

SWT Executive

Wednesday, 20th January, 2021,
6.15 pm



Somerset West
and Taunton

[SWT VIRTUAL MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

Members: Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair), Benet Allen (Deputy Chair), Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

Agenda

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee.

(Pages 5 - 12)

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or prejudicial or personal interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The personal interests of Councillors and Clerks of Somerset County Council, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes.)

4. Public Participation

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

Temporary measures during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Due to the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will holding meetings in a virtual manner which will be live webcast on our website. Members of the public will still be able to register to speak and ask questions, which will then be read out by the Governance and Democracy Case Manager during Public Question Time and will either be answered by the Chair of the Committee, or the relevant Portfolio Holder, or be followed up with a written response.

5. Executive Forward Plan

(Pages 13 - 14)

To receive items and review the Forward Plan.

6. Somerset Waste Partnership Draft Business Plan 2021-2026

(Pages 15 - 42)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor for Environmental Services, Councillor Sarah Wakefield.

This report seeks approval of the Somerset Waste Partnership's Draft Business Plan 2021-2026.

7. Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan

(Pages 43 - 160)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor for Asset Management and Economic Development, Councillor Marcus Kravis.

The Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan is a collaborative document that will move over time into delivering a pipeline of projects with the next steps being discussions around matters such as approaches to prioritisation and adapting our offer to meet the different funding streams that come forwards over time.



**JAMES HASSETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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Following Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will be live webcasting our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, but you can also access them on the [Somerset West and Taunton webcasting](#) website.

If you would like to ask a question or speak at a meeting, you will need to submit your request to a member of the Governance Team in advance of the meeting. You can request to speak at a Council meeting by emailing your full name, the agenda item and your question to the Governance Team using governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Any requests need to be received by 4pm on the day that provides 2 clear working days before the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting itself). For example, if the meeting is due to take place on a Tuesday, requests need to be received by 4pm on the Thursday prior to the meeting.

The Governance and Democracy Case Manager will take the details of your question or speech and will distribute them to the Committee prior to the meeting. The Chair will then invite you to speak at the beginning of the meeting under the agenda item Public Question Time, but speaking is limited to three minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes and you can only speak to the Committee once. If there are a group of people attending to speak about a particular item then a representative should be chosen to speak on behalf of the group.

Please see below for Temporary Measures during Coronavirus Pandemic and the changes we are making to public participation:-

Due to the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will holding meetings in a virtual manner which will be live webcast on our website. Members of the public will still be able to register to speak and ask questions, which will then be read out by the Governance and Democracy Case Manager during Public Question Time and will be answered by the Portfolio Holder or followed up with a written response.

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SWT Executive - 16 December 2020

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)

Councillors Benet Allen, Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: James Hasset, Dawn Adey, James Barra, Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Tracey Meadows (Democracy and Governance), Clare Rendell, Amy Tregellas and Richard Burge

Also Present: Councillors Ian Aldridge, Norman Cavill, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Libby Lisgo, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Andrew Sully, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

73. **Apologies**

No apologies were received.

74. **Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive**

(Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 20 October 2020, 21 October 2020, 28 October 2020 and 18 November 2020 circulated with the agenda)

Councillor S Wakefield gave amended wording on an item in the minutes for the meeting held on 20 October 2020 and highlighted an error in her declaration of interest for the meeting held on 28 October 2020.

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 20 October 2020, 21 October 2020, 28 October 2020 and 18 November 2020, with amendments, be confirmed as a correct record.

75. **Declarations of Interest**

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter	Personal	Spoke

		Trustee		
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke

76. **Public Participation**

Lori Busch, submitted a statement on agenda item 9, Extension of Public Space at Belvedere Road:

I would like to ask just what exactly Councillor Kravis meant at the Scrutiny Committee Meeting by his statement “If we look at who the tenants were...” I represent a national charity supporting victims of domestic abuse. We chose to base our national charity in Taunton, employing Somerset staff and the only statutory funding we received was the charity rate relief thanks to the Taunton councillors who supported our application.

As a tenant of Flook House, a building of significant historic importance dating back well into the 1700’s with features such as a first floor over mantle dating back to 1652 documented in books, I wished to formally object to the proposed demolition of this historic asset and the implications of combining it with a toilet block to just cast its history aside.

Flook House was mentioned in historical documents stating that John Trenchard MP resided there during the election of 1715. It was where he wrote “The Whig” and it was the site of many weddings, and registrations of births and deaths while it was the registry office. I have also had people mention to me their fond memories of the 1960’s when they used to have their school lunches there while attending North Town School. It surprised me that this historic building was not listed.

It amazed me that Flook House survived the historic floods of 1889 and 1960, only to be cast aside by a council which presented itself to the population of

Taunton as being the party of the people with their party stance being a greener, fairer, more caring Britain.

I believed the presentation to support the demolition of Flook House was also not representative of its importance to the history of the area where it was mentioned as a "chief residence". The idea that it was the cause of the anti-social behaviour was ridiculous and the proposed plans and costs to bring it up to modern standards were outrageous for an historic premises. As for the lack of tenants, most of the others were on a licence with 30 days' notice which was not enough to get a BT line moved during Covid so I could understand their wish to have a tenancy with a bit more security.

Another counsellor stated that the roof had already been done a few years ago, the boiler was replaced within the last 5 years for the heating and I witnessed several years ago ties between the ground and first floor being installed that were modern ties which did not show from the exterior. For a building that was approximately 500 years old, I think it looked very good.

There was a public expectation that those impacted would be involved in the process however it appeared that this had been pushed through during lockdown with no public scrutiny or tenant involvement. This made myself personally and the members, employees and trustees of charity feel that we had been disenfranchised from the democratic process.

Since this council was voted in in 2019, it appeared that it was happy to wilfully let historic buildings fall into disrepair through lack of maintenance and then vote to demolish them, removing yet another part of Taunton's history.

I have yet to have any direct contact from Councillor Marcus Kravis, portfolio holder for economic development. The contact I had received from one of his contractors was to apologise for the fact that I heard about it from the press. I wished to thank the Scrutiny Committee for allowing me to be heard despite not having proper notice of some members of the council's intention to push this through Executive Committee and for their unanimous decision to request that it go to a Full Council meeting for a decision.

Yours sincerely, Lori Busch, Charity Manager, The ManKind Initiative

The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development acknowledged the letter.

77. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

Resolved that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

78. **Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 2, 2020-21**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors acknowledged that although there was still work to be done on the Freedom of Information Requests and Complaints, that officers had done great work to improve the figures on performance.
- Councillors requested an update on the Wild Meadow mentioned on page 47 of the report.
The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change advised that the work required on the Wild Meadow was seasonal and would start in 2021.
- Councillors were pleased to see the progress made on items included in the appendices.
- Councillors requested whether the performance indicator for ‘% of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed extension of time’ be split into two indicators, as by combining them, it gave false figures for each indicator.
The Business Intelligence and Performance Manager advised that they were currently working on many suggestions made by the Scrutiny Committee and would feed back with an update in the New Year. He also advised that the title was from a historic list that was guided by national performance indicator wording.
- Councillors were pleased to see how the Council had adapted through the Covid Pandemic and continue to serve the community.
- Councillors admitted there was always room for improvement and that they would continue to strive for higher targets.
- Councillors were pleased to see delivery on the Corporate Plan.
- Councillors were pleased to see officer’s high performance since Transformation.
- Councillors thanked all officers for their hard work over the last year.

Resolved that the Executive were asked to consider the attached performance report.

79. **2020-21 Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2020)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors requested that officers included in the report that the reduction of parking revenue was partly due to the free parking introduced during the national lockdown but also that there would have been a reduction anyway due to the lockdown and that the shops were closed and residents were told not to travel if it wasn’t necessary.
The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources agreed and believed it was the correct decision at the time.
- Councillors agreed that the decision to offer free parking during the lockdown was made with the best of intentions, but that it became counterproductive at the end of the lockdown. This was because the car parks ended up being used by workers, who parked up all day and meant that shoppers were unable to return to the towns as there was nowhere to park.
- Councillors requested clarification on the figures in table one of the report and queried whether the £5,470,000 was the amount of funding the Council received or whether that was the amount given to the Council to give as grant payments to assist businesses.

The Lead Finance Business Partner and Deputy S151 Officer confirmed it was the grant funding that the Council received to assist with any loss of income incurred during the Covid Pandemic.

- Councillors were interested to see what the total amount of funding given to the Council would be at the end of the financial year.
- Councillors highlighted that the report showed how the Covid Pandemic had impacted on the Council's finances. The budget would need to be reviewed to ensure that it was balanced and to enable the Council to continue to provide services.

Resolved that the Executive reviewed and noted the Council's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2020/21 financial year as at 30 September 2020.

80. **Review of Voluntary and Community Sector Grants**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased to see the review taking place and queried whether the work would be completed by 2022.
The Portfolio Holder for Community hoped to get the working group in place for the financial year of 2022.
- Councillors requested an update on the funds given out through the Community Chest.
The Community Resilience Manager advised that the total amount of funding was £250,000 and that £167,000 of that had been approved and paid out to 47 different organisations over the past couple of months.
- Councillors were pleased to see a working group being set up to assist with the review.
- Concern was raised on the Advice Bureaus in the area. Councillors were aware that the amount of contact made to the Advice Bureaus had decreased during the Covid Pandemic and that when they reopened for face-to-face appointments that they would need extra support, as they were expecting a sharp increase of contact due to residents not being able to take up the offer of virtual appointments.
The Community Resilience Manager advised that he had met with the Advice Bureaus in Minehead and Taunton and that they expected a backlog when they reopened as they had not been able to assist everyone with virtual appointments. He had asked them to outline what assistance they might need in the future so that the Council could look at what future support could be given.
- Councillors agreed that the Advice Bureaus carried out fantastic work in the community.
- Councillors requested clarification on the figures stated on the funding from Spark.
The Community Resilience Manager advised that the figures stated were historically split between the former Taunton Deane and West Somerset areas and would be amalgamated into one for future reports.
- Concern was raised that the smaller organisations relied upon the grant payments given from the Council and that if those stopped, it could have a

fundamental impact on the organisations and mean that they were not able to continue to support the community.

The Portfolio Holder for Community advised that they were using due diligence at this point to ensure that the Council could continue to assist those organisations but also highlighted other options available for them to apply for grant payments, such as the Community Chest.

Resolved that the Executive approved:-

- 1) To maintain current levels of funding for the final year of the current agreement to end in March 2022; and
- 2) A cross party Members Working Group was established to work with officers to ensure that clear funding criteria were in place for future work with the Voluntary and Community Sector beyond March 2022.

81. **Extension of Public Space at Belvedere Road**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development withdrew the recommendations from the report and proposed two new recommendations, as follows:-
 - 1) The creation of a cross party working group to consider the options available for Flook House and the surrounding area. With a recommendation from this group being presented to Executive committee on the 21 April 2021; and
 - 2) That delegated authority be granted to the Portfolio Holder for Asset Management, along with the Director for External Operations and Climate Change to appoint Members to the working group and to agree the terms of reference for that group.
- The recommendations were accepted by Councillor M Rigby, the seconder of the report.
- Councillors agreed that it was a difficult decision to make and were pleased to see a working group being set up to assist with the decision making.
- Concern was raised on the amount of money that would be needed to refurbish the building and bring it back up to standard as it had deteriorated over the years.
- Councillors were pleased to see the new recommendations as there had been a lot of public interest in the building and they needed to ensure they investigated all the possible options for the building and space.
- Councillors suggested the building was sadly in the wrong location and they hoped that a good solution could be found as the building was not listed.
- Councillors agreed that they did not want the land or building to be sold and wanted to keep it as an asset.
- Councillors agreed it was a controversial decision and that they needed to be mindful of the future costs if the Council continued to support the building.
- Councillors suggested that the office space should be promoted as the building was in a good location for the town.

- Councillors suggested the building was given to the town/borough for the Mayor to use for their civic duties.
- Councillors requested that the final decision on the building and space be made by Full Council.
- The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee gave a summary of the points made when the report was debated by the Committee.
- Councillors suggested that the Working Group should look into options given by the Zero Carbon Forum.
- Councillors were pleased that the Executive had taken on board the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee.
- Councillors suggested a public consultation should be carried out on the different options for the building/space.
- The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development thanked all the Councillors for their comments and would take them on board as part of the Working Group research. He agreed that the timeline was short but that he wanted a decision to be made.

Resolved that the Executive approved the following:-

- 1) The creation of a cross party working group to consider the options available for Flook House and the surrounding area. With a recommendation from this group being presented to Executive committee on the 21 April 2021; and
- 2) That delegated authority be granted to the Portfolio Holder for Asset Management, along with the Director for External Operations and Climate Change to appoint Members to the working group and to agree the terms of reference for that group.

The Leader of the Council and Executive wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

(The Meeting ended at 7.50 pm)

EXECUTIVE

Executive Meeting	Draft Agenda Items	Lead Officer
20 January 2021	Somerset Economic Recovery & Growth Plan	Lisa Redston/Dan Webb
Exec RD = 8 January	SWP Business Plan	Stuart Noyce/Mickey Green
Informal Exec RD = 8 December		
SMT RD = 25 November		
9 February 2021	General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22	Emily Collacott
BUDGET ONLY	HRA Revenue and Capital budget setting 21/22, Dwelling Rent setting 21/22 and 30 year Business Plan Review	Emily Collacott/James Barra
venue =	Policy Framework	Amy Tregellas
Exec RD = 28 January		
Informal Exec RD = 5 January		
SMT RD = 9 December		
24 February 2021	East Street/St. James Street, Taunton Pedestrianisation	Joe Wharton
venue =	Safeguarding Policy Update	Scott Weetch
Exec RD = 12 February	Strategic Heritage Update (confidential)	Joe Wharton/Jo O'Hara
Informal Exec RD = 12 January		
SMT RD = 21 December		
17 March 2021	2021/22 Partnership Grants Schedule	Scott Weetch/Christine Gale
venue =	2020/21 Budget Monitoring Q3	Emily Collacott
Exec RD = 5 March	Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategies 2021/22	Paul Fitzgerald
Informal Exec RD = 9 February	Pay Policy	Angela Marshfield
SMT RD = 27 January	Q3 Performance Report	Malcolm Riches
	Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town – Feedback	Fiona Webb
	Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide	Fiona Webb
	Procurement Strategy	Paul Fitzgerald
	Options appraisal for delivering future single rough sleeper and homelessness accommodation in SWT	Simon Lewis
21 April 2021	Belvedere Road Public Space	Chris Hall
venue =		
Exec RD =		
Informal Exec RD =		
SMT RD =		
Items to be Confirmed	Firepool LDO	Nick Bryant/Dawn Adey
	Strategic Acquisition Report (Confidential)	Joe Wharton

Report Number: SWT 2/21

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Executive – 20 January 2021

Somerset Waste Partnership Draft Business Plan 2021-2026

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Sarah Wakefield (Environmental Services)

Report Author: Stuart Noyce, Assistant Director – Commercial Services

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the Somerset Waste Partnership's (SWP) Draft Business Plan 2021-2026. The Somerset Waste Board is required to annually approve a rolling five-year business plan. It also reminds the Executive about the changes to how garden waste income from customers will be taken in the future and informs the Executive about delegations that SWP are seeking from partner authorities to underpin its enforcement capabilities.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Approve the draft Business Plan 2021-2026 and draft budget 2021-22 and provide feedback to the Board (see Appendix A).
- 2.2 Note the changes to how garden waste payments will be made in 2021, as previously agreed by the Somerset Waste Board.
- 2.3 Approve the renewal of the delegation of powers to Somerset Waste Partnership subject to confirmation from the Director of External Operations and Climate Change in association with other Officers that SWP's Advice, Support & Enforcement Policy to be provided in due course is compliant with the constitution and legislation to delegate such power. The Director shall have such authorisation to approve this delegation.

3 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 Failure to approve a Business Plan (a SWP constitutional requirement) will impact on the ability of the SWP to effectively deliver the board's vision.
- 3.2 The challenges and opportunities facing SWP are set out in the business plan but key risks which may impact on delivery of the business plan include:
 - a) The ongoing impact of Covid-19, which has already disrupted progress in achieving the current business plan;
 - b) Resource pressures on SWP due to the intense workload associated with bedding in the new collection contract and implementing the Recycle More service change;

- c) Central Government policy changes, in particular those that result from the next phase of consultations on policy outlined in the Resources & Waste Strategy (in particular on Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Return Scheme, and Collection Consistency);
- d) Brexit and the uncertainty around this process and its knock-on impacts;
- e) Funding available to implement the Climate Emergency Strategy;
- f) The Future of Local Government in Somerset;

4 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 The Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) is responsible for providing waste and recycling services on behalf of all five local authorities in Somerset. The partnership is governed through a Joint Committee known as the Somerset Waste Board (SWB).
- 4.2 The SWP constitution requires an annual Business Plan to be formally adopted to provide a framework within which the Board can make decisions and steer the delivery of Waste Partnership services. The process of review is continuous but it contains a snapshot of where SWP is now, the things that have a major impact on the partnership, resources/budget, and its priorities. A draft is presented to the Board in December to approve for partner consultation, before returning to the Board in February for final approval and adoption. The quarterly performance reports submitted to the Board are then aligned with the approved business plan.
- 4.2 The Partnership is almost exclusively funded from contributions from partners. It is therefore dependent on agreement between partners on the level of funding provided by each of them in line with the cost sharing formula. Business planning and budget setting are therefore part of the same process. Under the terms of the Inter Authority Agreement, the Board cannot make a decision that has an adverse financial implication on any partner without that partner's agreement. The Board has delegated authority for decision making across all services and therefore must take into account any requirements to make savings and make proposals on how these can be achieved.

5 SWP Draft Business Plan 2021-26

- 5.1 The Business Plan explains how SWP will work towards its vision over the next five years, with a particular focus on next year. It contains three outcomes, beneath which sit a range of inter-linked activities which contribute to these outcomes. Whilst it is an iteration of the previous Business Plan, there is much change as it looks beyond the roll-out of Recycle More, having transitioned away from landfill, and having set out wider objectives through its work on the Climate Emergency strategy. These changes have meant a slight change to the outcomes under which the plan is structured:
 - a) Delivering Excellent Services: *Household waste is effectively collected, reused, recycled and treated* (as per previous business plan);
 - b) Changing behaviours: *People trust SWP and see waste as a resource* (broadly as per previous business plan);
 - c) Tackling climate change: (a new outcome to reflect the importance of this agenda to SWP and because some of the actions SWP are planning go beyond the services they are tasked with delivering);
 - d) Building its capability: *SWP maximises its contribution to tackling the climate emergency* (removed as an outcome so all our outcomes are externally focussed. Relevant activities have been included within other parts of the business plan, such as 'improving the customer experience') that the activities in the Business Plan have been

structured in a slightly different way to the previous business plan, and greater emphasis has been placed on climate change.

5.2 Key areas of activity in the draft 2021-26 Business Plan are as follows:

	<i>Area of activity</i>	<i>Content</i>
1	Waste reduction	Food waste, Refill, Pledge against Preventable Plastic, Signposting to zero waste shops, reusable nappies
2	Promoting Reuse	Developing, implementing and monitoring a reuse strategy
3	Recycling	Recycle More roll-out, ensuring homes are built with recycling in mind, food waste in communal properties, rolling year garden waste subscriptions, tackling hard to treat waste streams, HWRCs, composition and participation analysis, recycling A-Z guide, targeted campaigns
4	Decarbonising residual waste	Heat offtake, carbon capture and storage, education
5	Decarbonising our operations	Electric supervisors vans, green depot infrastructure, pilot alternative fuels, drive down carbon intensity of day to day operations, partial refleet of refuse vehicles
6	Tackling non-household waste	Schools, public sector estate, business waste
7	Working with others	Parish Councils, local data and engagement, developing partnerships, community action groups, engagement with front-line staff
8	Improving the customer experience	In-cab technology, innovation, website, CRM system procurement, GDPR, assisted collection review, processes around new home occupation, enforcement, supporting the most vulnerable
9	Supporting wider goals in Somerset	Tackling waste on the go, tackling fly-tipping, supporting local businesses and those far from the labour market
10	Enabling activities	Depot infrastructure, health and safety, contract management, service reviews, influencing national policy, long term strategy, behavioural insights, business continuity planning

6 Garden waste: rolling year subscriptions

6.1 In the current (2020-25) agreed Business Plan it sets out that SWP will centralise garden waste payments in Spring 2021. This will enable SWP to improve the customer experience and enable residents to sign up for a year's service at any time, and remove the need for garden waste stickers.

6.2 This change in how payments are handled will not result in any reduction in income to District Council partners, simply in the timing of income. SWP have managed garden

waste income successfully for Mendip District Council in 2020, and this pilot enables them to be confident in implementing this for other partners.

- 6.3 This change will not reduce the customer channels available at present. Whilst we would encourage customers to do it online, they will still be able to subscribe via District Council call centres and websites. Customers will now also be able to sign up via the SWP website and do so at any time year-round. This is likely to be of particular benefit when Recycle More makes it harder for those residents who are currently putting garden waste in their rubbish bin (as demonstrated through SWP's previous composition analysis). This change also enables SWP to address challenges from previous internal audits of difference between SWP/contractor records and records of payments held by District Councils, largely caused by the complexities inherent in having four different processes. The expected improvement in data quality, combined with effective utilisation of in-cab devices, should also mean that they can cease to send out garden waste stickers. This is a time intensive activity for District Council customer services which introduces another source of potential error and risk into our current processes. It will also ensure that they can remove the confusing anomaly from the SWP finances that whilst they show the costs of the garden waste service they do not show the income.
- 6.4 Like any project of change (especially in a complex partnership landscape of differing ICT systems) this project is not without risks. The Senior Management Group (SMG) will oversee this project over the coming months, supported by expert input from all partner customer services and ICT teams. S151 officers have been consulted on the financial changes this entails. The suspension of the garden waste service during the first Covid-19 lockdown in Spring 2020 has meant that 2020/21 subscriptions will end on 11 May 2021 rather than 31 March 2021 as they normally would. Following consultation with District Council customer services teams it is proposed to send out renewal reminder letters at the same time as normal to avoid clashing with heavy demand faced by these teams associated with council tax letters.

7 Advice Support and Enforcement: Delegations from District Partners

- 7.1 SWP is refreshing the policy on Advice, Support and Enforcement. The existing Enforcement Policy was adopted by the SWB in December 2015, but a technical issue regarding the legal delegations has meant that SWP do not currently have the ability to issue Fixed Penalty Notices. A clear decision to delegate these powers aims to address this technical issue. It is important to note that SWP's approach to enforcement will not significantly change, and they will continue to work with residents and businesses to support, advise and problem solve. The aim is to give SWP the ability to take enforcement action as a last resort for the very small minority who persistently refuse to engage or cooperate.
- 7.2 To enable SWP to progress this, it is seeking fresh delegations of powers under the Environmental Protection Act, 1990 from each of the district partners. This will provide Somerset County Council (as administering authority), acting through SWP, with the authority to issue Fixed Penalty Notices and instigate prosecutions. SWP has provided a list of the delegations required in order that the decisions can be made by each authority as part of the Business Plan approval process. These delegations will only cover those powers relating to domestic and commercial waste offences, relating to kerbside collections and recycling centres and Duty of Care.

7.4 SWP is not seeking any powers in relation to fly-tipping or street scene services which remain the responsibility of District Councils.

7.5 The ancillary powers that SWP are seeking delegation for are all under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA 1990):

Section 34 – Duty of Care

- Section 34ZA Fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for householder offences
- Section 34A FPNs for failure to furnish documents by a person who handles or controls waste

Section 46 – Receptacles for household waste

- Section 46A Written warnings and penalties for failure to comply with requirements relating to household waste receptacles -
- Section 46B Amount of penalty under section 46A and recovery
- Section 46C Notice of intent regarding penalties under section 46A
- Section 46D Appeals against penalties under section 46A

Section 47 Receptacles for Commercial and Industrial waste

- Section 47ZA FPNs for offences under sections 46 and 47
- Section 47ZB Amount of fixed penalty under section 47ZA

7.6 Any action taken using the delegated powers will be specifically detailed in the updated Support, Advice and Enforcement Policy. This policy will be brought to SMG and the SWB for approval in Spring 2021 prior to SWP formally having the necessary delegated powers in place. Through the normal reporting processes SWP will then keep SMG and the Board updated on the use of these powers and hence the effectiveness of the Policy.

8 Links to Corporate Strategy

8.1 Addressing climate change is identified as the Council's primary objective in the Corporate Strategy. The Somerset Waste Partnership Business Plan will influence delivery against many of the other objectives across all four strategic themes of the Corporate Strategy.

9 Finance / Resource Implications

9.1 The proposed annual budget is set out on the final page of the Draft Business Plan (appendix A) and summarised in the table below.

9.2 The table below shows the indicative budget requirements for 2021/2022. The key drivers are:

- Inflation for the collection contract is 0.33% based on the basket of indices in the contract with Suez.
- Household growth is based on the latest estimates provided by the District partners. These will be amended for final budget to be taken to the February Board when actual figures are known. Members are reminded that each collection partner will be charged according to their individual district housing growth. The current estimates provided by Somerset West and Taunton is 0.50%.
- Tonnages for recycling credits have been increased to reflect the 2019/20 levels but with no further growth applied as this will be attributable to Recycle More (as previously agreed by the Board and all partners). The majority of the increased income for collection

partners relates to the agreed 3% annual payment uplift on recycling credits from the County Council.

- Estimates reflect the latest information regarding garden waste customers, bulky collections, demand for containers and other contract cost changes.
- There is a one-off cost included for additional fleet maintenance/refurbishment on the small number of refuse trucks which transferred from Kier to Suez, the value of which is still subject to final negotiations with Suez. The total anticipated additional costs are more than double what has been estimated, and this reflects SWP's worst case scenario from these ongoing negotiations.
- There is a new budget line for income collected on behalf of Sedgemoor, Somerset West & Taunton and South Somerset for their garden waste charges. SWP are already successfully collecting garden waste income for Mendip.
- In light of the recent Comprehensive Spending Review announcement last week highlighting a pay freeze for public sector workers, there may need to be updates regarding the head office salaries figure for the final budget.

9.3 The roll out of 'Recycle More' is also scheduled for completion in February 2022. No savings resulting from the new contract will be taken from the SWP by any partner until the roll out costs are fully funded. This offers all partners equality of return, regardless of their place in the roll out. Savings are expected in 2022/23 with the business plan including estimated savings anticipated at £2m per annum across the partnership. Given the considerable change we've seen in this year and the experience from the first phase of 'Recycle More' roll-out, SWP are undertaking a review of all costs and income to ensure they are allocated correctly to 'Recycle More' or to the 'in-year' budget. This will be considered by the Board in its February meeting.

		Somerset West and Taunton Council
20/21 Final Budget		5,195,799
Inflation - Collection	0.33%	18,885
Household Growth	0.50%	23,716
Garden Waste	1.00%	(7,380)
Recycling Credits		(30,609)
Salaries	2.00%	3,910
Pension Deficit		0
Transfer Station Offset		(2,878)
Bulkies / Containers		55
Subtotal		5,201,497
Garden & Bulky Income		(886,288)
Proposed Savings		0
Fleet maintenance		35,000
21/22 Budget		4,350,209
Increase / (Decrease)		(845,589)
Percentage		-16.3%

9.4 The table shows a significant reduction in the proposed service charges from SWP, although this reflects a small net increase in costs offset by the inclusion of garden waste income which is currently received and budgeted directly by SWTC but will be netted from SWP recharges from 2021/22.

- 9.5 All partners agreed the capital borrowing to purchase vehicles at a cost of approx. £18m with a further £7m used to fund depot works, equipment and purchasing additional containers. Each partner has agreed to provide capital finance totalling £5m towards this capital investment requirement. The provision of finance towards vehicles costs has helped secure a lower price on the collection contract from SUEZ. SWTC's £5m contribution is already included within the Council's approved capital programme.
- 9.6 Many actions within the business plan will require specialist input, including financial and procurement advice. Some activities are subject to a business case and funding.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The waste collection contract is one of the Authority's largest contracts, managed by the the Somerset Waste Partnership. The Waste Partnership fulfils the Authority's statutory responsibilities in regard to waste collection. The proposed delegation of enforcement powers are set out in section 7 of the report.
- 10.2 Approval is required to set a clear mandate for SWP activities for the period and is a constitutional requirement.

11 Climate and Sustainability Implications

- 11.1 The production and delivery of the SWP business plan will directly lead to carbon reductions.
- 11.2 The five Somerset local authorities have all declared or recognised a Climate Emergency and developed a Climate Emergency Strategy covering the county of Somerset. Waste and Resources is one of 9 workstreams, and SWP's Managing Director acted as workstream lead with the officer group made up of senior officers from each partner (SMG) acting as project board. The scope of the waste and resources workstream is much broader than SWP's statutory responsibilities, as it looks at Somerset as a whole, rather than just focussing on household waste. The actions from this workstream are incorporated into the 2021-26 SWP Business Plan, clearly highlighting where there are resource/funding challenges which need to be overcome.

12 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

- 12.1 The update of the business plan has no new safeguarding or community safety implications. Risks in delivery of the plan will need to be considered and addressed as projects are developed and progressed.

13 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 13.1 Many of the actions in the business plan relate to the implementation of decisions already taken by the board, and Equalities Impact Assessments (EIAs) were undertaken at the time. Other actions relate to reviews/future actions, and EIAs will be carried out as appropriate to inform the board's decision making. Some other actions will not require EIAs. In most cases the decision to proceed based on the outcome of the impact assessment will be delegated to SWP's Managing Director. Where significant issues are identified through the assessment process that would have implications for major projects or programmes, the decision to proceed will return to the Board prior to commencing development.

14 Social Value Implications

14.1 There are no implications as a result of the revised business plan.

15 Partnership Implications

15.1 SWP is one of the Authority's key partnerships and takes strategic, client and operational responsibilities for the delivery of our recycling and waste priorities. The business plan has been produced in partnership between the Somerset authorities.

16 Health and Wellbeing Implications

16.1 The revised business case will contribute to reduce air quality issues associated with emissions from traditional petrol and diesel vehicles and from reduced amounts of waste going to energy from waste facilities by more being reused and recycled.

17 Asset Management Implications

17.1 There are no implications as a result of the revised business plan.

18 Data Protection Implications

18.1 Action 8.5 in SWP's Business Plan sets out the work planned to follow up on a GDPR compliance audit.. Personal Data held by the SWP is fundamentally the same as currently managed and used. As technology is developed and used to assess customer behaviour to reduce waste and improve recycling, then impact assessments will need to be carried out by the SWP to ensure compliance with data protection regulations. This is reflected in the action plan, and SWP will work closely with each partner authority and report progress to the Somerset Waste Board.

19 Consultation Implications

19.1 No public consultation is proposed on the revised business plan but certain projects within the plan will have public engagement and communication activity.

20 Democratic Path:

- Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No
- Executive – Yes
- Full Council – No

21 Reporting Frequency:

Annually

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Draft SWP Business Plan 2021 - 2026
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SWP Business Plan 2021 – 2026

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About Somerset Waste Partnership

Our vision and values

Who we are:	Somerset's Local Authorities working together as the Somerset Waste Partnership, ensuring that our household waste is reduced, collected, reused, recycled and effectively treated.
What we do:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve our environment by making every effort to ensure our household waste is not wasted but reused as a valuable resource. • Deliver excellent customer service and value for money to create a more sustainable Somerset.
What we want to become:	An exemplar for how we manage waste as a resource, work with others and support our residents to manage their household waste and make our service the best it can be.
Our values:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insight: Working with our partners to understand how and why people behave as they do and use this knowledge to shape our service. • Collaboration: Treating everyone we work with as an equal, knowing we have greater success when we work together. • Innovation: Learning from others and constantly looking at new ways of working to give the best service we can. • Quality: Focusing on excellent customer service and making the best use of the waste we collect.

Background to SWP

Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) was established in 2007 and manages waste services on behalf of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, South Somerset District Councils, and Somerset County Council. This made it the first county-wide waste partnership in the country. It has a history of innovation – the first to roll out food waste at scale, the first to publish an annual report showing exactly what happens to all its recycling, and is known for its commitment to collecting quality source separated recycling materials which are used as resources by UK industry.

SWP is accountable to the Somerset Waste Board (SWB), which consists of two members from each of the partner authorities. For further information about Somerset Waste Partnership and the Somerset Waste Board visit www.somersetwaste.gov.uk.

SWP has delegated authority to deliver household waste and recycling services throughout Somerset, including management of kerbside collections, recycling sites and disposal sites. These duties are in turn contracted to SUEZ (collections) and Viridor (recycling sites, landfill sites and treating food, garden and residual waste). 2020 saw a year of challenge for SWP with Covid-19 and also significant change – a new collection contractor (SUEZ), a move away from landfill to generating energy from waste, and the start of the Recycle More collection service model.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Political	The impact of withdrawal from the EU: Whilst SWP recycled 90% of its material in the UK, waste is a global business and this will have impacts, for example on recycle prices (and hence on our share of recycle income)
	National legislative change (resources): Further national consultations are expected in Spring 2021 with potential 2023 implementation.
	National legislative change (planning): National changes to planning policy may impact on our ability to ensure homes are built with recycling in mind.
	Future of Local Government in Somerset: Proposals for local government reorganisation may have a significant impact on SWP and business plan delivery.
Economic	Financial pressure on partner authorities: The financial environment in which we operate remains very tightly constrained.
	Waste sector: Both our current operators may change owners – Suez are the subject of a hostile takeover bid by Veolia and Viridor’s owners (KKR) are restructuring their business. Whilst our contracts define service specifications this may change the current positive relationships we have with our contractors.
	Recyclate risk: SWP will share risk with its collection contractor on recycle value. This will directly impact upon the SW:EEP behavioural change fund. Values of most materials have been falling recently.
	Risk of recession: The national economic outlook (given Covid-19 and Brexit) is uncertain. Periods of recession typically see lower levels of waste as a result of lower consumption, however, the past may not be a reliable guide to the future.
Social	Demographic changes: Somerset’s growing and ageing population inform our planning for the future, as do employment trends give our large workforce.
	Covid-19: The ongoing risks include elevated/variable tonnages collected, disruption to recycling centres, local/national lockdowns, changes to our working practices, disruption to services due to loss of staff. All of these put pressure on resources and may impact on business plan delivery. Conversely, there are positive changes in behaviour (e.g. higher kerbside recycling) that we will seek to embed.
Technological	Social media: Increasing use of social media presents an opportunity to reach more people, but raises expectations about speed of response.
	Big data: The ability to manipulate large data sets (be it around people’s behaviour or the life-cycle of resources and waste) can be powerful.
	New materials: New materials may emerge onto the market quicker than our ability to manage them at the end of their life.
Environmental	Somerset’s Climate Emergency: SWP led the ‘Waste & Resources’ workstream and aim to work more closely with partners to progress our wider vision. However, our ability to implement further change will be constrained by resources and capacity as we are already managing considerable change.
	Public Awareness: Many people are much more aware of climate change and keen to do more, and frustrated if they feel they cannot do more.

Approach to Business Plan

Our Business Plan explains how we will work towards our Vision over the next five years, with a particular focus on next year. It contains three outcomes, beneath which sit a range of inter-linked activities which contribute to these outcomes:

<i>Theme</i>		Delivering excellent services	Changing behaviours	Tackling climate change
		<i>SWP effectively collects, recycles and treats waste</i>	<i>People manage waste as a resource</i>	<i>SWP maximises its contribution to tackling the climate emergency</i>
1.	Waste reduction			
2.	Promoting Reuse			
3.	Increasing Recycling			
4.	Decarbonising residual waste			
5.	Decarbonising our operations			
6.	Tackling non-household waste			
7.	Working with others			
8.	Improving the customer experience			
9.	Supporting wider goals in Somerset			
10.	Enabling activities			

The actions currently underway remain the most significant set of changes to Somerset’s waste services since SWP’s inception in 2007, covering all aspects of our services. We are also expecting the most significant set of changes to national resources and waste policy for a generation, local government may be reorganised in Somerset and we are still dealing with the impacts of Covid-19 (and the delays this has resulted in to actions we intended to undertake in 2020/21 – implementing Recycle More and dealing with Covid-19 will continue to take priority over other actions

In addition to the actions set out in the Business Plan, SWP propose to continue with the two charities we adopted in 2019 to support through staff fundraising and volunteering. Covid-19 has impaired our ability to volunteer and raise funds.

Local Charity	National Charity
RAFT (Refugee Aid from Taunton)	WasteAid
RAFT provide aid through donations to help refugees and displaced people wherever and whenever they are able, regardless of colour, culture and religion. It demonstrates an innovative approach to reuse.	70% of the plastic in the oceans comes from places with no waste management. WasteAid helps people turn their waste into useful products, sharing recycling skills to create green jobs, improve public health and protect the environment.

1. Waste Reduction

In accordance with the waste hierarchy, reducing the amount of waste we generate in the first place is the best environmental (and financial) outcome

What		When	Why
1.1	Food waste reduction	Ongoing	Composition analysis shows us that c70% of food waste was avoidable and it is one of the most carbon intensive items in our waste. As set out in the climate emergency strategy, in the medium term we will seek to work with partners to develop food waste strategy for Somerset (to avoid food becoming waste in the first place), including prioritising a food waste reduction campaign across Somerset.
1.2	Refill campaign	Ongoing	SWP coordinates the Refill campaign in Somerset, encouraging people to swap single use water bottles for reusable alternatives, and encouraging businesses to enable people to sign up to the app so that people know they can refill their bottle when out and about
1.3	Pledge against preventable plastic	Ongoing	SWP promotes its Pledge Against Preventable Plastic primarily through the Schools Against Waste programme. It aims to harness the public interest in reducing plastic consumption but encourage people not simply to substitute another material for plastic
1.4	Signpost to zero waste shops	2021/22	Building on SWP's crowd-sourced listing of zero/minimal waste shops across Somerset develop a tool which raises awareness of these shops and encourages their use
1.5	Reusable nappies	Ongoing	Provide support to local cloth (reusable) nappy library groups to enable them to provide support and nappy loan kits to more families. Whilst we recognise reusable nappies will not be a solution for all, we want it to be easier for those considering their use to make it work for them.
1.6	Waste prevention campaigns	Ongoing	Whilst Recycle More will be our priority campaign in 2021/22, we will seek to undertake campaigns focussed on particular target materials (e.g. targeting fast fashion/Love Your Clothes) with a high carbon impact. This may involve doorstep leafleting.
Links to other activities in SWP's Business Plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWP's Waste Strategy will reflect the waste hierarchy and hence waste reduction. • Our Schools Against Waste programme is built around the waste hierarchy and will promote waste reduction to our young people. • Our proposed Green Business Support (funding dependent) will help businesses to make more resource efficient decisions • Waste composition analysis: helping us understand what Somerset residents are throwing away • Community Action Groups • Public sector procurement policy • SWP reports quarterly to the board on waste minimisation (total household arisings) 	

2. Promoting reuse

Reusing things that would otherwise become waste is better for the environment than recycling them. Across Somerset there is a vibrant network of organisations that deliver great social outcomes (be it tackling isolation, reskilling those far from the labour market, supporting refugees) as well as environmental ones, and SWP wants to explore how it can best work with that network.

What	When	Why
2.1 Develop a reuse strategy	2021/22	Working with both our contractors (Viridor and SUEZ) and commissioning external support (funded by our SWEEP fund) to improve reuse across Somerset, utilising the recycling centres and bulky waste collection service, and through more effective partnership working with the many reuse organisations/VCSE groups across Somerset (including furniture reuse groups, men's sheds, repair cafes etc). This will include considering whether an expanded network of reuse shops is the optimal approach.
2.2 Implementing reuse strategy	2021/22 onwards	Implementing the approach developed in 2.1 subject to securing funding and a viable business case. Suez's social value commitments include diverting more bulky items for reuse and to seek to outsource bulky collection to a third sector/charity partner in 2024.
2.3 Monitor effectiveness of reuse	April 2021	Restructure our quarterly board performance report so that it includes a page reporting on reuse to ensure that this remains high up our agenda
2.4 Reuse campaigns	Ongoing	Whilst Recycle More will be our priority campaign in 2021/22, we will seek to undertake campaigns focussed on particular target materials (e.g. small WEEE) with a high reuse potential. This may involve doorstep leafleting (a social value commitment from Suez).
Links to other activities in SWP's Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWP's Waste Strategy will reflect the waste hierarchy and hence reuse. • Our Schools Against Waste programme is built around the waste hierarchy • Our proposed Green Business Support (funding dependent) will help businesses to make more resource efficient decisions (e.g. designing for repair and reuse) • Community Action Groups • Public sector procurement policy • Waste composition analysis: helping us understand what Somerset residents are throwing away that could be reused • SWP reports quarterly to the board on waste minimisation (total household arisings) 	

3. Increasing recycling		
When waste can't be avoided or reused, the best thing that can happen to it is that it is recycled properly. SWP is committed to collecting quality recycle- with 90% currently staying in the UK. The National Resources and Waste Strategy is focussed on quality and held up SWP's kerbside sort approach as an exemplar.		
What	When	Why
3.1 Recycle More roll-out (all households)	Now – Feb 2022	<p>This remains the most significant programme of change on SWP's agenda and will consume a significant part of our resources for the duration of the roll-out programme. The planned roll-out schedule is as follows:</p> <p>3.1.1 Phase 2 (South Somerset): end of June 2021 3.1.2 Phase 3 (eastern parts of Somerset West & Taunton): end of September 2021 3.1.3 Phase 4 (Sedgemoor and western parts of Somerset West & Taunton): end of February 2022</p> <p>Each phase is preceded by a substantial (3 month) programme of comms and engagement, with support provided during and after roll-out. The approach to roll-out will be informed by lessons learnt from previous phases and may be affected by external factors such as Covid-19. The roll-out timetable is dependent upon our depot build programme.</p>
3.2 Ensuring homes are built with recycling in mind	Ongoing	SWP has refreshed its Developer's Guidance so that the default for most communal properties built in the future should be to do this in such a way to enable them to access the kerbside service. Embedding this in local plans, engaging on planning applications and working with planners, developers and their agents will be critical to realising this.
3.3 Food waste in communal properties	2022/23	Communal properties will benefit from additional recycling as part of the roll-out of Recycle More (timetable as per 3.1). Through that process as many communal properties will be transitioned to our kerbside recycling as possible. Properties remaining on communal recycling service will be offered food waste collections via kerbside recycling where this is possible. A project in 2022/23 will aim to ensure all communal properties have access to food recycling.
3.4 Rolling year garden waste subscriptions	April 2021	Residents in Somerset will be able to subscribe to garden waste for a rolling year (i.e. a year from when they subscribe). This is enabled by centralising the payment system. This will not change the available channels (e.g. online or via District Council call centres) nor will it result in reduced income for District Council partners.
3.5 Tackling hard to treat waste streams	All 2021/22	3.5.1 Work with Suez to seek opportunities to trial the collection of additional hard to treat materials at the kerbside

			<p>3.5.2 Work with regional partners to explore whether a viable regional solution to mattress recycling can be developed</p> <p>3.5.3 Work with Terracycle to explore whether HWRCs can host collection points</p>
3.6	HWRCs	<p>2021/22</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>3.5.4 Signage review of all HWRCs to align with kerbside, ensure effective use of Energy from Waste and drive behavioural change</p> <p>3.5.5 Ongoing programme of maintenance and safety improvements to ensure our ageing network of sites remain effective</p> <p>3.5.6 Seek opportunities to improve our recycling centres, subject to development of viable solutions and robust business cases. Minehead, Frome & Yeovil Recycling Centres are top priorities.</p>
3.7	Waste composition and recycling participation analysis	2022/23	SWP last undertook a thorough waste composition and recycling participation analysis in 2018. Waste composition analysis helps us understand what Somerset residents are throwing away that could be reused or recycled, and recycling participation analysis helps understand more about people’s recycling behaviours and hence what we can do to improve that. Whilst sampling will help us understand the impact of Recycle More, it makes most sense to do a full survey once this has been fully implemented.
3.8	Recycling A-Z guide	2021/22	With expanding kerbside collections, around 40 materials recycled at HWRCs, Terracycle schemes and other options for people to recycle different materials it can be a confusing picture. A comprehensive, up to date and user friendly A-Z guide will help people understand their options in Somerset.
3.9	Targeted campaigns	Ongoing	Campaigns targeted at key peaks in waste (e.g. Christmas – food waste, packaging and plastics, Halloween – pumpkins, Easter – plastic packaging, Summer – garden waste and BBQs). The carbon impact of materials not being recycled varies (with food and textiles being the most carbon intensive, and the proportion of small electrical items and batteries expected to fall) and the composition of what is in our bins changes of time. Focussing on carbon-intensive materials in waste (as opposed to weight) is an important part of delivering our vision.
Links to other activities in SWP’s Business Plan			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depot improvements • Partnership working (especially with parish councils) • Influencing national strategy and policy (noting that subject to future consultation there may be significant change in national policy in 2023) • SWP’s Waste Strategy will reflect the waste hierarchy and hence recycling • Our Schools Against Waste programme is built around the waste hierarchy (with tailored sessions developed to promote food waste recycling and Recycle More)

4. Decarbonising residual waste		
<p>Despite everything we do to reduce waste, encourage its reuse and recycling there will still be residual waste for the foreseeable future. The most important actions we can take to decarbonise our residual waste are therefore reduction, reuse and recycling. However, once we have this waste, we need to ensure it is dealt with in the least environmentally damaging way possible, whilst recognising that we operate within financial constraints. All our residual waste that can be is now processed through Viridor’s Resource Recovery Centre at Avonmouth.</p>		
What	When	Why
4.1 Heat offtake from Avonmouth	Ongoing	When Viridor opens their Plastics Processing Facility at Avonmouth it will utilise a proportion of the low level heat generated at the Energy from Waste facility. SWP will continue to work closely with Viridor to encourage the full use of heat – if Avonmouth operates as a combined heat and power facility it will be even more environmentally efficient.
4.2 Carbon capture & storage	Ongoing	After decarbonising the inputs and optimising use of heat and power, the most viable emerging technology to reduce the carbon intensity of Energy from Waste facilities is carbon capture and storage. SWP will continue to work closely with Viridor to ensure that Avonmouth sees this technology installed at the earliest viable point.
4.3 Educating the public about Energy from Waste	2021/22	Work with Viridor to develop a virtual visitor centre which ensures that the public can understand about Energy from Waste and have transparent access to key data (e.g. on emissions).
Links to other activities in SWP’s Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All activities under waste reduction, promoting reuse and increasing recycling • SWP’s Waste Strategy will reflect the waste hierarchy and hence reuse. • Our Schools Against Waste programme is built around the waste hierarchy • Waste composition analysis: helping us understand what Somerset residents are throwing away that could be reduced, reused or recycled • SWP reports annually to the board on the carbon impact of our waste and recycling 	

5. Decarbonising our operations		
<p>What we do (i.e. recycling, decarbonising residual waste treatment etc) is a much more significant impact on our carbon footprint than how we do it, but it is still crucial for us to continuously improve in this area. Rolling out Recycle More (with fewer and more efficient vehicles driving far fewer miles) has made a substantial improvement to the carbon impact of our operations.</p>		
What	When	Why
5.1 Roll-out electric supervisors vans	Spring 2021 – Spring 2022 subject to business case	SWP/Suez leased supervisor vans initially so that we could take advantage of maturing technology to procure electric vans suitable for operation across Somerset. The viability of this is dependent upon a business case being developed which involves additional capital expenditure with lower revenue costs giving a positive payback (and carbon savings). Roll-out will follow our depot infrastructure improvement programme, with Evercreech being retro-fitted first. Testing to date suggests electric vans are not viable for remote parts of the county, e.g. Exmoor, so some non-electric vans would continue to be required.
5.2 Implement green infrastructure improvements to depots	Spring 2021 – Spring 2022 subject to business case	Surveys of sites and plans are being undertaken over winter 2020 in order to identify if there are suitable investments in depots which reduce their energy usage. This will include exploring energy efficiency measures as well as energy generating measures (e.g. solar and wind). The viability of these investments will depend upon the business case (i.e. a financial benefit through capital investment resulting in ongoing revenue savings as well as carbon benefits). Whilst improvements at Evercreech would need to be retro-fitted, it is hoped to include such measures within the plans for other depot rebuilds/improvements.
5.3 Pilot alternative fuels in our fleet	2021/22	Work with our vehicle suppliers (primarily Romaquip for recycling vehicles and Dennis Eagle for refuse vehicles) to trial electric vehicles in Somerset
5.4 Drive down carbon intensity of day to day fleet operations	Ongoing	Technology onboard our new fleet (CMS Supatrak) will enable monitoring of driving (harsh braking/acceleration, idling), and Suez will utilise this to work with crews to improve driver behaviour. Reduced fuel usage and carbon emissions associated with new Recycle More rounds will be monitored.
5.5 Partial refleet of refuse vehicles	2022/23 - 2025	Learning from our trials and emerging technology will ensure that we maximise opportunities to have alternative fuelled refuse vehicles when we come to a partial refleet of our 2016 plate refuse vehicles in 2024. Note that a business case will need to be developed and the financial viability of alternative fuels cannot be predicted with certainty at this point.
Links to other activities in SWP's Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depot infrastructure improvements • Waste reduction, promoting reuse and increasing recycling (impact on vehicle/depot requirements) • Improving customer experience (resulting in less need for face to face contact and hence staff mileage) 	

6. Tackling non-household waste

SWP's delegated powers from District and County Councils are in relation to household waste and whilst for a number of years SWP has provided services to the majority of Somerset's schools, other than that our remit has not extended to the waste produced in our businesses and public sector offices. The joint work across the council to tackle the climate emergency we face has led to us expanding our remit to help drive improvement in this area. This builds on SWP's previous work to improve recycling in schools, whilst recognising that we are not resourced or responsible for non-household waste.

<i>What</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Why</i>
6.1 Schools	2021/22	<p>4.1.1 Transition to Recycle More for schools (separating fibre from other materials and adding in plastic pots, tubs and trays to the plastic bottles, cans, paper, card and food they can already recycle). The indicative timetable for this transition is: June 2021: Mendip and South Somerset schools September 2021: Sedgemoor and Somerset West and Taunton schools</p> <p>4.1.2 Continue with successful Schools Against Waste programme (free half day physical/virtual visits for primary schools) to embed behaviour change</p> <p>4.1.3 Develop a model to engage with secondary schools to embed behaviour change, working with Carymoor Environmental Trust and Suez</p> <p>4.1.4 Improving data and feedback: analysis of bin fullness to develop approximate recycling rates for individual schools (and using this data to drive improvement) and regular customer surveys to improve customer satisfaction.</p> <p>4.1.5 Improve customer services through introduction of dedicated online reporting for schools.</p> <p>4.1.6 Support improved recycling in schools through engagement of dedicated schools officer and provision of 'binrastructure' inside and outside of school buildings</p> <p>4.1.7 Encourage take-up of Eco-schools by launching a pilot grant funding scheme (indicatively £500 for 50 schools) to encourage embedding of this programme within Somerset schools, following feedback on the financial barriers schools face in taking action.</p> <p>4.1.8 Annual review of pricing model (working with Support Services for Education) so that we transition to a fuller 'producer pays' principle and incentivise behaviour change.</p>
6.2 Public sector estate		In 2019/20 SWP developed a business case which demonstrated the financial savings and environmental benefits from a coordinated approach to waste collection across the County Council and district partners – aligning that service more with the household service (i.e. a broader range of recycling and greater separation). This is not a service that the commercial waste sector currently provides at scale. Not only do we hope this project will enable the public

		2021/22	sector to lead by example, we hope it will shape the market for commercial waste in Somerset and hence make it easier for businesses to recycle more. Dependent upon securing Somerset climate emergency funding for the next phase of this project, the planned approach is:
		April 2022???	4.2.1 Procure a framework contract (meaning that wider partner eg police, parish and town councils etc) could also join 4.2.2 Enable public sector partners to call off against this contract. SWP would be likely to have an ongoing role in managing the framework contract
6.3	Business waste	Ongoing	4.3.1 Seek to pilot collaborative procurement for recycling and waste in one or more of Somerset’s market towns – reducing costs for businesses, improving environmental outcomes and aligning with local needs (working jointly with the industry and supply chain workstream).
		2021/22	4.3.2 Work with business/ partners to identify what support and guidance can be provided to Somerset’s businesses (e.g. food & drink producers, retailers/food outlets) be more resource efficient, and how best to provide that support. This is likely to be a joint project with the Devon, Somerset & Torbay Joint Trading Standard Service
		2021/22 – 22/23	4.3.3 Consider the potential changes to legislation for business waste recycling (subject to national consultation) around DRS, EPR, business waste recycling (inc food) and how SWP can work in partnership with others to shape Somerset to be an exemplar for household like recycling from businesses.
		2021	4.3.4 Launch an expanded ‘think outside the box’ campaign for Christmas 2021 to promote local businesses that are exemplars for sustainability
		2022/23	4.3.5 Ensure that businesses (inc. holiday lets) are not abusing the household service
Links to other activities in SWP’s Business Plan			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWP’s Waste Strategy will help define our role in non-household waste and shaping the future of resource efficiency in Somerset, informed by the major changes expected in national resources and waste policy from 2023 • Our behavioural change SWEEP fund is driven by levels of recycling (Suez and SWP contribute 2% each into this fund) and this enables us to undertake activity such as Schools Against Waste.

7. Working with others			
Partnership is at the heart of what SWP do.			
What	When	Why	
7.1 Parish Councils	Ongoing	Explore how we can share our toolkits and guidance (e.g. on composting, food waste, and setting up a plastic pot, tub and tray collection point) for those town and parish councils who want to take more local action on climate change. This will include evaluating whether a pilot scheme to work with a parish council to promote home composting (linked to our subsidised compost bin offer) is an effective way to promote home composting. Attending parish cluster meetings and meetings of environmentally motivated/interested groups is a key part of ensuring we remain close to our communities, particularly in the run-up to Recycle More.	
7.2 Local data and engagement	2021/22 2022/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how we can use our data to be more accountable to local areas (e.g. parish/town councils), and to work in partnership with those areas to use this to drive improvement. Local Engagement Programme delivering 100 activities and interventions per year in deprived and poor recycling areas (Suez social value commitments) 	
7.3 Developing partnerships	Ongoing	With limited resources, we need to develop strong partnerships with others in order to ensure that we cost-effectively drive people to change behaviours. Developing strategic partnerships with others, especially third sector organisations working in areas with low recycling performance, is a crucial means to do this. SW:EEP funding will potentially help support behavioural change in communities. Suez have committed to an employee volunteering scheme (2 days per year for 10 employees).	
7.4 Community action groups	2022/23	Working with SUEZ to explore SW:EEP funded arrangements whereby we develop community capacity to reduce waste, increase reuse and recycling. Suez have made a social value commitment to have 15 such groups active by 2023-24.	
7.5 Engagement with front-line staff	Ongoing	Our people are our most important asset and act as our ambassadors. Working closely with Suez and Viridor it is important that SWP engages closely with our frontline staff.	
Links to other activities in SWP's Business Plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector waste procurement (potentially available to parish councils and other bodies) 	

8. Improving the customer experience

SWP provides a universal service and delivering excellent customer service is a critical part of our vision. The scale and complexity of this is significant, with multiple complex systems interacting between contractors, SWP and partner authorities. We have over 20 million collections made each year, over 1.5m visits to recycling centres annually, around 100,000 customer contacts (with around 40% online), over 12,000 followers on facebook.

What	When	Why
8.1 Fully utilise in-cab technology	Ongoing	Using the exception reporting function to drive behavioural change amongst our residents (e.g. better sorting of boxes) and to identify and address unauthorised additional capacity).
8.2 Growing our channels	Ongoing	This will include innovation - developing our app, exploring how we can link key functions into smart speakers (e.g. Alexa), an automated website assistant that can answer queries. As part of this we will seek to continue to grow our following on Facebook (and develop a social media charter) and subscribers to our Sorted e-newsletter.
8.3 Website review	Ongoing	This will include reviewing how we support businesses, how we build trust (inc. a review of the Beyond the Kerb infographic).
8.4 CRM system procurement	2021/22 – 22/23	The contract with our current Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system (My Waste Services) expires in September 2022 and ahead of that SWP will review our approach.
8.5 Processes and Policy	2021/22	Implementing the action plan that resulted from the GDPR compliance audit that SWP requested to support our ongoing work in this area, refreshing our social media policy
8.6 Assisted collection review	2021/22	Periodic review of our database of assisted collections to ensure that customer still require the service.
8.7 Improve processes around occupation of new homes	2021/22	Implement process improvements to ensure that notification of new property occupation/home ownership is seamless and that we take advantage of this opportunity to change behaviours. This will potentially include procurement of a module (NLPG COU) for our CRM system which reduces the current 6 week lag in new properties being updated.
8.8 Enforcement and householder support	Ongoing	SWP work closely with contractors and partners to resolve complex issues, investigate complaints, find solutions to problems and clamp down on abuse (including trade waste abuse & side/excess waste). Enforcement remains the last option.
8.9 Supporting our most vulnerable	Ongoing	In addition to training all collection staff to be dementia aware (expected to be in early 2021), SWP will seek to identify other ways in which we can support the wider agendas of our partner authorities – for example how we can more effectively use the eyes and ears of our staff on the ground to better support vulnerable residents and streamline this process.
Links to other activities in SWP's Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste composition and participation analysis: helping us understand behaviours • SWP reports quarterly to the board on the customer experience 	

9. Supporting wider goals in Somerset		
<p>SWP spends approximately £50m of public money every year and our contractors employ well over 500 people. The close working relationships we have with all partners also provide a platform for progress on areas of common concern even where they are not within SWP’s delegated responsibilities (e.g. dealing with flytipping and recycling on the go). It is important that SWP looks beyond its delegated responsibilities to support the wider goals of all partners.</p>		
What	When	Why
9.1 Tackling waste on the go	Ongoing	Whist streetscene is a District Council responsibility, SWP wants to work with all partners to identify how we can learn from elsewhere to improve recycling on the go.
9.2 Tackling flytipping	Ongoing	Whilst managing fly-tipping is a District Council responsibility, SWP wants to work with all partners to identify how we can learn from other parts of the country (e.g. Hertfordshire) to improve the way we tackle fly-tipping.
9.3 Supporting local businesses and those far from the labour market	2021/22	<p>Ensuring we realise the social value commitments from Suez:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% of collection contract spend retained in Somerset, with increasing proportion spent with SMEs, micro-businesses and third sector organisations • 2 campaigns delivered each year to improve the capture of materials • 2 work placements per year (16 in total) from 2022-23 onwards for young people, including NEETs and care leavers, • 2 community payback scheme placements per year (16 in total) from 2022-23 onwards for low level offenders, • Ensuring 5% of staff are in apprenticeships every year of the contract
Links to other activities in SWP’s Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All activities under waste reduction, promoting reuse and increasing recycling • SWP’s Waste Strategy will reflect the waste hierarchy and hence reuse. • Our Schools Against Waste programme is built around the waste hierarchy • Waste composition analysis: helping us understand what Somerset residents are throwing away that could be reduced, reused or recycled • SWP reports annually to the board on the carbon impact of our waste and recycling 	

10. Enabling Activities		
Some of SWP's less visible activities are essential to enable both our front-line services and our ambitious programme of change.		
What	When	Why
10.1 Depot infrastructure improvements	2021-22	Having completed the redevelopment and expansion of Evercreech depot, we need to upgrade our other depots ahead of rolling out Recycle More: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taunton: between Jan and September 2020 to become a primary materials handling facility • Bridgwater: Sept – Nov 2020 to become primarily a vehicle park • Williton: July – November 2020 A temporary vehicle parking area required in Bridgwater for part of this programme.
10.2 Contract reviews	2022/23 2022/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review the garden waste collection service following any national legislative change • To review the collection contract and recycling credits mechanism following the roll-out of Recycle More & potential legislative change.
10.3 Health & safety	Ongoing	Given the significant health and safety risks inherent in our industry this is key.
10.4 Contract Management	Ongoing	Robust management of our two major contractors (Suez and Viridor) underpins everything we do. This may be particularly important given the potential for new owners for both companies.
10.5 Influencing national policy	Ongoing	With major central government consultations expected, it will be crucial that SWP uses its reputation as a sector leader, and by working through national bodies and regionally.
10.6 Developing a long-term strategy	2021/22 – 22/23	A long-term framework to 2050 is needed to align with Central Government's Resources and Waste Strategy to set out our ambition, the outcomes we want to achieve, our high-level targets and our over-arching approach.
10.7 Embedding behavioural insights	Ongoing	Using all the data at our disposal to understand behaviour is crucial to target interventions. Suez are required to develop a 6 monthly Performance Insights Report to draw together insights to inform targeted action.
10.8 Business Continuity Planning	Ongoing	Ensuring that robust Business Continuity Plans are in place and regularly reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Manage the risk of cost increases due to the impact of Covid-19 o Ensuring risk assessments and working practices are regularly reviewed o Ensure contingency plans are in place to mitigate the risk of Covid-1 impacting on business plan priorities whilst noting that not all eventualities can be successfully mitigated for o Review Business Plan priorities and target dates in light of the ongoing disruption and resource pressures that Covid-19 is causing
Links to other activities in SWP's Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These enabling activities underpin all aspects of our business 	

SWP Budget 2021 - 22

A draft Annual Budget for the forthcoming year will be brought to the December meeting of the Somerset Waste Board, with the final budget due in February 2021. A significant change in 2021/22 is that garden waste income will be collected by SWP rather than Districts. This is necessary in order to move to rolling year subscriptions, but it will also mean that the costs and income from garden waste are – for the first time – shown together in SWP's accounts.

Recycle More Implementation

The roll-out of the new Recycle More collection service is scheduled to be completed in February 2022. No savings as a result of the new contract will be taken from the Somerset Waste Partnership by any partner until all roll out costs have been fully funded – ensuring that all partners benefit equitably. Savings are expected to be seen from Recycle More in 2022/23 once roll-out costs have been fully funded. The overall savings are anticipated to be over £2m per annum.

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All partners have agreed capital borrowing to purchase the vehicles (c£18m), fund depot works and equipment (c£7m), and purchase additional containers. Each district partner is borrowing £5.0m on behalf of the Somerset Waste Partnership at a return of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rate plus 1%. In addition to this direct return to each borrowing partner (paid for through the contract), SUEZ are providing an additional £1.8m per annum collection contract discount reflecting the value to them of not having to borrow capital themselves.

The revenue costs associated with roll-out will be funded from a Recycle More Project Fund. This will cover the costs of recycling advisors (supporting people with the transition), communications and marketing and in-year transition costs (the additional costs of the current service model as opposed to Recycle More, based on forecast tonnage and material values. This also includes an allowance for risk (such as the risk that capital borrowing rates change before funds are actually drawn down). An equalisation reserve will be established after the roll-out period in order to smooth out potential fluctuations in recycle revenue, built up from 20% of forecast annual recycle revenue.

Covid-19

It is unclear at this time whether Covid-19 will continue to have an impact on services (and hence costs and income) in 2021/22. SWP will work with all partners to ensure that any additional Covid-19 costs are appropriately recorded and managed.

Annual Somerset Waste Board Budget 2021/22

	SCC	MDC	SDC	SSDC	SWAT
Expenditure					
Single Client Group					
Salaries & on-costs	1,020,230	466,857	111,977	119,079	155,853
Salaries pension deficit	84,500	38,667	9,274	9,863	12,908
MDC customer services impact	7,090		7,090		
Travel & Subsistence	51,770	23,690	5,682	6,042	7,909
Admin, training, meetings & IT	85,420	39,088	9,375	9,970	13,049
Advertising & campaigns	47,000	21,507	5,159	5,486	7,180
Office rent & accommodation	70,380	32,206	7,725	8,215	10,751
Support Services					
Legal	10,400	4,759	1,141	1,214	1,589
Insurance	5,280	2,416	580	616	807
Finance	81,490	37,290	8,944	9,511	12,449
Internal Audit	10,920	4,997	1,199	1,275	1,668
Human Resources	5,200	2,380	571	607	794
ICT	5,360	2,453	588	626	819
Democratic Services	6,960		1,408	1,498	1,960
Direct Services					
Waste Disposal					
Disposal - Landfill includes clinical disposal	13,337,959	13,337,959			
Disposal - HWRCs	10,583,028	10,583,028			
Disposal - food waste	1,569,920	1,569,920			
Disposal - Hazardous waste	223,420	223,420			
Composting	1,941,890	1,941,890			
Kerbside Recycling					
Sort it+ SP5 all districts	9,840,830		2,027,596	2,028,291	2,770,735
Communal Recycling SP5					
Garden	2,874,280		546,593	638,010	817,424
Garden sticker admin	18,000		3,435	4,013	5,070
Household Refuse					
Fortnightly	6,254,120		1,288,593	1,289,035	1,760,879
Refuse - Communal SP5					
Assisted Collections	103,630		21,352	21,359	29,178
Assisted Collection Review	10,000		2,060	2,061	2,816
Clinical Waste	130,140		26,334	28,005	36,653
Bulky Waste Collections	91,450		19,973	17,942	28,871
SWB Directed Collections	3,400		688	732	958
Day Works	8,780		1,777	1,889	2,473
Container Maintenance	62,660		12,679	13,484	17,648
Container Delivery	185,660		38,153	39,638	48,179
Container Supply	488,020		98,092	117,222	117,857
Admitted Body Pension Costs					
Base pension cost	60,380				60,380
Incremental pension cost	8,620		1,744	1,855	2,428
Depot Costs					
Village Halls	5,500			5,500	
Inter Authority Transfers					
Transfer Station Offset Cost	350,820	350,820			
Payment in lieu of Recycling Credits	2,729,740	2,729,740			
Third party Recycling Credits	30,910	30,910			
Advance Payment Saving	- 31,900		- 6,455	- 6,864	- 9,596
Lease Repayments - Sort It Plus Vehicles	262,430		58,580	47,800	68,890
Fleet Maintenance	140,000		35,000	35,000	35,000
Total direct expenditure	53,375,857	31,443,997	4,464,870	4,585,622	6,730,676
Income					
Kier Discount all Districts on SP5	- 80,000		- 16,188	- 17,215	- 22,531
Wilton Transfer Offset	- 350,820		- 70,990	- 75,492	- 98,806
Garden Income	- 3,105,560		- 590,070	- 688,630	- 885,180
Bulky Income	- 93,880		- 20,503	- 18,419	- 29,638
District Recycling Credits	- 2,729,740		- 575,429	- 548,678	- 764,327
Total income	- 6,360,000	-	- 1,273,180	- 1,348,434	- 1,937,903
Total net expenditure	47,015,857	31,443,997	3,191,690	3,237,188	4,792,773

Report Number: SWT 3/21

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Executive – 20 January 2021

Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Marcus Kravis

Report Author: Dan Webb - Strategy Specialist, and Lisa Redston – Economic Development Manager

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, existing challenges and future growth opportunities, a **Recovery and Growth plan for Somerset's economy** has been prepared in partnership between SWT, Sedgemoor, Mendip and South Somerset District Councils and Somerset County Council (together with expert inputs from consultants, and in consultation with the HotSW LEP).
- 1.2. This document (**please see appendix A**) sets out the plan, which is fully consistent with the recent submission of shovel-ready infrastructure projects by the Heart of the South West (HotSW) LEP and the LEP's Route Map to Recovery. With Government funding and support to enact these plans, together we will make a significant contribution to the UK Government's efforts to restart, revitalise and grow the national economy – 'building back better' and levelling up the UK economy. This document also effectively supersedes the previous Somerset Growth Plan (2017 – 2030).
- 1.3. The Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan (and it's supporting Project Summaries document – Appendix B) is a collaborative document that will move over time into delivering a pipeline of projects with the next steps being discussions around matters such as approaches to prioritisation and adapting our offer to meet the different funding streams that come forwards over time.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive is asked to note and endorse the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan and the collective approach being taken in partnership by the Somerset local authorities to create a coherent pipeline of projects to support economic growth in the county and in Somerset West and Taunton over the long term.

3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 The Somerset Recovery & Growth Plan has been prepared in response to the challenges (issues, risks and future growth opportunities) from the Coronavirus pandemic.

- 3.2 Without the development of a cohesive plan for Somerset (or if it fails to be approved), there would be a risk of a reduced / lost opportunity to seek or secure external support and funding, and therefore recovery and growth activity not being planned and delivered for county-wide benefits to be realised. As there is no guarantee of funding from Govt, there is a risk of insufficient funding to deliver the full programme.
- 3.3 There are no risks associated with the Somerset Recovery & Growth Plan itself, however the projects and activities included within this plan will be subject to risk management processes themselves.

4. Background and full details of the report

Background

- 4.1 Somerset's economy has been hard-hit and is vulnerable to further economic decline because of the Covid 19 crisis with Oxford Economics forecasting a severe recession in Somerset in 2020. Working together with Government we can tackle these challenges and build back better than before. Recovery and growth in Somerset will contribute to levelling up the UK economy. Our future growth will be greener and more inclusive, building on Somerset's innovative, high-value strengths in Clean Growth, Aerospace & Advanced Manufacturing, Digital & Environmental Data, and Agri-Food. Our plan outlines how we will work with Government to restart, revitalise and grow Somerset's economy.
- 4.2 Earlier in the pandemic the Leaders of the five Councils in Somerset wrote to government advising of our intentions to work collectively, regardless of differences in opinion around the future of local government in Somerset, to enable economic recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. In September last year a further letter and a short, summarised plan outlining intentions was sent to government to give comfort that the Councils in Somerset were indeed taking forward their commitment. This correspondence confirmed that further detail would be submitted going forwards and the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan is the next stage of this process.
- 4.3 The concept of a recovery plan to submit to government, even though it was not requested, came from a conversation between Leaders and Chief Executives when it was becoming clear that the economic impact of coronavirus on the areas was going to be significant but, due to the region being less impacted by coronavirus as regards infection and deaths, there was a danger that government would consider that the region had got off lightly compared to others and look to focus its resources elsewhere. By contacting ministers with proposals and following up with emerging plans it was anticipated that this would raise the profile of the county and ensure that, where funds became available, it was less likely to be forgotten and more likely to be remembered for its proactive response.
- 4.4 It should however be noted that this document is not in itself a bidding document and the submission to ministers is not expected to result in the allocation of funds to deliver the plan.
- 4.5 The Plan has been underpinned by research of the relevant databases and policy documents. The latest available data was used to help develop an assessment of the local economy. Significant amounts of economic data relating to Covid 19 have

informed the plan drawing on research from Oxford Economics and the University of Exeter.

4.6 Despite the challenges that have been presented through Coronavirus, Somerset is uniquely placed to drive the economic recovery for the region. A programme of activity has been developed that focuses on a cleaner more inclusive recovery leading to us achieving our pre-Coronavirus growth aspirations at a faster rate. The programmes we deliver throughout the coming years and will build on our emerging sector strengths of Clean Growth/Energy, Aerospace & Advanced Engineering, Digital & Data (environmental), and Agri-Food. Through targeted interventions we will increase social mobility and accelerate our pre-Coronavirus levelling up ambitions.

The Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan

4.7 In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, existing challenges and future growth opportunities a recovery and growth plan for Somerset's economy has been prepared. The plan is fully consistent with the recent submission of shovel-ready infrastructure projects by the Heart of the South West (HotSW) LEP and the LEP's Route Map to Recovery. The plan will support the UK Government's efforts to restart, revitalise and grow the national economy.

4.8 The current version of the plan is attached in the appendices. It is in two parts. The first (appendix A) being a narrative of the position in Somerset and the aspirations of the Councils herein, with a breakdown to the resourcing already in place to take these aspirations forwards and a series of asks from government to either enable delivery or accelerate it. The second part is the appendix (B) which gives a more detailed breakdown of how the aspirations are currently being developed by specific activities.

4.9 The Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan sets out the following:

- **Overall challenges and opportunities**
- **Aims:**
 - Safeguarding jobs in our bedrock sectors and creating new and better jobs
 - Support existing businesses and nurture start-up businesses from our bedrock and growth sectors
 - Delivering new affordable homes across Somerset
 - Promoting a green recovery and a low carbon economy
 - Levelling up and delivering an inclusive economy for all residents of Somerset
- **Objectives:**
 - Lockdown – Minimise negative impacts
 - Restart – Support bedrock industries and the workforce
 - Revitalise – Accelerate recovery through local interventions
 - Grow – Moving to a new (better) economy
- **Activities and responses** (Programmes / Projects / Instruments / Ambitions - grouped by themes and sub-themes):
 - Supporting employment, skills and economic inclusion
 - Helping business and sectors to grow and become more productive
 - Providing the infrastructure needed to enable growth
 - Creating attractive places and homes to live in
- **Offers and asks**

- 4.10. The plan will evolve over time, with this version being the first of many that will be presented to Members. The short-term focus is to bring together a picture of all of the activities going on to support businesses and to also identify those projects in development or implementation. This is intended to place us in a position to bid into the funding streams of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund, due to be announced early in 2021. The first phases of these funds will have very tight timetables for delivery and are expected to only be workable for 'shovel ready' projects.
- 4.11. Since the approach of government now is to offer funding for projects that can be delivered within very short windows of time, it is clear that to achieve success in bidding rounds we need to have invested resources upfront to develop business cases to a point where projects can roll out with immediacy on the injection of funding (the so called 'shovel ready' projects). While this may well be more about government being able to show that they have delivered something during the lifetime of their administration, rather than ensuring that the 'something' is appropriate, it has to be accepted that Councils must work within this current approach if they want to be awarded funds. In the long term therefore, as mentioned above, this Recovery and Growth Plan process should start to become part and parcel of the approach to economic planning in Somerset allowing us to continually have a set of business cases for projects that stand ready to bid into whatever funding programmes emerge.
- 4.12. The Somerset Recovery and Growth plan includes at least 46 areas of activity – there are additional detailed project development templates which define their scope as: Regional (at least HotSW wide); Strategic (contributing to the Somerset-wide strategic aims); or Tactical (locally important).
SWT is leading the following projects:
- Employment, Skills & Inclusion: Access to Learning and Employment Grant: (SW&T)
 - Helping businesses and sectors to grow: Local procurement activity to increase social capital and social innovation
 - Infrastructure - Reducing carbon emissions through travel & energy efficiency: Retrofit (social) housing with energy efficiency technologies pilot
 - Infrastructure - Improving digital and physical connectivity: Wellington Railway Station
 - Infrastructure - Reducing flood risk to enable growth: Taunton Flood Attenuation; and Blue Anchor Scheme
 - Places & homes - Improving the environment in Somerset's towns: Taunton Future High Street Fund
 - Places & homes - Enabling the private sector to deliver development: Revolving Infrastructure Fund; and Direct investment in new infrastructure e.g. schools
- 4.13. The projects listed within the plan have been developed by the nominated lead authority (Appendix B). Although the nominated lead has been responsible for designing the project plan, they will not necessarily lead on delivering the project. As identified in the plan, some projects are more aligned with specific geographies however implementation will benefit the wider Somerset area.
- 4.14. In addition, SWT has developed its own detailed Local Economic Recovery and Growth delivery action plan. This is a 'live' and iterative operational delivery action plan that sits alongside the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan, and includes detail on

how the council proposes to address specific challenges, issues and take opportunities to meet the goals and deliver the outcomes that the county-wide plan identifies.

A summary of the economic context and impact of COVID 19 on local economies and issues of unemployment:

- 4.15. Oxford Economics were commissioned in July to produce a report based on the economic impact in Somerset. The following scenarios do not take into account the November 2020 or January 2021 lockdowns:
- Oxford Economics has forecast the impact of the pandemic and associated lockdown measures on the Somerset economy⁵. The baseline scenario finds that by 2025 GVA will be 1.8% lower pre-pandemic forecasts. This outcome is based on an 8% decline in 2020 followed by a 7.4% increase in 2021 and continuing growth (albeit at a slower pace) up to 2025.
 - Under the baseline scenario it is estimated that there will be over 10,000 jobs lost in 2020, with the unemployment rate increasing to 5% (from 3% in 2019). The unemployment rate is forecast to fall from this 2020 peak year-on-year up to 2025 with a return to pre-pandemic levels by 2022. The claimant counts in Somerset rose significantly between March and August of 2020. As changes are introduced to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self Employment Income Support Scheme throughout the summer it is likely that fewer workers will be furloughed, and whilst some will go back to work, this is likely to lead to an increase in claimants. However, the extension of the UK furlough scheme to March 2021 could delay a more significant drop in employment.
- 4.16. In addition to the Oxford Economics Report the impact of Coronavirus and the associated lockdown on businesses in Somerset has been assessed through a survey conducted by Somerset's local authorities. Just over 50% of businesses have reported that turnover has fallen by at least half. Profitability has been impacted even further with just over 40% of businesses reporting they have made zero profits, and almost a quarter reporting they have made 50% profits or less. Almost 70% of businesses are not confident that their profitability will return to pre-pandemic levels in 2020.
- 4.17. KPMG have also projected the economic growth of local areas. The projections for Somerset's Districts showed a loss of between 6.8% and 10% of GVA in 2020, with a recovery of between 3.6% and 4.6% in 2021.
- 4.18. To summarise, Somerset has been severely impacted by the Coronavirus in similar ways to other areas of the UK. The data re-enforces the need for a co-ordinated approach to recovery and future growth.
- 4.19. **Next steps**
- Continue the dialogue with other stakeholders that we have started in the development of this Plan (e.g. with businesses and the education community), to ensure that there is comprehensive ownership of this plan throughout the Somerset economy
 - Develop the areas of activity that we have set out in this Plan, to show clearly how we as local stakeholders will contribute to these, and how Government can work with us to ensure that the plan is fully delivered. This will culminate in a high-level business case for the delivery of plan

- Following formal sign-off of this plan throughout January 2021 by each of the Somerset Local Authorities, a period of external engagement will commence early in 2021 with the HotSWLEP, Government and MPs.

5. Links to Corporate Strategy

5.1 The aims, objectives and themes in the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan very much align with the Somerset West and Taunton Council Corporate Strategy and Vision (published in 2019). The Corporate strategy includes Economy and the Environment as the first theme, with the stated objectives being:

- Making the District carbon neutral by 2030.
- Delivering Taunton Garden Town.
- Encouraging wealth creation and clean economic growth throughout the District, by attracting inward investment and enabling research and innovation.
- Improving the skills of the local workforce.
- Providing adequate and affordable employment land to meet different business needs.
- Supporting town centres to meet the challenge of changing shopping habits.
- Developing the commercial elements of the Firepool site in Taunton.
- Enhancing arts and cultural provision within the District.

5.2. In addition, the Council published a new Economic Development and Prosperity Strategy early in 2020 - the Somerset Recovery & Growth Plan aligns closely to the overarching objectives in the economic development strategy:

- Improved long-term capacity for clean growth by supporting the foundations of productivity
- Increased sustainability and broadening the base/capacity of business growth in the area
- Expanded and developed clusters and networks (both current and future)
- Increased productivity and research and innovation, increasing GVA per head across the whole area
- Retention of existing growth businesses and attracting high quality Inward Investments
- Improved skills, in order to improve job and career prospects for residents and the attractiveness of the area, including new investors creating higher value jobs.

5.3. The Somerset Recovery & Growth Plan plan is also fully consistent with the recent submission of shovel-ready infrastructure projects by the Heart of the South West (HotSW) LEP and the LEP's Route Map to Recovery.

6. Finance / Resource Implications

6.1 There are no new budget or expenditure approvals requested in this report. Current resourcing commitments are identified within this year's business plans and any approval for any future commitments would be via the expected governance processes.

6.2 Although there are no direct implications arising from this report at this stage, the Recovery & Growth Plan may lead to projects and interventions that would be subject to their own business case and approval route, and resourced by appropriate and available internal SW&T and / or external sources. (NB - There is no guarantee of funding from Government).

6.3 Specific Council funding has already been made available to support local economic and High Street recovery, which includes:

- Reopening High Streets Fund (ERDF) (£70k)
- Emergency Town Centre Recovery and back-fill of Economic Growth and Prosperity Fund (£535k, as approved 16 Sept 2020) - following Covid-19 Lockdown, £535,000 has been made available for the purposes of Emergency Town Centre Recovery by repurposing the Council's existing Economic Growth and Prosperity Fund earmarked reserve. This has been carried out to put in place short-term impactful interventions in our Town Centres to provide an urgent response to attracting footfall back in to the high street to support businesses located in these areas

7. Legal Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications that relate directly to this report.

8. Climate and Sustainability Implications

8.1 A key aim within the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan is "Promoting a green recovery and a low carbon economy", which aligns with the Government's aim of "Building back greener".

8.2 SWT's ambition through the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan is to achieve growth, bring enhanced job opportunities for residents alongside better educational attainment, and to attract/retain high value business committed to sustainable, clean growth. All of these outcomes are framed by the need to consider environmental issues and climate change and to recognize that growth and prosperity at any cost is not a viable option.

8.3 The economic development team are working in partnership with the County on the Climate Change Strategy Industry and Business workstream.

8.4 Within the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan are a number of projects and activities aligned to the theme of "Clean Growth" as a key growth sector, mirroring the approach taken by the LEP's Local Industrial Strategy. This focuses upon three areas – the "Dynamic Heart" of the economy – where there are significant assets and world-class potential, and where Somerset and SW&T is uniquely placed to contribute directly to local and wider economic prosperity. The three areas within the SWT District include:

- Clean energy: associated with technical development for nuclear power and renewables (Hinkley C)
- High-tech engineering, agri-tech and marine opportunities
- Digital futures: including big data, environmental and health technologies and services, with key assets, including the UK Hydrographic Office, Musgrove Hospital and the development of Digital Taunton.

8.5 The Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan also includes a number of infrastructure responses that enable growth whilst reducing carbon emissions through travel and energy efficiency, and reduce flood risk.

9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

9.1 Although there are no direct implications arising from this report, the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan is intended to have a positive influence on the quality of life for the community.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 There are no obvious implications for people with protected characteristics coming from this report. The evidence supporting the report indicates that the more vulnerable sections of our communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and that the increase in unemployment, expected rise in homelessness and business closures will see further impacts. The plan identifies the need to support communities to build skills, and reskill and has programmes that will target support for those most in need.

11. Social Value Implications

11.1 The Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan is focused on key underlying challenges around social mobility and inclusion. In addition to a number of activities outlined in the plan, there is also a cross-cutting theme to 'Promote greater inclusion' for all residents across the whole of Somerset through improving skills, supporting improved social mobility, helping people into jobs, supporting business growth and job creation, improving digital and physical access to learning and employment, and delivering affordable housing.

11.2 One of the key projects that the SWT Economic Development team has been involved in is shaping the Council's (and county-wide) approach to Social Value in its planning and procurement process which is ongoing. The project aims is described as:

*Social Value represents an opportunity where additional community benefits can be derived. It is important that Social Value is not just seen within the very narrow context of the requirements of the Social Value Act but something that can and should also apply to **the redesign and commissioning of services** as well as be **integrated into the procurement, contracting and the planning system** to support post Covid19 recovery and "building back better"*

12. Partnership Implications

12.1 Extensive stakeholder workshops have been convened with Economic Development Teams, Portfolio Holders, business representative organisations, private sector businesses and third sector representatives. On-going effective partnership working will be essential as the delivery plan is developed and implemented.

12.2 Through the Somerset Growth Board and its Management Group, the partners will continue the dialogue with other stakeholders that we have started in the development of this Plan (e.g. with businesses and the education community), to ensure that there is comprehensive ownership of this plan throughout the Somerset economy.

12.3 The partners will also develop the areas of activity that we have set out in this Plan, to show clearly how we as local stakeholders will contribute to these, and how Government can work with us to ensure that the plan is fully delivered.

13. Health and Wellbeing Implications

13.1 The Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan is intended to have a positive influence on the quality of life and health and wellbeing of residents and businesses, providing new

opportunities for inclusion in the economy and developing the confidence of individuals through education, training and mentoring and raising the aspirations and prosperity of all.

14. Asset Management Implications

14.1 There are no asset management implications that relate directly to this report

15. Data Protection Implications

15.1 The economic data used in the preparation of this plan is sourced from documents that are within in the public domain. Where information has been obtained through consultation with individuals or organisations we have:

- a) only collected the data necessary for the production of the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan
- b) secured permission to use the information and opinions
- c) acted in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018

16. Consultation Implications

16.1 Extensive stakeholder workshops have been convened with Economic Development Teams, Portfolio Holders, business representative organisations, private sector businesses and third sector representatives

17. Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s)

N/A

Democratic Path:

- Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No
- Cabinet/Executive – Yes
- Full Council – No

Reporting Frequency: Once only Ad-hoc Quarterly
 Twice-yearly Annually

List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)

Appendix A	Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan
Appendix B	Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan Project summaries

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Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan

Final Plan

Prepared by Somerset's Local Authorities

December 2020

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Summary of Our Plan

Somerset's economy has been hard-hit and is vulnerable to further economic decline because of the Covid 19 crisis, with Oxford Economics forecasting a severe recession in Somerset in 2020, exacerbated by a second lockdown. Working together with Government we can tackle these challenges and *build back better* than before. Recovery and growth in Somerset will contribute to levelling up the UK economy. Our future growth will be greener and more inclusive, building on Somerset's innovative, high-value strengths in Clean Growth, Aerospace & Advanced Manufacturing, Digital & Environmental Data, and Agri-Food. Our plan outlines how we will work with Government to restart, revitalise and grow Somerset's economy.

People: Many Somerset residents have been furloughed, lost their jobs, or may not find employment. We already have low skills, productivity and wages; and deprivation and economic exclusion. However, we can work with Government to help the newly unemployed find jobs; support entrepreneurs to become self-employed; help people transition into sectors which are hiring in rural and urban areas; create local employment opportunities; create a more highly skilled and motivated workforce; and make sure people have the right skills for these jobs. Our experience from the West Somerset Opportunity Area can be rolled-out across Somerset, but we need support from Government to do this. With more flexibility to spend the Adult Education Budget we can help adults develop the skills needed in the future and investment in our FE sector will help adults and young people gain the skills needed to access employment and start their own enterprises.

Businesses and sectors: Our bedrock sectors have been badly hit, in particular the visitor economy, hospitality and retail. Businesses are closing and jobs being lost. The Coronavirus crisis and changes in demand have exposed weaknesses in some manufacturing companies in Somerset, leading to redundancies in this sector too. With an enhanced Growth Hub we can help businesses reopen and thrive in a socially distanced economy. We will develop and support our Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to deliver benefits and add value to existing sectors, for example care and children related services. Working with Government to deliver new workspace in our towns and rural areas will help businesses start up and grow. We will invest alongside Government to deliver innovation zones across the county, with innovation centres, high-value business support and supply chain development for our high growth sectors of Clean Growth, Aerospace & Advanced Manufacturing, Digital & Environmental Data, and Agri-Food.

Infrastructure: The economic and social impacts of Covid 19 have been exacerbated by constrained digital and physical connectivity in Somerset, but we can grow greener and faster with better infrastructure, helping to deliver the National Infrastructure Strategy and meet the aims of the Energy White Paper/Ten Point Green Plan. Investment in walking and cycling infrastructure will reduce car journeys in our towns. County-wide broadband coverage will help people in rural and urban areas engage in online activity, learn and work from home. Delivering our strategic employment sites, including the Gravity Enterprise Zone, will help create thousands of new jobs in our high growth sectors. Improved strategic road and rail connections will help us access national and international markets. New flood defences will protect existing places and enable new homes and business premises to be built. All of these actions will help to create a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

Places and homes: Footfall in our towns has fallen during the Covid 19 crisis, and ongoing social distancing will constrain recovery. We will work with Government to make our towns places where people want to stay, raise their families and start businesses. Funding our four Future High Street Fund and Town Deal bids will help deliver regeneration in our major towns, making the town centres the hubs of our

communities where the VCSE sector can deliver support in a focused way. Benefits must also accrue to the rural hinterlands, and must not be displaced from smaller towns and rural areas to our larger towns. We need to unlock our major residential and employment opportunities and unleash private investment through borrowing to establish a Revolving Infrastructure Fund, and a Getting Building Fund. Funding to deliver infrastructure such as schools will enable the private sector to deliver homes; but we also need preferential PWLB borrowing to enable us to directly deliver new homes.

With Government funding and support to enact these plans, together we will make a significant contribution to building back better, levelling up across the UK and our rural and urban areas, and delivering a greener UK economy.

1 Introduction

- 1.0.1 In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, existing challenges and future growth opportunities we have prepared a recovery and growth plan for Somerset's economy. This document sets out the plan, with more detail in the appendices. Our plan is fully consistent with the recent submission of shovel-ready infrastructure projects by the Heart of the South West (HotSW) LEP and the LEP's *Route Map to Recovery*¹ and *Build Back Better Programme*.
- 1.0.2 Our plan will support the UK Government's efforts to restart, revitalise and grow the national economy, helping to meet the aims set out in the recently published National Infrastructure Strategy, Energy White Paper and Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.
- 1.0.3 Despite the challenges that have been presented through Coronavirus, Somerset is uniquely placed to drive the economic recovery for the region. A programme of activity has been developed that focuses on a cleaner more inclusive recovery leading to us achieving our pre-Coronavirus growth aspirations at a faster rate. The programmes we deliver throughout the coming years and will build on our emerging sector strengths of Clean Growth/Energy, Aerospace & Advanced Engineering, Digital & Data (environmental), and Agri-Food. Through targeted interventions we will increase social mobility and accelerate our pre-Coronavirus levelling up ambitions.

1.1 Coronavirus challenges

- 1.1.1 It is important to note that the socio-economic impact of Coronavirus is not wholly correlated to the public health impact. Somerset saw a relatively low number of cases during the first wave of Coronavirus, but experienced a significant socio-economic impact due to the first UK-wide lockdown; the supply chain and market effects caused by national and global economic impacts; and the significance of sectors such as leisure and tourism in Somerset's rural and urban areas, which are dependent on visitors to the county. This pattern is continuing during the second and subsequent waves of the Coronavirus health crisis.

Reduced economic activity

- 1.1.2 The IMF² expects the global economy to contract by 4.4% in 2020, much worse than during the 2008–09 financial crisis. There will be reduced economic activity in the UK economy, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer quoting OBR projections of UK GDP shrinking by up to 12% in 2020³, with peak unemployment not expected until at least Q2 2021 and in Q1 2022 under a downside scenario. Latest OBR projections suggest that in the best-case scenario GDP recovers to pre-pandemic levels in Q1 2021 and grows in-line with original forecasts⁴. In the worst-case, there is longer term economic scarring and GDP does not recover to pre-pandemic levels until Q3 2024.
- 1.1.3 There is no reason to believe that Somerset will fare better than the UK economy, and the sectoral composition of its economy along with the rural and coastal nature of the county mean it may fare worse. Work undertaken early in the crisis for the Heart of the South West LEP suggests a decline in output of 35% in Q2 of 2020, which is more severe than in many other parts of the UK¹.

¹ Heart of the South West LEP Covid-19 - Route Map to Recovery, HotSW LEP (2020)

² World Economic Outlook, October 2020: A Long and Difficult Ascent, IMF (October 2020)

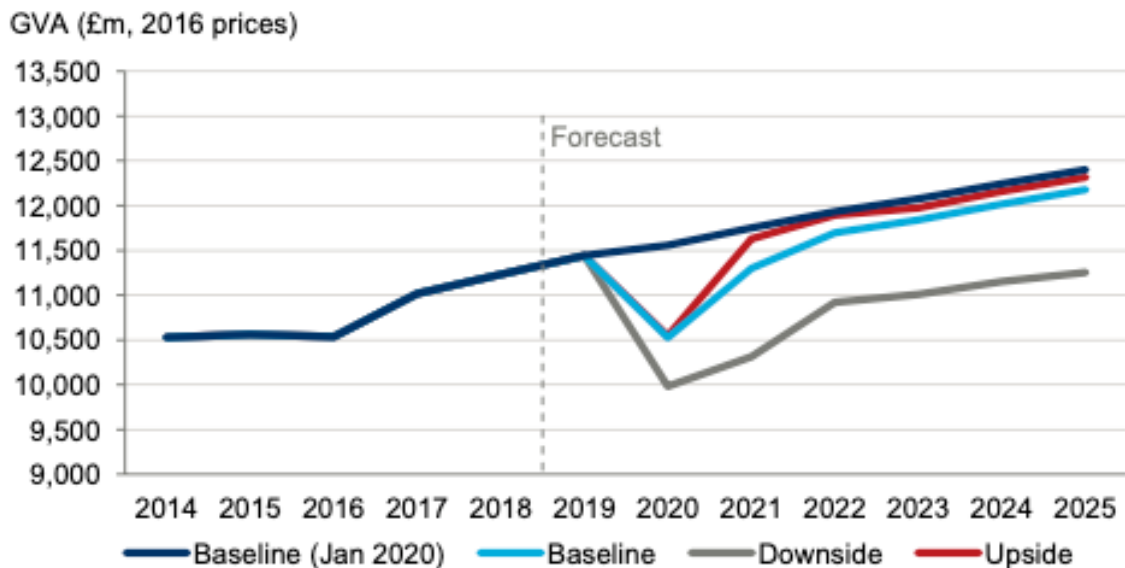
³ Chancellor of the Exchequer (November 2020) Spending Review, quoting OBR (November 2020) Economic and Fiscal Outlook

⁴ Fiscal Sustainability Report, Office for Budget Responsibility (July 2020)

1.1.4 Oxford Economics has forecast the impact of the pandemic and associated lockdown measures on the Somerset economy⁵. The baseline scenario finds that by 2025 GVA will be 1.8% lower pre-pandemic forecasts. This outcome is based on an 8% decline in 2020 followed by a 7.4% increase in 2021 and continuing growth (albeit at a slower pace) up to 2025.

1.1.5 Figure 1.1 below shows the impact of coronavirus on Somerset GVA, and a comparison to the pre-pandemic forecast. This shows that Somerset is forecast to lose at least £1 billion of GVA in 2020 compared to pre-pandemic forecasts. It should be noted that this modelling does not explicitly include the impact of the second wave of Coronavirus and the second national lockdown in November 2020.

Figure 1.1 - Impact of Coronavirus on the Somerset Economy



Source: Oxford Economics (July 2020)

People and employment

1.1.6 In its report on the impact of the pandemic on the Somerset economy undertaken in July 2020, Oxford Economics forecasts changes to employment under three scenarios⁵. Under the baseline scenario it is estimated that there will be over 10,000 jobs lost in 2020, with the unemployment rate increasing to 5% (from 3% in 2019). The unemployment rate is forecast to fall from this 2020 peak year-on-year up to 2025 with a return to pre-pandemic levels by 2022.

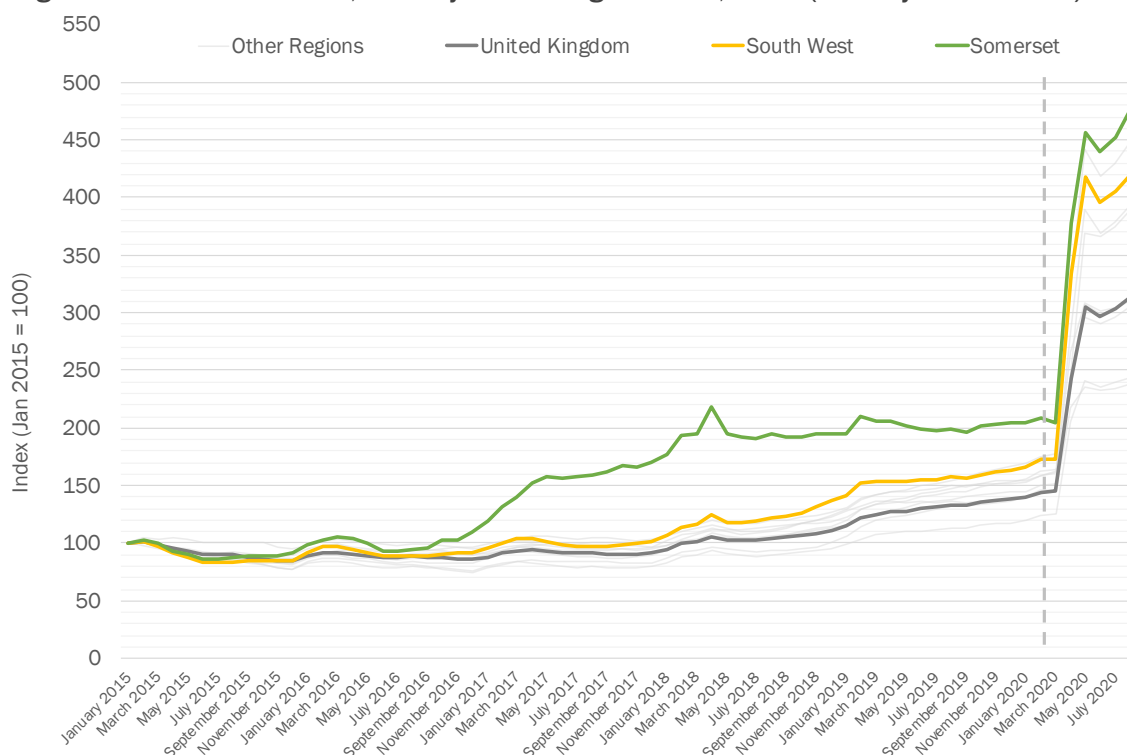
1.1.7 The claimant count in Somerset rose significantly between March and August of 2020. As changes are introduced to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self Employment Income Support Scheme throughout the summer it is likely that fewer workers will be furloughed, and whilst some will go back to work, this is likely to lead to an increase in claimants. However, the extension of the UK furlough scheme to March 2021 could delay a more significant drop in employment.

1.1.8 The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has published a report on the geography of the Coronavirus crisis in England⁶. This report considers Somerset to be very vulnerable, placing us in the fourth quintile of most vulnerable counties.

⁵ Oxford Economics (July 2020) Coronavirus: Economic Impact Scenarios for Somerset

⁶ The geography of the COVID-19 crisis in England, Institute for Fiscal Studies (June 2020)

Figure 1.2: Claimant Count, January 2015–August 2020, Index (January 2015 = 100)



Source: HJA analysis of ONS Claimant Count (2020)

- 1.1.9 The Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme (CJRS) was launched on 20 April, with the Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) following on 13 May. Reliable data on uptake of both schemes is available from the beginning of each scheme up until 31 May and then for each subsequent month.
- 1.1.10 By 31 May Somerset had 64,400 employments furloughed through the CJRS and 23,100 claims made to the SEISS. Figure 1.3 below shows the data from each scheme for the following months.

Businesses and sectors

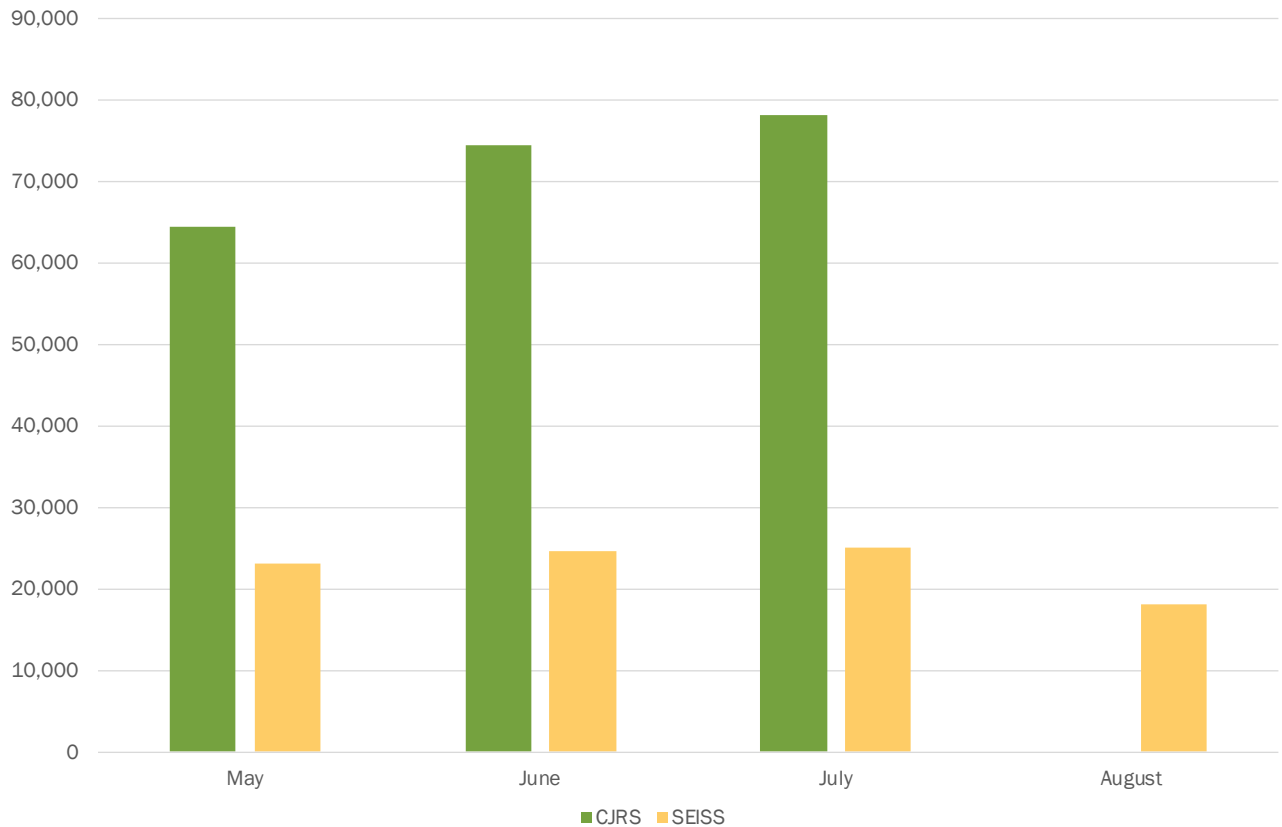
- 1.1.11 A regular Coronavirus impact survey undertaken by the ONS shows that businesses in Arts, Entertainment & Recreation and Accommodation & Food Services are most likely to be temporarily closed⁷.
- 1.1.12 The impact of Coronavirus and the associated lockdown on businesses in Somerset has been assessed through a survey conducted by Somerset’s local authorities. Just over 50% of businesses have reported that turnover has fallen by at least half. Profitability has been impacted even further with just over 40% of businesses reporting they have made zero profits, and almost a quarter reporting they have made 50% profits or less. Almost 70% of businesses are not confident that their profitability will return to pre-pandemic levels this year. The VCSE sector has faced particular challenges from social distancing, as many of its workforce/volunteers are older people who could not or did not feel safe to continue in work. As a consequence many such organisations could not continue to operate.

⁷ ONS Business Impact of COVID-19 Survey (BICS) published 8 June 2020, covering the period 18 May to 31 May

1.1.13 Social distancing and cash flow issues are reported as the most significant challenges facing businesses in Somerset. Of the 408 businesses that responded to the question, just over half indicated that financial support would be the most helpful thing to support their business.

1.1.14 Just over 30% of businesses agreed/strongly agreed that poor digital connectivity had posed a challenge for conducting business.

Figure 1.3 - Uptake of Government Support Schemes in Somerset



	CJRS	SEISS
May	64,400	23,100
June	74,600	24,600
July	78,300	25,000
August	-	18,200

Source: HMRC coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics

Places

1.1.15 KPMG has projected the economic growth of local areas in 2020⁸. The projections for Somerset’s Districts show a loss of between 6.8% and 10% of GVA in 2020, with a recovery of between 3.6% and 4.6% in 2021.

1.1.16 In April 2020 the Centre for Progressive Policy analysed the economic impact on a local authority basis by applying the methodology used by the OBR to reach the figure of a 35% GDP contraction

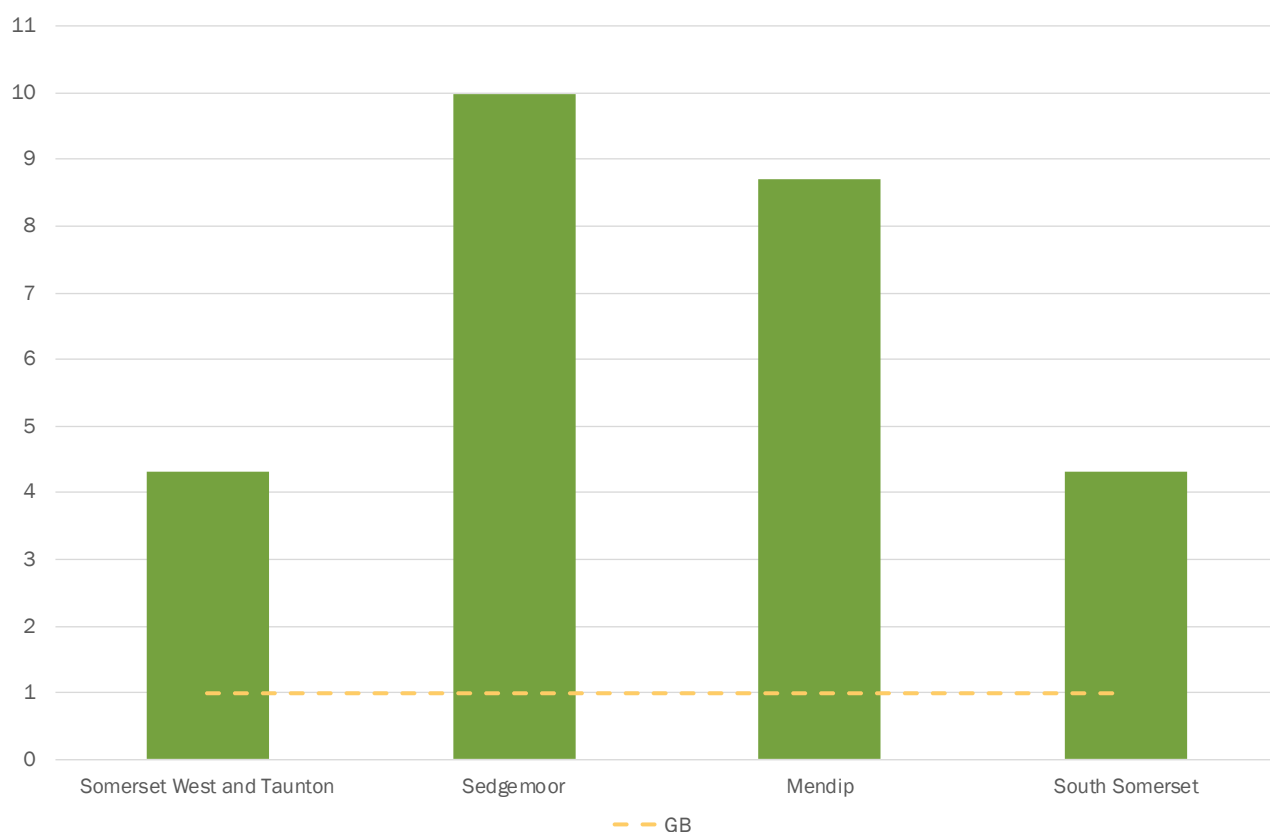
⁸ UK Economic Outlook: Hard Times, KPMG (June 2020)

for the whole of the UK in Q2 2020⁹. Each of Somerset’s Districts is forecast to see a decline of between -30% and -41% of GVA during this period.

1.1.17 The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) has carried out research on the localised impact of the pandemic on employment. This shows that between 26% and 28% of all jobs are at risk in each of Somerset’s Districts¹⁰.

1.1.18 The RSA analysis suggests that, in a Somerset context, Sedgemoor and Mendip are exposed to the greatest level of jobs at risk with Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset also above the average level of job risk for GB. Figure 1.4 below shows jobs at risk in each of the local authority areas relative to GB.

Figure 1.4 - Jobs at Risk Relative to GB (GB=1)



Source: Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (2020)
N.b. This data has not been calculated for the county of Somerset

1.1.19 The Centre for Towns has analysed the economic exposure of towns in England and Wales to Coronavirus lockdown measures¹¹. Minehead has the sixth highest proportion of local jobs in the four most vulnerable sectors (48%). Street and Wells are also listed in the top 5% of vulnerable towns, and Shepton Mallet is listed in the top 10%.

⁹ Which local authorities face the biggest immediate economic hit?, Centre for Progressive Policy (April 2020). Available at <https://www.progressive-policy.net/publications/which-local-authorities-face-biggest-immediate-economic-hit> [Accessed 19 June 2020]

¹⁰ Which local areas are most at risk in terms of impacts of Coronavirus on employment?, RSA (April 2020)

¹¹ The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our towns and cities, Centre for Towns (April 2020)

1.1.20 In general, it is thought that less prosperous areas are more vulnerable to Coronavirus because fewer people are able to work from home, more people travel on public transport, households tend to be larger and living in higher density, and more people have underlying health conditions.

1.2 Underlying opportunities and challenges

1.2.1 As well as the immediate challenges posed by the Coronavirus crisis, there are underlying opportunities and challenges we face, which will affect our future economic growth.

Opportunities

1.2.2 Our Growth Sectors are: Clean Growth/Energy, Aerospace & Advanced Engineering, Digital & Data (environmental), and Agri-Tech. There are also significant housing and growth opportunities in Somerset's towns, including the plans for Taunton Garden Town.

Challenges

1.2.3 There are a number of underlying challenges which need to be tackled to stimulate future growth and inclusion in Somerset, including:

- Infrastructure and connectivity challenges, including broadband, road, rail, public transport
- Low productivity and wages
- Labour market pressures in the longer term linked to an ageing population
- Poor housing affordability
- Rurality and low population density
- Deprived communities lacking opportunities, and not benefitting from the economic growth that has taken place
- An under-developed and under-utilised VCSE sector which could play a greater role

1.2.4 Many of these underlying challenges will be exacerbated by the Coronavirus crisis, as jobs are lost, new jobs are not created, and public transport usage falls, reducing the opportunities to tackle deprivation and social exclusion.

1.3 Our plan

Aims

1.3.1 In response to the immediate challenges of the Coronavirus crisis and the longer-term underlying opportunities and challenges we have set out the following aims for our Recovery and Growth Plan:

- Safeguarding jobs in our bedrock sectors¹² and creating new and better jobs
- Ensuring that our residents can find and have suitable skills for new, sustainable, rewarding jobs
- Support existing businesses and nurture start-up businesses from our bedrock and growth sectors
- Delivering new affordable homes across Somerset
- Promoting a green recovery and a low carbon economy

¹² Our bedrock sectors are: Health & Care, the Visitor Economy, Hospitality & Leisure, Retail, Agriculture, Food & Drink, and general manufacturing/supply chains. Construction is also an important sector in Somerset. Our Growth sectors are: Clean Growth (low carbon energy), Aerospace & Advanced Engineering, Digital & Data (environmental), and Agri-Tech.

- Levelling up and delivering an inclusive economy for all residents of both rural and urban Somerset

1.3.2 By achieving these aims in Somerset we will make a significant contribution to levelling up the economy of the UK. We will help the Prime Minister to achieve his aim to *build back better, build back greener, and build back faster*. Our plan will help to meet the levelling-up objectives set out in the National Infrastructure Strategy. With the HM Treasury Green Book being revised to place more emphasis within investment decisions on supporting policy objectives and delivering growth outside London and the South East, Somerset can play a greater role in achieving this policy ambition.

Objectives

1.3.3 The objectives to support these aims differ as we restart, revitalise and grow the Somerset economy. Following a second wave of Coronavirus a second England-wide lockdown has been implemented. It is unlikely that recovery will be linear, and there may be several periods of lockdown and restart, with a gradual transition into a period of revitalisation then growth.

Figure 1.5: Objectives of the Recovery and Growth Plan

Lockdown	Restart	Revitalise	Grow
<p>Minimise negative impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise loss of businesses, jobs and productivity 	<p>Support bedrock industries and the workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-open businesses • Get newly unemployed back to work • Retrain unemployed for opportunities that are available • Tackle inequality and exclusion 	<p>Accelerate recovery through local interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting to build back better • Support to bedrock and growth sectors • Promote economic growth (GVA) • Create new jobs • Train residents to enable access to jobs • Reshaping of High Streets and town centres • Delivery of more and more affordable housing • Tackle inequality and exclusion 	<p>Moving to a new (better) economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher GVA and productivity • High value jobs in global growth sectors • Innovation and R&D • Low carbon economy • Digital • Reduction in carbon emissions • Reshaping of High Streets and town centres • Delivery of more and more affordable housing • Tackle inequality and exclusion

Growth themes and activities

1.3.4 We have identified four themes and a number of activities within them that will help to meet these aims and objectives. They are discussed in more detail in the rest of this Outline Plan:

- Supporting employment, skills and economic inclusion (**Chapter 2**)
- Helping business and sectors to grow and become more productive (**Chapter 3**)

- Providing the infrastructure needed to enable growth (**Chapter 4**)
- Creating attractive places and homes to live in (**Chapter 5**)

Cross-cutting themes

1.3.5 There are also a number of cross-cutting themes that link together activities in each of these areas. For example, we will:

- Tackle the impacts of Coronavirus by supporting businesses to reopen and get people back to work, improve walking and cycling accessibility to and within our towns, ensure that there is full digital coverage across Somerset and that people and businesses can use it. We want to continue the reduction in carbon emissions that we have seen during the crisis
- Promote employment and productivity growth in our bedrock sectors through a combination of skills development, business support, and capital investment in infrastructure and workspace
- Develop the employment and productivity contribution of our Growth Sectors, through targeted investment in our existing and emerging innovation zones including skills development, innovation support, and new infrastructure and promoting green growth
- Promote greater inclusion for all residents across the whole of Somerset through improving skills, supporting improved social mobility, helping people into jobs, supporting business growth and job creation supporting the VCSE sector to provide volunteering and employment opportunities, improving digital and physical access to learning and employment, and delivering affordable housing
- Make our towns better places to live and work by improving the physical environment, supporting business and employment growth, making them more accessible, delivering affordable housing and reducing carbon emissions

Fit with HotSW LEP's Build Back Better Programme

1.3.6 It is important that our plan is aligned with the LEP's Build Back Better Programme, contributing to a LEP-wide coordinated programme of recovery and growth. Where there are common challenges across the LEP area then shared efforts to deliver, for example business support and digital infrastructure, will be more efficient and effective. Activities within our plan will contribute to the LEP's goals of:

- **Energy futures**, e.g. our support for the Gravity development as part of a clean growth cluster, and a clean energy innovation zone, contributing to the ambition to become an exporter of low carbon energy
- **Engineering futures**, e.g. our support for iAero and an aerospace innovation zone, contributing to the Future of Flight Programme
- **Digital futures**, e.g. our support for the Taunton Digital Innovation Centre and a digital innovation zone, contributing to the HotSW's data analytics and digital capabilities programme
- **People**, e.g. our activities to support employment, skills and inclusion in Chapter 2
- **Business environment**, e.g. our support for businesses in the bedrock and growth sectors set out in Chapter 3
- **Ideas**, e.g. our support for innovation zones and innovation centres
- **Places**, e.g. our plans to deliver workspace, homes and transformation in a number of our towns
- **Infrastructure**, e.g. our proposals to invest in broadband, mobile, cycling, walking, rail and roads

2 Employment, Skills and Economic Inclusion

Overview

Employment

Employees in many businesses have been furloughed, but others are being, and will be made redundant, across a range of sectors. Sustaining employment, creating new jobs and supporting people into these jobs is critical for Somerset's economy.

During the two **lockdowns and restart** Government has provided some direct financial support to businesses, for the employed, and to the self-employed. We are supporting those facing redundancy, using our BRRP funds, although the expected peak in job losses is now likely in 2021 rather than 2020. We are starting to create a network of Employment Hubs to help people to find work or move into self-employment.

Through this period and as **revitalisation and growth** happen we will help to maximise the opportunities for local people to work in Somerset. We will support the redeployment of people into the sectors that are short of workers or growing, match people to the job opportunities that exist, and support people into new roles. We will extend the Skill Up service, and support businesses to create apprenticeships and traineeships.

Education and Skills

Low skills have historically contributed to low productivity in Somerset. People, particularly the young, need the right skills to access employment opportunities both now and in the future.

During the **lockdowns and restart** we will use BRRP funds to support the work of the EBP and the Careers Hub to provide enhanced careers, education, information, advice and guidance to young people. We will extend CEIAG to the whole population that aligns with Somerset's employment opportunities.

Through **restart, revitalisation and growth** we will work with our training providers to enhance post-16 education, training and re-training; ensure that every young person has access to high quality education or training; and extend skills provision to adults so they can access job opportunities. We will support capital investment across training providers.

Economic Inclusion

Those living in deprived communities, and our young people, are at greater risk of economic exclusion. They need additional support to engage in training and work, helping levelling-up within Somerset.

During the **lockdowns and restart** we will provide support to increase employment, improve educational attainment and improve skills in our excluded communities. We will develop a strategy to support our Young People and other impacted groups. We will apply to extend the Access to Learning and Support Grant to help individuals overcome barriers to learning and employment; and work with training providers to ensure access to learning for all. We will use BRRP funds to improve digital access. We will ensure that support is provided to those young people at risk of, or who are, NEET. This will contribute to **revitalisation and growth** of the Somerset economy.

2.1 Challenges and opportunities

2.1.1 The UK Government is providing significant support for employees and the self-employed throughout lockdowns, saving many jobs. However, many have also been lost as businesses have, and continue to, fail. We will help the Government to get people back to work by identifying local employment opportunities and ensuring that the people of Somerset have the right skills and support to access these jobs.

2.1.2 In his speech on 30 June the Prime Minister called for the UK to have the most motivated and highly skilled workforce, promising £1.5 billion of investment in further education. We will help to deliver that workforce. The Prime Minister promised an apprenticeship, or in-work placement, for every young person. We will help to deliver that. We will also support the local implementation of those packages of support announced through the CSR20.

2.1.3 Below we set out the key challenges for each of our themes:

Employment

2.1.4 Somerset is a predominantly small business economy with around 90% of businesses employing less than 10 people and has high levels of self-employment. As a rural county, Somerset has a far greater proportion of businesses in agriculture, and higher levels than nationally in the retail, manufacturing and tourism/leisure sectors. These sectors employ a significant proportion of the workforce in Somerset and are those hardest hit by Coronavirus. Some sectors, including agriculture and food processing, are more reliant on overseas workers and Coronavirus travel restrictions have made it more difficult for them to recruit. This is exacerbated by the exit from the EU. This does create a demand for workers in Somerset, and an opportunity for employment.

2.1.5 Around 70% of Somerset businesses have furloughed some of their staff, over half of Somerset's manufacturers believe they will have to cut jobs, and one in three small businesses say they will need to make redundancies. 35% of closed small businesses are not sure whether they will reopen. Around 90% of businesses within the tourism/leisure sector have been closed during the Coronavirus lockdown periods with more than a third having to lay off staff and/or enforcing unpaid leave. We are experiencing high levels of unemployment seen in a high claimant count alongside a lack of new employment opportunities. As the Job Retention scheme is wound down, we do not know how many of those on furlough will retain their jobs and therefore what the impact on employment will be.

Skills

2.1.6 Somerset has a long-term issue of low skills, low productivity and low wages leading to a disconnect between supply and demand for labour. Somerset has a slightly lower proportion of the population with higher level skills, although this is skewed slightly by inward migration of older people retiring to the area, particularly in our rural areas. Our deprived areas have low skills levels. Young people and adults with lower qualifications will likely be the hardest hit, which will be exacerbated because sectors recruiting these individuals are also those hardest hit. Younger workers are at particular risk with 16-24 year olds twice as likely to be furloughed as middle-aged workers. Supporting people back into employment will be essential, but they will need the right skills.

Economic Inclusion

2.1.7 Long-term challenges around deprivation and low levels of inclusion in a number of our towns, rural and coastal areas will be intensified as a result of Coronavirus. Somerset has several areas

with high levels of deprivation, with West Somerset identified as the worst area for social mobility across England.

- 2.1.8 The impact of educational disruption for young people in Somerset will be significant likely leading to increased numbers at risk of or being not in employment, education or training (NEET). Somerset has already seen a steep rise in NEETs over recent years, with a 2.8% percent increase in the three-year period to February 2019. This is combined with existing challenges for progression routes into higher education, and lack of employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

2.2 Our Response

- 2.2.1 In the short-term we will build on existing activity to support those most impacted and at risk including young people, displaced workers and those with barriers to work. In addition to ongoing activity, we are investing £750,000 from the Somerset Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP) to develop and implement immediate support for individuals. This is short-term funding and activity which needs sustaining longer term where appropriate. Many of our immediate responses, where demand remains, will need to be continued as we restart and revitalise the economy.
- 2.2.2 As we restart and revitalise the economy we will review all activity in delivery. We will continue, or reshape, programmes where there is continued demand and evidence of need and we will end programmes that are no longer relevant. As we move into revitalisation and growth, we will work with employers to encourage the creation of jobs, particularly in our higher value growth sectors, which are accessible to local people. We will work with training providers to ensure we have an appropriately skilled workforce and we will continue to raise awareness of future opportunities to establish a future workforce pipeline. The BRRP funding is largely funding our short-term response, but ongoing, and new activity will need resourcing longer term.
- 2.2.3 Below we set out our key proposals to address the challenges and opportunities highlighted in the above.

Employment

- 2.2.4 We are working with partners to provide immediate support for those who are at risk of redundancy or who have lost their job as a result of Coronavirus. We will implement local Response to Redundancy Taskforces, following our Response to Redundancy Framework. We will put in place a comprehensive package of support to individuals which will be available as an online resource and supplemented with direct support where needed. This support will be aligned with that on offer from key partners such as Job Centre Plus, National Careers Service, SERCO and others. Businesses will also be supported through the redundancy process and support will be available for their ongoing resilience and growth.
- 2.2.5 We are working with partners to improve local employment support through a number of activities.
- 2.2.6 We will create a network of Employment and Skills Hubs to provide support to individuals who are seeking work, considering self-employment or who are seeking an alternative career route. We will ensure that they have suitable employability and personal skills through these hubs. We will match people to job opportunities and help individuals to apply for these jobs. In doing so we will work with Job Centre Plus, National Careers Service, SERCO and other jobs brokerage partners; the Hinkley Point C Job Service with a view to extending this more widely across Somerset; and align with the Skill Up service to ensure appropriate signing posting to skills provision. Once we are able,

these hubs will be developed as physical locations where all partners can be brought together as a single point of contact for individuals.

- 2.2.7 We will work with partners to develop a joined-up approach to redeployment into sectors where employment opportunities exist, such as the care sector, and through major projects such as HPC, creating a workforce pipeline for the future and also supporting individuals to retrain for relevant roles.
- 2.2.8 We have developed the Step Up Somerset website bringing together a range of employment support into a single access point. The website will hold all electronic resources in relation to the above activities and will sign post out to partner services. We will continue to develop this website into the medium/long term identifying any gaps in provision and seeking to fill these.
- 2.2.9 We will provide support to improve local employment opportunities.
- 2.2.10 We will work with employers to maximise opportunities for local employment within our growth and across our bedrock sectors, specifically encouraging clean growth, and support individuals to access these opportunities ensuring they have the appropriate skills to do so. We will create a logistics academy to help local residents to train for opportunities as warehouse operatives, forklift truck drivers and LGV/HGV drivers. We will support our VCSE sector to help people to bridge the gap between unemployment and employment. For major projects within Somerset we will use planning and procurement processes to secure employment of local workers and for investment in their ongoing skills development e.g. using and extending local labour agreements. We will need enhanced capacity to enforce this through planning and effective contract management of procurement. This will support revitalisation and growth in Somerset.
- 2.2.11 Skill Up Somerset is currently funded through the BRRP and through our ESF funded, Skills for the Workforce Programme, we will continue and extend the Somerset Skill Up Service, delivered by DSTPN, until 2023. Skill Up works with business to encourage them to create apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities, supporting the government’s Opportunity Guarantee for Young People, but also ensuring people of all ages have access to apprenticeships and training. Skill Up will work with business to support recruitment into apprenticeships and traineeships. We will work with the DSTPN to ensure appropriate provision is available and seek resources to improve the sustainability of these programmes. Our training providers will support the delivery of all employment related skills-based training programmes including traineeships and apprenticeships, underpinned by incentives to employers.

Figure 2.1: Employment

Response	Offer	Ask
Redundancy Support	Implementation of our Response to Redundancy Framework which provides coordination, and development, of a comprehensive package of support to business and individuals facing redundancy	DWP/JCP to be able to proactively share intelligence on redundancy announcements once HR1s are received Improved communications on large business making redundancies nationally/regionally where there is local impact

Response	Offer	Ask
		<p>To ensure that national programmes of activity engage with local partners to ensure coordination</p> <p>Contribution towards strategic capacity totalling £80k per annum</p>
Employment Support	<p>Creation of a network of physical Employment and Skills Hubs across Somerset matching people to job opportunities and helping individuals apply for these jobs.</p> <p>We will support redeployment into sectors where employment opportunities exist , such as health/care and HPC</p> <p>We will provide guidance and support to apprentices who have been impacted</p> <p>Supplementing the physical hubs, we have developed Step Up Somerset website bringing together a range of employment support into a single access point</p>	<p>£400,000 per annum of ongoing revenue funding for three years to support ongoing delivery of these initiatives</p> <p>Contribution towards strategic capacity totalling £80,000 per annum</p>
Improve Local Employment Opportunities	<p>We will work with employers to create employment opportunities within our bedrock and growth sectors, specifically encouraging clean growth, and support individuals to access these opportunities ensuring they have the appropriate skills to do so.</p> <p>We will support the development of a logistics training academy in partnership with a local logistics company.</p> <p>We will embed local labour agreements across all planning and procurement processes and encourage our supply chain to invest in their workforce</p>	<p>Contribution towards strategic capacity totalling £80k per annum</p> <p>Implement a range of funding and rule changes to 16-24 traineeship, apprenticeship and adult offers to facilitate training opportunities for all</p> <p>Employer incentives of up to £3,000 per apprentice, with an increase on non-levy funding allocations to match</p>

Response	Offer	Ask
	Continue and extend the Skill Up Somerset service, through DSTPN, to encourage creation of apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities. Skill Up will work with business to support recruitment into apprenticeships and traineeships	
Outputs and impacts	Those made redundant have access to appropriate support Increase in apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities Increased employment of local residents in local businesses	

Education and Skills

- 2.2.12 We are working with partners to provide enhanced careers, education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to all Somerset residents, including raising awareness of apprenticeships, traineeships and T Levels as a viable post-16 option. We will create clear route maps, and escalators of progression, into and through our core sectors. These pathways will align with our employment support programmes and, working with colleges and training providers, we will ensure individuals can access the right training meeting the needs of employers.
- 2.2.13 During school closures the Somerset Education Business Partnership (EBP) moved all resources online and rolled out a programme of virtual work experience and careers events accessible to all young people across Somerset. We will seek funding to continue the services of the EBP which is essential to sustain and develop careers advice and engagement between employers, schools, young people and their parents/guardians. The EBP will continue to work in very close partnership with the Heart of the South West Careers Hub. To enable continuation of both of these activities locally we will need additional revenue funding. Ongoing activity will need to be aligned with local labour market intelligence as the post-Coronavirus landscape continues to change and develop. In the short-term we will utilise the BRRP funding to cover a proportion of these costs.
- 2.2.14 We have developed the Step Up Somerset website (mentioned above), bringing together all CEIAG support available across Somerset. We will coordinate and implement an enhanced CEIAG offer accessible to all through this website. We will continue to develop this website in the medium/long term, identifying any gaps in provision and seeking to fill these.
- 2.2.15 We will work with partners to enhance our post-16 education.
- 2.2.16 We will seek to extend skills provision for adults alongside our European Social Fund Skills Support for the Workforce, which will provide training support to those in, or close to, employment.
- 2.2.17 We will work with our colleges and training providers through the Devon & Somerset Training Providers Network (DSTPN), to enhance post-16 education, including re-training for the unemployed and greater flexibility in course offer and start dates. This will help to ensure that residents have the skills needed to contribute to revitalisation and growth in the economy. We need greater flexibility in the use of the Adult Education Budget (AEB), around eligibility, age and amount of funding assigned to a qualification in respect of Co-funding. We seek support, including through flexibilities, to allow easy access to training for adults who have been made redundant, such as the National Retraining Scheme. This skills provision will range from short courses to

higher level qualifications, including additional support for digital literacy, outreach and workforce mobilisation across distressed sectors. We will build on existing provision to deliver more blended learning and local delivery in remote areas.

- 2.2.18 We will work with our colleges and training providers to ensure every young person has access to high-quality education or training, funded to meet their needs. Funding needs to be flexible to allow students to start throughout the year. We seek support to allow young people to access digital learning technology.
- 2.2.19 We will deliver higher skills for the Growth Sectors, aligned to the HotSW Local Industrial Strategy. We ask for greater flexibility in the use of funding to allow re-training and up-skilling in Growth Sector areas. This will include digital skills across all sectors. We will seek investment towards the development of innovation and skills opportunities with a focus on high growth and clean growth innovation and high value employment. We seek support to develop new curriculum to support adults into employment into these key sectors. We seek support for marketing and communication of upskilling and reskilling programmes for adults.
- 2.2.20 We will work with the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and wider partners to support measures around sustainability and growth including with financial hardship amongst training providers, and costs around modification and diversification as a result of Coronavirus. We seek an increase in the AEB funding rates to support the recruitment of specialist staff and additional cost related to Coronavirus, such as smaller groups and safety measures.
- 2.2.21 We will seek funding to support capital improvements within our colleges and across the training provider network including resources to enhance digital connectivity across the network to provide virtual learning to rural and urban areas and modernise assets. We seek investment for maintenance of training facilities. With greater flexibility and funding, we will be able to further develop delivery of blended learning opportunities (immersive online and face-to-face) and local delivery of post-16 education in less accessible places such as West Somerset.

Figure 2.2: Education and skills

Response	Offer	Ask
Enhanced CEIAG	<p>We will provide enhanced careers, education, information, advice and guidance to Somerset residents and raise awareness of apprenticeships, traineeships and T Levels</p> <p>We will create route maps and escalators of progression into and for our core sectors</p> <p>We will continue the services of the Somerset EBP and develop a sustainable local partnership model for beyond 2021</p> <p>We will continue to work with the HotSW Careers Hub and will provide an interim contribution</p>	<p>DfE to meet the full costs of the HotSW Careers Hub from 2021/22, to sustain provision</p> <p>Funding to continue the EBP post 2021.</p> <p>Contribution towards strategic capacity, totalling £80,000 per annum</p>

Response	Offer	Ask
	<p>to fund the shortfall in 2020/21 budgets</p> <p>We will align the CEIAG resource with our employment support programmes and will host all information on the Step Up Somerset website</p>	
<p>Enhanced Post-16 Education (16-19 Year Olds)</p>	<p>We will enhance the education and training of 16-19 year old learners to increase their contribution to the labour market and enhance their employment opportunities. Ensuring that every young person has access to high quality education or training</p>	<p>Funding to expand the education for 16-19 year olds to successfully deliver against our offer</p> <p>Support for 16-18 year olds to access education through the provision of free transport, in line with other parts of the Country such as London and Manchester</p> <p>£800,000 to provide all learners with access to a personal device and connectivity to access online learning</p>
<p>Enhanced Post-16 Education (Adults)</p>	<p>We will deliver the ESF funded Skills in the Workforce programme to support those in employment to increase their skills</p> <p>We will support those who are out of work to receive funded training to up/re-skill in a sector aligned to economic growth and/or bedrock sector and greater flexibility in course offer and start dates</p> <p>We will build on existing provision to deliver more blended learning and local delivery in remote areas</p> <p>We will deliver higher skills for Growth Sectors to enhance and accelerate economic strategies. We will develop a Systems Leadership approach and pilot this through the Yeovil Place Leadership Group</p>	<p>We ask that flexibilities are considered so that 19+ learners are given further support to incentivise participation in training development</p> <p>Repurpose balances of ESF to provide responsive and tailored programmes for adults within the community to re-train and re-skill</p> <p>Investment to develop and deliver programmes such as sector-based work academies</p> <p>Ensuring that training providers are embedded into JCP/DWP delivery</p> <p>Enhance the Adult Education Budget together in one budget line with the National Retraining Scheme, the National Skills Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund ensuring balances are sufficient to meet increased demand to counter the impact of reduced</p>

Response	Offer	Ask
		<p>income if full-funding flexibilities are implemented</p> <p>Early release of a proportion of the National Skills Fund to support flexible learning. Fully fund 24+ adults to undertake subsequent L3 programmes or units in priority sectors</p> <p>Simplification of the funding rates and rules that training providers work to in order to have flexibility to meet demand</p> <p>Where needed, deliver a front-loaded payment profile for training providers to allow for intensive upfront delivery</p> <p>Support for colleges and training providers with development funds to assist the development of individual provider's strategy to adapt and become the provider of the future</p> <p>£800,000 to provide all learners with access to a personal device and connectivity to access online learning</p>
<p>College and Training Provider Sustainability and Growth</p>	<p>We will ensure colleges and training provider needs are reflected within local investment discussions and will seek funding for improvements to the physical assets within our training network, including support for ongoing sustainability of providers</p> <p>We will deliver modification and IT set-up to deliver blended learning</p>	<p>Support for colleges and training providers facing financial hardship and additional costs as a result of Coronavirus</p> <p>Funding to replace category C&D accommodation within our colleges</p> <p>Release 20% of the £1.5bn capital fund for IT equipment, software and building modification for all providers</p>
<p>Outputs and impacts</p>	<p>Young people, and the wider population, understand the learning and employment opportunities open to them</p> <p>Training is available for young people, and the wider population, to help them to progress</p>	

Response	Offer	Ask
	Colleges and training providers have facilities that are suitable to deliver training and education People in more remote areas can access training People of all ages have the skills that local businesses need	

Economic inclusion

- 2.2.22 Promoting economic inclusion is an important outcome of restarting, revitalising and growing the Somerset economy. To promote inclusion we will address unemployment, under-employment, and in-work poverty.
- 2.2.23 We need funding to help people to prepare for, and access, learning and work through the extension of the Access to Learning and Employment Grant that we have delivered in the West Somerset Opportunity Area. This is a flexible grant to individuals to help overcome any barriers to learning or work e.g. childcare, training, transport or suitable workwear/clothes.
- 2.2.24 We will work with training providers to ensure that the whole population has access to learning through localised provision, particularly in our rural and deprived areas where transport and connectivity issues are a concern. This will include a blended and distance learning approach, accessible via local learning hubs.
- 2.2.25 We will provide targeted support for in-work poverty to ensure that people already in work are able to access training for upskilling, enabling them to move into better paid jobs. We will ensure that other responses highlighted in the plan help to achieve this. We will also provide support to businesses to train and upskill their staff through our Skill Up service, enabling individuals to move into better paid roles. We will support the VCSE sector, which is more inclusive than mainstream businesses, to increase the opportunities for economic and social inclusion it can offer to Somerset residents.
- 2.2.26 Building on the pilot in South Somerset, we will develop a Somerset-wide coaching and support programme to help families to help themselves and support children from deprived backgrounds in improving their educational attainment and accessing employment.
- 2.2.27 We will continue to improve digital skills and access to broadband throughout the population to enable people to access digital services, support and apply for jobs. We are rolling out a pilot programme to loan devices, with broadband access, to residents who are seeking employment. If demand is proven, we would require funding to extend and widen this service. We will also work with our training providers to ensure learners have appropriate devices and broadband access for learning. Through our Skills Programme we will ensure individuals has access to appropriate digital training.
- 2.2.28 We will develop a strategy that considers the challenges faced by young people in the current climate. We will develop a programme of interventions, aligned where appropriate to wider interventions, to ensure that young people have access to employment and training opportunities. We will coordinate and act as a gateway to the DWP Kickstart Scheme within Somerset. We will encourage and support employers to offer placements and ensure every young person engaged has access to appropriate wrap-around support.

- 2.2.29 We will deliver our £1.3 million ESF NEETs programme to ensure that young people at risk of, or who are, NEETs re-engage in education or can access employment opportunities. We will seek additional funding to ensure that all young people can access support they need to continue to engage.
- 2.2.30 We will develop a strategy to support the over-50s, or other adversely affected groups, who are 50% more likely than other age groups to be unemployed 12 months after losing their job.

Figure 2.3: Economic inclusion

Response	Offer	Ask
Short-term		
Address Un/Under Employment and In-Work Poverty	<p>We will apply for funding to extend the Access to Learning and Employment Grant, currently delivered in West Somerset, across Somerset</p> <p>We will support access to learning for those in and out of work and encourage local delivery of training by extending the Skill Up Here model and supporting a blended learning approach/distance learning particularly in rural areas</p> <p>We will provide target support, via coaching, for in-work poverty and support deprived families to improve their employment prospects</p>	<p>£400,000 per annum for two years for the access grant</p> <p>£1 million for capital investment in local/remote facilities (learning hubs)</p> <p>Investment in training provider facilities to enable enhanced blended/distance learning</p> <p>£1 million per year for three years for a county-wide coaching programme</p> <p>Contribution towards strategic capacity totalling £80,000 per annum</p>
Digital Skills and Access	<p>We will continue to promote and deliver digital skills training for all</p> <p>Working with our colleges and training providers ensure that all learners have access to devices and internet to support their learning</p> <p>Extend the pilot scheme to loan devices and internet to individuals seeking work</p>	<p>£800,000 to provide all learners with access to a personal device and connectivity to access online learning</p> <p>Capital funding to extend access to devices at a total cost of £9,000 per 10 devices. This can be scaled to meet demand</p>
Young People Support	<p>Develop a strategy and define the interventions we will roll out for Young People</p> <p>Coordinate, and act as a gateway for, the DWP Kickstart Scheme</p>	<p>Support to implement any appropriate interventions identified through the Young People Strategy</p> <p>For national schemes to engage fully with local stakeholders to ensure alignment of delivery</p>

Response	Offer	Ask
	<p>£1.3 million of ESF funds for the Somerset NEETs Programme: Somerset Works, supporting young people into education or employment</p>	<p>£190,000 urgent funding for pastoral and academic activity to support 16 year olds back into study to enhance the ESF programme</p> <p>Establish a pool of funding to support students at risk of becoming NEET to include one-to-one tutorial support/mentoring and the establishment of bursaries to remove barriers to education</p>
<p>Over 50s (or any other adversely impacted individuals) support</p>	<p>Develop a strategy and define the interventions we will roll out for those adversely impacted</p>	<p>Support to implement any appropriate interventions identified through the Strategy</p>
<p>Outputs and impacts</p>	<p>Increased skills levels, especially within deprived areas People in deprived areas have improved access to job opportunities, hence greater social mobility Significant reduction in NEETs Young People have access to employment and training opportunities Over 50s (or any other adversely impacted groups) are able to re/up-skill and have access to employment opportunities</p>	

3 Helping Businesses and Sectors to Grow

Overview

Businesses across the Somerset economy are suffering from the direct impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic such as lockdowns and the need for social distancing, but also from drastic changes in markets and demand. This is leading some business to struggle and others to close.

Bedrock sectors

During the **lockdowns and restart** we will provide support to the visitor economy, extending the work we have already undertaken under the BRRP. We will extend the support provided by the HotSW Growth Hub to businesses in all sectors; and the BRRP funded business support that we are providing.

We will support and encourage local procurement by the public and private sectors, and encourage the expansion of the VCSE sector to ensure that benefits to the local economy and residents are maximised during **revitalisation and growth**. We will continue to deliver enterprise centres and work hub space in Bruton, Burnham/Highbridge, Chard, Glastonbury, Wellington and Yeovil.

Growth sectors

We are already delivering innovation support through the Somerset Catalyst Programme and Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Programme. We will extend inward investment support activity that we are already providing under the BRRP.

Our support for the growth sectors in Somerset's economy is part of an ongoing process of working with the HotSW LEP to promote innovation and drive up productivity in the **revitalisation and growth** of the economy. We are delivering innovation centre infrastructure at the Somerset Energy Innovation Centre, iAero and the Taunton Digital Innovation Centre. We are formulating plans for innovation zones for Clean Growth, Aerospace, Digital and Agri-Tech.

3.1 Challenges and opportunities

- 3.1.1 The HotSW LEP is formulating a business and sector-based response to the Coronavirus crisis, set out in its *Route Map to Recovery*. This Somerset plan supports the activity being undertaken by the LEP, and that set out in the Local Industrial Strategy.
- 3.1.2 Many businesses are unable to trade either in part or in whole, with a particular impact on the visitor economy, hospitality, retail and care sectors. This will inevitably lead to business closures and job losses, which are likely to increase after the end of Government support for employees and the self-employed. As the lockdown is eased businesses need support to adapt to social distancing and other constraints.
- 3.1.3 In the longer-term Somerset has significant opportunities in our Growth Sectors, and it is important that we support the development of businesses in these sectors. As well as creating employment, development of the Growth Sectors will help to drive up productivity and wages in Somerset.

3.2 Responses

3.2.1 The UK Government is working to stimulate economic activity whilst keeping people safe. We will help the Government to re-open and revitalise the Somerset economy.

Safeguarding and creating jobs in the bedrock sectors

3.2.2 During lockdowns and restart we will provide particular support to the tourism sector, extending work that we have been doing under the Business Rates Retention pilot. Award of a Tourism Zone and providing further support for the sector are necessary for this. Farm diversification is important to rural areas.

3.2.3 During this period we will enhance and expand the Growth Hub support to businesses, to enable the service to support more businesses throughout Somerset. This will help businesses to survive and grow, safeguarding and creating jobs, and help new-start businesses that are established.

3.2.4 We will continue and expand the activities delivered in Somerset that are currently funded by the Business Rates Retention pilot to promote economic growth and productivity, including support for the visitor economy, start-up support, scale-up support, business clusters, networks and peer-to-peer support, inward investment, access to finance, apprenticeships and other supporting activity. This will help businesses to survive and grow.

3.2.5 As revitalisation and growth takes place we will support and encourage local procurement activity, to help small businesses and VCSE organisations to access larger customers and encourage large organisations in the public and private sectors to develop local supply chains. As well as helping business survival and growth this activity will provide employment opportunities for local people, thus supporting inclusion. We will encourage social value to be incorporated into local procurement activity, with the inclusion of local authority contracts and spend. We will support projects such as the South West Food Hub that is currently being piloted, to promote new approaches to public sector food procurement.

3.2.6 We want to increase social capital and social innovation and build on the support for social capital and social innovation delivered through the Somerset Social Enterprise Fund and ERDF funded LEP wide Enhance Social Enterprise Programme to deepen and extend the impact of Social Enterprise across Somerset. We have great examples of social enterprise in action, in places like Watchet (Onion Collective), Glastonbury (Red Brick Building) and Frome, and we want to nurture social innovation and entrepreneurship, working with the likes of these exemplars to deepen and extend the impact of social enterprise across Somerset.

3.2.7 We will deliver new enterprise centre and work hub space in towns where there is a shortage of workspace and support for new and small businesses. We have proposals for new centres in Chard, Bruton, Wellington, Burnham on Sea and potentially other towns. This will build on the network and infrastructure that we have established throughout Somerset to ensure provision across the county. These centres will help the establishment of new businesses and their survival, creating local employment opportunities and inclusion.

Figure 3.1: Safeguarding and creating jobs in the bedrock sectors

Response	Offer	Ask
Enhance and expand the Growth Hub support	Somerset local authorities will promote Growth Hub through all available channels and provide local service delivery points	BEIS funding to the LEP to support this service

Response	Offer	Ask
Support to tourism businesses	Use of the balance of the Small Business Grant Fund to provide grants, advice and support	Additional dedicated funding for tourism businesses Designation by DCMS of a South West Tourism Zone
Local procurement activity	Somerset local authorities will work with business organisations to review opportunities linked to public procurement and promotion/celebration of local purchasing in our communities	--
Increase social capital and social innovation	Build on existing social enterprise innovation projects in Frome, Glastonbury and Watchet	Capital and revenue funds to support social enterprise and innovation
Deliver new enterprise centres and work hub space	Re-use/redevelopment of existing local authority land and property assets to provide space Local capital investment Reinvestment of income streams in business support to occupants and businesses in the wider local community Targeting of new investment towards centres highly impacted by Coronavirus. We will deliver enterprise centres in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruton • Burnham/Highbridge • Chard • Glastonbury • Wellington And co-working space in Chard and Yeovil	Government investment in future programme via Local Infrastructure Stimulus Fund/MHCLG call for LEPs for shovel ready schemes and future funding sources e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Town Deals
Outputs and Impacts	Safeguarded businesses Safeguarded jobs A robust tourism sector Greater local procurement and local supply chains More, and more innovative, social enterprises Workspace to enable business growth and job creation	

Supporting growth and productivity in the Growth Sectors

3.2.8 The Energy White Paper and the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution have set out comprehensive and ambitious plans for the future of energy production and use in the UK, including investment in the nuclear power industry to encourage Small Modular Reactors and Advanced Modular Reactors; support for renewable and low carbon energy, including offshore wind; and encouragement of net zero aviation. Somerset has huge potential in these areas and can play an important role in the national effort. We can help to overcome the *indefensible gap in opportunity and productivity and connectivity between the regions of the UK* that the Prime Minister identified.

- 3.2.9 We will continue to develop Somerset’s innovation ecosystem through the delivery of the Somerset Catalyst Programme and the Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Programme in partnership with MIT and BEIS. Both programmes seek to accelerate the delivery of entrepreneurship and encourage the use of technology to increase productivity. Direct outcomes include new business start-ups who have the expertise and knowledge to grow their business in the local area and contribute positively to the Somerset Economy.
- 3.2.10 The HotSW LEP will take the lead in this area, supported by the local authorities. Activity will include support for Clean Growth/Energy, Aerospace & Advanced Engineering, Digital & Data (environmental), and Agri-Tech. This will include grants, capital and revenue funding and inward investment support. More activity in the Growth Sectors will create job opportunities for local people, and also drive up productivity and wages. This will be complemented with training to ensure that people have the right skills for these jobs. Work will be undertaken to understand and meet the skills needs of these sectors. This is covered in the section on People and Skills.
- 3.2.11 Support is already being delivered to the nuclear and low carbon energy supply chain. Further commitments will help to continue delivery and expand this activity. Support will help with supply chain diversification into areas such as renewable energy. This will help with the long-term sustainability of these high-value sectors in Somerset.
- 3.2.12 We will ensure the delivery of innovation infrastructure projects to support the high growth sectors, including the iAero aerospace innovation centre in Yeovil and the Taunton Digital Innovation Centre. This will support the survival and growth of businesses and jobs in high-value sectors, driving up productivity in Somerset.
- 3.2.13 We will also deliver new innovation zones in Somerset, containing innovation centres along with specialist business support to enable innovation and R&D. The Clean Growth innovation zone around Bridgwater, Hinkley Point C and the Gravity enterprise zone is already established, and there are further opportunities to capture local growth. An Aerospace innovation zone around Yeovil is our next priority. The Firepool Digital innovation zone will include the Taunton Digital Innovation Centre. An Agri-Tech innovation zone is also being developed, and we are working with the HotSW LEP on early ideas for a coastal innovation zone. We will prepare Local Development Orders for these zones to simplify the planning process and speed-up their delivery. These zones will help to support new businesses, employment and higher productivity. This is a strategic ambition for Somerset and we have established a group of stakeholders to develop plans for this activity. We are planning to provide more detail on this in the Spring of 2021.
- 3.2.14 We are preparing a submission to Government and the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), proposing Somerset as the location for the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) nuclear fusion project, including a research centre, test reactor, technology park, and associated training and skills centres.
- 3.2.15 We will also continue to deliver support to Somerset businesses for inward investment and export, and continue to deliver the Somerset Catalyst programme, which could be extended further.

Figure 3.2: Supporting growth and productivity in the Growth Sectors

Response	Offer	Ask
Delivery of innovation infrastructure projects	Complete the delivery of the iAero Innovation Centre	£0.5 million for iAero as part of Local Infrastructure Stimulus Fund/MHCLG call for LEPs

Response	Offer	Ask
Deliver new innovation zones (Clean Growth; Aero; Digital; and Agri-Tech)	We will deliver simplified planning through LDOs £4 million of match funding is already secured for the Taunton Digital Innovation Centre	£7.3 million for the Taunton Digital Innovation Centre as part of the LEP pipeline of shovel ready schemes for Local Infrastructure Stimulus Fund
STEP Nuclear Fusion Project	We will build on the infrastructure, ecosystem and collaborative teams already in place in place for the UKs only new building nuclear power station.	Government to locate this world leading project in Somerset, making the most of the attributes already in place and contributing to the levelling up agenda.
Additional inward investment promotion and support activity	Inward investment activity funded under the BRR pilot will be deployed to develop Somerset's key investment propositions linked to Clean Growth; Aero; Digital; and Agri-Tech	Build better working relationship with DIT
Somerset Catalyst programme	Delivery of an entrepreneurial ecosystem across Somerset	Additional funding to continue to deliver this programme after March 2021
Outputs and Impacts	Delivery of infrastructure to enable further growth in high-value exporting sectors New innovative businesses New high-quality jobs Increased innovation, R&D and GVA	

4 Providing the Infrastructure to Enable Growth

Overview

Somerset is largely rural, and limited infrastructure in some areas is exacerbating the negative impacts of lockdown and constraining the restart, revitalisation and growth of the economy. There are some infrastructure-related actions we can take immediately, but many will be delivered over the medium to longer-term.

Reducing carbon emissions through travel and energy efficiency

During the *lockdowns and restart* we have delivered temporary cycling and walking infrastructure, and we are now seeking to deliver permanent infrastructure within and between some of our towns. In the medium to longer-term we will retrofit energy efficiency technology to buildings, with an initial focus on social housing, supporting *revitalisation and growth* in our economy. We will introduce digital accessibility to our demand responsive transport in rural areas, and support decarbonisation of travel and transport within Somerset.

Improving digital and physical connectivity

We have already helped to improve broadband and mobile connectivity across Somerset, and will continue to invest in helping to deliver these throughout the county, which are critical to the *restart, revitalisation and growth* of the economy. We will continue to promote improvements in our strategic road infrastructure, including the A38, A39, A303 and A358, our motorway junctions, and critical local road projects, including main access routes into Bridgwater and Taunton. We are seeking to improve rail connectivity including a new station at Wellington as well as improved services.

Reducing flood risk to enable growth

To enable *revitalisation and growth* in the Somerset economy we need to improve flood resilience and protect against flooding and coastal erosion to protect our homes, towns, infrastructure and employment sites. Schemes such as the Bridgwater Barrier, Taunton flood attenuation, and Blue Anchor protection will help us to do this.

Delivering strategic employment sites

We will support the delivery of the Gravity Enterprise Zone, a regionally and nationally significant opportunity to deliver a clean growth campus, supporting our growth sectors. This could become part of a wider freeport zone in the South West. We will promote the delivery of other strategic employment sites in Somerset through investment from our revolving infrastructure fund.

Climate Emergency Strategy

We have recently prepared a Climate Emergency Strategy for Somerset. Delivery of this will help to decarbonise the public sector, make Somerset carbon neutral, and improve our resilience to the impacts of climate change.

4.1 Challenges and opportunities

4.1.1 Somerset is a largely rural county and the provision of infrastructure is limited in some areas, particularly in the more rural parts of the county. The economic and social impacts of the Coronavirus crisis have been exacerbated by the constraints to digital and physical connectivity in the county.

4.1.2 Key challenges include:

- Poor broadband and mobile coverage in parts of the county
- Relative inaccessibility of many of the more rural parts of the county
- Poor public transport provision, particularly in the more rural parts of the county, which has been exacerbated during the Coronavirus crisis
- Lack of capacity and resilience of some of the major road and rail links into and across the county
- Fluvial and coastal flooding and flood risk
- Lack of capacity in the electricity transmission and distribution network

4.1.3 There are also opportunities that will help to deliver further growth in Somerset, including:

- Opportunities for improved rail access and service provision
- Opportunities to reduce carbon emissions through green travel and improved energy efficiency

4.2 Our responses

4.2.1 The recently published National Infrastructure Strategy sets out an ambition to support recovery and levelling-up whilst delivering a net-zero economy. Priorities set out in the plan include the delivery of new roads (including the A303 and A358) and local road maintenance; new freeports; digital and broadband infrastructure; flood and coastal protection; and support for zero carbon vehicles and the charging infrastructure that they need. The Energy White Paper and Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial revolution underline the focus on green public transport and active travel by cycling and walking; the use of zero emission vehicles and the delivery of electric vehicle charging infrastructure to support this; and the construction of greener buildings and retrofit of green technologies to older buildings.

4.2.2 The following interventions will help to tackle the challenges and ensure benefit from the opportunities listed above.

Reducing carbon emissions through travel and energy efficiency

4.2.3 Following the temporary introduction of more cycling and walking infrastructure we will deliver permanent cycling and walking infrastructure within and between towns including Bridgwater, Radstock-Frome, Taunton, Walton-Street-Glastonbury, and Yeovil; and the Eastover pedestrian prioritisation scheme in Bridgwater. This needs to be undertaken soon to build on lower carbon mobility trends that have emerged during lockdown, as well as to improve connectivity, enable non-motorised travel and so reduce carbon emissions. Some funding has been secured, and further funding is needed to deliver this infrastructure.

4.2.4 We will retrofit energy efficiency technologies to buildings to reduce running costs and carbon emissions, with a particular focus on social housing. The focus of this initial project will be on council-owned social housing as a pilot to test a number of approaches and find the best one for Somerset, with the aim of:

- Reducing carbon emissions from the building stock
- Reducing the cost per unit of retrofit, through the application of new approaches and technologies, before rolling this out more broadly
- Creating new businesses and jobs

4.2.5 The ask is for £1 million to find the best approach, with the aim of then rolling out the solution across Somerset and the Heart of the South West. There are also opportunities to introduce technologies for energy storage in rural areas where there are renewable generation opportunities but insufficient links to the grid.

4.2.6 We will deliver digital demand rural transport and electric car and bus infrastructure to enable people to travel throughout Somerset using low carbon vehicles. This will improve connectivity to work, learning and leisure opportunities, and reduce carbon emissions. We have submitted a bid to DfT for a DDRT trail, and the award of £1.5 million will help to progress this.

4.2.7 We are working on a strategy for the decarbonisation of the travel network and fleet, to help Government to achieve its targets. This will be ready in the autumn of this year. This will include proposals for electric vehicle charging as well as significant increases in the use of electric bicycles and scooters.

Figure 4.1: Reducing carbon emissions through travel and energy efficiency

Response	Offer	Ask
Deliver cycling and walking infrastructure	Plans in place for delivery of new infrastructure	At least £10 million of capital funds
Retrofit energy efficiency technologies to buildings	Utilisation of the social housing stock to pilot and find the best approach	£1 million for a pilot project
Digital demand rural transport and electric car and bus infrastructure	We have developed a proposal for a DDRT trail	£1.5 million of funds from DfT
Decarbonisation of the travel network and fleet	We are developing a strategy, to share with you in the autumn	--
Outputs and impacts	New innovative approach to retrofit Reduced carbon emissions Modal shift to green transport New businesses and jobs created	

Improving digital and physical connectivity

4.2.8 We will deliver broadband and mobile connectivity across the whole county. We will build on work already undertaken to roll-out out of broadband across the county through *Connecting Devon & Somerset* (CDS), and complete Somerset-wide coverage. This will enable people in our rural and urban areas to engage in online activity, learn and work from home, which is likely to become more prevalent after the Coronavirus crisis. It will also support the setting up of new businesses and growth of existing businesses that draw on Somerset’s strengths and key sectors. We are proposing to deliver training and skills to ensure that people make the best use of this digital infrastructure.

4.2.9 We will work with Highways England and the local highways authority to deliver strategic road infrastructure improvements, including upgrades to the A303, A358, A39, M5 junctions 22 and 23. This will improve accessibility within Somerset and to strategic economic locations outside the

county, including airports and the major cities of Bristol and Exeter, thus making Somerset a more attractive place for investment and in which to do business. We have already developed schemes, but need at least £1 million to complete this, and funding of more than £100 million will be needed for the works.

4.2.10 We also need support to deliver important local road projects including the Cannons/Cross Rifles junction in Bridgwater and Toneway in Taunton. Funding has been allocated for several schemes, but greater flexibility over the timing of delivery is needed, whilst we need additional funding to deliver others.

4.2.11 We are working towards improving rail connectivity in parts of Somerset to increase connectivity and inclusion, and reduce road traffic, congestion and carbon emissions. Feasibility work is being undertaken on new stations at Wellington, Shepton Mallet, and Langport/Somerton. Significant funding is needed to deliver these stations. We also want to increase service provision to Bridgwater and need to explore a new rail link to the Gravity Enterprise Zone.

Figure 4.2: Improving digital and physical connectivity

Response	Offer	Ask
Deliver broadband and mobile connectivity across the whole county	Build on coverage delivered under CDS. Support further roll-out with skills to make use of digital	Capital funds to complete the delivery of broadband and mobile coverage across Somerset
Deliver strategic road infrastructure improvements	We have plans in place for major road improvements	£1 million to complete technical work, and £100 million to deliver these schemes
Deliver important local road projects	We have plans in place for significant local road improvements	Greater flexibility to spend funds that have already been allocated, and the allocation of additional funds e.g. £5 million for Cross Rifles
Improving rail connectivity	We are undertaking feasibility work on new station infrastructure throughout Somerset	Funding for new stations and existing station improvements
Outputs and Impacts	Full digital connectivity across Somerset Overcome infrastructure constraints to development and growth Improved attraction for inward investment	

Reducing flood risk to enable growth

4.2.12 By improving flood resilience and flood and coastal erosion defences we will protect our towns, existing homes and employment sites and be able to deliver new homes and employment development in the protected areas. We have developed proposals for strategic flood defences at Bridgwater, the Bridgwater Barrier, a £100m scheme and need £10 million of additional funds to deliver this in partnership with the Environment Agency. An application for a Transport Works Act Order has been submitted to DEFRA and an early positive decision on this will enable rapid delivery. We also have significant project proposal for Frome, Taunton and the West Somerset coast, which we need £13 million to deliver. Methods of natural flood management will be considered for the longer-term.

Figure 4.3: Reducing flood risk to enable growth

Response	Offer	Ask
Improving flood resilience and flood and coastal erosion defences	Delivery of Bridgwater Barrier	Additional £10 million for Bridgwater Barrier, plus honouring existing EA offer. Early decision on the Transport and Works Act Order submitted in December 2019 £2.6 million for short-term measures for Taunton flood attenuation £3.55 million for Blue Anchor protection scheme
Outputs and Impacts	Delivery of major flood protection infrastructure Protection of towns, homes and employment sites Enabling more residential and commercial development	

Delivering strategic employment sites

- 4.2.13 We have been progressing the delivery of the Gravity Enterprise Zone for several years, to support delivery of a smart campus focusing on Clean Growth principles with the stated ambition being to create a multifunctional campus with digital connectivity, smart mobility, including rail restoration, designed to reduce the need to travel and enhance wellbeing. The EZ also has the potential to support the Freeport proposal at Bristol with opportunities to support advanced manufacturing facilities as part of a wider Freeport Zone for the South West. Forward funding for infrastructure, including the reinstatement of a rail link into the site, will help to stimulate the development of high technology and energy-related businesses on the site, creating thousands of high-quality jobs and improved productivity.
- 4.2.14 There are a number of other significant employment sites that we are working on with development partners, including Nexus 25 at Taunton and the Bunford Innovation Park at Yeovil. Funds for these sites will stimulate private sector investment in delivering premises for new high value businesses, creating hundreds of new jobs and productivity in high technology sectors. These will be supported through the Revolving Infrastructure Fund discussed below.

Figure 4.4: Delivering strategic employment sites

Response	Offer	Ask
Delivery of the Gravity Enterprise Zone	Use of retained business rates to forward-fund site infrastructure Delivery of a Local Development Order to accelerate delivery of the site and provide fast track and agile planning processes aligned to investor timescales and occupier needs Create innovation space and test bed on Gravity	Inclusion of Gravity in the Freeport Zone for the South West £10m for acceleration of WPD grid reinforcement from Bridgwater to site £2 million demonstrator and incubator space to attract first occupiers to site and to demonstrate smart campus concept DfT investment into rail restoration project to enable rail connection to the site (£50 million)

Response	Offer	Ask
		Government support to promote the site as a location for a Gigafactory £5m for smart mobility centre to provide transport innovation and mobility solutions on and off site
Outputs and Impacts	Delivery of a significant regional employment site Creation of 4,000 new jobs Attraction of inward investment, including FDI Which contributes to the Freeport Zone in the South West	

Climate emergency

4.2.15 We have prepared a climate emergency strategy that will be approved by Somerset's five local authorities in the autumn of 2020. This sets out our activities to support improvement to the natural environment. We have three goals:

- To decarbonise the local authorities and the wider public estate to reduce our carbon footprint
- To make Somerset carbon neutral by 2030
- To prepare for and be resilient to the impacts of climate change

4.2.16 We have identified nine sectors in which we will respond to climate change. These are:

- Energy, including and energy plan for Somerset
- Transport, including walking, cycling and electric vehicles
- The built environment, including energy use
- Business, industry and supply chains
- Natural environment
- Farming and food
- Water
- Waste and resources
- Communications

5 Creating Attractive Places and Homes

Overview

Lockdown, ongoing social distancing, and unwillingness to visit have significantly reduced footfall in many of our towns and villages, having a particular impact on retail, leisure, hospitality and tourism businesses. Ongoing social distancing and Coronavirus concerns will continue to suppress footfall. This is accelerating the gradual decline in the prosperity and vitality of town centres. Housing affordability and the struggle to deliver new development also affect the revitalisation of our towns and rural areas.

Improving the environment in Somerset's towns

We have been undertaking marketing and promotion to encourage people into our towns as we **restart** the economy after lockdowns.

We are developing integrated regeneration and development programmes for the towns of Bridgwater, Glastonbury, Taunton and Yeovil, seeking support from the Towns Fund and Future High Street Fund to help **restart, revitalise and grow** our towns. We would like to establish a similar fund to support similar integrated regeneration in our smaller towns.

Enabling the private sector to deliver development

We have a number of major development opportunities in Somerset that need some financial support to get started. Stimulating these will help with the **revitalisation and growth** of the Somerset economy. We would like to establish a revolving infrastructure fund to invest in enabling infrastructure, which would be repaid and re-used to support ongoing development. We would also like to establish a fund to invest directly in delivering some infrastructure and public realm where the opportunity for recycling is not possible.

Direct delivery of housing

Delivery of housing for the residents of Somerset is one of our highest priorities. We want to establish a fund to invest in the direct delivery of homes in our towns and rural areas. As well as delivering affordable homes for our residents, this construction activity will be an important part of the economic **restart, revitalisation and growth** of Somerset.

5.1 Challenges and opportunities

- 5.1.1 Lockdown, ongoing social distancing, and unwillingness to visit have significantly reduced footfall in many of our towns and villages, having a particular impact on retail, leisure, hospitality and tourism businesses. Ongoing social distancing and Coronavirus concerns will continue to suppress footfall. This is accelerating the gradual decline in the prosperity and vitality of town centres. It is particularly challenging in the coastal and rural areas that are prevalent in the county, although a number of the larger town centres have also been highlighted as being vulnerable.
- 5.1.2 Longer-term, Somerset, like most places, has an underlying issues of poor housing affordability but housing provision can grow significantly, being in a huge opportunity area between Bath, Bristol, Exeter and Plymouth. Housing affordability in rural areas, where wages are often lower, is a particular problem.

- 5.1.3 There are opportunities for significant development and regeneration in our town centres, leading to increased residential density, population and workspace; and development opportunities in new communities on the edge of some towns. New development will help to promote inclusion for all of Somerset's residents.
- 5.1.4 The quality of the natural environment in Somerset is of a particularly high standard. Within the Somerset Levels and Moors, there are various locations of national and international significance for wildlife. However, in light of a court Judgement in August 2020 (known as Dutch N), Natural England has recently advised that new development should not give rise to additional phosphates within the catchments of the Rivers Tone, Parrett, Brue and Axe. The impact of this has been that affected planning applications cannot be determined unless developers are able to provide evidence that their development does not cause an impact, and future developments will have to prove neutrality.

5.2 Our responses

- 5.2.1 The National Infrastructure Strategy sets an ambition for thriving communities, and in his speech on 30 June the Prime Minister said that the Government will invest in the town centres of left behind places, promoting growth outside the cities and the metropolis. We will help to achieve this in Somerset's towns. We will help to achieve the Prime Minister's ambition that our towns become *places that people have the confidence to stay, to raise their families and to start businesses*. The Prime Minister talked about building new homes on brownfield land, delivering low carbon homes, and speeding up the house-building process. We will do all of this in Somerset, delivering tens of thousands of new homes.

Improving the environment in Somerset's towns

- 5.2.2 During the restart of our economy after lockdowns we will undertake marketing and promotion activity to encourage people back into towns and encourage night-time activity. Stimulating footfall will encourage vitality and help our town centre businesses to recover from the effects of Coronavirus and grow further, safeguarding existing employment and creating new employment.
- 5.2.3 We are developing integrated programmes of activity for major town centre redevelopment in Bridgwater, Glastonbury, Taunton and Yeovil. Securing £38 million of Future High Street Funds for Taunton and Yeovil, and up to £50 million of Towns Deal funds for Bridgwater and Glastonbury will draw in match funding and investment from other partners. These programmes will deliver thousands of new jobs and homes in these town centres, turning them into vibrant and sustainable places which provide opportunities for many of our excluded residents.
- 5.2.4 We are also planning to promote integrated regeneration in a number of other towns, including Chard, Shepton Mallet, Watchet and Wincanton, which can potentially be developed into Town Deals. This will build on existing initiatives including a new masterplan for Shepton Mallet. These regeneration schemes will help to create jobs, opportunities and greater inclusion in these towns, and to their rural hinterlands. We have plans for development in towns across Somerset and need at least £25 million of flexible funds to unlock match funding from other partners and private investment. This is a strategic ambition for Somerset and we have established a group of stakeholders to develop plans for this activity. We are planning to provide more detail on this in the Spring of 2021.

Figure 5.1: Improving the environment in Somerset's towns

Response	Offer	Ask
Integrated programmes of activity for major town centre redevelopment	We are developing plans for integrated development in Bridgwater, Glastonbury, Taunton and Yeovil	£38 million of FHSF £50 million of Towns Deal funding
Integrated regeneration in a number of other towns	We have plans for the integrated development of other towns, in partnership with the private sector and VCSE sector	£25 million fund to deliver growth across Somerset towns impacted by Coronavirus through a distributed town deal
Outputs and Impacts	Major regeneration of our town centres Increased footfall, spend, vitality and economic sustainability More homes in sustainable town centre locations	

Enabling the private sector to deliver development

- 5.2.5 We have a number of major residential and commercial development opportunities in Somerset which need enabling infrastructure to get started. In some case the cost of the infrastructure can be repaid by the development, but in other cases it cannot.
- 5.2.6 We want £150 million grant-in-aid (repayable to Government upon cessation) to create a Revolving infrastructure Fund to invest in enabling infrastructure to kick-start new developments. As development is delivered, we will invest in further enabling infrastructure. Along with parallel investment in training and skills, these projects will create employment for local people in construction, helping to increase inclusive growth. This is a strategic ambition for Somerset and we have established a group of stakeholders to develop plans for this activity. We are planning to provide more detail on this in the Spring of 2021.
- 5.2.7 In some places in Somerset we need to invest in new infrastructure and public realm developments on a non-repayable basis in order to enable new development by the private sector. These will stimulate the delivery of new homes, new employment opportunities, employment opportunities in construction, and greater inclusion. Many new residential developments result in the need to deliver new schools, additional classrooms and educational infrastructure for the new population. We know from experience that the level of CIL/S106 funding that we can achieve in Somerset from new housing developments is insufficient to fund educational infrastructure as well as other essential infrastructure. Therefore, we are requesting funding to allow us to build school places, so they are ready for new housing. CIL collected from these housing developments will then be used to help fund future schools, moving us from always experiencing a funding gap to proactively providing school places.

Figure 5.2: Enabling the private sector to deliver development

Response	Offer	Ask
Revolving infrastructure Fund to invest in enabling infrastructure to kick-start new developments	Accelerated delivery of new homes and new jobs	£150 grant-in-aid repayable borrowing to create the RIF
Investment in new infrastructure, including the funding of new school places and public realm developments	Accelerated delivery of new homes and new jobs	£57m of new funding for schools in Somerset to be built and ready for the academic year starting Sept 2024 at the latest
Outputs and Impacts	Delivery of new infrastructure, schools and public realm Enabling the delivery of new homes	

Direct delivery of housing

- 5.2.8 Delivery of housing for the residents of Somerset is one of our highest priorities. As local authorities we have delivered significant numbers of new homes and can deliver many thousands more homes in our urban centres, towns and rural areas. To maintain momentum in the delivery of new homes as well as bringing forward additional sites that have been stalled (e.g. harder to deliver brownfield sites), the councils need access to low cost secure lending. Our proposal is that Government creates a facility within the PWLB, at a preferential rate, that allows significant borrowing specifically to deliver new homes. This is a strategic ambition for Somerset and we have established a group of stakeholders to develop plans for this activity. We are planning to provide more detail on this in the Spring of 2021.
- 5.2.9 Recognising the impact that phosphate assessments could have on housing delivery and recovery the Councils have moved swiftly to review existing applications to assess which are still viable for determination, and to commission work to develop a phosphates calculator to be launched in early 2021. This will allow applicants to calculate their phosphate budget and mitigations so that the development does not adversely affect the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site. Going forward a Phosphates Strategy for Somerset will also be delivered by the councils to enable economic growth to continue in compliance with both the legal ruling and our aspirations for clean growth.

Figure 5.3: Direct delivery of housing

Response	Offer	Ask
Loan funding to enable delivery many thousands of affordable homes in our towns and rural areas	Delivery of thousands of new homes	A borrowing facility with a PWLB rate close to BoE base rate
Overcome phosphates related constraints on the delivery of housing	Develop a phosphates calculator and phosphates strategy for Somerset	--
Outputs and Impacts	Delivery of thousands of new homes	

6 Strategic Delivery and Implementation

6.0.1 Our Recovery & Growth Plan set out how we are responding to the socio-economic challenges of Coronavirus, along with shaping the longer-term growth of Somerset. We are already providing support to the residents and businesses of Somerset, often in partnership with organisations such as the HotSW LEP, and have set out plans to do more.

6.0.2 To meet our aims and objectives set out in Chapter 1, the preceding chapters set out three types of activity:

- Immediate responses, which are already being delivered. These projects will help with the restart and revitalisation of the Somerset economy
- Projects and programmes already being developed, which will be delivered in the short to medium-term. These projects will support revitalisation and longer-term growth
- Strategic ambitions, which we are developing into projects and programmes, through consultation with other stakeholders. These are medium to long-term projects that will help us to build back better, and contribute to long-term structural change in the Somerset economy towards a green recovery and low carbon economy

6.1 Immediate responses

6.1.1 Working closely with other organisations including the HotSW LEP, we are ensuring the local delivery of national programmes. In several cases, we present the opportunity to extend the delivery of these activities. This includes:

- Support to those made redundant or at risk of losing their job
- Local delivery of the Careers Hub
- Local delivery of the Growth Hub, support to the visitor economy, and business support including inward investment support
- Investment from the Getting Building Fund in projects such as Taunton Digital Innovation Centre and iAero

6.2 Developing the readiness of projects and programmes

6.2.1 We have or are developing business cases and implementation plans for investment in a range of projects and programmes that will help to revitalise the Somerset economy, and help with the long-term transition towards a greener and more equal society. Examples of activities that we are preparing include:

- Capital investment to enhance and enable the delivery of post-16 education and training
- A range of enterprise centres and work hubs in many of Somerset's towns
- Digital demand responsive transport solutions
- Local road and rail projects
- Flood attenuation projects
- Town regeneration bids for funding from the Towns Deal and Future High Streets Fund

6.2.2 We have set out plans for the development of regionally significant projects, such as the Gravity Enterprise Zone.

6.2.3 Our plans support national ambitions to promote a greener and fairer recovery set out in the National Infrastructure Strategy, Energy White Paper and Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution. We call on the Government to enable our contribution to national recovery and growth through support from the Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

6.3 Developing our strategic ambitions

6.3.1 In preparing this Recovery & Growth Plan we have identified some major opportunities for investment in Somerset that will stimulate long-term growth and transition. Local authorities have stepped forward to lead groups of stakeholders who will develop business cases for investment in these opportunities.

6.3.2 Whilst these ambitions are being developed for Somerset, they could be delivered at the LEP level or other strategic geography.

Multi-centre town deal

6.3.3 We are developing plans for an integrated multi-centre town deal across a number of towns not currently bidding for Towns Deal and Future High Streets Fund. We will identify the towns, and are seeking £25 million to add to the match funding already committed.

Revolving infrastructure fund

6.3.4 We are exploring the potential for a revolving fund to deliver enabling infrastructure, to kick-start development. We will re-invest all receipts as projects are delivered, enabling us to continue to stimulate development across Somerset. We anticipate a fund of around £150 million.

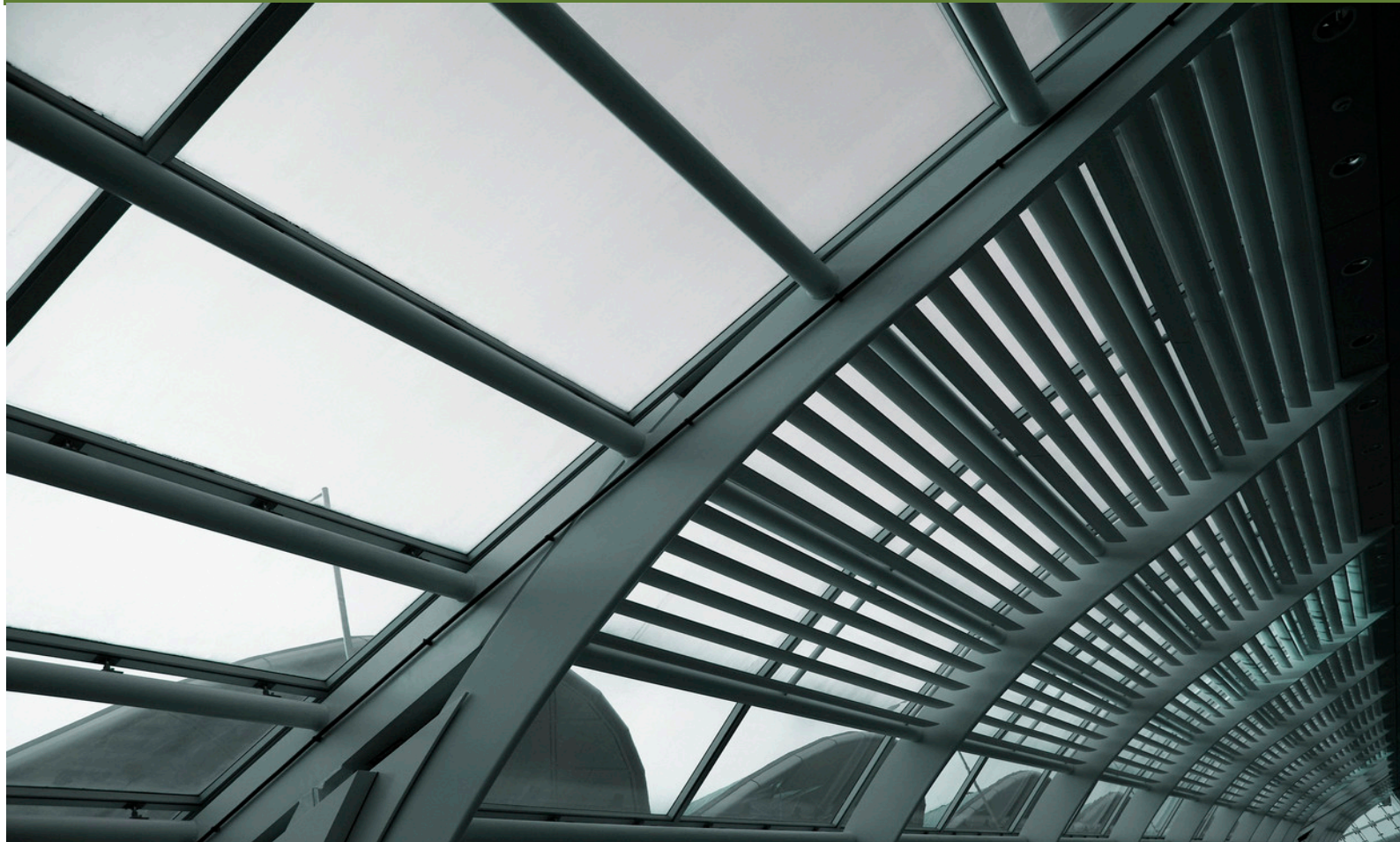
Innovation zones

6.3.5 We are developing proposals for a series of innovation zones to provide comprehensive support to our high growth potential sectors, including revenue funded activity such as business support, to complement capital investments in infrastructure. These zones would be thematic rather than specifically spatial. They include:

- Clean growth
- Aerospace
- Digital
- Agri-tech

Direct delivery of affordable housing

6.3.6 We would like to establish a fund to enable the direct delivery of affordable housing across Somerset.



Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan

Summary of Areas of Activity

Prepared by Somerset's Local Authorities

December 2020

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1 Introduction

- 1.0.1 This document sets out a short summary of each of the areas of activity proposed in the Somerset Recovery & Growth Plan. For many of these more detail is provided in a full project template which is available as a separate document.

2 Employment, Skills and Economic Inclusion

2.0.1 The activities included in this theme are divided into three areas: employment; education and skills; and economic inclusion. These are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 2.1: Activities to Support Employment, Skills and Economic Inclusion

Employment
Redundancy support
Employment support
Improve local employment opportunities
Education and skills
Enhanced careers, education, information advice and guidance (CEIAG)
Enhanced post 16 education
Training provider sustainability and growth
Economic inclusion
Address unemployment, under-employment and in-work poverty
Digital skills and access
Young people support

2.1 Redundancy Support

Overview

2.1.1 We are working with partners to provide immediate support for those who are at risk of redundancy or who have lost their job as a result of Coronavirus. We will implement local Response to Redundancy Taskforces, following our Response to Redundancy Framework. We will put in place a comprehensive package of support to individuals which will be available as an online resource and supplemented with direct support where needed. This support will be aligned with that on offer from key partners such as Job Centre Plus, National Careers Service, SERCO and others. Businesses will also be supported through the redundancy process and support will be available for their ongoing resilience and growth.

2.1.2 Key objectives of this programme are to ensure:

- A coordinated response to redundancies across partners following the Response to Redundancy Framework
- That all appropriate information and support is easily accessible by individuals and business

Offer

2.1.3 Using BRRP funding, short-term capacity has been secured for the following activity.

2.1.4 We will develop, roll out and maintain a Response to Redundancy (R2R) Framework which sets out how partners should work together to provide a coordinated response to support businesses (including survival, their ongoing sustainability and longer-term growth) and the individuals impacted.

2.1.5 We will bring together all advice and guidance available from partners in respect of redundancy support and publish it in a single, accessible, place on the Step Up Somerset website. This will act as a one-stop-shop for all relevant information. We will identify any gaps in provision and will work with partners to develop additional support where needed.

- 2.1.6 We will coordinate a multi-partner group (the Unemployment Support Group) to oversee redundancy announcements and the implementation of the R2R Framework. We will continue to pull together the services available across key partners.

Ask

- 2.1.7 That DWP/JCP are able to proactively share intelligence on redundancy announcements and HR1 details with the USG and/or key partners in a timely manner and that the Taskforce is fully engaged in early discussions with the business. This is key where the business may need business support alongside the support on offer to individuals.
- 2.1.8 To ensure that national programmes of activity are fully engaged with local partners, and work in parallel, under the R2R Framework so we are able to provide a coordinated response and support package to business. There is a significant risk of business receiving fragmented support if this is not achieved.
- 2.1.9 Additional funding, to continue this activity post September 2021, is required as set out below.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 2.1.10 The R2R Framework, Step Up Somerset and USG are all in progress.

Next Steps

- 2.1.11 To review and refine the R2R Framework based on learning from early implementation.
- 2.1.12 To continue to pull together support offers from across partners and include on the Step Up Somerset website.
- 2.1.13 Identify any gaps in provision or capacity issues across partners as numbers of redundancy increase. Ensure we have the right provision available and seek investment where appropriate.
- 2.1.14 Promote the support available directly to individuals, particularly where the business has closed without engaging through the R2R Framework, using social media and other channels.

Timing

- 2.1.15 Ongoing.

Funds

- 2.1.16 This activity has been delivered within the strategic capacity provided under the BRRP funding (1 FTE coordinator and 1 FTE project/comms officer). This capacity is currently funded until September 2021. Ongoing support will be required post September 2021 at an approximate annual cost of £80,000.
- 2.1.17 Step Up Somerset has been developed and funded through the BRRP and costs covered until September 2022. Ongoing development of the portal will be provided within the strategic capacity, but hosting costs and additional functionality of the website will cost between £500-£1,000 per annum depending on the requirements.

2.2 Employment Support

Overview

- 2.2.1 We are working with partners to create a package of support to those seeking work, considering self-employment or who are seeking an alternative career route. We will ensure that they have

suitable employability and personal skills. We will ensure that individuals are aware of the roles and opportunities available to them, match them to these opportunities and help them to apply for these jobs. This support will closely align with the Redundancy Support and the Skills Support programmes.

Offer

- 2.2.2 Using BRRP funding short-term capacity has been secured for the following activity.
- 2.2.3 We will develop and maintain the Step Up Somerset website which brings together a range of employment support into a single point of access. This is an online resource that will be supplemented by other delivery mechanisms.
- 2.2.4 We will create a network of employment and skills hubs across Somerset. Building on services already available across our partners and developing new provision where appropriate. The hubs will bring together partners who are already working with individuals to provide advice/guidance on all aspects of employment, applying for jobs, upskilling and self-employment such as Job Centre Plus, National Careers Service, SERCO and others. Advisors will be available to provide 1-2-1 support, matching individuals to job opportunities, and helping them through the application process. The hubs are intended to provide a physical access point for services hosted on the Step Up Somerset website.
- 2.2.5 Through Skill Up, we are providing guidance and support to apprentices who have been directly impacted by Coronavirus. Working with training providers and employers, advice will be provided to ensure the individual can continue on their apprenticeship journey, where possible, or is supported into another employment/training opportunity.
- 2.2.6 We will work with partners to develop a joined-up approach to redeployment into sectors where employment opportunities exist, such as the care sector and through major projects such as HPC, creating a workforce pipeline for the future and also supporting individuals to retrain for relevant roles. Under the Enhanced CEIAG Programme, we will develop a suite of route maps, and escalators of progression, into and through our core sectors.

Ask

- 2.2.7 Additional funding, to continue this activity post September 2021, is required as set out below.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 2.2.8 This is work in progress.

Next Steps

- 2.2.9 To review and refine the Step Up Somerset website, continue to develop content as appropriate and continue to raise awareness of the site and the services available through it.
- 2.2.10 Continue to roll out the physical employment and skills hubs across Somerset so they are operational before the end of the employment support schemes.
- 2.2.11 Identify any gaps in employment support and consider, with partners, how these can be filled.
- 2.2.12 Deliver three virtual jobs/apprenticeship fairs early in 2021 aligned with the Enhanced CEIAG Programme.

Timing

- 2.2.13 Ongoing.

Funds

- 2.2.14 This activity has been delivered within the strategic capacity provided under the BRRP funding (one FTE coordinator and one FTE project/comms officer). This capacity is currently funded until September 2021. Ongoing support will be required post September at an approximate annual cost of £80,000.
- 2.2.15 To continue the delivery of the employment and skills hubs we would require £400,000 of annual revenue funding.
- 2.2.16 Step Up Somerset has been developed and funded through the BRRP and costs covered until September 2022. Ongoing development of the portal will be provided within the strategic capacity, but hosting costs and additional functionality of the website will cost between £500-£1,000 per annum depending on the requirements.

2.3 Improve Local Employment Opportunities

Overview

- 2.3.1 We will work with employers to maximise opportunities for local employment within our growth and across our bedrock sectors, specifically encouraging clean growth, and support individuals to access these opportunities ensuring they have the appropriate skills to do so. For major projects within Somerset we will use planning and procurement processes to secure employment of local workers and for investment in their ongoing skills development e.g. using and extending local labour agreements. We will need enhanced capacity to enforce this through planning and effective contract management of procurement. This will support revitalisation and growth in Somerset.
- 2.3.2 Skill Up Somerset is currently funded through the BRRP and through our ESF funded, Skills for the Workforce Programme, we will continue and extend the Somerset Skill Up Service, delivered by DSTPN, until 2023. Skill Up works with business to encourage them to create apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities, supporting the government's Opportunity Guarantee for Young People, but also ensuring people of all ages have access to apprenticeships and training. Skill Up will work with business to support recruitment into apprenticeships and traineeships. We will work with the DSTPN to ensure appropriate provision is available and seek resources to improve the sustainability of these programmes. Our training providers will support the delivery of all employment related skills-based training programmes including traineeships and apprenticeships, underpinned by incentives to employers.

Offer

- 2.3.3 We will work with employers to create employment opportunities within our bedrock and growth sectors, specifically encouraging clean growth, and support individuals to access these opportunities ensuring they have the appropriate skills to do so.
- 2.3.4 We will embed local labour agreements across all planning and procurement processes and encourage our supply chain to invest in their workforce.
- 2.3.5 We have created the Skill Up Somerset service, through DSTPN, using BRRP funding and will continue the service, post March 2021, under our ESF Funded Skills for the Workforce Programme. Skill Up will continue to encourage creation of apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities and will work with business to support recruitment into these opportunities.

2.3.6 We will host information on the Step Up Somerset website. This will act as a one-stop-shop for all relevant information and will sign post out to partners where appropriate.

Ask

2.3.7 Implementation of a range of funding and rule changes to 16-24 traineeship, apprenticeship and adult offer to facilitate training opportunities for all.

2.3.8 Employer incentives of up to £3,000 per apprentice, with an increase on non-levy funding allocations to match.

2.3.9 Additional funding, to continue this activity post September 2021, is required as set out below.

Readiness and Deliverability

2.3.10 The activity is not yet fully scoped, although work under the Skill Up service is in progress.

Next Steps

2.3.11 The full scope of activity needs to be developed and an approach agreed.

Timing

2.3.12 This work will commence in early 2021.

Funds

2.3.13 This activity will be delivered by the strategic capacity provided under the BRRP funding (1 FTE coordinator and 1 FTE project/comms officer). This capacity is currently funded until September 2021. Ongoing support will be required post September at an approximate annual cost of £80k.

2.3.14 The Skill Up Service is funded via the BRRP until March 2021 and will be funded via the ESF Funding from April 2021 until July 2023.

2.3.15 Step Up Somerset has been developed and funded through the BRRP and costs covered until September 2022. Ongoing development of the portal will be provided within the strategic capacity, but hosting costs and additional functionality of the website will cost between £500-£1,000 per annum depending on the requirements.

2.4 Logistics Training Academy

Overview

2.4.1 As part of the sustained expansion of a key local logistics company based between Frome and Shepton Mallet, and the enhancement of their FLT Fleet to electric, an opportunity has arisen to create a purpose built Logistics Training Academy to serve the wider local area. The scheme proposal would include local training provider/s, local businesses accessing opportunities to upskill their staff alongside a programme for individuals accessing the industry through the DWP and through recruitment agencies to be included in the scheme to help to offset anticipated losses in many other sectors due to the impact of Covid-19. Additional skills in the sector are also expected with uncertainties around the impact of Brexit on international logistics companies.

2.5 Enhanced Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

Overview

2.5.1 We are working with partners to provide enhanced careers, education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to all Somerset residents, particularly our young people, including raising awareness of apprenticeships, traineeships and T Levels as a viable post-16 option. During school closures the Somerset Education Business Partnership (EBP) moved all resources online and rolled out a programme of virtual work experience and careers events accessible to all young people across Somerset. We will seek funding to continue the services of the EBP which is essential to sustain and develop careers advice and engagement between employers, schools, young people and their parents/guardians. The EBP will continue to work in very close partnership with the Heart of the South West Careers Hub. To enable continuation of both of these activities locally we will need additional revenue funding. Ongoing activity will need to be aligned with local labour market intelligence as the post-Coronavirus landscape continues to change and develop. In the short-term we will utilise the BRRP funding to cover a proportion of these costs.

2.5.2 The objectives of this activity are to:

- Raise awareness across our young people of post 16 opportunities in education, training or employment
- Raise awareness across the wider adult population of opportunities in education, training or employment

Offer

2.5.3 We will create clear route maps, and escalators of progression, into and through our core sectors. These pathways will align with our employment support programmes and, working with training providers, we will ensure individuals can access the right training meeting the needs of employers.

2.5.4 We will continue to deliver the Somerset Education Business Partnership and, working with partners, we will develop a sustainable model for ongoing delivery beyond 2021.

2.5.5 We will provide an interim contribution from the BRRP funding to cover the shortfall in costs in 2020/21 for the HotSW Careers Hub.

2.5.6 We have developed the Step Up Somerset website bringing together all CEIAG support available across Somerset. We will use Step Up to hold, and promote, CEIAG to the wider population on opportunities in education, training and employment. We will signpost to other provision where appropriate (including EBP for pre-16) and link to our Employment Support programme. We will continue to develop it into the medium/long term identifying any gaps in provision and seeking to fill these.

Ask

2.5.7 For Government (DfE) to fully meet the cost of the Careers Hub from 2021/22 to sustain this provision.

2.5.8 Additional funding, to continue this activity post September 2021, is required as set out below.

Readiness and Deliverability

2.5.9 EBP and Careers Hub is in delivery. Other activity has begun and will develop over time.

Next Steps

- 2.5.10 To define the model for ongoing EBP sustainability.
- 2.5.11 To develop the full CEIAG offer and promote.

Timing

- 2.5.12 Work has begun and will be ongoing.

Funds

- 2.5.13 The operational cost of the EBP is around £110,000 per annum. Ongoing funding is needed to continue the service post 2021.
- 2.5.14 The contribution to the HotSW Career Hub in 2020/21 for Somerset was £25,000. Costs for 2021/22 are not yet known and will be needed.
- 2.5.15 The wider activity has been delivered within the strategic capacity provided under the BRRP funding (one FTE coordinator and one FTE project/comms officer). This capacity is currently funded until September 2021. Ongoing support will be required post September at an approximate annual cost of £80,000.
- 2.5.16 Step Up Somerset has been developed and funded through the BRRP and costs covered for 2 years. Ongoing development of the portal will be provided within the strategic capacity, but hosting costs and additional functionality of the website will cost approximately £500 per annum.

2.6 Enhance Post 16 Education

Overview

- 2.6.1 Working with our training providers, we will ensure that everyone has access to the right education and training which aligns to the current and future needs of business.

Offer

- 2.6.2 We will work with our training providers and the DSTPN, to enhance post-16 education, including re-training for the unemployed and greater flexibility in course offer and start dates. This will help to ensure that residents have the skills needed to contribute to revitalisation and growth in the economy. We need greater flexibility in the use of the Adult Education Budget. We seek support, including through flexibilities, to allow easy access to training for adults who have been made redundant. This skills provision will range from short courses to higher level qualifications, including additional support for digital literacy, outreach and workforce mobilisation across distressed sectors.
- 2.6.3 We will seek to extend skills provision for adults alongside our European Social Fund Skills Support for the Workforce, which will provide training support to those in, or close to, employment.
- 2.6.4 We will work with our training providers to ensure every young person has access to high-quality education or training, funded to meet their needs. Funding needs to be flexible to allow students to start throughout the year.
- 2.6.5 We will deliver higher skills for the Growth Sectors, aligned to the HotSW Local Industrial Strategy. We ask for greater flexibility in the use of funding to allow re-training and up-skilling in Growth Sector areas. This will include digital skills across all sectors. We will seek investment towards the

development of innovation and skills opportunities with a focus on high growth and clean growth innovation and high value employment.

2.6.6 Independent Training Providers (ITP's) via the DSTPN will deliver different specialisms across the post 16 education training offer including re-training for the unemployed, Traineeships, Apprenticeships and provision for 16-19, 19-23 and 23 + year olds. Greater emphasis will be given to activity which encourages and increases work experience and gives greater flexibility on course offer and start dates.

2.6.7 We will deliver training to enhance and accelerate economic strategies.

Ask

2.6.8 Ensure guarantees for Adult Education Budget are in place for 2020/21. We ask that flexibilities are considered so that 19+ learners are given further support to incentivise participation in training development

2.6.9 Funding to expand the education for 16-19 year olds to successfully deliver against our offer

2.6.10 Support for 16-18 year olds to access education through the provision of free transport, in line with other parts of the Country such as London and Manchester

2.6.11 Repurpose balances of ESF to provide responsive and tailored programmes for adults within the community to re-train and re-skill

2.6.12 Investment to develop programmes such as sector-based work academies and the delivery of these programmes.

2.6.13 Ensuring that training providers are embedded into JCP/DWP delivery

2.6.14 Enhance the Adult Education Budget together in one budget line with the National Retraining Scheme, the National Skills Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund ensuring balances are sufficient to meet increased demand to counter the impact of reduced income if full-funding flexibilities are implemented

2.6.15 Early release of a proportion of the National Skills Fund to support flexible learning.

2.6.16 Fully fund 24+ adults to undertake subsequent L3 programmes or units in priority sectors

2.6.17 Simplification of the funding rates and rules training providers work to in order to have flexibility to meet demand

2.6.18 Where needed, a front-loaded payment profile for training providers to allow for intensive upfront delivery

2.6.19 Adequate funding with flexibility in the funding rules

Readiness and Deliverability

2.6.20 Training providers continue to deliver their services

Next Steps

2.6.21 Independent Training Providers are developing their strategy and approach to respond to Government's future post 16 education and skills strategy and the evolution of the economy and skills needs.

Timing

2.6.22 Ongoing

Funds

2.6.23 The funding requirements are set out within the Asks section above.

2.6.24 This activity has been delivered within the strategic capacity provided under the BRRP funding (one FTE coordinator and one FTE project/comms officer). This capacity is currently funded until September 2021. Ongoing support will be required post September at an approximate annual cost of £80,000.

2.7 Training Provider Sustainability and Growth

Overview

2.7.1 We will work with our training providers to ensure they are able to provide the right training to individuals that meets the needs of business now and in the future.

2.7.2 We will seek funding to support capital improvements within our training provider network including resources to enhance digital connectivity across the network to provide virtual learning and modernise assets. We seek investment for maintenance of training provider facilities. With greater flexibility and funding, we will be able to further develop delivery of blended learning opportunities (immersive online and face-to-face) and local delivery of post-16 education in less accessible places such as West Somerset.

Offer

2.7.3 Delivery of modification and IT set-up to deliver blended learning

Ask

2.7.4 Support for training providers with development funds to assist the development of individual provider's strategy to adapt and become the provider of the future

2.7.5 Funding to replace category C&D accommodation within our colleges

2.7.6 Release 20% of the £1.5bn capital fund for IT equipment, software and building modification for all training providers

Readiness and Deliverability

2.7.7 Work in progress.

Next Steps

2.7.8 We will continue to work with our training providers to understand need and use this to inform strategic investment planning locally and with the HotSW LEP.

Timing

2.7.9 Ongoing

Funds

2.7.10 Funding requirements are set out within the Ask section above.

2.7.11 This activity has been delivered within the strategic capacity provided under the BRRP funding (one FTE coordinator and one FTE project/comms officer). This capacity is currently funded until

September 2021. Ongoing support will be required post September at an approximate annual cost of £80,000.

2.8 Address Unemployment, Under-Employment and In-Work Poverty

Overview

- 2.8.1 Promoting economic inclusion is an important outcome of restarting, revitalising and growing the Somerset economy. We will seek to support individuals who need additional support to access employment and learning.
- 2.8.2 We will work with training providers to ensure that the whole population has access to learning through localised provision particularly in our rural and deprived areas where transport and connectivity issues are a concern. This will include a blended and distance learning approach accessible via local learning hubs.
- 2.8.3 We will provide targeted support for in-work poverty to ensure that people already in work are able to access training for upskilling, enabling them to move into better paid jobs. We will ensure that other responses highlighted in the plan help to achieve this. We will also provide support to businesses to train and upskill their staff through our Skill Up service, enabling individuals to move into better paid roles.
- 2.8.4 Building on the pilot in South Somerset, we will develop a Somerset-wide coaching and support programme to help families to help themselves and support children from deprived backgrounds in improving their educational attainment and accessing employment.

Offer

- 2.8.5 We are applying for funding to extend the Access to Learning and Employment Grant that we have delivered in the West Somerset Opportunity Area. This is a flexible grant to individuals to help overcome any barriers to learning or work e.g. childcare, training, transport or suitable workwear/clothes. existing Access to Learning and Employment Grant. If successful this will be extended across Somerset.
- 2.8.6 We will encourage local delivery of training by extending the Skill Up Here model, piloted in West Somerset. We will work with training providers to understand need, identify barriers and seek to overcome these to enable delivery.
- 2.8.7 We will continue to support, and encourage, a blended learning approach/distance learning particularly in rural areas.
- 2.8.8 We will provide employment support through our employment programmes and will provide enhanced coaching and support for deprived families.
- 2.8.9 Building on the pilot in South Somerset, we will develop a Somerset-wide coaching and support programme to help families to help themselves and support children from deprived backgrounds in improving their educational attainment and accessing employment and aiming to reduce social isolation, building resilience and securing employment/better outcomes.

Ask

- 2.8.10 £400,000 per annum for the extension to Access to Learning Grant. We are applying to DWP for this.

- 2.8.11 £1 million capital investment in local/remote facilities to roll out learning hubs.
- 2.8.12 Investment in training provider facilities to enable enhanced blended/distance learning.
- 2.8.13 £1 million per year for a three year county-wide coaching/support programme for deprived families based on the South Somerset model.
- 2.8.14 Additional funding, to continue this activity post September 2021, is required as set out below.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 2.8.15 Some activity is in progress and being delivered as part of wider programmes,

Next Steps

- 2.8.16 Continue with the application for funding for the Access to Learning and Employment Grant.
- 2.8.17 Develop a detailed plan of investment needed for delivery of a network of learning hubs.
- 2.8.18 Develop a detailed plan of investment needed in training provider facilities to enable blended/distance learning.
- 2.8.19 Develop a detailed plan, based on the South Somerset model, for a programme of coaching and support for deprived families.

Timing

- 2.8.20 Some activity has begun but the development of plans will begin early in 2021.

Funds

- 2.8.21 Funding requirements are set out in the Ask section above.
- 2.8.22 This activity will be delivered within the strategic capacity provided under the BRRP funding (one FTE coordinator and one FTE project/comms officer). This capacity is currently funded until September 2021. Ongoing support will be required post September at an approximate annual cost of £80,000.

2.9 Digital Skills and Access

Overview

- 2.9.1 Digital skills and access is a cross cutting theme that is considered across all of our programmes to support individuals into employment and through skills and training. However, there are a number of discrete projects that we consider to be essential enablers for the wider programmes such as:

- Access to devices and internet for individuals seeking work
- Access to devices and internet for our learners

Offer

- 2.9.2 Through our Skills and Employment Support Programmes we will continue to improve digital skills throughout the population to enable people to access digital services, support and apply for jobs.
- 2.9.3 Using BRRP funding we are rolling out a pilot programme to loan devices, with broadband access, to residents who are seeking employment. If demand is proven, we would require funding to extend and widen this service.

2.9.4 We will work with our training providers to ensure learners have appropriate devices and broadband access for learning.

Ask

2.9.5 Capital funding to extend access to devices at a cost of £9,000 per ten devices. This scheme can be scaled to fully meet demand if funding is available.

2.9.6 £800,000 to provide all learners with access to a personal device and connectivity to access online learning.

Readiness and Deliverability

2.9.7 The pilot is in delivery, other work is ongoing.

Next Steps

2.9.8 Review effectiveness of pilot and consider ongoing need/demand.

2.9.9 Work with training providers to understand needs and gaps in access to devices across the student population.

Timing

2.9.10 Ongoing into 2021.

Funds

2.9.11 The funding requirements are set out in the Ask section above.

2.9.12 The device loans scheme pilot has been funded through £10k of BRRP funding. Private sector sponsorship for an additional 10 devices is under discussion. Funding is required to further extend the scheme to fully meet demand.

2.9.13 This activity has been delivered within the strategic capacity provided under the BRRP funding (one FTE coordinator and one FTE project/comms officer). This capacity is currently funded until September 2021. Ongoing support will be required post September at an approximate annual cost of £80,000.

2.10 Young People Support

Overview

2.10.1 Our young people are, and will continue to be, adversely impacted by the effects of Coronavirus. All of our interventions across Employment, Skills and Inclusion will be accessible to young people, where appropriate. However, we will also develop a targeted strategy to support Young People to ensure they can access the right training and skills development for future job opportunities.

Offer

2.10.2 We will ensure that all of our services, both in delivery and being planned, consider specific support for Young People.

2.10.3 We will develop a strategy that considers the challenges faced by young people in the current climate. We will develop a programme of interventions, aligned where appropriate to wider interventions, to ensure that young people have access to employment and training opportunities. We will coordinate, and act as a gateway, the DWP Kickstart Scheme within Somerset. We will

encourage and support employers to offer placements and ensure every young person engaged has access to appropriate wrap-around support.

- 2.10.4 We will support national interventions ensuring local take up. Specifically, we will coordinate the DWP Kickstart Scheme locally and apply to become a gateway for public sector businesses and their supply chains. We will work with other gateway organisations operating in Somerset to support the effective implementation of the scheme for our Young People. We will offer the support of the Somerset Skill Up service to broker any additional wrap around support the young people need.
- 2.10.5 We will commission Youth Employment UK to develop an online hub for Somerset. We will coordinate across partners and our own services to ensure Young People can access services and support from this hub.
- 2.10.6 We will deliver our £1.3 million ESF NEETs programme to ensure that young people at risk of, or who are, NEETs re-engage in education or can access employment opportunities. We will seek additional funding to ensure that ALL young people can access support they need to continue to engage.

Ask

- 2.10.7 That all national schemes planned and rolled out are coordinated with local provision to avoid confusion and duplication and ensure alignment.
- 2.10.8 Investment to deliver the interventions identified within the emerging Young People Strategy.
- 2.10.9 £190,000 of urgent pastoral and academic activity to support 16 year olds back into study to enhance the ESF programme
- 2.10.10 Establish a pool of funding to support the students at risk of becoming NEET to include one-to-one tutorial support/mentoring and the establishment of bursaries to remove barriers to education.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 2.10.11 Some activity is integrated into other provision and in delivery (such as CEaIG and employment support), the ESF NEETs programme is in delivery and other activity is yet to be defined.

Next Steps

- 2.10.12 Develop the Youth hub online content.
- 2.10.13 Finalise the Young People strategy and define our interventions.

Timing

- 2.10.14 Strategy to be finalised in December 2020 and implementation ongoing thereafter.

Funds

- 2.10.15 £6,000 has been committed from the West Somerset Opportunity Area to commission the Youth Employment Hub.
- 2.10.16 Using BRRP funding we have commissioned capacity to develop the initial Young People strategy. Additional funding will be required to implement the recommendations and activity identified within the strategy.
- 2.10.17 This activity has been delivered within the strategic capacity provided under the BRRP funding (one FTE coordinator and one FTE project/comms officer). This capacity is currently funded until

September 2021. Ongoing support will be required post September at an approximate annual cost of £80,000.

2.10.18 Step Up Somerset has been developed and funded through the BRRP and costs covered for 2 years. Ongoing development of the portal will be provided within the strategic capacity, but hosting costs and additional functionality of the website will cost approximately £500 per annum.

2.10.19 Other funding requirements are set out in the ask section above.

3 Helping Businesses and Sectors to Grow

3.0.1 The activities included in this theme are divided into two areas: safeguarding and creating jobs in the bedrock sectors; and supporting growth and productivity in the growth sectors. These are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 3.1: Activities to Help Businesses and Sectors to Grow

Safeguarding and creating jobs in the bedrock sectors
Visitor Economy Support Programme
Enhance and expand Growth Hub support
Promote social value, procurement and social enterprise
New enterprise centres and work hub space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chard • Bruton • Wellington • Burnham/Highbridge • Glastonbury (as part of the Glastonbury Town Deal bid) • Co-Working Space (Yeovil & Chard)
Supporting growth and productivity in the growth sectors
Delivery of innovation infrastructure projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iAero • Taunton Digital Innovation Centre
Deliver new innovation zones
Additional inward investment promotion and support
Somerset Catalyst

3.1 Bedrock: Visitor Economy Support Programme

Overview

3.1.1 The Somerset Visitor Economy Support Programme will provide a discrete set of interventions to support the visitor economy to resume trading as COVID-19 restrictions are eased/lifted and to start to move towards recovery. This approach recognises the value and importance of Somerset’s visitor economy, the particular impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector and the need for targeted and tailored support.

3.1.2 Activities will include: beneficiary recruitment, signposting, business support and digital skills training, visitor sentiment and needs research

Offer

3.1.3 We have committed £250,000 of funds to deliver this activity.

Ask

3.1.4 The proposed activities will cost £500,000, so a further £250,000 is needed for these.

Readiness and Deliverability

3.1.5 There is a business plan in place. The Visitor Economy Support Programme phase 1 was approved by SGMG in June 2020. Phase 2 of the programme is currently in development with marketing, destination packaging and disruption strategies to connect businesses more closely with the visitor all being worked up.

Next Steps

3.1.6 Phase 1 will be delivered; and Phase 2 will be developed further.

Timing

3.1.7 Immediate delivery, lasting for 12 months.

Funds

3.1.8 £250,000 has been committed from the Business Rate Retention Pilot. A further £250,000 is needed for Phase 2.

3.2 Bedrock: Enhance and Expand Growth Hub support

Overview

3.2.1 The Heart of the South West LEP Growth Hub provides independent diagnosis and referrals to existing business support services in the HotSW area which includes Somerset.

3.2.2 This year the Growth Hub has engaged with a larger number of SMEs due to the Covid pandemic than in normal circumstances. The Growth Hub has worked closely and in partnership with businesses, business support providers, regulators and local authorities to provide and signpost to business support services in the region. Working with partnerships such as Better Business for All, HotSW LEP as well as partners and suppliers, the Growth hub has provided key information to businesses during the past year.

3.2.3 We will enhance and expand the Growth Hub support to businesses, to enable the service to support more businesses throughout Somerset. This will help businesses to survive and grow, safeguarding and creating jobs, and help new-start businesses that are established.

Offer

3.2.4 Somerset local authorities will promote Growth Hub through all available channels and provide local service delivery points. Growth Hub will provide ongoing business support and signposting for businesses in the region including in the Somerset area.

Ask

3.2.5 With the ERDF part-funded Start Up and Grow programme having ended in March, there would seem to be a clear gap for intensive programmes of support for start-ups. The Growth Hub, has noted increased start-up related enquiries as many people have re-evaluated their plans through necessity or choice as we move through the impacts of Covid-19

3.2.6 The following areas have been identified as areas of need where there are gaps in provision over the coming months and beyond

- Access to finance: this is the key gap that the LEP is currently looking at along with the British Business Bank.
- BAME support
- EU Exit Business Support
- Incremental Innovation / Adoption of new technology
- Social enterprise support
- Start-up

3.3 Bedrock: Promote Social Value, Procurement and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector

Overview

3.3.1 This whole strand of activity represents a programme level approach which is a **combination of existing projects and projects and an aspiration for the future** and greater levels of transformation in how collectively we deliver against social value objectives in our planning and procurement processes and how we support the re-stabilisation of the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) for them to become self-sustaining where possible.

Figure 3.2: The role of VCSE in Economic Recovery & Growth – cross cutting themes

Direct	Indirect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Spend local -> support the high streets • Mental health/well-being support • Pathways to employment • Transport • Skills • Health • Community owned assets – pubs, shops etc • Diversity & inclusion • Inward investment • Tourism/arts/culture • Financial/debt services – CABs, Credit Unions etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling services e.g. childcare, young people support, older people services... • Catalysts, alternative models • Contributing to overall quality of life • Community owned assets – community buildings to host activities

3.3.2 The tables above demonstrates cross-cutting themes that describe how the VCSE sector contributes directly and indirectly to inclusive economic growth and community wealth, which goes beyond simply what the VCSE sector needs to what the sector has to offer

3.3.3 The main themes under this activity are:

- The policies that the Councils are collectively developing in adopting the principle of the Social Value Act 2012, to ensure that as much Local Authority spend through its regeneration and procurement activities benefit local businesses, supply chains and skilling of the local residents, to ensure that monies are spent and distributed in the local area for the benefit of the local economy
- Supporting those organisations that provide support for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise businesses

3.3.4 This whole strand of activity represents a programme level approach which is a combination of existing projects and projects and an aspiration for the future and greater levels of transformation in how collectively we deliver against social value objectives in our planning and procurement processes and how we support the re-stabilisation of social enterprises for them to become self-sustaining where possible.

3.3.5 The focus should be on:

- Adopting a commissioning approach to the design of services delivered to the public ensuring those involved in procuring services within the Councils understand our Social Value objectives, and the value of VCSE sector in delivering services to the public
- Consider splitting contracts into smaller lots where this is likely to attract bids from micro, small and medium sized enterprises, community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises, with longer lead-in times and longer contract lengths
- Refresh Social Value policies and embedding them in Councils
- Adopt a Community Wealth generation approach
- Securing funding for those VCSEs that have been set back due to either lockdowns or the social distancing measures – shift to investing in a vibrant future for the sector
- Building and investing in partnership approach, support innovation, co-production, working together e.g. workforce development, asset transfers etc.
- Critical success factor – cultural change to see VCSE as mission-critical partner
- Need ‘risk capital’ and ‘org development’

Offer

3.3.6 Somerset’s local authorities will redesign the commissioning of services and use our procurement and planning systems to promote social value. Through this work we will:

- Create new local jobs
- Re-start local businesses, and support the growth of responsible businesses
- Develop local supply chains
- Provide skills, training and apprenticeship opportunities for local residents
- Build community resilience
- Recruit and train community volunteers
- Protect the environment

3.3.7 Activities could include:

- A VCSE Transformation Fund – consisting of grants, loans and patient capital. This would help support adaptation, managed change and innovation.
- Business development:
 - a) training and investment in core skills – leadership, management, HR, finance
 - b) ‘Enhance VCSE’ business planning and transformation service – for experienced business development professionals
- Investment in networks and peer learning including development of collaborative work, including bringing in ideas and influences from outside Somerset
- Community investment – anchor organisations and grassroots “people-led” initiatives
- Unlock potential within Somerset – CSR, volunteering, skill sharing
- Cross sector working practices to co-produce etc
- Investment in infrastructure
- To support existing social enterprises, CiCs and other VCSE organisations with trading or paid for service delivery functions, as well as supporting pre starts and the social entrepreneurship

3.3.8 We will build on existing Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) innovation projects in Frome, Glastonbury and Watchet.

3.4 Bedrock: New Enterprise Centres and Work Hub Space

3.4.1 See sections below on enterprise centres for:

- Bruton
- Chard
- Glastonbury
- Wellington

3.4.2 There are also sections on co-working spaces at Chard and Yeovil.

3.5 Bedrock: Bruton Enterprise Centre

Overview

3.5.1 The Bruton Enterprise Centre (BEC) project will deliver enterprise centre space including office and light industrial accommodation for SMEs. At present, ERDF and Somerset County Council funding has been secured for the office component. An application to the HotSW LEP's Getting Building Fund has been submitted to support the delivery of seven light industrial units.

3.5.2 The aim of the BEC project is to deliver modern, high quality managed office and light industrial space for SMEs in the Bruton area who are looking for grow-on space and to encourage these SMEs to access business support and to collaborate through the Somerset Enterprise Centre Network (SECN).

3.5.3 The BEC will be a new build addition to the SECN, comprising:

3.5.4 Phase One (328 sqm)

- Office space – 10 two-person office units, complete with 2 meeting rooms (which can be used by external businesses) and facilities
- Studio space – flexible workspace, with the potential to be transformed into office space later.

3.5.5 Phase Two (355 sqm)

- Industrial building – seven light industrial units, complete with facilities

3.5.6 The BEC will provide SME tenancies on flexible easy-in easy-out terms, which are particularly advantageous to those looking to move from home-working space to professional facilities to support business growth.

Readiness and Deliverability

3.5.7 The Business Case and Funding Applications have been submitted and approved. Planning permission has been achieved for both phases. Willmott Dixon has been appointed to design and build, and the final contract sum agreed along with a complete programme of works. The build is due to start onsite in late November.

Milestone	Start date	Completion date	Complete?
Key Management and Administration Milestones			

Somerset County Council entering into an ERDF Funding agreement with MHCLG		04/11/2019	Yes
Design and Build of Bruton Enterprise Centre			
Full planning permission secured	Application submitted September 2018	May 2020	Yes
Appointment of Design (Stage 4 onwards) and Build contractor using Scape Minor Works Framework (including associated Somerset County Council internal governance procedures)	July 2019	September 2019	Yes
RIBA Stage 4 - Technical design and Market Testing	October 2019	September 2020	Yes
Signing of the main build contract to allow for start onsite	October 2020	October 2020	No
RIBA Stage 5 - Construction, completion and handover	November 2020	June 2021	No
Fit out of Bruton Enterprise Centre	July 2021	End of October 2021	No
Bruton Enterprise Centre opens to tenants	November 2021	-	No

Funds

- 3.5.8 The cost of delivering Phase 1 and 2 simultaneously is £2,710,723. The project has already secured c.£615,000 of ERDF Capital funding towards the costs of Phase 1. £816,000 of Getting Building Funding has also been secured to support the delivery of Phase 2. SCC has made a further £1,279,732 available to deliver both phases simultaneously.

	Total	Secured?
Somerset County Council	£1,273,000	Yes
European Regional Development Fund	£712,000	Yes
<i>Capital</i>	<i>£615,000</i>	
<i>Revenue</i>	<i>£97,000</i>	
Getting Building Fund	£816,000	Yes

- 3.5.9 Although the original intention was to deliver the two phases separately, it has now been confirmed that they need to be delivered together. Phase 2 could not be delivered once phase 1 is occupied due to the limited size and the gradient of the site, and health and safety legislation.
- 3.5.10 The BEC is asking for a further £30,000 to enable the installation of a remote access IT system that would allow for remote control of the centre's doors from the operator's hub in Highbridge (Torbay Development Agency). The inclusion of this system would reduce the need for staff from TDA to travel and access the site for short periods of time to let people who aren't tenants into the centre. This would have direct reductions on CO2 created through travel to the centre from Highbridge (approx. 30 miles).

- 3.5.11 This would also provide greater flexibility to the centre for external businesses to book and access the meeting rooms, encouraging greater involvement from the local business community.

3.6 Bedrock: Burnham & Highbridge Enterprise Centre

Overview

- 3.6.1 SCC is proposing the development of council owned property into an enterprise hub in the Highbridge and Burnham-on-Sea area. The project will deliver enterprise space including office, practical space and storage for micro businesses and early stage trades. The space will be designed to create an environment in which early stage trades can grow and establish themselves. The facility will form part of the Somerset Enterprise Centre Network, which offers business space across Somerset along with a business support package.

Offer

- 3.6.2 The proposal is to utilise SCC owned property to develop an enterprise hub in the Highbridge and Burnham-on-Sea area. The centre will include office/practical space, grow on space and storage for early trades and micro businesses. It will be accompanied by a business support offer to help business establish themselves and provide routes into self-employment.
- 3.6.3 An intervention in the area is necessary. Burnham-on-Sea is identified as Somerset County's most deprived neighbourhood. A local hub will allow local business retention, create local employment and reduce outside leakages.
- 3.6.4 At this stage SCC estimates that there are costs of circa £280,000 to refurbish the building and a further estimated £50,000 to repurpose the site into a suitable enterprise hub. Estimates are based on similar developments by SCC in which costings have been prepared by SCC Property Services.

Ask

- 3.6.5 Based on the above estimation, SCC are requesting contributions towards the total cost of refurbishment and repurposing of the building.

Next Steps, Readiness and Deliverability

- 3.6.6 It is necessary to secure additional funding before project can proceed. Without additional funding this is not possible.
- 3.6.7 Once funding is secured/in development, SCC can begin to investigate the site fully beyond estimations. This includes a project cost feasibility and demand evidence.

Timing

- 3.6.8 Once funding is secure is will be possible to proceed with project.
- 3.6.9 Estimated start date: Q3 2021
- 3.6.10 Estimated completion date: Q4 2022

Funds

- 3.6.11 Estimated total cost £330,000 to refurbish and repurpose the site into an enterprise hub. SCC requests contribution towards the total project sum.
- 3.6.12 SCC will commit an asset to towards the scheme and contribute towards funding needed.

3.7 Bedrock: Chard Enterprise Park

Overview

- 3.7.1 The Chard Enterprise Park (CEP) project will deliver enterprise space including office, grow on space and light industrial accommodation for SMEs which will be delivered over three phases. Designed to create an environment in which new start businesses and established SMEs can grow, the new build facility will form part of the established Somerset Enterprise Centre Network (SECN).
- 3.7.2 At present, Somerset County Council is engaged in an ERDF funding process for phase 1, of which a decision is expected by the end of 2020. The project is supported by Chard Town Council and South Somerset District Council has been consulted and is supportive of the need for additional business space in the area.

Offer

- 3.7.3 The SCC owned land at Beeching Close, Chard, has been identified for development into the Chard Enterprise Park and will deliver supported business space including office, grow on space and light industrial units over three phases. The park will provide a business support offer available to tenants and external businesses. The park will create a local work hub in an identified area of deprivation. This will allow businesses to remain in locally and reduce outside commuting or business/employment leakages. The project will be delivered in three phases:
- Phase 1: Office space (this is the phase to be partially funded by the current ERDF funding application). The work required to develop the site for this phase also unlocks phase 2
 - Phase 2: Grow on space
 - Phase 3: Further employment space. The need for space for businesses has been identified and there is enough space to allow for further development as funding becomes available

Ask

- 3.7.4 Further funding for delivery of all phases, without extra funding these phases will not be deliverable.
- 3.7.5 Confirmation of grant funding for phase 1.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 3.7.6 Works are underway for the delivery of phase 1, including whole site planning applications, site investigations and ground works. Delivery of other phases is dependent on further funding.

Next Steps

- 3.7.7 Next steps in development or delivery of the activity:
- Phase 1 ERDF funding secured
 - Planning permission secured for whole site
 - Phase 2 & 3 funding source secured for further delivery
 - Appointment of contractor for design and build of Phase 1

Timing

- 3.7.8 Phase 1 open by December 2022. Depending on available funding, other phases could meet this timescale.

Funds

- 3.7.9 Total cost

Phase 1	SCC	ERDF	Total Project Costs
Capital	£1,576,900 (secured)	£1,575,687 (awaiting approval)	£3,152,587
Revenue	£12,500 (Secured)	£13,714 (awaiting approval)	£26,214

	Estimated Total Cost	Funding
Phase 2	£2.4 million	Unsecured
Phase 3	TBC	Unsecured

3.8 Bedrock: Glastonbury Enterprise Centre

3.8.1 This enterprise centre is part of the Glastonbury Town Deal proposal, discussed in detail in section 5.3.

Overview

3.8.2 SCC has submitted an Expression of Interest to Mendip District Council under the Government's Town Deal for Glastonbury. If successful, SCC will look to submit a full funding bid for the project. This will provide funding for SCC to repurpose its property asset Beckery House Resource centre into an enterprise and skills facility with an identified emphasis on local specialisation of food production.

3.8.3 The project would address the enterprise skills infrastructure, digital connectivity and space regeneration outcomes of The Town Fund and support the SCC economic recovery and growth plan

3.8.4 SCC have looked to work with partners to maximise the impact of the project and reduce any possibility of duplication including libraries services to address digital skills and local college for food manufacturing.

Offer

3.8.5 The Glastonbury Enterprise Centre would provide office space, specialist food development facilities and dedicated training space which will include digital skills development. These spaces will be provided to tenants on flexible, easy-in easy-out terms as flexible accommodation has proven popular elsewhere as it allows start-ups to take the next step in their development. Tenants will be given an initial business support assessment before joining the centre and further access to business support services will be available through their tenancy.

Readiness and Deliverability

3.8.6 The project is still in its very early days and has not yet secured funding. There are ongoing discussions with Mendip District Council regarding the viability of the bid in relation to other proposed projects under the Town Deal for Glastonbury

Next Steps

3.8.7 Further development of the Expression of Interest into a full funding bid is ongoing to meet the deadlines outlined below.

Timing

3.8.8 Initial bid to be submitted December 2020. Approval for bids will be January 2021 which will then lead to full and final bids around March 2021.

Funds

- 3.8.9 Estimated cost of project is currently around £1.25 million not including land value.

3.9 Bedrock: Wellington Enterprise Centre

Overview

- 3.9.1 The Wellington Enterprise Centre will be another addition to the Somerset Enterprise Centre Network. Located on Coram's Lane, Wellington, the existing SCC Estate that previously belonged to Somerset Skills and Learning will be refreshed to provide modern workspace for the local economy.
- 3.9.2 Wellington is considered to be an economically deprived area, with the area of 'Wellington North' in the top 20 most deprived areas in England. Therefore, this project would address Enterprise Skills Infrastructure and digital connectivity outcomes to support the SCC economic recovery and growth plan.

Offer

- 3.9.3 While this project is still in early stages of development, preliminary floor plans of the centre are proposing 11 small offices, a reception area, kitchen and other utility rooms. The centre will also include car parking for office tenants.
- 3.9.4 The centre is being approached with two stages in mind; refurbish and repurpose. The building requires initial work to refurbish existing damage, wear and tear that the building has experienced through a lack of use and upkeep.
- 3.9.5 The second stage will be to ensure that the building is fit for purpose and desirable to local business looking to invest in office space. Work will be completed to ensure that the centre has modern upgrades including superfast broadband connection, car parking, efficient heating and insulation and tenant amenities.
- 3.9.6 These offices will be provided to tenants on flexible, easy-in easy-out terms as flexible accommodation has proven popular elsewhere as it allows start-ups to take the next step in their development. Tenants will be given an initial business support assessment before joining the centre and further access to business support services will be available through their tenancy.

Ask

- 3.9.7 From evidence of demand from similar areas in Somerset, as well as consulting with Somerset West and Taunton District Council, we know that there is demand for training and skills space. Therefore, we intend that the Wellington Enterprise Centre will have focus on advanced technologies.
- 3.9.8 If further funding for the Wellington Enterprise Centre can be secured, the centre will be able to invest in advanced technologies for the tenants, as well as the skills training for these SME tenants to be able to adopt technologies into their business as usual. These technologies will complement those found in the Glass Box in Taunton and allow SME tenants to access specialised equipment that will allow them to further product development, productivity and ultimately, growth. This equipment will vary and reflect demand stimulated by the local area, but could include:
- 3D printers for product prototypes

- Virtual reality (VR) equipment
- A range of specialist software licenses

3.9.9 The Wellington Enterprise Centre will also be able to invest in advanced technology training. This will link with the business support offer already provided through the network (and Growth Hub) and help tenants of the centre to upskill/reskill in digital, a major sector in the post Coronavirus world.

3.9.10 A contribution from the government of £80,000 would allow the centre to invest in digital technologies and provide the wrap around training to ensure the facilities were fully adopted by tenants.

Readiness and Deliverability

3.9.11 Somerset County Council is already starting to undertake initial feasibility work to understand how the Wellington Enterprise Centre can be developed. Following this feasibility work, a formal decision will be taken on whether to proceed with the development of the centre. The hope is that SCC will be able to invest in this centre to benefit the local community of Wellington.

3.9.12 However, a decision for SCC to invest is strengthened if funding from other sources can be secured.

Next Steps

3.9.13 A project mandate is currently being drafted to instruct SCC Property Services to begin procuring feasibility work for the Wellington Enterprise Centre.

3.9.14 This feasibility work will create lead to a final proposed design. A formal decision will then be taken on whether to progress the Wellington Enterprise Centre.

Timing

3.9.15 Project Mandate Submitted – Dec 2020

3.9.16 Feasibility study and plans complete – Apr 2021

3.9.17 Decision to invest in centre – May 2021

3.9.18 Contracting, Procurement and Build – June 2021 onwards

Funds

3.9.19 While exact costs for the project and a feasibility work is yet to be completed, initial investigations into the site have provided the following costs. These costs have been put together by the SCC Estates team following an on-site assessment of the condition of the building.

3.9.20 £286,500 is the total investment needed to fully refurbish the building into a useable state. These costings have been put together by SCC Property Service from a conditions survey undertaken in January 2020.

3.9.21 Further works of £50,500 are also needed to repurpose the centre structurally into an ‘Enterprise Centre,’ changing the internal wall structure to create office rooms for use by SME’s.

3.9.22 Further funding on top of that will be used to upgrade the building, including investment in skills facilities and advanced technologies for tenant use.

3.10 Bedrock: Chard Co-Working Space

Overview

- 3.10.1 The Chard co-working space will provide an innovative environment in the form of shared workspace in Chard town centre. The hub will deliver space for professional industry start-ups, home-professionals in professional industries, and out-commuters in the professional industries to co-locate. We envisage that users will work across all sectors, however, our primary focus will be for 'professionals' and those working in the creative sectors. The space will result in increased productivity, motivation, teamwork, creativity, and potential business opportunities for everyone from freelancers to small businesses and large corporations.
- 3.10.2 Co-working is short for collaborative working. It is an emerging style of working in an innovative environment, usually a shared workspace, that is more flexible in its approach than traditional office environments. Co-working offers sharing of equipment, resources, ideas, and/or experiences among remote professionals. The co-working model is unique in that workers can choose to remain independent and self-directed, but can often find more opportunities for networking and socialising among like-minded individuals. This typically results in increased productivity, motivation, teamwork, creativity, and potential business opportunities for everyone from freelancers to small businesses and large corporations.' (Coworker.com, 2019)
- 3.10.3 South Somerset District Council owns a historic building within Chard Town Centre which we are seeking to transform into a co-working hub. The hub will provide employment space for those within Chard and the surrounding area. We anticipate that the space will act as a catalyst for entrepreneurship and innovation. During the Coronavirus pandemic we have seen a shift from people wanting larger scale office space to working from home. We believe that the outcome will be the requirement for a space that can be used on flexible terms. Co-working will provide this necessity for the South Somerset ecosystem.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 3.10.4 This forms part of the wider regeneration plans for Chard Town Centre.
- 3.10.5 Planning permission for change of use is required.

Timing

- 3.10.6 This could be delivered by 2022, depending on funding.

Funds

- 3.10.7 Total cost is £1.3 million.

3.11 Bedrock: Yeovil Co-Working Space

Overview

- 3.11.1 This project involves the purchase of a prominent derelict building that dominates the Bandstand area of the town. Radical intervention is needed to replace poor-quality unwanted retail space with high-quality, sought-after co-working space. Evidence from Smart Growth Analytics suggests that there is a significant demand for co-working and alternative workspace. However, the private sector alone cannot deliver this in Yeovil due to low commercial land values and significant redevelopment costs. The new shared workspace will help Yeovil adapt to changing technology,

creating a foundation for business start-ups and innovators to collaborate in the heart of the town centre whilst driving footfall.

Readiness and Deliverability

3.11.2 This forms part of the wider regeneration plans for Yeovil Town Centre.

Next Steps

3.11.3 Planning permission for change of use is required, but this is minor as the premise is currently mixed-use with retail lead.

Timing

3.11.4 This could be delivered in 2022 depending on the availability of funding.

Funds

3.11.5 Total cost is £4.8 million. £1.2 million of this is being sought from the Future High Streets Fund, so a further £3.6 million is needed to deliver this.

3.12 Growth: Innovation Infrastructure - iAero

Overview

3.12.1 The iAero Centre will provide high-quality space, equipment and support to foster innovation, collaboration and growth in the aerospace sector and supply chain. Construction is nearing completion and remaining project activity will focus on Centre fit-out and mobilisation to facilitate its opening and operation.

3.12.2 Beyond the existing project, there is longer-term potential to explore grow-on space as a second-phase development of the iAero Centre. There is also a strong link between the emerging iAero Centre and the 'innovation zones' activity identified in the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan, including any eventual Freeport proposition for the Heart of the South West LEP area.

3.12.3 The project aims to deliver the fit out and mobilisation activity required to enable the opening and operation of a fit for purpose iAero Centre. Through the above:

- To respond to the innovation and collaboration workspace, equipment and support service needs of the local aerospace sector and supply chain
- To provide a Somerset focal point in the wider aerospace South West cluster and innovation ecosystem, forging and exploiting strategic linkages with other relevant organisations and initiatives to maximise added value and impact
- To facilitate and foster increased innovation and collaboration in the local aerospace sector and supply chain, driving its competitiveness and growth

3.12.4 The activities that comprise this project are:

- Fit out of the iAero Centre
- Commissioning of innovation support services
- Wider iAero Centre mobilisation, such as marketing, Centre staff recruitment and lease/licence arrangements

Offer

3.12.5 Complete the delivery of the iAero Innovation Centre and Phase 3 of the Somerset Energy Innovation Centre

Ask

3.12.6 £0.5 million for iAero as part of Local Infrastructure Stimulus Fund/MHCLG call for LEPs.

Readiness and Deliverability

3.12.7 There is a business plan in place for the delivery of the activity.

Next Steps

3.12.8 Next steps are summarised in the figure below.

Key Project Milestones	Delivery Date
Completion of iAero Centre construction	December 2020
Signed Getting Building Funding Agreement in place to support Centre fit out	December 2020
Procurement exercises for fit out commence	By / in January 2021
Procurement of ERDF-funded innovation support services	January to April 2021
iAero fit out begins	By February 2021
Mobilisation of ERDF-funded innovation support services	April to June 2021
iAero fit out complete	June 2021
iAero Centre opens	July 2021
ERDF-funded innovation support services commence	July 2021
ERDF-funded Innovation Support Ends	June 2023

Timing

3.12.9 The activity will be delivered between November 2020 and the end of June 2023.

Funds

3.12.10 The total iAero fit out and mobilisation project activity cost is £607,723. This comprises:

- Capital costs of £127,548
- Revenue costs of £245,000

3.12.11 Funds have been committed by the Getting Building Fund, SCC revenue funds, and ERDF revenue funds. No further funding is needed.

3.12.12 Somerset County Council entering into a formal funding agreement with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership for Getting Building Funding for fit out of the iAero Centre.

3.13 Growth: Innovation Infrastructure - Taunton Digital Innovation Centre

Overview

3.13.1 The aim of the Digital Innovation Centre project is to deliver flexible, high-quality innovation and collaboration space and support services targeted at new-start and existing businesses in, or moving into, the digital economy, including, but not limited to, marine geospatial, health technology and risk analysis businesses. It will therefore:

- Capitalise on the recognised ‘digital’ competitive advantage of the local economy, including the UK Hydrographic Office’s presence in Taunton
- Respond to evidenced market failures and unmet target business needs
- Support productivity-led growth and higher-value job creation in and around Taunton
- Act as a Somerset focal point in the wider Heart of the South West innovation ecosystem, forging and exploiting strategic linkages with other relevant organisations and initiatives to maximise added-value and impact.

3.13.2 Key project activities are:

- Design and construction of a 3,000 sqm digital innovation centre on the Firepool site in Taunton
- Commissioning of innovation support services
- Fit out, mobilisation and opening of the Digital Innovation Centre

3.13.3 The project approach allows for potential second-phase development of a further 2,000 sqm building on the DIC site. There are also strong linkages between the DIC Project and the ‘innovation zones’ activity identified in the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan.

Offer

3.13.4 Complete the delivery of the iAero Innovation Centre and Phase 3 of the Somerset Energy Innovation Centre

Readiness and Deliverability

3.13.5 A business plan has been completed for this activity.

Next Steps

3.13.6 A planning application has been submitted, with a target decision date of late December 2020.

3.13.7 Next steps include:

- Discharging of pre-funding agreement conditions of funding and SCC entering into a Getting Building Funding Agreement with the LEP
- Securing ERDF monies for the Digital Innovation Centre scheme
- Planning approval
- SCC agreeing Heads of Terms and entering into a lease with Somerset West and Taunton Council for the Digital Innovation Centre plot on the Firepool site
- SCC awarding a construction contract (including early enabling works) to Willmott Dixon under the Scape Major Work Framework.

3.13.8 Key project milestones are set out in the figure below.

Key Project Milestones	Delivery Date
Planning approval	By 24/12/2020
Funding agreement in place with HotSW LEP	By 31/12/2020
Enabling works commence	By 04/01/2021
Enabling works completed	By 09/04/2021
Main construction works start onsite	By 12/04/2021
Commencements of innovation support services procurement preparation and process	By 01/05/2021

Marketing and tenant pipeline development commences	By 01/05/2021
Innovation support services provider contracted, and mobilisation commences	By 01/11/2021
Construction completed	By 24/12/2021
Fit-out of DIC completed	By 24/02/2022
DIC open to tenants and commencement of innovation support services	By 01/04/2022

Funds

- 3.13.9 The total project costs (including the LEP's Getting Building Fund management fee) is £9,630,000
- 3.13.10 Cash funding has been formally secured from Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and the Somerset Business Rates Retention pilot. An in-kind land contribution has also been secured from Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 3.13.11 Funding from the Getting Building Fund has been conditionally approved and a full ERDF application has been submitted.

3.14 Growth: New Innovation Zones

- 3.14.1 The development of innovation zones is a strategic ambition for Somerset.

Overview

- 3.14.2 We will deliver new innovation zones in Somerset, containing innovation centres along with specialist business support to enable innovation and R&D. The Clean Growth innovation zone around Bridgwater, Hinkley Point C and the Gravity enterprise zone is already established, and there are further opportunities to capture local growth. An Aerospace innovation zone around Yeovil is our next priority. The Firepool Digital innovation zone will include the Taunton Digital Innovation Centre. An Agri-Tech innovation zone is also being developed, and we are working with the HotSW LEP on early ideas for a coastal innovation zone. We will prepare Local Development Orders for these zones to simplify the planning process and speed-up their delivery. These zones will help to support new businesses, employment and higher productivity.
- 3.14.3 Somerset is committed to longer term ambitions focused on making the most of existing sector specialisms through the development of four strategically important innovation zones:
- Aerospace Innovation Zone – centred around Yeovil
 - Agri-tech Innovation Zone – further development of the virtual cluster in the Mendip area
 - Clean Energy Innovation Zone – centred around Bridgwater and the Gravity Enterprise Zone
 - Digital Innovation Zone – linked to the Firepool development and Taunton Digital Innovation Centre
- 3.14.4 Work is required to develop these ambitions more fully, but the aim is to develop innovation zones centred around these specialisms. Work will concentrate on provision of the right conditions and levels of support to enable innovation, research and development through to market ready products.
- 3.14.5 The intention is to develop full business cases for each of the innovation zones. Working groups have been convened for each of the potential zones and will focus on developing propositions for each of the potential innovation zones. Assessment will be undertaken of existing strengths and opportunities including existing assets and infrastructure as well as identification of any gaps or

barriers to development. Local Development Orders and additional funding for business support activity will be required to deliver this commitment and will form an essential part of the process.

3.15 Growth: Nuclear Fusion STEP Project

Overview

- 3.15.1 The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) is pursuing an ambitious goal of being the first in the world to develop and deploy a Fusion power station – through its Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) project.
- 3.15.2 The UKAEA is currently searching for a location to build STEP, and provide a fusion energy ecosystem, which will include a Research Centre, Test Reactor (about the size of a Small Modular Reactor), Technology Park and associated training and skills centres.
- 3.15.3 This is an opportunity to grow and anchor the capability to deliver one of the most important and complex engineering challenges in the world. It is also an opportunity for Somerset to contribute its existing strengths to maximise the success of the project.
- 3.15.4 The South West has the highest number of nuclear licensed sites in the UK, with Hinkley Point, home to reactors A, B and C (under construction) being one of the most attractive in terms of potentially locating the STEP programme. The site has good accessibility, water cooling, grid connections, and due to its poor socio economic and social mobility indicators would score highly within the Government's levelling up agenda. It also has a significant eco-system of nuclear assets and infrastructure that could in part be re-purposed or utilised for aspects of STEP. Including the Gravity EZ, National College for Nuclear, purpose-built training facilities on various Bridgwater & Taunton College campuses, a nuclear competent supply chain, established site services contractors and a variety of associated developments including freight management, logistics, and campus accommodation. As importantly, it has a community that is broadly accepting of nuclear activity, though it has to be noted that fusion technology is very different from fission, and will not be subject to the significantly high levels of regulation that fission reactors are.

Offer

- 3.15.5 Somerset is offering a coordinated approach to championing this project in recognition that landing the STEP project which will provide a sustainable legacy to the HPC new nuclear build. Leading to increased productivity, highly skilled occupations, a fusion technology cluster of businesses, and world class research and development.

Ask

- 3.15.6 Government to recognise the economic transformational potential of this project to the UK levelling up agenda, by supporting Somerset as the location for STEP, while also potentially reducing the costs of siting and developing the STEP project (less demand on the taxpayer) due to the re-use of assets, and infrastructure put in place for the construction of HPC.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 3.15.7 There is a SW STEP Team in place supported by Nuclear South West, comprising of technical experts and others. There is a Somerset STEP Team in place comprising of the three local authorities (SDC, SWT, SCC) supported by the LEP. Key Members of the local authorities have been briefed and are positive. Collaborative work is underway to meet the March 2021 deadline for submission of the EOI to UKAEA.

Next Steps

- 3.15.8 Various stakeholders have to be on-board (EDF Energy, NDA, Landowners etc.). Work in establishing this is underway. The EOI has to be completed by 31 March 2021, with 100 hectares of land across the three stations and in other geographically close areas identified (e.g. Gravity, Skills & Training facilities etc.).

Timing

- 3.15.9 The UKAEA have stated that the siting process will take up to 18 months, where proposals will be assessed, down selected and eventually recommendations made to Government (BEIS), where the Minister will make the final decision. Once a site is selected than the project will embark on the normal trajectory that any other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project would.

3.16 Growth: Inward Investment Promotion and Support

Overview

- 3.16.1 We will continue to develop Somerset's innovation ecosystem through the delivery of the Somerset Catalyst Programme and the Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Programme in partnership with MIT and BEIS. Both programmes seek to accelerate the delivery of entrepreneurship and encourage the use of technology to increase productivity. Direct outcomes include new business start-ups who have the expertise and knowledge to grow their business in the local area and contribute positively to the Somerset Economy.

Offer

- 3.16.2 Inward investment activity funded under the BRR pilot will be deployed to develop Somerset's key investment propositions linked to Clean Growth; Aero; Digital; and Agri-Tech.

Ask

- 3.16.3 Build better working relationship with DIT.

3.17 Growth: Somerset Catalyst Programme

Overview

- 3.17.1 The Somerset Catalyst Programme is creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem across Somerset which supports the growth of entrepreneurs, SME's and innovation in Somerset. The extension of this programme is critical to maintain momentum in entrepreneurial activity.
- 3.17.2 The aims and objectives of the Somerset Catalyst Programme are to create a system of support for innovation which supports the establishment, growth and development of high quality businesses with significant growth potential by providing them with access to support, capabilities, networks and resources required. The programme aims to establish a regional focus for technology businesses and high-quality growth businesses within advanced manufacturing and engineering including energy, aerospace and agritech that are significantly contributing to the growth of the economy e.g. in terms of GVA. It seeks to accelerate and support the development of high growth potential innovative micro, small and medium enterprises. It will support the growth and innovation within advanced manufacturing and engineering including energy, aerospace and agritech by supporting clustering effects and fostering open innovation between SME's industry primes and other keys businesses.

3.17.3 The programme will comprise of a business incubator, entrepreneurial bootcamps, Peer Group Club, incubator alumni group and networking events.

Offer

3.17.4 Support for high growth businesses is already being delivered.

Ask

3.17.5 Additional funding will allow for the extension of the activity beyond March 2021.

Readiness and Deliverability

3.17.6 Activity is already being delivered.

Funds

3.17.7 Project cost is £200,000 from April 2020 to March 2021.

3.17.8 Additional funding will allow for the extension of the activity.

4 Providing the Infrastructure to Enable Growth

4.0.1 The activities included in this theme are divided into four areas: reducing carbon emissions; improving digital and physical connectivity; reducing flood risk; and delivering strategic employment sites. These are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 4.1: Activities to Provide Infrastructure to Enable Growth

Reducing carbon emissions through travel and energy efficiency
Deliver cycling and walking infrastructure
Retrofit energy efficiency technologies
Digital demand rural transport and electric car and bus infrastructure
Decarbonisation of the travel network and fleet
Improving digital and physical connectivity
Deliver broadband and mobile connectivity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5G research • Community challenge programme • CDS Phase 2 • CDS Phase 2 Lot 4 • Rural Gigabit Connectivity Voucher Scheme • Mobile booster project
Deliver strategic and important local road projects
Improving rail connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellington • Gravity • Bridgwater • Shepton Mallet
Reducing flood risk to enable growth
Delivery of Bridgwater Barrier
Taunton Flood Attenuation
Blue Anchor Scheme
Delivering strategic employment sites
Gravity Enterprise Zone
Bunford Innovation Park

4.1 Carbon Emissions: Cycling and Walking Infrastructure

Overview

4.1.1 We will establish a transformational programme to deliver improved cycling and walking infrastructure across the area that supports a range of environmental, health, social and safety benefits.

4.1.2 We will deliver cycling and walking infrastructure within and between towns including Bridgwater, Radstock-Frome, Taunton, Walton-Street-Glastonbury, and Yeovil; and the Eastover pedestrian prioritisation scheme in Bridgwater. This needs to be undertaken soon to build on lower carbon mobility trends that have emerged during lockdown, as well as to improve connectivity, enable non-motorised travel and so reduce carbon emissions.

Offer

4.1.3 Plans in place for delivery of new infrastructure. A coherent strategy is being developed.

Ask

4.1.4 Financial support from Government, but no figure is yet available.

Readiness and Deliverability

4.1.5 The County Council and four District Councils will work together on delivering this, along with other stakeholders. An Active Travel Group has recently been established to deliver the Emergency Active Travel Fund.

4.1.6 The activity is still being developed, with a business plan being developed.

Next Steps

4.1.7 Development of an overall strategy and business plan.

4.1.8 Planning permission will be required for project delivery.

Timing

4.1.9 To be developed.

Funds

4.1.10 Total cost has not yet been calculated. Match funds have not yet been secured.

4.1.11 A scheme to link two park and ride facilities to Taunton town centre will cost £12.5 million. Other schemes may well be cheaper.

4.2 Carbon Emissions: Retrofit Energy Efficiency Technologies

Overview

4.2.1 We will retrofit energy efficiency technologies to buildings to reduce running costs and carbon emissions, with a particular focus on social housing – but the lessons learned will benefit private landlords and owner/occupiers also. The focus of an initial pilot project will be on Somerset West & Taunton (SWT) Council-owned social housing, and the Retrofit Programme will focus on void (empty home) properties over a 12 month period (from funding approval). This will make a step change in the low carbon qualities of SWTs existing homes.

4.2.2 This project will be a pilot to test different levels of investment to achieve the low carbon outcomes we desire, and to find the best one for Somerset. The programme will also identify the optimum cost to achieve the low carbon benefits. The programme has the aim of:

- Reducing carbon emissions from the building stock
- Reducing the cost per unit of retrofit, through the application of new approaches and technologies, before rolling this out more broadly
- Creating new businesses and jobs
- Reducing fuel poverty
- Improving health outcomes for tenants

4.2.3 The pilot project seeks to deliver over 350 carbon saving measures to over 65 homes, and complement the measures with a tenancy advisory service to help tenants make the most of their low carbon home. The programme will also link to current SWT investments in low carbon and use of innovation opportunities provided through the local supply chain

Offer

4.2.4 Utilisation of the social housing stock to pilot and find the best approach

Ask

4.2.5 The ask is for £1 million to undertake a competition to find the best approach, with the aim of then rolling out the solution across Somerset and the Heart of the South West.

Readiness and Deliverability

4.2.6 This is an ambition, and the activity is not yet ready to deliver.

Next Steps

4.2.7 Actions required to progress the delivery of the activity are:

- Stakeholder engagement activity, and establishment of ownership of the project by the Tenants Strategic Group and Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing
- Research new energy-saving technology (e.g. Biohm insulation)
- Test products and materials and supply availability (existing materials)
- Produce the low-carbon lettable standard checklists
- Train raise awareness of the project with staff, and train void maintenance operatives, lettings officers and Housing managers to ensure low-carbon measures can be identified and delivered, and tenants supported to use their home effectively
- Work with consultants to establish data monitoring process to understand cost savings to customers
- Project commencement (upon funding approval)

Timing

4.2.8 Delivery will take place over 12 months. If the pilot project can start in March 2021 then it will be completed by April 2022.

Funds

4.2.9 The total cost of the pilot project is £1 million.

4.3 Carbon Emissions: Digital Demand Rural Transport

Overview

4.3.1 We will deliver a digital Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) solution for the residents of Somerset. This is part of a wider project to trial innovative enhancements within the DRT provision. A bid for funding has been submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) to trial innovative solutions within DRT. The bid proposes to trial a number of initiatives including evening/Saturday services, feeder services and employment services, as well as piloting a digital solution for DRT.

4.3.2 The broader project in which digital DRT has a part, aims to tackle issues associated with:

- Social Mobility
- Employment Access
- Social Isolation
- Healthcare Access
- The Climate Emergency Agenda

4.3.3 The project will be led by Somerset County Council, working with the District Councils, Community Transport Groups, HotSW LEP, local bus operators, academic partners and technology suppliers.

Offer

4.3.4 We have developed a proposal for a DDRT trail across Somerset. This builds on 15 years of experience of delivering demand responsive transport. Daytime DRT coverage is already funded by the local authority.

Ask

4.3.5 £1.5 million of funds from DfT. Revenue from running the service will help to fund it.

Readiness and Deliverability

4.3.6 An expression of interest has been submitted to DfT. If successful, this will progress to a full business case.

Next Steps

4.3.7 If the EoI is successful, we will prepare a full business case, which is likely to take up to six months.

Timing

4.3.8 The overall timescale for the assessment of EoIs has slipped during 2020. We are hoping to hear about the success of the EoI in November 2020. Delivery will start around 12 months after the award of funding.

Funds

4.3.9 We have submitted an Expression of Interest to the DfT's Rural Mobility Fund for a Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DRRT) trail, and the award of £1.5 million will help to progress this.

4.4 Carbon Emissions: Decarbonisation of the Travel Network and Fleet

Overview

4.4.1 The activity includes setting out an overarching strategy for decarbonisation of the transport network and fleet.

4.4.2 The activity is now set out in some detail within the transport theme of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy which can be accessed from <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/somersets-climate-emergency-strategy-documents/>.

4.4.3 The transport sector summary can be found from page ** of the climate emergency strategy, covering the activity required to promote use of alternative fuels and electrification, reduction in need for and demand for travel, increasing shared transport and public transport usage, increasing use of active travel modes and adapting transport networks to improve resilience to climate change.

4.4.4 A detailed Electric Vehicle (EV) strategy has also been prepared.

4.4.5 High-level actions are:

- Carbon emissions generated on Somerset's road are reduced by 2030 through the use of electric cars, ultra-low emissions commercial vehicles and a reduction in road use
- Carbon emissions are reduced by encouraging behaviour change: reducing the number of single occupancy vehicle journeys undertaken by the promotion of car sharing, public transport

use, combining trips and replacing vehicular journeys with active travel modes (walking or cycling)

- Climate change adaptation plans have been developed and implemented to build and maintain the resilience of Somerset's transport infrastructure

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.4.6 There is no single overarching business plan in place for the delivery of the full range of activity for transport decarbonisation. A high-level action plan is being developed, but it encompasses an enormous range of activity and individual business plans will need to be developed for specific initiatives over time.
- 4.4.7 Some of the activities set out in the transport sector strategy for decarbonisation may require planning permission where they involve infrastructure that is not within highway boundaries (i.e. new cycle routes away from the existing highway, and installation of EV infrastructure may require permission in certain circumstances).
- 4.4.8 The planning process itself is key to achieving decarbonisation so planning consents for new development will need to actively consider this issue.

Next Steps

- 4.4.9 A high-level action plan is being developed which will consider delivery dates for key initiatives, but as most of the initiatives are currently unfunded the delivery dates will be hard to predict. The climate emergency strategy sets out a goal to work towards making Somerset carbon neutral by 2030 so the highest priority initiatives to achieve this goal will need to be implemented at the earliest opportunity prior to 2030.

Funds

- 4.4.10 Total cost is not yet defined.

4.5 Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile

- 4.5.1 We will deliver broadband and mobile connectivity across the whole county. We will build on work already undertaken to roll-out of broadband across the county through *Connecting Devon & Somerset* (CDS), and complete Somerset-wide coverage. This will enable people to engage in online activity, learn and work from home, which is likely to become more prevalent after the Coronavirus crisis. It will also support the setting up of new businesses and growth of existing businesses that draw on Somerset's strengths and key sectors. We are proposing to deliver training and skills to ensure that people make the best use of this digital infrastructure.
- 4.5.2 Key activities set out below are:
- 5G research
 - Community challenge programme
 - CDS Phase 2
 - CDS Phase 2 Lot 4
 - Rural Gigabit Connectivity Voucher Scheme
 - Mobile booster project

4.6 Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile - 5G research

Overview

- 4.6.1 CDS has commissioned some independent research into the economic impacts of 5G specific to our region. It is proposed that this research, along with other resources, will be used to help DCC and SCC formulate their future 5G strategy and help them agree an approach

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.6.2 This activity is not at a delivery stage. The first draft of the research report is due in November 2020.

Next Steps

- 4.6.3 Following input into the first draft report in November, a final report is expected in December. This will then be provided to the CDS board before then deciding next steps.

Timing

- 4.6.4 SCC will need to decide an approach to 5G over the course of 2021.

Funds

- 4.6.5 Future costs are unknown at this stage. Costs to-date for the research and report are circa £16,000.
- 4.6.6 Government is looking to Local Authorities to promote the take up of 5G and to encourage 5G infrastructure. Additional support may be required to handle public concerns about 5G.

4.7 Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile - Community Challenge Programme

Overview

- 4.7.1 CDS has piloted a Community Challenge Programme in a number of communities across the area. The Community Challenge Programme enables local communities to select an approved private sector partner and co-produce a broadband solution that works best for them with some financial support and advice from CDS.
- 4.7.2 Pilots were initially successfully trialled in Harford and Lower Combe in Devon with Openreach and Airband, as well as in Yatton in North Somerset with Openreach. Further schemes are currently underway across the region, including Churndon in North Devon, Northleigh in East Devon, Skillgate in Somerset West & Taunton and Charlton Musgrove in South Somerset, partnering with BDUK's Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme to gap-fund schemes. In total 458 homes and businesses will have access to full fibre to the premise broadband with the capability to deliver speeds up to 1 Gbps. The pilots have been supported by £146,700 capital funding from CDS. The pilots have proved effective at enabling local people in communities with different needs to co-produce a broadband solution that works best for them, with CDS support. Each community has had different characteristics and challenges, ranging from deeply rural areas and protected landscapes to urban fringes. CDS is continuing to apply this good practice learned from these pilots to help other communities to develop their own solutions. This is under development and adds a new dimension to complement the CDS broader programme. It also supports the UK Government's Gigabit capable/full fibre policy.

Offer

- 4.7.3 This scheme offers communities a solution by combining a number of funding sources along with contributions from the community as well.
- 4.7.4 CDS continue to work to identify communities who could benefit from the scheme.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.7.5 This is an activity that is already in progress.

Next Steps

- 4.7.6 CDS to continue to work to identify communities who could benefit from the scheme.

Timing

- 4.7.7 Ongoing

Funds

- 4.7.8 This project utilises a mixture of Government Rural Gigabit Connectivity vouchers, community contributions and top up funding from CDS' challenge fund.

4.8 Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile - CDS Phase 2

- 4.8.1 Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) is a local government-led partnership which is working to extend superfast broadband infrastructure in areas where commercial providers do not plan to deliver a Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband service. NGA broadband is a service capable of delivering download speeds of at least 30Mbps

- 4.8.2 The CDS board approved the procurement strategy and Building Digital UK (BDUK), the national competency centre for broadband, formally assured and approved the procurement documentation to extend NGA to secure broadband infrastructure providers on a gap funded model.

Offer

- 4.8.3 CDS is now part way through the Extending Next Generation Access (NGA) Broadband & Gigabit Access OJEU procurement, seeking to award contracts to six Lot areas across our region.

Ask

- 4.8.4 For bidders to model as many of the 97,000 NGA white premises as possible with the subsidy available. Certain rural and business premises outputs are required in order for us to meet funding requirements specifically with the LEP, ERDF and DEFRA.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.8.5 The procurement is part way through and contract award for all Lots is required by the end of December 2020.

Next Steps

- 4.8.6 CDS have presented their reports to Board and seek Cabinet approval to move to preferred supplier stage.

Timing

- 4.8.7 Procurement needs to complete by 31 December 2020. Build is then expected to commence early in 2021 with completion approximately three years later.

Funds

4.8.8 This project utilises a mixture of funding streams

Grant funding source	Amount	Status	Requirements
BDUK	£18,785,125	Confirmed	Spend by Dec 2024
Heart of the South West LEP	£7,010,520	Confirmed	Spend by Dec 2021
ERDF	£2,981,680	Confirmed	Spend by June 2023
RDPE	£3,165,000	Confirmed	Spend by June 2022
Local authorities	£5,601,475	Confirmed	Spend by Dec 2024
Total	£37,543,800		

4.8.9 Ask of Government: Fibre for all & Gigabit capable

4.9 Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile - CDS Phase 2 Lot 4

Overview

4.9.1 The Lot 4 contract was awarded to Airband in 2016 and is currently in build. Airband recently submitted a change request to move over to a full fibre solution, a step change from the Fixed Wireless solution to that point. The change request was approved by BDUK and CDS in May this year.

Offer

4.9.2 This contract is providing improved broadband solutions for circa 18,000 premises in some of the most rural parts of Devon and Somerset. Completion is expected towards the end of 2021.

Ask

4.9.3 Broadband infrastructure in Lot 4 area.

Readiness and Deliverability

4.9.4 The contract is in delivery with completion expected later in 2021.

Next Steps

4.9.5 CDS continue to monitor build progress.

Timing

4.9.6 Completion due towards the end of 2021.

Funds

4.9.7 This project utilises a mixture of funding streams

Grant funding source	Amount
BDUK	£5,254,876
Heart of the South West LEP	£2,168,600
ERDF	£1,321,000
RDPE	£1,835,000
Local authorities	£338,525
Total	£10,918,001

4.9.8 Ask of Government: Fibre for all & Gigabit capable

4.10 Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile - Rural Gigabit Connectivity

Overview

- 4.10.1 The Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) programme commenced in May 2019 and will run until the end of March 2021 with an initial £200 million fund. The FTIR identified that approximately 10% of UK premises, largely in rural and remote locations, would be unlikely to receive full fibre connections by 2033.
- 4.10.2 The RGC programme seeks to ensure that the final 10% of premises are addressed at the same pace as the rest of the UK. The programme is testing a hub model, with the hub being a public sector building upgraded with gigabit capable connectivity. Delivering this connectivity may result in the surrounding area becoming increasingly viable for commercial intervention, stimulating the market to build more networks in these areas. A £3 million pilot of this approach was first unveiled in February 2019 via the LFFN budget which is now expected to connect 119 schools. Schools in the CDS region were connected as part of this pilot.
- 4.10.3 The RGC Programme will be delivered using a phased approach. The Programme is initially working with Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care as two major public sector estates in rural areas. Progress of the initial phases, which has identified potential hub sites in priority areas, will be monitored and, utilising lessons learnt, may extend opportunities to more areas in the future.

Offer

- 4.10.4 As part of the UK Government's Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme, business and residents in some of the hardest-to-reach places in the UK are eligible for additional funding towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband to their premises when part of a group project. Group projects are when two or more residents and/or SMEs get together to combine their vouchers towards the shared cost of installation. Single connections are not eligible for additional funding. Group projects in rural areas (broadly defined for England & Wales as DEFRA D, E and F) with broadband speeds of less than 30Mbps can use Rural Gigabit Vouchers worth up to £3,500 for each small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), and up to £1,500 per residential premise to support the cost of installing new gigabit-capable connections.

Ask

- 4.10.5 CDS seeks to promote the take up of these vouchers. It is also possible for stakeholders to help identify communities/premises they believe may be eligible.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.10.6 This is an activity already in progress. Suppliers in our area are actively building based on a demand led model funded in part by these vouchers.

Next Steps

- 4.10.7 CDS to continue to help promote the Government scheme and work with the districts to help them identify opportunities.

Timing

- 4.10.8 Currently the voucher scheme is due to expire in March 2021 but it is possible than an extension to the scheme will be announced.

Funds

4.10.9 Currently all funds for this scheme come via DCMS.

4.10.10 Ask of Government: Fibre for all

4.11 Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile - Mobile Booster Project

Overview

4.11.1 The project aims to address small businesses and some residential premises in partial or total indoor mobile “not spots” and improve their indoor 4G coverage by acquiring and installing a signal booster through a universal voucher scheme across the Heart of the South West.

Offer

4.11.2 The project will allow potential beneficiaries to apply for a voucher via an online portal and self-certificate eligibility. Once a voucher is awarded, the beneficiary will contact their preferred supplier from an authorise list who will use the voucher to install an indoor 4G booster.

4.11.3 The project will look to target 1,250 beneficiaries over the lifetime of the project, which will complete in March 2022. The project will focus on small businesses with the estimation that 65% of take up will be from SME's with the remaining 35% of vouchers will be taken up but residential and home workers.

4.11.4 The value of each voucher will be £800. This will cover the cost of the signal booster and installation and, along with match funding, would incentivise the supplier. The match funding from small businesses and residents benefiting from the voucher scheme will be an average of £200.

Ask

4.11.5 The project is funded by the Heart of the SW LEP Growth Deal Digital Extension grant funding. If the project looks to exceed its outputs, addition funding would be sought.

Readiness and Deliverability

4.11.6 Grant funding agreement has been signed between SCC as CDS accountable body and LEP. Full project launch will happen in October 2020.

Next Steps

4.11.7 Internal systems are in place to operate the scheme including on-line voucher application and supplier database. Once formal launch as occurred, continued publicity to push the scheme will continue with the support of district Economic development teams, Federation of Small Business and other local business partners

Timing

4.11.8 The project will run from October 2020 and cease delivery end of December 2021. Full project closure will occur end March 2022

Funds

4.11.9 Total cost of project is:

	Growth Deal	Public Match	Private Match	Total
Capital	£1 million		£250,000	£1.25 million
Revenue		£96,000		£96,000
TOTAL	£1 million	£96,000	£250,000	£1.346 million

4.11.10 Match funding is £346,000 which is 20% of total project cost

4.12 Strategic and Locally Significant Road Infrastructure

Overview

- 4.12.1 The activity includes seeking further investment in key strategic roads to improve economic connectivity between Somerset and the rest of the UK; and improve selected local road connections necessary to unlock the growth and development of our main settlements.
- 4.12.2 We will work with Highways England and the local highways authority to deliver strategic road infrastructure improvements, including upgrades to the A303, A358, A38, A39, M5 junctions 22 and 23, and the associated Edithmead and Dunball junctions. This will improve accessibility within Somerset and to strategic economic locations outside the county, including airports and the major cities of Bristol and Exeter, thus making Somerset a more attractive place for investment and in which to do business. We have already developed schemes, but need at least £1 million to complete this, and funding of more than £100 million will be needed for the works.
- 4.12.3 We also need support to deliver important local road projects including the Cannons/Cross Rifles junction in Bridgwater and Toneway in Taunton. Funding has been allocated for several schemes, but greater flexibility over the timing of delivery is needed, whilst we need additional funding to deliver others.

Offer

- 4.12.4 We have plans in place for major road improvements. There are several separate planning processes underway to secure funds for various projects.

Ask

- 4.12.5 £1 million to complete technical work, and £100 million to deliver these schemes

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.12.6 Somerset County Council is the highways authority, and will work closely with Highways England. Other stakeholders include the Department for Transport, Peninsula Transport, the sub-national transport body, the HotSW LEP and its Local Transport Board.
- 4.12.7 A business case has been or is being prepared for each project.

Next Steps

- 4.12.8 Development consent is being sought for the A303 and A358 projects. Planning consent will be needed for the A39 improvements. Planning consent may be needed for improvements to the A38 corridor to Bristol Airport.
- 4.12.9 Business cases are being prepared. HM Treasury Green Book business cases have been completed for many of the schemes.
- 4.12.10 Funding is being sought for each of the schemes.

Timing

- 4.12.11 Delivery dates are not yet fixed. However:

- A303 proposed start date is 2021
- A358 proposed start date is 2023 or 2024
- A39 proposed start date is 2023
- A38 corridor proposed start date is 2022

Funds

4.12.12 Capital cost estimates include:

- A303 Sparkford to Ilchester – up to £250 million
- A358 Southfields to M5 – up to £500 million
- A39 Walton-Ashcott bypass - £90 million
- A38 corridor - £6 million
- M5 J23 - £6 million
- Dunball junction - £5 million
- Canon Cross Rifles junction - £7 million
- Toneway corridor phase 2 - £11 million

4.12.13 Revenue funding is needed for scheme development. Around £1 million is needed for the non-Highways England schemes.

4.12.14 Most schemes do not have match funding in place, but some Section 106 funds and other developer contributions have been secured for the Dunball junction and Canon Cross Rifles junction.

4.13 Rail Connectivity

Overview

4.13.1 We are working towards improving rail connectivity in parts of Somerset to increase connectivity and inclusion, and reduce road traffic, congestion and carbon emissions. We are working closely with different partners across the rail industry with the aim to facilitate improved connectivity:

- Within Somerset and between those communities with an existing station or with aspirations to develop a new one
- With key regional centres, e.g. Exeter, Bristol, Bath
- To connect with nationally important stations and interchanges, e.g. London, West Midlands (with potential future link to HS2) and South Wales

4.13.2 The nature of rail investment (scale and timing) means that we are less likely to be directly involved in delivering rail schemes but rather working with the rail industry, key partners and other stakeholders to identify needs, help provide the evidence base and work with local communities to ensure that improvements are delivered effectively.

Offer

4.13.3 We will work with arrange of stakeholders to develop and deliver our proposals. These include:

- The Department for Transport
- Office of Road and Rail
- Train operators – both passenger and freight
- Peninsula Transport, a subnational transport body

- Community rail partnerships
- Rail interest and campaign groups
- Heritage rail groups

Ask

4.13.4 Funding for new stations and existing station improvements.

Readiness and Deliverability

4.13.5 Text

Next Steps

4.13.6 Maintain and, if possible, extend strategic engagement with all stakeholders. Continue to actively support and promote funding opportunities and engage and encourage active lobbying of key government bodies.

4.13.7 Individual rail delivery projects will require planning permission, and these will be developed at the appropriate time.

Timing

4.13.8 Not yet known.

Funds

4.13.9 Revenue funds will be needed to develop project business cases.

4.13.10 Capital costs are not determined at this stage but are likely to be significant.

4.14 Rail Connectivity: Wellington Station

Overview

4.14.1 The project to re-open Wellington Station is part of a wider project to create a Devon and Somerset Metro network. This includes restoring rail access to Cullompton station too. Somerset West and Taunton Council is working in partnership with Mid Devon District Council to develop the business case for re-opening both stations. Other key partners in the Devon and Somerset Metro Group include: Somerset County Council; Devon County Council; Network Rail; Great Western Railway; the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership; Wellington Town Council; and Cullompton Town Council. The project is also supported by Rebecca Pow (MP for Taunton Deane) and Neil Parish (MP for Tiverton and Honiton).

Readiness and Deliverability

4.14.2 This project is building on existing activity. The partnership conducted a number of studies to assess the scope for re-opening stations at Wellington and Cullompton. These studies considered the likely patronage from the stations, the options for providing train services to them, and the technical feasibility of providing stations for the two towns. This has informed a successful Restoring Your Railway bid submission, and the subsequent development of the SOBC and further GRIP 3 work.

Next Steps

4.14.3 The Strategic Outline Business Case is due to be complete in December 2020. The final products will include: an Options Assessment Report; an Appraisal Specification Report; Environmental

Appraisal; Risk Statement; and SOBC (Strategic, Economic, Commercial, Financial and Management Cases).

4.14.4 Planning permission will be required once the final preferred options are determined for the site locations, access and associated works.

Timing

4.14.5 Delivery is estimated to be in 2025.

4.15 Rail Connectivity: Gravity and Bridgwater Connectivity

Overview

4.15.1 The Gravity site is a nationally significant destination for inward investment and will deliver over 4,000 jobs, bolstering GDP by more than £1 billion. It has a key part of play in delivering the Government's Industrial Strategy, acting as key location for clean growth and advanced manufacturing. A key aspect of this is ensuring that that site can offer a multi-modal transport solution for servicing the economy, including strategic connectivity in relation to rail.

4.15.2 The provision of a passenger and rail freight service will serve as a key attractor to expedite and secure investment. The aim is therefore to reopen the branch rail line into the site, just off and connected to the mainline between Bristol and Exeter. The reopened connection would deliver substantial added potential for the site to accelerate sustainable growth in a manner consistent with the Government's Clean Growth and Industrial Strategies. In general terms the new railway to the gravity site is intended to comprise of.

- A new turnout and spur line of 300 metres from the main line
- A new crossover on the main line just north of the new turnout
- A new single track to the development site
- A new freight siding with a loop
- A new freight siding
- A new passenger line and new single faced platform
- Associated signalling, telecoms, power and civils work

Offer

4.15.3 Feasibility work has been undertaken. This scheme will enhance a site with the potential to deliver up to 100,000 sq m of commercial floorspace and 4,000 new jobs.

Ask

4.15.4 Government investment would help to deliver the scheme.

Readiness and Deliverability

4.15.5 The Local Plan identifies support for reinstatement of the rail head to support the Enterprise Zone (Policy B16).

4.15.6 Preliminary engineering studies carried out between 2007 and 2010 indicate that whilst much of the original sidings and track have been removed, the track bed remains in place and the embankment was considered to be in a serviceable condition. It concluded that subject to detailed feasibility and viability studies, rail contract and statutory processes, it would be feasible to reconnect the site to the main line. More recently, Pre-GRIP (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) work has been undertaken by This is Gravity Limited in collaboration with Network Rail.

This indicates the deliverability of a scheme for both passenger and freight with no negative impacts upon existing rail services.

Next Steps

- 4.15.7 A detailed business plan needs to be developed. A preferred option has been identified.
- 4.15.8 Planning permission will be needed for this proposal. The land is safeguarded for rail use.

Timing

- 4.15.9 Delivery by the end of 2024 is achievable.

Funds

- 4.15.10 The total cost is thought to be between £45 million and £55 million, including contingency. Funds could be sought from Government or privately. Business Rate retention from the Enterprise Zone could possibly be used for this scheme. However, the scheme would need to be forward-funded and the funding repaid with Business Rate receipts.

4.16 Rail Connectivity: Shepton Mallet

Overview

- 4.16.1 The proposal is to create a modern commercial passenger service to Shepton Mallet in Somerset, by using the East Somerset branch line, from Witham Friary near Frome, which is currently partially in use as commercial freight route for Mendip Rail Ltd. This is a consortium of the aggregate 'super-quarries' between Shepton Mallet and Frome, with a terminus at Merehead Sidings/Torr Quarry, near the village of Cranmore.
- 4.16.2 The proposal is to utilise and upgrade the existing track bed to Mendip Vale Halt for passenger services between Shepton Mallet in the west, via the existing Mendip rail station of Frome, through to Westbury in Wiltshire, with the latter acting as an interchange for routes to London, Swindon, Bath and Bristol, and the wider South East and West Midlands.
- 4.16.3 A preliminary feasibility study by Atkins Rail was commissioned by Mendip District Council and the East Somerset Railway in 2007 to originally explore the idea of extending the line to Shepton Mallet for the heritage service. The conclusion of the study indicates feasibility and an indicative nature of the works required. Further work is now needed to update and refine the original cost estimates for groundworks, and to re-evaluate the proposal for a commercial passenger line, with integrated parking/bus service provision.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.16.4 An unsuccessful application was submitted to the Restoring your Railway DfT Ideas Fund. It is proposed that commissioning further feasibility work now occurs in 2021 when a clearer picture of the medium- and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 on railway funding and operations emerges.

Next Steps

- 4.16.5 Further consultation and evidence scoping will continue to take place in 2020-21. We would now expect to commission feasibility work in 2021, depending on the continuing impact of Coronavirus on railway operations. This is to enable proper engagement with Network Rail and TOCs through the process. Delivery of preliminary feasibility work for a passenger line would be expected to take four to six months.

Funds

- 4.16.6 Preliminary feasibility work is thought to be in the region of £30,000 to 50,000. The longer-term cost is estimated to be in excess of £10 million.

4.17 Flood Risk: Bridgwater Barrier

Overview

- 4.17.1 This project, led by the Environment Agency and supported by Sedgemoor District Council, will deliver the Bridgwater tidal barrier and associated improvements to downstream flood protection banks in order to reduce the risk of flooding from the tidal river Parrett. This features in the Somerset Levels & Moors Flood Action Plan (2014) which was developed by a range of organisations, including Somerset County Council and the Environment Agency. The barrier will result in 12,800 existing homes, businesses and infrastructure within Bridgwater and surrounding areas benefiting from a reduced risk of tidal flooding. The works will enable significant new housing and employment growth to come forward on sites already allocated for development in the adopted local plan.

Offer

- 4.17.2 The total scheme cost is £99 million. £79 million has been secured from Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA), and £4 million from the local levy. Further partnership funding will be secured from developer contributions through planning agreements.

Ask

- 4.17.3 £10 million is needed towards the partnership funding contribution.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.17.4 Development of the scheme is underway. Next steps are set out below.

Next Steps

- 4.17.5 The scheme is currently progressing through a Transport Works Act Order (including planning permission), with anticipated completion in early 2021. An outline business case has been prepared, and the full business case for FDGiA is being prepared. Contractor procurement is expected in 2021, with construction to start in 2022 and complete in 2024. Commissioning is expected in 2025.

Timing

- 4.17.6 Commissioning is expected in 2025.

Funds

- 4.17.7 £10 million is sought towards a total cost of £99 million.

4.18 Flood Risk: Taunton Flood Attenuation

Overview

- 4.18.1 The Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme (TSFAI) adopted by the Council earlier in 2020 identifies a suite of flood alleviation projects and measures phased over 30 years, to make them easier to deliver and fund, and which will all need to be delivered to ensure that flood risk to the Town of Taunton is minimised. This long-term strategic solution to reducing flood risk to Taunton and, where possible, to the wider catchment was the culmination of six years

partnership working by Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and the Environment Agency (EA), with additional funding/grant support from the Heart of the South West LEP and Somerset Rivers Authority.

- 4.18.2 The TSFAIS Programme will provide protection to thousands of properties, key infrastructure (such as the BT Exchange, Police Station, Royal Mail Sorting Office, Medical Centres, Primary Schools), resilient network routes (A3027, A3087, A3038, routes into the Town Centre and to Taunton Train Station) and maintain economic activity through access to businesses and services. It is estimated that a single major flood in Taunton would cost the local economy approximately £50 million. It will enable the large regenerations sites in Taunton Town Centre including Firepool and Tangier to come forward.
- 4.18.3 Going forward, in Year One, the Council will focus on working closely with partners including the Environment Agency to get the priority funded projects moving. It will also start to lay the foundations for exploring how and when some of the later projects might come forward.
- 4.18.4 There is no single option that completely removes or reduces flooding in isolation. Instead, a combination of around a dozen interventions is required. This combination of works is referred to as the “preferred approach”. This ‘Preferred Approach/Framework’ can reduce flood risk in Taunton today and in the future, when taking account of climate change, to protect existing property in Taunton and to allow the town to develop safely and holistically.
- 4.18.5 There are three ‘short-term’ projects the council is focusing on in the next few years:
- **River Tone Left Bank Flood Defences** – a combination of repair, replacement or new flood defences between Frieze Hill and Town Bridge to provide reduced flood risk to key transport routes including the A3027 Bridge Street, A3027 Staplegrove Road and the A3087 Station Road, and the North Town and Firepool areas of Taunton, including SWT’s multi-million pound regeneration site
 - **Firepool Lock gate** and associated bund between the River Tone and Bridgwater to Taunton Canal – raising levels of the lock gates and area around them in conjunction with creating an earthen bund defence between the canal and the river from Firepool to Obridge which will prevent flows entering the canal. This provides reduced flood risk for Priorswood and Crown Industrial Estates and Bathpool
 - **Longrun Meadow** flood attenuation improvements - optimisation of the existing flood storage area at Longrun Meadow through new embankments, inlet and outlet to remove excess water from the river and control when the water is put back into the River. This reduces flood risk in Taunton Town Centre and further downstream including areas of North Town, Firepool, Priorswood and Crown Industrial Estates, Bathpool and benefiting tributary flows reducing flood risk in Tangier area, which is also a key Town Centre regeneration site.
- 4.18.6 Other short - medium-term (10-15 years) projects in the TSFAI programme are:
- Raised or New Defences on the Tangier Tributaries (short term 0-10y)
 - Raised or new defences on the River Tone and its Tributaries (short/medium term)
 - Pumping station at Bathpool (short term 10-15y)
 - Preventing backflow from railway culverts (short term 10-15y)
 - River Restoration and flood storage at Vivary Park (short term 10-15y)
 - Raising Castle Street Bridge & Bus Station footbridge (as opportunity arises);

- Mill Stream flow diversion (as opportunity arises)

4.18.7 The long-term approach:

- Upstream storage at Bradford on Tone (30yr)

Offer

4.18.8 SWT is the lead partner on the short-term programme of projects, and is looking to deliver key elements of the design and construction of the first two of these projects (Firepool lock gates and River Tone left bank defences) with £6 million of Council funds.

Ask

4.18.9 £2.6 million is needed to close the funding gap for the total £8.6 million investment required for the three short term measures listed.

4.18.10 The Council has approved £6 million funding from New Homes Bonus (NHB) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Environment Agency FDGiA will be applied for. However, this relates to infrastructure only and due to how it is calculated it is anticipated it may only deliver a very small contribution. Wessex Local Levy and SRA grant will also be applied for. The Council is looking for other funding streams to support this important work on flood defence that will support the economy and growth of Taunton.

4.18.11 The entire TSFAIS programme totals c. £190 million of investment over 30 years. The Council will clearly not be able to progress the programme without significant funding support.

Readiness and Deliverability

4.18.12 For all the projects, detailed design is required and scheduling of works to manage potential detriment to other areas.

Next Steps

4.18.13 Next steps are:

- **Firepool** – currently in late design stage, with delivery anticipated late 2021
- **River Tone left bank** – design stage during 2021/22, with delivery anticipated in 2022/23. A Collaborative Agreement between SWT and the EA for the River Tone Left Bank Flood Defences will be signed early 2021. A Project Brief and Programme is being jointly progressed with a view to letting a contract via the Environment Agency's supplier framework by February 2021 for the detailed design, consents and permissions. Landowner liaison is taking place to identify any potential issues and protocols for access to land and notification of works/investigations and establish conflicts or opportunities for working. An Engagement and Consultation Plan will be prepared.
- **Longrun Meadow** – design and delivery during 2022-2024

Funds

4.18.14 SWT has approved an allocation of £6,000,000 of capital funding from already earmarked Community Infrastructure Levy, New Homes Bonus and s106 contributions, to progress the identified short term priorities of Firepool lock gates, improvements to the left bank of the River Tone (Frieze Hill to Town Bridge), and Longrun Meadow.

4.18.15 The entire Preferred Approach is phased to make it more affordable, as it is unlikely to attract full or majority funding from central government Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGIA). Funding sources

that have been identified by the SWT and EA Project Team include: Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), New Homes Bonus and the Wessex Flood Defence Committee. However additional sources continue to be sought.

4.19 Flood Risk: Blue Anchor

Overview

- 4.19.1 This activity comprises significant coastal defence works to protect the sea cliffs, the B3191 Blue Anchor to Watchet road, the services therein and the adjacent properties. The aim is to protect property, infrastructure and land. The scheme is the lowest cost option of those considered, the option most likely to be able to be delivered in a timely manner and the most deliverable of the options given the clarity regarding land ownership.

Offer

- 4.19.2 Somerset West and Taunton Council agree in principle to accept responsibility and ownership for the coastal protection structure together with a commuted sum to cover estimated maintenance over the estimated lifecycle of the asset, provided that the new infrastructure is funded entirely by the Highways Authority, Environment Agency and or other external contributors.
- 4.19.3 A Supplementary Capital Budget of £3,550,000 has been approved for the delivery of the long-term coast protection capital works, funded entirely by expected contributions from Somerset County Council and the Environment Agency.

Ask

- 4.19.4 Requests are being submitted to the Environment Agency for grant in aid and also for local levy funding

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.19.5 The project builds on activity that has already taken place.
- 4.19.6 Significant option appraisal work has taken place and a preferred option has been identified. As this is primarily a project to protect a highway the vast majority of funding is being provided by Somerset County Council with the project being managed and delivered by Somerset West and Taunton Council. Additional funding has been sought from the Environment Agency and we are awaiting the outcome of these applications. The project requires approval before detailed designs are started.
- 4.19.7 Agreement regarding future ownership and the funding of and responsibility for the ongoing maintenance and any repairs remains outstanding but is currently proceeding through the Somerset West and Taunton Council committee cycle (Full Council 1 December 2020).
- 4.19.8 The activity requires planning permission. It is not yet in place as there are no final designs yet in place for the scheme.

Next Steps

- 4.19.9 Detailed design work needs to be completed, and then planning permission secured.
- 4.19.10 Somerset West and Taunton Council will complete the emergency works to the existing sea defence wall and import approximately 1,800 tonnes of rock armour to buy time for the design and

implementation of the main scheme. This work has been awarded funding from the Environment Agency and there are no costs to Somerset West and Taunton Council.

- 4.19.11 Somerset West and Taunton Council officers will engage with local landowners to secure the use of the private land necessary for access, storage, and construction of the scheme. The Council will establish a contract with designers to take forward the scheme, and start engagement with the contractors. The Council will establish a multi-agency project board and timeline of activity.

Timing

- 4.19.12 The project can be delivered in 2021 or 2022 depending on the length of time for designs and permissions, and the availability of appropriate delivery vessels and rock armour.

Funds

- 4.19.13 It is estimated that the total capital cost of delivering the scheme will be £4 million. The vast majority of funding will come from SCC as the Highways Authority. Land required is expected to be free of charge. Further funding has been sought from the Environment Agency through both Grant in Aid and Local Levy routes.

4.20 Strategic Sites: Gravity Enterprise Zone

Overview

- 4.20.1 We have been progressing the delivery of the Gravity Enterprise Zone for several years, to support delivery of a smart campus focusing on Clean Growth principles with the stated ambition being to create a multifunctional campus with digital connectivity, smart mobility, including rail restoration. The EZ also has the potential to support the Freeport proposal at Bristol with opportunities to support advanced manufacturing facilities as part of a wider Freeport Zone for the South West. Forward funding for infrastructure, including the reinstatement of a rail link into the site, will help to stimulate the development of high technology and energy-related businesses on the site, creating thousands of high-quality jobs and improved productivity.
- 4.20.2 The proposed activities will include a delivery of a demonstrator and incubation space to attract start-ups and growing companies and to showcase the clean growth principle and smart campus concept alongside the preparation of the local development order. Additionally, the project seeks to deliver a smart mobility centre to provide transport innovation solutions on and off site.
- 4.20.3 The UK's ambition to build its own Gigafactories is recognised and Gravity could support the UK's government in fulfilling that ambition by hosting the first Gigafactory in the country. Additionally, the site is ideally located to support the latest government's initiative – freeports. Gravity and Sedgemoor District Council work closely with WECA and Bristol Port on designing a proposal that would create a multi-site freeport delivering jobs and wider social benefits in the area. Gravity, as a quite contained site, could be an ideal testbed for 5G and other technologies (e.g. autonomous vehicles, smart mobility, etc.).
- 4.20.4 The site requires a direct connection to WPD network – this project seeks Government's support in grid reinforcement between Bridgwater and the site to enable high-wattage power connection to enable the development.

Offer

- 4.20.5 The project will be delivered by This Is Gravity Limited together with Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, the HotSW LEP, the Department for International Trade, the Department of Transport, local HE and FE partners and Highways England.
- 4.20.6 Use of retained business rates to forward-fund site infrastructure
- 4.20.7 Delivery of a Local Development Order to accelerate delivery of the site and provide fast track and agile planning processes aligned to investor timescales and occupier needs
- 4.20.8 Create innovation space and test bed on Gravity

Ask

- 4.20.9 Inclusion of Gravity in the Freeport Zone for the South West.
- 4.20.10 £10m for acceleration of WPD grid reinforcement from Bridgwater to site.
- 4.20.11 £2 million demonstrator and incubator space to attract first occupiers to site and to demonstrate smart campus concept.
- 4.20.12 DfT investment into rail restoration project to enable rail connection to the site (£50 million).
- 4.20.13 Government support to promote the site as a location for a Gigafactory.
- 4.20.14 £5m for smart mobility centre to provide transport innovation and mobility solutions on and off site

Readiness and Deliverability

- 4.20.15 The project is being developed. High level plans are in place for the demonstrator space and the mobility centre. Proposals have been drafted for 5G bid and freeport consultation. SDC is participating in the delivery of the LDO to increase marketability of the site and promote development. Discussions are ongoing with Western Power Distribution and Hinkley Point C regarding power connection. The freeports consultation has ended but no date has been given for when the bidding process might start.
- 4.20.16 A business plan has been developed for a mobility centre.
- 4.20.17 A grid reinforcement project is being led by This is Gravity Limited.

Next Steps

- 4.20.18 Sedgemoor District Council is progressing work on a local development order which will align planning and vision for the site and will send a clear message to potential investors that the site is ready for development.
- 4.20.19 High level plans and costings have been developed for the demonstrator space and smart mobility centre, and these need to be developed further.
- 4.20.20 An energy strategy for the site needs to be prepared.
- 4.20.21 Freeport and 5G bids need to be pursued.

Timing

- 4.20.22 The demonstrator space and mobility centre could be operational by 2022.

Funds

4.20.23 A total of £17 million if funds are sought to deliver the activity set out above. Sedgemoor District Council could potentially borrow up to £4.5 million against retained business rates. Some funds are sought from ERDF.

4.20.24 A further £12.5 million is sought from Government to deliver this activity.

4.21 Other Strategic Employment Sites

4.21.1 There are a number of other significant employment sites that we are working on with development partners, including Nexus 25 at Taunton and the Bunford Innovation Park at Yeovil. Funds for these sites will stimulate private sector investment in delivering premises for new high value businesses, creating hundreds of new jobs and productivity in high technology sectors. These will be supported through the Revolving Infrastructure Fund discussed below.

4.22 Strategic Sites: Bunford Innovation Park

Overview

4.22.1 The BIP will provide innovation and enterprise grow on space for businesses operating within the Aerospace and AEM sectors with a specific emphasis on those working within the clean growth sphere. It will add to the developing ecosystem by aligning itself with existing developments such as Yeovil Innovation Centre and iAero.

4.22.2 BIP is a 59 acre site located adjacent to the A3088 National Freight Route in Yeovil, has the benefit of an existing Local Plan allocation for employment uses, an extant outline consent and recent section 73 consent to allow phased delivery. The site has a capacity for approximately 500,000 sq ft of commercial accommodation. The proposed redevelopment of the site would provide a varied provision of Grow On Space to complement existing innovation accommodation in Yeovil

Readiness and Deliverability

4.22.3 A business plan has been completed for this work.

Next Steps

4.22.4 Outline planning permission was granted in March 2011. Further permissions will be required.

Timing

4.22.5 Phase 1 – Access and Infrastructure Works – 2021/22

4.22.6 Phase 2 – EV charging and Grow-On Space – 2022/23

4.22.7 Phase 3 – Future BIP Delivery – ongoing dependent on market demand

Funds

4.22.8 An application has been submitted for Getting Building Funding. How much? Successful?

4.22.9 The total project cost is over £93 million, comprising:

- £4.6 million for Phase 1 access and infrastructure works
- £20.7 million for Phase 2 EV charging and grow-on space
- £68 million for Phase 3 full delivery of the BIP

5 Creating Attractive Places and Homes

5.0.1 The activities included in this theme are divided into three areas: improving the environment in Somerset’s towns; enabling the private sector to deliver development; and direct delivery of housing. These are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 5.1: Activities to Provide Infrastructure to Enable Growth

Improving the environment in Somerset’s towns
Major town centre regeneration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridgwater Town Deal • Glastonbury Town Deal • Taunton FHSF • Yeovil FHSF
Enabling the private sector to deliver development
Revolving Infrastructure Fund
Direct investment in new infrastructure e.g. schools
Direct delivery of housing
Loan fund to deliver new affordable housing

5.1 Major Town Centre Regeneration

Overview

5.1.1 We are developing integrated programmes of activity for major town centre redevelopment in Bridgwater, Glastonbury, Taunton and Yeovil. Securing £38 million of Future High Street Funds for Taunton and Yeovil, and up to £50 million of Towns Deal funds for Bridgwater and Glastonbury will draw in match funding and investment from other partners. These programmes will deliver thousands of new jobs and homes in these town centres, turning them into vibrant and sustainable places which provide opportunities for many of our excluded residents.

5.2 Major Town Centre Regeneration: Bridgwater Town Deal

Overview

5.2.1 Bridgwater Town Deal is a programme of capital projects that will be funded by Central Government. *Our Vision for Bridgwater is a Town Re-energised* – ensuring the town is better positioned to benefit from existing and future investment in clean energy and clean sustainable growth. A town recognised as a place of education, enterprise and innovation. A town that is socially conscious, culturally rich and colourful with a strong sense of civic pride and community.

5.2.2 The Strategic Aims of the Town Deal are:

- Maximise Our Community Potential – providing skills and support to residents to access employment and start businesses
- Re-energise our Town Centre - stimulating greater diversity of activity and connection, as a place for enterprise and production, alongside the traditional town centre functions of retail, culture and leisure
- Accessibility & Movement – ensuring that Bridgwater is able to function effectively and is well connected both within the locality and across the wider area.

Offer

- 5.2.3 The Town Board is preparing a Town Investment Plan to re-energise Bridgwater and attract investment in clean energy and sustainable growth.

Ask

- 5.2.4 Approval of the Town Investment Plan, and subsequent award of funds.

Readiness and Deliverability

- 5.2.5 A Town Board has been convened, comprising a range of stakeholders. A Town Investment Plan is being prepared, for submission in January 2021. The list of projects that comprise the Town Investment Plan has not yet been agreed.

Next Steps

- 5.2.6 A survey to engage residents and businesses is underway during October 2020.
- 5.2.7 Projects are being developed and a shortlist of projects will be compiled.
- 5.2.8 A bid will be submitted in January 2021.
- 5.2.9 If the Town Investment Plan is successful, then full business cases will be prepared for the projects. Some projects may need planning permission.

Timing

- 5.2.10 The Town Investment Plan will be submitted in January 2021. If this is approved, then full business cases need to be prepared within 12 months, and project must be delivered within six years.

Funds

- 5.2.11 A bid is likely to be for up to £25 million, although an exceptional bid could seek £50 million. Match funds have not yet been secured.

5.3 Major Town Centre Regeneration: Glastonbury Town Deal

Overview

- 5.3.1 Accelerator funding of £500,000 has been secured for:
- Renovation of Building C of the Red Brick Building, for business development, youth and community events
 - High Street enhancements, including cycle racks, trees, hanging baskets, signage and toilet blocks
 - Refurbishment of St Edmunds Hall
 - Community parking facilities at Herbies Field
 - A circular seven-mile footpath
- 5.3.2 A Town Investment Plan is being prepared for a bid of up to £24.5 million, for submission in January 2021. The focus is on:
- Regeneration projects around the Beckery in Glastonbury to create jobs and economic growth
 - A town centre hub for business and skills in the community. A proposal for an Enterprise Centre is part of this proposition and is discussed in detail at section 3.8.
 - Heritage projects

- Sports projects
- Affordable housing
- Transport
- Renewables

Offer

5.3.3 Accelerator projects have already been identified. A Town Investment Plan to promote economic growth, employment and change in Glastonbury is being prepared.

Ask

5.3.4 Up to £25 million of funds from the Town Deal.

Readiness and Deliverability

5.3.5 A Town Board has been convened, representing all sections of the local community, HotSW LEP, Somerset County Council and the local MP. Community and business consultation is underway.

5.3.6 The accelerator projects are ready to deliver. The Town Investment Plan is being developed.

Next Steps

5.3.7 Submission of the Town Investment Plan in January 2021.

5.3.8 Planning permission will be needed for some projects.

Timing

5.3.9 Submission of the Town Investment Plan in January 2021. Accelerator projects will be delivered by March 2021. Delivery of the main TIP projects will commence in 2022.

Funds

5.3.10 Up to £25 million in total is sought for the Glastonbury Town Deal.

5.4 Major Town Centre Regeneration: Taunton FHSF

Overview

5.4.1 The Taunton Future High Street Fund bid was submitted to MHCLG in May 2020 with a total ask of £20.2m. The proposed intervention will enable the Council to deliver long established plans for the regeneration of Taunton town centre. The FHSF bid included the following projects:

- A new, transformational, mixed use development at Firepool in the heart of the town: bringing forward a large stalled site that has laid vacant since 2008. Supporting the development of new housing, hospitality and leisure space, business and innovation space
- A new nationally significant cultural venue and multi events space at Firepool
- Creation of a new pedestrian and cycle route linking the station to the town centre and the River Tone.
- Converting one of the town's most strategically significant riverside locations, Coal Orchard, from a car park to a high-quality mixed-use development, including apartments, retail, workspace, restaurants and riverfront plaza. This will attract new footfall to the High Street and form a key connection between Taunton Station, the Firepool development and the town centre. The project is under construction and scheduled for completion in May 2021.

Offer

5.4.2 Projects costing £85 million will be delivered. The majority of the co-funding will be provided by Somerset West & Taunton Council. Some co-funding has been secured from Homes England.

Ask

5.4.3 £20 million of Future High Street Funding is sought.

Readiness and Deliverability

5.4.4 Stakeholders include Somerset West & Taunton Council, Somerset County Council, the Environment Agency, Homes England, and the HotSW LEP.

5.4.5 At Firepool, initial enabling works, site clearance and land assembly have been completed.

5.4.6 The Coal Orchard development is already under construction.

Next Steps

5.4.7 Initial infrastructure works are scheduled to take place in late 2020.

Timing

5.4.8 A full business case has been submitted to Government.

Funds

5.4.9 £20 million of Future High Streets Funding is sought, towards a total project cost of £85 million.

5.5 Major Town Centre Regeneration: Yeovil FHSF

Overview

5.5.1 *Yeovil Refresh* is an holistic regeneration of Yeovil town centre. This is supported by a strategic vision which will be delivered by a programme of interlinking projects.

5.5.2 This creates a regeneration programme based on three main themes:

- **Strategic Development** – Focused on Cattle Market and Vincents Yard, Glovers Walk and 72-74 Middle Street. These sites individually and in combination present an opportunity to create fundamental change in Yeovil. They will enable the reduction of retail floorspaces, densification of housing, introduction of new commercial and leisure spaces combined with creation of co-collaboration workspace.
- **Improving the Network** – Re-orientation of the transport networks to create an inter connected transport network across all modes of transport. Active travel approaches and creation of shared space focused on pedestrians in the core town centre streets. Tackle air quality and modes of transport.
- **Creating Spaces and Linking Places** - A broad range of public realm interventions were considered that respond directly to the market failure identified in the Strategic Case. The priority for Yeovil is to enhance the core of the town centre with a highly legible series of linked public spaces that create an investment friendly environment, making the town centre a more attractive space to spend time throughout the entire length of the day. A safe, attractive and high-quality public realm will support the wider objectives of the town in providing the connecting network between existing assets and destinations and importantly between the town and the newly developed sites within and around the town centre.

- Complementary Approaches – This theme underpins the three core themes with a planned programme of animation and activity which will use and support the town centre environment.

Readiness and Deliverability

5.5.3 An over-arching plan is being prepared. A bid has been submitted for Future High Streets Funding.

Timing

5.5.4 Delivery will take place between 2021 and 2025.

Funds

5.5.5 The estimated total cost of delivering the activity is £29 million, comprising £27.7 million of capital costs and £1.3 million of revenue costs.

5.6 Major Town Centre Regeneration Multi-Centre Town Deal

5.6.1 This activity is one of Somerset’s strategic ambitions, which is being developed.

Overview

5.6.2 We have set out proposals for investment in Somerset’s four largest towns in other projects. This project will help to deliver development and regeneration in the some of our second-tier towns. We are preparing a proposition for the integrated regeneration of towns including Chard, Shepton Mallet, Watchet and Wincanton, which can potentially be developed into a single Town Deal or four separate Town deals (or possibly applications to the newly announced Levelling Up Fund). Our plans will need at least £25 million of funds to unlock private investment and match funding from other partners. Delivering regeneration in our second-tier towns is a strategic ambition for Somerset, and we have established a group of stakeholders to develop plans for this activity. We will provide more detail in the Spring of 2021.

5.6.3 Our plan is to deliver a range of projects that help meet the aims of the Towns Fund i.e.

- Delivering urban regeneration to make these towns thriving places for people to live and work. This could include projects to increase density in the town centres; improve local assets, including cultural assets; acquire, remediate and regenerate sites; and use planning to bring strategic change and direction
- Delivering skills and enterprise infrastructure, to ensure that towns have the space to support skills delivery and small business development
- Improving connectivity by delivering local transport schemes to complement regional and national networks, and improving digital connectivity

5.6.4 We note that place-based regeneration, skills and enterprise infrastructure, and the delivery of physical and digital connectivity are addressed by other strategic actions in the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan, This multi-centre town deal helps to deliver activity specifically in some of our second-tier towns to complement and help them to benefit from the major strategic investments.

Offer

5.6.5 The regeneration of these towns will help to create jobs, opportunities and greater inclusion in these communities. Starting the process of regeneration will increase confidence, stimulating further investment and development.

5.6.6 We will assemble a package of private investment and match funding to complement any investment by Government in this activity.

5.6.7 We will build on activity which is already underway, including a recently commissioned masterplan for Shepton Mallet.

Ask

5.6.8 We request £25 million of Town Deal or Levelling Up funds from Government to start the process of regeneration in our towns.

Readiness and Deliverability

5.6.9 We are working on the development of plans for these towns. We are identifying, testing and working up opportunities that help to meet the aims and objectives of the Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund.

Next Steps

5.6.10 We will convene a Town Board to lead this project.

5.6.11 We will prepare a Towns Investment Plan to demonstrate how we will deliver regeneration across the four towns, to complement the strategic development that is taking place across Somerset.

5.6.12 Our Towns Investment Plan will set out:

- The contextual analysis for each of the towns, including the challenges it faces, needs, assets, strengths and opportunities. We will identify common needs and opportunities across the towns
- A strategy for the development of each town, setting out a vision, projects that will help to meet this, targets, priorities, and a spatial strategy. We will identify common strategic themes across the four towns, and develop complementary solutions across the four towns
- We will set out the theory of change, to show how investment in each town will lead to sustainable regeneration and growth
- Evidence of the engagement that we have undertaken with local businesses and communities in each of the towns. We will identify how the public and private sectors will work together to deliver regeneration in each of the towns
- Initial proposals for delivery including accountable bodies, high-level business cases, and high-level delivery plans

5.6.13 We will develop initial proposals for each project within the Town Investment Plan

5.6.14 Once we have agreed a Town Investment Plan with Government we will prepare full Business Cases for investment in each of the towns.

Timing

5.6.15 We will develop full plans for the integrated regeneration of Chard, Shepton Mallet, Watchet and Wincanton in 2021.

Funds

5.6.16 In the first phase of work we will identify projects costing a total of £25 million. As part of the process of developing the plans for the towns, we will identify sources of match funding which will help to increase the scope of work that we can undertake.

5.6.17 We will develop a Town Investment Plan and seek £25 million from Government for the implementation of the first phase of this.

5.7 Revolving Infrastructure Fund

Overview

- 5.7.1 We have a number of major residential and commercial development opportunities in Somerset which need enabling infrastructure to get started. We want £150 million grant-in-aid (repayable to Government upon cessation) to create a Revolving infrastructure Fund to invest in enabling infrastructure to kick-start new developments. As development is delivered, we will invest in further enabling infrastructure. Along with parallel investment in training and skills, these projects will create employment for local people in construction, helping to increase inclusive growth.

Offer

- 5.7.2 Accelerated delivery of new homes and new jobs

Ask

- 5.7.3 £150 million grant-in-aid repayable borrowing to create the RIF

Next Steps

- 5.7.4 In the first Quarter of 2021 we will establish a county-wide steering group involving the four District Council, and overseen by the Somerset Growth Management Group (SGMG).
- 5.7.5 The steering group will review and refresh the list of key development sites in Somerset, identifying:
- Location and ownership
 - Type/mix of potential development
 - Anticipated/planned quantum of housing, employment, and other development
 - Potential for the repayment of an investment from the RIF
 - Delivery/planning status and timescales
 - Key barriers to the delivery of enabling infrastructure and site development (actual/known, or possible risks)
 - Stakeholder identification and analysis work (and development of a stakeholder engagement plan – including how this work aligns with the LEP’s infrastructure investment strategy)
 - Identify existing and new funding opportunities (e.g. Levelling Up Fund), and assess how these might be suitable for specific schemes

5.8 Direct Investment in New Infrastructure

- 5.8.1 This project may be merged with the Revolving Infrastructure Fund, above.

Overview

- 5.8.2 In some places in Somerset we need to invest in new infrastructure and public realm developments on a non-repayable basis in order to enable new development by the private sector. These will stimulate the delivery of new homes, new employment opportunities, employment opportunities in construction, and greater inclusion. Many new residential developments result in the need to deliver new schools, additional classrooms and educational infrastructure for the new population. We know from experience that the level of CIL/S106 funding that we can achieve in Somerset from new housing developments is insufficient to fund educational infrastructure as well as other essential infrastructure. Therefore, we are requesting funding to allow us to build school places, so they are ready for new housing. CIL collected from these housing developments will then

be used to help fund future schools, moving us from always experiencing a funding gap to proactively providing school places.

Offer

- 5.8.3 Accelerated delivery of new homes and new jobs

Ask

- 5.8.4 £57 million of new funding for schools in Somerset to be built and ready for the academic year starting Sept 2024 at the latest

5.9 Loan Fund to Deliver New Affordable Housing

Overview

- 5.9.1 Delivery of housing for the residents of Somerset is one of our highest priorities. As local authorities we have delivered significant numbers of new homes and can deliver many thousands more homes in our urban centres, towns and rural areas. To maintain momentum in the delivery of new homes as well as bringing forward additional sites that have been stalled (e.g. harder to deliver brownfield sites), the councils need access to low cost secure lending. Our proposal is that Government creates a facility within the PWLB, at a preferential rate, that allows significant borrowing specifically to deliver new homes.
- 5.9.2 This proposal advocates direct intervention on the part of the Somerset Councils to establish a shared Housing Development Company, supported with a locally controlled and funded Housing Investment Loan Fund, designed to provide funding support to appropriate mechanisms that can unlock new housing, where delivery is stalled on sites on account of financial constraints.
- 5.9.3 The outturn will be increased numbers of directly delivered council homes which are well designed, energy efficient, sustainable and homes to rent and buy on both an affordable and commercial basis.

Offer

- 5.9.4 This project will bring together the separate work possibly already taking place at the individual local authority level, bringing a consistent and coordinated county wide approach. The creation of a new development loan facility will be a shared initiative design to support housing development and generate revolving recyclable funds for reinvestment into future housing delivery.
- 5.9.5 This proposal has a simple aim to encourage, accelerate and unlock housing delivery of new homes through direct delivery, generating income to expand further going forward in a sustainable way.

Ask

- 5.9.6 A borrowing facility with a PWLB rate close to the Bank of England base rate

Readiness and Deliverability

- 5.9.7 This project is a county-wide ambition and is being developed further by a group of stakeholders including all of Somerset's local authorities.
- 5.9.8 This proposal is building on existing activity, which will require the bringing together of current activity and agreeing a coordinated way forward.

5.9.9 Whilst individual councils are already able to provide commercial loans, this tends to be on an ad-hoc basis. The creation of new shared loan facility will require the creation of something new in terms of financial and legal arrangements.

Next Steps

5.9.10 To be confirmed.

Timing

5.9.11 Not yet assessed.

Funds

5.9.12 Total cost is not known at this stage.

