

GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

GREATER
BRIGHTON

GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD MEMBERS

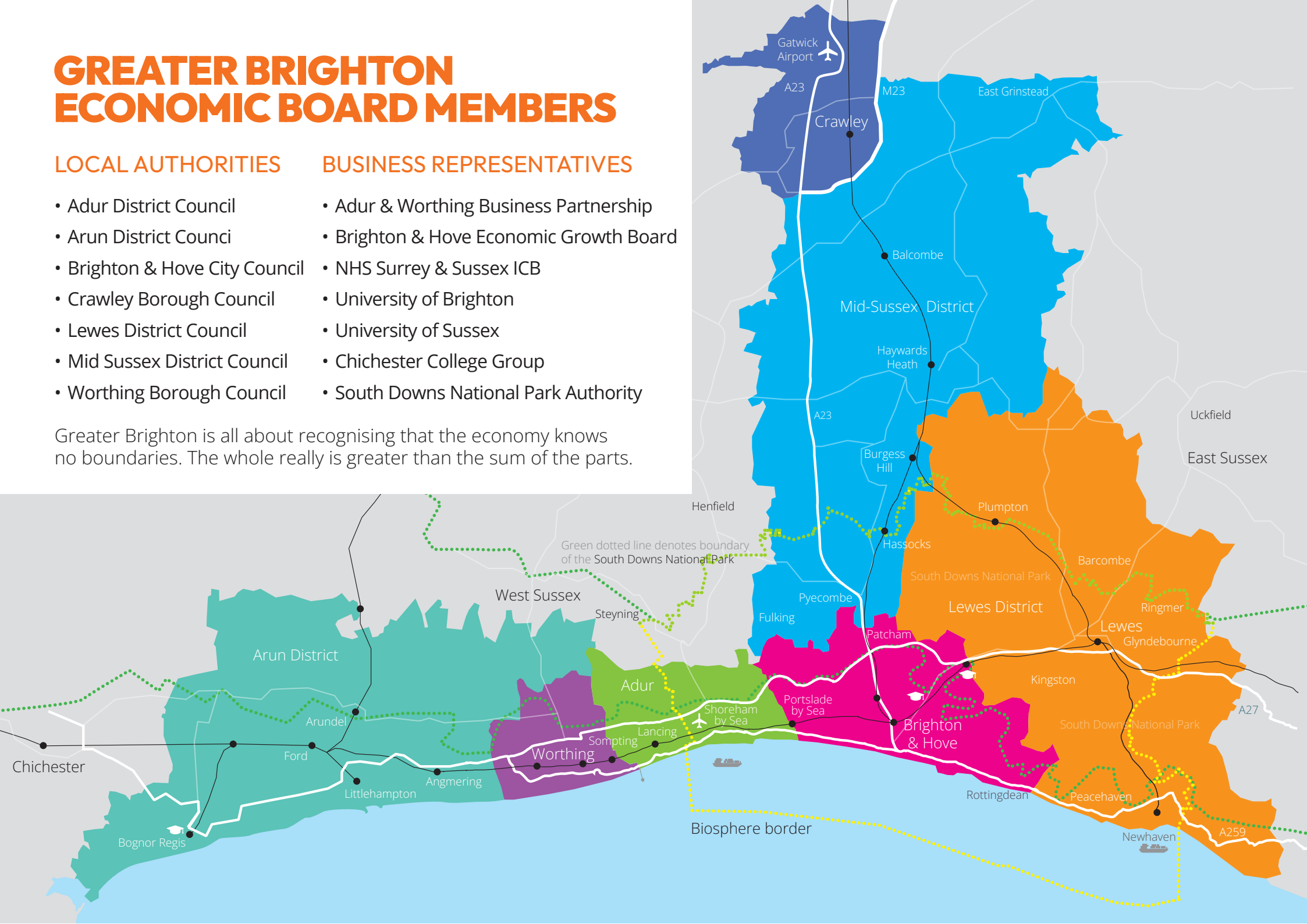
LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 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 Growth Board
- NHS Surrey & Sussex ICB
- 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.



FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR OF THE GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Board, to introduce this year's Annual Report.

This has been **an important year for Greater Brighton** and the wider Sussex and Brighton region. **Devolution** has moved from preparation into implementation, with the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority (SBSA) now vested and beginning its work. This creates new opportunities to align investment, infrastructure, skills, housing, economic growth and energy resilience around regional priorities.

Throughout this transition, the Board has focused on ensuring that the partnerships, priorities and value developed through more than a decade of collaboration are carried forward. An independent **review of regional economic opportunities** has identified where devolved powers and a regional approach could unlock long-term benefit.

Building on this, the Board has developed an **Integration Proposal**. This provides both a transition plan for the Board and a constructive offer to the SBSA, setting out how key workstreams, partnerships and assets could be adopted, scaled or utilised. As the

Board moves towards orderly dissolution, our priority is to support continuity and protect the value created through collaboration.

Sussex Energy remains central to this legacy and is increasingly being positioned as an investable, delivery-ready regional programme. Over the past year, the Sussex Energy Forum has launched and the Board's £100,000 Sussex Energy fund has been prioritised through collaborative workshops, leading to two key workstreams: **Solar Across Sussex** and a **Regional Energy Finance Strategy**. A **Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing** has been drafted giving the Strategic Authority a clear starting point on energy, building on activity already underway so the region can move quickly, demonstrate early progress and begin attracting investment.

The programme has strengthened **communications** and visibility through a public Sussex Energy LinkedIn presence with over 400 followers, and a **Sussex map of energy decarbonisation projects** has been developed to make regional activity more visible, help partners coordinate messages and lay foundations for future investment.



FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR OF THE GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD



Looking ahead, the Board will continue to engage with the SBSA, using the Integration Proposal as a blueprint for transition. Sussex Energy will build a project pipeline to support investor discussions, publish the energy map, progress the solar and investment work, and bring organisations working to support the energy transition across Sussex together, through the next Sussex Energy Forum in July.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members, officers, partners and stakeholders for their continued commitment and collaboration. The Greater Brighton Economic Board has always been built on the principle that our economy does not stop at administrative boundaries. As the region enters this new phase, that principle remains as important as ever.



Bella Sankey

Cllr Bella Sankey

Chair of the Greater Brighton Economic Board
Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council



Local Power Local Prosperity

A Sussex-wide public, private and community sector partnership growing clean power and improving efficiency to achieve energy neutrality by 2040.



SUSSEX ENERGY MISSION



Sussex Energy has continued to build momentum as the Board's regional mission to achieve energy neutrality by 2040, improving energy security, reducing emissions and supporting economic prosperity.

2025/6

As devolution progresses, **Sussex Energy is being positioned as a delivery-ready programme** that could be adopted and scaled by **Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority**.

A **Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing** is being developed collaboratively to inform the Strategic Authority about early priorities, investment opportunities and longer-term actions to embed energy decarbonisation within future regional governance.

Looking ahead

Build a pipeline of investable energy opportunities to inform future work to secure funding and investment.

Sussex Energy has strengthened **regional communications** through a comms working group, a Sussex Energy branded public LinkedIn presence with over 400 followers, promoting local success stories and building Sussex's reputation in low-carbon energy.

Develop and roll out a shared "pick and mix" content library with University of Sussex students to help partners align comms around shared themes amplifying and coordinating the region's voice on energy.

SUSSEX ENERGY MISSION



2025/6

The **Sussex Energy Forum** launched in July 2025, bringing together organisations working to support the energy transition across Sussex to share knowledge, strengthen collaboration and identify where regional coordination can accelerate delivery.



Looking ahead

Hold a second in-person Forum to share progress and strengthen regional alignment around the Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing.

The Board's £100,000 Sussex Energy fund was prioritised through collaborative workshops leading to two key workstreams:



1. Solar Across Sussex –

Enable and assist viable solar sites to progress towards development and identify changes that would make future solar projects easier to implement.

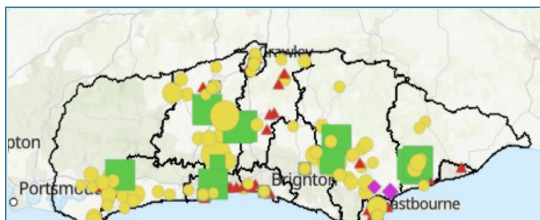
2. Regional Energy Finance Strategy –

setting out how Sussex can attract and coordinate investment into energy decarbonisation.



Complete Solar Across Sussex site identification and prioritisation, creating a pipeline of viable solar opportunities to develop.

Deliver the Regional Funding and Investment Strategy, to set out how future energy decarbonisation in Sussex could be financed.



With the support of University of Brighton, a publicly accessible **map of energy decarbonisation projects across Sussex** is being developed, helping raise the region's profile and showcase activity across Sussex.

Publish the Sussex Energy map to give a public view of energy decarbonisation projects across Sussex and promote it.

SUCCESSES

SUSTAINABILITY SHOWCASE: COLLABORATION IN ACTION



A Sustainability Showcase at the launch brought together a wide range of organisations demonstrating the strength and diversity of Sussex's energy transition work. Alongside a Worthing Heat Network stall, Community energy groups (OVESCO and Brighton Energy Co-op) showcased rooftop solar schemes, battery storage models, retrofit support for homes and businesses and explained how local residents can invest in solar and see financial returns stay within their communities.

Climate Resilience Centre Worthing (CREW) promoted their work on a community-funded model to install solar panels on industrial and commercial rooftops in Worthing. Alice Doyle was there providing practical sustainability advice for SMEs (funded through the Making Business Greener Campaign from The Naturesave Trust). Coastal and community climate initiatives (Sussex Bay and Transition Town Worthing) were also represented, highlighting how environmental action in Sussex spans energy, nature and local resilience. There was a lot of interest in the Sussex Energy stall which gave a flavour of energy transition projects happening in the wider Sussex region. The steady flow of visitors throughout the day reflected growing appetite for practical, deliverable solutions — not just strategy, but real projects already underway.



PROUD TO SUPPORT WORTHING HEAT NETWORK LAUNCH



The new town centre network, launched in February 2026 is now supplying buildings including Worthing Town Hall and the

Connaught Theatre through more than 2km of underground pipework connected to a central energy hub. Phase one alone is expected to cut around 3,000 tonnes of CO² each year – equivalent to taking more than 2,000 cars off the road. Phase two began in March.

SUCCESSES

UK'S LARGEST LIVING SEAWALL

Launched at Southwick Reef

Over 400 members of the public pre-registered to attend the January launch of Southwick Reef, alongside civic leaders, academic partners, media and key stakeholders.

The project, is a multi-organisation collaboration between Adur and Worthing Councils, Brighton and Hove City Council, Sussex Bay, Sussex Dolphin Project and University of Brighton designed to transform the marine environment within the area.

Southwick Reef incorporates three distinct habitat enhancement features: Vertipools, Reef Cubes, and habitat panels. Together, these elements are designed to increase ecological complexity and support marine biodiversity along the Harbour Arm.

Research will monitor biodiversity above and below the tide line using camera monitoring, eDNA sampling and traditional surveying techniques, while also exploring public perceptions and the social value of marine enhancements.

The reef creates new opportunities for people to engage with the coast through education, school visits, guided tours and future citizen science initiatives, encouraging a deeper connection with the marine environment.

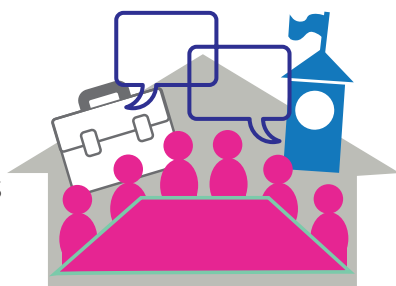


DEVOLUTION

THE REGION continues to transition towards the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority (SBSA), which was vested early in the spring, and held the first Board meeting on 15 April 2026. The English Devolution & Community Empowerment Bill received Royal Assent in late April 2026, which mandates Mayoral Strategic Authorities to develop local growth plans, aligning regional economic strategies with national policy.

DEVOLVING POWERS to Sussex and Brighton presents an opportunity to drive significant economic and social benefits for the region. The Board commissioned an independent study to review the economic opportunities for the region, fully considering the enhanced strategic powers, capability and perspective of the SBSA. The study identified seven priority areas;

1. Embed the Sussex Energy Mission as a cornerstone to delivery
2. Ensure the adequate provision of employment space to meet business needs
3. Raising productivity levels and supporting sectoral growth
4. Develop an investment prospectus for Sussex
5. Deliver a long-term affordable and sustainable housing strategy
6. Develop a vision for Newhaven and Shoreham Ports to lead economic diversification
7. Leverage major projects to drive local economic value



AN INTEGRATION PROPOSAL has been developed which brings together the above priority areas along with some of the Board's other key workstreams including the Creative Industries, Inward Investment and Food Systems. The proposal serves two purposes;

1. **A transition plan for the Board** – setting out how the Board should manage continuity of programmes, transfer assets and relationships, and provide a clear pathway to orderly dissolution.
2. **A proposal to SBSA** – explaining why specific Board initiatives should be adopted, scaled or utilised within the new Strategic Authority.

Looking ahead



The Board has nominated a Member to support senior engagement with SBSA leadership during the transition period and to act as a Board-level link between the Board and the emerging Strategic Authority. Officers and the nominated Board Member will continue to engage with SBSA, using the Integration Proposal as a blueprint for agreeing how priority workstreams, assets and relationships can transition into the new Strategic Authority, while supporting the Board's orderly dissolution.

INTEGRATION PROPOSAL

KEY OBJECTIVE OF THE INTEGRATION PROPOSAL: Ensure the Strategic Authority can inherit and build upon delivery-ready, evidence-led work, functioning regional collaboration and delivery platforms that can help the new Authority demonstrate early impact.

Don't lose valuable collaboration infrastructure during transition

One of the strongest assets developed through the Board is not just the projects themselves, but the trusted collaborative relationships across sectors and geographies. The Board has provided a rare neutral convening space across:

- Upper-tier authorities
- District & borough councils
- Universities
- Colleges
- NHS
- SDNPA
- Businesses
- Community organisations

Recognise existing GBEB work as strategic assets

The Board has already developed:

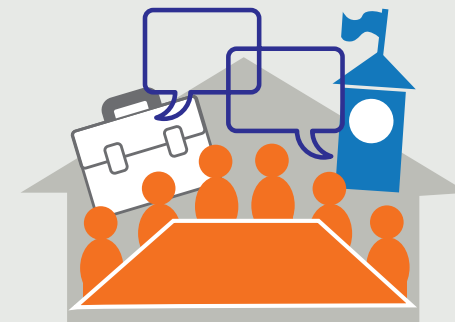
- Regional evidence bases
- Live delivery programmes
- Cross-sector partnerships
- Governance forums
- Investment pipeline activity
- Established relationships

These can help SBSA:

- Accelerate strategy development.
- Demonstrate early progress.
- Avoid duplication.
- Strengthen regional collaboration.

Provide “landing zones” inside SBSA

- Identify where initiatives logically sit within SBSA.
- Provide officer and political sponsorship.
- Maintain continuity during transition.
- Retain useful partnerships and networks.



GREATER BRIGHTON

