

## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024

### Growth Hub Board

15<sup>th</sup> January 2025

### Item 6 – 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> October - 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024
Equality and Diversity implications	None
Meeting Date	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
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#### 1.0 Introduction

As we progress into Quarter four, we remain committed to meeting our targets and continuing the impactful work of the the Growth Hub. Our joint meetings with Local Authorities and key partners have been instrumental in broadening our partnership network, fostering stronger collaboration, and extending the reach of our support services.

We are excited to announce the launch of our Growth Hub Business Community, which aims to explore commercial opportunities that will sustain and enhance our services in the future. This new initiative reflects our ongoing efforts to innovate and create value for businesses across The South Midlands.

Looking ahead, we are enthusiastic about the activities planned for the final quarter of the year. Additionally, we are collaborating closely with the Careers Hub to develop our delivery strategies for 2025/26, ensuring a cohesive and effective approach to supporting local businesses and driving economic growth.

Thank you to all our partners and stakeholders for their continued support as we work toward achieving our shared goals.

'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

The Growth Hub is pleased to welcome Jessica Stead to our Business Adviser team. Jessica brings a wealth of experience from the advertising industry, which will add valuable expertise to our support for local businesses.

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Over this period, the Growth Hub has handled 370 new enquiries—over 100 more than the previous quarter—highlighting the growing demand for our services. Professional services made up 24% of these enquiries, followed by consumer goods and retail at 11%, and financial services at 9%. The recently introduced Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Grant Scheme has also attracted significant attention, contributing to 41 enquiries from the Milton Keynes area. Meanwhile, businesses in West Northamptonshire accounted for 58 enquiries, with 38 enquiries from Bedford Borough businesses.

The Growth Hub team has been working closely with local authorities and educational institutions, including Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council, the University of Northampton, and Milton Keynes College, to explore new ways to collaborate and better support local businesses and communities.

In response to the Autumn Budget announcement, the Growth Hub has been helping businesses understand how the changes may affect their operations and future plans. We've been providing guidance to help them navigate these impacts and minimise any potential challenges.

Finally, we're excited to have launched the John Franklin Programme, designed to support pre-start and early-stage businesses in the West Northamptonshire area. The team is currently working with 21 businesses, providing tailored one-to-one support, workshops, and the chance to apply for £1,000 in grant funding.

### **Summary of Growth Hub highlights October to December**

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

## Businesses Supported April 2024 – Dec 2024



1,209 businesses supported



281 jobs committed through grants awarded



Over 3,000 hours of support provided



105 Grants Awarded



238 businesses referred to relevant specialist for support



396 businesses attending across 15 events



37 businesses attending Hour with an expert sessions

### Delivering events and working in partnership

From a partnerships and 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. During October, November and December we supported and hosted an array of events and partnership meetings. Firstly partnering with TC group after the budget announcement to deliver key changes relevant to our businesses in the region. We have also continued with our partner joint team meetings and have hosted Luton Borough Council, MK College, Bedford Borough Council and University of Northampton all in the last few months. We were also invited by HMG Co Create to attend their business showcase event and how we can work closer together in the future. In November we co-hosted for the third consecutive year, MoneyFest with NatWest, British Business Bank and MKU delivering a day of guest panellists sharing all things funding and access to finance which saw over 100 businesses joining us. We supported the BIPC start up day in Northampton providing guidance and signposting to young businesses. We also joined the Enterprise Nation team for an update to our services and hosted an exhibition stand at the first Net Zero summit hosted by Ngagae solutions at Silverstone. Into December we hosted a webinar around Cyber security in partnership with DBT as well as hosting our second Step into Net Zero support with our expert ActNow Consulting with a final Network & Learn of the year in Kettering in partnership with GatewayHR and North Northamptonshire Council. We have also met with several other partners to start planning for 2025 including another local HR business to become our next Hour with an Expert, a local Exit strategy expert to deliver an Exiting your business event and also the Barclays Eagle Lab team to discuss hosting more events together in 2025. We also had an exploratory conversation with the University of Bedfordshire about a new AI programme they are launching and how we can support them in promoting this to businesses. Finally, we attended the Bedford Chamber of Commerce members reception with the Careers Hub to demonstrate the collaborative way in which we work together now bringing business support and the future talent pipeline closer together. We continue to host our virtual 'meet the neighbours' webinars which is a

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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.

### **1.2 UKSPF**

The team are successfully delivering our BB Step into Net Zero programme and to date have already received 39 enquiries of which 23 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 February 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.

Grants available include:

Start-up grants of up to £2,500

Existing business grants of up to £5,000

The grant panel met in December and agreed to approve 25 grant applications to support projects to aid business growth.

### **1.4 GPF Grants**

#### **Growing Innovation Fund**

No more applications are being received for the Growing Innovation Fund. To date we have awarded 18 projects totalling £3,395,759.89. There is currently an underspend of £1,354,240.11. We are currently consulting with Local Authority Council officers to develop a new grants programme with the underspend.

### **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.

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These 91 applications have been to the independent grant panel. 62 grants have been awarded totalling £1,882,338.00. The Resilience and Innovation Grant Programme is now closed for further applications.

### 1.6 Case Studies

To showcase and celebrate our work with business across the South Midlands we've created a number of case studies demonstrating the impact the Resilience and Innovation Grant programme has had on businesses.

We've created the following case studies:

- **Northampton County Lawn Tennis Club**
- **Eco Flexibles**
- **The Cube Disability**
- **Pinnell & Bax**

### Email Stats

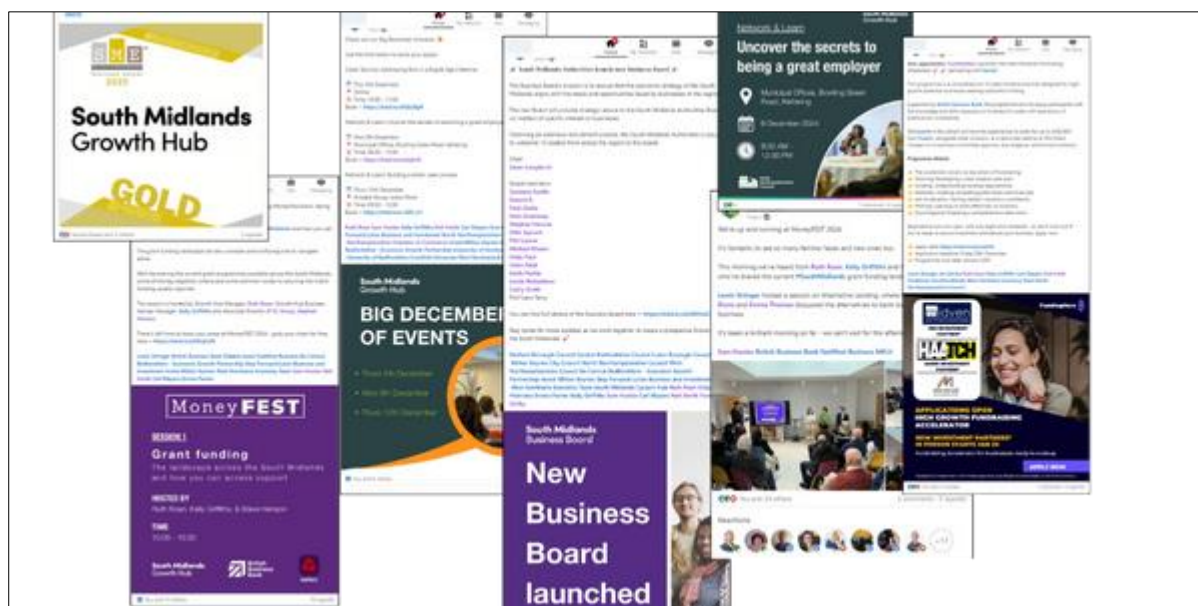
Email has been a key pillar of our marketing and communications outreach. It's formed the backbone of the promotion of Network & Learn, partner events and the Growth Hub monthly newsletter. We've also used the Growth Hub's platform to distribute communications regarding the newly formed South Midlands Business Board.

It's been particularly successful in generating awareness and building registration for the soon to launch Growth Hub membership, with 40 registered interests to date, as well as driving registrations to our Hour with an Expert programme.

	<b>Email</b>
Subscribers	4,259
Unique opens	16,623
Open rate (avg)	36%
Unique clicks	1,565
Click through rate (avg)	3%
Total emails sent	48,186

### Social Media Stats

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Throughout October 26<sup>th</sup> to December 31<sup>st</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, Step into Net Zero, and the promotion of the the new South Midlands Business Board.

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 23 posts have been published on LinkedIn.

	<b>LinkedIn</b>
Followers	2,007 (73 increase)
Page views	210
Unique visitors	186
Impressions	9,410
Clicks	520
Reactions/Likes	253
Comments	19
Reposts/Retweets	29
Engagement rate	8.7%

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

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

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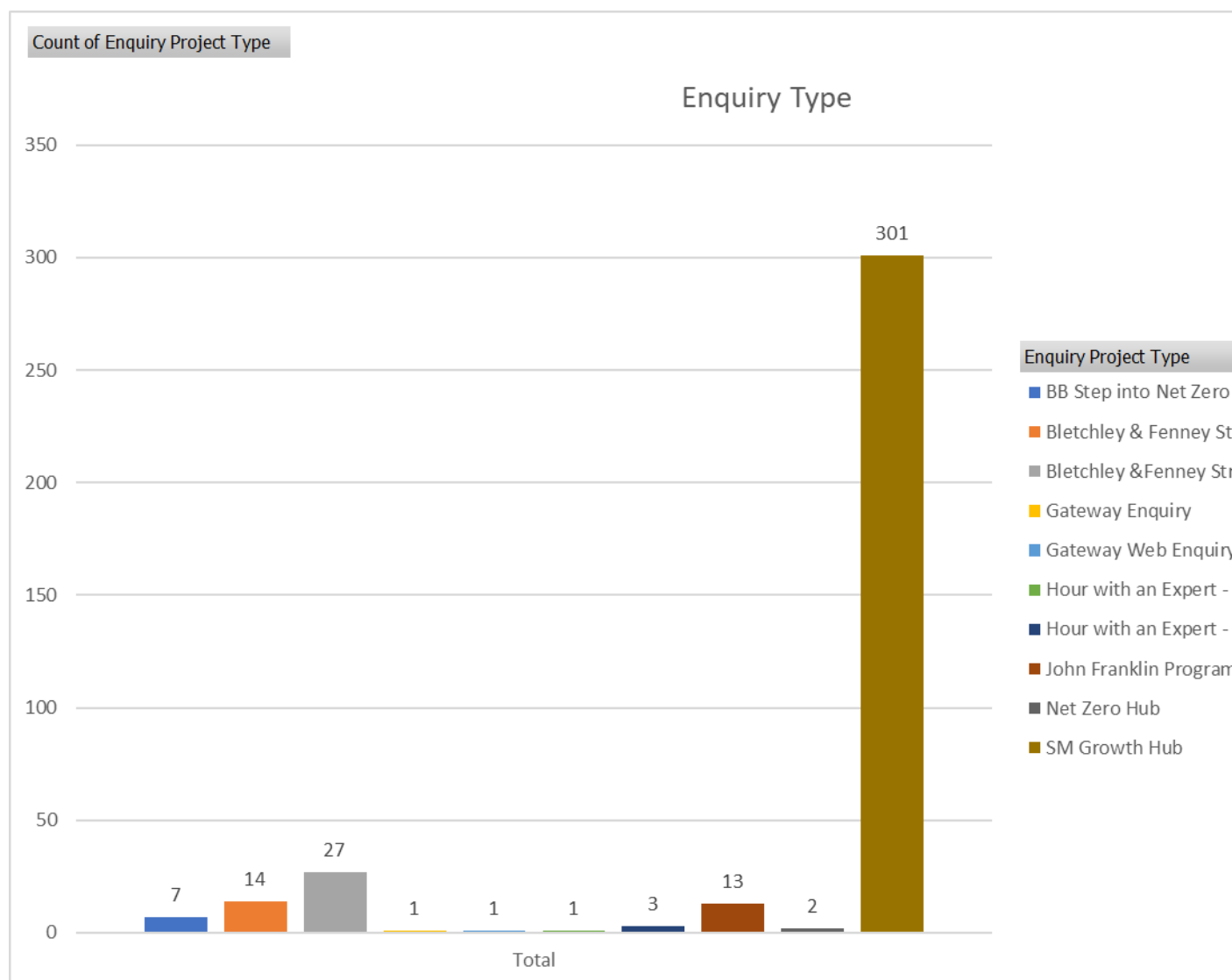
KPI measured April 2024 to March 2025	Target – Annual 24/25	Achieved 26 <sup>th</sup> October – 31 <sup>st</sup> December	Total Achieved	Variance
Total number of enquiries received	1,500	370	<b>1,209</b>	<b>81%</b>
Light intensity support (0-1 hours)	800	168	<b>427</b>	<b>53%</b>
Medium intensity support (1-12 hours)	550	202	<b>571</b>	<b>104%</b>
High intensity support (12+ hours)	50	-	<b>85</b>	<b>170%</b>
Workshop / Event attendees	300	68	<b>396</b>	<b>133%</b>
Workshops/ Events	25	3	<b>15</b>	<b>44%</b>
Referrals to external support	600	49	<b>238</b>	<b>33%</b>
Total number of unique visitors to the Growth Hub Website	To maintain 2023/2024 levels of visitors to the Growth Hub websites	2748	<b>15,698</b>	-
Private Sector Match Secured	£1,500,000	£501,212.85	<b>6,081,682.26</b>	<b>405%</b>
Grants awarded	50	25	<b>105</b>	<b>210%</b>
Jobs Created	35	147 Forecasted	<b>281</b>	-



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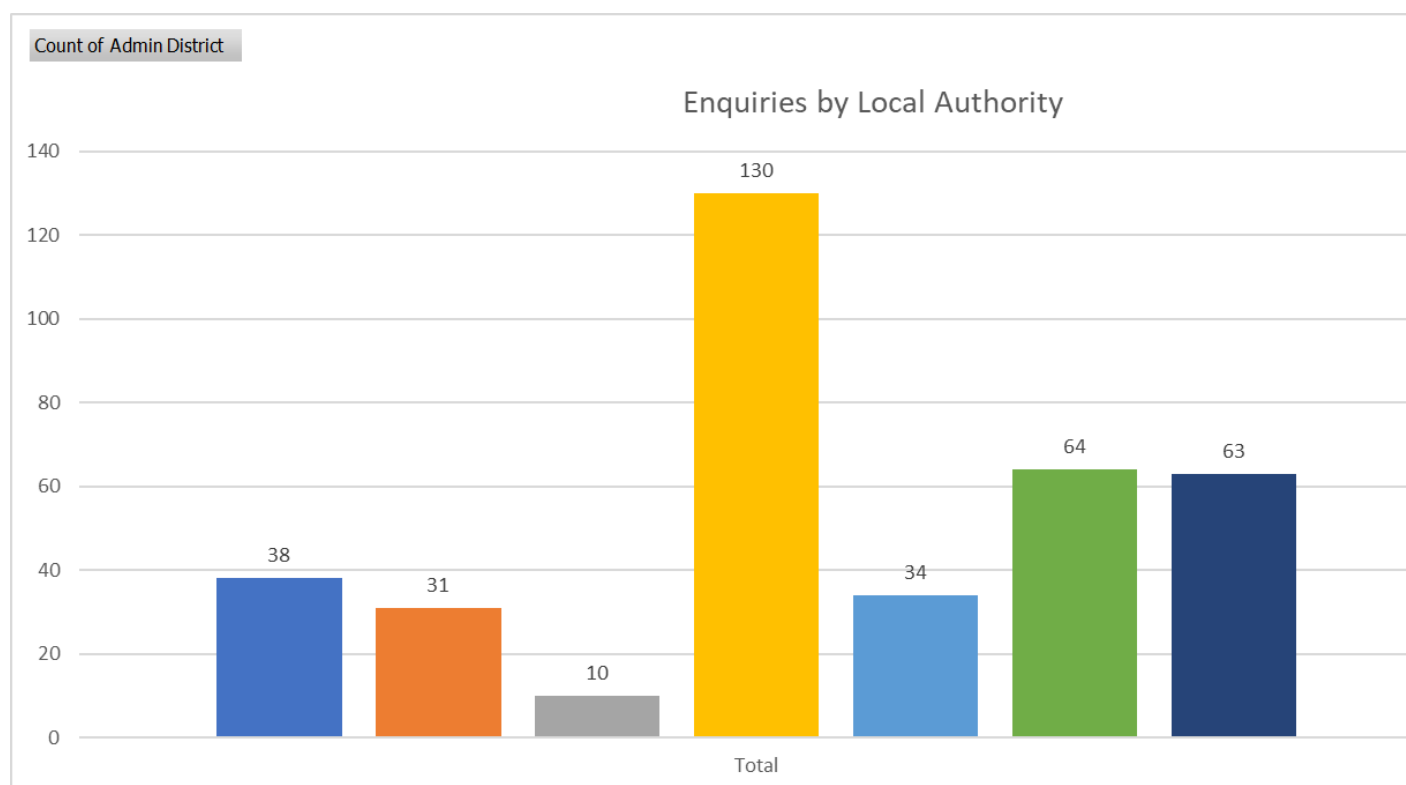
\*The number of businesses in each of these categories changes each quarter as some businesses move to higher categories of support. This accounts for sometimes seeing a reduction on previous quarter, as some businesses have moved upwards

Graph below showing businesses supported by enquiry type



Breakdown of businesses supported within the South Midlands

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### 1.8 Growth Hub post August

As we approach the final quarter of the financial year, our focus remains firmly on delivering our Department for Business and Trade (DBT) outputs while identifying and fostering delivery opportunities for 2025/26. Central to our efforts is the continued strengthening of partnerships across the region. By working closely with the six local authorities, universities, and other key partners, we are ensuring that businesses across the South Midlands have access to the support and opportunities they need for sustained growth.

Our priorities for this period are structured around six key areas:

1. **Business as Usual:** Ensuring the seamless delivery of our DBT targets and maintaining high-quality services.
2. **Inward Investment:** Strengthening the region's appeal to attract new businesses and investment.
3. **GIF/RIG Grant Schemes:** Effectively manage the end of the grants programme ensure all funds are claimed successfully
4. **Current Contracts:** Delivering excellence within our existing contracts to maximise impact.
5. **Future Contract Opportunities:** Exploring and developing new opportunities to expand our reach and services in 2025/26.
6. **Careers Hub Collaboration:** Working collaboratively to align business support with future skills needs and employment growth.

We deeply value the guidance and input of the Growth Hub Board, which remains essential to ensuring accountability and alignment with our delivery objectives. Together, we aim to

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continue enhancing business growth opportunities across the region, leveraging innovation and partnership to achieve long-term success.

We look forward to another impactful quarter as we deliver on our commitments and plan for the future.