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**N E W S R E L E A S E**

**New Year’s message from the Chair of Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership**

*We have much to be proud of in the ten years since Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership was established. Over the past decade we have built strong foundations to help our business community grow and worked tirelessly with stakeholders, political, education, business and community leaders to make our county a highly attractive place for businesses to thrive.*

*Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership investments continue to deliver transformative growth for the county.* *One of the key achievements this year is the Getting Building Fund programme with the 10 LEP sponsored projects delivered across the county. These projects have been selected to support jobs, skills and infrastructure in our key sectors of upstream space, creative and digital, advanced engineering and manufacturing and medical technology and health. Significantly, the Getting Building Fund leveraged over £14.5m of private match funding, which resulted in a total capital investment of £22.5m.*

*A host of projects have come to fruition across Buckinghamshire over the past 12 months. Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund investments have helped support the development of the Silverstone Sports Engineering Hub; the Satellite Applications Catapult’s In-Orbit Services and Manufacturing facility at Westcott; the University of Buckingham’s Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Innovation; and delivery of new broadband connections for our many rural businesses.*

*We have also become one of the first LEPs in England to establish an open-access* [*data observatory*](https://www.buckseconomy.co.uk/) *collating and sharing all of the latest economic data on the Bucks Economy, including latest statistics, reports and analysis.*

*We continue to build on the foundations we have put in place on projects such as our Buckinghamshire Enterprise Zone sites, which have delivered 55% of all new commercial and industrial employment space in Buckinghamshire since their inception. In doing so they have transformed the business environment at Silverstone and Westcott welcoming new international investors and have already started to develop the Aylesbury Woodlands site.*

*Skills support and development is central to creating the conditions for sustained innovation, excellence and growth for our Buckinghamshire businesses, particularly in priority sectors as described in our Local Industrial Strategy. As such, the development of the Bucks Skills Show, and launch of the Special Educational Needs Skills Show, are now the essential events to inform young people about career opportunities in the county, along with the development of an extensive apprenticeship support programme.*

*Our ambition is to create equal opportunities for everyone in Buckinghamshire. In partnership with Buckinghamshire Council, we are supporting the Opportunity Bucks initiative to support some of our hardest hit communities. Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership have always enjoyed a close collaboration with our partners at Buckinghamshire Council and with our colleagues at Buckinghamshire Business First, to ensure that economic development activities within the county are well co-ordinated and that the voice of business is clearly heard in local policy making.*

*As we continue to help businesses navigate the current challenging trading conditions by ensuring effective support is in place with a broad range of business support packages, grant funding and advice.*

*We are excited about developing further collaboration and research capacity within our priority sectors. The iconic locations of Pinewood Studios and Silverstone are now the focus for new business collaborations, along with our vibrant clusters in the fields of high-performance technology and film and creative industries. Bucks LEP is delighted to provide funding to support initiatives as diverse as the new Bucks Film Office; the Cycling Test Lab and Swimming Flume at the Silverstone Sports Engineering Hub; the Agri Living Lab at our Westcott Enterprise Zone; and the Life-science & Innovation Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital.*

*Looking forward to 2023, we are excited to see further innovative growth driven by the new Drone Port operation at the Westcott Enterprise Zone and developing integrated healthcare solutions to reduce the burden on our national health service with Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust and leading technology and life-science companies. Our Buckinghamshire Business First Growth Hub will lead on the development of the first Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan, the only Growth Hub in the country to be doing so.*

*Finally, I look forward to continuing to work closely with all of our partners to deliver on behalf of Government ongoing and meaningful results for our economy and maximising efforts to create jobs, long-term growth, and investment across the county.*

**Andrew M. Smith DL**

**Chair, Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership**