

An aerial photograph of Brighton, UK, showing the harbor, residential areas, and the coastline. The harbor is filled with boats and surrounded by industrial buildings and a beach. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

GREATER
BRIGHTON

GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD MEMBERS

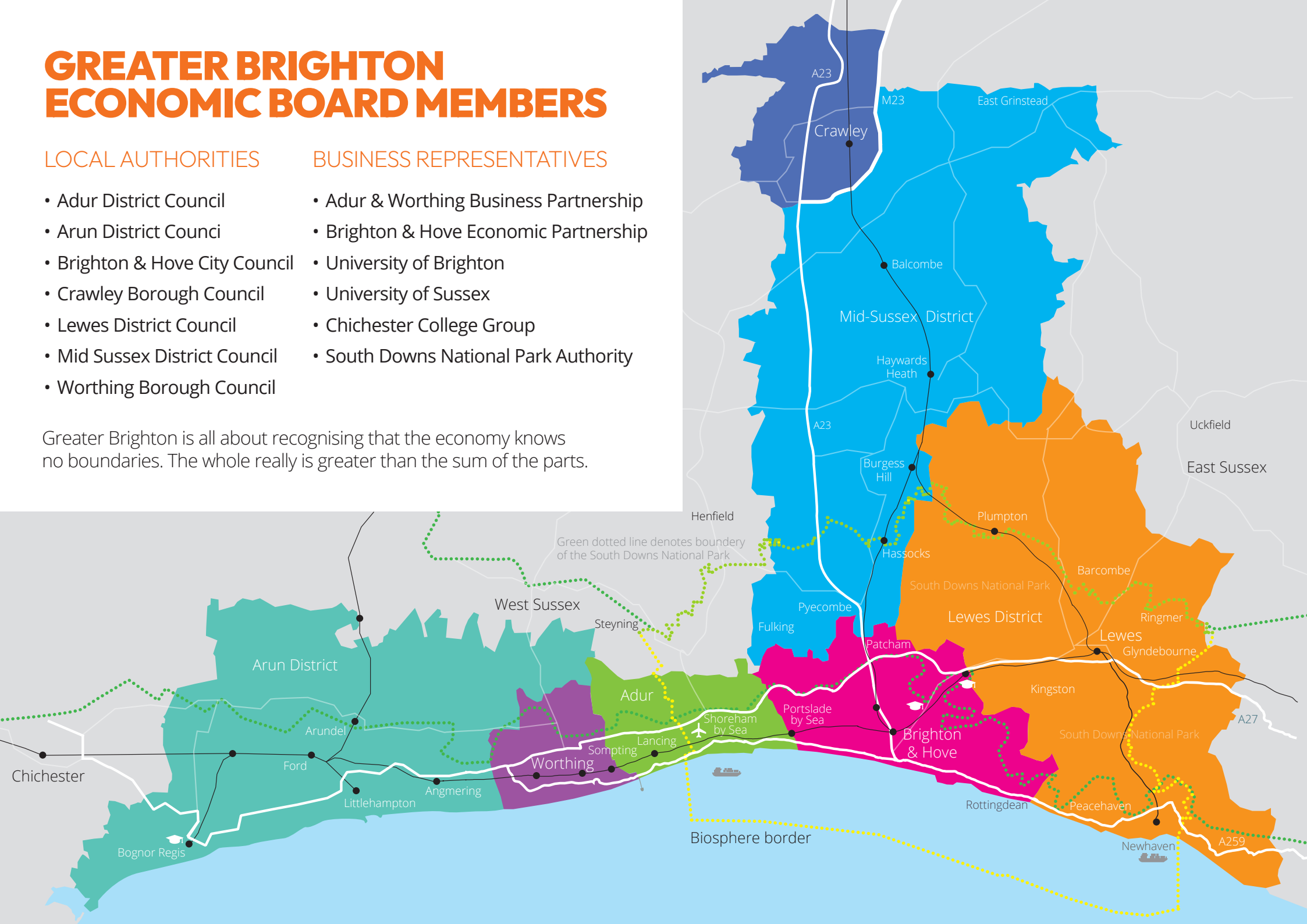
LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- Adur District Council
- Arun District Council
- Brighton & Hove City Council
- Crawley Borough Council
- Lewes District Council
- Mid Sussex District Council
- Worthing Borough Council

BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES

- Adur & Worthing Business Partnership
- Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership
- University of Brighton
- University of Sussex
- Chichester College Group
- South Downs National Park Authority

Greater Brighton is all about recognising that the economy knows no boundaries. The whole really is greater than the sum of the parts.



DEVOLUTION UPDATE

MOMENTUM GROWING

Momentum has been growing on devolution, catalysed by The Levelling Up White Paper published in February 2022 where the government announced they wanted to 'usher in a devolution revolution' and one of the missions stated: 'By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement'.

When the paper was published there were 11 areas in England with devolution deals. As of March 2024, devolution deals had been agreed with 22 areas. In March 2023 the Government published new 'trailblazer' deals, committing a single financial settlement and additional powers. The Labour Party has promised it would 'work to expand devolution further and faster, with local authorities coming together to take on new powers to boost their economies.' The devolution journey is showing no signs of slowing down.

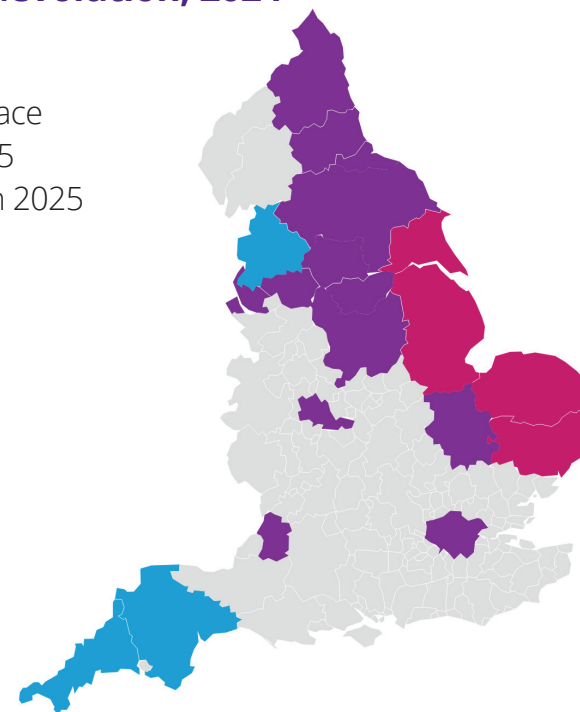
Devolution unlocks funding and powers that would provide certainty, allowing a locality to plan spend more strategically, over a long period. This would support targeted investment based on local need and priorities that will result in the best return for a region's citizens, businesses and the wider economy.

We are currently in a time of political change with four of the seven Greater Brighton local authorities now having a Labour majority (Brighton & Hove, Crawley, Worthing and since the May 2024 elections, Adur) and a General Election in progress. Times of change can create opportunities

Coverage of English devolution, 2024

Area type

- Mayoral devolution in place
- Mayoral deal due in 2025
- Non-mayoral deal due in 2025



Source: Institute for Government analysis of UK government announcements, including the 2023 autumn statement.

for boundaries to be crossed and conversations to open exploring deeper collaboration between local authorities.

Because Greater Brighton is a coalition of the willing and crosses local authority boundaries, it is well placed to be involved in discussions about the options for deeper collaboration. We can bring relevant people together and highlight insights about how the strengths and achievements of the different councils can complement one another to make the strongest possible case for investment in the region.

SUSSEX ENERGY – ACCELERATING OUR JOURNEY TO A GREENER FUTURE

TAKING THE LEAD – TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The climate crisis has necessitated that all local authorities set ambitious carbon reduction targets. To that end there is already a lot of innovative work going on in the region to reduce energy demand and increase the supply of locally-generated renewable energy.

Worthing Borough Council have recently unveiled an ambitious £500 million project to decarbonise heating across the entire town by 2050, partnering with Hemiko, who will finance, execute, and manage a district heat network. This initiative is projected to reduce heating emissions by around 90%. The initial phases of the project will focus on connecting large public sector buildings, estimated to save over 3,000 tonnes of annual CO₂ emissions and create approximately 40 local jobs.

Hemiko have also been working alongside Crawley Borough Council to provide operation and maintenance services to Crawley's first district heat network. In its first phase, which is now complete, the heat network supplies heat and hot water to 130 residential units, the new Town Hall, and The Create Building. It will also serve the proposed residential development on the former Town Hall site. The carbon savings are equivalent to removing over 260,000 driving miles from the road each year.

Lewes District Council together with the Newhaven Enterprise Zone (NEZ) is developing an investment plan that will enable the Newhaven business sector to become net zero by 2030. Reaching net zero by 2030 will enable the NEZ and surrounding enterprises to gain a competitive advantage and

become environmental leaders at a regional and national level. Net zero solutions will primarily be greener, cheaper energy in commercial buildings and vehicles and will lay the foundation for the residential sector. A key technology solution will be solar PV.

Several years ago the Board agreed to establish a Greater Brighton Task Force to ensure the city-region's homes and buildings are fit for a zero-carbon future. This work is being overseen by Lewes District Council, and the research study led by the University of Brighton and the Council's joint venture Clear Futures.

The study looked at the most realistic solutions that could be delivered by 2030, which includes more investment in local green energy and a targeted approach to retrofit. Delivering these solutions though will



Decarbonising our Housing Stock: Roadmap for 2030 zero carbon

Summary Report

Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council

February 2023

HOMES FIRST

SUSSEX ENERGY – ACCELERATING OUR JOURNEY TO A GREENER FUTURE

require a coordinated effort between Local Authorities, central Government, and energy companies, as well as the development of local energy systems.

The Council has already applied the learnings from this work to its own housing stock, using a blend of SHDF and its own funding to deliver a pragmatic programme of works. The summary report can be found at **[Decarbonising-our-Housing-Stock-Roadmap-for-2030-zero-carbon](#)**

There is also the work of Hydrogen Sussex, the body supporting and facilitating the hydrogen economy across Sussex. Hydrogen Sussex has quickly built a significant network of key stakeholders across local and central government and the private sector, and has been engaging other stakeholders including regional MPs to enhance support and understanding of the region's hydrogen ambitions. Hydrogen Sussex also led on the development of a regional hydrogen strategy and investment proposition.

A UK Hydrogen Strategy was published in October 2021, together with notice of a Net Zero Hydrogen Fund for 2022, as part of a raft of decarbonisation strategies culminating in the government's Net Zero Strategy in November 2021. Hydrogen will have a critical role in the UK's net zero energy future.

The UK Hydrogen Strategy highlights the potential of public sector funding to leverage private investment in innovation, to unlock commercialisation and create a market for hydrogen. The ambition to produce 5 GigaWatts of hydrogen by 2030 would mean the creation of a thriving new hydrogen industry, which could support over 9,000 high-quality jobs and £900 million of GVA. Government investment in hydrogen to de-risk early projects, could unlock over £4 billion of private sector co-investment by 2030.

Moving quickly to develop a strong UK hydrogen economy by 2030 presents opportunities for investment in projects and associated infrastructure and supply chain companies. With such a critical role to play in enabling the UK hydrogen economy, it is important that a joined up and strategic approach is taken to hydrogen Research and Innovation investment.



SUSSEX ENERGY – ACCELERATING OUR JOURNEY TO A GREENER FUTURE

A STEP CHANGE IN AMBITION

However, despite all the innovative work going on across the region there is no time for complacency. As things currently stand, both Greater Brighton and wider Sussex areas are significant net importers of energy. Current baseline data suggests that the annual energy demand for Sussex is around 16 times more than the current supply from renewable sources. A step-change in terms of ambition and activity is needed to address this imbalance. If the region is to transition to net zero carbon in accord with organisational targets, and to achieve a level of energy resilience, there needs to be a levelling of demand and renewable supply. The Board can take a leadership role across the Sussex region in addressing the huge differential that we are experiencing now.

In July 2024 the Board will launch a mission for the City Region and wider Sussex region to achieve net zero energy status by 2040, **where the total amount of energy used by our community on an annual basis is equal to the amount of renewable energy created within the community**. This will address one of the most pressing aspects of the climate emergency and bring about significant economic and social opportunities and benefits.

By unifying around the Sussex Energy mission and pointing everyone in the same direction, we can help to join up dots to accelerate work and provide momentum. Conversations with a variety of stakeholders have shown that this mission energises and resonates with people and having a single clear voice and a clear ambition will lay the foundations for stronger regional engagement with central government.



UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF OUR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

WHY ARE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IMPORTANT TO US?

The Creative Industries are a defined industrial category for a range of economic activities that are concerned with the generation and commercialisation of creative ideas, knowledge and information.

This includes the music industry, the games sector, film & television, software programming, publishing, architecture, fashion, design, marketing services, and the performing arts.

The Creative Industries are a success story for the United Kingdom. Over the past decade they have grown at 1.5 times the rate of the wider economy. They currently contribute over £108bn per annum to the UK economy. That makes them bigger than the UK's life sciences, automobile and aeronautical sectors combined.

Across Greater Brighton and wider West Sussex county area, there are over 10,000 registered businesses that fall under the banner of Creative Industries, employing nearly 55,000 people. In addition there are around 21,000 creative freelancers in the region.

There is significant cross-party recognition of the economic importance of the creative industries sector in supporting national economic recovery and growth.

OUR REGION: STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Research conducted when preparing the strategy identified five key Creative Industry strengths on which to build:

- 1. Our Assets:** A powerful array of distributed assets and resources that, if harnessed, can accelerate Creative Industry growth.
- 2. Our Talent:** An educated creative workforce and a region that is attractive to talent.
- 3. Our Entrepreneurs:** Significant entrepreneurial and start-up activity.
- 4. Our Innovation:** Proven innovative ability in integrating creative practices and technological innovation, and in commercialising the outputs.
- 5. Our Clusters:** Strong music, screen (TV / games), and performance sub-sectors that are distributed across the region.

There are internationally award-winning individuals who work as creatives in the commercial side of the creative industries across games, TV, film and design. The experience within the talent pool is phenomenal.

A vision for the creative industries needs to reflect and articulate how this freelance workforce can support a growing larger business ecology. One of the most significant challenges faced by local authorities and stakeholders is how to structure investment in the sector in a way which makes working capital available to support, encourage and develop those successful creative behaviours, rather than requiring security for those investments. If successful, this will:

- Ratchet up the knowledge intensity and innovation of individual creative entrepreneurs and microbusinesses.
- Seed the development of more dynamic clusters and supply chains.
- Provide a spur to productivity, employment and business growth in the process.

UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF OUR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Relative to other regions, Brighton & Hove and Coastal West Sussex demonstrates a lack of specialist physical infrastructure; but more important, it means that the region is lacking in the 'soft' infrastructure to support collaboration, investment in skills and the perception amongst local people that creative industries represent a viable and worthwhile career choice.

Our goal is to realise the potential that this region clearly has to become home to a world-class Creative Industries sector.

OUR VISION: PUTTING TALENT FIRST

Ultimately, value in the Creative Industries is generated by individual creativity and imagination, and the skills and knowledge required to turn it into something with value.

A core strength of our region is its creative talent – both homegrown and those that are attracted here from elsewhere.

But whilst talented people are everywhere across our region, the opportunities for them to succeed are not. Certain social groups are

underrepresented in our Creative Industries and the sector is the poorer for that.

That needs to change. We will embrace a simple but ambitious vision for our region, to make it...

The best place in the UK for anyone, whatever their background, to build a fulfilling career in the Creative Industries.

We call this **Putting Talent First**.

To achieve this goal, Greater Brighton and Coastal West Sussex needs to commit to 3 clear targets:

1. That everyone in our region gets a chance to understand and experience the opportunities in the Creative Industries.
2. That anyone in our region can access the training needed to start and grow a career in the Creative Industries.
3. That we support our creative entrepreneurs to build successful businesses and organisations.

The region already possesses much in terms of the organisations and infrastructure that

we need, and has strength in key growth sub-sectors. We can go far by leveraging them more effectively and developing activity to strategically connect and enhance them.

We will work with our regional economic geography, not against it. This means enhancing our two existing creative corridors, empowering stakeholder communities at a local level, and connecting up those working in the same industry sub-sectors.

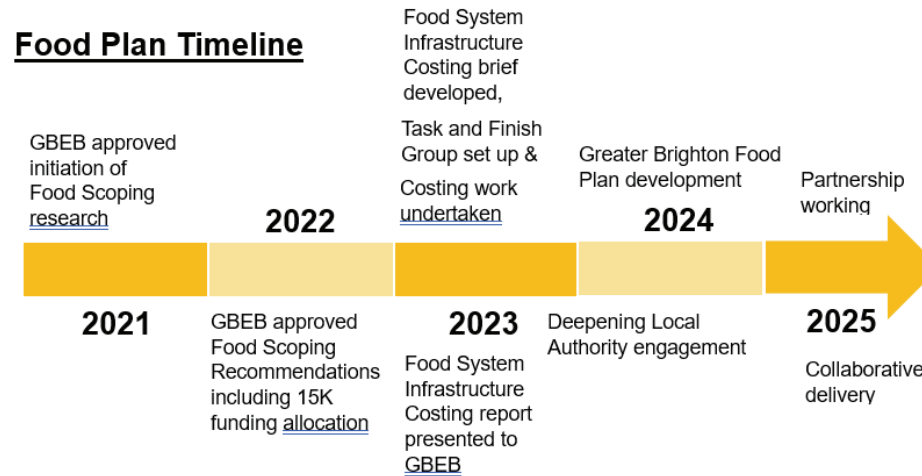
This is a strategy that is relevant, ambitious and achievable. It can secure local and national buy-in from both industry and government.

Deliver on it and Greater Brighton and Coastal West Sussex can re-energise our Creative industries, release this region's real creative potential and build a world-class economic powerhouse.

IS FOOD YOUR BUSINESS? COLLABORATING ON THE FOOD PLAN

A LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

Work continues to develop an ambitious Food Plan to transform the city region's food system and lead the way in the development of a local food economy. All Local Authority areas are at different stages in food system transformation. Coordinated economic development activities and investment planned at city region level are required to deliver Government Food Strategy objectives and meet health, nature and climate commitments. We are already lucky to have strong existing business, education and food partnerships covering the breadth of the city region food system and local authority areas, with the creative potential to make the Greater Brighton Food Plan a real success.



Local Authorities are able to use the Food Scoping report, Food Scoping recommendations and Food System Infrastructure costing report to identify and consider local delivery. As directed by the board, deeper local authority engagement is well underway to align work with strategic local objectives and collaborate to attract targeted investment. We are now starting to see developer interest in the food system infrastructure plans.

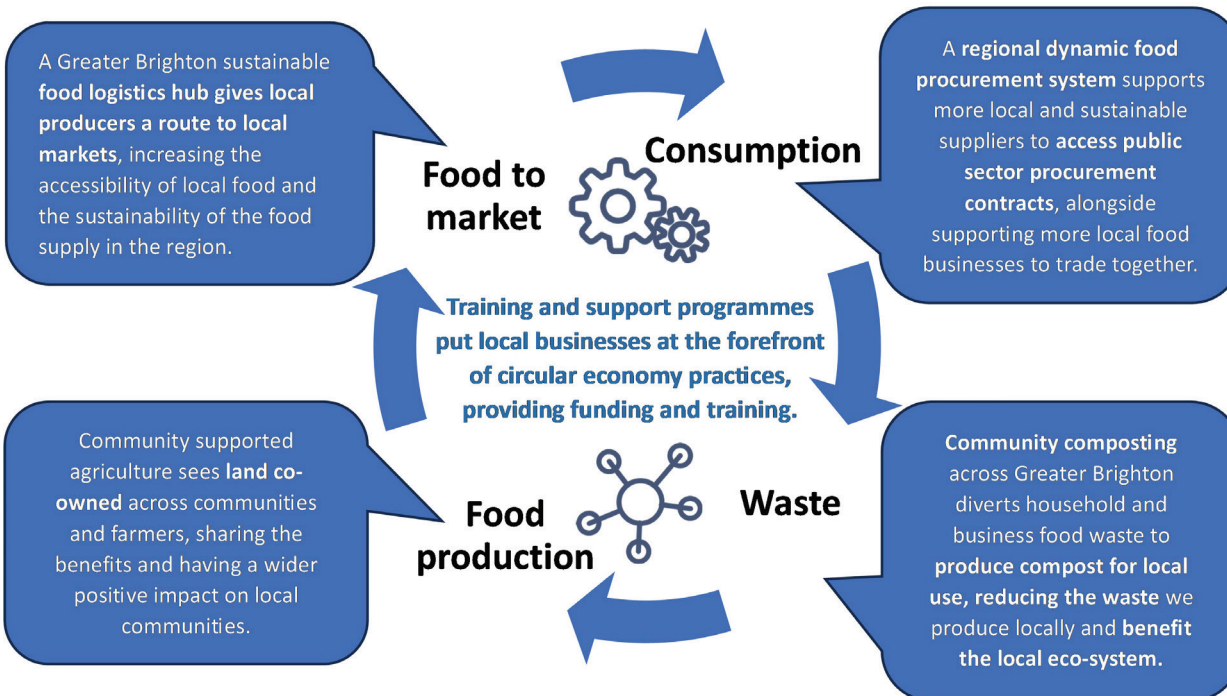
SUMMARY OF FOOD SCOPING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Mechanism to co-ordinate action i.e. set up task and finish group
- £15K for infrastructure, business support and training investment plan
- A call to action and active communication of food system innovations

IS FOOD YOUR BUSINESS? COLLABORATING ON THE FOOD PLAN

FIVE KEY PROJECTS

Our Business, Education and Local Authority Economic Development Teams are now starting to work together to develop the Plan and highlight the investment needed across the City Region to make this exciting project a reality. A Task and Finish Group including University of Brighton, SDNPA, Plumpton College, University of Sussex, Food Partnership, International and Local Authority representatives meets quarterly at Plumpton College's Agri-Food Centre to ensure activities are co-ordinated. With a focus on local supply chains and growth areas, five key projects have been identified for collaboration and investment:



BENEFITS

The key projects are all about utilising the city region's strengths for local food production at scale and investing in food system assets. They will contribute to the social resilience of Greater Brighton communities and the wellbeing of residents, alongside wider economic and environmental impacts. Growth opportunities have also been identified for smaller projects (quick wins) that may move quickly into the implementation phase, depending on local capacity and resourcing.



IS FOOD YOUR BUSINESS? COLLABORATING ON THE FOOD PLAN

PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

Education leads are helping ensure projects clearly articulate priorities and align the right interventions to deliver government food strategy. **University of Brighton** research and practice around the continuous Productive Urban Landscape (CPUL) design concept continues to progress and examine intrinsic links with supportive food governance. The South Coast Sustainability Research System (SCSRS), **University of Sussex**, is building a network to learn more about local experiences and knowledge and skills to balance competing interests such as food security and biodiversity. It looks at how we can work collaboratively to scale sustainability actions using place-based knowledge and networks. The University of Sussex also hosted the 'Brighton & Hove Food Strategy Research and Evidence Review' showcasing relevant research.

Sussex Food Partnerships continues to meet and provide a supportive network. Good Food East Sussex is convened by the four East Sussex Local Food Partnerships, East Sussex County Council and supported by Food Matters. It is a

network of local organisations and individuals coming together to build a food system that works for people, economy and environment. (See directory of suppliers and buyers of food and drink produced or processed locally through independent local business).

Attendees at the **West Sussex Economy Group* (includes Arun, Crawley, Mid Sussex, Worthing District Council and SDNPA)** said that the food scoping and costing work resonated with the group with regards to Cost-of-Living work and West Sussex Climate Action. Discussions followed on how to get industry involved in food supply chain work e.g. skilled processors, college groups, hospitality sector, West Sussex Growers Association etc to be able to collaborate better on productivity, net zero and innovation. The group are thinking ahead to issues businesses will face in the future e.g. freshwater shortages, skills and labour shortages, transition to a circular economy, climate change, carbon literacy and carbon footprint of food.

The **Agri-Food Centre** at **Plumpton College** hosted a Baker's Roundtable. Local bakeries,

industry professionals and colleagues gathered to network, share best practice and collectively promote this industry and actions made on sustainability and equality, diversity & inclusion. Plumpton College was announced as 'Agriculture, Environmental & Animal Care Apprenticeship Provider of the Year' at the FE Week & AELP Apprenticeship Awards 2024. **Brinsbury College** produced a report identifying specific skills priorities for the future. The findings clearly evidence the shortage of skills that are essential to a prosperous and sustainable commercial horticulture sector. The skills shortages fit under three broad categories: technical skills, business skills and soft skills.

The **SDNPA delivery budget for the FiPL programme** in the South Downs National Park has now been fully allocated for the year 2024/2025. The **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)** programme is part of Defra's Agricultural Transition Plan to help farmers and land managers in the country's protected landscapes as we transition from the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy to a new agricultural support system.

THE LIVING COAST - CONSERVING OUR UNIQUE NATURAL CAPITAL

THE UNESCO BIOSPHERE

The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere is a 390km² stretch of the Greater Brighton geography, running from the Adur to the Ouse rivers including the South Downs, coast and sea with the city of Brighton & Hove at its heart. The Biosphere boundary is detailed on the regional map on page 2.

The UK's only urban UNESCO Biosphere it is both a spatial designation recognising the international importance of our natural environment and a diverse partnership, encompassing national, regional, private and public sector and community organisations. Brighton & Hove City Council leads The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere partnership which also includes Lewes District Council and Adur & Worthing Borough Council. Biospheres are sites of excellence for sustainable development for people and nature with 3 objectives:

1. Conservation of nature and culture;
2. Sustainable socio-economic development;
3. Education and research.



BENEFITS

The benefits of The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere include bringing together a diverse partnership for cross sector knowledge sharing; enabling local to global links through our regional, national and international UNESCO networks and connections; project delivery for dedicated, funded projects and being a transversal communications vehicle for our partnership and wider, relevant local, regional, national and international initiatives.

Our project delivery, both uniquely as The Living Coast Biosphere and supported by our partners, focuses on the 3 Biosphere objectives detailed above. Our current projects in delivery include Greening the Cities, bringing the Downs into the Towns creating new areas of wildflower planting in urban environments to enhance biodiversity and health & wellbeing – part of the landscape scale Changing Chalk project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund; The Sustainable Management of Urban Aquifers, delivering research and education on water quality and nature based solutions tackling flooding – funded by UNESCO and the ABDRN Charitable Foundation; Our City, Our World and Our School, Our World environmental education programmes for primary and secondary school pupils – funded by Brighton & Hove City Council, Southern Water, the Environment Agency, South Downs National Park and Let's Go Zero; and The Living Coast Artist Residency programme supporting local early career artists creatively exploring and communicating human / nature connections – funded by Fabrica Gallery, University of Sussex and University of Brighton and supported by ONCA Gallery.

THE LIVING COAST - CONSERVING OUR UNIQUE NATURAL CAPITAL

COLLABORATION

Greater Brighton Economic Board has always worked closely with The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere – for example during the development of the GBEB Energy & Water Plans – and last year financially supported the Biosphere in their Periodic Review and development of a new 10-year strategic plan. UNESCO requires all its Biosphere designations to undertake a 10-year Periodic Review to monitor conditions within the Biosphere and ensure that the criteria of this prestigious international designation are still being met.

Thanks to the support of GBEB and other funding partners including Lewes District Council and Brighton & Hove City Council, The Living Coast were able to utilise consultants to support the review process and undertake a large stakeholder engagement exercise to inform both the review and the development of the new strategic plan for 2024 - 2034. GBEB have also provided a letter of support for the renewal of the UNESCO Biosphere designation, alongside multiple organisations from across The Living Coast Biosphere Partnership.

The Living Coast will be submitting the finalised Periodic Review and request for redesignation as a UNESCO Biosphere to UNESCO in Summer 2024. We expect to receive the outcome of our application by September 2025. To learn more about our UNESCO Biosphere please visit www.thelivingcoast.org.uk





GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

LINKS AND RESOURCES

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LINKS TO INVESTMENT PROGRAMME AND OPE PROGRAMME

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