

Economic Opportunities Review for Greater Brighton

Main Report

Greater Brighton Economic Board

17 March 2026

Lichfields is the pre-eminent planning and development consultancy in the UK

We've been helping create great places
for over 60 years.

lichfields.uk

Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
	Background	1
	Purpose of the Study	2
	Our Approach and Method	3
	Structure of the Report	4
2.0	Unlocking the Devolution Dividend	6
	A New Era of Local Leadership	11
3.0	The Greater Brighton Economic Context	14
	International Gateways	15
4.0	Economic Opportunities for Greater Brighton	21
	a. Transport and infrastructure planning	21
	b. Skills and employment	27
	c. Housing and strategic planning	33
	d. Economic development and regeneration	38
	e. Environment and climate change	47
5.0	Future Priorities and Actions	51
	Potential Opportunities and Actions	53

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Greater Brighton is a dynamic functional economic area comprising the seven local authority areas of Brighton and Hove, Arun, Worthing, Adur, Mid Sussex, Crawley, and Lewes. The Greater Brighton Economic Board (‘GBEB’) brings together these local authorities with a range of other public and private sector partners to promote, and create the conditions for sustainable economic prosperity, working together since the Board was established in 2014 through the Greater Brighton City Deal.

1.2 Within the context of evolving devolution, GBEB’s flagship priority is to transition the region towards net zero, supported by a number of other opportunities, including conserving natural capital, unleashing the potential of the region’s creative industries and strengthening the local food economy.

Background

1.3 The publication of the English Devolution White Paper¹ (henceforth ‘the Devolution White Paper’) in December 2024 marked a significant shift in the Government’s approach to local economic planning, whilst also reshaping the delivery of public services across England. Building on this (in February 2025), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (‘MHCLG’) kickstarted a process to reconfigure the structure and responsibilities of local councils through local government reorganisation². This process seeks to simplify local government, reduce service duplication, improve efficiency and save money and is separate from, albeit running in parallel to devolution.

1.4 However, prior to the Devolution White Paper, and in response to an invitation by the Deputy Prime Minister (i.e., in July 2024) Brighton and Hove City Council, acting on behalf of local authorities across both East and West Sussex, submitted in October 2024 an Expression of Interest (‘EoI’) to Government for a Sussex-wide devolution deal.

1.5 The EoI set out a shared commitment to collaboration across Councils and partners, recognising both the strengths and untapped potential of the region. As highlighted within the EoI, Sussex is home to a diverse range of assets which include a nationally significant coastline and national park forming the Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere³, three leading universities⁴ and a strong further education (‘FE’) sector⁵, a Premier League football club with international acclaim, in addition to major gateways⁶. Yet, the EoI also acknowledges that the region has “*much more to offer*”, with persistent disparities and pockets of deprivation limiting its potential for achieving inclusive growth.

1.6 The aspiration underpinning the devolution bid is to unlock powers and funding that will drive economic growth, strengthen local decision-making, and ensure that communities and businesses benefit directly from investment into the region.

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024), *English Devolution White Paper*. [\[Link\]](#).

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025), *Local government reorganisation: Policy and programme updates*. [\[Link\]](#).

³ See: [\[Link\]](#).

⁴ i.e., the University of Brighton, University of Chichester and University of Sussex.

⁵ Incl., the East Sussex College Group, the Greater Brighton Metropolitan College, Chichester College, and Plumpton College.

⁶ Incl., Gatwick Airport, Shoreham Port, Newhaven Port and Brighton City Airport.

- 1.7 In February 2025, it was confirmed that Sussex (i.e., comprising East and West Sussex, as well as Brighton & Hove) has been accepted onto the Government’s Devolution Priority Programme, with the aim of establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority (‘MCCA’) within 12 months – to be known as the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority (‘SBCCA’) as shown below.

Figure 1.1 Sussex and Brighton



Source: MHCLG

- 1.8 This new body, ultimately led by an elected Mayor, will hold strategic powers across transport, housing, skills, economic growth, public safety, health and climate action, with discussions currently underway to agree the terms of devolution for the region.
- 1.9 Taken together, these reforms will mark a fundamental reorganisation of the local funding landscape – moving away from competitive bidding towards a model that recognises the centrality of Strategic Authorities (i.e., the SBCCA in the case of Sussex) in driving economic growth opportunities.
- 1.10 In December 2025, it was confirmed that the SBCCA will receive £38 million per year Investment Funds allocation for 30 years. These Funds will be split equally between capital and revenue, and will be ‘un-ringfenced’, giving local choice on which priorities are invested in. This funding will be additional to devolved funding streams from individual government departments, such as adult skills funding and transport funding. It was also confirmed that the inaugural Mayoral election will now take place in May 2028⁷, but that progress would continue in the meantime on establishing the new structures, with Sussex and Brighton receiving 40% of its allocated annual investment funds over the next two years (i.e., £15.2 million per annum)⁸.

Purpose of the Study

- 1.11 The study arrives at a pivotal moment, offering the chance to build on GBEB’s achievements to date and use this as a launchpad for the establishment of the SBCCA. Its purpose is to reframe current priorities with the emerging narrative of devolution, and the

⁷ Devolution Priority Programme, Written Ministerial Statement, 4 December 2025. [\[Link\]](#).

⁸ Sussex councils continue to create new Combined County Authority to unlock huge investment. [\[Link\]](#).

enhanced power and leverages now within reach. In doing so, it provides an opportunity to reposition Sussex (i.e., through the lens of Greater Brighton) at the forefront of a rapidly evolving national context; one that is shaped by a new Modern Industrial Strategy⁹, and the Government’s wider growth ambitions¹⁰.

- 1.12 With several major projects and initiatives on the horizon (such as Gatwick Airport’s Northern Runway which received consent in September 2025, and the Sussex Energy Mission established in 2024), in addition to a series of locally-significant regeneration schemes and proposed masterplan developments (such as the planned growth at Newhaven Port), the study seeks to identify key opportunities for the region over the short, medium and long-term.
- 1.13 Ultimately, this Economic Opportunities Review for Greater Brighton aims to inform a discussion locally on the approach to maximising the potential offered by the SBCCA’s new capabilities, enabling the new Mayor (i.e., once elected in 2028) to focus on growth activity, prioritise investment and deliver long-term economic prosperity for the region.

Our Approach and Method

- 1.14 As mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to reframe Greater Brighton’s existing priorities to align with the emerging narrative around devolution, in addition to identifying further opportunities for economic growth in the region. This process will ensure that the region is well-paced to maximise the new powers and levers that will soon be available to SBCCA (and ultimately its elected Mayor). At the heart of this work is an assessment of how devolved responsibilities over funding, strategic planning and delivery can be translated into tangible economic opportunities for the region. The analysis has been explicitly shaped by the reforms set in motion by the Devolution White Paper, which provides the framework for understanding the expectations placed on SBCCA (and the Mayor), in addition to the powers that will be available over the short, medium and longer term (*see* Table 2.1).
- 1.15 The study commences with a detailed review of the Devolution White Paper to establish the scope of devolved powers and opportunities they create, both over the short-term, and the longer period (including the potential to ask for additional devolution powers). This is complemented by a review of local evidence (including Local Plans, economic strategies and research undertaken by constituent authorities), to build a picture of the social and economic context across Greater Brighton and the wider Sussex region. Where appropriate, this analysis is supplemented by statistical data from the Office for National Statistics (‘ONS’), alongside desk-based research into the region’s four international gateways (drawing on annual reports, published masterplans and Development Consent Order, or ‘DCO’ evidence for Gatwick’s Northern Runway project).
- 1.16 Building on this evidence base, Lichfields engaged extensively with stakeholders from across the region, including local economic development officers (‘EDOs’), GBEB representatives, FE and HE providers, and gateway operators. These discussions served to validate the analysis, test emerging themes and identify potential opportunities for action, whilst also highlighting areas of consensus and appetite for intervention. Further

⁹ HM Government (2025), *The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy*. [\[Link\]](#).

¹⁰ HM Government (2024), *Plan for Change, Milestones for mission-led government*. [\[Link\]](#).

engagement with GBEB at the end of October 2025 allowed the initial findings to be shared, priorities to be refined and feedback to be incorporated into the evolving framework.

- 1.17 The final stage of the study involved a more detailed review of each intervention, considering:
- a. Why the opportunity is necessary, and the risk of inaction;
 - b. The specific value that devolution can add (i.e., whether through scale, new powers or funding flexibility);
 - c. The likely impact(s) of each opportunity, recognising that many actions are at an early stage of development;
 - d. Potential actions championed by SBCCA over the short-term, and (once elected) the Mayor over the medium and longer term horizons. Where appropriate, the latter considers intermediate action needed to facilitate long-term success.
- 1.18 The study concludes by presenting a series of opportunities and actions for SBCCA (and ultimately the future Mayor) to consider, acknowledging that Greater Brighton forms part of the wider Sussex economy, and that action must deliver added value at the regional scale. Importantly, the recommendations have been developed without prejudice to political affiliation, while ensuring that the themes proposed resonate with the region's existing priorities.
- 1.19 A number of examples referenced in this study draw on similar actions being explored in other parts of the country, including emerging Local Growth Plans of other Strategic/ Combined Authorities, which in several cases are yet to be fully implemented and/or evaluated.
- 1.20 Given the wide-ranging nature of the opportunities explored in this study, and in many cases the limited delivery or project-specific information being available at the current time, it has not been possible to quantify benefits at this stage. However, where possible the study provides a qualitative indication of the potential impact.
- 1.21 As such, it is therefore recommended that GBEB and SBCCA (once established) monitor progress and seek to apply lessons learned from other location as further evidence emerges, and plans are further development.

Structure of the Report

- 1.22 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:
- **Section 2.0** provides an outline of the emerging Devolution agenda (i.e., both nationally and within Sussex) and highlights key priorities for the region based on areas SBCCA can leverage its position/power for the benefit of the Greater Brighton and wider Sussex regions.
 - **Section 3.0** provides an overview of Greater Brighton within the wider Sussex context, in addition to the footprint and scale of opportunity (and wider national economy) provided by international gateways located within the region (i.e., comprising/primarily Gatwick Airport, Shoreham Port, Newhaven Port and Brighton City Airport).

- **Section 4.0** draws on a review of local evidence, as well as extensive engagement with stakeholders from across the region to identify opportunities, whilst also establishing short, medium and long-term priorities.
- **Section 5.0** sets out overall recommendations for the SBCCA to take forward.

2.0 **Unlocking the Devolution Dividend**

2.1 The publication of the Devolution White Paper has set the stage for a fundamental shift in how local growth and public services are delivered across England. Framed as a mechanism for unlocking untapped potential and aligning investment with the region's priorities, devolution will consolidate funding streams and devolve decision making closer to home. It will also enable SBCCA to design integrated strategies that connect infrastructure, housing and skills with economic growth and environmental protections.

2.2 This section undertakes a review of the Devolution White Paper to help establish a framework for identifying economic priorities over the short, medium and long-term. This review focusses on the following five thematic areas set out within the Devolution White Paper, and outlines how the SBCCA and the Mayor, once elected, can exert the greatest influence on economic development, and what powers and budgets may be available to support delivery.

- a. Transport and infrastructure planning;
- b. Skills and employment (including adult skills funding);
- c. Housing and strategic planning;
- d. Economic development and regeneration; and
- e. Environment and climate change.

a. Transport and infrastructure planning

2.3 Devolution will mark a step-change in how transport is governed, planned, and delivered across the region. Under the Government's devolution framework, Strategic Authorities will be given a statutory role in shaping integrated transport systems, with powers spanning buses, rail, roads and other emerging modes of mobility (such as e-scooters and bike hire). For the region, this means that the SBCCA will be able to set a clear vision for connectivity that links communities, supports economic growth and drives the decarbonisation of transport.

2.4 One of the most significant changes will be the ability to bring buses back under public control through franchising, strengthened partnerships and/or even through publicly owned operators. The process for doing so is being simplified, which would enable SBCCA to deliver more reliable, affordable and better-integrated bus services.

2.5 Alongside this, SBCCA will also have a statutory role governing and planning the rail network, with the right to request (further) devolution of services, infrastructure and station management where this would support a more joined-up and inter-modal system. This will enable SBCCA to shape rail services around local priorities, whilst also unlocking regeneration and housing opportunities linked to station/railway land and surrounding development.

2.6 On roads, SBCCA will be empowered to coordinate the local road network. Whilst day-to-day responsibility for local roads will remain with constituent authorities, this new layer of oversight will allow for more consistent management across the region. SBCCA will also have powers to regulate micro-mobility schemes (such as e-scooters and bike hire),

ensuring these are integrated into wider transport plans and tailored to each area's local needs.

2.7 Crucially, these powers will be underpinned by funding consolidation, giving SBCCA, and ultimately the future Mayor greater autonomy and flexibility to allocate resources across the region, with the shift away from fragmented, competitive funding streams representing a major opportunity to plan for the long-term and investing strategically. Furthermore, SBCCA will also be expected to play a leading role in the decarbonisation of transport by developing plans to transition bus fleets, reduce air pollution and expand infrastructure that enables active travel across the region.

2.8 At the heart of this new settlement will be a requirement to prepare a Local Transport Plan that is aligned with the region's Spatial Development Strategy. This will provide a framework for integrating transport with housing, skills and economic development, ensuring that investment decisions are mutually reinforcing.

b. Skills and employment

2.9 Devolution offers an opportunity to reshape the way skills and employment support are delivered, ensuring these are more closely aligned with the needs of local people, employers and the regional economy. Under the Government's devolution framework, adult skills and employment support will be devolved, giving SBCCA the ability to design integrated plans that reflect the realities of the Sussex labour market.

2.10 Building on the success of Local Skills Improvement Plans ('LSIPs'), devolution will see the SBCCA take joint ownership of the LSIP process alongside the Sussex Chamber of Commerce which is designated as the region's employer representative body ('ERB'). This partnership will continue to place employers at the heart of the skills agenda, ensuring that sector priorities are clearly defined and embedded within a wider framework that incorporates a Sussex-wide Local Growth Plan ('LGP'), and which aligns with priorities of the Modern Industrial Strategy and Skills England's national priority skills assessments¹¹. In practice, this means SBCCA will be able to set out sector priorities that guide provision, strengthen pathways into employment, and ensure that training opportunities are relevant to the needs of local businesses.

2.11 SBCCA will also play a crucial role in shaping clear progression routes from education into FE and higher education ('HE'), as well as into local employment opportunities. By feeding into the Department for Education's ('DfE') annual strategic conversations with colleges, SBCCA will also help shape the FE offer across Sussex. The Mayor's convening powers will be central in securing industry placements and work experience with local employers, ensuring that 16-19 education provision is closely tied to real world pathways.

2.12 However, SBCCA's role will extend beyond skills, and into employment support. As set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper¹², SBCCA will be responsible for implementing the local Get Sussex Working Plan¹³. Funding for supported employment provision will be

¹¹ Skills England (2025), *Research and analysis, Assessment of priority skills to 2030*. [\[Link\]](#).

¹² HM Government (2024), *Get Britain Working*. [\[Link\]](#).

¹³ Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council (2025), *Get Sussex Working Plan*. [\[Link\]](#).

devolved, enabling SBCCA to design tailored actions that reflect local priorities, and which reflect the needs of Sussex communities.

- 2.13 Looking ahead, SBCCA will also be a key partner in the development of the new National Jobs and Careers Service, helping to create a holistic and joined-up offer that integrates employment, skills and health support. Within this framework, SBCCA will take on a central role in ensuring that young people across the region have access to consistent, high-quality advice and opportunities.

c. Housing and strategic planning

- 2.14 Devolution will also give SBCCA a stronger role in shaping housing delivery and strategic planning across the region. Under devolution, SBCCA will be tasked with ensuring that more homes are built in locations that are well connected to essential infrastructure, whilst also increasing the supply of social and affordable housing. Until now, Strategic Authorities have lacked the powers to significantly influence these outcomes, particularly in relation to affordable housing and long-term planning. As such, devolution will mark a step-change in strategic planning, both within Sussex and nationally.
- 2.15 A central responsibility of SBCCA will be the preparation of a LGP, setting out a long-term vision for growth in their region over the next decade and a roadmap for how this can be achieved. This will galvanise and guide work across partners to deliver growth. Building on this, SBCCA and the Mayor will be empowered to develop and propose a Spatial Development Strategy ('SDS') for the wider region. This Strategy will provide strategic development management powers across Sussex (i.e., such as defining regionally-significant development sites, infrastructure requirements, and the distribution of housing, including affordable housing provision).
- 2.16 Individual local authorities will be required to ensure their Local Plans are in general conformity with the established SDS, embedding a more consistent and coordinated approach to planning across wider Sussex. In December 2025, the government confirmed the requirements for SDS as part of consultation on a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).¹⁴ Amongst other requirements, it is intended that SDS will "*give spatial expression to strategic elements of Local Growth Plans and the National Industrial Strategy.*"
- 2.17 Once the SDS is in place, the Mayor will gain access to a range of development management powers, including the ability to intervene in planning applications of strategic importance, applying compulsory purchase orders ('CPOs') and establishing Mayoral Development Corporations ('MDCs') and/or issue Mayor Development Orders ('MDOs') to accelerate regeneration. To support the delivery of major infrastructure projects, the Mayor will also be able to raise a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy ('MCIL'), creating a dedicated funding stream for strategic investment.
- 2.18 As devolution becomes more embedded, it is anticipated that SBCCA will take on an increasingly central role in housing delivery, including gaining control over grant funding to support regeneration initiatives, and delivery of affordable housing. Statutory consultation¹⁵ (i.e., undertaken between February and April 2025), has also highlighted the potential for

¹⁴ See link to consultation document here: [\[Link\]](#)

¹⁵ See here: [\[Link\]](#).

SBCCA to push for new models of affordable housing delivery, including social housing, first-time buyer schemes and affordable developments, including within rural areas. Similarly, SBCCA can work with Homes England to explore the potential for, and establish a Strategic Place Partnership which provides a framework for it to work closely with local leaders, supporting locally-driven housing and regeneration efforts. Over time, Government intends to move towards the full devolution of funds and delivery responsibilities, positioning SBCCA as the key driver of housing growth and renewal.

- 2.19 These new arrangements will however, require high levels of collaboration between SBCCA, and local planning authorities.

d. Economic development and regeneration

- 2.20 Devolution will also provide SBCCA with the opportunity to secure greater investment and shape a more dynamic, and locally responsive approach to economic development. SBCCA will be in a position to attract international investment, support businesses to thrive, and create vibrant places where people want to live, work and visit. By aligning devolved power with the vision and ambitions set out in the LGP, SBCCA will be able to drive forward a coherent strategy, and create vibrant places where people want to live, work and visit. The LGP will act as the “guiding star for investment”, and provide the long-term vision and roadmap to guide this, ensuring that devolved powers are deployed in a way that accelerates delivery.

- 2.21 A central role for SBCCA will be to work in partnership with the Department for Business and Trade (‘DBT’) to coordinate national, local and devolved business support schemes, driving productivity and helping small firms to scale. This is especially pertinent as 78.9% of businesses across Greater Brighton employ fewer than five people; a proportion that is slightly higher than the national average (i.e., of 78.2%)¹⁶. Building on successful pilots elsewhere, SBCCA will also have the opportunity to roll out a data-led export growth programme, helping small firms to scale-up in line with the long-term priorities identified within the LGP.

- 2.22 The integration of the Growth Hub into devolved funding will give SBCCA a key role in the provision of business support across the region. By focusing local provision, SBCCA will help deliver a core suite of growth products as part of the England-wide Growth Hubs network, ensuring that businesses in Sussex can access consistent, high-quality support. At the same time, joint working with the Office for Investment will allow SBCCA to develop, and market investible propositions (e.g., through the development of an investment prospectus) that are grounded in the long-term priorities and ambitions articulated by the LGP.

- 2.23 Beyond attracting investment and providing business support, SBCCA will also play a pivotal role in unlocking the region’s innovation potential. By working with universities, businesses and government partners, SBCCA will be empowered to influence decisions on regional innovation, with direct connections to UK Research and Innovation (‘UKRI’) and opportunities to collaborate with Innovate UK on long-term strategies, while ensuring that

¹⁶ Based on data published by the Office for National Statistics (‘ONS’) in UK Business Counts – enterprise by industry and employment size band.

investments are aligned with the region’s long-term vision., embedding research and development as a driver for inclusive economic growth.

- 2.24 Finally, devolution will also provide SBCCA with a role to play in supporting the growth of key sectors locally, including the creative, cultural heritage and tourism sectors. By working with Government to devolve levers to growth, and addressing skills challenges, SBCCA can help ensure that funding decisions are locally informed and aligned with the LGP’s long-term vision for sector growth and diversification. This will strengthen the region’s offer, whilst at the same time also creating new opportunities for employment, innovation and regeneration.

e. Environment and climate change

- 2.25 Devolution will also provide a powerful platform for driving forward the region’s decarbonisation agenda, ensuring that efforts to protect the natural environment and biodiversity are embedded within wider economic and social priorities. By aligning local leadership with national ambitions, SBCCA will be central to delivering the Government’s mission for a transition to a clean energy system, whilst at the same time also ensuring that communities across Sussex benefit from the social, economic and wellbeing gains this shift will bring.
- 2.26 Once established, SBCCA will be required to engage with the National Energy System Operator (‘NESO’) to develop a Regional Energy Strategic Plan which will create a transparent route for local insights to shape the future energy system and ensuring that planning reflects the realities of Sussex’s functional economic area. In doing so, SBCCA will help balance national priorities with local needs, whilst at the same time positioning Sussex and its initiatives (such as the Sussex Energy Mission¹⁷) as a leader in clean energy innovation and delivery.
- 2.27 Beyond energy, SBCCA will also play a crucial role in tackling climate change and nature emergencies at both local and wider national levels. By taking on enhanced responsibilities for Local Nature Recovery Strategies, SBCCA will be empowered to convene partnerships, coordinate investment, monitor and report the delivery of environmental initiatives. In doing so, this will ensure that nature recovery remains rooted in community engagement, and is considered as an integral part of regeneration, housing and infrastructure planning.
- 2.28 Looking ahead, the Government has signalled its intention to explore further opportunities for devolution in this space. This could see greater devolution to respond to the impacts of climate change, in particular ensuring that rural and coastal communities are better represented in local policy decision-making. By combining strategic oversight with local engagement, SBCCA will be well placed to champion a holistic approach which integrates clean energy, biodiversity and climate resilience into the region’s long-term growth strategy.

¹⁷ See here [\[Link\]](#).

A New Era of Local Leadership

- 2.29 Devolution represents a transformative moment in local government, with the Devolution White Paper signalling a decisive shift of powers from Whitehall to local leaders. For Sussex, this means that SBCCA and the Mayor will hold responsibilities across transport, housing, skills, economic development, regeneration and climate action, and will have the tools needed to align investment with the region's unique assets (i.e., natural, economic and social) and its challenges.
- 2.30 Through the consolidation of funding streams and devolved decision-making, SBCCA will be able to design integrated strategies that connect infrastructure, housing and skills with economic growth and environmental protection. In doing so, it will be well positioned to attract inward investment, foster innovation and strengthen the role of international gateways, ensuring that growth is both inclusive and sustainable. The challenge, as highlighted by consultees to the Government's statutory consultation¹⁸ is for SBCCA to reflect the varied identities across the region, and ensuring it does not disproportionately benefit Brighton or larger towns and settlements at the expense of smaller and/or rural settlements.
- 2.31 Table 2.1 overleaf provides an overview of the key powers and levers available to SBCCA (and ultimately the Mayor) over the short, medium and long-term. The analysis shows that over time, the power and levers available will expand. A key benefit of devolution is that it provides a platform to make the case for further devolution over time. By demonstrating effective delivery and strong governance, the region can build credibility with government, strengthening the argument for additional fiscal levers, expanded responsibilities and longer-term funding settlements.

¹⁸ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025), *Sussex and Brighton devolution consultation response*. [\[Link\]](#).

Table 2.1 Overview of key powers and levers available to SBCCA and the Mayor (once elected) over the short, medium and long-term.

Devolution Thematic Area	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
Transport and infrastructure planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shaping the development of integrated transport systems. Power to franchise buses, strengthen partnerships and/or establish public operators. Regulation of micromobility schemes (incl. e-scooters and bike hire). Development of Local Transport Plan (to be aligned with Spatial Development Strategy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Right to request further devolution of rail services, infrastructure and station management. Development and management of strategic road network. Potential for consolidated transport funding providing greater flexibility to allocate resources. Co-ordinate investment in active travel initiatives and decarbonisation of bus fleet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded influence over rail planning and integration with wider network / services. Potential to control local stations and surrounding land (to support delivery of integrated regeneration schemes). Greater integration with housing and economic growth strategies (incl. ability to raise additional funding through MCIL).
Skills and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint ownership of LSIP with the Sussex Chamber of Commerce. Convening powers to secure industry placements for learners aged 16-19. Delivery of, and updated production of Get Sussex Working Plan, aimed at reducing economic inequality. Play a key role shaping local FE provision through DfE's annual strategic conversations with colleges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed funding for supported employment provision. Integration of skills, employment and health support through the National Jobs and Careers Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater influence over 16-19 pathways, ensuring greater alignment with local labour market needs. Greater devolution of skills budgets. Strategic role in shaping innovation-led skills pipelines in partnerships with universities and industry.
Housing and strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy for Sussex. Initial development management powers (incl. the potential to 'call-in' strategic planning applications). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Powers to apply Compulsory Purchase Orders. Ability to establish Mayoral Development Corporations and issue Mayoral Development Orders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devolution of affordable housing funds and delivery responsibilities. Expanded control over regeneration and housing grant funding.

Devolution Thematic Area	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise MCIL to fund strategic infrastructure. • Explore opportunities to establish a Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England, to support locally-driven housing and regeneration efforts. 	
Economic development and regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce LGP to hardwire local growth priorities, set out a long-term vision for growth in Sussex over the next decade, and a roadmap for how this can be achieved. • Build strategic partnership with the Department for Business and Trade. • Greater control on how Growth Hub funding is deployed. • Greater influence on innovation funding through partnerships with businesses and universities to access funding opportunities (such as the £500 million UKRI-led Local Innovation Partnerships Fund). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support growth of export potential, targeting high-potential SMEs at first. • Joint working with the Office for Investment to make the case for investment for Sussex as a whole. • More levers to support the creative, cultural, heritage and tourism sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuller integration of innovation partnerships into regional economy (and strategy going forward). • Expanded role shaping national innovation and investment programmes.
Environment and climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with NESO to develop Regional Energy Strategic Plan. • Ability to convene partnerships, coordinate investment and monitor delivery to support delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to coordinate local heat networks. • Expanded decarbonisation responsibilities, influencing transport, housing retrofit and clean energy projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater powers to respond to climate change impacts (especially for rural and coastal communities). • Integration of climate resilience into growth strategies. • Bigger leadership role support Net Zero delivery through investment and innovation.

3.0 The Greater Brighton Economic Context

- 3.1 The Greater Brighton economy sits within a broad and varied Sussex economy that is polycentric in nature and encompasses a mix of urban, coastal and rural settlements.
- 3.2 In total, Sussex supports over 750,000 jobs; a figure which is slightly above pre-pandemic levels. Within this, Greater Brighton accounts for around 459,000 jobs, representing approximately 61% of the region's economy. Despite this scale, employment in Greater Brighton remains marginally below 2019 levels, with its share of the wider economy having declined slightly compared with pre-pandemic proportions (i.e., by 1.0 percentage point). Employment in Greater Brighton is concentrated in human health and social care, wholesale and retail, hospitality (i.e., accommodation and food) and education; and is broadly consistent with Sussex's wider employment profile.
- 3.3 Greater Brighton has distinctive sector specialisms in line with the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy eight sectors¹⁹ (also referred to as IS-8). The dominance of transport and logistics is underpinned by the presence of Gatwick Airport and other international gateways, which whilst not one of the government's eight sectors with strongest growth potential (i.e., Is-8) is an important driver for all. Meanwhile, clean energy is underpinned by large-scale renewable energy projects (such as Rampion and Rampion 2 offshore wind farms) and the ambitious Sussex Energy Mission which seeks to increase the amount of zero carbon energy produced, while at the same time also reducing demand achieving energy neutrality by 2040. The creative industries, particularly in Brighton and Hove add further strength, and complement innovation in advanced manufacturing, automotive, vacuum technologies and the digital and technology sector, including university spin-offs in quantum computing. Together, these clusters highlight Greater Brighton's role as an emerging knowledge economy, and potential to play a key global role in the development of new technology and securing productivity gains for the UK's economy.
- 3.4 Alongside these sectoral strengths, Sussex has a significant visitor economy that is rooted in centuries of heritage, the area's natural environment, as well as creative expression and cultural assets. This is also supported by the international profile of Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club ('BHAFC').
- 3.5 Structurally, the Greater Brighton economy is dominated by micro businesses, with nearly four-in-five employing fewer than five people. Whilst this highlights strong entrepreneurial levels and business resilience, it also signals greater risks as micro businesses are most exposed during economic downturns and periods of economic uncertainty. Productivity levels remain below national levels, particularly in East Sussex (where productivity is 73% of the national average) and salaries lag behind national benchmarks. Skills levels are variable, and the economy is often characterised as being too reliant on lower-value sectors, limiting earnings potential for working-age residents, and creating a significant challenge given housing costs across the Greater Brighton region.
- 3.6 The natural environment is a major asset, but the region continues to experience pockets of higher levels of relative deprivation, including areas amongst the 10% most deprived in

¹⁹ Comprising – advanced manufacturing, defence, clean energy industries, digital and technology, the creative industries, financial services, life sciences, and professional and business services.

England. The pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living crisis have exacerbated inequalities in Greater Brighton, with higher rates of Universal Credit claimants living along the Sussex coast (incl., Newhaven, Littlehampton, East Brighton and Worthing), in Crawley and parts of Lewes. Even previously less disadvantaged rural areas have seen significant rises in low incomes and unemployment.

- 3.7 In addition, challenges with employment land provision are acute, and significantly impact areas along the coast where environmental constraints limit the supply of developable land for employment uses, leading to fragmentation and higher business costs. Commercial space pressures are intensifying, with evidence prepared in the lead-up of the Brighton & Hove Economic Plan²⁰ suggesting that 41% of the city's commercial stock will not meet Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards ('MEES'). Whilst implementation of MEES legislation has been delayed to at least 2030, the direction of travel and scale of the challenge means this remains an important consideration. This, combined with labour market constraints and an ageing population, is restricting business growth and placing additional strain on local health and wellbeing services.
- 3.8 Greater Brighton is a diverse and dynamic economy with international gateways, sectoral strengths and key innovation assets. Yet it also faces significant structural challenges around productivity, skills, land supply and deprivation.

International Gateways

- 3.9 In addition to its domestic strengths, Greater Brighton is home to four international gateways that connect Sussex with the wider world. Of these, Gatwick Airport is by far the largest, serving not only as a critical global hub for London, but also as a major economic player for the region, with significant potential to drive business growth and investment. The ports of Shoreham and Newhaven provide vital links for trade, and increasingly act as green hubs for the region, reinforcing its role as an outward-facing economy. Brighton city Airport offers a more modest contribution to connectivity, operating primarily as a general-aviation airfield that supports niche flying and training activity.
- 3.10 This section provides a high-level overview of these gateways and examines their direct and wider economic footprint. It also highlights the opportunities they offer to underpin future growth and prosperity across the region.

Gatwick Airport

- 3.11 With over 43 million passengers in 2024²¹, Gatwick Airport is the second largest airport in the UK. Located near Crawley and c. 30 miles south of Central London, the airport serves Greater London, Sussex and Surrey. Whilst seeing growth year-on-year (i.e., of +5.7% during 2023-24), passenger numbers at Gatwick Airport are still below the pre-pandemic high of almost 47 million passengers (i.e., in 2019). During 2024, Gatwick Airport handled approximately 104,000 tonnes of freight, having recovered from a pandemic-induced low of around 11,600 tonnes in 2021. However, the quantum of freight going through the airport in 2024 remains below pre-pandemic levels (i.e., of 112,600 tonnes in 2018).

²⁰ Brighton & Hove City Council, *Fairer, greener, more productive. An economic plan to build on our strengths and adapt to a better future 2024 to 2027*. [\[Link\]](#).

²¹ See here: [\[Link\]](#).

- 3.12 Routes serviced by the airport include a variety of domestic destinations, in addition to international destinations in Europe, North America and the Middle East. The busiest international routes from Gatwick in 2024 included Barcelona and Malaga, Dublin, Rome and Dubai.
- 3.13 Drawing on analysis by Oxera²², it is estimated that during 2023 Gatwick Airport directly employed in the region of 2,500 people, generating an annual economic impact of approximately £734 million gross value added ('GVA'). In addition, a further 20,200 workers were employed on-site, through ancillary activities at the airport (including hotel and Duty Free), generating a further £941 million GVA each year. Once accounting for the airport's wider employment effects (i.e., indirect and induced effects), it is estimated that Gatwick supports further 41,100 jobs, which together contribute just under £3.0 billion GVA more widely.
- 3.14 In aggregate, this means that Gatwick Airport supports an estimated 63,800 jobs, and generates an annual economic contribution of more than £4.5 billion GVA each year.
- 3.15 A significant share of this employment is rooted locally. Passholder data indicates that around 10,000 on-site employees live within the Greater Brighton area, including approximately 6,800 Crawley residents, and 1,500 Mid Sussex residents. The proportion of employed residents working at the airport varies across the region, from 0.4% in Arun to 1.6% in Adur and 3.6% in Mid Sussex, with the Greater Brighton average standing at 3.7%. In Crawley, the airport's influence is particularly pronounced, with around one in five employed residents working at Gatwick. When indirect and induced employment is aggregated at the Greater Brighton level, the airport is estimated to support around 8,000 jobs, generating £570 million in GVA for the local economy, underlining Gatwick's role as a major driver of prosperity for communities across the region.
- 3.16 In 2021, Gatwick Airport published its Decade of Change²³ policy which outlined its commitment to a sustainable Gatwick by 2030. The strategy outlines the airport's plans related to net zero emissions, people and communities, in addition to the local environment. Key initiatives include reducing its environmental footprint through improved water and waste management, enhancing biodiversity, investing in sustainable transport infrastructure, and engaging with communities through initiatives such as the Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee.
- 3.17 The existing northern runway at Gatwick Airport is limited to acting as a taxiway and is operational only when the main runway is out of use. A Development Consent Order to bring the northern runway into routine use was approved by the Secretary of State for Transport in September 2025. The project will reposition the centre line of the northern runway 12 metres north to allow dual runway operations. The £2.2 billion privately financed plan is one of the largest capital investment projects in the region, and it will help the airport meet future passenger demand by serving up to 80 million passengers a year.
- 3.18 As outlined above, the airport already supports significant employment and generates considerable economic output to the economy. Growth at Gatwick Airport has potential to supercharge this, with potential to almost double its total footprint (i.e., to around £9

²² Oxera (2024), *Local economic impact of London Gatwick: 2023*. [[Link](#)].

²³ See here: [[Link](#)].

billion GVA per annum), as well as supporting growth across a range of related industries, including tourism and leisure, manufacturing and the service sector.

- 3.19 Beyond its direct economic contribution, Gatwick also sits at the heart of the Airport Economic Zone ('AEZ'), a partnership designed to leverage the airport's role as a regional anchor to drive long-term, sustainable growth. Amongst other things, the AEZ is focused on attracting inward investment (including foreign investment) through strong links with DBT, presenting a unified voice to national government and global investors (e.g., at key for a such as the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum, or 'UKREiiF'). Its remit extends to strengthening collaboration across the wider region, promoting the visitor economy, and enhancing international trade. Groups such as Gateway Gatwick, a network of local businesses supported by the Airport to help firms access new opportunities, raise their profile and build commercial connections demonstrate how the Airport's ability to galvanise partners can be harnessed to stimulate enterprise, supply chain development and wider regional prosperity.

Shoreham Port

- 3.20 Shoreham Port is the largest commercial port in the region and a major economic anchor for Greater Brighton, and the wider Sussex coast. Each year, the port handles close to 2 million tonnes of cargo and facilitates around 500 cargo shipping movements, reflecting its strong role supporting construction, manufacturing, retail and other key sectors across the UK. The port's financial performance has continued to strengthen, with annual turnover rising to more than £20 million in 2024²⁴, underpinned by its long-term strategy of diversification and investment.
- 3.21 A defining strength of Shoreham Port is the diversity of activity across its 110-acre estate, which accommodates cargo operations, fishing, leisure marine uses, and a wide range of industrial and commercial businesses. The port handles a broad mix of goods, including timber, steel, aggregates, bulks and glass, as well as petroleum, woodchip and cereals, and is well positioned for short-sea shipping with strong connections across Europe/ This diversity has been central to the port's resilience and its continued growth.
- 3.22 The port has capacity to handle around 2 million tonnes of cargo each year, and can accommodate vessels up to 103 metres in length. Alongside its cargo-handling capabilities, Shoreham Port is also designated a fish landing port, welcoming over 430 nomadic commercial fishing vessels during 2024. Furthermore, the port provides extensive facilities for storage, marine services and leisure craft, with more than 12,500 vessel movements recorded during 2024. The estate includes around 48,000 sq.m of covered storage space, large-scale warehouses, smaller industrial units and modern serviced offices, all creating a flexible environment for businesses of all sizes.
- 3.23 Shoreham Port is also home to a thriving industrial cluster, comprising around 200 business tenants and supporting more than 1,600 jobs across the site, in addition to the port's own directly employed workforce. While some tenants rely on port-side access, an increasing number choose Shoreham Port for its strategic location, high-quality facilities and collaborative business environment. Over the past decade, a strong diversification strategy, through a continually evolving portfolio of serviced office space and light

²⁴ Shoreham Port, 2024 Annual Review. [\[Link\]](#).

industrial units, the port's cluster has now grown to become a hub for small and medium-sized enterprises ('SMEs') reinforcing its role as a dynamic hub for employment and innovation.

- 3.24 As a Trust Port, Shoreham operates for the benefit of its community and maintains strong relationships with residents, businesses and educational institutions, both locally and across the wider region. In 2024, the port contributed both directly and in-kind to its community, and undertook extensive engagement with schools, colleges and universities in the region, to promote maritime careers, and drive awareness of the opportunities across the sector. Through visits, talks and careers fairs, the Port is helping young people from across Sussex access opportunities in marine and related industries.
- 3.25 Looking ahead, Shoreham Port's growth is guided by its long-term plans for regeneration, as outlined by its Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan²⁵ ('AAP') and its Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plan²⁶ ('LIDP'). The vision focuses on creating a vibrant waterfront, enhancing leisure and commercial opportunities, while at the same time delivering a more integrated and sustainable port environment. Central to this is the port's ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions, supported by major planned investments in renewable energy generation, including 4.8 MW of solar PV, 6 to 8 MW of onshore wind, and 18.4 MWh of battery storage.
- 3.26 These investments build on a series of ongoing decarbonisation initiatives, including the development of shore power to reduce emissions from berthed vessels, collaboration with innovators of electric propulsion, and the installation of a marine source heat pump to replace traditional oil-fired heating. The port has also explored potential partnerships for hydrogen production, however to date none have yet reached final investment decisions. These initiatives will also make an important contribution to the Sussex Energy Mission, reducing dependence on national infrastructure and strengthening local energy resilience.
- 3.27 The LIDP further demonstrates the Port's commitment to sustainability. Funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero ('DESNZ') and delivered in partnership with Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation ('UKRI'), the LIDP sets out how the industrial cluster can build on the port's long history and core strengths to evolve into a zero carbon centre for trade, employment and inclusive community engagement. It highlights opportunities to create new jobs as industry transitions to low-carbon technologies, with emerging systems requiring new skills and ways of working.
- 3.28 The LIDP assesses four decarbonisation scenarios ranging from 'do nothing' to full electrification. Each scenario would deliver an overall reduction in emissions, primarily due to committed investments. However, the analysis presented within the LIDP shows that gradual electrification of plant equipment, a shift to electric vehicles, and wider adoption of low carbon technologies offers the greatest potential for long-term emissions reduction.
- 3.29 The cluster is strategically positioned to harness renewable energy, and ongoing research is helping to better understand the port's reduced carbon footprint, air-quality impacts on the environment and its community, and opportunities for further mitigation. Together, these initiatives support the port's aspiration to become a leading green hub for business, and an exemplar of sustainable industrial growth, not only in Sussex but more widely. However,

²⁵ Shoreham Harbour Regeneration (2019), *Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan*. [\[Link\]](#).

²⁶ Shoreham Port Industrial Cluster (2025), *Shoreham Port Industrial Cluster Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plan*. [\[Link\]](#).

the evidence makes clear that progressing from planning to deployment will require the right policy environment, investment conditions and mechanisms to be in place.

Newhaven Port

- 3.30 Newhaven Port is a long-established port and associated docks complex located at the mouth of the River Ouse in East Sussex. It handles around 1 million tonnes of cargo each year, and remains an important hub of maritime activity along the Sussex coast. In addition to commercial freight, the port operates a year-round passenger ferry services to Dieppe, with increased frequency during the summer months. The port has potential to accommodate vessels of up to 145 metres in length, supporting a mix of freight, ferry and marine operations.
- 3.31 The port is served by Newhaven Harbour rail station, enabling the efficient movement of goods and people to and from the site. The port is also home to a rail head with potential for future expansion, strengthening its role as a strategic rail-freight hub for the South coast. Newhaven handles a diverse range of cargo, including timber, steel, cement and aggregates, fertiliser, waste and scrap metal, reflecting its roles in supporting construction, manufacturing and other key sectors in the region.
- 3.32 Situated at the heart of the town, Newhaven Port plays a central role in the area's economic vitality. Its footprint overlaps significantly with the Newhaven Enterprise Zone ('EZ'), creating opportunities to align port-related growth with wider regeneration, inward investment opportunities and employment creation. As such, the port has a significant corporate and social role to play, including striving to achieve net zero emissions by 2040, through the decarbonisation of port operations and promoting renewable energy initiatives on-site, in addition to community-focused campaigns such as supporting local business growth and developing green spaces to improve resident wellbeing.
- 3.33 Newhaven Port contributes to a wide range of regional and national industries and is a key asset to the Sussex Energy Mission. It is home to the operations base for the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm, reinforcing its role in the UK's clean energy transition. The port's strategic location also positions it well to support future growth in offshore wind, as well as other marine energy technologies.
- 3.34 In 2024, the port produced a new masterplan setting out opportunities for sustainable growth and long-term resilience. Key opportunities identified include expanding its role in offshore wind, as well as developing renewable energy clusters, enhancing tourism and cruise activity, and supporting the commercial fishing sector. A continuing operational challenge for the port is the maintenance of nearly 1 km of breakwater facilities, which is essential not only for port activities but also for protecting low lying land upstream along the River Ouse, and into East Sussex.
- 3.35 Building on the vision of the 2024 masterplan, Newhaven Port alongside the University of Brighton, University College London and Moda Energy Ltd were awarded around £339,600 to deliver the GREENPORTSIDE research project. This project considers how renewable electricity can be used at the port to support ships and port operations in ways that are technically feasible and economically viable. These findings could help shape the UK's transition to zero carbon shipping, reducing pollution while also supporting regional

growth and innovation, putting the port at the forefront of innovation in clean maritime technologies.

- 3.36 The project (funded by Innovate UK and the Department for Transport) investigates practical ways for ports to supply vessels with sustainable energy, including renewable shore power, enabling ships to plug into clean electricity when docked, and more ambitious options such as generating sufficient renewable electricity on-site to power port operations, and provide fast-charging for battery-powered vessels. Researchers are assessing both the technical feasibility and economic viability of these solutions, with the aim of creating models that could be replicated across other UK ports.

Brighton City Airport

- 3.37 Brighton City Airport, located near Shoreham-by-Sea, operates primarily as a general-aviation airfield. While it has historical significance, its contemporary role is modest and primarily focused on light aviation activity.
- 3.38 The airport does not provide commercial passenger services or handle commercial cargo, and therefore plays only a limited role in the region's transport or economic infrastructure. Activity is largely confined to private flying, pilot training and small-scale business aviation.
- 3.39 Brighton City Airport is served by the Shoreham-by-Sea rail station located along the West Coastway Line. The airport comprises one terminal building and restricts use to smaller planes with a maximum take-off weight of around 5,700 kg. The site hosts Northbrook College's engineering department (i.e., a Centre of Vocational Excellence, or 'CoVE' in aerospace and aviation), in addition to a number of small businesses. These activities are generally local in nature and do not constitute a significant cluster, however the presence of nearby logistics and employment sites creates opportunities for complementary growth.

4.0 Economic Opportunities for Greater Brighton

4.1 Drawing on the fundamentals established by the Devolution White Paper, alongside our review of local evidence and stakeholder engagement from across Greater Brighton, this section sets out a series of opportunities SBCCA can prioritise as the region charts its course through the early phases of devolution.

4.2 The opportunities considered span a range of thematic areas (incl., transport, housing, regeneration, skills and the environment). Whilst presented below under the separate themes – as set out in section 2.0 – it should be recognised many of the following opportunities cut across multiple policy areas, creating scope for more integrated growth, stronger investment cases, and wider benefits for both businesses and communities across the region. This approach reflects the reality that the region’s challenges, and acknowledges that opportunities are best addressed through joined-up action, which devolution can provide a stronger platform for. Accordingly, for each theme, we tabulate opportunities and actions considering:

- Why is this opportunity necessary?
- What is the net additionality / added value?
- What is the proposed timeline (i.e. short, medium or long-term)?
- What is the expected impact?
- Which themes would delivery support?

4.3 It is recognised that once elected in May 2028, the Mayor will define their own (political) agenda, and set priorities accordingly. The following opportunities are therefore presented as politically neutral and are designed to provide the widest-possible range of opportunities for securing a prosperous and sustainable future for the region.

a. Transport and infrastructure planning

4.4 Transport is one of the region’s most pressing challenges, with congestion and variable public transport provision undermining connectivity and holding back economic growth. The proposed opportunities for action are all part of the same narrative which seeks to address existing pinch-points while at the same time also providing genuine alternatives that improve reliability and reduce dependence on private mobility. The scale of investment required is significant, with Transport for the South East’s (‘TfSE’) Strategic Investment Plan (‘SIP’) estimating £3.6 billion (in 2020 prices) of collective action across Sussex, including around £1.6 billion specifically targeted at tackling bottlenecks on the road network, illustrating the depth of the challenge.

4.5 The added value of intervention lies in weaving these strands together into a coherent system. By bringing together national agencies, local authorities, operators and employers, SBCCA and the Mayor can align investment decisions with plans outlined in the SDS, ensuring that upgrades to transport and infrastructure benefits not only support the economy, but also promote inclusive growth. In the short-term, this means championing ‘shovel-ready’ projects and piloting new approaches. Over the long-term, the Mayor’s convening powers can help leverage additional funding, strengthen the case for further devolved powers, and explore new funding mechanisms (such as MCIL) as part of a broader suite of funding levers to support delivery.

Case Study – East Midlands Transport Plan

The Mayor of the East Midlands, Claire Ward, is planning to invest over £2 billion in transport funding to create an integrated transport system that enables healthy, inclusive and sustainable options which reduce car dependency, and link communities through better public transport and mass transit as part of new developments. This fund will be transformative, and aims to improve how residents, visitors and businesses experience travel in the region.

4.6 In doing so, SBCCA can harness the scale provided by devolution to transform fragmented interventions into a single, integrated vision; one that connects people to opportunity, drives regeneration and which positions the region as a leader in sustainable growth. Central to this will be the preparation of a Local Transport Plan (i.e., as required by the Devolution White Paper), ensuring that intervention is fully aligned with aspirations in the LGP, embedding investment within a joined-up framework and supporting the evolution of a future-ready transport network across Sussex.

Unlocking bottlenecks and constraints on the road network

4.7 Congestion along the A27, the A259, and the region’s strategic road network continues to hold back connectivity and constrain Greater Brighton, and the wider Sussex region’s economic potential. Devolution provides the power to tackle these long-standing pinch-points by unlocking investment, easing movement across the region, improving air quality and linking people to jobs and services more efficiently.

4.8 The added value of devolution lies in the ability of SBCCA to convene national agencies and local partners to champion shovel-ready schemes, embed upgrades within the SDS, and align transport investment with housing and regeneration initiatives. Over time, greater devolved influence over the Strategic Road Network, and the ability to raise MCIL will ensure that these improvements remove barriers to economic growth and underpin wider ambitions for skills, housing and inclusive growth.

4.9 However, congestion on the roads can only be eased if genuine alternatives are provided. This means that upgrades to the road network must be conceived as part of an integrated package where improvements to road, rail, and wider transport systems are delivered together, rather than treating road upgrades in isolation.

Transforming Sussex rail to unlock labour markets

- 4.10 Investment in improving rail infrastructure represents both a critical requirement and a major opportunity for addressing wider connectivity challenges throughout Sussex. Congestion on the roads can only be eased if rail becomes a genuine alternative, and devolution gives SBCCA the power to deliver reliable east-west and other internal services (such as the Arundel Chord scheme) within Sussex and further afield into Kent, the Solent and beyond. In addition, improved rail connectivity has the potential to open up labour markets and boost the visitor economy.
- 4.11 SBCCA and the Mayor can lobby for franchise reform and embed rail upgrades within the region's SDS so that transport investment can directly support housing delivery, economic growth and job creation. However, SBCCA and the Mayor also have a critical leadership role to play in championing further investment on parts of the rail network beyond the region (such as addressing the existing bottleneck at Croydon) which will require coordinated engagement with DfT, TfSE, Network Rail and the Mayor of London, but has the potential to significantly improve connectivity to Sussex.

Building Sussex mass transit

- 4.12 Local bus services are critical to everyday mobility yet are too often unreliable and fragmented. With new franchising powers, SBCCA can deliver affordable, integrated routes and create Strategic Mobility Hubs that anchor regeneration. The ability to convene operators and local authorities, in addition to piloting franchised routes in priority areas, and embedding mass transit as part of a strategy that reduces car dependency and supports inclusive growth has potential to generate significant wider benefits to both economy and the environment. Illustrative industry evidence cited in the Industrial Strategy shows that every £1 investment in bus infrastructure and services generates £4.55 in wider economic returns. Few initiatives offer such a compelling payback, making this a strong and evidence-led case for SBCCA and the Mayor to champion and invest in a modern and integrated bus network as a driver of economic growth and wider societal inclusion.

An active travel revolution: embedding walking, cycling and micromobility

- 4.13 SBCCA will also be well placed to accelerate and channel investment in walking, cycling and micromobility schemes that help shift travel behaviour and further ease pressures on the road network. Devolution allows for the regulation of local micromobility schemes, and encourages investment in active travel corridors as part of wider regeneration and health strategies. Devolution will also accelerate delivery by giving the ability to expand pilots to secure early funding, ensuring that active travel is built into all new developments, creating healthier communities while also cutting carbon emissions.

Table 4.1 Potential opportunities and actions identified as part of the transport and infrastructure planning theme

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
Unlocking bottlenecks and constraints on the road network								
The A27 and A259 are two of the region’s most critical transport corridors, yet congestion and bottlenecks along these and other strategic corridors in the region undermines connectivity and constrains opportunities for economic growth.	Devolution provides SBCCA and the Mayor with the scale needed to tackle long-standing challenges and support the delivery of critical interventions. Over the short-term, the key opportunity lies in the ability to convene stakeholders from across the board (e.g. DfT, National Highways, TfSE and local authorities) to strengthen the case for investment, including through prioritisation in the LGP. Over the medium-to-long terms, the opportunity lies in embedding upgrades within the region’s SDS. Furthermore, over the longer-term there is potential for the Mayor to secure further (devolved) influence over the Strategic Road Network, embedding road network improvements as part of a coherent regional framework.	ST = Support and champion ‘shovel-ready’ projects. MT = Incorporate upgrades within SDS. LT = Secure greater devolved influence over the Strategic Road Network.	Implementation of all investments proposed in TfSE’s SIP for unlocking bottlenecks is estimated to generate £200m GVA uplift per annum and support the creation of 700 new jobs by 2050 (i.e., relative to a ‘do nothing’ approach). More broadly, the proposed investments have potential to lead to improved reliability, enhanced competitiveness and support further economic growth, while also improving air quality due to there being less congestion.	✓✓		✓	✓	✓
Transforming Sussex rail to unlock labour markets								
There is potential to improve capacity and reliability on shorter commuter journeys (e.g., between Worthing and Brighton), whilst at the same time also enabling faster inter-urban	Devolution provides the opportunity to transform rail services along the Sussex coast, in the process enabling high-quality and high-frequency connections that strengthen east-west links within the region and beyond (i.e., into Kent and the Solent). Devolution also gives the region the ability to lobby for rail devolution and franchise reform, ensuring investment in capacity and service reliability aligning these with wider ambitions.	ST = Incorporate improved rail connectivity as part of SDS. MT-LT = Potential for greater devolution of	The TfSE’s SIP estimates that enhanced coastal rail services could generate in the region of 10,000 extra trips each weekday, resulting in £80m GVA uplift each year by 2050.	✓✓		✓	✓	✓

services (i.e., between Brighton, Portsmouth and Southampton, or eastward from Eastbourne into Kent).	Over the short-to-medium term, SBCCA can champion east-west connectivity as a regional priority (in particular along the Sussex coast), and press for early action on key bottlenecks. Over the medium-to-long term, there is potential for the Mayor to bring together key stakeholders to ensure that improvements are fully embedded within the region’s SDS and economic growth ambitions.	local rail services and greater control through franchising of services.	Furthermore, this has potential to encourage modal shift, reducing congestions and improving air quality.					
Building Sussex mass transit								
Complementing the above, there is potential to drive forward mass transit initiatives that better connect both urban and rural areas with Strategic Mobility Hubs which act as focal points for interchange, in the process supporting wider regeneration and making services more responsive to local needs.	Devolution gives SBCCA and the Mayor the power to convene operators, local authorities and others to build stronger partnerships across the region. With new powers to franchise routes, and where necessary establish new operators, SBCCA can ensure that services are more reliable, affordable and better integrated with the region’s regeneration priorities. Over the short-to-medium term, there is potential to focus on piloting franchised routes and develop mobility hubs in key regeneration area. Analysis undertaken as part of TfSE’s SIP suggests that extending mass transit may be more feasible in East Sussex, although it is noted that further work may be required to establish feasibility in West Sussex.	ST-MT = Establish the feasibility of mass transit across West Sussex and electrification of mass transit fleet. LT = Greater control on mass transit.	TfSE’s modelling suggests that enhanced mass transit could support over 100,000 additional trips each workday, resulting in 65,000 fewer private car trips and boosting GVA by more than £100 million each year by 2050. Furthermore, this has potential to improve air quality.	✓✓			✓	✓
An active travel revolution: Embedding walking, cycling and micromobility								
This intervention continues to build on previous initiatives and seeks to provide better “first/last mile” connections to rail stations and bus hubs, making public transport more attractive and	Devolution provides the ability to regulate e-scooters and bike hire initiatives, alongside the power to direct investment into active travel corridors, resulting in wider health and wellbeing, in addition to improved environmental benefits. Devolution will enable delivery to embed active travel as part of wider regeneration and health strategies, allowing for greater integration with wider health and wellbeing outcomes and drive collaboration with the NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board	MT = Regulate scooters, bike hire and micromobility schemes to support greater and safer take-up.	Based on TfSE estimates included within its SIP, it is estimated that enhanced active travel measures could remove over 40,000 car trips each weekday and cut 5,000 tonnes of CO ₂ each year.	✓✓				✓

<p>accessible to all. This initiative encourages seamless transfers between modes, boosting ridership and reducing car dependency, whilst also helping to strengthen the case for investment in rail and bus services.</p>		<p>LT = Integrate active travel projects as part of wider SDS for the region.</p>						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

a. Transport & infrastructure planning | b. Skills & employment | c. Housing & strategic planning | d. Economic development & regeneration | e. Environment & climate change

✓✓ = Major contribution to theme | ✓ = Supporting contribution to theme

ST = Short-term, typically 1 to 2 years | **MT** = Medium-term, typically up to 5-years | **LT** = Longer-term

b. Skills and employment

- 4.14 The Sussex economy is evolving rapidly, yet engagement with stakeholders suggests that the skills system remains fragmented and is not fully aligned or embedded with the region's economic growth ambitions. Whilst employers continue to face persistent skills gaps, many residents remain unable to access the training or support needed to progress. Opportunities for reskilling and upskilling across all stages of life are limited, meaning the demands for a digital, green and knowledge-driven economy are not being fully met. This creates a cycle where growth ambitions outpace the workforce's ability to meet them, resulting in suppressed productivity and constraints to the region's capacity to deliver the economic transformation it aspires to achieve.
- 4.15 Devolution creates the opportunity to reshape this landscape into a coherent and lifelong skills and employment ecosystem. By bringing together schools, colleges (i.e., FE providers), universities (i.e., HE providers), employers and local authorities, the region can align skills provision with wider economic priorities, embed employer insights into curriculum development, highlight career pathways, and integrate the Get Sussex Working Plan into mainstream delivery. Crucially, this approach must extend to embrace lifelong learning, ensuring residents can retain, reskill and adapt throughout their careers. Early action can mobilise partners, establish real-time employer engagement and secure quick wins for those farthest from the labour market, while also laying the foundations for a culture of continuous learning. In addition, this creates an opportunity for increasing the sector's contribution to driving economic and productivity growth.
- 4.16 As SBCCA and the Mayor assume greater responsibility for the Adult Skills Fund and Skills Bootcamps, the region will also need to secure more stable, and long-term funding to meet its employment and skills objectives. Over time, greater devolution in adult skills funding can enable a shift towards lifelong learning, the development of future-focused curriculum innovation and inclusive progression routes. Together, these activities can create a skills system that is agile, employer-led and capable of supporting both economic transformation and wider social inclusion across Sussex, underpinned by the ability to set a strategic direction of travel, whilst at the same time also aligning the system around shared priorities.

Building a future-ready skills ecosystem

- 4.17 The region's long-term prosperity is held back by a fragmented skills system that does not equip people for non-linear career paths, or the demands of a digital, green and knowledge-driven economy. The region needs a coherent and lifelong approach to skills; one that supports people from school into early adulthood, through their working and beyond, and which aligns training with future labour-market needs and local priorities.
- 4.18 Devolution creates an opportunity to bring schools, colleges, universities and employers into a single, Sussex-wide skills forum, forging the partnerships and processes needed to support people. Employer engagement will be vital to ensure that careers information, training and employment support are aligned with wider economic priorities in the LGP. Early action can strengthen coordination and progression pathways, whilst over the long-term, devolved powers over adult skills funding have potential to enable a shift towards lifelong learning, curriculum innovation, and developing a future-ready workforce. The

result will be a skills ecosystem that supports inclusive growth, improves productivity and ensures that residents can access the jobs created by Sussex’s evolving, and knowledge-driven economy.

Driving employer engagement in the skills ecosystem

4.19 It is recognised that the strength of the skills ecosystem, and its future direction of travel will ultimately depend on the depth and quality of its relationship with employers from across the region. Inconsistent employer engagement risks creating a weakened system in which lags real labour market needs. On the other hand, strong engagement and employer engagement has potential to drive the sector’s (particularly HE) contribution to national economic output, by driving economic productivity and growth (i.e., in line with the UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy, and the ambitions outlined within the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper. While the Sussex LSIP provides a useful foundation, it does not yet guarantee the continuous, real-time employer engagement needed to keep curriculum design, careers advice and workforce development aligned with a fast-changing economy. This is further reinforced by the Get Sussex Working Plan²⁷ which highlights the need for a more integrated approach that brings together employers, education providers and other strategic stakeholders.

4.20 On this basis, devolution creates an opportunity to make employer engagement a permanent feature and embedded feature of a successful skills ecosystem. In the short-term, SBCCA working in collaboration with FE and HE partners can use convening powers to establish an employer partnership framework recognising university and college industry boards as well as skills advisory panels and other stakeholders to support the co-design of courses and implement alternative credential routes (incl., ones built on modular learning), whilst also articulating existing skills gaps, emerging priorities, and future workforce needs. This will ensure that provision is aligned with labour market demand and supports the ambition to raise the skill levels of residents across Sussex. Over time, there is potential to extend this further, enabling businesses to influence governance and decision-making on

Case Study – South Yorkshire’s Growth Plan, Skills Escalator

While South Yorkshire often ranks amongst the top three regions for producing talent, businesses in the region often struggle to fill higher-level vacancies. Meanwhile, the challenge of having significant levels of economic inactivity is treated as separate. The South Yorkshire’s Growth Plan proposes the development of a ‘skills escalator’ and highlights the ambition of developing a skills and employment strategy that is fully aligned with the region’s LSIP. The Growth Plan aims to tackle barriers to deliver more and better employment pathways for residents to benefit from economic opportunities in the region.

Case Study – Hampshire & Solent Skills Channel

In the Solent, the LSIP established a Skills Channel that promotes employer engagement and supports businesses to better articulate their needs so that provision aligns better with future need. Ultimately, the Skills Channel seeks to be a one-stop-shop for both providers and employers in the region, driving long-term local economic growth.

²⁷ Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Department for Work & Pensions (2025), *Get Sussex Working Plan*. [\[Link\]](#).

skills funding and programme design. Embedding careers, employment and skills at the heart anchor institutions (including SBCCA, but also universities, large employers, and health care services) will help drive a system-wide approach and also support the delivery of the Get Sussex Working Plan's ambitions.

Promoting inclusive pathways by implementing the Get Sussex Working Plan

- 4.21 Many residents in the region remain disengaged from the labour market, including adults with complex needs, young people not in education, employment or training ('NEETs'), older workers, and adults with disabilities and/or neurodivergence. These groups often face the most significant barriers to entering and sustaining work, and are therefore a central focus of the Get Sussex Working Plan. The Plan provides a clear framework for tackling the challenges, but its success relies on strong partnership working across employment, education, health and wider public services. Delivering genuinely inclusive pathways will require better alignment between skills provision, employment support and wider economic priorities, alongside practical delivery mechanisms that build people's confidence, resilience and readiness for work.
- 4.22 Building on the ambitions outlined within the Get Britain Working White Paper²⁸, devolution creates the opportunity to embed the Get Sussex Working Plan within a coherent, inclusive skills and employment system. SBCCA and the Mayor have a key role in convening partners, supporting all six ambitions outlined within the Plan, and ensuring that careers, employment and skills are considered as part of core strategic decision making across the region. Early action can help mobilise partners and align delivery with devolved programmes to secure quick wins for the Plan's priority groups. Over time, as further powers over adult skills funding become available, longer-term commitments can be secured, embedding inclusive pathways into the region's growth model. This approach will ensure that regeneration, investment and new jobs can translate into real opportunities for everyone in the region, including those who face the greatest barriers to work.

²⁸ HM Government (2024), *Get Britain Working*. [\[Link\]](#).

Table 4.2 Potential opportunities and actions identified as part of the skills and employment theme.

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
Building a future-ready skills ecosystem								
<p>The long-term prosperity of the Sussex economy depends on a skills ecosystem that supports people at different stages of the lives, starting from primary school, into early adulthood and beyond. Ultimately, this intervention aims to prepare people for the jobs of tomorrow.</p>	<p>Devolution provides the opportunity to champion a whole-life approach to skills development, bringing together stakeholders from primary and secondary education, FE and HE, as well as lifelong learning, whilst ensuring this aligns with SBCCA's strategic growth ambitions. In addition, by taking joint-ownership of the LSIP (including the refresh of the Sussex LSIP), SBCCA can embed this within wider economic priorities, ensuring that skills provision is directly connected to the needs of the Sussex economy and its communities.</p> <p>This intervention recognises that career pathways are no longer linear, and that strength lies in enabling people to build transferable skills, access opportunities at different stages of their careers (i.e., post-16+) and adapt to a more digital, green and knowledge-driven economy.</p> <p>As such, devolution provides SBCCA and the Mayor with the power to convene skills and training providers in a Sussex-wide skills forum which embeds modern careers, supports the development of progression pathways, and helps identify future skills needs.</p> <p>Whilst there is potential for early action to support publication of the refreshed Sussex LSIP, taking ownership and supporting delivery, devolution will also give SBCCA powers over adult skills funding to embed lifelong learning as a core part of the regional offer, in addition to developing a skills transition plan that helps define changing need in the economy, and</p>	<p>ST = Take ownership of refreshed Sussex LSIP, ensuring it is shaped and led by SBCCA to reflect local priorities.</p> <p>LT = Greater devolution over adult skills funding. Support the skills transition in green skills, digital literacy and transferable competencies.</p>	<p>This intervention seeks to future-proof the Sussex economy, by ensuring that future workers have the agility and resilience needed to adapt. In addition, it has potential to support inclusion by enabling older workers, those with complex needs and disadvantaged groups to re-enter and progress through the labour market.</p> <p>Finally, this action seeks to position Sussex to meet immediate growth priorities, while at the same time also building a workforce that is capable of adapting to structural changes, ensuring that economic transformation is both sustainable and socially equitable.</p>		✓✓		✓	

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
	championing innovation to ensure green skills, digital literacy and transferable competencies are embedded across all levels.							
Driving employer engagement in the skills ecosystem								
Building a future-ready skills ecosystem depends on skills providers' ability to understand direction of travel, and identify future need, which in turn depend on the depth and quality of relationships with employers from across the region. While frameworks such as the LSIP provide a useful starting point, SBCCA has a key role to play in ensuring that provision is continuously shaped by business needs.	Devolution provides a unique opportunity to embed meaningful employer engagement as a permanent feature of the region's skills ecosystem, ensuring that training and education are responsive to real-time labour market dynamics, in addition to continuously evolving workforce needs. Over the short-term, devolution gives SBCCA the powers to establish regular channels for employers to articulate local skills gaps, as well as emerging priorities, with this insight feeding directly into curriculum design, careers advice and other workforce development initiatives. Ultimately, this will ensure that provision is demand-led. However, over the long-term there is potential for the Mayor to further strengthen engagement, ensuring that business voices are central to decision-making on funding, programme design and sector growth ambitions.	ST-MT = Establish regular communication channels for employers to articulate local skills gaps. LT = Strengthen engagement, and ensure that business voices are central to decision-making.	Sustained engagement has potential to support the development of a demand-led system; one where training reflects real-time needs. This intervention has potential to support the development of a system that is agile, future-focused and inclusive, whilst also strengthening productivity (incl., to the UK's economy), build confidence among employers and investors of a robust skills pipeline.		✓✓		✓	
Promoting inclusive pathways by implementing the Get Sussex Working Plan								
The Get Sussex Working Plan provides a framework for supporting those farthest from the labour market by reducing economic inactivity and creating	The Get Sussex Working Plan, developed collaboratively by partners from across the region is now approved, and moving into delivery. As a partnership-led framework, its success depends on sustained collaboration across key stakeholders, particularly in supporting those groups who face the greatest barriers to work.	MT = Embed Get Sussex Working Plan within regional growth model. LT = Lower levels of economic	In principle, successful delivery of the Get Sussex Working Plan will see an increase in labour market participation and higher employment levels. Ultimately, the success of		✓✓		✓	

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
more opportunities for good work.	<p>Devolution provides SBCCA with a key role to play in ensuring that the Plan is implemented effectively, ensuring that delivery is fully aligned with devolved powers over skills and (adult) employment support, to maximise its impact and embed inclusion at the heart of the region’s growth model going forward.</p> <p>Over time, SBCCA and the Mayor will gain greater influence over adult skills funding, including the Adult Skills Fund and Skills Bootcamps, using this as an opportunity to secure longer term commitments (including for funding), and embedding the Get Sussex Working Plan as the foundation of an inclusive skills and employment ecosystem</p>	<p>inactivity, higher employment rate.</p> <p>LT = Greater confidence levels and personal resilience.</p>	<p>the Get Sussex Working Plan will also be measured in terms of building residents’ confidence and resilience, whist also reducing overall reliance on welfare and public services as more people achieve sustainable employment. For younger people, successful delivery has potential to mean improved life chances, in addition to health and wellbeing gains.</p>					

a. Transport & infrastructure planning | b. Skills & employment | c. Housing & strategic planning | d. Economic development & regeneration | e. Environment & climate change

✓✓ = Major contribution to theme | ✓ = Supporting contribution to theme

ST = Short-term, typically 1 to 2 years | MT = Medium-term, typically up to 5-years | LT = Longer-term

c. Housing and strategic planning

- 4.23 Stakeholder engagement has highlighted long-standing, Sussex-wide challenges in both housing and employment land delivery. While the coast and natural environment (particularly the South Downs National Park, or ‘SDNP’) are key assets for the region, they also constrain individual authorities’ ability to deliver the housing and employment floorspace needed to support economic growth. As a result, businesses often face inefficient sites and higher operating costs, while residents experience rising housing pressures and affordability challenges. Meanwhile, infrastructure constraints (such as power capacity and water neutrality and transport network bottlenecks) also impact upon the region’s ability to deliver much needed housing at scale.
- 4.24 Devolution provides the opportunity to turn these constraints into drivers of change. Through the duty to prepare an SDS, SBCCA and the Mayor can set clear priorities that coordinate land release, and align housing, employment and infrastructure delivery at scale. For the first time, the region will be able to engage strategically with key partners such as the South Downs National Park Authority (‘SDNPA’) and Southern Water to explore opportunities for densification and urban extensions, while also addressing critical challenges such as grid capacity, flooding and water neutrality.
- 4.25 Devolution also equips the Mayor with a suite of development management powers, including the ability to intervene in strategically important planning applications, applying CPOs (or the prospect of CPOs where progress on strategic sites has stalled and requires collaboration between different landowners to be encouraged), establish MDCs and issue MDOs to accelerate regeneration. In addition, the ability to raise MCIL creates scale and a dedicated funding stream for strategic investment. Over time, these levers can help unlock stalled sites and deliver flagship regeneration projects that overcome viability barriers currently holding back development.
- 4.26 Together, these activities can create a more productive, inclusive and resilient region where investment is aligned with skills, transport and community needs, and growth translates into tangible improvements in prosperity and quality of life. By amplifying local priorities through regional leadership and connecting policy levers to scale-up delivery, intervention can transform piecemeal initiatives into a coherent growth model capable of tackling inequality, driving competitiveness and building long-term resilience.

Case Study – Building Grid Capacity in the West of England and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

In the West of England, challenges around grid capacity have been identified as a key constraint to potential high-growth clusters, where demand significantly outstrips existing supply. To this end, the West of England Growth Strategy set an action to work with GB Energy and regional partners to identify local solutions to grid capacity constraints, including investigation of smart grid technologies, that improve efficiency and resilience to climate change.

In Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, it is the CA’s ambition to work with the National Energy Systems Operator (‘NESO’), through the Central England Regional Energy Plan to ensure that the growth ambitions of the area are recognised.

Employment land: Unlocking sites for growth and innovation

4.27 A high-level review of local evidence on employment land and premises suggests that the region’s economic potential is greatly constrained by fragmented employment land and ageing premises, with a significant proportion failing to comply with MEES legislation. As a result, many businesses, particularly in coastal districts, are often forced to operate across multiple sites, driving operational costs and reducing efficiency. While the implementation of MEES legislation has now been delayed to at least 2030 the overall direction of travel and scale of the challenge remains significant. Without coordinated intervention, these pressures risk deterring future national and international investment, and limiting the region’s long-term economic growth prospects.

4.28 Devolution provides the opportunity to embed employment land priorities within the SDS, particularly where they can be of strategic value to the economy of the area. Through this, SBCCA and the Mayor can play a central role in unlocking constrained sites, prioritising strategic employment land and aligning land use with infrastructure investment. By working closely with local authorities, especially in the context of local government reorganisation, the Mayor can coordinate local plans and enable a joined-up approach to release of older unsuitable sites, protect and prioritise strategic sites and make new provision, and align development with infrastructure investment, while navigating the unique constraints of the region, including the SDNP. Over the longer term, new powers such as CPOs can be used to unlock stalled sites (especially for large strategic sites requiring cooperation between different landowners), ensuring that employment land is fully integrated with housing, skills and transport strategies, and positioned as a driver of innovation and inclusive growth.

Drive housing growth and affordability

4.29 Housing growth and affordability remain critical challenges for the region. A 2023 study²⁹ on the impact of the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis on Greater Brighton households, identified tens of thousands of residents experiencing hardship, with pressures particularly acute in parts of Brighton, Crawley and coastal towns (such as Newhaven, Littlehampton and Bognor Regis), with low-income households, disabled residents, larger families,

Case Study – Increasing sustainable and high-quality commercial and housing development in York & North Yorkshire

The York & North Yorkshire Growth Plan identifies the increase in sustainable and high-quality commercial and housing development as a shared priority with central Government, and acknowledges that tackling this challenge will require strong collaboration to deliver innovative partnerships and models that could unlock sites, and work together to deliver increased sustainable housing, including potentially addressing planning capacity constraints, local site viability issues and the development of related infrastructure. The Growth Plan also acknowledges the need to boost digital connectivity and skills to enable greater digital innovation (in particular to improve the region’s broadband infrastructure in rural areas) to support businesses to invest in, and roll-out technological advancements in growth sectors and boosting productivity.

²⁹ Institute for Employment Studies (2023), *Costs of living impacts in Greater Brighton. Analysis of areas and groups most at risk from rising costs of living.*

students and private renters being most exposed. Without intervention, these inequalities risk deepening, undermining both community resilience and the region's ability to support economic growth. Crucially, there must be a marked shift in housing affordability to reflect the realities of the region's economy. Without this, parts of the region risk becoming a dormitory for London as prices there rise, with local residents increasingly priced out of their communities.

- 4.30 Devolution provides the opportunity to embed affordability and sustainability at the heart of housing delivery. Through the SDS, the region can secure the scale needed to align housing with transport investment, tackle long-standing constraints (such as power capacity, water neutrality, but also transport network constraints and the lack of land available for employment and housing) that limit individual authorities' ability to deliver and set clear priorities for affordable housing growth. Addressing entrenched challenges will require sustained effort, but new powers and regional scale will enable SBCCA and the Mayor to explore affordable housing programmes that can leverage existing funding streams, such as the Social and Affordable Homes Programme ('SAHP') to increase delivery. The result will be a housing system that reduces inequality, strengthen communities and underpins long-term prosperity across Sussex.

Table 4.3 Potential opportunities and actions identified as part of the strategic housing and planning theme.

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
Employment land: Unlocking sites for growth and innovation								
Stakeholder engagement indicates that the region’s economic potential is often constrained by fragmented employment land and ageing premises, many of which fail to comply with MEES legislation (now delayed to 2030). Without intervention to unlock new sites that support economic growth and innovation there is a very real risk of deterring national and international investment, limiting long-term economic growth.	Devolution provides SBCCA with an opportunity to embed employment land priorities within the region’s LGP and ultimately SDS, by adopting a strategic approach to unlock constrained sites, prioritising strategic employment land, and aligning uses with infrastructure investment. By working closely with local authorities, SBCCA and the Mayor can coordinate local plans and enable a joined-up approach not previously possible. Over the longer term, new powers such as CPOs can be used to unlock stalled sites, improve project viability, whilst also ensuring that employment land is fully integrated with housing, skills and transport strategies.	MT = Embed employment land priorities in SDS, aligning land release with infrastructure investment. LT = Use CPOs to help unlock stalled sites LT = Fully integrate employment land with housing, skills and transport strategies, positioning employment land as a driver of innovation and inclusive growth.	The rationalisation and strategic release and development of employment land across the region has potential to reduce business operating costs, increase compliance and encourage greater levels of inward investment into the region.	✓		✓✓	✓	
Drive housing growth and affordability								
Housing growth and affordability are a critical challenge across Sussex,	Devolution provides the opportunity to embed affordability at the heart of housing delivery across the region, including throughout development of the LGP. Through the SDS, SBCCA	MT = Embed housing affordability	The key measure will be higher overall housing delivery with a growing	✓		✓✓	✓	

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
<p>with tens of thousands facing hardships (i.e., related to housing affordability), especially in Crawley, parts of Brighton, and other coastal towns.</p> <p>Without intervention there is a risk for inequalities to deepen, undermining resilience and economic growth, with higher prices resulting in the displacement of local residents.</p>	<p>and the Mayor can achieve scale that aligns housing delivery with investment in transport, whilst at the same time also tackling long-term and strategic challenges (such as water neutrality).</p> <p>Over the long-term, there is potential for the region to develop an affordable housing programme that leverages existing funding streams to increase delivery.</p>	<p>priorities within the SDS, aligning this with region-wide transport and infrastructure strategies.</p> <p>MT = Develop affordable housing delivery programme, leveraging funding streams to coordinate delivery across authorities</p> <p>LT = Achieve a marked shift in affordability across the region, reducing inequalities and supporting long-term prosperity.</p>	<p>proportion of affordable homes being delivered, reducing costs on vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Over the long-term, this has potential to build stronger community resilience, reduce inequality and improve residents' quality of life.</p>					

a. Transport & infrastructure planning | b. Skills & employment | c. Housing & strategic planning | d. Economic development & regeneration | e. Environment & climate change

✓✓ = Major contribution to theme | ✓ = Supporting contribution to theme

ST = Short-term, typically 1 to 2 years | MT = Medium-term, typically up to 5-years | LT = Longer-term

d. Economic development and regeneration

- 4.31 The Sussex economy is characterised by both long-standing industries and emerging specialisms; although fragmented delivery and infrastructure constraints have limited the ability to connect these strengths into a coherent growth narrative for the region. Devolution provides SBCCA and the Mayor with the tools to champion innovation, attract investment and align sectoral priorities with housing, skills and infrastructure delivery. The ‘golden thread’ is the ability to move from piecemeal initiatives to a joined-up regional strategy that positions Sussex as competitive, resilient and inclusive.
- 4.32 The ports of Newhaven and Shoreham, two of the region’s strongest economic assets exemplify this opportunity. These ports alongside smaller, more local ports (such as Littlehampton Harbour) have potential to evolve into modern maritime hubs that anchor renewable energy, sustainable logistics and low carbon innovation, with thriving industrial clusters and next-generation port operations. With devolved powers, SBCCA and the Mayor can help elevate these ports onto the national and international stage, accelerating investment, strengthening their contribution to the Sussex Energy Mission, and unlocking the next wave of inclusive economic growth. This creates significant opportunities for specialist skills development, high-quality employment (i.e., which in turn drives productivity) and wider regeneration which enables local communities to directly benefit from the ports’ continued success.
- 4.33 Alongside these sectoral strengths, Sussex’s visitor economy remains a defining feature, rooted in centuries of heritage but now diversified through its natural environment, creative expression and cultural assets. From Brighton’s world-renowned arts scene to the international profile of BHAFc, Sussex has the ability to attract global audiences as well as investment. Devolution enables integration of the visitor economy into the region’s growth strategy, ensuring it is not only sustained, but leveraged as a driver of inclusive prosperity. This also creates the chance to reorient the economy seawards, capitalising on its coastal assets and maritime gateways, rather than defaulting to a London-facing model.
- 4.34 International gateways, including ports, airports and digital infrastructure, are critical enablers of this transformation. They provide the means to make the Sussex economy more international, by connecting world-leading innovation (e.g., in quantum computing), the creative industries and visitor attractions to global markets. The added value lies in the ability to convene partners, aligning investment and using devolved powers to embed these gateways within the SDS. By doing so, the region can position itself as a hub for clean energy, creative excellence and cultural vibrancy, while also ensuring that growth translates into tangible benefits for communities across the region.

Ports as powerhouses: Newhaven and Shoreham as drivers of clean growth

- 4.35 Newhaven and Shoreham are two of the region’s most dynamic economic assets, and are already powering clean growth and the transition to net zero. Both ports are expanding their role in renewable energy, and their industrial clusters hold untapped potential to anchor a new phase of growth – supporting the deployment of additional clean energy, sustainable logistics, and a deepening pool of maritime skills (including the potential for a maritime skills hub and training centre at Shoreham Port). At Shoreham, this is reinforced

by the LIDP which sets out a clear pathway for the port’s industrial cluster to transition towards low carbon operations, including through electrification, alternative fuels and wider energy efficiency measures. At Newhaven, the GREENPORTSIDE project is exploring how renewable electricity can be deployed to support ships and port-side operations in ways that are both technically feasible and economically viable, offering insights that could accelerate the UK’s transition to zero carbon shipping.

4.36 Devolution provides SBCCA and the Mayor with the levers needed to elevate these assets, not simply as centres of trade and freight, but as drivers of innovation and clean growth. The LIDP identifies electrification as the scenario with the greatest potential to reduce emissions, while GREENPORTSIDE demonstrates how renewable power can be integrated to reduce pollution and stimulate regional innovation. Devolved powers will enable SBCCA and the Mayor to support delivery of these pathways by convening partners, providing long-term certainty in a period of economic and technological change, and helping to de-risk and reduce the financial barriers that inhibit SMEs’ ability to invest in both existing as well as emerging low carbon technologies. This leadership can support Newhaven and Shoreham ports’ ongoing evolution into green hubs for businesses, capable of attracting new investment and supporting growth of clean industry.

4.37 Both ports are ideally placed to support the transition to net zero by accommodating investment in offshore wind, hydrogen, solar and energy storage, and acting as testbeds for clean shipping technologies and the electrification of transport systems. Targeted infrastructure investment can unlock further growth and strengthen the ports’ role in sustainable logistics, and shifting goods from congested roads onto maritime and rail alternatives.

4.38 With devolved powers, the region can champion Newhaven and Shoreham ports as central pillars of its economic narrative, bringing together government, investors and industry to accelerate diversification, secure long-term investment and embed ports as drivers of local economic growth. The Shoreham LIDP and GREENPORTSIDE project together provide a strong evidence base for this collaboration, highlighting the region’s potential to become a leading green industrial hub for the South coast. Through sustained partnership building, strategic investment and a clear commitment to the electrification pathway, the Mayor can

Case Study – Promoting offshore wind & energy transition in the North East

The North East region is home to the UK’s most advanced offshore wind industrial cluster, yet the North East Combined Authority’s (interim) Growth Plan recognises the ongoing scale of opportunity this presents, and outlines several priorities for developing this further. Proposed interventions include the development of flagship regional sites with investment in port and quayside infrastructure and connectivity to provide world-class facilities; working with skills providers and the new Energy Academy and Energy Central Campus to strengthen and diversify the skills pipeline; work in strategic partnership with the ports in the region to unlock growth opportunities, facilitate the development of other forms of renewable energy (e.g. geothermal, hydrogen and district heat networks) in conjunction with world-leading research expertise; and progress the Institute for Low Carbon Hydrogen in partnership with central Government and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

help ensure that both ports evolve into nationally recognised hubs for clean energy, innovation and maritime excellence, driving high-quality jobs, skills and regeneration across the region.

Reimagining the Sussex visitor economy to unlock its full potential

- 4.39 The visitor economy is a defining feature of the region, but remains characterised by low-paid, lower-productivity employment and generally a transient workforce. However, the opportunity lies in diversifying and elevating the visitor offer to build on the region’s natural environment, strengths in the creative industries and cultural assets, while also harnessing the international profile of BHAFC. The football club’s plan for a new stadium to support its Women’s Super League (‘WSL’) team highlights how sport can broaden the visitor offer and create new avenues for growth. This sits alongside the ambitions of East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex Local Visitor Economy Partnership³⁰ (‘LVEP’) which sets out a shared pan-Sussex vision for a “*thriving, vibrant and regenerative visitor destination*” which blends contemporary culture and local hospitality against a backdrop of outstanding natural and built heritage.
- 4.40 Devolution provides SBCCA and the Mayor with the levers to reposition the visitor economy as a driver of inclusive economic growth, and embed the LVEP’s strategic plan as the foundation for future interventions. By aligning investment in culture, sport, skills and the natural environment with the LVEP’s four priorities (i.e., incredible experiences; positive impact; developing innovation, productivity, accessibility and sustainability; and a collaborative, connected and pioneering sector), the region can raise the quality of jobs, strengthen productivity and support a more resilient and year-round visitor economy. In turn, this has potential to create wider supply chain and induced effects that ripple through the broader economy. The LVEP’s commitment to partnership, collaboration, inclusivity and sustainability provides a strong platform for SBCCA and the Mayor to build on.
- 4.41 As the LVEP board develops its role as a leadership voice for the visitor economy, the Mayor and SBCCA can amplify this work, acting as the region’s champion and promoting a joined-up, pan-Sussex narrative to national and international audiences. This includes supporting coordinated messaging, championing programmes that enhance the region’s appeal, driving event creation and showcasing Sussex’s destinations and venues. Collaboration with Gatwick Airport will be central to raising awareness of the Sussex offer and attracting new visitor markets. In doing so, SBCCA and the Mayor can ensure the visitor economy is recognised as a key opportunity to achieve wider objects for the region, as outlined within the LGP.

³⁰ East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex Local Visitor Economy Partnership (2024), *Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth 2024-2034*. [\[Link\]](#).

Supporting innovation: From creative industries to quantum computing

4.42 The regional economy is characterised by a rich and diverse mix of nationally significant industrial clusters spanning Brighton’s world-renowned creative industries, West Sussex’s automotive specialisms, and East Sussex’s advanced engineering and vacuum technologies. Yet, these strengths are often seen in isolation, limiting their ability to drive productivity growth and wider diversification. Without stronger coordination, the region risks missing the chance to connect these assets (i.e., sectoral strengths and clusters) into a coherent and future-facing economy.

4.43 Devolution provides the opportunity to harness these sectoral strengths and embed them within a regional growth strategy. The creative industries’ vision ‘Unleashing the Potential’ produced to support and grow the sector in Greater Brighton and Coastal West Sussex offers a powerful exemplar, setting out ambitions for growth, routes into employment and support for individuals working in the sector. This model can be replicated across other priority industries, ensuring that innovation is not only celebrated but also strategically nurtured. Breakthroughs in quantum computing enabled (in part) through collaboration with regional strengths in vacuum technology, show how complementary strengths can be connected to deliver outcomes greater than the sum of their parts, underlining the importance of a joined-up approach, even in seemingly unconnected sectors. Recent breakthroughs in quantum technologies have empowered the University of Sussex and its spin-off Universal Quantum, to bid for the UKRI-led Local Innovation Partnerships Fund³¹ (‘LIPF’) to create a new ‘Quantum Silicon Valley’ in the UK³².

4.44 SBCCA will be well placed to build on this by convening FE and HE providers and businesses to develop sector deals, aligning skills pipeline with emerging opportunities and embed emerging priorities within the LGP. Alongside the current bid for a ‘Quantum Silicon Valley’, SBCCA should explore further opportunities under the £500 million LIPF “Competed” strand which provides opportunities for regions with polycentric geographies,

Case Study – Unlocking growth in rail innovation & security in York & North Yorkshire

The rail innovation & security sector has a long history in the region, and is at the forefront of technological specialisms (e.g. AI and quantum communications). The York & North Yorkshire Growth Plan seeks to accelerate the translation of this innovation into industry, stimulating further confidence, driving greater inward investment, as well as cluster growth. The Growth Plan’s ambition for unlocking growth in the sector seeks to build on existing relationship with Government to explore procurement flexibilities to accelerate innovation (as current contract and procurement regulations delay the process and discourage innovation), while at the same time also working with Great British Railways to develop innovation and skills. This will include the development of a Rail Innovation Hub at York Central, while at the same time working closely with sector training providers (e.g. National Skills Academy for Rail) to identify and develop career pathways to support talent pipelines and reskilling/upskilling the existing workforce.

³¹ See here: [\[Link\]](#).

³² See here: [\[Link\]](#).

such as Greater Brighton, to strengthen innovation capacity, increase their competitive advantage and deliver impact at scale.

- 4.45 By championing clusters as nationally and internationally competitive, and leveraging Sussex’s international gateways, the region can attract investment, accelerate innovation and ensure local people benefit directly from new opportunities. Over time, this approach will position Sussex as a hub of excellence; one where creative industries, advanced technologies and foundational sectors combine to deliver a knowledge-driven economy, resilience and long-term economic transformation.

Revitalising town centres as pilots for inclusive renewal

- 4.46 Urban centres remain the backbone of Sussex’s economic and social life, yet many town centres are not realising their full potential, with vacant units, fragmented investment and limited flexibility influencing their ability to shape local priorities. Devolution provides the opportunity to change this, empowering town centres as vibrant engines of inclusive growth, where regeneration is integrated with housing, transport and skills delivery to create places that are resilient, attractive and accessible to all.

- 4.47 The added value lies in championing town and city centre renewal as part of a broader vision for inclusive economic and social prosperity by bringing vacant sites into productive use, diversifying centres to strengthen the evening and cultural economy, and improving connectivity so residents can access new opportunities (i.e., within the region and further afield). By aligning regeneration aspirations outlined in the LGP within the SDS, SBCCA and the Mayor can coordinate investment in housing, transport and employment land, ensuring that centres are commercially successful and socially inclusive. Visible progress will help build investor and community confidence, embedding urban centres as hubs of employment, culture and civic life, providing a replicable model for renewal across Sussex. Such initiatives will require SBCCA and the Mayor to provide the strategic leadership needed to bring forward these opportunities in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way.

- 4.48 The experience of the Newhaven EZ demonstrates what can be achieved when local partners have the tools to shape place-based intervention. The EZ has already helped reposition Newhaven as a hub for regeneration and innovation, delivering 2,900 sq.m of new employment floorspace, attracting more than £20 million in investment, supporting over 600 jobs and the refurbishment of more than 70,000 sq.m of commercial floorspace³³. Crucially, it shows how locally defined priorities can drive momentum more effectively, than nationally prescribed programmes.

- 4.49 By championing place-based delivery vehicles such as the Newhaven EZ (noting that EZs are no longer a government policy), and exploring options such as MDCs or Industrial Strategy Zones (‘ISZ’) where appropriate, the region can create dedicated mechanisms to secure funding, embed sectoral priorities and drive regeneration at scale.

³³ Newhaven Enterprise Zone, *Newhaven Unleashed. Newhaven Enterprise Zone Business Plan, April 2023 – March 2026.* [\[Link\]](#).

Table 4.4 Potential opportunities and actions identified as part of the economic development and regeneration theme.

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
Ports as powerhouses: Newhaven and Shoreham as drivers of clean growth								
Newhaven and Shoreham Ports are two of the region’s most important assets and are driving clean-growth and innovation, albeit with potential to further support the transition to net zero, and strengthening the ports’ role in sustainable logistics, and as green growth hubs for the region.	Devolution has potential to enable SBCCA and the Mayor to coordinate infrastructure, skills and clean energy deployment at pace, turning strong momentum into transformational growth. Devolution has potential to super-charge growth through place-based leadership and elevate both ports from strong regional assets, to nationally recognised clean energy hubs, accelerating diversification, attracting long-term investment, expanding skills in maritime, and leading the shift to low carbon freight. The added value lies in strategic alignment, faster delivery and the ability to act as a testbed for clean maritime technologies.	ST = Champion both ports as regional powerhouses to become green growth hubs for the region. MT = Explore and identify opportunities for securing funding for targeted investment. MT = Explore viability for establishing a marine skills hub. LT = Ports are nationally recognised hubs for clean energy, maritime innovation and high-value employment.	By securing investment and diversifying activity, there is potential to maximise both ports’ ability to develop into clean-growth hubs delivering jobs, skills and regeneration. Over time, both ports have potential to become flagship centres of clean energy and innovation, driving regeneration across coastal communities and strengthening Sussex’s role in the UK’s transition to net zero.	✓	✓		✓✓	✓

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
Reimagining the Sussex visitor economy to unlock its full potential								
The visitor economy is a defining feature of the regional economy, but is characterised by low-paid, low-productivity jobs. The sector’s workforce is generally transient, often young and inexperienced, limiting long-term prosperity. Without enhancements and diversification, there is a risk the sector remains low-value, representing a missed opportunity for regional growth and productivity gains.	Devolution provides the opportunity to reposition the visitor economy as a driver of inclusive growth, building on the powers to align investment in culture, sport and sectoral diversification, with skills and infrastructure development. By championing diversification through creative industries, promoting the region’s unique natural assets and sports (building on BHAFc’s presence in the English Premier League, and a new WSL stadium), SBCCA and the Mayor can embed visitor economy priorities within the SDS.	ST = Reaffirm and strengthen partnerships with creative industries, MT = Explore opportunities for driving investor confidence to deliver new WSL stadium. Align investment in culture, sport and the natural environment with skills priorities. LT = Establish the visitor economy as cornerstone of regional identity.	In addition to increasing total employment, diversification of the visitor economy also has potential to result in higher-quality employment, which leads to better wages and improved productivity. More broadly, this intervention also has potential to enhance regional identity, and build stronger community resilience.		✓		✓✓	
Supporting innovation: From creative industries to quantum computing								
The region has diverse, nationally significant clusters (e.g., in creative industries, automotive, advanced engineering, and vacuum technology); which primarily operate separately with	Devolution gives SBCCA and the Mayor powers to convene FE and HE providers alongside businesses, with a view to building sector deals and developing innovation partnerships, which in turn embed	ST = Build on the creative industries’ vision to embed the	Successful implementation will see increased investment flows and higher productivity (incl. per capita) driven by		✓		✓✓	

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
very little, if any inter-sector co-ordination. Without this, the region risks missing opportunities to connect assets into a coherent, future-facing, and knowledge-based economy.	sectoral priorities within the region’s LGP, which are then embedded within the SDS. The added value lies in the ability to champion clusters as nationally and international competitive, leveraging the region’s international gateways to maximise growth opportunities.	sector into the SDS. ST = Champion breakthroughs in priority sectors (e.g. quantum computing) to drive investor interest. ST = Explore opportunities and submit bids to LIPF. MT = Develop sector deals and innovation partnerships for priority sectors. LT = Position Sussex as a knowledge-driven economy with resilience and long-term transformation.	growth in high-value jobs and an expanded skills base. Over the long-term, the collaboration between FE and HE providers and the region’s business base has potential to lead to long-term transformation into a resilient inclusive and knowledge-driven economy.					
Revitalising town centres as pilots for inclusive renewal								
Urban centres are the backbone of the region’s economy and social life. However, many town centres experience high levels of vacancy, underperforming	Devolution provides the opportunity to champion the renewal of town and city centres as part of a broader vision for inclusive growth across the region. This can be achieved by tackling vacant sites, diversifying uses	ST = Identify priority centres to initiate regeneration	In the first instance, successful renewal will see increased footfall, higher occupancy rates and the				✓✓	

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
high streets and entrenched deprivation. Without intervention, urban centres (i.e., town and city centres) risk losing their roles as hubs of commerce, culture and community.	(including the promotion of a stronger night-time economy) and improving connectivity (outlined under Theme a.). The added value lies in aligning the town centre regeneration with the SDS, and integrating housing, transport and employment investment.	pilots, and tackle underperforming spaces. MT = Support diversification of town centre activity to strengthen the local economy, while also embedding renewal as part of the SDS. Align transport investment and skills strategies to support delivery. LT = Position town centres as hubs for inclusive employment, cultural vibrancy, and community inclusion.	creation of new employment opportunities. Moreover, there is potential for stronger community resilience, in addition to tackling persistent pockets of deprivation. Over the long-term, the successful renewal of urban centres has potential to see town centres into vibrant, sustainable engines of growth.					

a. Transport & infrastructure planning | b. Skills & employment | c. Housing & strategic planning | d. Economic development & regeneration | e. Environment & climate change

✓✓ = Major contribution to theme | ✓ = Supporting contribution to theme.

ST = Short-term, typically 1 to 2 years | MT = Medium-term, typically up to 5-years | LT = Longer-term

e. Environment and climate change

- 4.50 The region stands at a pivotal moment; it faces the dual challenge of tackling climate change and addressing energy security, while also managing pressures to grow the economy, deliver new homes and unlock employment land. Without strong coordination, fragmented delivery risks making energy neutrality impossible to achieve, and environmental assets could be treated as constraints rather than drivers of prosperity. The task ahead is to embed clean energy and natural capital at the heart of Sussex’s growth strategy; ensuring that climate action, environmental stewardship and economic development are mutually reinforcing.
- 4.51 Devolution provides SBCCA and the Mayor with the levers to turn ambition into delivery. With strategic oversight of renewable energy schemes, SBCCA can align infrastructure investment with wider spatial priorities, help tackle constraints such as grid capacity and secure commitments from developers to invest in local supply chains. At the same time, SBCCA can embed environmental protection within the SDS, ensuring housing, employment and infrastructure respect ecological limits, whilst also maximising opportunity.

The Sussex Energy Mission

- 4.52 The region faces the dual challenge of tackling climate change and addressing energy security, while ensuring its economy remains resilient and inclusive. Launched in 2024, the Sussex Energy Mission sets out GBEB’s ambition to achieve energy neutrality by 2040, scaling up zero carbon energy production and reducing demand. Yet, without strong coordination, fragmented delivery would make energy neutrality impossible to achieve, and the benefits of clean energy projects would be unevenly distributed across the region’s communities. The Sussex Energy Mission must therefore be seen not only as a response to climate change, but as a coordinated framework to improve energy security and create new pathways for regional prosperity.

Case Study – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA’s LGP energy and clean tech as a priority growth sector, built around clean-tech, energy generation, energy management and energy storage (incl., carbon capture and storage). In addition to supporting growth within the sector, the LGP identifies this as an opportunity to invest in skills and workforce development, whilst at the same time also accelerating innovation in addition to research and development (‘R&D’) in energy and clean-tech areas.

- 4.53 Devolution provides SBCCA and the Mayor with the levers needed to ensure clean energy projects deliver maximum benefit for Sussex. With strategic oversight of major renewable schemes, the region can align infrastructure investment with wider spatial and economic priorities in the region’s LGP, embed initiatives within the SDS, and secure commitments from developers to invest in local supply chains. In addition, the strategic oversight and scale provided enables the region to tackle key constraints that may limit the deliverability of renewable energy projects, most notably grid capacity and connectivity. This will ensure

that clean energy investments can be delivered at scale, and embedded within region's long-term growth strategy.

- 4.54 By linking green skills provision to the needs of the energy transition, the region can ensure that local people benefit directly from the new jobs and opportunities created. Over the longer term, this coordinated approach has potential to position Sussex as a hub for clean energy and innovation; a place where the transition to net zero drives prosperity, resilience and inclusive growth.

Harnessing natural capital for long-term prosperity

- 4.55 The region's natural environment is one of its greatest assets, yet pressures to grow the economy, deliver new homes and unlock employment land often create conflicts and constraints, limiting its ability to balance development with environmental protection and sustainable growth. This is particularly evident in sectors such as agriculture and horticulture, where land pressures, climate impact and a fragmented approach to planning threaten long-term food security and the viability of rural enterprise. In addition, piecemeal development further risk undermining the contribution that natural capital can make to long-term prosperity. Without a more strategic approach, environmental assets may be treated as barriers rather than drivers of resilience and innovation. The challenge is to strike the right balance; protecting and enhancing the environment, while also meeting the needs of a sustainable economy. Initiatives such as the UNESCO-designated Living Coast Biosphere and Sussex Bay already demonstrate how nature, people and the economy can thrive together. Going forward, it will be key for their 'spirit' and direction are sustained and embedded across the wider regional growth framework.
- 4.56 Devolution provides SBCCA and the Mayor with the levers needed to place environmental protection at the heart of regional growth. By integrating natural capital into the SDS, the region can ensure that housing, employment and infrastructure are planned in ways that respect ecological limits while maximising economic opportunity. This requires a serious debate about how Sussex grows; making better use of existing resources, settlement edges and urban strengths, alongside densification and rural diversification. Over time, this approach will position the region as a national exemplar of sustainable development, where initiatives such as the Biosphere and Sussex Bay are sustained as part of a broader narrative, and where environmental stewardship and economic growth are mutually reinforcing, delivering prosperity, resilience and quality of life for all communities across the region.

Table 4.5 Potential opportunities and actions identified as part of the environment and climate change theme.

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes				
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
The Sussex Energy Mission								
<p>The Sussex Energy Mission takes on the dual challenge of addressing climate change, whilst also working towards energy security for the region. However, without a coordinated approach (and centralised leadership) there continues to be the risk of fragmented delivery and uneven economic benefits. Furthermore, without a coordinated approach delivery risks being constrained by challenges outside individual projects' control (e.g., grid capacity and connectivity).</p>	<p>Devolution provides the opportunity to provide strategic oversight, convene partners from across the board (i.e., investors, developers, businesses and local government), and provide the scale needed to align infrastructure investments with the region's SDS. In addition, SBCCA and the Mayor will also have a role to play in securing and maximising developer commitments to invest in local supply chains and embed these projects as part of the local community. In addition, devolution provides the Mayor with the opportunity to draw on additional levers (incl., the ability to raise MCIL for infrastructure investments) to tackle constraints and (where possible) align investment sequencing with project pipelines.</p>	<p>ST-MT = Embed the Sussex Energy Mission as central to the region's SDS, so that clean energy and grid upgrades are treated as spatial priorities linked to housing, employment land and transport. MT = Play a bigger role to embed renewable energy projects in local supply chains, and the local economy. LT = Promote the success of</p>	<p>Successful delivery of the Sussex Energy Mission will see both an increase in renewable energy generation, in addition to an overall decline in energy use. However, success for the Sussex Energy Mission will also mean that the benefits of clean energy are distributed across communities in Sussex, resulting in an overall reduction in regional inequality. Furthermore, by securing supply chain commitment by developers (in particular larger on larger projects), there is potential to champion, and develop green skills pathways across the region.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓

Why is the opportunity necessary?	What is net additionality / added value	Proposed timeline	Expected impact of opportunity	Relevant Themes					
				a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	
		the Sussex Energy Mission.							
Harnessing natural capital for long-term prosperity									
The natural environment is one of the region’s greatest assets; however, without a coordinated approach, fragmented planning and piecemeal development there is a very real risk that these assets are treated as barriers, rather than opportunities for growth. Stakeholders at the local level have highlighted the challenges of balancing requirements for growth, housing delivery and employment land release with environmental protection.	SBCCA and the Mayor (once elected) will have a key role to play in striking the right balance between protecting the environment, whilst also promoting sustainable economic growth. Devolution provides SBCCA and the Mayor with the scale needed to develop a strategic and coordinated approach to planning, ensuring that the region’s natural capital is integrated within the SDS. Convening powers can bring together different partners and stakeholders, to have a wider debate on how environmental priorities can be embedded as part of a sustainable economic strategy, by championing regional initiatives (such as the Sussex Energy Mission, Sussex Bay and the Living Coast Biosphere), whilst at the same time setting spatial priorities. Ultimately, SBCCA and the Mayor will have an important role to play in aligning investment decisions with natural capital, and securing commitments that not only protect, but also enhance the local environment.	MT = Embed natural capital within SDS, building on the visions set out within existing initiatives (e.g. Sussex Energy Mission, Living Coast Biosphere and Sussex Bay). LT = Position Sussex as a nature-positive economy (e.g. growing nature-based tourism, developing green supply chains).	Over the long-term, successful implementation of this initiative will see development planned within ecological limits, reducing any potential conflict between economic growth and environmental protection.			✓		✓✓	

a. Transport & infrastructure planning | b. Skills & employment | c. Housing & strategic planning | d. Economic development & regeneration | e. Environment & climate change

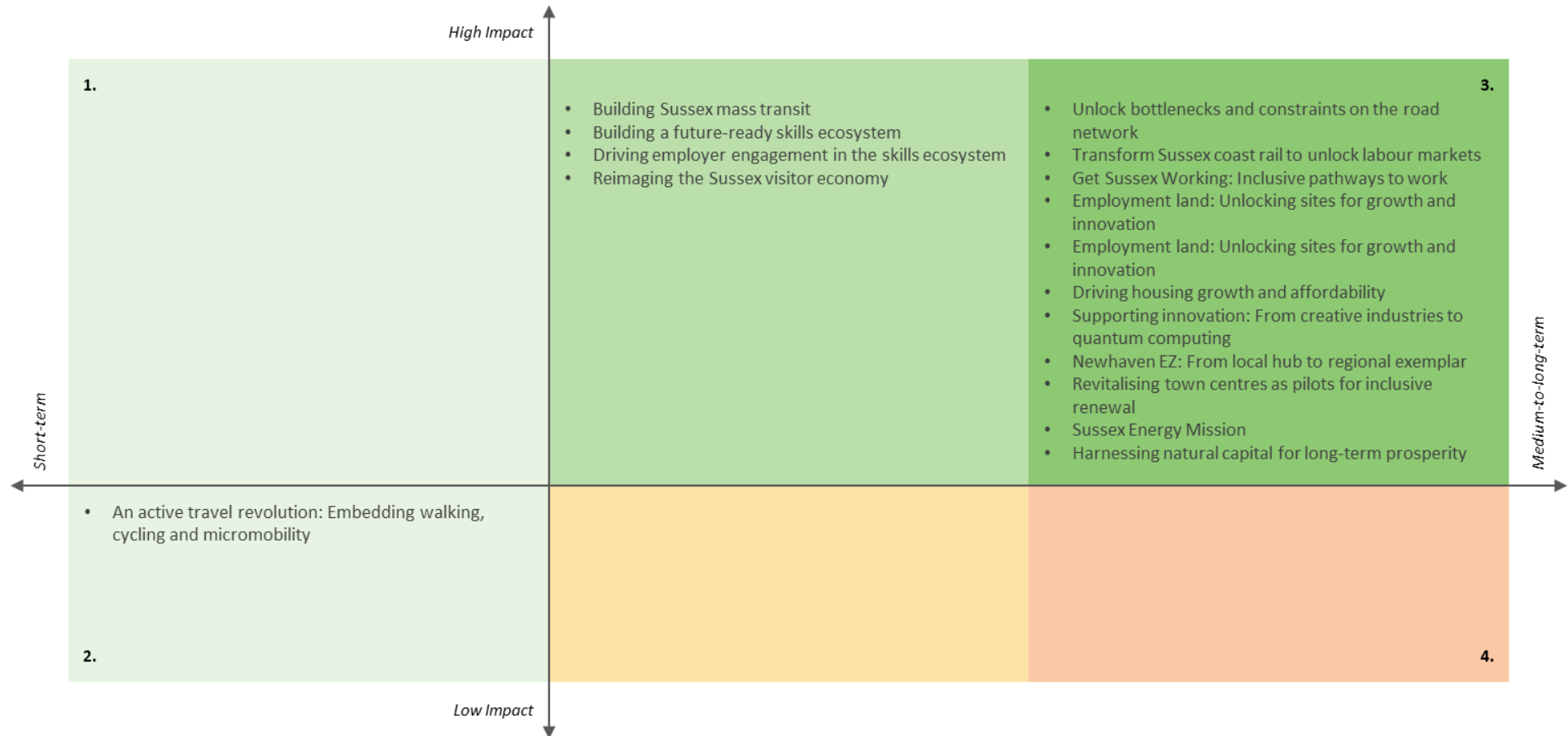
✓✓ = Major contribution to theme | ✓ = Supporting contribution to theme

ST = Short-term, typically 1 to 2 years | MT = Medium-term, typically up to 5-years | LT = Longer-term

5.0 Future Priorities and Actions

- 5.1 This section translates the analysis from the preceding sections to provide a clear, action-focused framework that groups opportunities for action by **impact** and **timeframe**. The purpose is to show which actions can deliver positive outcomes for residents and the Sussex economy, and when those outcomes can realistically be secured. The framework is designed to help SBCCA and the Mayor decide where to deploy resources (such as convening powers, funding and delivery vehicles) so that short-term momentum is captured (particularly within the region's LGP), while medium and long-term system change is put on a credible path to delivery.
- 5.2 The framework in Figure 5.1 presents a simple conceptual tool for prioritising opportunities for action by impact (vertical axis) and timeframe (horizontal axis). The model supports three practical tasks: sequencing short-term 'wins', planning medium-term scaling and setting long-term change objectives, with potential actions being grouped into the following four quadrants:
- 1 **Short-term and high impact** – These actions deliver rapid, visible benefits, which can quickly shift regional outcomes. These are the most desirable as they build public confidence and unlock follow-on investment. In practice, genuine opportunities of this nature are uncommon and typically depend on pre-existing readiness, strong national and local partnership and rapid access to funding.
 - 2 **Short-term and low impact** – These actions are quick, low-risk and produce incremental gains. They are useful for demonstrating progress, testing approaches (i.e., that can be scaled further) and building momentum. While these can generate confidence, their impact is likely to be limited, and should therefore be treated as stepping stones rather than ends in themselves.
 - 3 **Medium-to-long-term and high impact** – These actions have potential to reshape systems and deliver the greatest, and most sustained benefit over the long-term; but require planning, investment and institutional change. In principle, these actions will represent the strategic focus over the short-to-medium term, whilst at the same time shaping the regional agenda over longer term.
 - 4 **Medium-to-long-term and low impact** – These actions take time, but deliver limited systemic benefit, and risk diverting capacity and funding from actions which can deliver significant change. They are the least desirable category and should therefore be deprioritised unless they serve as enablers for higher-impact opportunities or are required for statutory reasons.
- 5.3 Each opportunity considered in the previous section has been ranked based on the above definitions as shown in Figure 5.1. This exercise shows that the majority of proposed opportunities sit in the medium-to-long-term and high impact category. The immediate challenge for SBCCA (and the Mayor once elected), is therefore to put in place the enabling steps (such as institutional arrangements, delivery vehicles and partnership agreements) so that the region can mobilise those long-term benefits and begin to secure positive outcomes much sooner.

Figure 5.1 Overview of prioritisation framework



Source: Lichfields analysis

- 5.4 While each opportunity considered in the previous section is presented against a primary theme, most cut across multiple devolution themes, creating synergies when planned and delivered together. Sequencing interventions (such as linking transport, skills, energy, land and natural capital) will produce multiple effects that are greater than the sum of individual projects.
- 5.5 An overview of the opportunities' contribution to key devolution themes is presented in Table 5.1 below

Table 5.1 Overview of opportunities' contribution to key devolution themes

Initiative	Relevant (devolution) theme				
	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
Unlocking bottlenecks and constraints on the road network	✓✓		✓	✓	✓
Transforming Sussex coast rail to unlock labour markets	✓✓		✓	✓	✓
Building Sussex mass transit	✓✓			✓	✓
An active travel revolution: Embedding walking, cycling and micromobility	✓✓				✓
Building a future-ready skills ecosystem		✓✓		✓	
Driving employer engagement in the skills ecosystem		✓✓		✓	
Get Sussex Working: Inclusive pathways to work		✓✓		✓	
Employment land: Unlocking sites for growth and innovation	✓		✓✓	✓	
Drive housing growth and affordability	✓		✓✓	✓	
Ports as powerhouses: Newhaven and Shoreham as drivers of clean growth	✓	✓		✓✓	✓
Reimagining the Sussex visitor economy to unlock its full potential		✓		✓✓	
Supporting innovation: From creative industries to quantum computing		✓		✓✓	
Revitalising town centres as pilots for inclusive renewal				✓✓	
The Sussex Energy Mission	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Harnessing natural capital for long-term prosperity			✓		✓✓

a. Transport & infrastructure planning | b. Skills & employment | c. Housing & strategic planning | d. Economic development & regeneration | e. Environment & climate change

✓✓ = Major contribution to theme | ✓ = Supporting contribution to theme

Potential Opportunities and Actions

- 5.6 Drawing on the evidence review, stakeholder engagement and analysis undertaken, the final section sets out a series of priorities for SBCCA, and eventually the future Mayor, to explore and take forward. The proposed interventions are intended to shape delivery in the short to medium term, while laying firm foundations for long-term transformation, translating the preceding analysis into proposals that can generate measurable benefits for residents, businesses and the wider Sussex economy.
- 5.7 As SBCCA takes shape it will be important to build on the existing Greater Brighton agenda, in particular GBEB's flagship commitment to transitioning the region towards net zero, alongside its focus on conserving natural capital, unleashing the potential of the creative

industries and strengthening the local food economy. This will provide a strong and coherent platform that should be carried forward into the emerging Sussex-wide approach.

- 5.8 Taken together, the following priorities highlight the importance of an integrated and cross-cutting delivery, ensuring that transport, skills, housing, energy and natural capital are aligned so that individual opportunities reinforce one another. The ability to convene partners, supported by the scale of a Sussex-wide LGP and SDS, in addition to the potential for new delivery vehicles (such as MDCs), will be central to turning strategic ambition into tangible, inclusive outcomes that endure well into the long-term. Carrying forward GBEB's established priorities will help ensure continuity, coherence and momentum as the region transitions towards greater devolution.

Embed the Sussex Energy Mission as a cornerstone to delivery

- 5.9 Positioning the Sussex Energy Mission as a flagship and cross-delivery programme for SBCCA offers a powerful opportunity to align clean energy deployment with job creation, skills and spatial planning across the region. With devolved oversight, SBCCA can coordinate developers, grid operators, local authorities and anchor institutions to accelerate delivery, reduce duplication and ensure that investment is targeted where it has the greatest economic and social impact.
- 5.10 The potential scale of this opportunity is significant, with ONS data³⁴ suggesting that every £1 billion turnover³⁵ in the low carbon and renewable energy economy ('LCREE') supports an estimated 4,600 full-time equivalent ('FTE') jobs directly and more widely through supply chain and induced effects. Around a third (i.e., 37.7%) of the total impact is supported by construction activity. Similarly, evidence submitted to support the DCO for Rampion 2 suggests that construction activity will support an average of 4,060 FTE jobs each year through direct and supply chain expenditure (i.e., excluding wider induced effects) nationally³⁶.
- 5.11 Drawing on the above in addition to research highlighting the 'Grand Challenge', it is estimated that an investment 12-times the scale of Rampion 2 (i.e., of around £45-£50 billion, in 2025-pricing) is required across the region to ensure the success of the Sussex Energy Mission³⁷. Key to maximising the opportunity will be the ability to secure local supply chain commitments for businesses in the region. This will ensure that the unprecedented wave of investment required translates into long-term and locally-embedded economic value for Sussex.
- 5.12 There is strong precedent for this type of intervention. The Net Zero Strategy for Tees Valley³⁸ has leveraged devolved powers to coordinate industrial decarbonisation, in the process unlocking £10 billion with potential to support over 30,000 new jobs in the region. Similarly, the West Midlands Combine Authority's Energy Capital initiative³⁹ has

³⁴ Office for National Statistics (2025), *Low carbon and renewable energy economy, UK: 2023*. [\[Link\]](#).

³⁵ In 2023-pricing

³⁶ Based on c. 40% UK-based sourcing for Rampion 2; equivalent to £1.14 billion in 2019-pricing (or £1.47 billion in 2025 pricing) as per Appendix 18.4 [\[Link\]](#). However, only 2.5% (i.e., equivalent to £30 million in 2019-pricing) of UK-based expenditure is currently anticipated to be captured by businesses located in Sussex.

³⁷ i.e., a shortfall or 'net import of energy' of 24.9TWh per annum for Sussex, as evidenced in public records published by GBEB [\[Link\]](#).

³⁸ Tees Valley Combined Authority, *Net Zero Strategy for Tees Valley, Powering the UK's journey to Net Zero*. [\[Link\]](#).

³⁹ See here: [\[Link\]](#).

demonstrated how regional coordination can unlock grid investment, and stimulate green-skills pathways through FE and HE partnerships.

Ensure the adequate provision of employment space to meet business needs

- 5.13 A systematic review of employment land Sussex-wide is needed to ensure that future supply keeps pace with the evolving needs of growing firms and modern occupiers. Devolution gives SBCCA the ability to convene landowners and strategic stakeholders (such as the SDNPA, utilities providers and operators of strategic employment sites) to identify priority locations, unlock sites and bring underperforming premises back into productive use. This coordinated approach can secure high-quality employment space close to transport hubs and key labour markets, ensuring that businesses can expand locally, instead of being displaced to locations outside the region.
- 5.14 Provision of new employment land to facilitate commercial development will, not only support new employment, but may also increase business retention by providing opportunities for growing businesses to invest and expand. Furthermore, this has potential to support the formation of new clusters in priority sectors (incl. advanced manufacturing and digital services).
- 5.15 For Sussex, such an approach has potential to unlock a pipeline of modern, flexible employment space that supports high-value sectors (such as opportunities in LCREE, the creative industries, advanced manufacturing and digital technology), in the process raising productivity levels and wage levels for residents in the region.

Raising productivity levels and supporting sectoral growth

- 5.16 A step-change in productivity levels will require a focused and evidence-led approach that defines and prioritises the region's distinctive sectoral strengths (such as quantum computing, vacuum technology, advanced manufacturing, the visitor economy and creative industries), and then aligns investment, skills development and land provision around those priorities. Devolution gives SBCCA the ability to set clear sectoral priorities, broker partnerships, and target infrastructure and business support to where it will raise output most effectively.
- 5.17 This is precisely the ambition outlined by the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy; to "*seize the most significant opportunities and create the most favourable conditions in key UK sectors*". According to the Industrial Strategy, the eight sectors with the highest potential (also referred to as 'IS-8' in the Industrial Strategy) are on average 27.1% more productive than the UK national average, with the current trajectory anticipated to add an extra £152 billion GVA each year and create 1.1 million new jobs by 2035.
- 5.18 The region is already well-positioned to capitalise on this approach. The region is home to a number of emerging specialisms (most notably quantum technologies, and vacuum engineering, in addition to advanced manufacturing) anchored by world-leading research institutions and a growing ecosystem of innovative firms. These strengths provide a strong foundation for attracting private investment in research and development ('R&D'), particularly in areas where demand for advanced technologies is accelerating. By coordinating land release, skills development and infrastructure provision, SBCCA can help

these clusters scale, deepen their supply chains and strengthen their international competitiveness.

- 5.19 There is also significant potential to support the diversification of the region’s economic base. The visitor economy, for example, is greatly influenced by seasonal trends. By supporting diversification (e.g. by expanding the cultural and experiential offer, or linking tourism assets more closely with the region’s natural capital and heritage) the region can unlock year-round employment, and unlock productivity gains. Similar opportunities existing the creative industries, where digital content and immersive technologies can add value and stimulate spillover benefits across the wider economy.
- 5.20 Taken together, these interventions can create new pathways for sustained productivity gains. Aligning sector priorities with investment in skills, infrastructure and the SDS will ensure that the region’s existing strengths, alongside emerging ones are transformed into engines of long-term growth.

Develop an investment prospectus

- 5.21 An investment prospectus translates regional strengths and development pipelines into a compelling offer for investors and funders, showcasing both the region’s established capabilities and its emerging opportunities. It provides a platform to package ‘shovel-ready’ projects, strategic employment sites, skills pipelines and the Sussex Energy Mission into a suite of investible propositions, each backed by clear delivery plans and risk-mitigation measures.
- 5.22 A well-crafted prospectus can play a catalytic role, with evidence from elsewhere suggesting that a coordinated investment proposition can will accelerate inward investment, unlock private finance and make the case for further devolution powers and long-term funding. For instance, the approach adopted by the West Midlands Combined Authority evidences how successful delivery has made the West Midlands as the UK’s most investible region outside London, with over 130 projects supporting an estimated 5,800 jobs during 2024 and 2025⁴⁰.
- 5.23 The region has a similar potential to articulate a clear, place-based investment story, rooted in its strengths (e.g., in quantum technology, vacuum engineering, clean energy, creative industries, advanced manufacturing and the visitor economy) to position itself as a destination for high-value, mission-aligned investment. The prospectus will also provide a mechanism to align investment with the region’s wider strategic ambitions. By integrating spatial priorities, along with infrastructure investment, skills pathways and sectoral strengths into a single narrative, SBCCA can demonstrate how devolved powers can be used to de-risk investment, accelerate delivery and create long-term value.

Deliver a long-term, affordable and sustainable housing strategy

- 5.24 A long-term, strategic approach to housing delivery is essential to meeting the region’s identified housing needs and support genuinely inclusive economic growth. Development of the SDS will provide a mechanism to plan for this at scale, aligning new homes with transport investment, utilities capacity, employment land provision and environmental stewardship. The consultation draft NPPF also sets out that the SDS will include the

⁴⁰ See here: [\[Link\]](#).

apportionment to local planning authorities in the strategy area of objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses that are best considered at a strategic scale for the duration of the plan period (at least 20 years, with a review every 5 years).

- 5.25 Through the SDS, the Mayor and SBCCA can prioritise well-connected sites, sequence infrastructure upgrades and remove barriers that currently delay or constrain sustainable development. This coordinated approach will help unlock sites in the right places, reducing delivery risks for developers and ensuring that new communities are supported by the infrastructure they require.
- 5.26 Embedding ambitious, but deliverable affordable housing targets within the SDS will further strengthen this strategy. In doing so, this will create a clear mandate to scale the supply of social and affordable homes, protecting vulnerable residents from market pressures and helping retain people (including many key workers) in the region. The scale of need is significant; evidence⁴¹ from Brighton and Hove alone suggests that there are around 4,600 households on the Housing Register, with similarly high levels of unmet demand expected across the wider region. Addressing this challenge is therefore central to building a fairer and more resilient Sussex.
- 5.27 Expanding affordable housing delivery will not only reduce waiting lists, but also tackle the wider pressures created by a lack of secure and affordable homes, such as rising use of temporary accommodation (including reliance on local B&Bs) and increasing levels of overcrowding. Housing insecurity has well-documented impacts on health, wellbeing and life chances. While many of the benefits of improved access to housing are not easily quantified, the HACT Social Value Bank⁴² suggests that each household accessing affordable housing experiences in the region of £4,700 of annual social value benefit. More broadly, the delivery of sufficient new homes will support labour market growth, underpinning the region's wider economic growth ambitions.

Develop a vision for Newhaven and Shoreham Ports to lead economic diversification

- 5.28 The two ports in Sussex are far more than gateways for freight and passengers travelling to and from the region. They are strategic assets with the potential to anchor a more diverse and resilient regional economy. By extending their role (including into clean energy generation, advanced manufacturing, logistics and supply chains, as well as skills development), Newhaven and Shoreham can both become hubs for innovation and opportunity.
- 5.29 This creates a major opportunity for SBCCA and the Mayor to articulate a bold and unified vision for Ports in Sussex; a place-based strategy that links investment directly into the Sussex Energy Mission, green skills pipelines and emerging low carbon cluster strategies. Done well, this will ensure that local people and businesses can capture the benefits of new jobs, new income streams and new forms of industrial activity.
- 5.30 Repositioned as multi-functional economic and community anchors (particularly in the case of the Shoreham Port's unique role as a Trust Port) the two ports in Sussex can drive regeneration, strengthen regional resilience and attract significant public and private sector

⁴¹ i.e., from 2022: [\[Link\]](#).

⁴² See here: [\[Link\]](#).

investment. They can also demonstrate how modern port infrastructure can serve both economic growth and the wider public good, acting as catalysts for clean energy, innovation, skills and inclusive prosperity.

Leverage major projects to drive local economic value

- 5.31 The region is entering a period of unprecedented capital investment, from the expansion of Gatwick Airport and the development of Rampion 2 to major coastal defence upgrades, infrastructure improvements, the delivery of new employment land and large-scale housebuilding. These schemes represent far more than physical infrastructure; they have the potential to act as catalysts for economic activity, supply chain development and long-term business resilience. Therefore, SBCCA and the Mayor have the opportunity to position these investments as engines of local value creation by coordinating procurement, skills pipelines and business-readiness support across the region.
- 5.32 The scale of the opportunity is significant, yet engagement with stakeholders suggests that this opportunity is not currently being maximised. Early estimates suggest that only 1% of Rampion 2's total project value (i.e., equivalent to £30 million in 2019-prices) may accrue to Sussex-based businesses. While this proportion may rise as the project progresses, it underscores the need for a more proactive approach to securing local supply chain participation and ensuring that major investments deliver tangible benefits for the region.
- 5.33 By treating large-scale investments as strategic economic enablers (i.e., not just as infrastructure projects), SBCCA can embed local value into every stage of project delivery. This includes aligning procurement with skills programmes, supporting SMEs to scale and diversity, and ensuring that spatial planning and sector strategies anticipate, and respond to future demand. Done well, this approach has the potential to maximise the economic dividend for businesses and residents in Sussex, strengthening the region's resilience and competitiveness over the long term.

Birmingham
0121 713 1530
birmingham@lichfields.uk

Edinburgh
0131 285 0670
edinburgh@lichfields.uk

Manchester
0161 837 6130
manchester@lichfields.uk

Bristol
0117 403 1980
bristol@lichfields.uk

Leeds
0113 397 1397
leeds@lichfields.uk

Newcastle
0191 261 5685
newcastle@lichfields.uk

Cardiff
029 2043 5880
cardiff@lichfields.uk

London
020 7837 4477
london@lichfields.uk

Thames Valley
0118 334 1920
thamesvalley@lichfields.uk

@LichfieldsUK

lichfields.uk