

Top Business Talent Joins The Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Board

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- Local Enterprise Partnership appoints new board members to support its mission to collaborate for growth across the Thames Valley region

Berkshire, 26th March 2012. The Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP) announced today the appointment of three new board members: Emma Gibson, Partner, Shoosmiths LLP, John Weaver, BT Regional Director for the South East and David Knowles-Leak, Regional Chairman, Federation of Small Businesses. The new members join the TVB LEP's current board in the drive to foster excellent economic performance in Berkshire by improving education, skills and employment; improving broadband and infrastructure access; and increasing inward investment in the Thames Valley Berkshire region.

David Knowles-Leak is currently a TVB LEP forum member and has also been appointed to the board in his role as Chair of the LEP's Education, Skills and Employment Group for a six month period. The Education, Skills and Employment Group is currently working on a number of initiatives in the Thames Valley Berkshire area; including improving engagement with education institutions and local employers to increase the number of young people in the region with 'work-ready' skills, and widening access to higher apprenticeships. David Knowles-Leak comments: "Education, skills and employment is one of the TVB LEP's three key priorities, and this appointment recognises the importance of that agenda."

Emma Gibson, Partner at national law firm Shoosmith is based in the firm's Thames Valley office, advising clients in the financial services, retail, leisure, technology and healthcare sectors. Emma originally trained as a teacher, then set up and ran her own business for six years before training as a solicitor. Her direct commercial acumen gives her a breadth of experience and knowledge, particularly in understanding the specific needs of SMEs. John Weaver has over 27 years experience in the ICT industry, working for BT within the UK and European markets, he also worked for two years in Osaka, Japan. John is a member of the CBI Regional Council and a Board Director for the Hastings and St Leonard's Academies.

Steve Lamb, chair of the TVB LEP comments: "The Thames Valley Berkshire LEP has been created to harness the collaborative might of business throughout Berkshire by fostering relationships between businesses, the employment and education sector, the public sector and the voluntary and community sector. Both Emma and John bring considerable expertise, skills and knowledge to the team to forward the goals of the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP.

"John's experience in the technology industry will be an important voice in our drive to improve broadband and telecoms infrastructure in the region. Similarly, Emma's expertise in law and her experience of running her own company means she will be invaluable in supporting the LEP's aims for business engagement in Thames Valley Berkshire."

Emma Gibson commented: "I am delighted to be joining the board of the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP at this exciting time in its development. The Thames Valley is a growth area for Shoosmiths and we have

invested significantly in the region over the past decade. As someone directly interested in progress in our local area I am committed to working with the TVB LEP to represent the business community in our region.”

John Weaver added: “As a Berkshire resident I wholeheartedly support the LEP’s goals for Thames Valley Berkshire. I am very pleased to join the Board and I am looking forward to working with the team to promote and develop the economic prosperity of the region. Having worked with local government to improve IT infrastructure, I am committed to finding ways of extending superfast broadband coverage in the South East, which is such an important attractor for business.”

Emma and John join the LEP as it works to increase the competitiveness of the Thames Valley Region not only locally but globally. The Thames Valley Berkshire LEP was awarded £10.8m from the government’s Growing Places Fund in February 2012 and is working in collaboration with the business, community and voluntary sectors to ensure Thames Valley Berkshire remains the most enterprising and competitive region in the country.

-ENDS-

About Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

TVB LEP is business led and made up of key leaders across the business, education, the voluntary and community sector and six unitary authority areas of: Bracknell Forest, Reading, Slough, West Berkshire, Windsor, and Maidenhead, and Wokingham. For more details of the membership of TVB LEP please visit the website <http://www.thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk>. Organisations interested in bidding for funds should contact Deborah Wharton or Richard Tyndall on 01628 796020. You can download a full briefing and FAQs document on Growing Places Fund via the website.

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