

DELIVERY **PLAN** 2022 to 2025



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CONTEXT

Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (Dorset LEP) was established over a decade ago in 2011, with a geography based on a thorough assessment of its economic functional area – whilst understanding the wider linkages across the South West and South Central regions.

Since that time, Dorset LEP has delivered many impactful initiatives, investing in on-the-ground delivery, particularly through significant capital programmes in place-based infrastructure and facilities as well as revenue-based investment in business support (primarily Dorset Gateway) and labour market and skills provision. Dorset LEP has also developed a number of economic strategies based on an evidence base of data, analysis and consultation – ranging from the 2014 Strategic Economic Plan through to the 2019 Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and 2021 Dorset Investment Prospectus. These have underpinned a clear articulation of the needs and opportunities across the area to Central Government and private investors, particularly during a time when the local political landscape was going through significant change and focus was on new operational governance and structures.

Dorset LEP's role, as an initiator of 'economic development' across the region, has always been strongly rooted in a compelling and authentic business voice. Examples include the 'demand-led' skills approach undertaken to support Dorset labour market development in recent years and innovation in areas such as agri-tech and health. However, much has changed since the LEP was first established.

As well as nationally significant events such as austerity, leaving the EU and the Covid-19 pandemic, Dorset witnessed a significant Local Government re-organisation that went live in April 2019 creating the 2 new unitary councils of Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP) Councils. Both organisations have subsequently undergone rapid change and establishment – particularly with a focus on place-based economic growth and regeneration (including housing and infrastructure). These Councils have now commenced discussions on future devolved opportunities, as well as significant work in partnership with Dorset LEP on a new investment landscape including the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Local Skills Investment Plans (LSIPs).

There is consensus across LEP partners that it is now time to refresh the role of Dorset LEP. This 2022/25 Delivery Plan outlines a transition to take account of wider changes whilst maintaining and strengthening a focus on business-led economic insight and activity for productivity-led growth.



INTRODUCTION

The Dorset LEP Board has approved a refreshed focus for the company – with a transition to this focus taking place over the course of 2022/23, with the aim of promoting Dorset more actively so that it is seen as a centre of innovation with the expertise, infrastructure, environment and culture for businesses to develop ideas and solve some of the great challenges of our time, foster partnerships, find investors, build enterprises and successfully export ideas, products and services. A place where people realise their potential through education and training, employment, the opportunity to volunteer and enjoy a great quality of life; where “One Health” principles are the foundation for living sustainably and well within our world class landscape. This will be achieved by bringing public and private sectors together to shape the future of Dorset’s economy, supporting business growth, innovation and skills.

Dorset LEP primary areas of focus for 2022/25 are:

**Economic Insight and Strategy:**

providing sound evidence and analytics and maintaining a clear focus on strategic economic priorities for Dorset.

**Business Growth, Innovation & Skills:**

supporting effective and impactful business growth in Dorset and ensuring the county maximises investment for business growth. Focusing on the ‘long tail’ of productivity in SMEs as well leading bespoke activity for agreed priority sectors.

Dorset LEP is moving to a more agile business model where it will support the ambitions of agreed strategies, prioritising those areas where it can add real value to business, education and Council capacity, such as business-led market insight and sector development.

As the primary, non-membership business voice across the Dorset area, Dorset LEP is playing a key role alongside BCP and Dorset Councils in emerging devolution discussions – and this is expected to continue across the 2022/25 period.

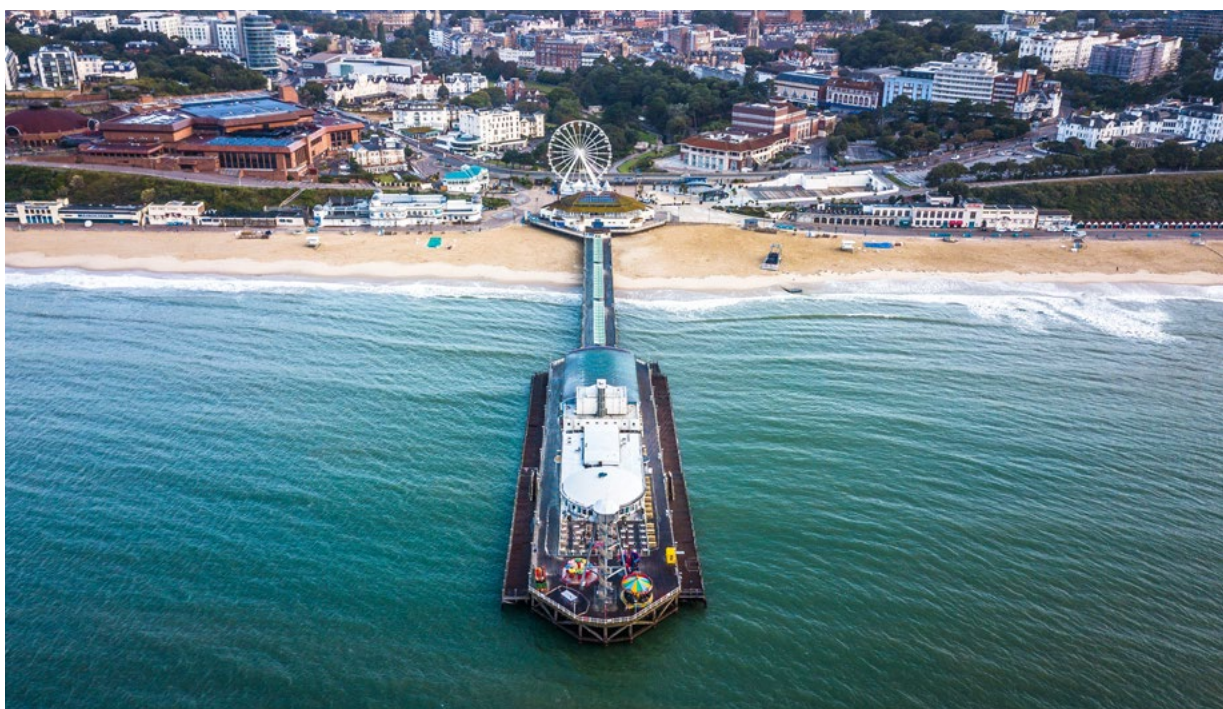
Working in Partnership

BCP Council, Dorset Council and Dorset LEP share a core emphasis on productivity, local labour supply and agreed priority sectors. This is demonstrated through both Councils' Economic Development Strategies, the Dorset Investment Prospectus and Local Industrial Strategy, as well as other key strategic documents such as the Dorset Local Skills Report and Dorset Low Carbon Energy Opportunities which the LEP produced in 2021/22 based on data-base analysis and stakeholder engagement.

Dorset LEP will continue its role helping to reinforce immediate economic priorities (such as economic recovery) and longer-term priorities (such as future skills and talent.) The Dorset LEP Executive Team and Council officers have been working together on implications of the changes to the LEP and economic development priorities for Dorset and identified 'future ways of joint-working' have been agreed in principle, irrespective of any devolution decisions across Dorset:

- Dorset LEP will work in collaboration with both Councils to ensure there is a strong 'business voice in local decision making'.
- Dorset LEP will position itself more clearly as a business-led organisation – with a much stronger focus on business rather than geography per se.
- Supporting stakeholders to 'do more with less' – ensuring the LEP adds quantifiable value in everything it does.
- Working as an agile and flexible partnership with clear agreed commissioned outputs where needed.
- Ensuring activities are transferable in any future devolution arrangements.

This 2022/23 Delivery Plan outlines our refreshed focus in more detail, including impacts on governance and resources.





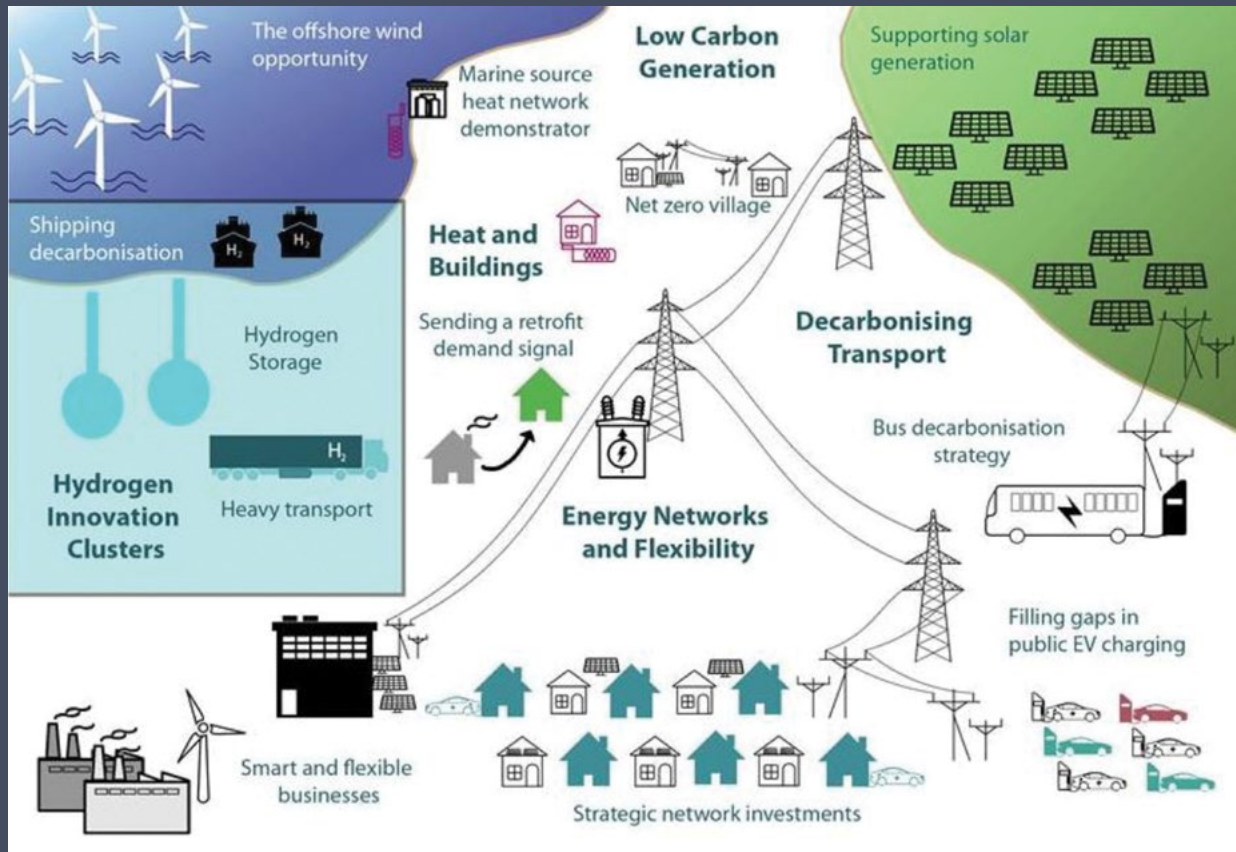
ECONOMIC INSIGHT & STRATEGY

Whilst Dorset LEP has undertaken a range of strategies for Dorset over the last decade, all based on a sound evidence footing, the concept of the LEP as strategic economic ‘think tank’ has not been utilised fully. Under our new focus, more emphasis will be placed on Dorset LEP in this role, establishing effective business-led insight and ‘intelligent commissioning’ alongside public partners. Closely working with relevant research institutions, initiating bespoke research and maintaining a finger on the pulse of the Dorset economy will enhance focus and ensure effective analytics and performance monitoring of economic and business growth initiatives.

This role will fortify effective business representation across a wide variety of functional areas, including business support and skills – as well as a strategic role in articulating the economic and business-based implications/ambitions of the place agenda (primarily led by the Unitary Councils). Effective insight and intelligence will underpin Dorset LEP’s role as a co-commissioner, ensuring a smart approach to both commissioning new activities in partnership with stakeholders, as well as promoting effective programme and performance management.

Dorset LEP will work with key stakeholders to outline a forward programme of activities for the remainder of 2022/23 and the following two years. We anticipate that the forward programme is likely to include the following types of insight:

- Supporting the economy under devolution
- Supporting effective UKSPF Investment Plans and commissioning
- Addressing low productivity in the local economy
- Innovative approaches to levelling up in coastal communities
- Economic modelling for future growth scenarios
- Local supply chain development
- New approaches to sector focus
- New market research
- Skills and labour insight to support the emerging LSIP.



Visualisation of the Opportunities to Decarbonise in Dorset

Strategic Advocacy

In 2022/25 we will:

- Identify areas of collaboration for most impact across the Great South West, Western Gateway, National partnerships
- Take a lead role in areas of activity in the wider LEP Network that align to our Delivery Plan priorities
- Continue leadership through Great South West All-Party Parliamentary Group
- Strengthen cross-LEP working via the Net Zero Energy Hub.
- Continue to work with business representative organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce & Industry, CBI, FSB and others.
- Continue to engage with key sector groups such as Maritime UK South West and the South West Defence Cluster.



BUSINESS GROWTH, INNOVATION & SKILLS

With a renewed sense of focus on business-led growth in Dorset, the LEP will prioritise the majority of its resource in this area. With a very challenging economic context for business, our 2022/23 activity will be focused on supporting businesses to manage and recover from these impacts to build back a stronger economy.

Dorset LEP has a key role in collaborating with the Councils in their development and implementation of their UK SPF business objectives, with the British Business Bank for the new South West Fund, with key departments such as Department for International Trade, and capitalising on significant innovation opportunities through Innovate UK, as well as the on-going support for all via the Dorset Gateway (Growth Hub). There is much to do.

Dorset LEP will work in partnership alongside Councils, and identified strategic organisations, via an intelligent commissioning function across publicly-funded initiatives to implement business growth, innovation/R&D, trade and investment, access to finance and bespoke sector/ cluster advancement.

The Dorset Investment Prospectus, created by the LEP with key stakeholders in 2021 was founded on a solid evidence base that is regularly updated and has also formed the basis of Local Authority Economic Development Plans. The document outlines our shared plans to enhance the current innovation eco-system, promoting Dorset as a centre of innovation with the expertise, infrastructure, environment and culture for all businesses to develop ideas and solve challenges, and to drive activity, cooperation, employment, investment and as well as inspiring and enabling innovation.



It is anticipated a new Business Growth Commissioning Board will be established and activities of this Commissioning Board will be underpinned by the 'think tank' approach, ensuring both appropriate targeting and performance management.

The Dorset LEP Board and a wider range of business voices (see governance below) will ensure strong business representation across this commissioning function to embed a 'demand-led' approach to support for Dorset's private sector.

There will also be four key areas of focus for 2022/25 which we will work on alongside our two Local Authorities.

- 1. A refreshed Dorset Gateway**
- 2. An impactful Shared Prosperity Fund for business**
- 3. Innovation infrastructure (including low carbon and investment and trade)**
- 4. Skills and labour.**

**DORSET
GATEWAY**



GOVERNANCE

Dorset LEP has high standards of governance and takes great care in ensuring the appropriate use of public funds. We will continue to do so where activity will include:

- Ensure compliance with the National Assurance Framework.
- Review and update the Local Assurance Framework.
- Review all policies and standard operating procedures.
- Undertake a refresh of the governance structure.
- Maintain robust financial processes across all income streams to ensure compliance with the government funding requirements
- Participate in formal and informal peer review opportunities.
- Manage the corporate risk framework.
- Create an annual report of activities.
- Successfully participation in an Annual Performance Review with Government.

Legacy Capital Programmes

In terms of legacy capital programmes, for Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund, the main focus for 2022/23 will be to manage the contracted projects to ensure they continue to deliver the predicted outputs until 2025.

We will continue to manage and further develop the Growing Places Fund loan scheme which supports capital projects that encourage economic growth in Dorset. The fund is designed to unlock capital projects which have a significant economic impact and the potential to increase innovation and productivity, create jobs and housing, and deliver tangible economic outcomes and may also be used where businesses are unable to access alternative funding mechanisms for viable schemes that will deliver economic growth and support Dorset LEP's strategic objectives.

Board Review

With a refreshed approach, during 2022/23 Dorset LEP will undertake a Board composition review and revise the Articles of Association.

Dorset Business Council

We will repurpose the Dorset Ambassadors in order for this mechanism to provide the means with which to engage a much broader range of business representatives as required – providing the breadth and depth of direct business engagement in local decision-making. This will see the creation of a Dorset Business Council.

Business Growth Commissioning Board

We will explore establishing a new, focused committee that will bring together business with delivery organisations help to inform and shape the current and future delivery of the Gateway/growth hub and the business objectives within UKSPF. Their focus would be to drive new thinking around support necessary for scale-up, business support, trade and business resilience across Dorset.



OPERATIONS

Our operations will be based on the following:

- Creating a strategic, small organisation supporting business to engage with local decision-making (with a small Board to oversee governance/budget and large 'business council' approach to engage wider range of business voices), we will respond effectively to the Government's commitment to the active role of business in local decision making.
- Working together with Dorset partners, maximising investment opportunities and targeting well-evidenced priorities.
- Focusing on excellent economic insight and impactful business growth and productivity activities.
- Supporting a three-year business plan (with annualised delivery plans to be agreed).

Co-commissioning/co-investment approach

This approach will support both Council's roles as the democratic leaders for local strategy and policy in their areas, as well as the lead in economic programme management.

Co-commissioning will ensure an evidenced-led approach (qualitative and quantitative) to 'smart' commissioning new activity – via UKSPF or other funding sources and will facilitate testing the market to identify optimum delivery solutions. Co-investing will maximise the 'relatively' un-ringfenced funds available to leverage against other sources of funding, including UK SPF. Dorset LEP will add value to these funds through a local co-investment model, linked to smart commissioning.

Devolution

We will work to ensure a seamless move to a devolved structure should that be in place during the next 1 to 3 years.