

# Marches Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

## Progress Report – Annex D

**June 2025**





# Marches LSIP

## Local Skills Improvement Plan

### Local Authorities – A Brief Overview

A Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is an employer focused plan to better match training provision to local employer skills demands through research, engagement and collaboration.

The following pages are provided to help the reader understand, in more detail, the action and activities that have been carried out, or are to be carried out.



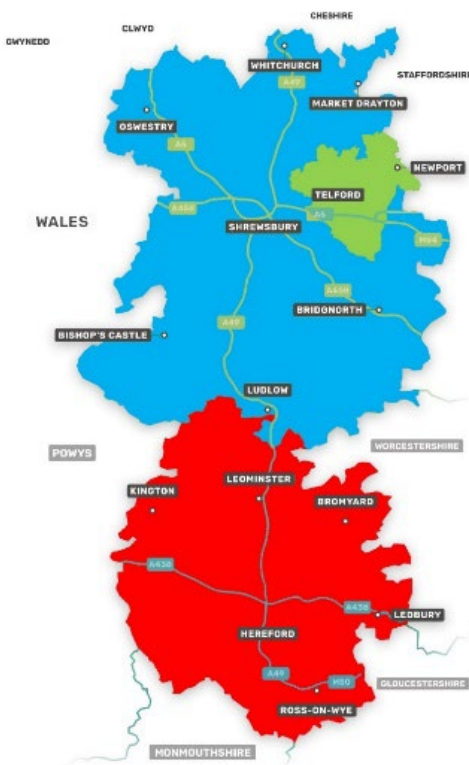
### TERMINOLOGY KEY

2021 Census	National Population Census for England & Wales	LA	Local Authority
BID	Business Improvement District	LSIF	Local Skills Improvement Fund
C&Eco	Careers & Enterprise Company	LSIP	Local Skills Improvement Plan
DfE	Department for Education (UK Government)	Marches	Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
DWP	Department for Works & Pensions	MEP	Marches Education Partnership
ERB	Employer Representative Body (Shropshire Chamber)	MLSIP	Marches Local Skills Improvement Plan
FE	Further Education	MSPN	Marches Skills Provider Network
HCA	Hereford College of Arts	NMITE	New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering
HE	Higher Education	NOMIS	Part of the Office for National Statistics
HLNSC	Hereford, Ludlow and North Shropshire College	SAP	Skills Advisory Panel
HTQ	Higher Technical Qualifications	SCG	Shrewsbury Colleges Group
HWGTA	Hereford & Worcester Group Training Association	SLT	Senior Leadership Team
ITP	Independent Training Provider	T level	Technical Levels
ICS	Integrated Care System	UKSPF	UK Shared Prosperity Fund



The Marches area has three Local Authorities within its boundaries, Herefordshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council and Shropshire Council. Each council has its own unique geography, population and employment makeup. The Marches LSIP research was Marches wide, though each council is very aware of the priorities and working with those priorities, they of course must tailor their delivery to suit their individual population and employer base.

### Summary of the Marches LSIP



**The Marches Area** 3 Unitary Authorities – Total area 5,957,sq.km

**Herefordshire:** Pop. 189,900 Pop density 87 per sq.km.  
Key Employment Sectors: Land-Based, Manufacturing, Cultural & Tourism and Defence

**Shropshire:** Pop. 329,260 Pop density 102 per sq.km. Key Employment Sectors: Land-Based, Health, Education, Retail and Manufacturing

**Telford & Wrekin:** Pop. 190,419 Pop density 651 per sq.km. Key employment sectors Wholesale, Retail, Motor Trade, Health and Manufacturing



Herefordshire Council



**These are just a few examples, out of many different activities, to show how the Council is working with the Marches LSIP Priorities, to help employers, employees and individuals to train, upskill, retrain and enter employment. Activities taking place are also aimed at helping employers understand the breadth of activity and talent within the county so that they can access support to grow their business and reduce their skills shortages.**

### **New Employment Hub (YEH)**

Winter 2024 saw a new Youth Employment Hub open in the centre of Hereford, offering employment & training information and advice to young people. YEH aims to upskill, enable and empower young people aged 16-24 by building their confidence and experience. 300 referrals had taken place by March 25.

A partnership between Herefordshire Council and the Department for Work and Pensions, with additional UKSPF funding, the YEH also works closely with employers, further education providers, schools and community partners.

The support provided includes advice on education, training, apprenticeships, work opportunities and volunteering. To extend the value and reach of the hub a website has been created [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/hfdsyeh](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/hfdsyeh). Not only does the site give 24/7 access, but it also reaches every corner of the largely rural county.

### **Cultural Strategy 2025-2030**

The Council, along with many other stakeholders, are revisiting and redefining the strategy to meet the future needs of the County.

Culture and the arts are an important part Herefordshire's makeup and economy. The county boasts a rare gem in having one of the only dedicated Arts Colleges in the UK, offering students



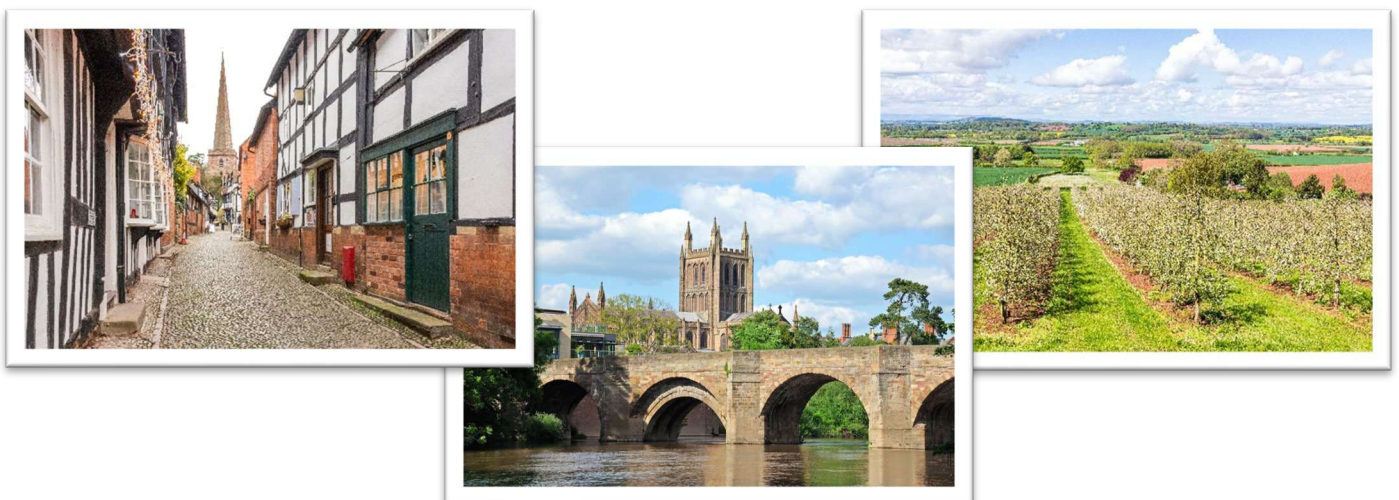
education from school leavers to post graduates. The National School for Blacksmithing is based at Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College's Holme Lacy Campus. The county is famed for the annual Hay Festival, which has a global reach. Filming locations include Weobley, the village recently used for the filming of the new blockbuster Hamnet, the US made film being released later this year. Media & film production and broadcasting are key creative sectors for the county. Rural Media Charity works with schools and groups across the expanse of the County to give a voice to those communities. This all goes to creating skills, jobs, a healthy tourism offer and stronger communities.

### The Herefordshire Growth Hub

The Herefordshire Growth Hub, based at Skylon Park in the Hereford Enterprise Zone, supports businesses of all sizes and across all sectors. The team offers free, impartial information and guidance on business grants, loans, support and other opportunities to help businesses succeed. 2024/2025 saw a range of courses and activities to help upskill employees or sole traders, to allow them to enhance their businesses and the value and employment that they bring to the local economy.

### UKSPF Funding 2024/2025

These figures illustrate some of the activity that has taken place. Herefordshire Council used its UKSPF allocation in many ways including supporting 294 individuals to participate in education, 625 upskilling, with 654 completing a course or gaining a qualification after receiving support to do so.



## Shropshire Council



**These are just a few examples, out of many different activities, to show how the Council is working with the Marches LSIP Priorities, to help employers, employees and individuals to train, upskill, retrain and enter employment. Activities taking place are also aimed at helping employers understand the breadth of activity and talent within the county so that they can access support to grow their business and reduce their skills shortages.**

### **UKSPF Funding**

From the Council's UKSPF allocation, thirty community projects and seventeen business projects were supported, with skills being a high priority. Five projects helped over fifty economically inactive residents into employment and provided four hundred and thirty individuals with basic and digital life skills. Moreover, fifty individuals earned qualifications to boost their career prospects. The interventions saw 486 individuals gain increased employability skills, supported 86 into employment, with 354 gaining a qualification or completing a course after support.

### **Shropshire Growth Hub (Invest in Shropshire)**

The hub offers support to all sizes of business and every sector. The strong emphasis in upskilling, boot camps and leadership programmes are responding to the findings of the Marches LSIP Priorities, funded through UKSPF funding and delivered by partners. The Growth Hub is an enabler through direct and indirect contact with businesses across Shropshire ensuring that businesses are aware of the funding, courses and activities to enhance their business, their employees and their recruitment needs.

Employers also benefit from the wider range of the entire Invest in Shropshire website, which aims to provide a range of information for businesses looking to relocate, businesses already based in the county that are looking to expand and grow, and investors looking for investment opportunities.



During October 2024 the Council and its partners ran numerous events to help residents, those seeking employment or those needing digital skills, to progress in their career to access a wide range of activities to support their progression. The Marches LSIP research highlighted how weak digital skills are hampering progression and therefore creating additional skills gaps. These activities happened across the entirety of Shropshire, important as employment in rural areas is limited and the better equipped an individual is or a business having access to the right skills, the stronger the economy and workforce in that location becomes. Rurality can be a barrier to employment or business expansion, as shown in the LSIP research.

### **Enable Shropshire**

Has worked with the Marches LSIP to understand employers fears about taking on those with barriers to work. The service is supporting and offering employers advice, mentoring and support. This helps bring valuable skills back into the workforce, or supports an employer's current employee, who may have changed due to a new disability.

### **Dulson Training**

Working with the Council and DWP to provide HGV skills boot camps. Dulson Training very recently opened a new base in Ludlow, to ensure that this initiative can reach the south of the County. National and local shortages of HGV drivers impact on every industry but can also provide new career paths for those wishing to diversify from farming activities.



## Telford & Wrekin Council



**These are just a few examples, out of many different activities, to show how the Council is working with the Marches LSIP Priorities, to help employers, employees and individuals to train, upskill, retrain and enter employment. Activities taking place are also aimed at helping employers understand the breadth of activity and talent within the borough so that they can access support to grow their business and reduce their skills shortages.**

### **UKSPF Funding**

The upskilling grant was awarded to thirty-six businesses, with ninety-nine employees accessing training. Fifteen employees from twelve businesses accessed Leadership and Management training. Twenty employees from eleven businesses accessed Project Management training. Both initiatives were funded through UKSPF and delivered by Harper Adams University.

Much of the other funding allocation was used to support unemployed people to have the skills to move into work, specifically NEETS (young people not in employment, education or training) and those furthest away from the labour market. The programmes supported circa 650 people to gain employability, soft and work-related skills, some of which achieved employment, training, apprenticeships or other positive outcomes.

### **Support to get individuals online and increase basic digital skills**

Telford College partnered with many including large employers, such as Capgemini, to run drop-in sessions across the borough to support residents, those seeking employment or those needing digital skills to progress in their career to access training on basic digital skills. The lack of these basic skills was mentioned by numerous employers in the Marches LSIP Employer Voice Reports as a barrier to recruitment and progress. Through taster sessions, attendees were signposted to

various types of support. Since the Marches LSIP priorities were published, this has become far more pivotal in the drive to help those furthest from employment into employment.

## **Built By You Programme**

2024 and the construction of the Station Quarter in Telford. This Council/Contractor initiative offers four-week programmes for people aged nineteen and above who are not in work and includes a guaranteed job interview at the end of the process for everyone who completes their studies. The first cohort – the majority of which had never been on a building site before - have already achieved their Level One Certificate in Health and Safety in a construction environment.

The programme continues and marries well with the Marches LSIP Priorities, as entrants into construction are much needed. Lovells, the main contractor, and their subcontractors have joined forces with Telford College to drive the programme. Telford being one of the fastest growing towns in the country has high needs for construction workers and this an on-going programme which will help support that.

## **Skills for Growth**

The Skills for Growth service is a collaborative partnership between Telford and Wrekin Council, Telford College, InComm Training, Harper Adams University and Shropshire Chamber of Commerce (Marches LSIP ERB). Working collaboratively, we provide a seamless service, offering advice, guidance, and training to ensure that our local businesses receive the right support.

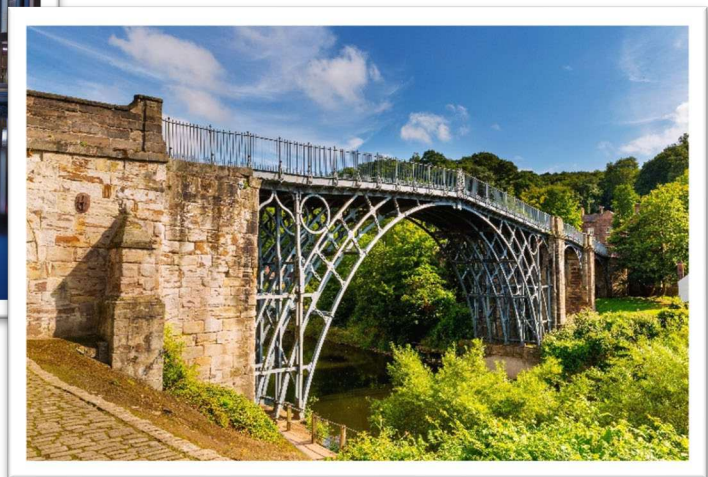
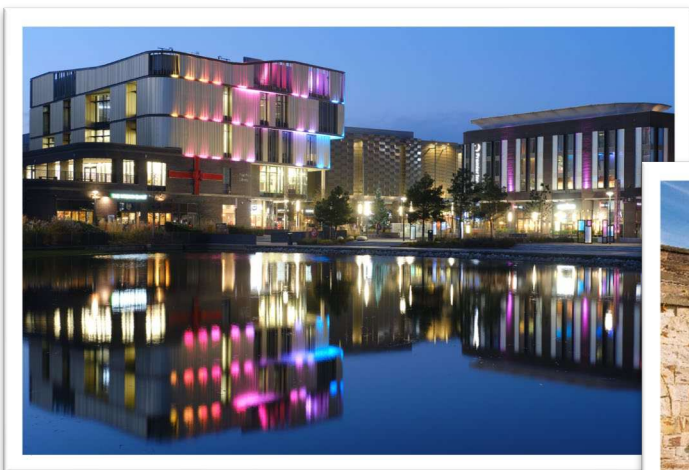
The Marches LSIP clearly identified a lack of understanding by employers, as to what training is available and where. This partnership initiative, with the Marches LSIP ERB as part of the partnership, will help deliver against one key LSIP priority by simplifying the access, understanding and language to ensure employers access the training they need.



## Station Quarter – Telford

The Council's drive to create a solid educational presence in the town centre is well underway with the new Station Quarter Quad - a digital and enterprise hub. The Quad building is eye catching in its design and opened in autumn 2024. The building houses a wealth of training opportunities, alongside a wide range of business support teams. The co-location will ensure that businesses become aware of the building, the inhabitants within and that will lead to healthy cross pollination. Harper Adams University and Telford College have both taken up residence to enhance and expand their offer. The hub is very much about digital and technology advancements. Courses include cyber, AI and robotics, virtual reality and cloud computing. Degree studies include applied data science, robotics, automation & mechatronic engineering and digital business management. With the local density of manufacturing, it is vital that they have a skill supply that matches need. The location also makes it more accessible for a wider range of students.

Also to come in 2026 within the Station Quarter development, will be the Sixth Form Centre. Through total refurbishment of a previous Council office block, a modern and appealing learning space will be created, which is fit for the future. This Council and Telford College collaboration will allow Telford College's main campus in Wellington to repurpose the vacated space for further vocational training facilities, when the sixth form moves over to the town centre next year. Space much needed to meet the skills demands of the local employers.



## Further Information

Herefordshire Council [Herefordshire Council – Herefordshire Council](#)

Shropshire Council [Shropshire Council](#)

Telford & Wrekin Council <https://www.telford.gov.uk/>

Invest in Shropshire (Growth Hub) <https://www.telford.gov.uk/>

Invest Telford (Growth Hub) [Proven. Connected. Thriving - Invest Telford](#)

Harper Adams University [Harper Adams University - Home](#)

Hereford, Ludlow and North Shropshire College [Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College - Home](#)

Shrewsbury Colleges Group [Courses | Training | Shrewsbury Colleges Group](#)

Telford College [Telford College](#)



### Contact information:

Employer Representative Body (ERB) for the Marches Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce

Telford 01952 208200