



Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Creating new private sector jobs for Oxfordshire

Chief Executive's Update Report for the Oxford Economic Strategy Steering Group

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Introduction

This report provides an update on the key projects being developed by the Oxfordshire Local enterprise partnership (OxLEP).

Key Projects

The Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) has now been submitted to Government and is established as the framework economic document for Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (OxLEP) vision for Oxfordshire is that:

By 2030 Oxfordshire will be a vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, world leading economy, driven by innovation, enterprise and research excellence.

The SEP expands upon this vision via four thematic objectives, these are;

- Innovative enterprise- strengthening innovation led growth in the Oxfordshire economy
- Innovative people- delivering the skills in local residents and beyond to service our economy
- Innovative place- providing the homes, infrastructure and quality of life to underpin the economy of the county
- Innovative connectivity- allowing people to move easily and seamlessly throughout the county to live visit and do business.

The SEP closely aligns to the Oxford Economic Strategy and the elements within it.

Innovation and Support Programme

A key aspect of the SEP is to attract businesses into Oxfordshire to grow the economy. The Invest in Oxfordshire Service continue to expand the inward investment service delivered on behalf of the LEP and the County Council. Enquiry numbers from firms looking to relocate to Oxfordshire or expand within the County have risen by 92% year on year to 148. Seven projects have come to fruition during the last year which together are predicted to create 332 new jobs within a three year period. Four companies have set up new facilities, covering investment from Spain, Canada and the US as well as an amalgamation of a UK business. In addition three existing Oxfordshire firms have been assisted to expand.

OxLEP have recently established a project to map the county's employment land, both used and available as a tool to aid discussions with potential businesses that are looking to establish in the county. The projects aim is to build a common database of all site availability, using both public sector data and knowledge from agents and building owners to be able to discuss all options with new businesses. It is hope that this database could be GIS based, thus providing a geographic aspect. This project will complement an action in the City's economic strategy and officers are discussing how to link these projects to mutual benefit.

City Deal

The City Deal document was finalised in March of this year and the focus has now turned to delivering on the offers made in the document. The key offers to highlight here include

Innovation

The Oxfordshire Support for Business Programme has made strong start following completion of the negotiations with Lancaster University. This provides benefits for businesses through increased funding (channelled through existing university and Oxford Investment Opportunities Network structures), vouchers to reduce the cost of leadership development and use of research facilities and training sessions for start up entrepreneurs. This is supported by a team of 9 Network Navigators who work part time with the programme to help those seeking support access the right sort of support more easily than they could have done in the past. The administration team and the Network Navigators are up and running and the web portal, grants, vouchers and training are available for use.

The deal also confirms the development of a number of escalator hubs, a physical point where creative ideas can grow. There are four in total and the first of these, at Culham and Harwell are moving towards a planning stage with a promised completion date of mid-2015.

Skills

The skills commitment is to develop a world class skills eco-system that allows us to provide for the full spectrum of growth in the local economy. It is early days for these projects but we expect, for example the skills vouchers to be available later in the year.

Transport-road

The city deal is committed to creating the conditions that make Oxfordshire the location of choice. Key projects and their progress are

- Oxford Northern gateway- a programme of schemes to relieve congestion and enhance access at the northern gateway development site is on-going. At the same time a Growth Deal bid has been submitted to assist with the utility and associated works necessary to unlock the site.
- Science Transit- This is a package of measures to improve connectivity all along the route from science vale to the city including junction enhancements and improved public transport, feasibility and design is under way for this, complemented by the existing commitment to redesign the Redbridge Hollow roundabout.

Transport-rail

The City deal proposes an enhanced connectivity from the key economic locations to London, the West Country and beyond. This will include connections to and from the key hubs at Science Vale etc. and Didcot. This is complemented by growth deal funding bids to enhance the stations at Didcot and Oxford to make them true multi-modal points linking rail to road, public transport and cycle access to the economic hubs of the city.

Housing

The city deal offers an accelerated development of 7500 houses to 2018 by using innovative methods, for example the Oxford Investment Partnership. It is early days for a project with a long lead time but specific actions for individual sites have been identified.

At the same time a commitment from government to raise the lending cap for HRA councils is enabling oxford city to bid for increased lending powers to enhance development capacity.

Super- connected cities

This is a project funded by the City with match funding from the Growing Places fund to provide a holistic wi- fi experience for residents and visitors to the City. This will include

- Connectivity to Wi-Fi at park and ride and buses into the city. Agreement has been reached with the oxford bus company to install Wi-Fi and negotiations with Stagecoach are on-going.
- Free wi-fi at key public buildings, for example the town hall and museums
- Enhanced wi- fi throughout the city zone provided through a network of hot spots.

This project is complemented by a growth deal project sponsored by all the LEPs in the Thames Valley to deliver 5G telecommunications throughout key urban conurbations in the Thames Valley.

European Structural Innovation Fund

Along with the City Deal and Skills Strategy, this is the third of the strategic documents that provide the detailed framework of the SEP.

The strategy has been completed and approved by government and an indicative allocation of £19.4 million to 2020 made to Oxfordshire, dependant upon the successful conclusion of national negotiations.

The fund has two component parts

1. The European Regional Development Fund- earmarked for projects relating to innovation, competitiveness, low carbon and ICT. 20% of this fund must be sent on climate change adaptation and the environment.
2. The European Social Fund- earmarked for projects to support employment, labour mobility, social inclusion and combatting poverty.

Once the fund is finalised officers from across the county will be developing relevant projects for approval through the structures required by the fund which operate under the LEP.