**European Regional Development Fund – Cheshire and Warrington Projects**

It was agreed at the last Board Discussion Forum, that it would be helpful to circulate a list of those projects that currently receive ESIF funding, as well as a list of those projects that have recently been submitted, with a view to securing ESIF funding. It is important to note that while the LEP can influence this process, ultimately the decision rests with HMG and projects can only go forward with the agreement of HMG.

Those projects listed from 1-14 inclusive have been contracted between 2015 – 2017 and those listed from 15 – 27 have been developed over the last few months and were submitted to Government by 20th April 2018.

1. **Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub**

*A First- Stop Shop for business advice in Cheshire and Warrington.*

The Cheshire & Warrington Growth Hub provides an impartial, clear and expert first stop shop service for businesses looking for support with their growth ambitions as well as young/ potential new businesses seeking advice and guidance.

The Growth Hub provides: • Comprehensive information and signposting to the best local and national business support services • General One to One Business Advice • Business Needs Analysis & Diagnostics • Bespoke Business Growth Project Plans • Free consultancy support for SMEs.

1. **Cheshire and Warrington Business Growth Programme**

*A package of support for new Entrepreneurs, Start-ups and SMEs under 42mths old across all priority sectors which will deliver SME growth activities.*

Key activities will include for example: • Cross-sector growth support • Sector specific focus • Supply chain expertise • Start up and growth support • Mentoring • Incubator support services • Accounts & Finance • Sales • Skills assessments, training & development plan creation • HR & Recruitment • Marketing • Product development • Expansion and innovation • Leadership & management • Health & safety • Process Improvement.

1. **Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund**

*Lending and investment in Small and Medium Businesses.*

Support at different stages of development, from early stage to high potential firms with growth ambitions. Includes Micro finance - £25k to £100k, Debt Finance - £100k to £750k and Equity Finance - £50k to £2m.

1. **Cheshire and Warrington Manufacturing Growth Service**

*Help to streamline manufacturing processes, drive up production capacity and innovation, improve business systems and access new markets.*

Where actions are suitable for a grant, the project will support the creation of a detailed specification of work and to identify potential providers.

1. **SMART Cheshire**

*Expert workshops and individual coaching, whilst promoting peer-to-peer support through Innovation Growth Groups and individual coaching sessions.*

The project will build a robust innovation community across four innovation hotspots and demonstrate the benefits of working with knowledge based partners. Companies engaging with the programme will benefit from advice from experts, experienced coaches and, crucially, other businesses wishing to embed innovation into their firms. The programme will be delivered at various sites throughout Cheshire and Warrington.

1. **Innovation to Commercialisation**

*Technical support and access to equipment for SMEs to develop and test prototypes and increase the number of research and innovation projects between SMEs and universities. It will establish long-term resources for SME use and will add value to existing business and innovation support offerings.*

Extending the shared equipment resource at Thornton Science Park e.g. Computer-aided design (CAD), using computer technology (software) for design purposes, data analysis allowing non-experts a means of interpreting the results of experiments to aid and inform business decision making.

1. **BioCity - Next Business Generation - Life Sciences Support Programme**

*Help for SMEs in the Life Sciences sector. The BioHub at Alderley Park enables emerging pharmaceutical and life science companies to take advantage of some of the UK’s best invested research and development facilities, scientific heritage and industry experts, while operating entirely independently.*

The project offers a programme of advice, delivering key tools and methodologies to help SMEs de-risk and grow; a mentoring programme to provide support for SMEs and investment readiness support for life sciences SMEs.  The project supports enterprises to innovate and grow their companies as a result of which jobs will be created and new products will be introduced to firm or marketplace.

1. **Healthcare Business Connect**

*Support for SMEs to break into the NHS market in health and social care and enable SMEs to grow supply chain markets and in turn, grow their businesses.*

The programme will enable SMEs to better understand, work with and sell to the health and social care markets. This is a complicated sector to do business with, but the Innovation Agency and GM Academic Health Science Network are uniquely placed to help SMEs across Cheshire & Warrington to work with healthcare providers to drive much needed changes in the healthcare system and in doing so build capacity and capability within the businesses to deliver economic growth.

1. **Enhancing SMEs international trade performance**

*Events to identify potential exporters, Pre-Export development support, a specialist internationalisation programme for R&D focused companies, Sector-specific events & market visits, Specialist consultancy support, match funded grants of £1,500-£3,000 to help implement bespoke Export Action Plans.*

This project will provide tailored export support services to SMEs across the North West. Activity will be complementary to Department for International Trade’s core services and designed to help firms become better skilled and equipped to access new international markets. Beneficiaries will be able to exploit new overseas growth opportunities and boost the export performance of the regional UK economy.

1. **ECO Innovation**

*SMEs will have access to university expertise, facilities and equipment to grow low carbon markets and develop innovative technologies.*

Building on an award-winning eco-innovation model in collaboration with universities the project will deliver an intensive programme of flexible, SME-led innovation interventions. SMEs from across Cheshire and Warrington will gain access to university expertise, facilities and equipment, benefiting from researchers, academics and business support staff. SMEs from any sector are eligible, providing there is a low carbon focus to interventions.

1. **Helix Business Park**

*6 Units of Workspace in Ellesmere Port at Market Rates*

This project involves the purchase and development of a 1.21 hectare brownfield site located off Newbridge Road, Ellesmere Port to provide a total of 4,784 m² of new, quality, speculative business workspace accommodation.

The proposal is to provide six individual business units of varying sizes (464 m² - 1,393 m²) designed to offer high quality modern business space providing ideal grow on space for high growth SME’s in the Cheshire and Warrington LEP area.

1. **Support and Workspace for Business in Key Growth Sectors**

*18 Units of Managed Workspace at Market Rates in Chester, Northwich and Winsford.*

The project will build and manage 3,508 m sq. (37,760 sq. ft.) of new, high quality, flexible business start-up and grow on space in Winsford, Chester and Northwich.

The project will also provide access to a dedicated Business Development Officer, linked into Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub. This will provide a wider wrap-around service for businesses and a tailored programme of networking. The project will assist at least 40 new or expanding businesses targeted on energy, technology and advanced manufacturing start-ups or grow-on SMEs, including the tenants of the business space.

1. **Digital 2020 Programme**

*Superfast Broadband to underserved businesses. Connection Vouchers. Advice and guidance to support digital led business growth.*

Digital 2020 will enhance access to ICTs for SMEs in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area. It will improve the quality (speed and reach) of digital infrastructure and boost the use of digital technology by businesses. The project will strengthen the competitive potential of SMEs, help develop new products and services, and ensure businesses exploit e-commerce opportunities to access new markets. Digital 2020 has complementary strands: • Not Spots: extending superfast broadband to under-served businesses • Connection Vouchers: helping businesses access and exploit ultrafast broadband • Digital Support: advice and guidance to secure digital-led business growth.

1. **ERDF Technical Assistance**

*Staff to work with the LEP to assist with the delivery of the ESIF Strategy.*

Bring forward activity, which will increase the capacity of organisations across Cheshire to engage with the ERDF Programme. Provide advice and guidance to any organisation that wishes to apply for ESIF funding. Provide links from MHCLG to the LEP, LEP to partners, and LEP to applicants and act as an intermediary between applicants and the managing authority. Provide economic intelligence data for identifying knowledge gaps. Consult with Stakeholders and provide engagement activities e.g. Events and Workshops. Provide Project Development Support for any applicant developing and delivering eligible ERDF projects (activity that is not already being undertaken by the managing authority)

**Recent Projects**

1. **Access to Finance**

*A team of three, peripatetic, Access to Finance Managers will work across the sub-region, providing impartial information, diagnostic and brokerage services and, where necessary, intensive support to access the most appropriate business finance.*

The project team will be augmented by Business Growth Managers from delivery partner’s teams who will provide initial SME engagement and referrals, and the Skills & Growth Company will provide additional wrap around Programme Management, Event Management, IT and Procurement support.

1. **Energy / Low Carbon Housing Support EP & Neston**

*A small project of activities to support low carbon living in social housing. E.g. ECO Radiators, Solar Panels and insulation.*

The specific activities that will be undertaken as part of the project are: 1. The provision of alternative ‘’Eco Radiator” heating systems to tenants in up to 92 homes. 2. Consider retro fitting solar panels on up to 1160 south facing Council homes and 3 high-rises and 66 low rise blocks this will assist in reducing fuel poverty for many hundreds of households across Ellesmere Port and Neston. 3. Provide external insulation to 19 solid wall homes that the Council has been unable to deliver as part of the 2016/17 Housing Capital Investment Programme. 4. Address issues relating to persistent damp, mould and condensation in Council homes through a combination of providing homes with additional cavity wall, external and loft insulation, natural and mechanical ventilation.

1. **Cheshire 3D Print Hub**

*C3D is a capital project with revenue support to deliver a state-of-the-art industry 4.0 facility that will bridge TRLs 2 to 5 that then connect seamlessly into existing Catapult centres.*

The project is submitted on the basis that the Tatton Estate renovates and repurposes about half the existing buildings outside the programme to put in as match, and ERDF funding would allow a significant array of industry 4.0 equipment purchases as well as project management and SME engagement revenue and will run from June 2018 to July 2021.

1. **Chester City Place SME & Business Innovation Centre**

*The project will deliver 70,600 sq. ft. of Grade A multi-purpose office accommodation and a 40,000 sq. ft. Business Innovation Centre. At least 60% (42,360 sq. ft) of the Grade A offices and 100% of the Business Innovation Centre will be let to SMEs.*

The focus will be on accommodating and supporting sectors in which Chester specialises, including education/training, technology and financial services.

Business support to increase productivity will available to occupiers, SME tenants of the adjacent One City Place, those envisaged to occupy later phases of City Place, as well as SMEs across Chester. It is expected around 541 FTE jobs in SMEs will be supported, approximately 24 SME businesses.

1. **Cheshire Food Producers**

*The project will improve and repurpose a range of derelict buildings at Millington Hall Farm to create new, food-grade grow-on production units, with revenue support.*

This will meet a significant gap in the market currently limiting economic growth in this priority sector. Ancillary to the production units will be storage and stock holding facilities, office and visitor meeting space including a demonstration kitchen. The project will employ a technical specialist to support the food businesses to develop new products and access new market places, as well as offering a platform for food-specific small business grants scheme to enable producers to purchase new production equipment.

1. **Cheshire & Warrington Low Carbon Investment Programme**

*This Project will award grants to Cheshire & Warrington SMEs to stimulate innovative investment in low carbon technologies and equipment. The Project will also provide technical support to ensure that investments are practical, appropriate and capable of proving a satisfactory return on investment.*

The project will target 75 capital grants to SMEs to reduce carbon and energy use, with each project averaging £50,000, attracting a 60% £30,000 grant contribution. 150 SMEs supported with low carbon technology investment and / or development, via 12-hour assists. Utilise £1.5m funds from C&W LEP’s Local Growth Fund Energy Capital Investment fund. £1.5million private sector investment matching public support to enterprises. Minimum of 750T CO2e savings (A notional target of 5 tonnes / year savings for each SME assisted has been set).

1. **Cheshire & Warrington SME Growth Grants**

*A financial grant contribution to implement an identified Growth Project.*

The project will be working with the Cheshire & Warrington Growth Hub and through the project partners will identify and engage SMEs with identified potential to grow and will provide a financial grant contribution to implement an identified Growth Project e.g. improving business efficiency & productivity, developing new processes/products etc.

1. **REACH - Real World Evaluation for Adoption & Commercialisation of Healthtech**

*The project will enable SMEs to provide evidence of the impact of their innovations and develop their business case for commercialisation through evaluation within clinical practice through wider scale procurement and / or commissioning.*

Specifically, the programme will provide bespoke support to companies in many key areas including, but not limited to:

• Introduction to pilot sites, including hospitals, primary care, care homes and direct to patients as appropriate  
• Establishing and agreeing the terms of reference for each evaluation with all parties concerned  
• Conducting a robust academic evaluation of the technology in practice  
• Conducting clinical and / or patient surveys as appropriate  
• Developing a clear value-based offering that evidences cost and efficiency improvements, better patient outcomes and clinical excellence.   
• Developing a meaningful health and financial economic case for adoption  
• Preparing a case study and plan to support adoption and scaling

1. **V-Carbon**

*The project will enable V-Carbon to establish its UK research and technology centre to meet these goals. The project will undertake research to process scrap from Aerospace / Automotive sectors.*

Alongside ERDF funding, DIT is also supporting V-Carbon in locating inward investment from US & EU locations for its Global Headquarters in the UK. This R&D facility will establish the foundation for future UK operations and production of full scale processing of up to 700T carbon composites through recycling and advanced conversion lines. It will create a new high value, engineered material at an industrial scale.

1. **Biohub Accelerator & Scale Up Programme**

*This project will continue to capitalise on activities to support a new pipeline of SMEs at Alderley Park.* *This new project will introduce a new element (“Scale-up”) to a wider group of SMEs focused on generating rapid turnover and/or employment growth.*

1. ‘Spark’ events increase chances of early stage ideas finding product market fit, and support the creation, de-risking, and early growth of SMEs 2. ‘Develop’ programme – focuses on rigorous testing and validation of value propositions and business models 3. One-to-one coaching, mentoring and access to experts to meet specific needs Additional activities and support: 1. Senior Leadership and skills development. Market access (national and international) 2. Access to finance 3. Profile raising 4. Cluster development and collaboration, to create an environment for sustained growth.

1. **The Millington ECOhub**

*The Millington ECOhub will supply the neighbouring 50,000 sq. ft rural diversification project being delivered next to the new A556 Knutsford-Bowdon dual carriageway with consistent renewable solar and biodiesel electricity supported by onsite battery storage.*

Millington Hall Farm is set in rural Cheshire only one junction down the M56 from Manchester Airport and comprises a range of redundant farm buildings that the Millington Estate intends to repurpose to provide for a range of uses ranging from the Cheshire Food Producers hub, a new Brunning and Price pub, a microbrewery, farm shop, short let visitor accommodation and other complimentary uses. The Cheshire Food Producers unit will provide a range of food-grade grow-on production units supporting a range of SMEs adding value to locally sourced agricultural produce effectively as grow on space for the University of Chester’s NowFood project.

1. **Greater Innovation for Smarter Material Optimisation GISMO**

*R&D collaborations from I month to 2 years will provide more intense, technical interventions.*

This is industry-led activity, the type and duration of support will be determined by the needs identified. SMEs will engage via a bottom up derived project or in responding to a Prime Challenge. Support includes access to key innovation assets (including facilities and equipment relating to, chemical process innovation, advanced engineering and nano-fabrication, materials science, energy, accelerator science & quantum technologies). With 200 materials researchers, LU will maximise its technical capability and facilities focused on Smart Materials, their performance and their interactions with the outside world (interfaces). Smarter material interfaces represent the greatest ‘added value’ in most technological sectors. This interdisciplinary theme is directly applicable to: Energy Materials; materials in the Chemicals and Processing Industries, Advanced Engineering; Life Sciences and Healthcare materials.

The project will have additional locations at Daresbury Science Park in the Lancaster University led Cockcroft Institute; and at the SGC headquarters; with support covering the full Cheshire and Warrington LEP area.

1. **Pathways to Innovation**

*Services across the entire innovation cycle for the delivery of IP support in the smart specialisation sectors. Activities will help mitigate risk for SMEs in commercialising technologies.*

STRAND 1: EVALUATING, PROTECTING AND COMMERCIALISING “BRIGHT IDEAS”

STRAND 2: COMMERCIALISING “BRIGHT IDEAS” CROSS-SECTORALLY  
STRAND 3: SUPPORTING “BRIGHT IDEAS” EXEMPLAR PROJECTS  
STRAND 4: PROMOTING AND CELEBRATING “BRIGHT IDEAS”