



Prosperity and Economic Development Strategy (Final Draft v1) prepared for

Somerset West and Taunton

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This paper has been produced exclusively for consideration by Somerset West and Taunton Council and is strictly confidential.

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1- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategy is intended to be a framework which supports the transformation of the Somerset West and Taunton (SW&T) economy to a knowledge based one, ultimately leading to greater levels of investment and higher paid jobs.

It forms part of an ongoing transformation of the newly merged council, with a specific emphasis on the economic development themes of People, Place, and Business.

SW&T has a unique opportunity as a new district geography, a newly formed council and new political leadership, as well as some key new stakeholders to the sub-region including the Council's CEO, the LEP CEO and the Somerset Chamber CEO for instance. The strategy aims to deliver on a vision of ensuring that the **place** in which we live, work and spend our leisure time meets the future needs of the next generation, that our **people** are included and supported to become ambassadors for the area and attract in those skills and businesses who are like minded so that the places are re-invigorated and re-positioned for the knowledge economy of the 21st century.

This is seen as a 10 year vision which has been developed through extensive interaction with stakeholders, in order to reach a consensus on those priorities that will have the greatest positive impact upon the local economy, whilst acknowledging the cross cutting themes of the climate change challenge and sustainability.

Over 100 individuals from the public, private and voluntary sectors have contributed to the strategy, generating 700 ideas between them and demonstrating a commitment to work towards making a positive difference.

Based upon the key themes, existing actions and stakeholder ideas, whilst recognizing that limited budget and resources are available, the following priorities have emerged as the most important:

Developing People - through improving inclusivity and career progression and pathways across the District, facilitating improved social mobility through the provision of better job and career opportunities and responding to the skills which businesses need.

Improving Places - the coast and natural capital and its preservation, rural areas including Exmoor National Park, our market towns, the M5 corridor and the more urban areas surrounding it, and Taunton as both County & Garden town by;

- strengthening the tourism offer of our coastal towns, while reducing dependency on this sector alone and diversifying the offer.
- bringing forward appropriate employment land and flexible premises and sites to support both existing business growth across the district, attract new businesses in and facilitate the growth of start-up enterprises particularly along from the M5 Growth Corridor and the rural locations of our district, working collaboratively with local agents & developers
- establishing a world class strategic public and private sector collaborative partnership focused on economic development
- helping our market towns recognize their unique offer, whilst at the same time addressing their challenges, including the protection of cultural and heritage assets
- realising the implementation of the Taunton Garden Town vision as set out in the 'new roots' chapter related to the supportive business environment of digital, creative and cultural businesses and enterprise
- improving underpinning infrastructure to benefit all residents/businesses, especially those isolated communities on the periphery.

Encouraging Business - increasing the number of enterprises, accelerating business growth, supporting interventions to improve levels of productivity and innovation and attracting in targeted Inward Investment;

- encouraging enterprises to start up, survive and thrive
- enabling businesses in SW&T to maximise their growth potential and become more productive through innovation
- fostering the future emergence and capacity of sectors already in SW&T, including linking up supply chains to allow diversification and develop peer to peer traded networks and clusters
- developing a differentiated profile and targeted sector propositions to generate a targeted pipeline of inward investment, working with other institutions including the UK Hydrographic Office and Digital Taunton, by way of illustration

- supporting those unique/longstanding businesses in the area to remain/grow, supporting them as part of a strategic key account management approach, with ongoing aftercare
- through the business engagement strategy and further business analysis, identify those key strategic partners and business accounts that need to form part of the Council's strategic key account management and aftercare programme

These priorities have been used to develop a concise set of action programmes that will make the biggest difference and take forward a co-ordinated approach to delivery. This will help to focus the efforts and impact of partners and investment locally, in Somerset and across the South West. It will also provide the flexibility to plan for change and sustainability, respond to the impacts of Brexit and position the area to benefit from future economic changes and challenges.

The strategy has been developed with the Economic Development Team to facilitate delivery of its objectives, including input from across the whole council, working alongside key partners, not least the County Council and Local Enterprise Partnership.

TOP 6 ACTIONS

Considering all of the building blocks of the strategy, feedback from stakeholders, analysis of intelligence and reports available, and all of the actions identified (Appendix I), the following 'Top 6' actions have emerged.

By focusing upon these in the short (1-3 years) and longer term (3 years+), SWT will potentially have the greatest positive effect upon the economy of the area. These actions have implications across all three themes of People, Place and Business rather than just one, and therefore offer the potential for the largest impact. These are not intended to replace, but rather to complement and sit alongside other work that the Council already has underway, and the wider range of recommendations.

Short term

1. *Become a highly valued strategic influencer and delivery partner for the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Somerset County Council, the Somerset Growth Board and Hinkley C Programme Board and its S106 business support and skills delivery programmes, including management of the Community Impact Mitigation funding(CIM). This is positioning to leverage future funding streams from Government into the District.*

Maintain regular dialogue regarding the implementation of the Economic and Prosperity Strategy, demonstrating alignment with the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) on the three key Opportunity Areas (Advanced Manufacturing, Digital and Nuclear) through the lens of Clean Growth, as well as supporting business support and skills programmes including tourism initiatives and positioning for post Brexit funding opportunities from a future UK prosperity fund.

In the context of the refreshed Local Plan, ensure that key infrastructure projects are identified to lobby Government nationally as well for future transport and other connectivity bids, including faster broadband and digital connectivity.

- 2. Progress key strategic employment sites including Firepool and Nexus 25, as key strategic assets within the Garden Town vision and prospectus.*

Re-visit the Taunton Garden Town implementation plan and build on the previously commissioned Digital Taunton sector strategy and action plan, as well as working collaboratively with UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) to realise their commercial exploitation of maritime big data, a key LEP opportunity within the Local Industrial Strategy.

Work with the County and the LEP to develop the Digital/Big Data inward investment proposition, using the business rates inward investment programme initiative, to generate targeted inward investment leads as well as working with agents/developers to position Nexus 25 in the future knowledge economy and agree a joint marketing strategy with the developers.

Promote success as soon as possible, particularly as Firepool comes forward and ensuring that the Future High Street Fund (if successful) contributes directly to the stated objectives.

- 3. Building on the business engagement strategy, identify and develop a number of Strategic business and institutional relationships by adopting a Key Account Management (KAM) and ongoing aftercare and relationship management programme.*

Immediate examples include fostering the relationship with the UK Hydrographic Office as a significant employer and key collaborative research and development asset to realise the ambition of developing an 'open innovation zone' at the heart of Firepool and the County town centre of Taunton.

In itself, this could form part of a sub-regional LEP M5 corridor Tech Nation cluster, complementing Exeter and Plymouth.

4. Longer term

1. *Explore the potential for a University in Taunton, with a business led curriculum that will help deliver the skills businesses want, attract more Inward Investment and create opportunities for higher value jobs for residents. Also, explore and scope the future potential for a knowledge based Innovation and Technology Park, with links to specialist centres of excellence and research Institutes linked to Higher Education and relevant Universities and Research Institutes and/or Catapults.*

There is an opportunity to build on the UKHO open innovation activity, but also embrace other opportunities arising from the South West Institute of Technology with a focus on advanced engineering and digital, working with Bridgwater and Taunton college and the University Centre.

There are also opportunities to explore and validate emerging opportunities in knowledge economy sectors and clustering such as AI/Big Data and digital technologies already underway with links to the South West Institute of Technology, remote healthcare delivery (telehealth/telemedicine) linked to the care of an increasing elderly population and low carbon renewable energy and environmental technologies (including plastic waste recycling).

2. *Enhanced business support and innovation programme*

Open up dialogue with Somerset County Council and Heart of South West LEP, regarding an integrated, skills brokerage, start-up, innovation and business support and grant programme for SMEs, in order to increase opportunities for sustainable self-employment and improved business growth.

3. *Investigate the potential of attracting a major tourist attraction to West Somerset, to increase tourist numbers and time spent by visitors to SW&T, with possible links to a college for tourism skills, and lobby for improvements to new & existing transport infrastructure (road, rail and sea).*

Summary

SWT's ambition 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. By working collaboratively and in partnership with business and education, and becoming an even more valued partner to the County Council and LEP, SW&T has a bright future and the opportunity to take the lead in environmentally friendly low carbon growth in the South West.

2 - INTRODUCTION

This strategy has been developed specially for the new Council in SW&T through a process of review of existing desk based research and intelligence and extensive stakeholder engagement.

The overriding objective of the strategy is to create a route map towards increased prosperity for SW&T residents and businesses.

The strategy provides a framework to support the transformation of the SW&T mixed economy to more of a knowledge based one, (delivering greater levels of investment and higher paid jobs), which will shape the delivery of the Heart of the South West's original Productivity strategy, the Rural Development Strategy and the Council's refreshed Local Plan and the refresh of the Somerset Growth Plan. It will also inform implementation of the LEP's Local Industrial Strategy, action plan and Strategic Economic Plan.

This strategy is the first for the new combined Council as it continues its transformation focused around the key economic development growth themes of People, Place, and Business:

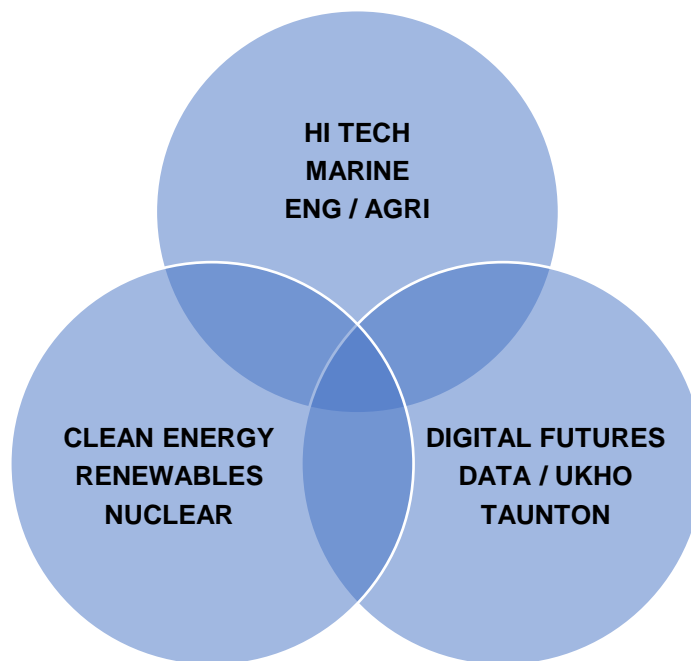
- **People:** putting people first, focusing on vulnerable communities, supporting social inclusion and mobility, responding to their needs and raising their aspirations and life chances.
- **Place:** making better use of development and regeneration opportunities, including strategic employment sites and SW&T's natural capital, by prioritising future investment in infrastructure, assets and public realm to build thriving places.
- **Business:** this underpins everything the strategy aims for, articulating how thriving business communities can be built, with inclusive growth and shared prosperity, supporting new and existing businesses, job creation and attracting inward investment.

SW&T have a unique opportunity with a new district area, a newly created council leadership and executive, as well as new leadership positions amongst key stakeholders including the LEP and the Somerset Chamber. Challenges exist, not least those created by the need to take into account the different spatial and demographic aspects of the District consisting of urban, rural and coastal economic communities. However, the opportunities far outweigh the challenges.

Throughout this strategy runs the theme of “Clean Growth”, mirroring the approach taken by Heart of the South West’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 SW&T is uniquely placed to contribute directly to local and wider economic prosperity.

The three areas 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.



Whilst a very high number of ideas and opportunities have been identified as the Strategy has developed, the primary focus has been placed upon those activities that have an impact across SW&T’s key themes, and that align with a wider geographical area as well as delivering clean sustainable growth and prosperity locally.

3. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

VISION

SW&T is an area blessed with a wonderful combination of existing opportunities and new potential, although there are challenges that must be managed to achieve this. By focusing on these issues and working together, the Council can ensure that the **place** in which we live, work and enjoy our leisure time is ready for the next generation, that our **people** are supported and become our finest ambassadors who attract in those who are like minded and that they all have fulfilling careers in a **business** based locally.

Place and the issues surrounding it are a universal responsibility. It is critical that the climate emergency is urgently addressed and that everything which happens in SW&T is based on a 'circular economy approach' of recycling, re-purposing and re-use where possible and reduction and mitigation of carbon emissions to a responsibly managed and sustainable environment which is appropriately protected, maintained and enjoyed . Everybody has a part to play in this and only when people share both a vision and a desire for common action will progress be made.

This cannot be achieved in isolation, and the ability to communicate and connect with the South West, the rest of the UK and global neighbours is important to facilitate collaboration in every sphere. These comprise: improved green travel services, faster broadband speed and better mobile coverage which will help people at leisure and work, businesses seeking to connect with suppliers and customers, new ways of working and mitigate against the impact of climate change.

People are the heartbeat of SW&T and, like the environment, must be nurtured. Society must be inclusive, respectful and supportive so community spirit thrives where residents are physically and mentally healthy, and where there are clear pathways to help people support each other through volunteering, or to help themselves by raising or meeting their aspirations.

It is important that the young have the skills and aspirations to help succeed as well as an increasing desire to play a part in the future of SW&T's economy; that the senior members of local communities are able to contribute to the future and be supported when they need it; that entrepreneurs and executives are encouraged to develop ventures; and that employees of all ages are engaged, helped and able to develop their skills and skills which business needs them to have to reduce under-employment, increase economic participation and improve prosperity.

Establishment of a University or a research institute presence within SW&T should be the aim, with links to our towns and villages to enable remote lifelong learning for any resident.

Business needs the right people with the right skills at the right time, and this linkage is important to recognize and develop. Natural human curiosity, the ability to change and adapt, and in-built resilience are core to human nature and survival while also being critical to business success. Development, diversification and innovation of process, product and proposition must all be encouraged; enterprise must be stimulated and supported so firms survive the early years and then thrive; local business must be supported; and new businesses must be attracted to SW&T.

As this is achieved, the business community will flourish and go from strength to strength, employment will increase and subsequently local people will benefit, and GVA plus other measures of economic output will improve

OBJECTIVES

This strategy is intended to be a framework which delivers upon this vision.

It will transform the economy to a knowledge base (delivering greater levels of investment and higher paid jobs), which has a central role over the next few years in shaping delivery of the Heart of the South West's Productivity strategy, the Rural Development Strategy and the Council's Local Plan (while informing the development of the LEP's Local Industrial Strategy, action plan and delivery of the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan), The sections of the report which follow focus on linked thematic areas that will impact upon increasing prosperity. These thematic areas are Place, People, and Business.

In considering all the issues involved, it must be remembered that the climate emergency is overarching and must be urgently developed via actions to re-use and recycle resource (a circular rather than a disposable approach) to a responsibly managed / sustainable economy and an environment which is appropriately protected, maintained and used.

Everybody has a part to play in this and only when people share both a vision and a desire for common action that progress will be made. By developing a strategy that considers all of these key themes together, rather than in isolation, SW&T will achieve:

- 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 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.

This strategy is aligned with the recently produced Somerset West and Taunton Council Corporate Strategy and Vision. 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.

4. CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The strategy is not intended to stand alone. In order for it to be effective in improving prosperity sustainably, it needs to take account of and directly contribute to the established priorities for SW&T, Somerset and the wider LEP area, and show alignment with national imperatives. Issues that have shaped this strategy are as follows:

- Climate change
- The Green and Blue Economies
- The diverse range of communities/spatial aspects
- Previous lack of investment (including town centre developments)
- Bringing suitable employment sites forward
- Significant local employers, especially Hinkley C and the UK Hydrographic Centre
- Research, Innovation and Technology (see Taunton Digital)
- BREXIT

Specific contexts that have been considered include the UK Industrial Strategy:

“The challenge for the future The United Kingdom is a successful, competitive, open economy. We have many strengths on which we can build, and some weaknesses we need to address.”

The same is true for SW&T so there is a clear framework for SW&T to factor into any planning, and reference to other strategies reinforce this framework. Other papers reviewed include:

- Nuclear South West:
- UK Clean Growth
- The Somerset Growth Plan and its proposed re-fresh
- HotSW Coastal Productivity Plan
- HotSW Local Industrial strategy

However, it is the SW&T Corporate Strategy that sets the scene:

“We live in a beautiful area where residents have high expectations for good quality services and most enjoy an excellent quality of life. However, some within our community do not share this high quality of life due to being unable to access affordable /appropriate housing, suitable employment or through experiencing poor physical or mental health. Many of the District's rural communities are disadvantaged by barriers to suitable housing and social exclusion through poor access to facilities and limited public transport. Climate change is a global challenge but one which is of particular relevance locally.

The objectives in this strategy are cross referenced to the contexts indicated above at local, regional, national and, where appropriate, international levels. Full commentary on the context surrounding this strategy and the research underpinning it is contained in Appendix G.

When considering the points above, it must be remembered that the climate emergency is critical and must be urgently addressed via a circular approach to a responsibly managed / sustainable economy and an environment which is appropriately protected, maintained and used. Everybody has a part to play in this and only when people share both a vision and a desire for common action that we will make progress.

5. BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE STRATEGY

The Strategy has been developed through extensive stakeholder consultation and review of existing data, intelligence and reports. All of the data analysed is appended to the strategy. The building blocks of the strategy have thus been identified, consisting of **Objectives** mapped to **Challenges, Opportunities and Ideas** and addressed for **People, Place and Business**.

The achievement of the objectives will be reached through the actions indicated in the tables below. More detailed actions plans for each overarching action are included in Appendix F.

5.1 PEOPLE

SW&T are committed to developing the current/future workforce: this involves identifying skills gaps and considering how residents can be supported to train or re-train at any stage in their career development in order to obtain employment, improve their future career prospects and access current/future knowledge economy jobs. Key to realizing this ambition are the following;

Improve Inclusivity across the District <i>The National Industrial strategy has a pillar; 'People', 'creating good jobs and greater earning power for all' which mirrors this strategy's objective. The Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) also focuses upon an inclusive approach to growth so all residents can benefit from future prosperity.</i>		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
SW&T has low social mobility, an ageing and aged population.	Increasing reliance upon social services and other public funds, if not addressed. Two tier divided economy.	Work towards increasing business willingness to employ older workers. Promote volunteering opportunities. Consider working with Musgrove (NB account management) on tele-health, one way of improving wellbeing and increasing the potential for older residents to return to work.
Parents need help to enter (or return) to the workforce.	Loss of skills to the workforce.	Specific programmes (workshop based) developed for returners.

Facilitate improved social mobility through better job/career opportunities The National Industrial Strategy has a focus upon harnessing the power of innovation to help meet the needs of an ageing society'.		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
Increasing numbers of economically inactive.	Identify accurately which groups belong in the category of economically inactive.	Review carried out of categories of economically inactive, with a survey to understand better their reasons. Programmes of support could be developed and targeted to help clearly identified groups.
Young people have unrealistic aspirations and a desire to move away.	Unless addressed, locally represented jobs (and sectors) will remain seen as offering only short term prospects, rather than careers of choice for all. Educational standards and qualifications need to be improved to position individuals as highly desirable to employers, and create the desire to work locally.	Long term issue to be addressed. Requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> opportunities to influence the young people at university school/college public/private initiatives to address perceptions of sectors locally
Develop the skills business needs The LIS states that the HotSW will <i>work with the business community to provide technical skills and non-technical capabilities within the existing and emerging workforce to support the area's industrial future, ensuring all sectors have the people and skills they need with clear progression opportunities and fulfilling careers for residents.</i>		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
Business owners report that skills shortages are very real.	Hard to attract skilled workers because they leave the area.	Develop a plan to attract back skilled workers, through defining the employment offer as a combination of lifestyle, location, attractive businesses and potential.
Opportunities exist to leverage the knowledge, skills and experience of older people.	Active older people result in improved health/wellbeing, reduced care costs, better communities.	Longer term work towards increasing business willingness to employ older workers is required. Promote volunteering, coaching and mentoring opportunities.
Businesses must plan for skill development - don't rely on 3 rd parties	This would create a positive convergence between actions business takes, actions 3 rd parties take, actions employees take. A win/win results.	Encourage sectoral workforce development plans.

<p>Introduce an integrated apprenticeship, brokerage and skills service. This service could be aligned with the Growth Hub and any planned, enhanced business support services.</p>	<p>This could leverage the Apprenticeship Levy, resulting in greater take up of apprenticeships. If businesses were directly involved, improved skills identification would result & providers influenced to deliver required qualifications.</p>	<p>Thorough scoping of concept and optimum geographic coverage required. Budget sources to be identified. The service could pull together current providers of apprenticeships and skills delivery, with 'one front door' for employers. Brokerage and apprenticeship levy pooling services could also be introduced.</p>
<p>Attract a University to be established in SW&T</p>	<p>A new University could offer qualifications and courses business requires, not be student led (as FE frequently is) and could help revitalise the County Town. New models of University in Milton Keynes, Hertfordshire and Herefordshire could offer useful comparators.</p>	<p>A scoping exercise would be required to identify the potential of attracting a University partner. Benchmark against the approach taken in Milton Keynes (MK:U with Cranfield University as sponsor and business led), Hertfordshire and Herefordshire (New Model in Engineering and Technology NMiTE), and that planned in Peterborough</p>
		<p>The University curriculum could be designed with the involvement of sustainable businesses, renewable energy providers and other 'Envirotech' focused organizations creating the first 'Green Business' University which would link with the clean growth, digital and garden town concepts for instance – providing the skills required by the sector. It Could also link to UKHO to leverage digital and big data.</p>

Detailed action plans to address the objectives above are contained in Appendix I

5.2 PLACE

In order to enhance SW&T in the context of 'Place', both infrastructure improvements and a coherent approach to 'place marketing' are important. The availability of employment land/premises, broadband and transport links, and the appeal of our distinct areas within the District need to be addressed. When considering place related issues, it is important to recognize the uniqueness and idiosyncrasies of the various place related characteristics across SW&T.

These include the Coastal strip and its communities, the Rural band running across the countryside in the heart of the area, market towns such as Wellington, the M5 corridor and the more urban areas surrounding it, and Taunton with its role as both County and Garden town. Barclays Bank is launching its third pilot area out of four nationally for its three year 'Thriving Local Communities' programme in Taunton Deane, specifically as it recognizes the largely rural nature of the Taunton Deane constituency.

It is also important to ensure climate change and environmental issues feature significantly in all plans – as mentioned before they are critical and not an optional extra. This should be a recurring theme in developing policy and delivering interventions. The following emerged as the key factors;

<i>Strengthen the tourism offer of our coastal towns</i>		
The Heart of the South West have recently produced the Coastal Productivity Plan. SW&T can align support programmes for the sector with this plan. The National Industrial Strategy includes a sector deal for tourism; similarly a local focus can build upon this. The LIS emphasizes the need for supporting the development of coastal action zones and an emphasis on sustainable tourism.		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
Place marketing; joined up working across Somerset regarding coastal issues will benefit the coast.	Leveraging scarce resources, learning from good and best practice, economies of scale is required.	Develop local actions to support the HotSW Coastal Productivity Plan; include strategic joined up working across Coastal Communities Teams (CCTs).
Development of a college/academy/institute that trains in, and delivers on, excellence in the visitor economy could bring significant benefits.	If Minehead based, it would send positive signals, work experience training for local people, attract students, give increased confidence to entrepreneurs and executives, and help attract year round visitors.	Exploratory dialogue with HE/FE and other possible specialist operators. The model to follow could be Sedgemoor's Hinkley C nuclear college & welding institute.

<p><i>Reduce dependency upon the existing tourism offer increase diversification</i></p> <p>Seeking to attract a new major tourism attraction to West Somerset, would reduce dependency locally upon current tourism offer and aligns with National Industrial Strategy Sector Deal for Tourism.</p>		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
Energy; SW&T could leverage nuclear, marine, solar and wind.	Could SW&T become the leading South West district for renewable energy.	Take forward the SW energy strategy and encourage wider adoption.
Attract a major attraction as an 'anchor' attraction	Increased tourist numbers, and dwell time in SW&T, spin off benefits for the rest of the district and raised profile for tourists and businesses.	Network with local authorities who have succeeded to understand what might be required. e.g. Hastings DC (Jerwood Gallery), Thanet Council (Turner Gallery Margate).
Develop cross channel opportunities to Wales (and Ireland)	Increased tourist numbers linked to a specific offer (e.g. Exmoor)	Feasibility study and partnership working needed to consider ferry or hovercraft linkages
<p><i>Bring forward employment land and business opportunities to leverage particularly along the M5 Growth Corridor through public/private partnerships.</i></p> <p>An opportunity exists to align bringing forward employment sites locally with the LIS's work towards all places becoming 'clean growth settlements', in addition to implementing the rural Local Development Order (LDO) currently under development and adoption by SW&T.</p>		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
Explore opportunity to further develop employment land opportunities close to M5 Junctions 25/26. This could benefit Taunton and Wellington while also attracting visitors to the rest of SW&T.	Currently tourist and business traffic carry on past SW&T along the M5, not seeing Taunton as a destination or Gateway. Reasons need to be created to locate here.	Local plan plays a key part. Tourist and Inward Investment Strategies need to be created and integrated (e.g. visit/study/work/ Invest/live in SW&T). Local Development Orders (LDOs) may be a potential attraction in the absence of Enterprise Zone status

<i>Establish a world class partnership focused on economic development</i>		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
All the ingredients are in place, they just need to be aligned and joined up in the right way. See appendices for a brief analysis of the Allegheny Conference, an exemplar model taken from the USA.	The benefits could be huge. These include cementing key relationships and partnership working and development of broader involvement from other partners. Once established, collaborative working can achieve a huge amount.	Research the Allegheny Conference (Pittsburgh USA - see Appendix H) and possibly other models, then meet with a small group of key actors to explore further. This could replace the former Taunton economic prosperity Board.
<i>Help our Market Towns address their challenges</i>		
The National Industrial Strategy pillar; creating prosperous communities across the UK links to the Government's intention to agree approaches with towns on how the government, local councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships and businesses can work together to deliver growth		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
Towns may be tired and need re-vitalizing.	Town centres are currently on a downward spiral of decline.	Explore potential for Public Realm improvements & town centre masterplanning, as well as helping to develop a town centre retail and evening economy prospectus and inward investment promotional strategy to attract in evening economy operators and restaurants (and funding – see Future High Street Funds).
Changes in retail patterns result in less usage of town centres.	Less trade in towns, less footfall, less opportunity for residents with transport issue to shop locally.	Consider business rates and start-up incentives for independent shops. Support town centre events and activities alongside the proposed activity of the Business Improvement Districts established in Minehead and proposed in Taunton.
Broadband improvements are necessary.	Isolation exacerbated without connectivity (digital as well as physical).	Work closely with the County post the re-let of the Connected Devon and Somerset broadband programme.

Realise the vision for Taunton as a thriving Garden Town and centre for Digital Economy businesses.

Nationally the UK Government's Industrial Strategy states that they will create a new National Re-training Scheme that supports people to re-skill, beginning with a £64m investment for digital skills. The LIS states that 'the Heart of the South West will develop a strategically significant digital cluster'. Locally the 'Growing Taunton's Digital Economy' report (2016) remains to be fully implemented yet aligns with the National Industrial Strategies. The Growth Prospectus for Taunton sets out a vision to attract high value businesses to Taunton, creating new employment and increasing wages.

OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
Place marketing – Taunton; little reason to stop currently – driving past easier for tourists. No lively night-time economy or student and business networking.	County town faces challenges, in part addressing by High Street Regeneration programme; detrimental to residents and business (e.g. increased anti-social behaviour, lack of footfall)	As part of the process to enable the town to regain purpose and pride, ensure the BID (if successful) is supported and align economic activity with key actions being taken forward by the BIDs as part of Garden Town vision and prospectus. Look at best practice in thriving county towns e.g. Exeter or Norwich.
Develop a new entertainment venue in Taunton –possibly a conference centre and arena complex linked to a sports facility.	Increased tourist numbers, spin off benefits for the rest of the district and raised profile. Links to potential Cricket club development and Firepool plans.	Feasibility and partnership working needed to consider options. Exploratory dialogue with operators similar to the O2, NEC and other music promoters.
The delivery of Taunton's ambition to be the leading centre for digital businesses in the South West remains a highly desirable objective	Not implementing 'Growing Taunton's Digital Economy' will potentially leave Taunton behind other areas moving faster with their plans. Would also give credibility to critics of the council regarding a lack of implementation of strategic initiatives in the past.	'Growing Taunton's Digital Economy' Hardisty Jones Associates 2016, should be re-visited, the recommendations refreshed (if necessary) and implemented. The digital sector should also become the primary Inward Investment target for proactive activities.
The provision of makerspaces is currently limited.	Without appropriate space for digital, creative and craft ideas development, the potential in SW&T is unlikely to be fully realized.	In plans for managed office space, incubators and innovation centres, maker space provision should also be considered, especially in rural areas such as Exmoor and West Somerset.

<p><i>Support infrastructure developments to enable rural communities be less isolated</i></p> <p>The National Industrial Strategy has a focus on supporting rural areas in the UK to increase their prosperity.</p>		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
<p>Infrastructure - bus routes are too few, underutilised and the area cannot attract enough drivers.</p>	<p>Isolation of rural communities.</p> <p>Inability of residents to travel for work or educational opportunities</p>	<p>Build better co operation with bus companies and County council to try and create a better bus service</p> <p>Examination of low carbon sustainable transport options such as local self-help/volunteer shared mobility and on demand transport systems.</p>
<p><i>Improve Infrastructure to benefit all residents and businesses</i></p> <p>One of the Government's Foundations of Productivity is to improve UK infrastructure; including road and rail but with a concentration on improvements to the nation's digital infrastructure.</p>		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
<p>Good motorway route exists, cross district travel by car reasonable.</p> <p>Rail to Taunton good with consideration of a new station at Wellington and West Somerset commuter train services being explored.</p>	<p>For tourists and business visitors and commuters; it is easy /quick to get to SW&T (particularly from London).</p>	<p>Promote SW&T as the first coastal West Country stop from London.</p> <p>Progress discussions on Wellington railway station stop.</p>

Detailed action plans to address the objectives above are contained in Appendix I

5.3 BUSINESS

Elements that contribute to 'Business' are;

- Enterprise: the activities and support needed to foster an entrepreneurial culture
- Business productivity and innovation: identifying and helping growth-oriented companies
- Inward Investment: encouraging both foreign owned and UK businesses to locate and grow in SW&T, and retaining existing employers.

Encourage enterprises to start up, survive and thrive.

The National Industrial Strategy pillars aims under 'Business environment' to make the UK the world's most innovative economy. The Economic Plan for the Heart of the South West and the Smart Specialisation Approach prioritises support for knowledge-based development in areas of competitive advantage. The LIS has an ambition, which SW&T can contribute significantly towards, of making the Heart of the South West one of the best areas in which to start and grow a business, and increasing the enterprise rate to achieve and then exceed the national average.

OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
<p>Start-up support is currently very limited.</p> <p>There is some support in the enterprise centres supported by the County in Wiveliscombe and Williton.</p>	<p>Not enough new business starts.</p> <p>Some businesses start inappropriately or without the necessary support</p>	<p>Establish an enterprise support programme, developed collaboratively with the County and/or LEP and building on the current operating model for the County's investment in the enterprise centre network.</p> <p>This could offer pre-start and start-up advice to all; young and older residents included, to inspire an entrepreneurial culture.</p>
<p>Start-up numbers are low although survival rates are higher than UK, West Country and Somerset averages.</p>	<p>Wasted resources and opportunity costs for individuals failing in business, and pressures on publicly funded support (health services, social security).</p>	<p>A structured programme could increase the number of start-ups and improve the 3-year survival rate to 80% (from 70%).</p>

Enable businesses in SW&T to maximise their growth potential and become more innovative

The National Industrial Strategy pillar; 'Ideas' aims to make the UK the world's most innovative economy. The LIS aims to support businesses to manage resources more effectively to achieve clean growth, which could be a cornerstone of any planned business support service in SWT.

OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
<p>Business support is currently fragmented and dis-jointed, as well as not being spread evenly geographically. There is a limited range of support available from the region's Growth Hub.</p>	<p>Businesses do not achieve their potential, and GVA growth is constrained.</p>	<p>Consider introducing an integrated business support service to improve access to finance and greater take up of business support, leading to growth in GVA.</p> <p>Build on the Business Rates programme for innovation support and links to University and research expertise including knowledge transfer.</p> <p>Support programmes developed by Barclays Bank such as rural Agri-Tech fest programmes, under their Thriving Local Economies interventions.</p>
<p>Grant funding is not currently available to encourage SW&T businesses to take up business advice support and coaching, or to invest in capital equipment to foster growth.</p>	<p>Without a 'nudge' businesses (particularly smaller ones) do not take up advice that has been proven to help growth, or invest in capital equipment.</p>	<p>Consider a grant programme (ERDF part funded) as part of any business support service, potentially across the whole LEP area.</p>
<p>The levels of innovation funding in the South West (according to Innovate UK) are below the majority of LEP areas (figures are not available at District level).</p> <p>This implies a lack of innovation currently amongst businesses.</p>	<p>Improving rates of patent applications, and other innovation measures will evidence improved innovation activity within SWT businesses.</p>	<p>An innovation strategy could be developed to pull together commendable local initiatives (e.g. the planned Taunton Innovation Centre). Build on the Set Squared business rates pilot innovation programme, which could inform the development of Firepool's innovation zone and support needed at the future UKHO and Digital Innovation Centre at Firepool.</p>

<p>UK Hydrographic Office represents a significant opportunity.</p>	<p>A key asset to SW&T, the UKHO could offer significant cluster growth opportunities.</p>	<p>Investigate successful cluster development around sector 'anchors' elsewhere; e.g. Agri-tech, Built Environment, Life Sciences and Film production, in Hertfordshire.</p>
<p>Develop plans for a Taunton Innovation Centre, an open innovation centre to develop standalone and UKHO stimulated data / digital work.</p>	<p>Leveraging the presence/brand of the UKHO would bring immediate credibility and secure the long term future for UKHO in Taunton.</p>	<p>Exploratory dialogue with UKHO, St Johns' Innovation Centre Cambridge (as a model to follow) and other relevant operators (e.g. Rothamsted Agri-tech Research Centre) to consider alternatives if the current ERDF bid is unsuccessful, or to shape the Full Application.</p>
<p>Hinkley C is an issue as well as an opportunity.</p>	<p>Boom and bust issues and locally missed opportunities and a restricted area of benefit around Bridgwater.</p> <p>Exacerbates skills shortages and issues.</p>	<p>Continued close collaborative working with Sedgemoor to adopt a joined up 'key account management approach; which could be applied to other key employers.</p> <p>Develop new three years programme for business support and skills, aligned to this economic development strategy and building on non core funded programmes which are still germane and relevant to the economic development themes and priorities.</p>

Foster sectors already in SW&T, attracting supply chain organizations to form successful clusters in our existing and emerging sectors, focused upon Clean Growth. The National Industrial Strategy has a Grand Challenge of 'maximising the advantages for UK industry from the global shift to clean growth'. SW&T could lead on establishing a carbon neutral cluster in digital businesses; meeting the objective of the Industrial Clusters mission (National Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges) of creating a net-zero carbon industrial cluster by 2040. Targeted inward investment activity could focus upon London based digital businesses (e.g. Shoreditch) where excessive rents and shortage of available skills are causing existing employers to consider re-location. The Local Industrial Strategy for the Heart of the South West intends to establish a globally significant energy cluster, building on assets in new nuclear, off-shore renewables and the transformation of the Heart of the South West's own energy system. SW&T can play a key role in achieving this ambition.

OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
<p>Developing the tourism and digital offers in SW&T; building on what exists already and creating new sustainable initiatives would create additional jobs and secure existing ones.</p>	<p>Without a focused approach to existing sectors, stagnation or decline is a threat.</p>	<p>New tourism initiatives are required, alongside innovative changes to ways of working and raising the profile of the industry as a career of choice.</p> <p>Plans are already in place to enhance the development of the digital (and creative) sectors in Taunton.</p> <p>Take learned experience of Hinkley in terms of inward investment and supply chain development and skills development and apply to other sectors as appropriate, including healthcare and the environmental technology sector.</p>
<p>In order to maximize the success of our current key sectors; tourism, creative, digital/data, agriculture, logistics, Business, Professional and Financial Services and agri-tech, sector focused plans would be beneficial.</p>	<p>The area is predominantly dependent upon a small number of sectors; there are significant benefits of working to optimize these (new jobs created, GVA improvements).</p>	<p>The establishment of sector champion groups; facilitated by the Council with both public and private representation.</p> <p>These would be collaborative working groups to address specific sector based issues (e.g. digital skills, the perception by young people of the tourism industry).</p>
<p><i>Enable establishment/growth of aspirational sectors; bluetech, cleantech, marine.</i></p> <p>The LIS recognises the need to establish partnerships for accelerating clean tech adoption across sectors; SWT can become a leading partner in the South West through regular dialogue and the contribution of positive ideas, piloted locally.</p>		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
<p>Sectors under the 'Envirotech' banner are attractive to SW&T.</p>	<p>By increasing the presence of credible and expanding sectors/clusters, a wider range of higher value jobs can be created.</p>	<p>The 'Envirotech' credentials of the District should be articulated as part of a suite of Inward Investment propositions.</p>

<p>A focus could be placed upon these in order to identify the District as a key player in attracting and fostering the growth of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable energy • Green technology • Agritech • Sustainable transport • Enabling technologies including digital and high tech manufacturing 		<p>Consideration could be given to the creation of an area covered by a Local Development Order with business incentives, to attract Envirotech businesses.</p>
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Gain increases in successful Inward Investments- retain key employers in SWT

The LIS is ‘working to attract high-value business investment in the form of FDI and inward investment into the region and retain key employers’. Locally a key priority remains the fostering of the relationship with the UK Hydrographic Office.

This could be an anchor around which digital (data) driven businesses could cluster. This could improve Inward Investment opportunities, drive up demand for digital skills and improve job prospects (quantity and quality). Examples to study include the Life Sciences cluster established in the last 20 years in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. A Gene Therapy Catapult Centre has been established to enhance the presence of GSK in Stevenage. The initiative, led by GlaxoSmithKline, Wellcome and Innovate UK and partly funded by European Funds (ERDF) offers ‘hot housing’ facilities for selected small businesses from the sector, to access research equipment that would normally be out of reach. The 8-10 businesses allowed direct access to the facilities are a temporary fixture, spinning out to larger premises as they grow, and allowing other innovative up and coming businesses to take their place. This initiative has had a significant impact upon the Hertfordshire economy, increasing investment in the businesses within the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst to over £1bn in 5 years, and attracting many small and medium sized enterprises to the area to be in close proximity to GSK and the Catapult. This example, although hard to copy, would not be impossible with a high profile partner (UKHO). The Devolution Prospectus for the Heart of the South West LEP identifies the UKHO as a key asset, and data analytics as a ‘golden opportunity’, for investment to achieve future growth.

OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
Inward Investment - remains low.	<p>Supporting retained growth is important, but new businesses must be encouraged into the area to develop clusters, stimulate innovation and offer enhanced local job opportunities.</p> <p>Build upon collaboration across the county/LEP area rather than competing.</p>	A SW&T devoted service may be required as broader based inward Investment initiatives are not currently producing significant results for the District. Budget needed; should be scoped. Opportunity to work with public and private partners, especially joint working under the business rates programme of inward investment with County and other district partners.
Investors would face difficulties in finding the skills they need in SW&T.	SW&T not even on shopping lists of potential investors, and risks losing current investors.	The profile of SW&T (to visitors, potential new residents and Inward Investors) needs to be raised through targeted lead generation.
SW&T has notable business and sector assets; Nexus, Butlins, Hinkley, Cricket Club, Musgrove Hospital, UKHO	Retention of key employers is as important as attracting new. A wide range of visitor/Inward Investment benefits could be realized (i.e. tapping into the regular flow of international visitors to UKHO).	Detailed plans to promote, leverage and retain SW&T's key assets are required, through the introduction of a key account management programme.
Develop closer relationships across the portfolio of key organisations based in SW&T		
OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES IDEAS	BENEFITS CONSEQUENCES	TOP LEVEL ACTIONS
More knowledge of and closer relationships with the key organisations basin in SW&T will help to increase visibility of Council and Partners, help to ensure dialogue is in place, and help spread the word with potential investors in SW&T.	Failure to address this issue could result in missed opportunities to help business, missed opportunities to attract new investors to SW&T, and increased chances of business leaving the area. These could all mean NDR revenues fall, employment opportunities are missed, and SW&T's reputation is tarnished.	Develop a blue chip key account management programme to build and manage relationships with key local organisations (e.g. local business such as Singer and Shearwell; national business such as Butlins; key installations such as UKHO, Musgrove Hospital)

Detailed action plans to address the objectives above are contained in Appendix I

In addressing the points above, it must be remembered that the climate emergency is critical And must be urgently addressed via a circular approach to a responsibly managed and sustainable economy and an environment which is appropriately protected, maintained and used. Everybody has a part to play in this and only when people share both a vision and a desire for common action that we will make progress.

6. PRIORITY ACTIONS

Summarising the building blocks of the strategy, and the top level actions identified in Section 5, the following 'Top 6' actions emerge.

These are not intended to replace, but rather to complement and sit alongside other work that the Council already has underway (e.g. bringing forward Firepool, broadband improvements, the Innovation Centre). By focusing upon these in the short (1-3 years) and longer term (3 years+) SWT will potentially have the greatest positive impact upon the local economy.

These are cross referenced to Appendix I; Detailed Action Plans, and aligned with the other recommended actions. These actions have implications across all three themes of People, Place and Business rather than just one, and therefore offer the potential for the largest impact.

TOP 6 ACTIONS

Considering all of the building blocks of the strategy, feedback from stakeholders, analysis of intelligence and reports available, and all of the actions identified (Appendix I), the following 'Top 6' actions have emerged.

By focusing upon these in the short (1-3 years) and longer term (3 years+), SWT will potentially have the greatest positive effect upon the economy of the area. These actions have implications across all three themes of People, Place and Business rather than just one, and therefore offer the potential for the largest impact.

These complement and sit alongside other work that the Council already has underway, and the wider range of recommendations.

Short term

A. Become a highly valued strategic influencer and delivery partner for the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Somerset County Council, the Somerset Growth Board and Hinkley C Programme Board and its S106 business support and skills delivery programmes, including management of the Community Impact Mitigation funding (CIM). This is positioning to leveraging future funding streams from Government into the District.

Maintain regular dialogue regarding the implementation of the Economic and Prosperity Strategy, demonstrating alignment with the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) on the three key Opportunity Areas (Advanced Manufacturing, Digital and Nuclear) through the lens of Clean Growth as well as supporting business support and skills programmes including tourism initiatives, as well as positioning for post Brexit funding opportunities from a future UK prosperity fund. In the context of the refreshed Local Plan, ensure that key infrastructure projects are identified to lobby Government nationally as well as for future transport and other connectivity bids, including faster broadband and digital connectivity.

B. Progress key strategic employment sites including Firepool and Nexus 25, as key strategic assets within the Garden Town vision and prospectus.

Revisit the Taunton Garden Town implementation plan and build on the previously commissioned Digital Taunton sector strategy and action plan as well as working collaboratively with UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) to realise their commercial exploitation of maritime big data, a key LEP opportunity within the Local Industrial Strategy.

Work with the County and the LEP to develop the Digital/Big Data inward investment proposition, using the business rates inward investment programme initiative to generate targeted inward investment leads as well as working with agents/developers to position Nexus 25 in the future knowledge economy and agree a joint marketing strategy with the developers.

Promote success as soon as possible, particularly as Firepool comes forward and ensuring that the Future High Street Fund (if successful) contributes directly to already stated objectives.

C. Building on the business engagement strategy, identify and develop a number of Strategic business and institutional relationships by adopting a Key Account Management (KAM) and ongoing aftercare and relationship management programme.

Immediate examples include fostering the relationship with the UK Hydrographic Office as a significant employer and key collaborative research and development asset to realise the ambition of developing an 'open innovation zone' at the heart of Firepool and the County town centre of Taunton. In itself, this could form part of a sub-regional LEP M5 corridor Tech Nation cluster, complementing Exeter and Plymouth.

Longer term

D. Explore the potential for a University in Taunton, with a business led curriculum that will help deliver the skills businesses want, attract more Inward Investment and create opportunities for higher value jobs for residents. Also, explore and scope the future potential for a knowledge based Innovation and Technology Park, with links to specialist centres of excellence and research Institutes linked to Higher Education and relevant Universities and Research Institutes and/or Catapults.

There is an opportunity to build on the UKHO open innovation activity, but also embrace other opportunities arising from the South West Institute of Technology with a focus on advanced engineering and digital, working with Bridgwater and Taunton college and the University Centre. There are also opportunities to explore and validate emerging opportunities in knowledge economy sectors and clustering such as AI/Big Data and digital technologies already underway with links to the South West Institute of Technology, remote healthcare delivery (telehealth/telemedicine) linked to the care of an increasing elderly population and low carbon renewable energy and environmental technologies (including plastic waste recycling).

E. Enhanced business support and innovation programme

Open up dialogue with Somerset County Council and Heart of South West LEP, regarding an integrated, skills brokerage, start-up, innovation and business support and grant programme for SMEs, in order to increase opportunities for sustainable self-employment and improved business growth.

F. Investigate the potential of attracting a major tourist attraction to West Somerset, to increase tourist numbers and time spent by visitors to SW&T, with possible links to a college for tourism skills, and justification for improvements to new & existing transport infrastructure (road, rail and sea).

Measuring Success

As the action plans are implemented, success will be measured through a range of outputs. These measures will be those most relevant to the actions. It is important that these will be tracked through the County's Somerset Growth Plan and the Local Economic Assessment for Somerset as well as higher level measures such as Gross Value Added (GVA) tracked by the LEP. Some of the key measures regarding progress will include the following for;

- People related activities
 - Reduction in unemployment/underemployment rates (by age group)
 - Increase in Level 3 (and above) NVQ qualifications
 - Increased Up-take of apprenticeships
 - Reduced numbers of economically inactive residents
 - *Number of jobs available in environmentally sustainable industries and organizations*
- Place marketing and Infrastructure developments
 - Increased number of tourist/visitor numbers lengths of stay and amount spent per head
 - Increased levels of inward investment including infrastructure funds secured from outside Somerset and LEP and other Government funded projects
 - *Increased number of rail/cycle journeys*
- Business, enterprise and innovation
 - Number of new businesses created, and 3 year survival rates
 - Gross added value added per head (improvements and compared to national/regional/county figures)
 - Number of business 'innovating' to compared to the national average (various proxies include patent registration etc - 50%: National Industrial Strategy)
 - *Renewable energy related company numbers*
 - *Amount spent by business on innovation activities; particularly to introduce green and carbon neutral initiatives (products and services)*
- Inward Investment
 - approved planning applications granted (*and the % granted to 'green' businesses*)
 - an enquiry pipeline and conversions and status
 - New investors being converted & setting up in SW&T and jobs created (*with figures for high value jobs and those in sustainable industries*)
 - *Retention and safeguarding of jobs of existing businesses*

In addressing the points above, it must be remembered that the climate emergency is critical And must be urgently addressed via a circular approach to a responsibly managed and sustainable economy and an environment which is appropriately protected, maintained and used. Everybody has a part to play in this and only when people share both a vision and a desire for common action that we will make progress.

7. CONCLUSION

Somerset West and Taunton (SW&T) has a unique opportunity to make a significant positive difference to the prosperity of the area over the next 10 years.

With a new Council in place, and new Chief Executives at the Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership, what has gone before can be learnt from, but not obstruct or hinder progress on key programmes.

The overriding goodwill that emerged during the stakeholder engagement, during the creation of this strategy, also bodes well for the future prosperity of SW&T, and indicates that private and public sector partners are willing to work together for mutual benefit.

Some existing strategies and plans remain to be fully implemented but are underway, and a relatively small number of additional actions, although not necessarily simple to execute, will together bring great rewards for People, Place and Business.

The overriding ambition for SW&T is clearly to achieve growth, bring enhanced job opportunities for residents alongside better educational attainment, and to attract and 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.

It must be remembered that the climate emergency is critical and must be urgently addressed via a circular economy approach to a responsibly managed and sustainable economy and an environment which is appropriately protected, maintained and used. Everybody has a part to play in this and only when people share both a vision and a desire for common action that we will make progress.

By working collaboratively and in partnership with business, and education, and becoming an even more valued partner to the County Council and LEP, SWT has a bright future and the opportunity to take the lead in environmentally friendly growth in the South West.

APPENDIX A

THE CHALLENGE, THE PROCESS AND DESK RESEARCH

The Challenge

The specification for this strategy was to develop, collaboratively across SW&T and a range of stakeholders, the following;

- a sustainable and resilient future vision for the knowledge economy in SW&T within the context of the sub-regional economy
- an assessment of SW&T's current positioning, considering current strengths and opportunities as well as weaknesses and threats
- priority themes and recommendations for interventions providing supporting rationale and indicative outcomes
- specific actions SW&T should undertake within a broad action plan, together with individual actions grouped by theme
- clarification regarding prospective knowledge economy sectors/clusters/supply chains to be developed or attracted to the area and the opportunities these offer.
- recommendations to further enhance the local business environment/attract future investment
- economic development priorities within an action plan for the short, medium and longer term

In order to do this effectively, and within the timescales of the project Deyton Bell proposed;

- to develop a coherent economic development vision and programme with clear objectives and priorities focused upon the Council's approach of People, Place and Business.
- to identify the roles SW&T should play alongside other strategic partners (LEP, Growth Hub, County Council) to deliver interventions
- to focus upon and develop a strategy that was structured around the key themes of
 - enterprise: the activities and support needed to foster an entrepreneurial culture
 - business productivity and innovation:
 - place marketing
 - Inward Investment
 - developing the workforce
- to incorporate the specific priorities for intervention of SW&T into a broader collective stakeholder action plan

Process

The process adopted to deliver this engagement followed 5 stages. The original project plan was adapted as a first step with the SW&T Project team and the following phases carried out;

First phase - meeting with SWT.

We met with the SW&T team at SW&T offices for an inception meeting (24th July 2019), to establish the joint Project Team (SW&T and DB) and finalise an agreed plan of action;

- project scope, including any changes in emphasis/focus since the tender was issued
- flexibility required if/when needs change
- changes to the original proposed methodology
- data and intelligence availability
- stakeholders and key contacts
- permissions to contact stakeholders (GDPR compliance)
- project risks and escalation procedures for issues
- frequency, contact type and reporting requirements

Second phase – planning and research.

During this phase DB studied the comprehensive intelligence and research made available, analysed this and planned incorporation of findings into the interim report. We agreed additional research required, and this was provided. During this phase (August to September 2019) we put in place a regular series of tele-conference and face to face Project Team meetings and finalised timings for the stakeholder engagement phase.

Third phase – engaging with stakeholders.

We carried out an extensive programme of stakeholder engagement during September and October 2019 which involved;

- Agreeing a 'long' list of stakeholders whose views should be sought
- Deciding upon the optimum contact methods for each
- Producing and distributing an on-line survey to gather feedback
- Carrying out 1-1 face to face and telephone interviews
- Organising and delivering workshops for businesses, business representative groups, officers and members (SW&T), representatives of the LEP and the County Council

Fourth phase - production of an interim report.

We worked on this during October/November 2019, presenting initial findings at the SW&T Council Member Briefing and carrying out extended Project Group review session.

Final and fifth phase – production and presentation of the final draft Strategy.

This was completed during November/December 2019 and included;

- Final Draft Strategy
- Appendices
- Power point presentation slides
- Agreement of DB to attend future presentations of the report as required to stakeholders

Overall, despite some minor movements on timescales to manage operational issues the project was managed in line with agreed timelines and all deliverables were produced as required.

Desk research

The desk research, intelligence review/analysis/commentary phase of the project included consideration of the following;

1. *International sources of reference*

- Partnership working in an ED context – Allegheny Conference

2. *UK wide sources of reference*

- National Industrial Strategy
- UK Clean Growth Strategy
- Local industrial strategy – SELEP, Tees LEP
- Coastal strategy – SELEP, Solent LEP
- Innovation strategy – Dorset LEP, Breckland Council
- Inward investment strategy – Kirklees Council
- Business support strategy – East of England Business Link, Redcar and Cleveland Council, Portsmouth City Council

3. *Local sources of reference*

- Local Industrial Strategy
- LEP briefing papers
- Strategic Economic Plan and refresh in 2019
- HotSW LEP Productivity strategy and delivery plan
- HotSW Local Industrial Strategy Challenge Paper and delivery plan
- Cross LEP Energy Strategy
- South West Rural Productivity Commission report 2017
- Heart of the South West Coastal Productivity Plan (draft)

Somerset CC strategy and briefing papers

- Somerset Economic Intelligence portal
- Somerset Improving Lives Strategy
- Somerset Growth Plan Somerset Employment and Skills strategy
- West Somerset Opportunity Area Taunton Deane Local Plan
- West Somerset Local Plan
- Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan 2008

- Taunton Garden Town vision and plan <https>
- Taunton Deane Leisure and Employment Land Review
- Coastal Communities Minehead CCT EP and Esplanade Study
- Coastal Communities Watchet CCT EP
- Coastal Communities
- Exmoor National Park

SWT briefing papers

- Taunton High Street Fund Expression of Interest March 2019
- Taunton Deane Borough Economic Development Strategy 2017 internal draft
- Taunton Deane Local Economic Assessment 2009 Geoeconomics
- Envisioning the future of the Taunton Economy April 2009 Geoeconomics
- Ekosgen's West Somerset Economic Strategy Refresh 2011 – October 2011

4. Lessons learned elsewhere

- Good examples and ideas – Pittsburgh partnership approach (see Section 5 'Place' and Appendix H)
 - Poor examples and ideas, including Inward Investment Strategies developed and then not implemented, LEP commissioned reports that were rejected as 'cut and pastes', ineffective European funded projects (specific project names confidential)
5. Ideas 'borrowed' from elsewhere; again confidential, but including LIS development, Coastal Communities work, a business support/start-up programme in the North East, Innovation Strategies from the South and East of England, business engagement projects in the South East, and Inward Investment programmes developed for 14 Local Authorities nationally.

Relevant points emerging from these sources have been factored into the recommendations and action plans within the strategy.

Key findings

- Corroboration of the importance (and relevance) of SWT's approach of focusing upon the key themes of people place and business
- The need for comprehensive and holistic strategies; but based in reality, bought into and deliverable
- Strategies can become immediately irrelevant if they are very similar and are not bespoke to their local economic landscapes
- Successful strategies are broader than district or borough boundaries; they work best when aligned with county and LEP priorities
- The challenges of balancing coastal, rural and urban geographies
- The danger of too much consideration of past success/failure of initiatives, whilst retaining a realistic approach as to what can be achieved
- With increasing pressure on budgets, innovative ways of working need to be considered, even if they are disruptive
- The contribution skills development can make to overall wellbeing, prosperity, business development and Inward Investment
- Current skills demands may not be the same as future
- Brexit will create significant skills challenges
- With more competition for business investment, real differentiation has to be found with a genuine, not purely aspirational local offer
- The boundaries between business support, inward investment and innovation are blurred, and a prosperity strategy needs to consider all three and the relationships between them

APPENDIX B

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, SURVEY AND WORKSHOP FEEDBACK / ANALYSIS

Engagement

Stakeholder engagement involved three distinct and separate activities. These enabled us to obtain feedback from as wide a range of stakeholders as possible, whilst giving everyone engaged the chance to participate in meaningful way.

Firstly, an online survey was carried out, districted to 500 recipients, then one to one meetings and telephone calls arranged, alongside a series of workshops. Invitations to the workshops and to engage in 1-1 dialogue were distributed to including businesses, business representative groups, SWT officers/members, representatives of the LEP, the County Council, various HMG agencies.

In total 113 individuals responded in some way as a result of contact being made regarding the development for the Prosperity and Economic Development Strategy, and have participated in the development of this document. Of around 500 survey invites sent, 120 opened the e-mail (24%) and 44 completed a survey (37% of openers and nearly 10% of recipients.)

One internal workshop for members and officers of SW&T was held, and two other workshops (in Taunton and Williton (to include Minehead area)). 54 delegates attended the workshops and 25 meetings were held on a one to one basis (approximately 30 individuals had been invited to one to one meetings. The workshop venues were chosen to allow a minimum distance of travel to venues, and the opportunity for those based in both rural, coastal and urban areas to participate.

The good number of responses from invitees meant that we achieved a good spread of businesses and organisations across SW&T, and representatives from different organisation types, sizes and geography. A full list of all those who have been involved is included as Appendix A.

It should be noted that the level of positive responses in completing the survey or engaging through other means, is higher than other projects we have been involved with, and is indicative of the proactive nature of the identified stakeholders, the importance they attach to the development of posterity strategy and the willingness to work with the Council by providing views, ideas and feedback.

In order to maintain and build upon this goodwill, it will be important to offer up-dates to all stakeholders involved as implementation of the strategy takes place, and perhaps consider using them as a group for future consultation and to gain further feedback.

Specific feedback from the three elements of stakeholder engagement (survey/one-to-one conversations and group workshops) have been built into the strategy sections of this report, under the relevant theme.

A copy of the ideas matrix used during the workshops is included as Appendix C.

Analysis of feedback received via the surveys and workshops is included at Appendix D.

Survey Responses

44 responses were received of completed surveys, 9 of these were anonymous.

The survey questions are included as Appendix B.

Analysis of the responses to the questions gave us the following information;

Of those who responded to the relevant question, respondents were located in; Minehead 10%, Wellington 15%, Taunton 42%, Other 32% (inc. out of area)

Q2: Assets

Land availability was highlighted as an issue in 17% of responses, road rail links 17%, tourism 12% and a range of others. Over 10% specifically mentioned UKHO as an asset to be further leveraged

Q3: Key barriers

Many responders gave multiple answers to this question); Local transport shortcomings, lack of quality broadband, shortage of appropriate/attractive employment opportunities (partially for young people), linked to lack of HE results in skills shortages, drive people away and leaves gaps.

Perception of the area (and awareness) is harming tourism and inward investment. 10% also recognized lack of vision/economic strategy (historically) and follow through (Firepool repeatedly mentioned) but also the opportunity for the new council.

Housing issues were also raised; part of the problem of retention of young people, due to the type, location and having appropriate facilities.

Largest %age response concerned concerns about planning (negative perception) – 20% of comments mentioned this issue.

Q4: Opportunities

This was positively responded to in the main but some answers really just repeated negatives/barriers and suggested these could be improved/rectified (e.g. broadband again, to enable remote working and encourage digital business).

Also mentioned more than once; investment in education (HE) and improving public realm. Most frequently mentioned - enhancing tourism further and creating business start-up opportunities, and enhancing support (both 12% of ideas suggested).

Q5: Business Support

This question received negative responses in the main, although 5 % of respondents were positive about the current SW&T ED team, and a further 5% thought support was good; 13% felt there was none, and 22% felt what there was poor or ineffectual.

Q6: Improving Innovation in Business and Competitiveness

Improvements to digital infrastructure was again repeatedly referred to. Skills improvements were felt important, and practical, tactical actions including rates reductions were mentioned.

Most frequently referred to were initiatives to improve collaboration, between public and private sectors, Higher Education and partners from neighbouring areas.

Q7: Sectors

Multiple sectors were recognized as important, including public sector, and functional activities (office provision) plus micro businesses/SMEs).

Key sectors were felt to be digital/creative, Food and Drink, (including food production/agriculture), retail, engineering and healthcare. Unsurprisingly the most important sector recognised (by 33%) was tourism.

Q8: Employment Growth

This question probably received the largest variety of responses, ranging from creating higher value jobs where possible (including at Firepool), attracting a 'beacon' inward investor, and tackling in work poverty by increasing the number of higher value jobs available.

15% of respondents recognized the difficulty of this issue to resolve quickly however.

Consistent responses related to increasing apprenticeship take-up (10%) and to incentivize SMEs to take on people and grow (15%) were received.

Q9 and Q10: Competitor areas and their advantages

Local areas (Sedgemoor, North Somerset and Devon) were identified as competitor areas, as well as cities including Bristol and Exeter, and London.

An important point mentioned more than once was not to consider other areas as competitors – rather collaborators, role models and examples of good practice.

It was recognised that others did have advantages though, including local airports and Universities, stronger tourism offers (including TV and film tourism offers), financial incentives for business, better infrastructure and stronger brands/awareness.

Q11: Effectiveness of Inward Investment

Generally negative responses to this question.

Many respondents were not aware of Inward Investment services at all (30%) (thus indicating that there is no profile for what is being done).

Some felt that Inward investment was good in some areas (near the M5 and Hinkley) and others that retention of existing employers was just as important (both 10%).

The largest response however was that exciting Inward Investment activities are non-existent or poor (35%); demonstrating a real need to address the issue.

Workshop Feedback

Feedback from stakeholders identified some consistent issues for SWT to focus upon including;

- Recognise diversity amongst all people living, working and visiting the area
- Maintain, manage, utilise and where necessary protect the areas outstanding natural capital
- Responsibly develop opportunities through a clean, green, blue lens
- Be forward thinking and ambitious, and not constrained by historical issues

Stakeholders were also explicit about what they did not want;

- Any damage to the environment as a result of policy initiatives
- Ignoring lessons learnt from the history of local government across SW&T, but without undue deference to what has gone before

Other issues created mixed feedback from stakeholders on issues associated with:

- Focus on sectors and functions – views varied across the area regarding existing, emerging and aspirational sectors to focus upon
- Location – views varied depending on the respondent's geographical base regarding areas/communities with the most need or greatest potentials

There were some differences between the focus of the workshops, dependent upon their geography, and whether business or internal to SWT.

Taunton Business – October 2 2019 – 257 comments recorded			
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Number of comments</i>	<i>%age of total</i>	Notes; multiple mentions (NB Comments and ideas have been included in Sections 7-11)
Business	80	31	Almost half of comments related to business support needed; a similar number mentioned transport issues. Lack of appropriate business space also featured.
Infrastructure	78	30	Road and broadband improvements needed
People	71	28	15% commented upon lack of opportunities and similar numbers re lack of skills
Place	28	11	Far less comments upon 'Place' from business –perhaps a lack of understanding of what it entails? Urban and rural needs for improvements were rated equally important; (15% each)
Williton Business – October 2 2019 – 238 comments recorded			
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Number of comments</i>	<i>%age of total</i>	Notes
Business	86	36	More emphasis (10%) on transport issues and of AI and VR than Taunton – recognition that technology (if accompanied by culture shift) could transform business (and place/people?) Business support (inc. finance) frequently mentioned. Strong recognition regarding Inward investment needed. Space and support for start-ups needed. Focus on skills here (not seen as people issue?) West Somerset neglected

Infrastructure	66	27	<p>Rail improvements to major towns required, and energy sustainable homes</p> <p>Transport 10% -better roads and heavy focus upon sustainable transport</p> <p>Coastal Communities teams felt to be important (15%)</p>
People	52	22	<p>Linkages observed; rural transport and lack of skills/educational attainment/skills availability - difficult to offer work experience and attract young people to jobs.</p> <p>Emphasis on skills development unsurprisingly (20%).</p> <p>10% talking about incentivising young to train and make it attractive to stay</p>
Place	34	14	<p>Lack of understanding of place – mixed up with places to train rather than improving place.</p> <p>Public realm felt to be important</p>

Taunton Internal – October 1 2019 – 176 comments recorded

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Number of comments</i>	<i>%age of total</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Business	58	33	<p>Strong links to infrastructure needs and capitalising on place (e.g. Taunton's s location and M5 links).</p> <p>15% made reference to town centre growth (plus sustainable growth generally)</p> <p>An emphasis on the need to build on existing sectors – agri, marine, digital</p>
Infrastructure	45	25	<p>Evenly split over road, rails, and digital infrastructure issues to be addressed.</p>

People	34	20	A focus (20% of comments) emerged regarding the older demographic and resulting issues/opportunities and rural issues.
Place	39	22	Comments were fairly evenly split over road, rails, and digital infrastructure issues to be addressed.
Totals (3 workshops) – 671 comments recorded			
Business		34%	The most recorded comments related to business by a significant margin
Infrastructure		28%	
People		23%	
Place		15%	

KEY POINTS OF FEEDBACK RECEIVED DURING 121 MEETINGS

25 meetings were held on a 121 basis – a summary of key feedback received is detailed below:

LOOKING BACK

- Historical SWT activity to develop Hinkley C has been disappointing – more is expected
- There has been too much of a split between Taunton and the rural/coastal communities
- There is a risk that historical Council issues between Taunton/Somerset West could hinder progress
- Historically local Councils have been unresponsive – this must change
- Town centres are drab with poor quality facilities
- Taunton is a tired town out of step with modern times – revitalisation is needed

LOOKING AHEAD

- UK Hydrographic Office is a key asset to the local economy which must be leveraged
- Development of a UKHO centric tech/data initiative must be a core priority
- Business people want local Councils to act as a catalyst for change
- New SWT seen as a breath of fresh air and people hope and want Officers to succeed
- Minehead needs a major cultural/tourist installation to balance Butlins risks
- SWT must develop new trading/tourist opportunities with S Wales – ferry service ideal
- Cycle paths should be developed – people want more
- Climate change and other environmental issues must be top priority
- Economic Development Policy must have environmental/social issues at its core

- Blue/marine/aqua issues should be developed as enviro and economic opportunities
- The Hospital is an untapped facility which should be an economic asset
- An ageing population offers future opportunity and should not be viewed as a liability
- Highly skilled people are hard to attract – ED policy must help business draw people in
- Local businesses should be helped to analyse performance/be self critical to drive improvement
- Educate educators in business/economic opportunity so they can help young people with careers
- Educators must offer courses/training in what business needs...not in just what students want
- Rural planning policy must be much more flexible/realistic to help business
- Rural housing policy must help attract employees who want to enjoy the local lifestyle
- Agritech is an underdeveloped local asset which should receive more support
- Tourism service standards must rise – need to drive up via increased education/training
- Long term employment issues will dominate in transportation and construction
- Social mobility is/ will continue to be an increasing problem – particularly in West Somerset
- Taunton can be a huge opportunity if University/leisure/nightlife can be developed
- The M5 economic corridor must be developed as per M11, M4 and M3

APPENDIX C

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND CONTRIBUTORS

25 meetings were held on a 121 basis, 44 surveys were completed and at least 54 delegates attended workshops. Well over 100 people (113) therefore participated and offered input. We are very grateful to the following who are amongst those who contributed to initiatives associated with development of this strategy:

121 meetings	Survey responses	Internal workshops	External workshops
Cllr Marcus Kravis	Peter Murphy	Jo Humble	Ruth Lambert
Cllr Habib Farbahi	Andy Berry	Rebecca Miller	Nick Chapman
Nigel Pearce	Stephen Henagulph	Simon Lew	Julie O'Donnell
Graham Sizer	Paul Coles	Nick Bryant	Sally Lowndes
Andrew Hopkins	Ian Knight	Dan Webb	Rachel Kelly
Ray Tew	Bill Wilson	Brendan Cleere	Marie Howard
Chris Loach	Sarah Blackburn	Mark Wathen	Harry Singer
Sally Lowndes	Colin Waller	Matt Parr	Rob Perks
Rachel Kelly	Andrew Hanson	Maureen Gori de Murden	Chris Loach
Harry Singer	Jane Birch	Craig Stone	Loretta Wetlor
David Eccles	Nigel Hatfield	Andrew Penna	Sarah Ellwood
Richard Webber	Phill Adams	Jonathan Stevens	Ray Tew
Ruth Lambert	Brian Totman	Hatti Winter	Peter Murphy
Katrina Midgley	John Harris	Kate Murdoch	Roger Hall
David Ralph	Matt Tudor	Nicki Maclean	Chris Wood
Stephen Henagulph	Stephen Newton	Becky Brown	Graham Sizer
Nick Porter	Rosemary Woods	Colleen Blake	Val Hammon
Graham Austin	Corinne Matthews	Gordon Dwyer	Julie Wooler
Ali Porter	Pauline Homeshaw	William Collier	Gus Green
David Tomaney	Roger Habgood	Lisa Redston	David Hall
Guy Funnell	Nigel Muers-Raby	Joanne O'Hara	Debra Scarratt
Paula Hewitt	Wendy Powell	Paul Kirby	Katrina Midgley
Jim Whittaker	Brian Goodman		Andrew Hanson
Dan James	Helen Vittery		Adam Tidmarsh
Jon Levenson	Sally Turner		Louise Brown
Daniel Newman	Sally Mann		Barbara Pocock
	Aniko Hadnagy		Andrew Hopkins
	Graham Sizer		Cllr Habib Farbahi
	Val Hammond		Cllr Rod Williams
	Lou Elgilany		Nick Porter
*non confidential	Jenny Archard		Nigel Pearce
	Ben Fox		Andrew Knutt

APPENDIX D SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Thank you for your willingness to take part in this survey from Somerset West and Taunton Council. We are grateful to you and your views are important to us as we consider economic development issues. We are of course very conscious that this research and the data collected must be managed in line with best practice. We will only keep your personal details for the duration of this study and these will not be seen by anyone other than the specialist consultants advising us, and those individuals within the Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) who are involved in this study. If you are happy for your responses to be attributed to you, and for us to contact with any follow up queries, please provide us with contact details below:-
2. What key assets in SWT do you believe could contribute to development of the district economy?
3. What problems, negatives or barriers constrain economic growth in SWT?
4. What positives, ideas or opportunities could stimulate economic growth in SWT?
5. What's your view of current business support across SWT?
6. What could be done to help businesses in SWT become more innovative or competitive?
7. What sectors and functions do you think are most important to the economy of SWT?
8. How do you believe employment growth can be generated across SWT?
9. Which areas compete with SWT?
10. What have they got or what do they offer that SWT need to be aware of?
11. How effective is inward investment promotion/attraction of new businesses into SWT?
12. How could inward investment promotion/attraction in SWT be improved?
13. What's your view on the availability and appropriateness of development land supply across SWT?
14. What's your view on the availability and appropriateness of business premises across SWT?
15. Please tell us if/how you or your organisation would like to offer further comment, be consulted or get involved to help SWT shape the future of our economy.

APPENDIX E

IDEAS GRID USED AT WORKSHOPS

SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON - PROSPERITY DEVELOPMENT - WORKSHOP COMMENTS AND ACTIONS													
		INFRASTRUCTURE			BUSINESS			PLACE			PEOPLE		
		OPPORTUNITY	IDEA	CHALLENGE	OPPORTUNITY	IDEA	CHALLENGE	OPPORTUNITY	IDEA	CHALLENGE	OPPORTUNITY	IDEA	CHALLENGE
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
INFRASTRUCTURE													
ROAD	1												
RAIL	2												
AIR	3												
MOBILITY	4												
ENERGY	5												
CLEAN GROWTH	6												
HOUSING	7												
TECHNOLOGY	8												
AI	9												
COMMS	10												
BUSINESS													
TOURISM	11												
RETAIL	12												
MANUFACTURING	13												
BFPS	14												
AGRI	15												
LOGISTICS	16												
SME	17												
SUPPORT	18												
GLOBALISATION	19												
INNOVATION	20												
SUSTAINABILITY	21												
PLACE													
NATURE	22												
URBAN	23												
RURAL	24												
COASTAL	25												
PEOPLE													
EDUCATION	26												
SKILLS	27												
JOBS	28												
FAMILIES	29												
YOUTH	30												
SENIORS	31												
COMMUNITY	32												

APPENDIX F

People and Place Context

The Area: 459.5 square miles that includes:

- 70% of Exmoor National Park
- 2 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- 50km of coastline
- 11 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- 2913 Listed Buildings
- 235 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- 52 Conservation Areas
- 11 Historic Parks and Gardens

Employment: 73,800 people aged 16+ are in employment

SWT has 41,000 full time employee jobs and 26,000 part time employee jobs

Population; 152,288

- 17% are aged 0-15
- 8.8% are aged 16-24
- 28% are aged 25-49
- 21% are aged 50-64
- 25.2% are aged 65+

The number of people over the age of 65 is set to increase significantly over the next 20 years, and the number of people age 85 or over is forecast to double. (2017 ONS Mid-year estimates and 2016 ONS population projections).

The former Taunton Deane area is projected to experience the second highest population growth in Somerset of 14% by 2041 (Sedgemoor is the highest at 16%). The former West Somerset area is due to experience a change of just 5% by 2041. (Somerset Economic Assessment Report 2016).

Business; SWT has 6,520 business enterprises. 89.7% employ <10 people

The former Taunton Deane district is projected to have the highest GVA (Gross Value Added) growth of all the Somerset districts in the period to 2030 (+48.8%), exceeding the Somerset growth rate (+44.9%). (Somerset Economic Assessment Report 2016).

The strongest employment growth of all the districts is projected to occur in the former Taunton Deane area with 10.8% more jobs by 2030. (Somerset Economic Assessment Report 2016).

Whilst rates of employment are high, many jobs are relatively low earning, particularly in the agricultural, care, hospitality and tourism sectors. There is a need to attract higher earning jobs that will boost the District's productivity.

A growing population also requires additional infrastructure to meet the pressures that will result from more people living in the district.

Key employment sectors:

- Manufacturing 7.2%
- Construction 7.4%
- Wholesale and trade 16.7%
- Accommodation and food services 6.9%
- Public administration and defence 7.7%
- Education 9.7%
- Human health and social work activities 16.5%

Deprivation; Most residents in the District enjoy a high quality of life. However, 3 neighbourhoods in Taunton (2 in Halcon and 1 in Lyngford) are within the top 10% of most deprived areas, 2 others (Wellington North and another in Lyngford) are in the top 20% of most deprived (Index of Multiple Deprivation).

Many of the District's rural communities are disadvantaged by barriers to suitable housing and social exclusion through poor access to facilities and limited public transport.

APPENDIX G

Context

The strategy is not intended to stand alone. In order for it to be effective in improving prosperity (sustainably), it needs to take account of and directly contribute to the established priorities for SWT, Somerset and the wider LEP area, and show alignment with national imperatives.

Issues that have shaped this strategy are as follows;

- Climate change; a global challenge but one which is of particular relevance locally due to an increased risk of flooding.
- The Green and Blue Economies
- The diverse range of communities/spatial aspects
 - Coastal
 - Rural and National Park (Exmoor)
 - M5 Strategic Growth corridor
 - Market Towns
 - Taunton Garden Town
- Previous lack of investment (including town centre developments)
- Bringing suitable employment sites forwards
- Significant local employers, especially Hinkley C and the UK Hydrographic Centre
- Research, Innovation and Technology (see Taunton Digital)
- BREXIT

Specific contexts that have been considered include;

The national Strategy:

“The challenge for the future The United Kingdom is a successful, competitive, open economy. We have many strengths on which we can build, and some weaknesses we need to address. As we leave the European Union we need to raise our game at home and on the world stage. This can be done if we seize the opportunities of the years ahead – and it is essential if the British people are to enjoy prosperous lives with fulfilling work and high quality public services.”

This sets a clear framework for SWT to factor into any planning, a framework which is reinforced by more specific comments as follows:

“At the same time, the world is changing in fundamental ways. Technological innovations are transforming how we live and work. The proportion of older people in our society is growing. The way we generate and use energy is changing rapidly.”

The ambition for the UK is clearly summarised:

“Our vision is for: the world’s most innovative economy; good jobs and greater earning for all; a major upgrade to the UK’s infrastructure; the best place to start and grow a business; and prosperous communities across the UK.”

Despite the clear vision, there are practical challenges associated with this ambition:

“We use an enormous amount of energy to move people and goods from place to place: Around 40 per cent of the UK’s total final energy use. Developing UK leadership in low carbon transport is therefore a shared priority with our Future of Mobility Grand Challenge. We will invest in innovation to develop clean technologies across road, rail, aviation and maritime transport.”

And of course, all this will use energy:

“The nuclear sector is integral to increasing productivity and driving growth across the country. Nuclear is a vital part of our energy mix, providing low carbon power now and into the future. The safe and efficient decommissioning of our nuclear legacy is an area of world-leading expertise. The nuclear sector is in advanced discussions with the government on a range of ambitious proposals to increase competitiveness and achieve greater value at both national and regional levels.... The sector’s proposals cover the supply chain, nuclear R&D and skills, where the aim of the deal is to help deliver the diverse workforce needed for the future, supporting a potential 100,000 jobs from Cumbria, north Wales, Somerset...”

Opportunities in the energy sector have also been picked up in ‘Nuclear South West’:

Five key High Priority recommendations that could substantially improve the region’s nuclear economic outlook are summarised below: Identify and address the workforce and skills shortage to the next stage at Hinkley Point C; 4 Promote innovative skills in the South West to meet demand at Hinkley Point C and improve local capability to supply future projects within and beyond the region; Develop cross-sector innovation in decommissioning between the civil nuclear and defence nuclear sectors; Assess the opportunity for the South West to host and supply Advanced Modular Reactor technologies; Deliver a programme to support South West companies sell their capability into the fusion programme, in the UK and abroad. Overall, the results of the study show that there are significant and substantial opportunities for suppliers of both nuclear and non-nuclear capability in the South West.”

Building a UK wide perspective will also raise ‘clean and green issues’ which the UK Clean Growth Strategy seeks to address:

“Our approach will maintain that of our Industrial Strategy: building on the UK’s strengths, improving productivity across the UK and ensuring we are the best place for innovators and new business to start-up and grow.....”

This broad focus on innovation is expanded to offer specific examples:

“It is only through innovation – nurturing better products, processes and systems – that we will see the cost of clean technologies come down....In addition to supporting innovation, we are focused on policies that deliver social and economic benefits beyond the imperative to reduce emissions. Higher quality, more energy efficient buildings are healthier places to live and work. Reducing the amount of heat we waste will reduce bills.”

With a clear direction to de-centralised government:

“Actions taken by the Government on clean growth will be consistent with broader Government priorities, such as delivering clean air. All parts of the UK have a major role to play in delivering our ambitions on clean growth, and the Devolved Administrations have a range of plans and policies in place to deliver emission reductions.”

Along with other issues this has been picked up in the Somerset Improving Lives Strategy:

“We have a vision for Somerset. Over the next ten years, we want all organisations to work together as a partnership to create a thriving and productive Somerset that is ambitious, confident and focused on improving people’s lives; a county of resilient, well-connected and safe and strong communities working to reduce inequalities; a county infrastructure that supports affordable housing, economic prosperity and sustainable public services; a county and environment where all partners, private and voluntary sector, focus on improving the health and wellbeing of all our communities.”

And the strategy emphasises the need for partnership driven approach:

“This vision is owned by all of us; it is not just for decision makers....We want to work together to improve the lives of our residents. We will only achieve this if we work with partners across the county, and with Somerset’s residents and communities. We can achieve more collectively than we can individually.”

Partners in Somerset have clear future vision – the Somerset Growth Plan Re-fresh comments:

“Somerset partners agree that: There needs to be a clear long term vision at the heart of the plan – this needs to extend beyond raising productivity (as an “input” measure of economic performance) to improving prosperity and the quality of life outcomes that will result from this. The strategy of the plan should also be about securing “good growth” – development which is sustainable and outcomes that are inclusive across the businesses and residents of the HotSW area.

The strategy needs to focus to sustaining and improving productivity across the whole economy (“raising all the boats”), rather than simply focussing on improvement in particular growth centres or sectors of the economy. This means that the plan will need to include an approach to raising rural productivity, recognising the significance of the rural economy to the HotSW area and the changing policy context for rural areas resulting from Brexit.”

The Somerset Growth Plan also has clarity on a future economy focussed on sustainable prosperity:

Clean growth (including clean energy and journey to carbon neutrality), healthy ageing (including ageing workforce, geography and society) and data and technology futures (including data specialisms, artificial intelligence, robotics, augmented reality and advanced engineering)

The rural agenda overlaps with Coastal issues too, and the LEP have already identified key issues in the HotSW Coastal Productivity Plan which, along with recognising the distinctive offer of coastal areas in terms of environment, housing and work/life balance, recommended:

“work with government to pilot a Coastal Action Zone, and develop a Town Deal; ensure that the needs of coastal towns and resorts are recognised in the design of relevant growth funding; develops and pilot a Digital Business Academy; expand Apprenticeship Pilot; support the Visitor Economy sector to develop a bid to secure a Tourism Zone; recognition of the importance that coastal towns and resorts play in the HotSW economy; test appetite with other LEPs (such as those in the Greater South West partnership and the South East England LEP) to work with government in developing a place led response to coastal challenges.”

The issues above are neatly captured by HotSW in its Local Industrial strategy:

“The Heart of the South West is a special place; with an economic output of £35bn per year, 83,000 businesses and a 1.7 million population, it is the equivalent of a major UK city, matched with some of the finest natural capital in the world. But it is an area which faces huge opportunities and challenges in the coming years. The world of work is changing, undergoing a digital revolution which is already opening new previously undreamt of opportunities. Employment levels are high but annual real growth rates have flat lined in the last five years. Continuing economic growth and so raising living standards means a need to drive up productivity across the area. The population is ageing and there is an urgent need to increase social mobility. And the climate change emergency creates an essential imperative to address all this in a different way.

The strategy to address this is to become a Clean Growth Trailblazer, to develop a new approach to growth, one where economic growth is decoupled from emissions growth and where the proceeds of economic growth are shared across people and communities. The Heart of the South West is uniquely poised to achieve this; the environment is recognised nationally and internationally as one of the outstanding features of the area. It is also home to world-class businesses and institutions at the cutting edge of the new emerging markets, along with a fabulous balance between 21st century opportunities and a vibrant cultural and outdoor lifestyle.

The vision for the Heart of the South West economy, as set out in the productivity strategy is to “raise productivity in order to drive prosperity for all”. Clean Growth is the central tenet of this Local Industrial Strategy, a Strategy which sets out how the Heart of the South West will enable its businesses and people to capitalise on the new opportunities. This will be achieved whilst driving clean growth and ensuring that the proceeds of that growth are more equitably shared across the area. The core mission of this Local Industrial Strategy therefore is to “transform the economy through Clean Growth”

Most importantly however, it is the SWT Corporate Strategy that sets the scene:

“We live in a beautiful area where residents have high expectations for good quality services and most enjoy an excellent quality of life. However, some within our community do not share this high quality of life due to being unable to access affordable /appropriate housing, suitable employment or through experiencing poor physical or mental health. Many of the District’s rural communities are disadvantaged by barriers to suitable housing and social exclusion through poor access to facilities and limited public transport. Climate change is a global challenge but one which is of particular relevance locally.

Most likely issues which may affect the District include an increased risk of flooding (levels and moors, surface water runoff and coastal storm inundation). The population of the District is older than the national average which will increasingly require adaptability of homes, and a range of specialist housing. Growing population requires additional infrastructure to meet the pressures that will result from more people living in the district. Whilst rates of employment are high, many jobs are relatively low earning, particularly in the agricultural, care, hospitality and tourism sectors. There is a need to attract higher earning jobs that will boost the District’s productivity. There are large disparities between average local earnings and average house prices, making affordability a real issue for many of our residents. Pressures on the vibrancy and viability of Town Centres, in particular through changing shopping habits.

And which details the priority strategic themes and outcomes that matter:

- *“Our Environment and Economy - a low-carbon, clean, green and prosperous district that attracts high quality employment opportunities and encourages healthy lifestyles.*
- *A transparent and customer focused Council - a Council which informs and engages openly with our stakeholders and which consistently delivers excellent customer service.*
- *Homes and communities - a district which offers a choice of good quality homes for our residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those who need it.*
- *An enterprising Council - a financially self-sufficient Council which has expanded its commercial activity and generated more income in order to support service provision.”*

The priority actions in this strategy are cross referenced to the contexts indicated above at local, regional, national and, where appropriate, international levels.

APPENDIX H

Comparators

In seeking comparators, sources of best practice and lessons that can be learned, we sought to identify partnership based on public, private and not for profit sector models. The strongest of these is the Allegheny Conference (alleghenyconference.org).

For many years the Allegheny Conference on Community Development has brought together public, private and not for profit leadership to improve the economy and quality of life of the 10 counties of southwestern Pennsylvania, all focused around Pittsburgh. From the 1940s through to the 1970s the Conference provided private sector leadership but from the 1980s until now, the Conference has worked with numerous partners to diversify the region's economy and improve its quality of life, creating the vibrant, diverse, balanced and technology-driven economy that exists today. There is considerable history to understand but in essence it all hinges on an important blend of public/private/NFP cooperation developed in a way which could be used by SWT.

The conference is one of the United States' foremost civic leadership organizations, regarded nationally as a model for setting a vision and building consensus to achieve regional goals. The organization epitomizes "leadership through partnership" that crosses geographic and political lines. They explore competitive issues, advocate for improvements and market the region globally to encourage business investment that creates jobs and attracts talented people to fill them.

The Conference is in essence an umbrella partnership, with very heavyweight local leadership from all sectors, delivering various initiatives via The Regional Investors Council, which provides people and resources to define opportunities and challenges, identify solutions and mobilise public/private/NFP sectors to drive action.

The Conference delivers initiatives via a group of subsidiaries or 'affiliates' including:

- Pittsburgh Regional Alliance - marketing the region to attract talent/companies
- Pennsylvania Economic League – undertaking research/analysis to drive solutions
- Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce - advocating for enhanced competitiveness

The work of the Conference offers possible options for the management of some SWT stakeholder complexities and a model combining functions/organisations needed to drive economic growth.

It is important to point out that it is the spirit of partnership rather than the structure which is critical. Partnership takes many forms but we believe at their heart the best models involve a group of organisations working together via a mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship, with resources used and activity focused around common objectives, with complete transparency, clear communication and trust in place.

The key dynamics that need to exist in order for this type of successful partnership to thrive include:

- Shared vision for the future
- Common objectives and outcomes
- Inclusivity and broad representation
- Clear communication
- Focus on action rather than debate

This requires partners to be willing to:

- 'Give' rather than 'take'
- Suppress personal interest
- Abandon ego

Those involved must come to the 'partnership table' *without* a focus on their own issues and *without* a desire to derive personal or organizational benefit, but *with* a willingness to cooperate with others for the common good. This involves a great deal of flexibility all round, and a genuine willingness amongst partners to collaborate.

It is of course appropriate and important to draw on the knowledge, skill and experience of partners and to leverage their market connectivity, but all involved must realise that this will be 'for the common good', and not to either hinder nor help partners, and all involved must be willing to become involved in full knowledge that they will be expected to actively help the partnership achieve its objectives, rather than be part of a group strangled by debate and indecision.



This paper has been produced exclusively for consideration by Somerset West and Taunton Council and is strictly confidential.

APPENDIX I

ACTIONS, PRIORITIES, TIMELINES

Internal dialogue has to take place in order to prioritise and sanity check actions we suggest. Delivery of these will be heavily dependent upon resources available to deliver these individual actions and the strategy as a whole.

The first action therefore should be to consider the resources, the routes to securing these, and the required time period, to move forward with any/all of the suggested actions. An assessment will be required to quantify the demands upon;

- Cash
- People
- Assets

From SWT Council, Public Sector partners, regional and national sources, private sector and voluntary that could be leveraged, and the likelihood/method of obtaining them.

Secondly, an internal change programme may be needed to join up council function in order to;

Present a consistent approach to residents and businesses (e.g. Economic Development and Planning Control delivering consistent messages).

Below are individual action plans for the activities in Section 5. These will require further development, with costings and relevant measures added, and to be built into relevant work streams within SWT over the short and longer term.

ACTION PLAN

TO BE INSERTED BY SWT