

## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024

**Growth Hub Board**  
**13<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

### Item 8 – Growth Hub Performance Update and Priorities

Paper Title	Growth Hub Performance Update
Purpose of Paper	To inform the Board of activity and performance for the Growth Hub from 26 <sup>th</sup> August 2024 - 25 <sup>th</sup> October2024
Equality and Diversity implications	None
Meeting Date	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
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#### 1.0 Introduction

We are looking forward to the second half of the year and are now fully embedded within West Northants Council where the team is working well, feel settled and supported. We are now officially the South Midlands Growth hub and will work over the next 6 months to embed our new brand both internally and externally. We are continuing our joint team meetings across the local authorities and key partners across the region, which are valuable in ensuring we continue our joined up approach. The team continue to demonstrate their dedication, teamwork, and innovative ways of working to deliver successfully with reduced delivery team. Our Hour with an expert service offering is already successful and we continue to grow our partner offering. We are looking forward to our joint event with the Careers Hub at the end of the month, where we will launch our new joint website.

The following report provides a summary of the Growth Hub's activity and performance August 2024 - October 2024

We are working as a team to delivery against our plan, also working with our LA's to contribute to their ED strategies and are playing a key role in the development of the strategic plan for the South Midlands.

'As always we are continually making changes to our website and communication, so please do visit to see the brilliant work we are achieving across the South Midlands.  
[www.semlepgrowthhub.com](http://www.semlepgrowthhub.com)

#### Core Delivery

During this period, the Growth Hub received a total of 265 new enquiries, reflecting a strong demand for our support services. Professional services accounted for 37% of enquiries, followed by creative industries at 19%, and manufacturing at 9%. The main reasons for reaching out included advice on available grant programmes across the South Midlands and participation in our Hour with an Expert session for AI and marketing support. Our newly launched Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Grant Scheme has attracted significant interest, with 87 enquiries from Milton Keynes businesses registering an interest in the scheme. West Northamptonshire followed with 47 enquiries, and North Northamptonshire with 34. The

Presented at the Growth Hub Board Meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> June2024

## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024

Business Adviser team has been actively supporting these clients through personalised one-on-one engagement, providing advice, access to events, and referrals to our network of specialist partners.

The team has continued to promote the Bedford Borough Step into Net Zero Programme, which supports businesses on their journey toward sustainability. A highlight this quarter is the upcoming Carbon Reduction Workshop in November, led by our sustainability expert from ActNow Consulting. The team has been assisting Bedford Borough businesses with grant applications for sustainability-focused projects, helping them achieve their environmental goals.

During this period, our focus on educating businesses about the economic benefits of sustainability and the potential of AI has a priority. With recent team training on AI applications, we are better equipped to discuss how businesses can leverage AI to overcome challenges and drive growth. By integrating sustainability and AI into our conversations, we're sparking ideas on how these tools can enhance resilience and future-proof their operations.

## Summary of Growth Hub highlights 26th August – 25th October 2024

We continue to deliver Growth Hub activity in line with Growth Hub priority areas and in response to business intelligence and challenges faced.

These priority areas are summarised below including the key delivery / activity within each priority area. We also have a champion for each of these areas on our Growth Hub Board.

The team has been continuing to create and maintain relationships with our local businesses and wider business support community through our Growth Hub events and, and by attending partner networking events across the South Midland patch

## What We've Achieved – April 2024 - October 2024



12,950 unique visitors to the Growth Hub website



190 jobs forecasted to be created



Over 830 businesses received support



76 grants awarded



331 attendees across 8 events



1800 hours of support provided

Presented at the Growth Hub Board Meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024

## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024

### Delivering events and working in partnership

From an events perspective, the Growth Hub has had another busy few months of our own events and supporting those of partners, thus strengthening our relationships across the region. Our Network & Learn events continue to receive great feedback from businesses who are enjoying the value from our guest speakers but also to network with other like-minded businesses. In September we hosted our first joint conference, 'BusinessFest' with the South Midlands Careers Hub at Kings House in Bedford. Our aim with this conference as a Growth Hub was to bring together more of the professional services businesses in the South Midlands and showcase to them how they can add value to their offerings and services to their clients with support from their local Growth Hub. We have over 200 attendees on the day across both the Growth Hub and Careers Hub. The morning sessions were split per hub and then we put together carousel panel sessions for the afternoon with brought both groups together. Attendees heard from the likes of various public sector partners and how they can benefit from working with them such as the Local Authorities. We also had businesses that have recently been successful in obtaining grant funding from us to demonstrate how professional services businesses can leverage this kind of support for their own clients as no extra cost to them. We continue to host our virtual 'meet the neighbours' webinars which is a follow on from our support provider summit and will intersperse the face-to-face sessions bringing partners together to discuss the business support offerings available across the region from us all. We held an in person session in September at the conference with this group to mainly focus on discussing future grant programmes. .

#### 1.2 UKSPF

The team are successfully delivering our BB Step into Net Zero programme and to date have already received 31 enquiries of which 20 have attended a 30-minute business clinic. All of the businesses who have attended a clinic have also received a bespoke toolkit to assist with taking the next steps on their carbon reduction journey including:

- How to measure a carbon footprint
- How to create a carbon reduction plan
- Free training and development opportunities
- Funding to support carbon reduction initiatives.
- Wider carbon reduction support programmes

Newly registered clients will be invited to attend our upcoming Carbon Reduction workshop in November which will be delivered by our sustainability expert from ActNow Consulting. The workshop will be an interactive session, to support businesses with understanding more about their carbon footprint and provide advice and guidance on how to develop a carbon reduction strategy. Individuals will learn about the wider support available including funding opportunities to support sustainable projects.

#### 1.3 Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Grant Scheme

On 1<sup>st</sup> October Milton Keynes City Council launched a new grant scheme for businesses in Bletchley and Fenny Stratford. The scheme is part funded by Milton Keynes City Council and the government's Towns Fund. The South Midlands Growth Hub is providing administrative support to help deliver this scheme.

Presented at the Growth Hub Board Meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024

## **Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024**

### Grants available include:

Start-up grants of up to £2,500

Existing business grants of up to £5,000

Deadline for applications is 30 November 2024.

### **1.4 GPF Grants**

#### **Growing Innovation Fund**

The second round of funding launched on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 . The remaining allocation was £3,914,500.84. The deadline for EOI submission was 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024. The deadline for applications to be received was 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024. 17 applications were received and appraised by our external assessors Edale. The results were presented to the Grant Panel on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024. 15 applications were approved for funding totalling £2,898,033.13.

The total amount of funding awarded from Rounds 1 and 2 is £3,433,532.29 which leaves £1,316,467.71 uncommitted. We are currently looking at what options are available for this remaining underspend and are presenting a paper to the Board on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

### **1.5 Resilience and Innovation Grant**

The first deadline to receive applications was 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023. We have held 7 grant panels since the first deadline, the last one being held on 10 October 2024. 91 applications have been received in total.

These 91 applications have been to the independent grant panel. 62 grants have been awarded totalling £1,894,358.87. The Resilience and Innovation Grant Programme is now closed for further applications.

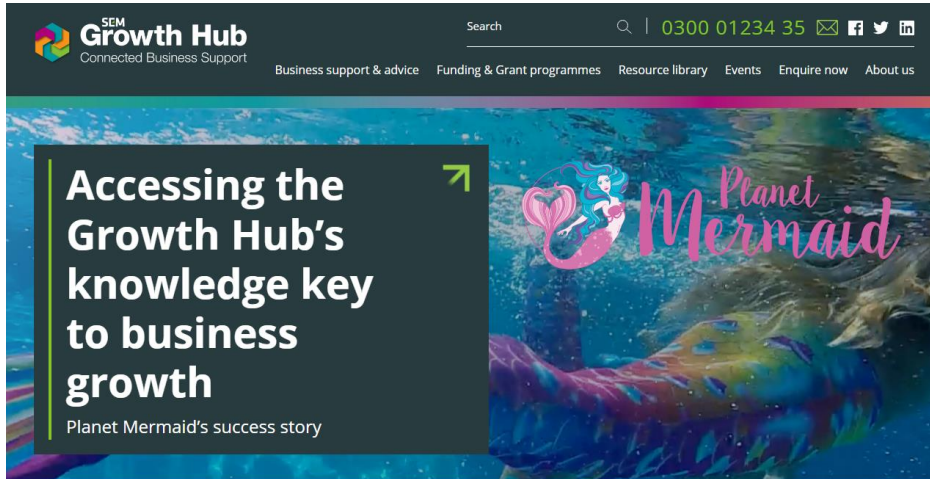
### **1.6 Hour with an Expert – Marketing**

During the month of June, the Growth Hub launched Hour with an Expert – Marketing, delivered by our Marketing Lead. The programme was launched in response to demand from local businesses requesting advice and guidance on how to better promote their businesses and grow their customer base. The programme had a positive response receiving 32 registrations between June and August.

### **1.7 Case Studies**

To showcase our work with business across the South Midlands we've created the following case study alongside Planet Mermaid. The case study focuses on how the Growth Hub supported Planet Mermaid in first relocating their business and leasing new property, to then taking part in Growth Curve and successfully accessing funding.

## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024



*Finding the perfect premises can be a daunting task for any business. For Planet Mermaid, a rising star in the world of aquatic fashion, this was no exception. Hoping to match their rapid growth with a suitable location, they turned to the expertise of the Growth Hub. What ensued was not just assistance, but a transformative partnership that propelled Planet Mermaid to new heights.*

### Email Stats

Email continues to prove effective in reaching our audience and generating interest in our programmes. Over 70% of sign ups to our events are generated through our email outreach, whilst our funding programmes receive boosts in EOIs when promoted through the channel.

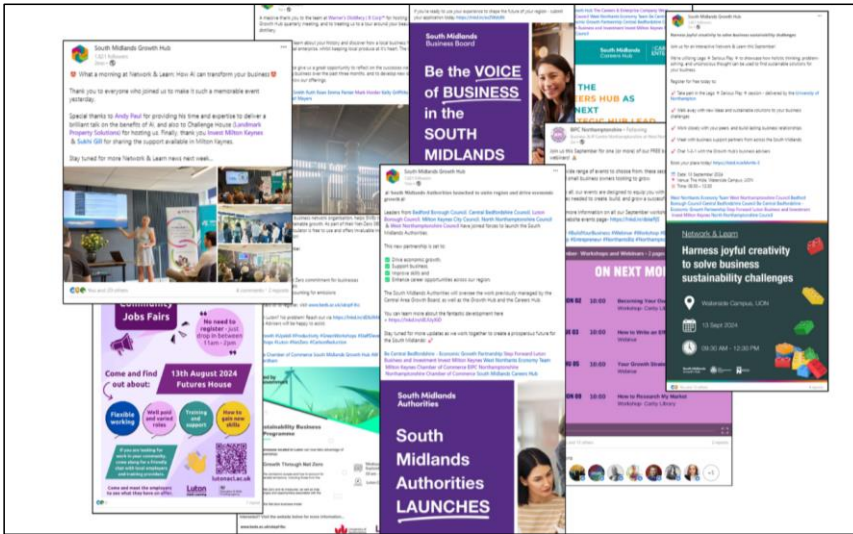
We've also utilised our extensive reach amongst the South Midlands to share the messaging on behalf of the South Midlands Authorities, creating the press release, email and all communications materials.

	Email
Subscribers	4,309
Unique opens	17,096
Open rate (avg)	38%
Unique clicks	1,263
Click through rate (avg)	3%
Total emails sent	48,186

### Social Media Stats

Presented at the Growth Hub Board Meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> June2024

## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024



Throughout August 26<sup>th</sup> to October 25<sup>th</sup>, the Growth Hub has utilised LinkedIn to share our programmes and support offerings, as well as the support available from our network of partners. Particular areas of focus throughout the period was our ongoing Network & Learn series, BusinessFEST, and the recruitment of the South Midlands Business Board.

LinkedIn has also played an important role in promoting our announcement of the launch of the South Midlands Authorities, the South Midlands Business Board, and also two new jobs roles. Collectively, these posts generated 2,122 impressions, 79 clicks and 75 likes and reposts.

LinkedIn continues to play a vital role in raising awareness of the Growth Hub and the support available to business across the region.

In total 84 posts have been published on LinkedIn.

	<b>LinkedIn</b>
Followers	1,934 (114 increase)
Page views	134
Unique visitors	59
Impressions	11,634
Clicks	788
Reactions/Likes	356
Comments	22
Reposts/Retweets	19
Engagement rate	8.0%

### 1.8 Summary of KPI performance and types of businesses supported

Presented at the Growth Hub Board Meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> June2024

## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024

The following table provides an overview of performance against the KPIs we set out for the Growth Hub at the beginning of the financial year.

Table below showing key performance indicators of the Growth Hub

### Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024

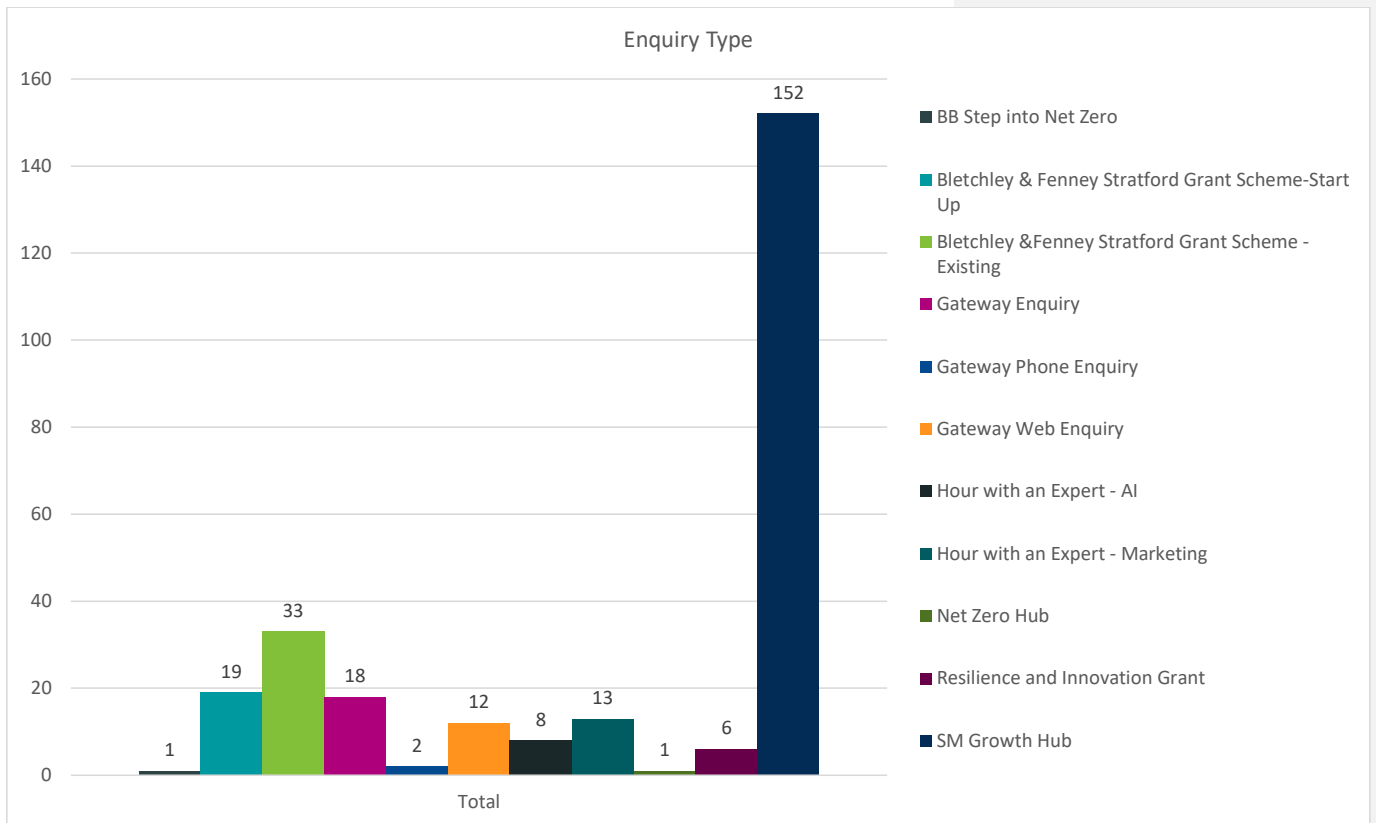
KPI measured April 2024 to March 2025	Target Annual 24/25	Achieved 26 <sup>th</sup> August – 25 <sup>th</sup> October	Total Achieved	Variance
Total number of enquiries received	1,500	265	<b>836</b>	<b>56%</b>
Light intensity support (0-1 hours)	800	142	<b>259</b>	<b>32%</b>
Medium intensity support (1-12 hours)	550	116	<b>369</b>	<b>67%</b>
High intensity support (12+ hours)	50	2	<b>85</b>	<b>170%</b>
Workshop / Event attendees	300	159	<b>331</b>	<b>110%</b>
Workshops/ Events	25	83	<b>85</b>	<b>48%</b>
Referrals to external support	600	46	<b>151</b>	<b>25%</b>
Total number of unique visitors to the Growth Hub Website	To maintain 2023/2024 levels of visitors to the Growth Hub websites	3468	<b>12,950</b>	-
Private Sector Match Secured	£1,500,000	£ 501,212.85	<b>5,265,125.6</b>	<b>317%</b>
Grants awarded	50	11	<b>76</b>	<b>130%</b>
Jobs Created	35	21 Forecasted	<b>127</b>	-

Presented at the Growth Hub Board Meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> June2024



## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024

\*The number of businesses in each of these categories changes each quarter as some businesses move to higher categories of support. This accounts for sometimes seeing a reduction on previous quarter, as some businesses have moved upwards

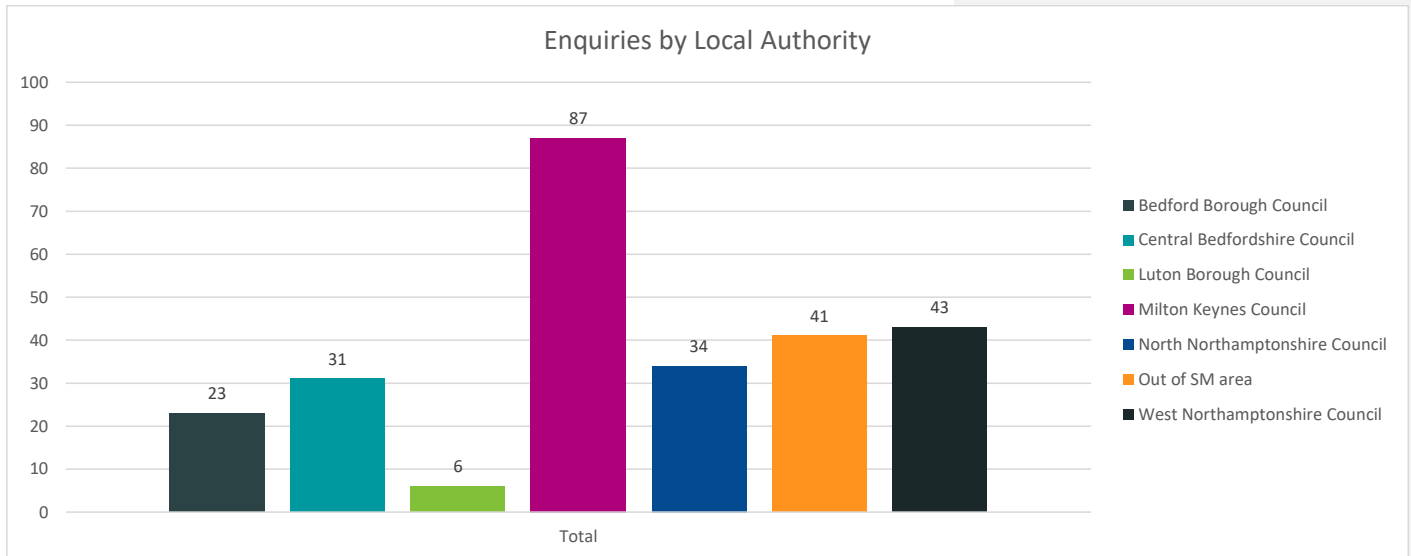


Graph below showing businesses supported by enquiry type

Breakdown of businesses supported within the South Midlands

Presented at the Growth Hub Board Meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> June2024

## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024



### 1.9 Growth Hub post August 2024 – Ruth

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Our focus is to continue our work to strengthen our partnerships across the region. Working with the 6 local authorities, universities and other partners to ensure we continue to support and enhance businesses across the region with their business growth opportunities. Whilst we focus on business as usual delivering our DBT targets. We have 6 key priority areas: Business as usual, Inward Investment, GIF/RIG Grant Schemes, Current Contracts, Future contract opportunities and Careers Hub collaboration.

We value the input of the Growth Hub board and look forward to continuing to work with you all to ensure we are accountable to our delivery objectives.