



Welcome to our first news bulletin for 2020. The New Year holds a period of renewal for the South East LEP, as we look to the next few months and the formation of our new Board, becoming a new company, the appointment of a Deputy Chair and the finalising of our Local Industrial Strategy. This represents a period of change for us as a partnership. We are extremely grateful to all those private and public sector Board members who have served so well over the years; the experience and expertise brought to our activities has been invaluable. We look forward to the new opportunities that change brings and keeps us moving forward.

We will keep you updated on all these developments, as well as all we have been doing to help the Government deliver on its growth agenda and support our businesses and communities across **East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend** and **Thurrock**. Through our fortnightly bulletin we share updates of the hard work and great things happening across the region to enable you to pass on the key growth messages for your area when speaking with your constituents and others.

Wishing a successful 2020 for all

Chris Brodie, Chair

SELEP leads the way for UK's high-growth companies

SELEP currently has more companies looking to scale up their operations and grow than any other LEP outside of London, with 270 across the SELEP area, according to the ScaleUp Institute's latest ScaleUp Index.



SELEP and South East Business Hub – which comprises BEST Growth Hub; Business East Sussex; and the Kent and Medway Growth Hub –

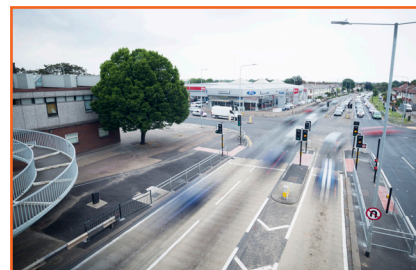
recently showed their support for scaleups, which are high-growth companies, in the South East by attending the ScaleUp Institute Reception and Annual Review 2019 at the National Gallery. They were joined by six businesses from across the SELEP area that have received support from their local Growth Hubs, as well as Scale Up Ashford, a programme that provides support for businesses in the Ashford area.

Scaleups now collectively generate £1.3trn in turnover, a 34% rise from 2016, and employ 3.4 million people.

Project funded to help revitalise Southend town centre

SELEP has supplied Southend on Sea Borough Council with £867,708 from the Local Growth Fund (LGF) for the Southend Town Centre Interventions project.

The project – estimated to cost around £2.5m in total – is designed to address the challenges faced by Southend town centre to help make it vibrant, diverse and ready for the future. While the town centre remains



popular and receives a large number of visitors, it also has increasing levels of vacant retail space, public safety issues and poor messaging about what the town has to offer visitors.

Southend on Sea Borough Council is planning to use the funds to install footfall cameras within the existing CCTV system throughout the High Street to count and report footfall, which will in turn influence investment, events and opening hours; and offer a 75/25 shop façade grant to encourage businesses to invest in external shop improvements.

The funding will also be used to improve lighting, green spaces and wayfinding to draw visitors to the High Street and seafront from the Southend Victoria and Central stations. The project is expected to create 31 new jobs connected to the return of vacant retail units to use, and to return 1,086sq m of employment workspace to use.

READ MORE: southeastlep.com/news

Businesses set for £50m funding boost from Innovate UK

Innovate UK is making up to £50m available to help businesses grow through research, leadership skills and new products, services and ideas, with two funding pots currently available.



Innovate UK previously announced a £25m pot earmarked to expand its Knowledge Transfer Partnerships programme, with the aim of getting more than 200 additional graduates with relevant skills places into businesses with "complex" management issues. A dedicated management KTP round is currently open until the 19th February.

More recently, the organisation announced the launch of another £25m funding pot through its Smart programme to invest in innovative business projects across any technology area, with a particular focus on ideas that have significant potential for global markets. The Smart programme competition is open until the 22nd April 2020. Businesses of any size can apply, and projects can range in size from £25,000 to £2m, and last between 6 and 36 months.

FIND OUT MORE: southeastlep.com/news

Lower Thames Crossing joins Facebook to keep communities and stakeholders up to date



Highways England has launched a new Facebook page for the Lower Thames Crossing project to keep communities and stakeholders up to date with the project's plans and activities, as well as kicking

off a new regular community video newsletter.

The first edition of the video newsletter provides an update about ground and marine investigations for the project, as well as the work that's been carried out with the Supply Chain School, which SELEP supported in October last year.

Due to the success of the Supply Chain School, Highways England will be holding two more Lower Thames Crossing Supply Chain School events in February with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). There will be an event in Kent on the 18th February, as well as one in Basildon, Essex on the 26th February.

FIND OUT MORE: facebook.com/lowerthames



SELEP works with Huawei to deliver digital workshop

In December, SELEP Skills Lead Louise Aitken gave a presentation at the Building Digital Skills workshop organised by Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei to provide a regional perspective on the challenges and opportunities of boosting digital skills in schools.

The workshop saw education experts and IT professionals come together for the first in a series of collaborative events that are designed to foster long-term cooperation between industry and the private and public sectors, with the aim of bolstering digital skills and inclusion in UK education.

Aitken's presentation stressed the need for young people and adults to be prepared for a fast-paced digital world, and that to do this, public and private sector partnerships are vital. The workshop focused on supporting schools in delivering a digital education that best benefits young people and their journey into a career. Two primary and secondary school teachers from within the SELEP area will also be given the opportunity to input directly at future workshops which will culminate in national action plans and a white paper to Government.

In her presentation, Aitken highlighted the challenges that the South East specifically is facing in terms of boosting digital skills, such as a disproportionately aging population. She also introduced attendees to the LEP's Skills Strategy 2018-2023, which highlighted digital skills shortages and led to the successful bid for SELEP's Digital Skills Partnership, of which Huawei is a member.



Progress for £104.4m M20 junction scheme

A £104.4m project for the M20 is now one step closer to completion following the opening of the London-facing slip roads on junction 10a, making the junction fully operational. SELEP provided £19.7m to the project, which is being delivered by Highways England, while Ashford Borough Council also contributed funding to the scheme.

The construction of the London-facing slip roads for the new junction involved building two new bridges to allow the new slip roads to span over the Aylesford stream. The existing junction 10 coast-facing slip roads were permanently closed to allow the new slip roads to safely join onto the M20.

Work for the project was fast-tracked earlier this year to allow for key sections of the new junction – namely the east-facing slip roads as well as the new A2070 link road – to be available for traffic by the end of October 2019.

Highways England said the new junction 10a will relieve congestion around the existing junction 10, therefore reducing queues that form on the slip road and often extend back onto the M20. It will also improve safety and journeys, and will open the door for further inward economic investment for the area, which is part of an international route widely used by freight and holiday traffic.

FIND OUT MORE: highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/m20-junction-10a



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We have included links where you can find more details on some of these updates. If you have any queries or would like specific details, please get in touch:

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