobilise services quickly, such as delivery of EU Transition assistance and responding to the Ukraine crisis. Thanks to Growth Hub business support provision, 109 new full time equivalent positions were created.

The SWLEP ran its second digital conference in October with the theme 'Doing Business Brilliantly'. It showcased growing local organisations and shared why our area is such a great place to live, work and grow a business. Businesses exhibited via the online stand facilities, delivered a number of workshops on subjects to assist business owners as well as participating in a round table discussion led by Paddy Bradley. The conference attracted a wide audience, with delegates logging in from as far away as India, Pakistan, Netherlands, Spain and the US.

The Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster also held its first Cyber ICE conference

in June at the BCC which was a great success despite a number of attendees being unable to come due to COVID-19 symptoms.

In February, the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy split into three departments. The SWLEP continues to work effectively with, and provide information to, the new departments which are the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

The Integrated Review Refresh 2023, published in March 2023, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-review-refresh-2023-responding-to-a-more-contested-and-volatile-world>) updated the government's security, defence, development and foreign policy priorities to reflect changes in the global context since its Integrated Review 2021. Whilst this doesn't impact SWLEP directly, many of our BCC members and our defence partners need to consider its findings.

A number of projects that SWLEP has been involved with in previous years, either

by sourcing funding or in a supportive capacity, came to fruition during the year. These included improvements to Chippenham station, the Riverside regeneration project in Salisbury and phase 2 of the Porton Science Park.



Porton Down Phase II



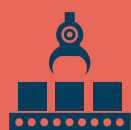
# OUR AREA'S ECONOMY

## SWINDON AND WILTSHIRE RESIDENTS



### OUR ECONOMY

Source: ONS Regional Gross GVA



Production

**£4.3bn - 2020**  
**£4.4bn - 2021**



Construction

**£0.9bn - 2020**  
**£1.1bn - 2021**



Services

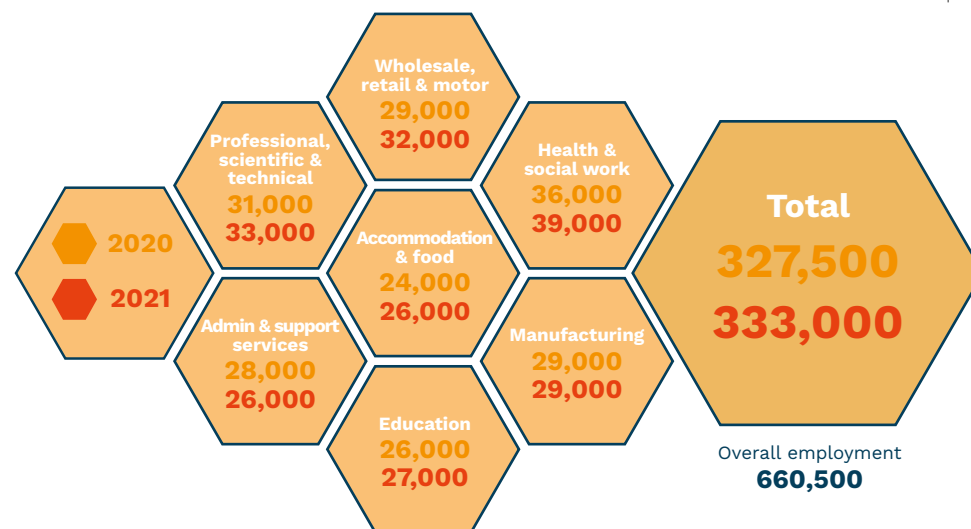
**£14.9bn - 2020**  
**£15.8bn - 2021**

2020 Population **727,00**2021 Population **747,100**2020 Population aged 16-64 **439,000**2021 Population aged 16-64 **459,000**2021 Economically active **360,600**2022 Economically active **375,600** (Apr 22 - Mar 23)2021 Economically inactive **77,100**2022 Economically inactive **82,300** (Apr 22 - Mar 23)2021 Inactive and want a job **14,500**2022 Inactive and want a job **12,900** (Apr 22 - Mar 23)2021 Self employed **8.8%**2022 Self employed **7.3%**

Signs of recovery from the impact of the pandemic started to emerge in the statistics, although the data predates the impact of war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis on the economy, both of which placed additional strain on economic performance.

Between 2020 and 2021, the Swindon and Wiltshire economy grew by £1.2bn to £21.2bn, a good sign, albeit, £1bn less than in 2019.

Source: NOMIS LEP profile



## LARGEST SECTORS BY EMPLOYMENT



**Paul Moorby OBE**  
SWLEP Chair  
Managing Director, Chipside Ltd



**Alison North**  
SWLEP Deputy Chair & SME  
Champion. Founder, AN  
Information Ltd



**Paddy Bradley** (Resigned July  
2023) SWLEP Chief Executive  
Officer



**Doug Gale MBE**  
Director, QinetiQ plc



**Suzanne Wigmore**  
Chief Executive, Wiltshire Citizens  
Advice



**Col. Gary McDade** (From February  
2022) Commander South West



**David Renard**  
Leader Swindon Borough Council



**Prof. Ian White**  
Vice Chancellor, University of Bath



**Carole Kitching**  
SWLEP Equality Champion. Principal  
& CEO, New College Swindon and  
Institute of Technology



**Richard Clewer** (From May 2022)  
Leader, Wiltshire Council



**Andrew Gudgeon OBE**  
Head of Enterprise Risk  
Management & Operations, Zurich



**Tom Harrison** (From September  
2022) Business Consultant, PA  
Consulting



**Mandy Clarke** (Resigned November  
2022) SWLEP Deputy Chair  
Founder, Accomplish HR Ltd



**Pam Webb** (Resigned July 2022)  
CEO, Voluntary Action Swindon



**Keeren Vetriko** (Resigned May  
2022) Managing Director, JERES



**Ramona Derbyshire**, (From  
September 2022) Partner, Thrings



**Mark Matthews** (From September  
2022) Strategy and Advisory  
Director, Ipsos UK - Public Affairs



**Abdul - Basit Mohammed** (From  
September 2022) Business  
Development Manager and  
Cultural Ambassador, Portfolio  
Institutional



**José St.Clair** (From September  
2022) Managing Director, SKARP  
Group

# THE SWLEP BOARD

## 2022 - 2023





# ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The Board said goodbye and gave its grateful thanks to three directors who left during the year, two of whom did so to follow new business opportunities and one through retirement. Following a successful round of recruitment, the Board welcomed five new directors who brought a wide range of new skills and business backgrounds to its operation, increasing its size to 16.

SWLEP continued to operate within its Governance Framework arrangements throughout the year, holding six scheduled and one extra-ordinary Board meeting between April 2022 and March 2023. A light touch review of SWLEP's governance arrangements was undertaken in the autumn and SWLEP's Annual Business Plan 2022/23 and the draft Business Plan 2023/24 were completed in line with the government's timelines. The annual financial audit for year ended 31 March 2022 declared that SWLEP Limited remained a going concern and the Annual Report for 2021/22 was published to this effect.

The Board remains committed to achieving a 50:50 gender balance, however the changes to the Board resulted in its gender balance slipping from 38.5% in May to 22% in November 2022. SWLEP will continue to

promote Board director positions to women and other under-represented people and aims to increase representation over time. The public to private sector balance of the Board continued to exceed national requirements despite the change in the classification of further education colleges from private to public sector organisations.

Work to better understand local government devolution and LEP integration continued throughout the year through engagement with the LEP Network. LEP areas across England fell into one of three categories: those looking to establish a Mayoral Combined Authority; County Deals and those areas which did not fall into a clear integration pathway, the latter group included Swindon and Wiltshire. The March budget in 2023 announced that the government was minded not to continue to fund LEPs beyond 2023/24 and SWLEP's core funding was reduced for the second year in succession; Growth Hub core funding was slightly increased for 2023/24 compared to 2022/23. Wiltshire Council continued to serve as SWLEP's Accountable Body, providing oversight of our programme compliance, funding allocations and financial claims process.



# Income Statement for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

Funding programme	Funding Source	22-23 Funding	% spent
LEP Core	DBT	£375,000	100%
Growth Hub Core	DBT	£231,000	100%
SME Competitiveness	ERDF (DLUHC)	£430,805	100%
Skills and Talent funding	Department for Education	£55,000	100%
Cyber Cluster	UKC3 (DCMS)	£55,000	100%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,146,805</b>	

During the year, SWLEP secured £1.15m of external funding to contribute towards the costs of delivering a wide range of activity:

- The Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub's core service offer, details of which can be found in the Business Environment section of this report.
- European funding to deliver the SME Competitiveness Programme, which entered its third and final year of delivering business support services across Swindon and Wiltshire in July 2022. Further details on this programme are included in the Business Environment section;
- The final tranche of funding from the Department of Education to support the skills analysis and labour market intelligence to support the work of the Skills and Talent Subgroup, details of which can be found in the Skills and Talent section;

- Funding from UKC3 was awarded to the SWLEP to support the activities of the Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster which aims to build security knowledge, skills, infrastructure and capabilities to make local businesses more resilient to cyber attacks.

SWLEP's core funding allocation was reduced to £375,000 from the £500,000 received in previous years. The amount of funding awarded for core Growth Hub services was reduced by 50% compared to 2020-21, following enhanced funding in the previous few years to support businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic; core funding therefore returned to a similar level to that awarded pre-pandemic.

A copy of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Limited's audited accounts are filed at Company's House and can be accessed [here](#).







# SKILLS AND TALENT

The Skills and Talent Subgroup continued to bring together a wide range of organisations and partners supporting skills development and educational pathways into employment.

The Subgroup continued to monitor labour market trends throughout the year as the UK emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic but continued to experience prolonged economic uncertainty impacting on business confidence, labour market constraints, international supply chain challenges and the impact of rising energy prices with the onset of the war in Ukraine.

SWLEP supported the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) throughout the year helping to shape its focus and business engagement and the progress of LSIP was a regular feature. This relationship will continue as the Subgroup takes on the governance for the LSIP in the future as local partners begin to design delivery. The Subgroup also received regular labour market analysis drawn from SWLEP's data resources and this analysis was cascaded across all subgroups.

The Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub continued to be one of the best in the

country engaging with every secondary school in Swindon and Wiltshire. For the third year running, it reached the top five for performance against the Gatsby Benchmarks which measure the range and depth of careers education provision in schools. It continued to work closely with 58 schools and colleges, helping to raise the career aspirations of young people. SWLEP is one of the few LEPs which is engaged with all secondary and further education providers through its Careers Hub. Alongside the delivery of the Hub's core service, the Careers Hub developed its ongoing projects further and introduced new ones to ensure that the ever-changing needs of employers are met wherever possible. These included:

1. Teacher Encounters Project began in the summer with the aim to provide teachers with direct industry context regarding their subject areas. A total of 16 schools and 69 teachers were engaged including three employer site visits to Wiltshire Council, QinetiQ and the Ramsbury Estate;
2. Hub Innovative Project: researches the

careers education needs of young people who are Electively Home Educated (EHE). The Careers Hub worked in partnership with EHE parents and carers to develop a platform to bring together local and national resources so parents and carers can deliver effective careers education within their Home Education Curriculum. The platform, 'Home Education Futures', is due to launch in 2023 and

3. Apprenticeship and Technical Education Project: continued through 2022/23 and included a social media and marketing campaign aimed at young people in the autumn followed by an online Apprenticeship Showcase broadcast in January, attended by 6,100+ young people. Two Apprenticeship Fairs were also delivered in Salisbury and Swindon, attended by 16 schools and colleges and over 1,500 young people.

There are some exciting activities happening across the skills support sector which the SWLEP is embracing. One of the important activities includes representatives from UCAS who are engaging with Local

Enterprise Partnerships through the LEP Network, delivering information specifically on degree apprenticeships to businesses and training providers and allowing apprenticeship adverts to be displayed on the UCAS website and during their Discovery Days.

SWLEP has also been actively promoting the designation of university centre status for the Higher Education provision at New College in Swindon and the Institute of Technology. This status has been confirmed and will be granted in July 2023. Another key focus for SWLEP has been to increase the number of apprenticeships within Swindon and Wiltshire. Following support from our Skills Adviser, 13 businesses which had never taken on an apprentice before did so, and 36 apprenticeship opportunities were created overall during the year.





## IDEAS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLACES

SWLEP has been supporting a wide range of innovation, infrastructure and regeneration projects which met the strategic priorities for the area, delivery of which has been overseen by the Ideas, Infrastructure and Places Subgroup which is Chaired by Suzanne Wigmore with Tom Harrison as Deputy Chair.

Preliminary works for the Salisbury River Park project were completed during the year with main construction work to take place from the summer of 2023. In addition to reducing flood risk, the project has been designed to provide major ecological, amenity, walking and cycling benefits. By improving the aesthetics of the area, it aims to encourage greater tourism, which in turn, will assist with the economic recovery and growth of the city.

Another project was to improve accessibility to Chippenham's station. This

work entered its final stages and is due to be completed by June 2023. Investment in the station to date has helped with ticketing and the flow of travellers and commuters which will help attract more users.

Having secured Life Science Opportunity Zone status for Porton Science Park in 2019, SWLEP is delighted to see the progress made in the delivery of Phase 2 of Porton Science Park, The Collaborative Innovation Centre. SWLEP invested £2m from the Getting Building Fund into the project which is due to be opened in July 2023. The Centre has been designed to facilitate greater collaboration between academia, the health and life sciences and the defence technology sectors.

Sustainable technologies continued to be a strategic priority for SWLEP and the subgroup has continued to receive updates

on the refurbishment of the Carriage Works in Swindon. SWLEP invested £4m from the Getting Building Fund towards this scheme which is the location for the Innovation Centre for Applied Sustainable Technologies 'iCAST'. This 'Research Gateway' is a collaboration between the Universities of Bath and Oxford which aims to support businesses to incorporate leading edge research into their processes.

During the year, the Subgroup has also engaged with, and kept up to date with the work the All Parliamentary Party Group (APPG) on Rail Freight as well as supported the development of The Western Gateway's Rail Vision. In addition, SWLEP supported the establishment of The Western Gateway's Hydrogen programme through a part-time secondment to the Secretariat Team and in doing so, supported the progression of

Swindon and Wiltshire's green hydrogen aspirations. During the year, as a result of the secondment, the Western Gateway published its interactive hydrogen mapping tool and Hydrogen Ecosystem brochure and work commenced on the development of a Western Gateway Hydrogen Delivery Pathway to 2050. As a Western Gateway partner, and Board member, Paul Moorby was invited to become the Chair of its Hydrogen Steering Committee, supported by Swindon Borough Council's Leader.

<https://western-gateway.co.uk/hydrogen>

<https://westerngateway.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index>



# BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The Business Environment Subgroup met regularly throughout the year to oversee the work of the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub and BCC. Local business intelligence has been captured from a wide range of engagement and sources as well as shared with government to help inform its understanding of business and trading conditions and policy development. SWLEP's Business Intelligence Network Group (BING) and with the Rural Economy Sector Group (RESG) had an important role to play in supporting this activity and maintaining the wider conversation between business and SWLEP's partners.

The Business Environment Subgroup is chaired by Alison North, who is also SWLEP Board's SME Champion and Deputy Chair.

SWLEP, the Growth Hub and BCC have always focussed on providing a variety of business support to match the needs of the diverse, exciting and enterprising businesses in our area.

The SME Competitiveness Project, which was led by the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub and delivered by a rich network of partners including SWLEP, was a fully funded business support programme thanks to a successful bid for European Regional Development Funding (ERDF). This programme of business advice supported over 1,200 businesses and helped to create at least 160 new jobs in Swindon and Wiltshire. This programme of support was successfully concluded in June 2023.

Chris Stevens, Head of Business Support, said "We have external evaluation that confirms the Growth Hub team exceeds the expectations of those who interact with us

and following further feedback and research, we have created an enhanced offer to meet the specific needs of our SME community. This feels like the natural next step in developing the Growth Hub and to protect its longevity."

The importance of wellbeing has been specifically highlighted following the COVID-19 pandemic. During the year, the Growth Hub, in collaboration with Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council, therefore, continued to run extremely successful Wellbeing for the Workplace digital sessions amongst its wide range of business support services.

During the year, SWLEP has supported the British Business Bank's plans for a South West Regional Investment Fund which will see £200m awarded to businesses regionally. LEPs across the region have done likewise and will sit on an advisory panel once the fund is open.

## The BCC

The BCC welcomed over 2,000 people through its doors during 2022/23 either as office members, attendees at private events or for public conferences.

The BCC's reputation continued to grow amongst the business community as the go-to venue for hybrid meetings, events and conferences. This started in June 2022 with the Swindon & Wiltshire Cyber Cluster's CyberICE conference, which saw over 30 attendees joined online by speakers from across the UK and the United States. The BCC has hosted a wide range of events throughout the year including the Swindon &

Wiltshire Careers Hub conference, Ministry of Defence and Strategic Command, Google Digital Garage and private industry, predominantly in the defence and security sector.

Nine companies joined the BCC community as office members through the year, with a combined workforce of over 50 staff regularly working from the facility. Member companies operate across multiple sectors, including defence and security, financial and professional services, and intellectual property. The BCC has also become a regular venue for regionally based companies to hold their away-days and a regular drop in workspace bringing together staff working from other locations such as Bristol, Gloucester and London.

If you would like to join our community, please contact us on [hello@bcc.co.uk](mailto:hello@bcc.co.uk)

## Franco's Café & Deli:

Opening in March 2023, Franco's Café & Deli has brought a further dimension to the BCC, providing refreshments for the local community and BCC members, as well as catering and refreshment services for events and parties at the BCC. Franco's Café & Deli will extend its offer in 2023/24, with the space being open for hire for private events.





## Swindon Wiltshire Cyber Cluster

The Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster (SWCC) is based at the BCC and is a network created specifically for Cyber Security SMEs from across our area. Membership of the Cluster is free of charge and all members are invited to regular meetings to hear speakers and take part in networking and discussion events. It promotes the sharing of ideas and best practices so that cyber security specialist businesses in our area can find new ways to thrive and develop.

The Cluster is managed by the SWLEP, and it supports the UK Government's Cyber Security Strategy and our local economic priorities. It aims to build cyber security knowledge, skills, infrastructure, and capabilities to make local businesses more resilient to cyber-attacks through minimising risks.

Events have been held regularly throughout the year, both in person and online. In addition to communicating national and international initiatives and trade opportunities to its membership, the SWCC ran its first Cyber ICE conference in June 2022, where 37 businesses attended a number of talks and presentations from Cyber experts from across the world utilising the state-of-the-art technical facilities at the

BCC. The ICE theme picked up on the key values of the BCC: innovation, collaboration and education.

Alongside SWLEP's Commercial Operations Manager at the BCC, the Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster lead joined the Board of Global Ecosystems Partnership Innovation and Cybersecurity 'Global EPIC'. Global EPIC connects global cybersecurity ecosystems which support local economic growth by enabling collaboration and the adoption of world-changing solutions to address existing and emerging high-impact cybersecurity challenges.

The Cyber Cluster aims to highlight the need for ongoing cyber security development and collaboration and achieves this by bringing together a dynamic, diverse, and forward-thinking group of like-minded individuals, who receive ongoing support suitable for all businesses. Members share their knowledge within the cluster members as well as hearing from insightful guest speakers. There are also many collaborative opportunities with Defence organisations and educational facilities both locally and further afield.

## BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT (CONTINUED)







# GROWING PLACES INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

To support businesses and to help achieve our priority of inclusive and sustainable economic development for the area, the SWLEP relaunched its Growing Places Infrastructure Fund (GPIF) in 2016, which led to a significant expansion in loans awarded. The Growing Places Infrastructure Fund is a £12 million revolving loan fund which provides investments to companies in Swindon and Wiltshire to use towards capital elements of suitable projects. During 2022/2023 nine loans were agreed totalling £4.2m, securing a further £6.5m in other investment with the aim of creating nearly 270 new jobs.

It is important that the investments support the continued development of Swindon and Wiltshire as a productive and innovative area and support the SWLEP's priority sectors in a sensitive and sustainable way to maintain the high quality and attractive environment of Swindon and Wiltshire.

Since inception, loans have supported activity in a range of sectors including healthcare, manufacturing, real estate, energy and technology, all of which have unlocked opportunities to support innovation, enterprise, growth and productivity improvements. Investments have particularly focussed on projects that have been unable to be developed due to infrastructure or commercial constraints, but that were able to proceed immediately following investment from the GPIF fund.

A recent analysis of eight companies who were early recipients of a GPIF loan, revealed that they averaged a net asset improvement of 91%. The SWLEP is keen to have a pipeline of businesses interested in utilising the loan fund. For further information please email **hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk**. The companies which have received loans all had unique needs with diverse project requirements.



## CASE STUDY:



## CLINICAL PARTNERS

Clinical Partners is a great example of a growing company which has been significantly supported by GPIF. Clinical Partners provides expert advice from trusted clinicians online, in-person or over the phone, either privately or via the NHS. Its advice covers all areas of mental health and includes depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), self-harm and eating disorders for adults and children.

The company received its third GPIF loan in October 2022 which enabled further integration with NHS systems and introduced an app-based patient management system. The GPIF loan significantly assisted the company to continue its growth trajectory, doubling its turnover year-on-year and taking its headcount from 23 in 2019 to approximately 250, most of whom are employed from Wiltshire.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Clinical Partners realised that it needed to upgrade its software platform to not only provide a safe and secure environment for its clinicians, clients and clinical partners to communicate and share information with full GDPR compliance, but also to deliver significantly higher volumes of appointments giving consistent service nationwide. The improved system supported by the GPIF loans allows its clinicians to be more effective and evidence-based, utilising customised dashboards to enable targeted treatment and automation for reports and repeat prescriptions services with improved outcomes for patients.

Barry Guthrie, CEO & Adrian Clarke, Managing Director at Clinical Partners took part in our 'Doing Business Brilliantly' annual conference discussing its growth with Paula Harsley. The video of the discussion can be found here: : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6icYLwQQe3g&list=PLvjfxWzfvT-S4EGOJsQklr1CjK527zCZ&index=3&pp=iAQB>



# BUSINESS FESTIVAL

## LOOKING AHEAD

SWLEP will work with both Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council to develop a managed transition plan in relation to our economic analysis and planning, business engagement and delivery of programmes core functions to meet central government and local requirements, and we will engage with the wider LEP Network throughout this process. As a limited company, we will use our commercial income to develop further opportunities to grow services through a concentration on the use of the BCC and its business services to build resilience and growth potential.

We will continue to offer our GPIF loan programme and new loans will be awarded as capital is repaid into the pot. Where appropriate we will signpost business to the British Business Bank's offer and work to establish a reciprocal relationship to support the wider investment needs of our business community.

We will continue to support engagement

with our Business Intelligence Network Group, Rural Economic Sector Group sharing development, data and analysis so we can best represent business needs given the ongoing difficult economic conditions. We also look forward to the findings of the PhD research we co-fund with the University of Bath in understanding the value of natural Capital and how it can be embedded into investment decisions.

These developments are taking place where growth and productivity are slipping behind previous rates of progress. The country as a whole is experiencing low rates of growth and low productivity. We see our role as a means of helping to increase the economic prospects for Swindon and Wiltshire and to contribute to the growth of the economy in the UK. This will include actively seeking new businesses to locate through our investment programme.

Within this picture of relatively weak economic growth, the role of skills development is crucial to making a positive

environment for inward investors and existing companies. There is a need to recruit and support the training of young people and also adults who may well have to change their jobs due to the decline of certain sectors as advances in technology challenge traditional roles. We will continue our active engagement in this work through the Skills and Talent Subgroup, the Careers Hub, the deployment of our Skills Advisers and supporting the implementation of the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

As part of our continued support and promotion of businesses and the economy in our local area, we are planning to replace our traditional annual conference with an exciting new venture. The Business Festival will showcase businesses from across our area, enabling effective networking opportunities, to learn and grow partnerships, as well as achieve potential new business contracts and opportunities to collaborate. The festival will be open to all businesses, large or small, including

sole traders and micro-businesses who form a very significant part of the business landscape in our area. News of the festival's impact will be given in next year's report.

The military is a strong and abiding presence in Swindon and Wiltshire housing one of the country's largest garrisons. With this high proportion of armed forces personnel and their families, the SWLEP will be renewing its Armed Forces Covenant in May 2023, which will show our continued commitment to supporting the armed forces community.





# GET INVOLVED

**The SWLEP is a business-led partnership and we are keen to hear the voice of local business in taking forward the work we do. There are several ways this can be done:**



## **Joining the SWLEP:**

At least 70% of the SWLEP Limited Board Directors come from the private sector and from time-to-time we advertise vacancies on the Board via our website.

Alternatively, you might want to consider becoming a member of SWLEP Limited and attend our Annual General Meeting.

To find out more or to apply, please email:

**[administration@swlep.co.uk](mailto:administration@swlep.co.uk)**

## **Provide feedback:**

We are interested in your views about the work we do as well as how your business may be affected by national policies. You can get involved by attending our events, participating in our consultations and surveys on our website, or through responding to a direct request for feedback from us. You can also provide us with feedback via our website. Complete the Get in Touch form and insert 'Feedback' in the Your Enquiry field.

**[www.swlep.co.uk/contacts](http://www.swlep.co.uk/contacts)**

## **Business support services:**

Start-ups and small and medium-sized businesses can access information, advice and guidance through SWLEP's Growth Hub.

To find out more visit:

**[www.swgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.swgrowthhub.co.uk)** or

email: **[hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk](mailto:hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk)**

## **SWLEP newsletter:**

Subscribing to our newsletter is a great way to hear about the latest news on the SWLEP's programmes and events which could support your business and extend your network within the wider business community.

To subscribe and get started, please email:

**[hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk](mailto:hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk)**





## Join us in growing our local economy

To receive regular updates on SWLEP programmes, email:

**[administration@swlep.co.uk](mailto:administration@swlep.co.uk)**

**[www.swlep.co.uk](http://www.swlep.co.uk)**

07825 098 384

**[www.SWGrowthHub.co.uk](http://www.SWGrowthHub.co.uk)**

[hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk](mailto:hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk)

01249 477 287



@SWLEP



Swindon & Wiltshire LEP



**Swindon & Wiltshire**

LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

SWLEP would like to thank the following organisations for permission to use their photographs: Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council.

We would also like to thank all the firms that took part in our case studies which form part of this report.

**Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Limited, company limited by guarantee, Company No 11766448 (England & Wales)**

**Registered office at Unit 7, Greenways Business Park, Chippenham SN15 1BN Website: [www.swlep.co.uk](http://www.swlep.co.uk)**