



Solent 2050

An Economic Strategy for the Solent

April 2022



**SOLENT
LOCAL
ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP**

Foreword

For centuries the Solent has flourished as the UK's coastal powerhouse, strategically located as a trading gateway of international significance. Today, as we look ahead to levelling-up and greening our economy in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and establishing new trading relationships with the rest of the world, these unique economic credentials and strengths remain more important than ever before.

Our region is exceptionally placed to be at the vanguard of environmental innovation as part of the pathway to Net Zero, leading the way in strengthening UK competitiveness on a global stage, in turn levelling up prosperity and opportunity so that all parts of our population and business base can contribute towards economic success.

Against this backdrop we are delighted to present a new ambitious and long-term strategy for the area: Solent 2050 represents a major opportunity to put our region on the path to realise its potential as a world-renowned economic cluster, laying the foundations to unleash our area's distinctive strengths to power the local economy, increase productivity and support our communities to prosper in a fast-changing world.

By uniting the region's illustrious history across the marine and maritime sector with our world-class centres of learning, research and innovation, we will become a leading hub for decarbonisation and environmental innovation, blending two of the Solent's distinctive characteristics by protecting our natural assets and communities from the effects of climate change given our unique geography, and securing the renaissance of our coastal towns within a changing economic landscape, ensuring growth can be inclusive for all.

We embark on this transformational journey to Solent 2050 as our economy emerges from an unprecedented period of disruption, with the outbreak of Covid-19 bringing with it challenges for our economy unlike any that have been seen before. But the Solent has a history of rising to such challenges and Solent 2050 presents a timely opportunity to inspire and galvanise the region's communities to navigate our way through the challenge, uniting and levelling up the region to chart a course to economic success as we Build Back Better.

In particular, our recent success in securing a Freeport represents the start of a new era for the Solent and a real catalyst to level up economic opportunity now and in the future as we begin our work with Government to create jobs and drive innovation locally.

We are extremely grateful to all of our many partners and stakeholders that have contributed to building this vision and strategy and we look forward to working with you over the coming months and years as we collectively turn this blueprint for the Solent in 2050 into an exciting reality.

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1. Executive Summary

Solent 2050 sets out a long-term strategy to unleash the Solent's distinctive strengths that can power the local economy to increase productivity and support our communities to prosper in a fast-changing world.

Our vision for the Solent in 2050 is: to be the globally leading maritime cluster and at the forefront of innovations to adapt to climate change, with towns and cities that are fantastic places to live, trade and with opportunities for all our communities to flourish.

The Solent is recognised as a global leader in the marine and maritime sector and plays an important international gateway role to spearhead UK trade and investment. With a population of around 1.3 million people and 41,600 enterprises, the region also boasts strengths in advanced manufacturing, aerospace, digital and computer science. We are a globally-facing region with immense knowledge assets within our academic, research and industrial base, talented people with a strong cultural identity, boasting a world-leading natural environment that perfectly positions the Solent as the place to do business and grow.

Strategically-located at the centre of the UK's south coast with sheltered estuaries and harbours, a double high water, and an outstanding environment, the Solent has a natural coastal geography that has drawn people, international commerce and innovation for millennia, laying down the strata that have helped shape the Solent as the UK's Coastal Powerhouse. This status continues to evolve and strengthen today in a world of increasing globalisation and technological disruption, fuelled by the unparalleled aggregation of marine and maritime assets that have clustered in the Solent, anchored by the flourishing port cities of Southampton and Portsmouth.

Its gateway function means that the Solent performs a critical role for the UK economy. For every £1 of additional investment spending the Solent region, it is estimated that UK GDP increases by between £2.35 and £3.15. This underlines the critical role that the region plays in supporting other parts of the country, such as the North and Midlands, which depend on the trade flows which pass through the Solent and the sectors and associated economic value we facilitate. In doing so, the Solent forms a key component of UK competitiveness – which has become increasingly relevant as we establish new trading relationships in a post-Brexit era – and we want to play a key role in levelling up prosperity and opportunity across the UK.

The outbreak of Covid-19 brought with it challenges for our economy unlike any that have been seen before. The pandemic and associated restrictions imposed on our everyday lives caused a major economic shock to the global economy, and businesses and communities across the Solent have been affected by this. All aspects of the region's economy have been impacted in some way, and in some respects, the future in the aftermath of the pandemic will look very different. As a region it is vital that we not only continue to support a return to business-as-usual through our immediate work to support businesses and to guide the economic recovery of the Solent area over the short term, but also take action now to ensure we can be more resilient to future disruptions and seize the opportunities for innovation and the benefits of doing things differently that have been brought about by the pandemic. We remain committed to delivering this new ambitious and long-term vision and strategy for the area to build a positive growth agenda for the Solent region in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic as we collectively Build Back Better.

This Strategy offers a bespoke approach for building on these strengths to achieve sustainable and transformative growth in the Solent, with a vision of building a more prosperous and productive regional economy. It will protect our natural assets and communities from the effects of climate change given our unique geographical constellation of islands and peninsulas, and the major coastal cities of Portsmouth and Southampton, and secure the renaissance of our coastal towns and their adaptation within a changing economic landscape.

The Strategy aims to unite the region's illustrious history across the marine and maritime sectors with the region's world-class universities and colleges. The Solent will build on its strengths to become a leading hub for decarbonisation and environmental innovation, and an international centre for the incubation and application of ground-breaking Net Zero technological solutions. This will help deliver an ambitious and innovative local economy, whilst driving a green recovery and protecting and enhancing our region's natural capital and ensuring opportunities are created for all our communities as we look to level up prosperity.

Underpinning this overall vision are **seven strategic priorities** around which our plan for future activities to transform the Solent is framed:

1. **A world-leading marine and maritime economy**, building on our existing assets and global competitive advantages to strengthen the UK's international trading relationships.
2. **Pioneering approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation**, linked to our coastal setting, and establishing real expertise which other regions – nationally and globally – can learn from.
3. **The UK's capital of coastal renaissance**, harnessing new technologies and approaches to revitalise and level up economic opportunity across all of our coastal communities.

4. **A thriving visitor, creative and cultural economy**, capitalising on the Solent's superb natural beauty and rich maritime history.
5. **Developing a world-class talent base**, helping people at all stages of their career build the skills they need to respond to new technology and drive an innovative knowledge-based economy.
6. **An outstanding business environment** that encourages innovation, fosters collaboration and enables businesses of all sizes and sectors to thrive.
7. **Health and wellbeing at the heart of economic success**, through a focus on building strong, healthy and resilient communities that can prosper in a fast-changing world.

Achieving all of these priorities will be challenging. However, as this Strategy shows, the Solent has superb assets and strengths at its disposal. Together these can be leveraged as a set of **enabling factors** to overcome key challenges to productivity growth and set a path to achieving our vision for the Solent in 2050.

As well as positively transforming the Solent as a place to live, work and invest, achieving this vision will directly support the UK's Build Back Better plan for growth and responds through a dual proposition – to 'level up' productivity performance within the Solent and relative to other parts of the South East, and to enable the UK to become more competitive on a global stage.

The Solent's role as a gateway to international trade and its strong visitor economy will be a vital part of how an outward-facing UK interacts with the rest of the world. In pioneering innovative approaches to vitally important challenges – including climate change adaptation and the ageing population – the Solent can offer invaluable knowledge and experience to UK society as a whole.

Overview of the Solent 2050 Strategy

Solent 2050:

To be the globally leading maritime cluster and at the forefront of innovations to adapt to climate change, with towns and cities that are fantastic places to live, trade and with opportunities for all our communities to flourish.

Our vision is underpinned by seven priorities:



We will leverage our enabling factors to deliver future actions:



We have developed a set of future actions to deliver each of the seven priorities as detailed below.

1. *A world-leading marine and maritime economy*

We believe that the Solent is well placed to address the economic recovery and productivity challenges set out in the UK's Build Back Better plan for growth and lead the way in developing the ambitions of the Maritime 2050 strategy. We want to leverage the potential of our marine and maritime economy to drive productivity improvements by facilitating high value R&D and innovation activity, open up access to new global markets to boost UK trade with the rest of the world, and attract investment in high tech business facilities, infrastructure and skills. Our future actions to support this include:

1. Develop **Maritime UK Solent** as a transformative private sector cluster partnership to bring together the Solent's marine and maritime strengths and assets

and champion the region as a globally significant maritime hub. Maritime UK Solent forms part of a network of regional maritime clusters that foster collaboration among business and academia and work with Government in the UK's maritime regions, providing leadership to ensure continued growth and prosperity of Solent's maritime sector.

2. **Establish the Solent Freeport** as a 'once-in-a-generation' opportunity to level-up local communities, turbocharge post-Brexit trade and invest in a Net Zero future, in turn helping to create more than 32,000 jobs and unlock £1.35 billion private sector investment into the Solent area.
3. Establish a **Marine Innovation Hub** within a Solent port alongside leading maritime Universities and industry partners to support research and development into pioneering marine and maritime innovations and maximise the economic impacts of clustering and agglomeration.
4. Work with partners to deliver the **Solent Institute of Technology** to support vocational professional pathways into the Solent's world leading marine and maritime industry and associated advanced manufacturing and technical pathways.
5. Linked to the Solent Freeport opportunity, explore potential to develop '**smart ports**' at the Ports of Southampton and Portsmouth in order to better connect the region with global trade routes.

2. Pioneering approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation

Through this Strategy we set out a plan to embed clean growth principles at the heart of our ambition for growth, recognising the role these can play in driving local productivity growth by enhancing economic resilience to climate change, improving energy efficiency and stimulating innovation across a range of clean growth activities and applications (such as transport and technology). We want to secure the shift to a Net Zero carbon economy by growing our capacity for sustainable energy production and transport and investing to help our region mitigate the impacts of climate change which impact upon our communities. Our future actions to support this include:

1. Deliver the **Ten Point Plan for Building Back Greener in the Solent** to showcase the region's green growth credentials, ambitions and local response to the Government's national Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution. This identifies key actions to adapt to climate change and accelerate the achievement of net zero, building on the recently designated Solent Freeport with its focus on clean growth, green skills and jobs.
2. Support the development of a **Decarbonisation Cluster and Nature Based Solutions Hub** in the Solent to bring key assets and ideas together to foster innovation and application of green technology. This would build on existing sector strengths and specialisms including Ultra-low Sulphur Investment at Fawley Refinery, WightLink Hybrid Ferry, and Cheetah Marine's development of the world's

first hydrogen powered catamaran, as well as unique opportunities that our coastal setting provides for carbon capture (such as sea kelp forests and mud flats).

3. Work with the Port of Southampton to implement a **‘Shore to Ship’ Power initiative**, a pathfinder project that will enable shore power capability for cruise ships allowing compatible vessels to switch off their auxiliary engines to deliver a zero emissions cruise facility at the Port of Southampton. This will be the first major commercial berth and cruise terminal fitted with this technology in the UK, supporting Europe’s number one cruise Port to adopt innovation in its transition to support cleaner vessels as part of our wider ambitions around the ‘greening of marine’.
4. Prepare a **Natural Capital Baseline Assessment** for the Solent, building on the specific New Forest Natural Capital Study published in 2021. This will develop a baseline natural capital audit in order to identify areas of importance for wildlife conservation and areas of wildlife risk.
5. Develop a **new LEP-wide fund** to invite applications to bring forward low carbon solutions for the Solent’s marine and maritime sector. This could be used to encourage investment in AI technology and its applications within coastal maintenance, such as the monitoring of marine and maritime environments.

3. The UK’s capital of coastal renaissance

Through this strategy, we want to secure a renaissance of and level up our existing coastal communities – such as Gosport, Havant, the Hamble peninsula, the Isle of Wight and the Waterside area of the New Forest – so that they are better positioned to confront the challenges of tomorrow and promote inclusive growth. In tandem, we want to pioneer the next generation of coastal-urban living by adopting innovative practices and smart technologies in terms of improved transport and digital connectivity, and coastal living. Our future actions to support this include:

1. Work with partners to develop a comprehensive **integrated transport strategy** that delivers city-to-city connectivity enhancements through adoption of technology, sustainability and modal integration. This will build on successful proposals to establish a Future Transport Zone and to secure additional Transforming Cities Funding within the Solent.
2. Accelerate and expand the roll out of **next generation digital technology** so that gigabit connectivity can be accessed across the Solent, helping to facilitate online learning initiatives in support of skills and training needs, the shift towards more flexible and agile working post Covid-19, and to respond to changing business needs.
3. Collaborate with local research institutions and policymakers to explore the **feasibility of autonomous travel solutions** in various locations throughout the Solent, including along the Hayling Billy Trail.
4. We will work to support local authorities and developers to **deliver planned new communities** which can provide high-quality, sustainable and connected new ways

of living, through intelligent design, piloting new technologies and smart infrastructure delivery. We will help to apply learning from innovative new community development to the benefit of existing communities in the Solent.

4. A thriving visitor, creative and cultural economy

With its unique combination of outstanding natural environments, coastal communities, associated marine and cultural heritage and an array of world class visitor attractions, there is a significant opportunity to develop a distinctive tourism offering for the Solent. We want to capitalise on this to develop a thriving visitor economy that also raises the profile of our superb creative businesses and cultural offer. Our future actions to support this include:

1. Develop a **Solent visitor economy strategy** that provides the basis for a unified marketing and visitor engagement strategy with the aim of creating a streamlined and enhanced visitor experience across the region. This will capitalise on the growing domestic tourism market and opportunities to develop a more connected and holistic visitor economy ecosystem that can thrive year-round.
2. Create a **destination management offer** for the Solent to ensure that we promote our unique maritime heritage assets, including Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, Titanic and Bucklers Hard, and more effectively ‘package up’ these assets to create a distinctive identity to the Solent’s tourism offer.
3. Work with partners to optimise the implementation of the **Gosport Heritage Action Zone**, to ensure that Gosport’s unique military history is sustained and supports the physical, economic and social regeneration of the Borough in the future.
4. Support the economic recovery, future growth and sustainability of the **cruiise industry** at our two ports, and fully integrate this sector as part of the wider Solent visitor economy strategy through the development of tailored offerings.
5. Support the **bid for Southampton to be City of Culture 2025**, that celebrates Southampton’s cultural, community, arts and heritage offer and links these to the wider Solent visitor economy, as well as underpinning opportunities for current and future generations.

5. Developing a world-class talent base

We want to invest in skills and talent development to enable the Solent to cultivate a dynamic and agile skills ecosystem that is able to support locally-significant industries and respond to innovation opportunities. Through Solent 2050 we want to roll out innovation in careers education for marine and maritime to more of our industry sectors and provide opportunities for people at all stages of their career to build the skills they need to take part in an innovative knowledge-based economy. Our future actions to support this include:

1. Work with partners to deliver the **Solent Institute of Technology (IoT)** to support vocational professional pathways into the Solent’s maritime industry as well as associated advanced manufacturing, digital and technical pathways. This will

- spearhead the delivery of higher technical education in STEM subjects to underpin productivity growth within the Solent's world leading marine and maritime economy.
2. Deliver **world class employer-led training facilities** for our key growth sectors as part of the Solent Freeport and its flagship **Green Growth Institute**. This would meet the government's objective for Freeports to create high-skilled jobs in ports and the areas around them.
 3. Support **Solent-wide skills development initiatives that place local employers at the centre of talent proposals** to ensure the local skills system delivers the skills our employers need.
 4. Through our local networks and partnerships, deliver **targeted support to those sectors experiencing chronic skills shortages** (such as logistics, health care, hospitality) in order to boost the supply of suitably qualified local labour.
 5. Work with the Solent Skills Advisory Panel to implement our **Skills Strategy and Action Plan** to support local educational establishments in developing skills programmes that fit the changing nature of key strategic opportunities including the marine and maritime sector.
 6. Secure flexibilities in the **Apprenticeship levy** to support the development of skills and talent in priority sectors and to support re-training, particularly within the fields of autonomy and digital.
 7. Work in partnership with the Careers and Enterprise Company to deliver the **Enterprise Adviser Network** that actively matches Solent business leaders with local schools and colleges to provide access to meaningful employer encounters and experiences.

6. An outstanding business environment

The Solent's diverse economic foundation supports a varied business base and one with strong potential for growth. We want to facilitate a world-class business environment that enables businesses of all sizes and sectors to thrive and seize opportunities associated with new ways of working in a post Covid-19 world. This will be underpinned by a palpable culture of creativity and innovation, complemented by an exceptional business support offer that inspires our businesses to realise their growth ambitions right here in the Solent. Our response through Solent 2050 focuses on business resilience and continuity following the Covid-19 pandemic in the short-term, followed by a longer-term emphasis on productivity growth as the economy recovers. Our future actions to support this include:

1. **Expand the package of business support and funding opportunities available for Solent businesses** via the Solent Growth Hub and secure additional national funding for businesses as new government interventions emerge.
2. Establish a **Trade and Investment Hub** for businesses seeking to develop new business relationships on an international basis, building on the opportunities presented by Solent Freeport.

3. Work with industry partners to develop **sector-specific interventions** tailored to the short term needs and priorities of our strategic clusters including marine and maritime, visitor economy and advanced manufacturing, supported by development of peer-to-peer business networks to facilitate cross sector working and diversification.
4. Through the Solent Growth Hub, deliver a locally responsive **Business Resilience Programme** including targeted support to enable firms to adapt to new technologies (such as enhancing digital and e-commerce capabilities), diversify or access new markets (including exporting opportunities) and support business start-ups amongst residents re-entering the labour market as a result of Covid-19.
5. Facilitate a **world-class, globally competitive trading environment** for businesses as part of the Solent Freeport and support the landing of new businesses and new investment attracted to our Freeport.
6. Establish a Solent-wide Taskforce to explore issues of **diversity in the workplace** and how our region's business base can lead the way in promoting equal labour market opportunities for all of our communities.
7. Ensure our businesses have access to the talent and skills they need to grow through delivering a world-class **Solent Institute of Technology**.
8. Establish a **Solent supply chain network** to facilitate resilient, inclusive local supply chains and a collaborative approach to procuring local products and services.
9. Work with local partners to elevate the contribution that the Solent's social enterprises can make to supporting economic recovery and growth, by establishing a **Social Enterprise Economy working group** and exploring opportunities to develop a dedicated Social Enterprise Hub in the Solent.
10. Explore opportunities for commercialising new ideas through the LEP funded **Zero to One programme**, run by the University of Southampton's Web Science Institute.

These will be supported and complemented by a range of other measures to enhance the Solent's business environment as set out in the other strategic priorities.

7. Health and wellbeing at the heart of economic success

Our experience of navigating the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis has significantly elevated the health and wellbeing agenda, which has become increasingly recognised as a critical underpinning ingredient of economic resilience and performance. Going forward, and as we look to increase local productivity and support our communities to prosper in a fast-changing world, we want health and wellbeing in its broadest sense to form a key part of Solent 2050's DNA. Through this strategy we want to embed healthier ways of living and working as we look to level up opportunity across all parts of the Solent and ensure that our health and wellbeing assets and business base more broadly are equipped to seize growth and innovation opportunities as society adapts to a 'new normal'. Our future actions to support this include:

1. Work with local partners to **monitor the evolving impacts of new ways of working post Covid-19 upon the region's business and workforce base** and co-ordinate targeted intervention to raise awareness and take-up of health and wellbeing support services, including opportunities to better connect our remote workforce.
2. Via the Solent Growth Hub, raise awareness of the many existing resources available to **promote positive mental health amongst businesses and employees** across the Solent, including the 'mental health toolkit for employers' developed by Public health England to help employers take positive actions to build a culture that champions good mental health.
3. Explore the potential to introduce a **specific health and wellbeing dimension into the LEP's Assurance Framework** and associated criteria for funding.
4. Working with the Solent Skills Advisory Panel, **explore the skills development opportunities associated with a more explicit focus on health and wellbeing**, engaging with education and training providers across the Solent to examine particular skills innovation opportunities as society adapts to a 'new normal'.
5. Via the Solent's existing business, skills and careers networks, establish a **health and wellbeing ambassadors programme** to champion the importance of good physical and mental health and wellbeing within all aspects of our economy, and provide our ambassadors with the tools, resources and support they need to raise awareness, promote and share good practice.

A call to action

This Solent 2050 Economic Strategy aims to address the productivity underperformance of the Solent economy by raising our performance to above the UK average and closing the productivity gap with the wider South East.

Our substantial economic influence at a national level means investing in the Solent will strengthen the productivity and competitiveness of the UK economy, directly support other parts of the country which depend on the trade flows which pass through the Solent and the sectors we facilitate, and be critical in meeting the Government's ambition for levelling-up prosperity and opportunity across the UK. We want to re-invent the Solent economy as future-ready, highly skilled, and globally-facing, with the latent potential of our coastal communities fuelling this ambition.

The future economic dividend of realising the Solent 2050 Strategy could be substantial, for both the Solent and the UK more widely. Through our strategy we identify a broad range of interventions that offer the potential to deliver a significant uplift across the following productivity-related measures and outcomes:



Transforming productivity – level up Solent workforce productivity to match the UK average by 2025 and become a regional leader by 2030. This could support an uplift in economic output (measured in terms of GVA) worth at least £244m a year by 2025, and £2.8bn a year by 2030.



Driving job creation – supporting our strategic sectors and wider business base to create employment opportunities to power the Solent's coastal renaissance, delivering 20,000 jobs by 2025 and 50,000 jobs by 2030.



Boosting earning potential – close the existing 'wages gap' with the rest of the South East region to ensure that our residents benefit from increased prosperity and productivity. This could increase the earnings capacity of our workforce by over £20m a year by 2030.



Levelling up our communities – reducing socio-economic deprivation across the Solent by reducing the proportion of our communities falling within the 20% most deprived nationally from 16% to 14% by 2025 and less than 10% by 2030.



Carbon reduction – transition the Solent to a Net Zero carbon economy ahead of 2050, and Southampton by 2030, by enhancing economic resilience to climate change, improving energy efficiency and stimulating innovation across a range of clean growth activities and applications. This will be guided by the key priorities set out in the 10 Point Plan for Building Back Greener in the Solent.



Support the development of sustainable new communities that are future ready – delivering new homes, employment opportunities and driving coastal renaissance across the Solent.



Digital revolution – roll out 5G and gigabit fibre across all parts of the Solent by 2030 to achieve world class digital connectivity for all communities.

In this context, Solent 2050 is designed to be an ambitious, high-level strategy that seeks to remain relevant in a changing world. We have identified a series of tangible short to medium term actions and interventions to help address the challenges facing the Solent – and the UK more widely. It provides a blueprint for how we can build a stronger platform to support the region’s long-term productivity and competitiveness to 2050.

But the Strategy is also a wider call to action, setting out a vision for our region that we hope enthuses our residents, local businesses, academic institutions and other organisations to play their part.

2. Context

Successful countries require places to lead the way in national and global challenges such as the UK's productivity gap and climate change. The Solent is well placed to respond by exploiting new technologies, levelling up productivity and being a leader in climate change adaptation.

This document sets out the vision of the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and its partners for the Solent region in 2050; what we want the region to look like, what it can offer its resident and business base, and the contribution it can make to boosting prosperity across the UK as a whole. The vision is deliberately bold reflecting the Solent's unrivalled economic strengths, assets and USPs of both national significance and international renown.

It complements the Government's Net Zero Strategy¹ and Build Back Better plan for growth², in particular its three core pillars of infrastructure, skills and innovation to support levelling up, the transition to Net Zero and supporting the vision for a Global Britain. It is also a wider call to action, setting out a vision for our region that we hope enthuses our residents, local businesses, academic institutions and other organisations to play their part.

In building this vision and strategy we have consulted extensively with a wide range of local stakeholders and members of the public. A full list of consultees is included at Appendix A, while Section 5 includes a mapping of our stakeholder relationships.

2.1 A Changing Economic Context

The UK economy has undergone significant change over the past thirty years. This has been characterised by strong growth within financial and business services generating high value jobs particularly in London and the wider South East of England. Meanwhile de-industrialisation has impacted many areas of the UK as traditionally dominant sectors have declined and in some cases changed beyond recognition, with new sectors and technologies being created.

The Solent has felt the effects of these macro changes, with an industrial structure that is very different from the greater South East, with a larger manufacturing sector and fewer business services. But it has also been highly successful in building a world-leading marine and maritime research and business cluster that continues to deliver significant economic prosperity benefits for the area and provides unique opportunities to enhance the competitiveness of UK plc in a post-Brexit era.

¹ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (October 2021) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

² HM Treasury, Build Back Better: our plan for growth (March 2021) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth>

Looking ahead to the next thirty years, the pace of economic change is expected to continue. Technological advancements are rapidly transforming society, with developments in artificial intelligence and other technologies promising to revolutionise the way we live and work, as well as the services the economy can offer. An ageing population means we need to rethink the relationship between the labour force and the economy, how workers gain skills throughout their working lives and how vital services such as healthcare are most effectively provided. Most pertinent of all, the climate change emergency poses ever increasing risks to society and to economic prosperity, but also huge opportunities to those able to pioneer and innovate in pursuit of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Few places are more alive to this than the Solent, but our natural assets and innovative research base leave us well placed to harness and respond to these opportunities in a fast-changing world. Our Solent 2050 vision positions the area at the forefront of these global trends, whilst recognising that there is still work to do to address uneven economic performance and open up access to growth opportunities for all.

Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic brought with it challenges for our economy unlike any that have been seen before. As the economy returns to growth, we know that Solent's gateway economy has felt the impact of the closure of global economies more than most. Economic resilience has, and continues to be, tested with all sectors facing cash flow challenges, supply chain and workforce disruption, and changes to domestic and export markets. As we emerge from this very challenging context we must consider our short-term priorities through this strategy and accompanying Economic Recovery Plan to focus our resources on securing the fundamental strengths and assets of the Solent that will ensure our economy is able to recover and prosper in the years ahead.

Longer Term Implications of Covid-19

As we reflect on the short to medium term impacts of Covid-19 on our economy, it becomes increasingly apparent that the pandemic will have lasting effects on our day-to-day lives and the way in which people, businesses and society in general will operate in the years to come. Although it is still too early to predict the full extent of this, we consider ‘life after Covid’ will instigate some longer term ‘paradigm’ shifts and opportunities for local economic development here in the Solent, and we want to be ready to capture and facilitate these opportunities as we chart a course to economic recovery and growth. Some of these are summarised below and are reflected within the strategic priorities presented in Solent 2050.



2.2 Policy Context

With its focus on levelling up productivity performance across the Solent, supporting our transition to Net Zero, and enabling the UK to become more competitive on a global stage, our vision for the Solent in 2050 directly supports the Government’s Build Back Better plan for growth, levelling up agenda and Net Zero Strategy. The Solent’s coastal location, coupled with favourable infrastructure and investment in people and technology, means that it is well-placed to address the key productivity challenges relevant to the UK as a whole.

Harnessing the Solent’s expertise in research and development can help address the productivity challenge, whilst the region’s role as a global gateway will be vital as the UK builds its international trading relationships. With its unique combination of natural capital, coastal communities and research expertise, the Solent is primed to play a critical role in

developing responses to climate change and the shift to cleaner growth as part of the wider net zero agenda.

Solent 2050 has been developed against the backdrop of a range of evolving policy initiatives which provide a timely opportunity to crystallise the Solent’s role in delivering on wider strategic objectives. Most recently, this includes the Levelling Up White Paper which identifies twelve overarching ‘missions’ to anchor Government’s objective to spread opportunity more equally across the UK. Our Solent 2050 strategic priorities are strongly positioned to respond to these missions, as illustrated further in Appendix B.

The focus on pioneering approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation, through the Solent’s role as a centre for climate change mitigation best practice and clean growth research, directly responds to the UK Government’s commitment to Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as set out in the Net Zero Strategy. Our own Strategy sets out a series of tangible short to medium term actions to showcase the important role that the Solent can play in this regard. It also illustrates how we can actively support a number of national ‘sector deals’ to boost productivity, employment, innovation and skills within areas such as tourism and offshore wind where the Solent already has particular strengths, as well as a range of other local policies and initiatives, as summarised below.



3. The Solent in 2022

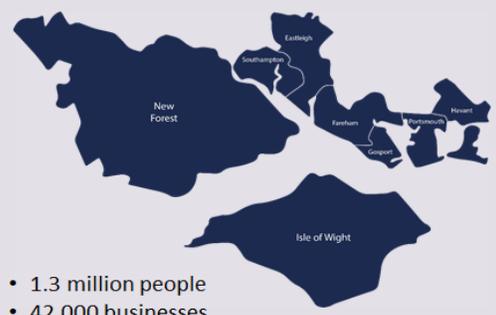
3.1 Overview of the Solent Economy

Strategically-located at the centre of the UK’s south coast, with sheltered estuaries and harbours, a double high water and an outstanding environment, the Solent has a natural coastal geography that has drawn people, international commerce and innovation for millennia. It is these qualities that have helped shape the Solent as the UK’s coastal powerhouse today.

The Solent LEP area (as shown in the map below) is comprised of the two urban hubs of Portsmouth and Southampton, the Isle of Wight, the New Forest National Park and the Solent waterway. It is very much this coastal interface and the co-existence of intensely urbanised and industrial land-use alongside world-class natural landscape (including the New Forest National Park and the recently UNESCO designated Isle of Wight Biosphere), that shape so much of the character of the Solent economy, its heritage and its people, and sets the Solent apart from other areas.

With a population of around 1.3 million people and 41,600 enterprises, it forms an internationally-recognised economic hub and cluster. Unlike many other LEP areas across the country which tend to have a single key centre to which most trips gravitate, the Solent has two large cities – Portsmouth and Southampton – and a constellation of large towns. This results in a sizeable ‘core’ urban area within the Solent which tends to accommodate the majority of business activity and face the greatest socio-economic challenges. Suburban and rural locations tend to be more affluent, but lack the critical mass of economic activity and employment opportunities associated with the coastal corridor.

Our Economic Credentials



- 1.3 million people
- 42,000 businesses
- Nearly 350 miles of coastline
- 2 coastal cities of Portsmouth and Southampton
- Three islands and three peninsulas
- Three world class Universities and global research assets
- Strategic sectoral strengths in maritime, visitor economy, logistics, advanced manufacturing, disruptive technologies and defence

£31 billion
GVA generated for the UK economy each year

£3.15
For every £1 of additional investment in the Solent, UK GDP increases by between £2.35 and £3.15

£77.5 billion
Value of imports and exports that flow through the Solent each year

3x
Solent’s manufacturing business base has grown at 3 times the national average

£5.8 billion
Economic value of the Solent’s maritime sector, representing 19% of the LEP area’s economy

3.2 Assets and Strengths

The Solent contributed £31 billion in GVA³ to the UK Economy in 2018, and economic output has been growing, averaging 1% growth each year between 2009 and 2017. It is home to an enviable collection of economic assets that play an important strategic role for the national economy.

For example, the Solent is the first point of call on the key Shanghai-to-Rotterdam Sea Super Highway, a gateway for the movement of over £78 billion of goods each year. Meanwhile, the UNESCO world heritage site on the Isle of Wight represents just one of a number of unique assets that bolster a strong visitor economy, and the presence of world-class universities within the Solent enable innovation to be translated into local commercial success. A particular strength is the Solent's diverse economic foundation, supporting a varied business base and accommodating a number of sectors with strong potential for growth.

The Solent has evolved into an export-intensive region, with an economically-active workforce and a growing innovation sector. The Solent is less reliant on EU markets than the remainder of the South East – selling only 35% of its exports to EU countries compared to 50% in the South East. This puts the Solent in a strong position to help directly expand the UK's trade with new markets following Brexit.

These unique strengths mean the Solent is primed and ready to help tackle the nationwide economic recovery and productivity challenge set out in the Government's Build Back Better plan for growth; play an increasingly influential role in establishing new trading relationships in a post-Brexit era both in terms of direct export potential and facilitating trade flows through our ports for other parts of the country; and supporting the Government's wider ambition for levelling-up prosperity and opportunity across the UK.

Reflecting this, economic activity in the Solent has large 'multiplier' effects, both for the local economy and the national economy. For every £1 of additional investment spending the Solent region⁴, it is estimated that UK GDP increases by between £2.35 and £3.15. These multiplier effects are substantially larger than the average for the UK as a whole – by a factor of between 1.4 and 1.9. This underlines the critical role that the region plays in supporting other parts of the country, such as the North and Midlands, which depend on the trade flows which pass through the Solent and the sectors we facilitate.



Marine and Maritime

The Solent's coastal location with sheltered havens and double tides sets it apart from other areas and gives the Solent a unique economic identity. This couples with a long-standing clustering of businesses and educational strengths to place the Solent at the heart of the UK's marine and maritime sector.

³ Gross Value Added, a measure of economic activity similar to Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

⁴ Based on a Computable General Equilibrium model – see [Evidence Base](#) for detail.

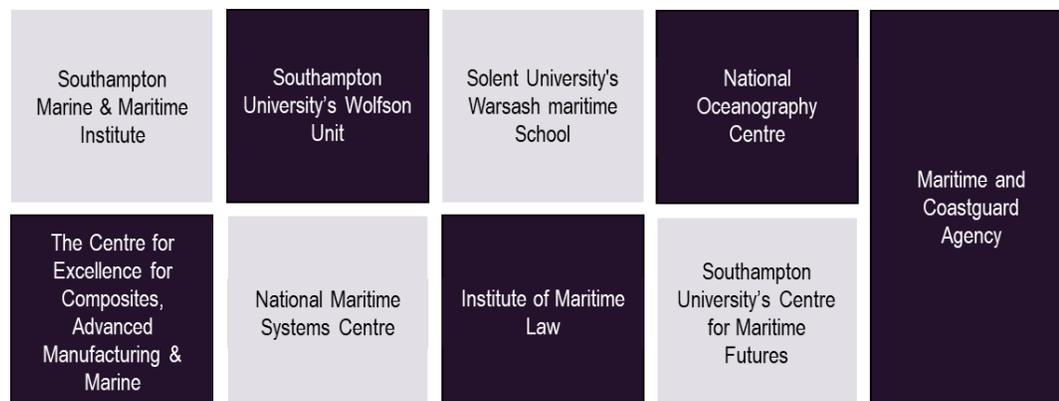
Agglomeration effects have supported a world-renowned business cluster in the region. The economic footprint of the maritime sector is substantial, contributing £5.8 billion of GVA each year, equivalent to 19% of the Solent LEP economy.

The sector not only provides the industry and innovation base necessary to be at the leading edge of new growth opportunities, but also acts as a nationally recognised test-bed for a range of enabling and emerging technologies. For instance, the Solent region is pioneering research in marine and maritime autonomy and robotics, with cutting-edge projects including the application of emerging autonomous vehicle technologies, the development of hydrogen-powered water transport, and pioneering state-of-the-art shore-to-ship power solutions.

Our recent success in securing a Freeport in the Solent provides an important platform and ‘once-in-a-generation’ opportunity to further strengthen the area’s marine and maritime credentials by creating jobs, driving innovation and building sustainable, long-term maritime communities now and in the future.

The Solent boasts world-leading marine and maritime research establishments. For example, the National Oceanography Centre (NOC) in Southampton undertakes research in large scale oceanography and ocean measurement technology, working with Government and business to translate the latest research and technology into practical advice and applications. A number of important marine and maritime establishments based in the Solent are highlighted below.

The Solent’s leading marine and maritime establishments



Ground-breaking Research

The Solent is home to a thriving research community through its universities and research institutions which act as places of transformation. As well as representing major employers in their own right, they support the generation of new businesses, support existing businesses to thrive and bring significant revenues to the local area.

As noted above, the marine and maritime cluster is supported by numerous related educational establishments, which have strong expertise in the area. These institutions are at the forefront of innovation and provide a vital anchor for knowledge intensive activity and employment in the region.

Beyond marine and maritime specific expertise, the Solent's universities as a whole generate an estimated £4.2 billion GVA to the UK, whilst supporting around 52,300 jobs.

The community drives workforce productivity and is a key source of innovation, talent and emerging business in the area. There are three world-class universities, which not only feed highly-skilled individuals into local businesses, but are also the source of multiple research spin-outs. For example, the University of Southampton has spun out 27 companies since 2000, four of which have floated on London's Alternative Investment Market with a combined market value of £180 million.

The Solent punches above its weight in terms of innovation activity, with the region ranking 10th out of all LEPs for the percentage of its workforce in R&D related professions. Furthermore, investment in R&D is comparatively high; in 2017 Solent businesses spent £713m, meaning the region is close to meeting the Government's commitment to increase UK investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP. This reflects the strong appetite from the private sector to innovate and offers significant potential for the region to act as a test bed for new technologies in automation, water taxis and wider maritime innovation.

Significant investments in research facilities include the Fareham Innovation Centre and the University of Portsmouth's Future Technology Centre. Such institutions are leading research into cutting edge technologies such as robotics, autonomy research (including the application of emerging autonomous vehicles), and energy (including the development of hydrogen-powered water transport and shore-to-ship power solutions).



Rich Heritage and Culture

The Solent's marine, maritime and defence heritage is a defining part of the region's visitor economy, reinforced by assets such as the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, Spinnaker Tower and the SS Shieldhall. Additional historic locations offer redevelopment opportunities, including Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Defence sites in and around Portsmouth Harbour.

The region also hosts major events throughout the course of the year, such as the Southampton International Boat Show, the Isle of Wight Festival, and Cowes Week, one of the longest-running and most respected regattas in the world.

The Solent's wealth of natural capital, when combined with its legacy assets, cruise terminals, and easy transport links to London, has made the region a popular destination for visitors. Between 2006 and 2015, the Solent share of international passengers at UK ports saw a marked increase, from 11% to 15%.



Green Credentials

The Solent has an exceptionally strong natural capital offering, equipped with a coastal location and a world-class environment. Its natural advantages stem from the Solent's unique geography comprising three islands and two peninsulas, coupled with renowned countryside and coastline.

The Isle of Wight has recently been designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, due to it being one of the best areas in the world for managed landscapes. The New Forest National Park is also situated in the Solent region, with an unspoilt coastline running alongside 220 square miles of ancient woodland and open forest.

The region leverages its natural assets and capital without negatively impacting existing habitats and ecological diversity. For example, the Isle of Wight generates renewable energy and often produces more electricity than it consumes. Solent LEP also has an alliance with the Green Halo Partnership, which brings together a number of players to support a thriving, economically successful community whilst protecting the precious local environment.

Furthermore, the Solent has green targets that are more ambitious than the UK as a whole. For example, Southampton is targeting carbon neutrality by 2030, 20 years ahead of the national commitment, while Portsmouth International Port has the ambition to become the first zero emission port under the Clean Maritime 2050 Plan.



International Gateway

The Solent’s geographical location makes it one of the UK’s most important gateways to European and global markets, with direct highway and rail links to London and the strategic national corridor, and international connections through an airport and two ports, which lie just 20 nautical miles from the world’s busiest shipping route from Shanghai to Rotterdam. The region is a gateway for both the export and import of goods. Whilst the Solent itself exports £5.6 billion of goods each year, the value of goods that are moved through the ports of Southampton and Portsmouth amount to over £77.5 billion per annum, with exports accounting for £42.8 billion of this trade. 85% of these are moved through Southampton to the UK’s non-EU trading partners.

Three International Gateways

Port of Southampton, Portsmouth International Port and Southampton Airport

£77.5bn

worth of goods for import and export pass through Solent ports



1.5 million

teu shipping containers are handled by the Port of Southampton each year

8.9 million

ferry passengers passed through Portsmouth International Port in 2018



503

loaded ships were received by Portsmouth International Port in 2018, 230 for imports and 272 for exports

820,000

ro-ro vehicles are handled by the Port of Southampton each year



2 million

cruise passengers move through the Solent per year

1.96 million

plane passengers pass through Southampton Airport each year



42,750

air transport movements from Southampton Airport annually, to around 40 destinations

20%

of UK refinery capacity is supplied by ExxonMobil’s Fawley refinery

2,000

ship movements are handled by Fawley refinery every year

The Solent region has above average levels of connectivity and its International Gateways play a crucial economic role in providing global connectivity to markets across the Solent and wider regional and UK economies. This makes it uniquely placed to strengthen the UK's trading relationship with the rest of the world.

Portsmouth International Port is the UK's best-connected port with the greatest number of routes to Europe. The port sees 8.9 million ferry passengers and 250,000 freight movements a year, contributing to an annual turnover of over £33 million. Furthermore, the Port of Southampton is the UK's number one vehicle handling port and home to the nation's second largest container terminal, which handles 14 million tonnes of cargo or 1.5m twenty-foot equivalent shipping containers, per year. As the number one cruise port in Europe, the port welcomes 1.7 million cruise passengers annually, and supports 15,000 jobs.



Coastal Capital

The Solent's status as Coastal Powerhouse of the UK continues to evolve and strengthen today in a world of increasing globalisation and technological disruption, fuelled by the unparalleled aggregation of marine and maritime assets that have clustered in the Solent, anchored by the flourishing port cities of Southampton and Portsmouth.

The area boasts a range of coastal assets, many of which have UK-wide and international reach. For example, the ExxonMobil Refinery at Fawley is the largest in the UK and provides 20% of UK refinery capacity.

Despite some challenges from de-industrialisation, changes in patterns of tourism, and globalisation, the smaller coastal communities have proved resilient to economic change and are at the helm of a coastal renaissance. For example, some new coastal settlements have emerged, such as Centenary Quay in Southampton, with others continuing to emerge, such as the proposed Intelligent Merchant City on the site of the former Fawley Power Station.

3.3 Challenges

Despite its many unique attributes and strengths, the Solent also faces a number of challenges to continued economic prosperity and productivity growth.

An overarching issue is workforce productivity which is 1.5% lower in the Solent than the average for Great Britain as a whole, and nearly 7% behind the average for the South East. This is partly explained by the area's industrial structure, with lower proportions of employment within high productivity sectors such as finance, ICT and professional services and higher proportions of employment in lower productivity sectors such as public services and hospitality. In this sense, the Solent is not a typical South East economy; it has a strong manufacturing base which is relatively productive, but in many private service sectors productivity is noticeably lower than the rest of the region. A range of other structural issues such as resident skills, an ageing population and pockets of acute socio-economic deprivation also continue to act as a drag on the Solent's productivity.

Another key existing challenge is the threat of climate change, with sea levels rising and coastal erosion. However, this also presents an opportunity for the region to become an industry leader, protecting the asset-rich Solent coastline by incorporating a range of innovative solutions tailored to counter the mounting environmental pressures. Meanwhile, the ageing demographic and low rates of youth retention provide significant scope to boost local economic growth. The Solent can capitalise on the knowledge and expertise of the older generation to boost economic growth through upskilling.

Some of these challenges – such as an ageing population – are common to many parts of the UK, whilst others – such as the risk of coastal flooding – are particularly relevant to the Solent. Our strategy will navigate these challenges and turn them into opportunities that can help achieve our vision for Solent 2050.



Ageing Population

The Solent's population is ageing rapidly, with a higher proportion of older people (20.4%) compared with the rest of the UK (18.2%). Projections from the ONS show that by 2041 there will be a 45% increase in the number of people in the Solent aged 65 or over. Whilst demographic change is a pressing issue across the UK, the Solent's strong concentration of older residents, particularly in rural areas such as the Isle of Wight and the New Forest (which attract a disproportionate number of retirees due to being attractive places to live) will inevitably impact on the supply of labour available to drive forward productivity improvements in future.

Health and disability – including mental health – and the effects these factors can have on productivity, are likely to become increasingly important issues in the workplace and society more broadly over the next 30 years. An ageing population will increase the pressure on many public services and will require innovative solutions.

Whilst an ageing society brings challenges to the region, it presents great opportunities for the Solent to become a prime location to test innovative solutions, in fields such as healthcare.



Talent Retention

One of the Solent's key economic strengths is its ground-breaking research and the presence of three excellent universities that attract students and academics from around the globe. However, retaining highly skilled workers proves to be challenging, with many students not choosing to remain in the region after graduation. In tandem with this, many skilled workers and small business owners in the Solent's specialised industrial sectors are approaching retirement age. If the Solent can enhance the opportunities offered to younger people, encouraging them to stay in the area, whilst improving the transfer of skills through the labour force, there will be better retention of both knowledge capital and people of working age.

The rural areas of the Solent face particularly acute talent retention challenges. For example, on the Isle of Wight, a significant proportion of employment is from micro-businesses and self-employment, which often do not have the capacity to generate further employment opportunities for those entering the labour force for the first time.



Climate Change Challenges

The Solent's unique coastal geography is a great strength but also means that the Solent is exposed to the impacts associated with climate change in more acute ways than other parts of the UK.

Coastal erosion and flooding are real risks that the Solent faces, particularly when paired with the global challenge of climate change and rising sea levels. By the turn of the century, it is expected that sea levels could rise by 1m, with an extra tidal surge inundation of up to 3m.

As sea levels rise, greater investment in flood defences will be required to protect not only Southampton and Portsmouth as key hubs of economic activity, but also smaller population centres. This is a serious challenge, but also presents an opportunity for the Solent to become a world leader in the area of climate change mitigation.

Beyond coastal erosion and flooding, the urbanised areas of the Solent must tackle air quality through a process of decarbonisation. Southampton City Council provides an example of how air quality issues can be tackled by signing up to a Green City Charter in 2019 with a range of partners all focusing towards the same goal of improving air quality within the city.

Furthermore, building on one of the Solent's Green Credentials, the region must also target reducing the marine and maritime industry carbon footprint. The development of smart ports will increase efficiency of docking and thus reduce the carbon impact. Further investment in non-combustion engines in the marine sector will also significantly reduce the industry's carbon footprint.



Physical Connectivity

The Solent's strategic position, linking the capital to the sea, means it is well-connected physically. However, the Solent's coastal geography is overlaid with intense urbanisation, strategic trade and defence functions that provide a barrier to effective connectivity. The presence of two large cities, the role of the three International Gateways in connecting the UK with global markets, and the challenges imposed by the Solent's unique geography come together to result in complex and exceptional demands on the area's transport networks.

Key challenges associated with the Solent's natural geography result in severance, additional travel costs and time, and the channelling of over 3.2 million trips each day through a small number of transport 'pinch points'.

Transport connectivity across the Solent is a significant challenge; a summary of the key intra-Solent transport constraints is provided below.

- The road network suffers from severe congestion and unreliability; the car mode share for commute trips is 74%, considerably higher than other urban and dual-city economies.
- The performance of Solent's motorways and principal road network is weak. Average vehicle speeds are 32% lower than the national average with particularly acute congestion on the M27.
- This is a symptom of the poor local service that rail offers for many commuting journeys, whereby:
 - Large parts of the network are served by only an hourly service.
 - There is no direct rail connection between Southampton airport and Portsmouth and eastwards along the South Coast.
 - Business regard the journey time between the two main cities as slow: the best journey time (1 tph) is 45 minutes, the other two hourly services take 60 minutes (one requiring a change) for a 20-mile journey.
 - Key communities within the Solent have no rail access; for instance Gosport is one of the largest towns in the UK not to be served by rail.
 - Services within the area are optimised around longer distance links with London, Birmingham, Brighton and Bristol. This results in infrequent services between many local stations.
- There are relatively poor journey times from the Solent to London due to track congestion, capacity constraints at Waterloo and Clapham Junction and comparatively slow line speeds.
- Utilisation of the rail infrastructure is very high, meaning that there is no capacity for additional services.

The overriding constraint exists between Portsmouth and Southampton, due in part to the geography and demography of the area, coupled with a dysfunctional rail network. This is particularly significant as Portsmouth and Southampton represent the economic engines of the Solent economy. Solent's cities operate as two labour markets; the average commuting distance is 9.6 miles and just 8% travel to work by public transport. We know that employers cannot attract the staff they need even though the skills exist. These city to city connectivity challenges also result in a dysfunctional local housing market and disconnected coastal communities. The inability of the rail network to provide for the connectivity the Solent needs results in a further exacerbation of the issue, with new housing and employment locked-in to car-based transport and an inability to create new sustainable coastal communities.

Other connectivity challenges include linkages between the Isle of Wight and the mainland, with issues including the cost of fares and frequency of services outside of peak periods.



Digital Connectivity

Digital connectivity will be a vital enabler for Industry 4.0 and, with its base in advanced manufacturing, this is especially relevant for the Solent. Having the infrastructure in place to provide digital connectivity, including 5G networks, is a big priority if Solent businesses are to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown measures have accelerated longer term trends towards remote and flexible working into an immediate step change for many sectors of the economy. Digital technology and online platforms have allowed many businesses to continue to operate during the disruption, and strong connectivity will be increasingly important as this technology becomes more permanently embedded within our working practices.



Home ownership and affordability

The Solent's geography, its attractiveness as a place to live in retirement, and its proximity to London mean that housing affordability is a major issue, particularly for younger people. The ratio of house prices to median incomes, a measure of housing affordability, is around 9% higher than the average for England. Furthermore, since the turn of the millennium, house prices in the South East have also increased 138%, adjusted for inflation – far more than UK pay which has only increased by 51%, adjusted for inflation.

Within the Solent, housing affordability is a particular challenge in the New Forest, Eastleigh, Fareham and Havant, where relative housing affordability is lower than the national average. Meanwhile, Portsmouth, Southampton and Gosport have slightly better levels of housing affordability compared with the national average. As ratios are based on average wages, this inevitably means that key segments of the Solent's resident base and workforce will struggle to accommodate their housing needs.

Suitable housing for young people is also harder to find in more rural areas. While there is generally an adequate supply of family housing, there is a noticeable shortage of one or two bedroom properties, and a shortage of social housing. The limited supply of these houses paired with the high wage-to-house price ratio has resulted in an expensive private rental sector and barriers to young professionals looking to buy their first property, potentially deterring them from settling in the region.

The availability of good quality, affordable housing – as part of an area's wider quality of life offer – can play an important role in attracting and retaining workers, so this remains an important challenge for the Solent to address during the coming years.



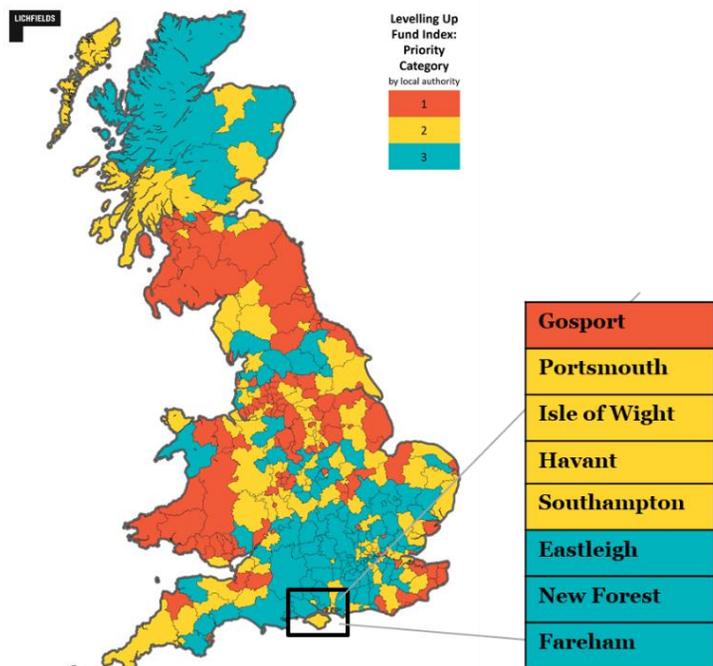
Deprivation

Whilst the socio-economic profile of the Solent varies across its different communities, there are some pockets of persistent and acute deprivation which present key challenges for local prosperity, economic participation and productivity.

Portsmouth and Southampton are ranked as the most deprived Solent authorities overall, reflecting a broader macro trend of urban areas accommodating the highest concentrations of deprivation and highlights those areas in greatest need of regeneration across the Solent. In Portsmouth, there are particular pockets of deprivation around the Naval Base, as well as significant levels further north around the Cosham area. In the Southampton urban area, there are significant areas of deprivation around the Port area, as well as in the north east around the Redbridge and Millbrook neighbourhoods.

Gosport town centre is also highlighted as a significantly deprived area as measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, as is Havant town centre and Waterlooville. Meanwhile, Fareham, Eastleigh and New Forest all rank as some of the least deprived authorities in England.

These respective socio-economic challenges are also recognised at a national level by Government within the context of the levelling-up agenda. For instance, the £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund is targeted towards places considered to have the most significant need, as measured by an index taking into account need for economic recovery and growth, need for improved transport connectivity, and need for regeneration. The Government identifies Gosport as the only authority area in the central South East to fall within the highest priority category 1, with a number of other Solent authority areas also falling within category 2.



4. Destination Solent 2050

4.1 Vision

We want the Solent to be the best place to live, work and trade in the UK. Our vision through this Strategy is:

The Solent in 2050: to be the globally leading maritime cluster and at the forefront of innovations to adapt to climate change, with towns and cities that are fantastic places to live, trade and with opportunities for all our communities to flourish.

This vision brings together two distinctive characteristics of the Solent: first, protecting our natural assets and communities from the effects of climate change given our unique geography, which includes two major coastal cities; and second, securing the renaissance of our coastal towns and supporting their adaptation within a changing economic landscape, ensuring growth can be inclusive for all.

Underpinning this overall vision are **seven strategic priorities** around which our plan for future activities to transform the Solent is framed:

1. **A world-leading marine and maritime economy**, building on our existing assets and global competitive advantages to strengthen the UK's international trading relationships.
2. **Pioneering approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation**, linked to our coastal setting, and establishing real expertise which other regions – nationally and globally – can learn from.
3. **The UK's capital of coastal renaissance**, harnessing new technologies and approaches to revitalise and level up economic opportunity across all of our coastal communities.
4. **A thriving visitor, creative and cultural economy**, capitalising on the Solent's superb natural beauty and rich maritime history.
5. **Developing a world-class talent base**, helping people at all stages of their career build the skills they need to respond to new technology and drive an innovative knowledge-based economy.
6. **An outstanding business environment** that encourages innovation, fosters collaboration and enables businesses of all sizes and sectors to thrive.
7. **Health and wellbeing at the heart of economic success**, through a focus on building strong, healthy and resilient communities that can prosper in a fast-changing world.

4.2 Enabling factors

Achieving the seven priorities of the Solent 2050 vision will be challenging. However, as this Strategy shows, the Solent has superb assets and strengths at its disposal. Together these can be leveraged as a set of enabling factors to overcome key challenges to productivity growth and set a path to achieving our vision of the Solent in 2050.



A Celebration of our Cultural, Heritage and Creative Assets

The Solent has an enviable array of cultural, heritage and creative assets, which combine to make the Solent an attractive place to visit, live and invest. These assets offer huge opportunities to achieve our vision and to drive up local productivity.

Skills and Talent that Employers Need

The Solent's people are its greatest asset – this strategy will be underpinned by a skills system that nurtures and develops the right talent to meet market demand.

Improved Connectivity

The Solent benefits from strong global connectivity from its unrivalled international gateways, but there is significant scope to improve local connectivity – both physical and digital – across the Solent to ensure that all our communities can benefit from future growth.

Embracing and Innovating New Technology

Emerging technologies offer a variety of new platforms to view and address opportunities through an innovative lens, and we need to capitalise on these to achieve our ambitious vision.

Strengthened Natural Capital and Net Zero

The Solent's outstanding natural capital sets us apart from others and a number of our strategic priorities (such as maritime, visitor economy and Net Zero) depend on the region's natural environment.

Placemaking

Success of our strategy will rely upon creating and maintaining high quality communities and destinations where people want to live, work, visit and invest.

(1) A world-leading marine and maritime economy

Solent's natural coastal geography and strategic location has helped the region to develop a unique marine and maritime sector proposition and, over the years, strengthen its status as the UK's centre for marine and maritime excellence. Its economic influence is significant and supports a thriving supply chain as well as a rich tapestry of heritage, visitor economy and cultural assets.

Already a world leader in innovation and ground-breaking research, we are the UK's maritime gateway to trade around the globe. We want to build on our exceptional existing strengths, our marine and maritime heritage and our role at the cutting edge of marine and maritime innovation to fully realise the potential of the region as an international trading gateway.

We believe that the Solent is well placed to address the economic recovery and productivity challenges set out in the Build Back Better plan for growth and lead the way in developing ambitions of the Maritime 2050 strategy. We want to leverage the potential of our marine and maritime economy to drive productivity improvements by facilitating high value R&D and innovation activity, open up access to new global markets to boost UK trade with the rest of the world, and attract investment in high tech business facilities, infrastructure and skills.



A Celebration of our Cultural, Heritage and Creative Assets



The Solent has a rich marine and maritime history and an unrivalled portfolio of heritage assets, all of which have an important role to play in supporting a local marine and maritime economy of world renown. The link to the sea is embedded within the history of the area and on display at venues including Portsmouth Historic Dockyard (home of Henry VIII's 'The Mary Rose'), the SS Shieldhall and Spinnaker Tower.

The region also hosts major international marine events throughout the course of the year, such as the Southampton International Boat Show, Sea Work and Cowes Week.

These existing assets are world class but need to be more effectively integrated and promoted as an important underpinning component of a thriving marine and maritime sector in the Solent.

Improved Connectivity



The Solent's connectivity strengths have been a crucial enabling factor behind our status as the UK's centre for marine and maritime excellence; our strategic geographic position is unrivalled within the context of European and Global trade routes and shipping lanes. For instance, the region is the first port of call on the key Shanghai to Rotterdam shipping superhighway boasting the UK's closest deep-water ports to the route. It also contains the UK's biggest export port at Southampton, and the UK's most successful municipal port at Portsmouth. These marine and maritime assets come together to underline the importance of the Solent to supporting UK competitiveness, particularly as we look to establish new trading relationships in a post-Brexit era.

But we recognise that maintaining this competitiveness will require continued and significant investment in the Solent's infrastructure, to not only continue functioning as the UK's premier international gateway but also to better connect different parts of the area together as part of a thriving Solent marine and maritime ecosystem.

By bringing people and firms closer together, the Solent can unlock productivity gains from knowledge spill-overs, integrated supply chains, and labour market access. Given the region's position as a major international port, the productivity gains from enhancing access to these key gateways have the potential to be transformational.

Strengthened Natural Capital and Net Zero



The Solent has an exceptionally strong natural capital offering, equipped with a coastal location and a world-class environment. Indeed, natural capital is central to our existing USP as an internationally renowned marine and maritime cluster which is highly dependent on, and influenced by, the region's natural environment, including outstanding coastline with sheltered havens and double tides sets.

Intervention will be required to protect these natural capital assets to maintain our competitive advantage. Furthermore, strengthening the Solent's natural capital offers significant opportunities to secure our position as the world leading marine and maritime economy by improving climate resilience and in doing so, protect our essential port and marine infrastructure and related business activity from the threat of climate change.

Skills and Talent that Employers Need



Upskilling in marine and maritime capabilities

The Solent is home to a unique combination of industry clustering based in marine and maritime, manufacturing and defence. As these sectors continue to grow and embrace new technology as a way of enhancing productivity, business skills needs will evolve, and the Solent's labour force must respond. Ensuring that education and training aligns with industry needs will benefit both job seekers and the local business community.

The Government is aware of the need for better training and reskilling in the marine and maritime sector and recognises the Solent's higher and further education base for its reputation in producing impactful research and pioneering marine and maritime innovation. For instance, Solent University has established a reputation for producing impactful research on autonomous vessels, as well as on crewing practices and safety. The Solent is a world centre for maritime training, and the University of Portsmouth has recently opened a Future Technology Centre that works as a hub for delivering the University's unique higher level qualifications in innovation engineering, while the Centre of Excellence for Composites, Advanced Manufacturing and Marine (CECMM) on the Isle of Wight is a specialist centre for engineering, aimed at creating a world-class workforce in response to the skills required by local businesses, including marine and maritime businesses.

As the sector and its supply chains develop, we need to continue this investment in marine and maritime upskilling within the Solent to ensure our workforce is equipped with the skills to fuel a world leading marine and maritime economy.



**MARITIME UK
SOLENT**

To ensure our array of maritime assets are harnessed and promoted, and that the area continues to be at the forefront of pioneering developments in the sector, the Solent LEP has established Maritime UK Solent as a

transformative private sector cluster partnership. It brings together the Solent's marine and maritime strengths and assets and champions the region as a globally significant maritime hub. The Solent was identified as one of 20 economically significant clusters in the UK in the Levelling Up White Paper. Government wants to encourage private sector-led partnerships across the UK, especially when these coincide with existing or potential new clusters of business activity and has committed to work with Maritime UK Solent as one of 16 private sector partnerships.

Embracing and Innovating New Technology



The marine and maritime sector offers significant scope for productivity improvements through embracing and innovating new technology to support day-to-day efficiencies and global market diversification, while the Solent's marine and maritime legacy also provides opportunities for innovation in the clean growth arena. These are considered in turn below.

Pioneering 'smart' ports

The productivity and efficiency of docks in the Solent are critical, with Southampton and Portsmouth combined processing more goods than the largest port in the UK. Given their position as gateways to the global market, improvements to day-to-day operation of these ports will convert to significant productivity gains of both local and national significance.

There is a key opportunity for Solent to develop Southampton and Portsmouth into "smart" ports and better connect the region with global trade routes. By utilising emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things and big data, the Solent's

ports can better track, plan and connect shipping. Through deeper integration of all aspects of port activity, the Solent can increase efficiency, productivity and volume, optimising turnaround times of ships and ferries.

This vision for the Solent has been shaped by the success of smart ports such as Rotterdam, where a digital replica of the port has been developed into a dashboard with complete oversight of all activity, enabling the port to optimise operations. By acting now, the Solent has the potential to become a global leader in the use of connected and automated docking systems.

Solent Freeport



As one of eight Freeports nationally, the Solent Freeport represents a major opportunity to create over 32,000 jobs across the UK and enable our region to capitalise on the Solent's geographic advantage in the highly competitive global market following Brexit. Deprived coastal communities in the Solent will be levelled up and the UK's net zero ambitions will be supported through site-

specific developments as well as Freeport-wide interventions and initiatives. Through links to three world-class universities and a host of national research assets, Solent Freeport will catalyse an innovation revolution in maritime, autonomy and green growth. It will provide a centre of excellence in green skills and jobs to ensure local communities, and in particular our young people, can benefit from opportunities created.

Investing in marine and maritime R&D

The presence of world-leading universities and research facilities strengthens the Solent's role as a leader in marine and maritime innovation. The National Oceanography Centre (NOC) in Southampton, for instance, is one of the world's top oceanographic institutions, providing the UK with the national capability needed to lead in international collaborations. Linked to the expertise of the NOC, the Solent is undoubtedly at the forefront of pioneering marine and maritime autonomy and robotics, with companies such as L3 Technologies and Saab SeaEye establishing their names as world-leaders in respective fields. With assets such as the Southampton Web Science Institute (WSI) and the QinetiQ Innovation and Collaboration Hub, the Solent has existing and growing expertise in the area of digital and disruptive technologies and a strong position in the world arena of marine and maritime autonomy.

These examples provide an indication of the digital and technological innovation capabilities of the region, particularly important in a world that is increasingly exposed to unexpected disruption. As the Solent continues innovating, we need to ensure that business, academia and local government can effectively collaborate to maximise the productivity and growth benefits for both the Solent and UK plc.

UK Centre of Excellence for Maritime Mission Systems



The Solent LEP has provided £5m of funding toward establishing an Innovation and Collaboration Hub (ICH) as part of the £23m National Maritime Systems Centre (NMSC) redevelopment at Portsdown Technology Park by QinetiQ. The ICH will offer opportunities for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to attract the best local talent and develop Maritime Mission System offerings for UK and International markets.

Clean growth

The Solent's marine and maritime legacy and prowess provides fertile ground for innovations in the clean growth arena, such as the development of the Wightlink hybrid ferry service, the MHI Vestas Offshore Wind facility on the Isle of Wight, and Cheetah Marine's sea-trials of a hydrogen-powered catamaran.

In early 2019, 'Maritime 2050: Navigating the Future' was published - a long-term strategy document which outlined the Government's vision and ambitions for the future of the British maritime sector. A key theme was the movement towards a greener, more sustainable approach in order to reduce and mitigate the numerous negative externalities of CO2 emissions – for example through using cleaner electric power for water transport. Portsmouth international Port has a clear ambition to become the first zero emission port under the Clean Maritime 2050 Plan.

Placemaking



Our ambition to be the world's leading marine and maritime economy will depend upon a thriving and inclusive marine and maritime ecosystem across the Solent, where key players come together to support the region's evolution into a successful global maritime gateway.

Key to achieving this ambition is the Solent LEP's establishment of Maritime UK Solent, part of a network of regional maritime clusters that fosters collaboration among business and academia in the UK's maritime regions. This private sector cluster partnership will provide sector leadership, building unique strengths, attracting investment, developing skills and driving growth.

Port of Southampton

The Port of Southampton performs a crucial role for UK plc. It is the UK's biggest export port, with over £40bn of UK manufactured goods exported from Southampton each year – 90% to destinations outside the EU. It is also the UK's prime automotive hub, handling one million cars per year. Southampton is the UK's most efficient container port and is the biggest cruise turnaround port in Europe, with over 500 cruise ship calls per year, and handling over 2 million passengers. Each ship call brings in £3m to the local economy and has seen globally-leading companies such as Carnival establishing their HQ in the city. More widely, the Port supports in the order of 15,000 jobs and generates £1.4bn to GVA.



Forecasts for growth are staggering with passenger numbers expected to double in the next 15 years. The Port of Southampton consulted on a Master Plan to expand the Port to provide additional land, berth space and facilities to handle cargo, all of which will be necessary for the Port to continue to grow as an international gateway to the local, regional and national economy.

Our Future Actions

To achieve this priority, we will focus on the following key actions:

1. Develop **Maritime UK Solent** as a private sector cluster body to bring together the Solent's marine and maritime strengths and assets and champion the region as a globally significant maritime economy. Maritime UK Solent forms part of a network of regional maritime clusters that foster collaboration among business and academia in the UK's maritime regions and provide leadership to ensure continued growth and prosperity of Solent's maritime sector. This could, for instance, provide opportunities to engage with private sector SMEs to utilise their specialisations around AI, pairing these with the smart port agenda to drive innovation.
2. Establish the **Solent Freeport** as a 'once-in-a-generation' opportunity to level-up local communities, turbocharge post-Brexit trade and invest in a Net Zero future, in turn helping to create more than 32,000 jobs and attract £1.35 billion private sector investment into the Solent area.
3. Establish a **Marine Innovation Hub** within a Solent port alongside leading maritime Universities and industry partners to support research and development into pioneering marine and maritime innovations and maximise the economic impacts of clustering and agglomeration.
4. Work with partners to deliver the **Solent Institute of Technology** to support vocational professional pathways into the Solent's world leading marine and maritime industry and associated advanced manufacturing and technical pathways.
5. Linked to the Solent Freeport opportunity, explore potential to develop '**smart ports**' at the Ports of Southampton and Portsmouth in order to better connect the region with global trade routes.

(2) Pioneering approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation

The Solent’s combination of natural geography and industrial strengths provides a major opportunity to strengthen its position as a leading hub for environmentally friendly innovation and a pioneer of clean growth by incorporating emerging technologies with an appetite to deliver ground-breaking solutions within maritime, logistics, transport mobility and coastal protection. Our Solent 2050 Strategy specifically responds to the UK’s recent shift in policy focus to reduce carbon and develop a coherent pathway to Net Zero by 2050, where we believe the Solent has a leading role to play.

Coastal erosion and flooding are real risks that the Solent faces, especially paired with the global challenge of climate change and rising sea levels. Such adaptation will therefore be a necessity for the Solent given its unique geography with two major coastal cities, and there is an opportunity to build real expertise in this area that other regions, nationally and globally, can learn from.

Through this Strategy we set out a plan to embed clean growth principles at the heart of our ambition for growth, recognising the role these can play in driving local productivity growth by enhancing economic resilience to climate change, improving energy efficiency and stimulating innovation across a range of clean growth activities and applications (such as transport and technology). We want to pioneer Net Zero in the Solent by growing our capacity for sustainable energy production and transport and investing to help our region mitigate the impacts of climate change which impact upon our communities.



Improved Connectivity



‘Thinking Green’ with our transport infrastructure

Green technology is firmly embedded within the Solent’s infrastructure investment plans, and we recognise there is an opportunity for improved connectivity across the Solent to embrace clean growth principles in a more holistic way as part of our aspiration to pioneer approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation.

The region’s marine and maritime legacy has provided fertile ground for innovations in the clean growth arena, such as the development of the Wightlink hybrid ferry service, an environmentally-friendly vessel that heralds a new, greener era of travel between the Isle of Wight and the mainland. Meanwhile, Portsmouth international Port has a clear ambition to become the first zero emission port under the Clean Maritime 2050 Plan.

Wightlink: Going for zero

Victoria of Wight is the first hybrid energy ferry in England, heralding a new, greener era of travel between the Isle of Wight and the mainland. She entered Wightlink service in August 2018 and runs on hybrid energy, allowing her to run partly on electricity when required. Wightlink's wider 'going for zero' vision includes plans to bring forward the UK's first fully electric plug in large vehicle ferry, alongside other opportunities to accelerate decarbonisation such as electrifying its existing smaller car ferries and investing in a new all electric high speed passenger ferry to be built locally.



As part of the clean growth agenda, we see the Solent piloting innovative solutions to green mobility. Increased utilisation of our existing waterways represents a key opportunity in this respect. These waterways are, at present, an untapped resource, which we see as a key agent in the region's future. This relatively low-level of waterway use, coupled with the areas critical mass, offers an opportunity to test solutions such as on-demand water-taxi services and water-based goods transport. Through further utilising these waterways, the Solent can develop an integrated network of 'green' water transport, connecting assets and places across the region.

The rapid advancement of technology also provides a timely opportunity to look at new and innovative solutions to transport and connectivity challenges in the Solent (most notably between the key economic centres of Southampton and Portsmouth), such as drone corridors or autonomous pods, with a number of proposals already underway across the region.

Strengthened Natural Capital and Net Zero



The Solent region's defining feature is its abundance of outstanding natural beauty. Our unique combination of vibrant cities, beautiful countryside and spectacular coastline set the region apart from the rest of the UK. The Covid-19 pandemic has really highlighted the value of green spaces, in particular their importance for wellbeing and sense of place.

Our strategy for Solent 2050 focuses on strengthening and protecting the region's natural capital, recognising the environmental challenges of coastal erosion, rising sea levels and risks to conservation that the region faces.

In particular, we want to harness the Solent's unrivalled natural capital assets to pioneer clean growth technology and adaptation and in doing so, drive productivity improvements across the region's business and employment base.

The unique geography of three islands and three peninsulas positions the Solent as a competitive strategic location for developing the UK's renewable energy sector, with particular strengths and opportunities around wind and solar energy. For instance, the Isle

of Wight is the UK base of the global renewable energy player MHI Vestas Offshore Wind, which has ambitious expansion plans in line with the growth of sustainable power generation.

Green Halo Partnership (New Forest)



The New Forest's Green Halo Partnership brings together local organisations from the public, private and third sectors, to make the Solent a global exemplar of how our most precious landscapes can work in harmony with a thriving, economically successful community. The partnership is committed to supporting 'on the ground' action, in relation to improving health and wellbeing, protecting the natural environment, and encouraging sustainable living, all while supporting the local economy.

Skills and Talent that Employers Need



The Solent region is home to world leading research at its three Universities and institutions, such as the National Oceanographic Centre. The Universities of Southampton and Portsmouth are large contributors to R&D in the region, in particular through supporting entrepreneurial spin-off opportunities - these range from graduate start-ups and social enterprises, to large university-owned enterprises. These assets make the Solent well-equipped for a position at the forefront of clean growth research. For example, the Centre of Excellence for Composites, Advanced Manufacturing and Marine on the Isle of Wight works closely with MHI Vestas Offshore Wind in co-developing offshore wind as an economically viable and sustainable energy resource.

We need to ensure that future skills development opportunities within the areas of climate change adaptation and decarbonisation keep up with evolving technology and business requirements and are accessible to the local population. This will enable the Solent to respond to the clean growth agenda with maximum impact and success.

Embracing and Innovating New Technology



Developing green technologies

The development of new green technologies is crucial in driving the shift towards decarbonisation. *Maritime 2050*, which outlines the Government's vision and ambitions for the future of the British maritime sector, includes the movement towards a sustainable, less-carbon intensive approach to reduce and mitigate the numerous negative externalities of CO₂ emissions. The development of new technologies, from hydrogen heating to the electrification of vehicles, are examples of routes to achieving this goal, and the Solent is well positioned to lead these changes.



World class hub for tackling climate change

Various industry-leading green technology initiatives and facilities already exist within the Solent. The region has the potential to become a global leader in decarbonisation by continuing to develop ambitious and innovative approaches. Drawing on the region's local talent, accelerating uptake of technologies, and more effectively harnessing its natural assets, we want to work more collaboratively with businesses, universities and government to shape new solutions to environmental challenges.

We want to build on the innovative work and success stories that we have already seen to proactively embed clean growth principles within the placemaking agenda across the Solent. For instance, Southampton City Council provides an example of how new approaches can be introduced to existing communities and places, through their Green City Charter which was announced in 2019. This Charter will see the Council collaborate with a range of partners so that the city flourishes as a role model for a clean, green city with a thriving economy, demonstrating its commitment to significantly improving air quality within the city.

Southampton Green City Charter

This Charter will see the Council collaborate with a range of partners so that the city flourishes as a role model for a clean, green city with a thriving economy, demonstrating its commitment to significantly improving air quality within the city. The City Council has committed to being carbon neutral by 2030, working with local partners to reach this target alongside other sustainability goals. Portsmouth City Council has also declared a climate emergency and is actively investing in schemes and projects, large and small, that can make a difference to the city and our planet.



New Communities

We want to take advantage of the significant opportunities for innovation in sustainable housing and community development, applying and showcasing green technologies and clean growth principles within the development of new and expanded communities across the Solent.

The Solent is already pioneering ground breaking approaches to developing quality of place, making its new communities future-facing with examples including the emerging Intelligent Merchant City at Fawley Waterside which has embarked on building an intelligent town, innovatively using technology as the foundations of a globally-recognised successful and healthy community. It has been designed to be carbon neutral, adopting and promoting net zero technologies, to become Europe's first, purpose-build sustainable smart city.

Our Future Actions

To achieve this priority, we will focus on the following key actions:

1. Deliver the **Ten Point Plan for Building Back Greener in the Solent** to showcase the region's green growth credentials, ambitions and local response to the Government's national Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution. This identifies key actions to adapt to climate change and accelerate the achievement of net zero, building on the recently-designated Solent Freeport with its focus on clean growth, green skills and jobs.
2. Support the development of a **Decarbonisation Cluster and Nature Based Solutions Hub** in the Solent to bring key assets and ideas together to foster innovation and application of green technology. This would build on existing sector strengths and specialisms including Ultra-low Sulphur Investment at Fawley Refinery, WightLink Hybrid Ferry, and Cheetah Marine's development of the world's first hydrogen powered catamaran, as well as unique opportunities that our coastal setting provides for carbon capture (such as sea kelp forests and mud flats).
3. Work with the Port of Southampton to implement a **'Shore to Ship' Power initiative**, a pathfinder project that will enable shore power capability for cruise ships allowing compatible vessels to switch off their auxiliary engines to deliver a zero emissions cruise facility at the Port of Southampton. This will be the first major commercial berth and cruise terminal fitted with this technology in the UK, supporting Europe's number one cruise Port to adopt innovation in its transition to support cleaner vessels as part of our wider ambitions around the 'greening of marine'.
4. Prepare a **Natural Capital Baseline Assessment** study for the Solent, building on the specific New Forest Natural Capital Study published in 2021. This will develop a baseline natural capital audit in order to identify areas of importance for wildlife conservation and areas of wildlife risk.
5. Develop a **new LEP-wide fund** to invite applications to bring forward low carbon solutions for the Solent's marine and maritime sector. This could be used to encourage investment in AI technology and its applications within coastal maintenance, such as the monitoring of marine and maritime environments.

(3) The UK’s capital of coastal renaissance

The coast defines so much of the heritage, culture and future potential of the Solent. We want to deliver a step change in productivity and prosperity in our coastal communities such as Gosport, Havant, the Hamble peninsula, the Isle of Wight and the Waterside area of the New Forest. All have seen major change as they respond to de-industrialisation, changes in tourism, and globalisation.

Through this strategy, we want to secure a renaissance of our existing coastal communities so that they are better positioned to confront the challenges of tomorrow and promote inclusive growth, with a greater emphasis on community diversity and economic inclusion brought into even sharper focus during recent months through the Black Lives Matter movement. In tandem, we want to pioneer the next generation of coastal-urban living by adopting innovative practices and smart technologies in terms of improved transport and digital connectivity and coastal living. Centenary Quay in Southampton and the proposed Intelligent Merchant City on the site of the former Fawley Power Station both provide good examples and have the coast at their heart.

It is the ambition of this strategy to support existing and new coastal communities, allowing them to flourish as places to live, work and visit. In doing so, we will level up economic opportunity across our region and make the Solent the UK’s capital of coastal renaissance.

The recently published Levelling Up White Paper also provides a timely opportunity to explore with government how local resources can be best directed towards the Solent’s coastal communities within the context of the levelling up agenda.



Improved Connectivity



Enhancing the local transport system

Transport infrastructure is a comparative weakness and already a constraint for the area. Given transport’s role as a fundamental component of economic success, the Solent cannot afford to be complacent in the delivery of a transport infrastructure network fit for an economy of its size and potential. In particular, as the most urbanised area in southern England outside London the region faces city-to-city connectivity constraints and network capacity and reliability challenges around our major economic assets including the Port of Southampton, the ExxonMobil Oil Refinery, HM Naval Base Portsmouth, Portsmouth International Port and Southampton Airport. This results in a complex interplay of local and strategic movements, unlike anywhere else in the UK. The inability of the rail network

to provide for the connectivity the Solent needs results in a further exacerbation of the issue, with new housing and employment locked-in to car-based transport and an inability to create new sustainable coastal communities.

The Solent 2050 Strategy aims to overcome the challenges of Solent's complex coastal geography and high car dependency. At its heart is the development of a safe and sustainable public transport system, which utilises smart technologies and facilitates the shift towards low-carbon modes of travel. In particular, reducing use of the private car for journeys will be critical to achieving the ambitions of Portsmouth and Southampton to be carbon neutral by 2030. Over the short term, our transport system must adapt to changing patterns of demand and use in response to Covid-19, for instance reduced use of some key commuter routes and extended 'peak' travel times.

The Strategy builds upon existing proposals to develop Solent as one of the government's Future Mobility Zones to test and deliver future mobility options that support the efficient movement of people, and explore innovative approaches to the movement of goods and freight in urban areas. The foundations of Solent's 2050 local transport infrastructure will be:

- **Technological innovation:** Solent will utilise the latest developments in transport technology, for example smart ticketing and harnessing data, to optimise journey times, predict demand and improve reliability.
- **Sustainability:** Solent will focus on encouraging low-carbon transport, such as cycling, by developing a safe network of cycleways, in addition to introducing low-emission fleets. As part of this, we will develop an electric infrastructure strategy and work to improve electricity infrastructure across the region to facilitate greener forms of transport. We will investigate potential for the introduction of a water taxi network on Southampton Water similar to those which exist in other 'bay area' economies internationally, to make better use of our waterways and provide access points across the Solent.
- **Integration:** The introduction of a rapid bus network and dedicated lanes for public transport, as well as smart ticketing, will create an efficient and interconnected public transport network, which reduces journey times and improves the customer experience.

Southampton City Region Transforming Cities Fund

As part of the 2020 Budget, the Chancellor announced £57m of Government funding from the Industrial Strategy's Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) for the Southampton City Region to deliver plans for sustainable and active travel in the City Region in a targeted way. It will have a transformative impact on people's journeys by bus, walking and cycling as well as supporting wider clean growth ambitions for the area. The TCF funding will allow Southampton City Council and Hampshire County Council to invest in measures to transform people's Mobility, Lifestyles and Gateways in the City Region.



Enhancing infrastructure for digital connectivity

The introduction of 5G in the Solent is currently underway, with Portsmouth and Southampton set to have 5G introduced in the coming year. This will help unlock greater economic growth, due to faster networks, increased reliability and reduced reliance on physical infrastructure. Additionally, authorities anticipate that 5G will help facilitate technological advancement in many applications including driverless cars, holographic technology and remote health care.

The Solent has already started to invest in improved infrastructure; WightFibre, the Isle of Wight's provider of fibre optic broadband, is installing ultrafast full-fibre broadband that is 35 times faster than the national average.

Going forward, the Solent will continue to support and encourage business investment in faster broadband. The Solent will work with local stakeholders to develop a comprehensive strategy to test-bed before fully rolling out 5G and gigabit fibre throughout the region. The Solent will continue to support the UK government in the digital revolution and will engage with national initiatives, such the recent £30m competition to test ground-breaking 5G applications in rural areas. Engagement across all of stakeholders will ensure the Solent remains at the forefront of the ongoing digital revolution.

Strengthened Natural Capital and Net Zero



Protecting and strengthening natural capital is critical to achieving coastal renaissance. Our coastal communities face environmental challenges regarding coastal protection that need to be tackled, such as coastal erosion and flooding due to rising sea levels. However, this could place the region in a prime position to pioneer new technologies and in turn create new economic opportunities for our communities. The Solent can become a model for coastal-urban living rich in innovative practices within a special environment.

We will work to support clean growth initiatives as part of future development and infrastructure across the Solent. Sites such as Fawley Waterside represent a fresh look for coastal communities with smart technology integrated from the outset, while the Havant Thicket Reservoir will secure reliable water supply and create new natural capital.

Havant Thicket Reservoir

Portsmouth Water is investing £120 million to create a new reservoir in Hampshire. The reservoir will provide an important strategic resource to help support new housing and other development and cope with the effects of climate change. The reservoir will be built on the grassland site next to Havant Thicket, which sits in between Rowlands Castle, Leigh Park and Staunton Country Park in Havant. As well as providing reliable supplies for the water-stressed South East, it will also create enhanced natural capital by providing a new community and green leisure space, bringing more benefits for local people and nature, including a wetland to support threatened species of birds.



As well as providing reliable supplies for the water-stressed South East, it will also create enhanced natural capital by providing a new community and green leisure space, bringing more benefits for local people and nature, including a wetland to support threatened species of birds.

Southampton City Council announced their Green City Charter and have committed to being carbon neutral by 2030, working with local partners to reach this target alongside other sustainability goals. This Charter will see the city lead the way in best practice for a clean, green city with a thriving economy, demonstrating its commitment to significantly improving local air quality within the city.

Embracing and Innovating New Technology



The Solent has the opportunity to redefine access and logistics for its more remote communities. The 2050 Strategy takes a forward-looking view, recognising the potential that emerging technologies, such as drones and autonomous vehicles can bring to the region and the need to place these at the forefront of the strategy. The Strategy will ensure that the region will be conducive to rapid uptake of these technologies, once the appropriate regulatory, legal and safety frameworks are in place.

- **Drone delivery corridors:** more remote areas, such as the New Forest and Isle of Wight, often face less reliable or slower deliveries and services. Drone technology can be used to transport lighter packaged goods efficiently, whilst avoiding congestion and geographical barriers. This is particularly valuable for emergency deliveries, such as hospital or medical supplies.
- **Autonomous vehicles:** these vehicles can operate without human interaction. While still under development, they have the potential to transform the mobility landscape in the future and offer more efficient, greener modes of transport. Specifically, applying autonomous technology to marine and maritime uses, such as water taxis, represents a niche in the market that Solent – with the right leadership, direction and investment – has the potential to be a market leader. We will also explore where such technology can provide effective connectivity improvements for hard-to-reach communities, such as Hayling Island.

Looking forward, the Solent will place an emphasis on understanding the practical applications of these technologies and learning from the experience of other regions, countries and initiatives. The Solent aims to ensure it is well placed to support government policy in the development of the appropriate regulatory frameworks that will support the safe applications of these technologies in every-day life.

Trialling drone technology to respond to Covid-19

As part of its Future Transport Zone programme, Solent Transport's four-year drone project has been advanced to trial an innovative drone transportation service in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. The trial is the first of its kind and aims to benefit patients at St. Mary's



Hospital on the Isle of Wight by speeding up the delivery of medical supplies. Various types of unmanned aircraft have been trialled to see how these could improve the movement of medical supplies between the three hospitals in Hampshire. The project intends to increase efficiency, reduce costs and transportation time of medical supplies between NHS locations.



Accommodating our growing coastal communities

The Solent is an attractive place to live and work, across all stages of life. A stable and sufficient housing supply is critical to enable more people to build their future here, in turn supporting our regional labour market and economy.

One key barrier to settlement in the region, particularly for younger people, is housing availability and affordability. The ratio of house prices to median incomes is above the national average, and if the region is to successfully attract and retain more young talent, residential accommodation is a must. This is also coupled with the fact that suitable housing for young people is harder to find in more rural areas, with a noticeable shortage of one- or two-bedroom properties.

The Solent will pioneer new approaches to developing high-quality, sustainable and connected new communities that provide exemplar urban-coastal developments. We will work to support local authorities and developers to deliver planned new communities which can meet these objectives, through intelligent design, piloting new technologies, and smart infrastructure delivery. There are already a significant number of planned new communities across our region, including Welborne Garden Village, Fareham, Lennox Point, Portsmouth, Horton Heath, Eastleigh and Camphill, Isle of Wight. We will help to apply learning from innovative new community developments for the wider benefit of existing communities in the Solent.

Strengthening our town centres

Like other parts of the country, the Solent's town centres are experiencing the effects of rapid changes within the retail sector, the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift towards the 'experience' economy. However, town centres lie at the heart of our communities and are a critical factor in supporting coastal renaissance.

Therefore, we will work across the Solent to support new investment in town centres that can improve their resilience and appeal as places to live, work and visit, and their function as locations for accessing local services, culture and heritage. The proposals to transform Havant town centre are one such example.

Havant Town Centre Regeneration

An inspiring transformation of Havant's historical core is planned through the long-term regeneration vision produced by Havant Borough Council. Plans to reclaim its heart with a change in its residential and retail offer, adapting to the way we shop online and work from home, includes a mix of proposed residential (c. 450 new homes), retail and leisure developments in the town. The vision utilises the town's heritage through better placemaking, embedding links to arts and culture with new housing, entertainment and an innovative shopping experience.



Skills and Talent that Employers Need



The development of skills and talent is fundamental to achieving our aim for coastal renaissance in a way that delivers genuinely inclusive growth for all our communities and champions the use of new technology and innovation to develop communities that are fit for the future.

Through this Strategy, we are committed to boosting skills and expertise amongst Solent's coastal communities to ensure that our residents and business base are fully equipped with the skills needed to respond to new and emerging technologies and drive future productivity improvements through rejuvenation of our coastal economy.

We want to improve accessibility and availability of skills provision for our coastal communities by leveraging technology and by strengthening transport connectivity to our more isolated and peripheral communities.

The development of our planned state-of-the-art communities also represents a major opportunity to invest in our human capital at the same time as delivering the critical infrastructure we need to support future population and economic growth. Key sites – such as Fawley Waterside, One Horton Heath and Welborne – offer a range of upskilling opportunities through their application of innovative design, construction and infrastructure and our existing coastal communities are well placed to benefit.

Intelligent Merchant City at Fawley Waterside

The Fawley Waterside project aims to create an 'Intelligent Merchant City' at the former Fawley Power Station, one of the biggest brownfield sites in the UK. Proposals include 1,380 new homes, over 100,000 square metres of new commercial space, enlarged dock and canal facilities. The new community will be sustainable, drawing on excess heat from the nearby ExxonMobil refinery, be digitally enabled, and offer new housing ownership models. In-built superfast broadband will serve applications including energy, travel and community service solutions, while thousands of advanced manufacturing, offshore energy and marine jobs will create a self-sustaining community.



Welborne Garden Village

Welborne Garden Village in Fareham will be a new community for Hampshire, bringing together up to 6,000 homes, parks, woodland, playgrounds, schools, shops, business premises, healthcare and public transport. It is sited just north of Fareham, some six miles northwest of Portsmouth and 10 miles southeast of Southampton.



The community will be an exemplar that will stand the test of time, with the amenities and infrastructure to serve its residents and the wider area for generations to come. Grounded in the principles of the Garden City movement of the early twentieth century, Welborne will combine housing, employment and local facilities within an attractive, walkable and leafy environment realised to high standards of design and construction.

Our Future Actions

To achieve this priority, we will focus on the following key actions:

1. Work with partners to develop a comprehensive **integrated transport strategy** that delivers city-to-city connectivity enhancements through adoption of technology, sustainability and modal integration. This will build on successful proposals to establish a Future Transport Zone and to secure additional Transforming Cities Funding within the Solent.
2. Accelerate and expand the roll out of **next generation digital technology** so that gigabit connectivity can be accessed across the Solent, helping to facilitate online learning initiatives in support of skills and training needs, the shift towards more flexible and agile working post Covid-19, and to respond to changing business needs.
3. Collaborate with local research institutions and policymakers to explore the **feasibility of autonomous travel solutions** in various locations throughout the Solent, including along the Hayling Billy Trail.
4. We will work to support local authorities and developers to **deliver planned new communities** which can provide high-quality, sustainable and connected new ways of living, through intelligent design, piloting new technologies and smart infrastructure delivery. We will help to apply learning from innovative new community development to the benefit of existing communities in the Solent.

(4) A thriving visitor, creative and cultural economy

With its unique combination of outstanding natural environments, coastal communities, associated marine and cultural heritage and an array of world class visitor attractions, there is a significant opportunity to develop a distinctive tourism offering for the Solent.

The Solent is already a popular destination for visitors due to its maritime history, beautiful environments, easy transport links to London, and role as a major cruise destination. Despite this success, there is room for improvement. We want to capitalise on the Solent's superb natural beauty and rich maritime history to develop a thriving visitor and cultural economy, with national and international appeal. This includes encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of the Solent, to give an enhanced experience and thereby greater spending locally during their stays.

Leveraging the wealth of environmental and coastal assets the Solent offers also provides the opportunity to embrace eco-tourism, where visitors can support conservation efforts and observe wildlife, or extending the trips of cruise passengers through tailored offerings.

Supporting this tourism offer is an exciting creative and cultural industry that, whilst modest in scale, is growing fast and offers significant potential to diversify the Solent's economic base and underpin its reputation as world class hub for innovation and creativity.



A Celebration of our Cultural, Heritage and Creative Assets



Maximising our maritime heritage

Building on the Solent's rich, vibrant history knitted within the marine and maritime sector, there is the opportunity to highlight the character of the area to visitors and encourage them to learn and become involved with the local coastal theme. Building on this, there are also interactive events that highlight the ongoing importance of the marine and maritime sector. The annual Southampton Boat Show, numerous aquatic activity and trip providers are just some examples.

The Solent has numerous historic sites linked to its rich marine and maritime heritage, and preserving and enhancing these will be critical to the long-term success of the region's visitor economy and promoting its distinctive offer. Initiatives are already underway, for example, the Gosport Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) agreed with Historic England in 2019. Investing in existing sites and attractions is also important to ensure they can respond to changing needs in a competitive market and enhance the visitor experience, for example the significant investment underway at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard which is now one of the UK's top five cultural attractions outside of London.

Gosport Heritage Action Zone

Gosport's Heritage Action Zone is a 5-year project that will pool the skills and resources of a number of partners to save the town's military heritage – from barracks to trenches and green spaces – using it as an anchor to support the town's regeneration so that the local community will benefit. From feasibility studies to place making and public engagement – a number of separate projects will add up to make a big difference to Gosport's future prosperity.



Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

The National Museum of the Royal Navy is investing almost £33million in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and the wider city. Developing major new exhibitions and interpretation alongside finalising major museum projects are at the heart of the investment. The visitor experience on site will be boosted by a new Royal Marines Museum and the creation of the country's newest national museum collection in the newly-named Storyhouse 12: The Navy Unlocked. Over two million artefacts, previously kept in 30 separate stores within 14 buildings across nine sites, will be relocated and made accessible to visitors to revolutionise the way the epic story of the Royal Navy is told.



Celebrating our cultural and creative assets

The Solent is home to a wide range of creative and cultural industries from computer consultancy activities through to radio broadcasting and performing arts. Although modest in size relative to other sectors locally, the sector is growing fast, with an additional 10,000 jobs created over the last five years alone.

It's wide ranging application means that the creative and cultural sector plays an important supporting role for other industries that rely on creative innovation, with 50% of creative roles across the region based in businesses that are not necessarily defined as 'creative'. Local universities have introduced a number of courses, such as Creative Enterprise which revolve around this growing industry, and there are university and business activities in a variety of areas, including art, design, fashion, media, digital technology and theatre.

Creative Network South

Creative Network South (CNS) is a network of Businesses, Universities and Local Authorities working together to promote the creative economy in the Solent area. It provides free business support for creative businesses in South Hampshire including 1-2-1 advice sessions and mentoring. As part of CNS, Creative Growth Southampton was established in 2018 to help people building businesses in the sector to develop the confidence, skills and contacts needed to help them succeed. Southampton has one of the fastest growing tech, digital and creative economies in the UK, with around 500 new creative businesses starting-up in the city between 2010 and 2016.



Our creative industries also play a key role in place shaping, contributing to the quality of life and distinctive identity of the region. This in turn underpins the attractiveness of the Solent as a place to live, work, visit and invest.

We need to raise the profile of our superb creative businesses and cultural offer, and integrate these unique assets more closely within our wider tourism and visitor economy. This includes better showcasing the Solent's cultural offer on the national and international stage, for example through Southampton's bid for City of Culture 2025 which will act as a springboard for developing the city as a cultural hub for both economic and social benefit.

Southampton City of Culture 2025



Southampton City Council have submitted a bid for the City of Culture 2025, to recognise and celebrate the city's great cultural, community, arts and heritage achievements, whilst underpinning opportunities for current and future generations. A successful bid will bring enormous economic benefits to Southampton through significant funding to support events and cultural development, as well as raising the profile and attractiveness of the city for businesses to locate and invest in Southampton.

Improved Connectivity



Unifying our regional tourism strategy

The Solent has the vision to bring together its regional tourism offerings under one body. By developing a unified marketing and visitor engagement strategy, the Solent aims to link visitors up with the full array of the region's sites and activities, with the overarching aim of increasing the value of the visitor economy, as opposed to the quantity of visitors, recognising the need to preserve natural capital. A streamlined and enhanced visitor experience will extend the reach of the tourism industry across the region and maximise spend within. Better engaging the region's cruise industry visitors is a key priority.

Southampton Airport Runway Extension

In April 2021, Eastleigh Borough Council approved Southampton Airport's runway planning application for a 164m extension to the northern end of the existing runway; in doing so, safeguarding the future of the airport and the future economic prosperity of the local economy. With its focus on inter-regional connectivity, Southampton Airport is ideally positioned to be at the leading edge of Jet Zero technology to push forward low carbon travel and drive the uptake of sustainable aviation fuels and develop the infrastructure of the future to place the Solent at the forefront of green planes. It also plays a crucial underpinning role for the region's tourism economy; pre Covid-19, the Solent attracted 43.5m visitors p.a. generating a total of £3.27bn, with 40% of airport passengers associated with leisure and cruise trips.



Strengthened Natural Capital and Net Zero



Leveraging our natural assets

There is opportunity for the Solent to develop its tourism offering, through further leveraging its wealth of environmental and coastal assets. With its combination of green space in areas, such as the New Forest National Park, and coastal communities such as the Isle of Wight, the Solent offers a unique opportunity to test things differently at a time where there is a global and UK debate about natural resources and the environment.

This could include offerings such as eco-tourism, where visitors support conservation efforts and observe wildlife, or extending the trips of cruise passengers by tailored offerings on the mainland. The emphasis on embracing our natural capital without damaging it is a common theme throughout the organised activities on offer and should be incorporated into the wider strategy of the Solent as a whole. There is also room for the region to explore the role the natural environment can play in supporting health and wellbeing, particularly important given the local trend of an ageing population.

Placemaking



Cruise capital

The Solent is known as the 'cruise capital' of Northern Europe, with a 15% share of international passengers at UK ports in 2015 and the Port of Southampton ranked as the UK's busiest port for cruises handling over two million passengers. Southampton is also home to the world's leading cruise operator, Carnival (with brands including Cunard and P&O), and 83% of UK cruises are based at the port.

The sector has been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic; we want to position our cruise industry for a strong return to growth through expanding capacity and state-of-the-art passenger facilities at our Ports. This includes a new fifth Cruise Terminal at the Port of

Southampton, providing world class infrastructure to safeguard its role as the largest cruise port in Europe, and securing agreement for delivery of a new passenger terminal annex at Portsmouth International Port.

As part of this, we also want to support the future growth and sustainability of the cruise industry at our two ports, and better provide for the needs of cruise passengers as part of the Solent's overall visitor economy strategy. This will include working to ensure that our tourism offer can be developed to complement and extend the trips of cruise passengers through tailored offerings, and maximise the ability of visiting passengers to access local culture, heritage and landscapes in a sustainable manner. Supporting the growth of the cruise industry is linked to other priority activities identified through this strategy, for example creating a zero emissions cruise facility at the Port of Southampton.

Our Future Actions

To achieve this priority, we will focus on the following key actions:

1. Develop a **Solent visitor economy strategy** that provides the basis for a unified marketing and visitor engagement strategy with the aim of creating a streamlined and enhanced visitor experience across the region. This will capitalise on the growing domestic tourism market and opportunities to develop a more connected and holistic visitor economy ecosystem that can thrive year-round.
2. Create a **destination management offer** for the Solent to ensure that we promote our unique maritime heritage assets, including Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, Titanic and Bucklers Hard, and more effectively 'package up' these assets to create a distinctive identity to the Solent's tourism offer.
3. Work with partners to optimise the implementation of the **Gosport Heritage Action Zone**, to ensure that Gosport's unique military history is sustained and supports the physical, economic and social regeneration of the borough in the future.
4. Support the economic recovery, future growth and sustainability of the **cruise industry** at our two ports, and fully integrate this sector as part of the wider Solent visitor economy strategy through the development of tailored offerings.
5. Support the **bid for Southampton to be City of Culture 2025**, that celebrates Southampton's cultural, community, arts and heritage offer and links these to the wider Solent visitor economy, as well as underpinning opportunities for current and future generations.

(5) Developing a world-class talent base

In the new technologically-driven age, human capital (i.e. knowledge and skills) will be a key driver of regional and local competitiveness and productivity growth. The Solent has a talented labour market and benefits from world leading assets including its three universities and a first class further education system. The ability to achieve our 2050 ambition to be the globally leading maritime cluster and at the forefront of innovations to adapt to climate change will depend on a steady supply of relevant skills and ability of our residents to compete in the local labour market. We want to invest in skills and talent development to support locally-significant industries and respond to innovation opportunities.

We need to develop a more dynamic and agile skills ecosystem that closes skills gaps through closer collaboration between education, academia and industry need, especially given the changing requirements of employers, such as the need for more digital skills and reacting to the impacts of automation. Through Solent 2050 we want to roll out existing innovation in careers education for marine and maritime to more of our industry sectors and provide opportunities for people at all stages of their career to build the skills they need to take part in an innovative knowledge-based economy.



Skills and Talent that Employers Need



Retaining young people within our workforce

With a wealth of academic expertise and experience through the presence of three world-leading universities on its doorstep, there is significant scope for the Solent to increase graduate retention by strengthening the path between the private sector and academia. At the same time, more needs to be done to support lower level training opportunities for school leavers. We need to strengthen our future pipeline of talent by encouraging more of the Solent's young population to enter the local workforce.

Increased provision of apprenticeships and courses

While the Solent currently offers an impressive range of higher education opportunities, choices become limited when looking at more practical training courses and apprenticeships. Currently there are two Careers Hubs that provide full coverage of the Solent area, connecting schools with businesses and students with the careers in the local economy. Beyond this, there is also the opportunity to enhance skills-based interventions, such as increasing investment in the provision of apprenticeships, entry-level vocational training programs and work placements that provide 'hands-on' experience. This provides

young people with valuable and transferable skills that will improve their employability, whilst offering business support to firms with appetite to grow.

CECAMM, Isle of Wight

The region is home to the Centre of Excellence for Composites, Advanced Manufacturing and Marine (CECamm) based in Whippingham on the Isle of Wight. It is a specialist centre for engineering, aimed at creating a world-class workforce in response to the skills required by local businesses, including marine and maritime businesses. The Centre works closely with MHI Vestas Offshore Wind in co-developing offshore wind as an economically viable and sustainable energy resource.



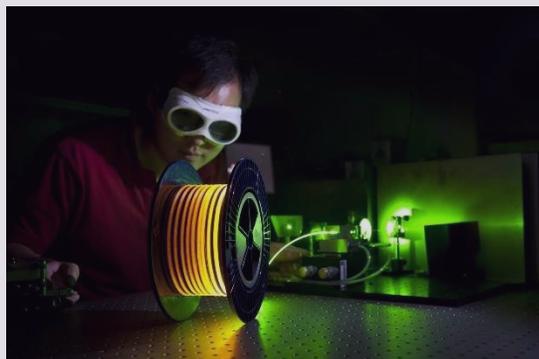
The Centre works closely with MHI Vestas Offshore Wind in co-developing offshore wind as an economically viable and sustainable energy resource.

Better integrating academia with business

There is an abundance of educational facilities in the Solent, however skill gaps persist in the labour market. There is a need to strengthen the link between education and local business, especially as employer requirements continually change in response to technology such as digital skills and automation. As the workforce of the future, our young people will be key to this process, with particular alignment opportunities identified with the Solent's marine and maritime manufacturing and defence industry clusters.

Solent Skills Strategy and Action Plan

Recognising the critical role that skills development plays in providing the opportunities needed for the region's residents, workforce and businesses to remain competitive and grow, our Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) has published a Skills Strategy and Action Plan for the Solent area. Our strategy for transforming skills and developing a world-class talent base in the Solent is framed around four overarching, and overlapping, priorities:



awareness and aspirations; skills brokerage; core sectors and competencies; and digital inclusion. The accompanying Action Plan takes a three-stage approach to reflect short, medium and longer-term programmes of activity over the next five years. An employer-led approach informs the overall direction of travel, through innovative schemes such as the Centre for Civil Engineering and the successful submission to Government for an Institute of Technology in Maritime Technology and Engineering.

Upskilling the existing workforce

We need to develop the skills and capabilities of the Solent's workforce as a key driver of growth and productivity to create a system that delivers the higher technical skills required in a technology-driven economy. In addition to retaining more young people in our workforce, there is also an opportunity to develop a new skills curriculum targeted towards more experienced segments of the Solent's existing workforce, many of which are already highly skilled. This would involve training on new technologies, preparing them to work in more digitised roles, which are less likely to be automated. A successful skills and training strategy could provide a double dividend for the economy; boosting participation in the labour market and boosting productivity for those already in work.

Warsash School of Maritime Science and Engineering, Solent University

The world-leading Warsash Institute of Maritime Science and Engineering is a part of Solent University and boasts state-of-the-art facilities, as well as offering first class education, training, and commercial services to all maritime sectors worldwide. The Institute have recently launched the UK's largest and most sophisticated maritime simulation centre, furnished with the latest cutting-edge hardware and software in the field.

Linked to this, we want to expand mentoring schemes and programmes across the region to encourage the interaction and the exchange of knowledge between young professionals and older, more experienced workers. This would facilitate a skills transfer and give people recently entering the labour market greater insight and ability, improving their employability.

Embracing and Innovating New Technology



Leveraging technology for upskilling

We want to take advantage of technology enhancements to extend education, training and upskilling opportunities to more of the Solent's population. This would have the dual benefit of increasing engagement in education as well as raising the skills levels of the local workforce to be able to more effectively participate within the Solent's future economic growth and prosperity.

A key way of achieving this would be through investing in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs); online learning courses designed to be highly flexible and accessible, to an unlimited number of people. The Solent could benefit significantly from developing and encouraging the uptake of MOOCs, as the diverse landscape can make travel difficult, restricting the upskilling potential for many individuals. The proliferation of MOOCs, coupled with growing accessibility of technology across all age brackets, makes this a viable and well-suited method of upskilling for the Solent, given its demographic and geographic composition.

CEMAST, Solent Enterprise Zone



such as BAE Systems, GE Aviation, Virgin Atlantic and Burgess Marine.

The £12m Centre of Excellence in Engineering, Manufacturing and Advanced Skills Training (CEMAST) opened at the Solent Enterprise Zone in September 2014. Specialising in STEM skills, the college trains more than 900 full and part-time learners, apprentices, and employees per week to support local companies in the development of new engineering and manufacturing solutions. CEMAST is the main learning centre for students in apprenticeship programmes with leading companies

Centre for Cancer Immunology

Scientists have been at the forefront of cancer immunology research at the University of Southampton for over 40 years. In a bid to improve their research even further, the Centre for Cancer Immunology was created in an investment totalling £25 million including £4.5 million funding from the Solent LEP. It is the first centre of its kind in the UK has been located in the Solent in recognition of the university's prominence in the field.



Placemaking



As the Solent develops a world class talent base to match our 2050 vision for the Solent to be the globally leading maritime cluster and at the forefront of innovations to adapt to climate change, the role of placemaking will become increasingly important in terms of both talent retention and attraction.

Quality places retain and attract skilled and talented people. Increasingly, talented workers expect to live in communities that have recreational and cultural amenities, are safe, accessible, attractive, vibrant and offer a strong quality of life. Through our Solent 2050 Strategy we therefore need to ensure that employment and skills opportunities are accompanied by a competitive and affordable housing offer, and the prospects of desirable places to live across the Solent.

Our Future Actions

To achieve this priority, our programme of activity will focus on the following actions:

1. Work with partners to deliver the **Solent Institute of Technology (IoT)** to support vocational professional pathways into the Solent's maritime industry as well as associated advanced manufacturing, digital and technical pathways. This will spearhead the delivery of higher technical education in STEM subjects to underpin productivity growth within the Solent's world leading marine and maritime economy.

2. Deliver **world class employer-led training facilities** for our key growth sectors as part of the Solent Freeport and its flagship **Green Growth Institute**. This will help to meet the government's objective for Freeports to create high-skilled jobs in ports and the areas around them.
3. Support **Solent-wide skills development initiatives that place local employers at the centre of talent proposals** to ensure the local skills system delivers the skills our employers need.
4. Through our local networks and partnerships, deliver **targeted support to those sectors experiencing chronic skills shortages** (such as logistics, health care, hospitality) in order to boost the supply of suitably qualified local labour.
5. Work with the Solent Skills Advisory Panel to implement our **Skills Strategy and Action Plan** to support local educational establishments in developing skills programmes that fit the changing nature of key strategic opportunities including the marine and maritime sector.
6. Secure flexibilities in the **Apprenticeship levy** to support the development of skills and talent in priority sectors and to support re-training, particularly within the fields of autonomy and digital.
7. Work in partnership with the Careers and Enterprise Company to deliver the **Enterprise Adviser Network** that actively matches Solent business leaders with local schools and colleges to provide access to meaningful employer encounters and experiences.

(6) An outstanding business environment

The Solent’s diverse economic foundation supports a varied business base and one with strong potential for growth. Whilst the marine and maritime sector represents a particular strength, the presence of other key growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing, aerospace, digital and computer science has enabled the Solent to build a track record in translating innovation and new technologies into commercial success.

The outbreak of Covid-19 and resulting pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for the Solent’s business base; both immediately in terms of survival and over the longer term to regain business efficiency and productivity. Some of our key sectors such as the visitor economy and maritime (cruise industry, ports etc) have been affected disproportionately by enforced lock-downs and knock-on impacts on economic activity. Some parts of our business community have been struggling to achieve their potential, with sluggish enterprise growth and poor business survival rates amongst some sectors well before the pandemic, and this challenge becomes even more pertinent in the aftermath of Covid-19. Our response through Solent 2050 focuses on resilience and continuity in the short term for those business sectors still recovering from the pandemic, followed by a longer-term emphasis on productivity growth as the economy returns to growth and transitions to a ‘new normal’.

We want to facilitate a world-class business environment in the Solent that enables businesses of all sizes and sectors to thrive. This will be underpinned by a palpable culture of creativity and innovation and complemented by an exceptional business support offer that inspires our businesses to realise their growth ambitions right here in the Solent. This priority clearly complements and reinforces other priorities in our strategy and we see significant opportunities for our business base to contribute to these growth ambitions over the coming years.



Fareham Innovation Centre, Solent Enterprise Zone

Opened in 2015, the Fareham Innovation Centre provides state-of-the-art workspace and business support for growing companies in the marine, aerospace and engineering sectors. Following remarkable success of the innovation centre to date, a second phase of development has recently secured part funding from the Solent LEP to expand the existing accommodation and provide move on space to enable businesses grown in the innovation centre to remain in the area. The new 3,400m² building will accommodate 33 offices and 5 workshops tailored to the needs of businesses engaged in developing new and innovative technologies.



A Celebration of our Cultural, Heritage and Creative Assets



The Solent boasts a vibrant cultural scene stemming from its historical heritage and local leisure activities, and more recently this has been complemented by a flourishing creative and arts sector. The variety of creative industries across the region, such as photography, graphic design, print design and illustration, is important for the creation of dynamic and diverse places that can successfully attract a talented workforce and business investment.

Most of our creative businesses are small, therefore collaborating and sharing ideas with other businesses is a vital part of growth and innovation. Provision of high quality, flexible workspace is critical in maintaining a competitive business environment and through Solent 2050 we want to ensure our thriving creative sector has access to world class creative workspaces and hubs where businesses can exchange ideas and immerse themselves in innovation, engendering a creative environment that can contribute to the vibrancy and attractiveness of places.

We know that our smaller businesses have been at particular risk from the Covid-19 pandemic and it is crucial that the Solent does not lose its creative capacity to support longer term productivity improvements and economic diversification. Our short-term business support interventions will be particularly important for this segment of the Solent's business base as they continue to resume trading over the coming months.

Improved Connectivity



The Solent's ability to offer an outstanding, world class business environment is underpinned by strong connectivity – both physical and digital – to enable our businesses to operate efficiently and productively.

Our unrivalled international gateways mean that we already benefit from strong global connectivity, but we need to improve local connectivity within the Solent to better integrate our knowledge hubs, to facilitate collaboration between different businesses and industries, and to expand the labour pool available to facilitate business growth.

A key focus of Solent 2050 is therefore around enhancing local transport infrastructure through pioneering technological innovation, sustainability and future mobility options that support the efficient movement of people and goods across our sub-region. The benefits from this will be far reaching, reinforcing the Solent's outstanding business environment as well as our other key priorities such as coastal renaissance and decarbonisation.

Digital connectivity is equally important, and through Solent 2050 we are committed to supporting business investment in faster broadband and rolling out 5G and gigabit fibre throughout the region.

Strengthened Natural Capital and Net Zero



The Solent's natural capital offering is strong, equipped with a coastal location and a world-class environment. We also have a thriving rural economy and a diverse business community operating within areas such as the New Forest and Isle of Wight. This provides us with significant competitive advantage as a business location and through our strategy for Solent 2050 we need to be smarter at leveraging our natural capital assets to generate opportunities for productivity growth within our business base.

This includes harnessing our natural capital assets to pioneer clean growth technology and adaptation, drawing on our unrivalled strategic location for developing renewable energy, with particular strengths and opportunities around wind and solar energy. We already have a number of globally-leading enterprises leading the charge in the Solent but we can do more to develop a wider ecosystem that can attract further investment and innovative activity.

As part of our ambition to achieve coastal renaissance, we want to protect and strengthen our natural capital by pioneering new technologies to tackle the environmental challenges that many of our coastal communities face from coastal erosion and flooding due to rising sea levels. Our business base is well placed to respond to this challenge.

An immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been a marked improvement in the health of our natural environment and we see our business community playing a leading role in helping to embed and safeguard these short-term benefits within the Solent's longer term clean growth agenda.

Skills and Talent that Employers Need



A skilled and resilient workforce represents an essential component of an outstanding business environment in the Solent and will need to evolve and adapt as emerging technologies and growth opportunities become increasingly embedded within the area's economic base.

The Solent is home to a thriving research community through its universities and research institutions which represent major employers in their own right but also support the generation of new businesses and support existing businesses to thrive. Yet we know that our resident base currently lacks many of the skills that will be required to drive up productivity and support high value businesses to grow.

Through Solent 2050 we set out a strategy to drive investment into upskilling to ensure our workforce is equipped with the skills to fuel our locally distinctive ambitions to sustain a world leading marine and maritime economy, to pioneer approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation and rejuvenate our coastal economy. An underpinning theme is our commitment to develop a more dynamic and agile skills ecosystem that closes skills gaps through closer collaboration between education, academia and industry need, especially given the changing requirements of employers, such as the need for more digital skills and reacting to the impacts of automation.

University of Portsmouth Future Technology Centre

The Solent LEP has provided £1.05m towards the impressive £11m facility which will train the innovative engineers of the future through hands-on experience of specialist technology to develop creative answers to global challenges. The Future Technology Centre will be the hub for delivering the University's unique higher-level qualifications in innovation engineering in an industrial-standard training environment. LEP investment in the centre will open up the world-class facilities to assist companies to take advantage of new production technologies, translating innovation into business growth.



Embracing and Innovating New Technology



Our track record in innovation already underpins the Solent's status and reputation as an attractive business location and we want to elevate our position on the UK and global stage by pioneering the application of cutting-edge technology to drive transformative growth of our economy over the coming years. Through this strategy we identify particular opportunities for productivity improvements through embracing and innovating new technology to support day-to-day efficiencies and global market diversification within some of our key sectors such as marine and maritime and clean growth.

Within the aftermath of Covid-19 there are particular opportunities to embrace digital technology to support business resilience as traditional operating models are no longer feasible and parts of our business base have to adapt to new forms of trading. We are committed to working with our businesses to embed technology to enable more effective remote working and to transition to e-commerce platforms where applicable to protect productive capacity over the short term. We have already seen local businesses embracing technology to respond to the health crisis induced by Covid-19 (for instance by manufacturing personal protection equipment (PPE) for frontline health workers) and there will be further opportunities as the UK looks to its knowledge-based industries to develop longer term solutions to combat the ongoing virus threat.

Solent Maritime Innovation Gateway

This ground-breaking collaboration between Maritime UK Solent, Solent Maritime Enterprise Zone and Connected Places Catapult will ensure the Solent's maritime cluster maximises its full potential on the global stage. The Solent Maritime Innovation Gateway (Solent MIG) has been designed to act as a catalyst for transforming the Solent

Maritime region, and co-ordinate the business ecosystem by connecting and interacting regionally, nationally and internationally with investors and innovators. It is the result of a pioneering partnership to create a single point of access and an enterprise approach which promotes the unique strengths of the Solent's maritime industries on a global stage.



Placemaking



An outstanding business environment will need to be supported by presence of high quality places and communities across the Solent that appeal as destinations where people want to live, work, visit and invest. Within a globally competitive business environment, the Solent will need to work hard to ‘stand out from the crowd’ and showcase its business credentials, and placemaking represents an inherent part of this mix.

The Solent benefits from a number of key site opportunities to accommodate new economic clusters and boost business activity in areas such as Gosport, the Isle of Wight, and the Waterside. Ambitious plans are also underway to develop new communities for instance the Intelligent Merchant City at Fawley Waterside which will pioneer innovative ways of working and in time, provide good practice examples for other parts of the Solent to replicate.

Our Future Actions

To achieve this priority, we will focus on the following key actions:

1. **Expand the package of business support and funding opportunities available** for Solent businesses via the Solent Growth Hub and secure additional national funding for businesses as government interventions emerge.
2. Establish a **Trade and Investment Hub** for businesses seeking to develop new business relationships on an international basis, building on the opportunities presented by Solent Freeport.
3. Work with industry partners to develop **sector-specific interventions** tailored to the short term needs and priorities of our strategic clusters including marine and maritime, visitor economy and advanced manufacturing, supported by development of peer-to-peer business networks to facilitate cross sector working and diversification.
4. Through the Solent Growth Hub, deliver a locally responsive **Business Resilience Programme** including targeted support to enable firms to adapt to new technologies (such as enhancing digital and e-commerce capabilities), diversify or access new markets (including exporting opportunities) and support business start-ups amongst residents re-entering the labour market as a result of Covid-19.
5. Facilitate a **world-class, globally competitive trading environment** for businesses as part of the Solent Freeport, and support the landing of new businesses and new investment attracted to our Freeport.
6. Establish a Solent-wide Taskforce to explore issues of **diversity in the workplace** and how our region’s business base can lead the way in promoting equal labour market opportunities for all of our communities.
7. Ensure our businesses have access to the talent and skills they need to grow through delivering a world-class **Solent Institute of Technology**.
8. Establish a **Solent supply chain network** to facilitate resilient, inclusive local supply chains and a collaborative approach to procuring local products and services.

9. Work with local partners to elevate the contribution that the Solent's social enterprises can make to supporting economic recovery and growth, by establishing a **Social Enterprise Economy working group** and exploring opportunities to develop a dedicated Social Enterprise Hub in the Solent.
10. Explore opportunities for commercialising new ideas through the LEP funded **Zero to One programme**, run by the University of Southampton's Web Science Institute.

These specific actions are supported and complemented by the range of other measures to enhance the Solent's business environment as set out in Solent 2050's other priorities that focus on the marine and maritime sector, clean growth, coastal renaissance, visitor and cultural economy, skills and health and wellbeing.

(7) Health and wellbeing at the heart of economic success

Our experience of navigating the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis has significantly elevated the health and wellbeing agenda, which has become increasingly recognised as a critical underpinning ingredient of economic resilience and performance. Going forward, and as we look to increase local productivity and support our communities to prosper in a fast-changing world, we want health and wellbeing in its broadest sense to form a key part of Solent 2050’s DNA.

The healthcare sector makes an important contribution to the Solent economy and has risen magnificently to the Covid-19 challenge and public health response, for instance through Covid-19 vaccine trials led by the University of Southampton and drone delivery trials between St. Mary’s Hospital on the Isle of Wight and the mainland.

Recent months have also emphasised the stark health and wellbeing inequalities that exist between and within our communities, and the need to embed healthier ways of living and working as we look to level up opportunity across all parts of the Solent. Related to this, we want to embrace a more inclusive approach to regeneration and economic prosperity going forward, one that recognises the value of a diverse resident and workforce base, and that champions and learns from key movements such as Black Lives Matter.

As the sector has become more pronounced throughout the pandemic and the pace of change has accelerated in response, we need to ensure that the Solent’s health and wellbeing assets and business base more broadly, are equipped to seize growth and innovation opportunities as society adapts to a ‘new normal’.



Skills and Talent that Employers Need



Our workforce has had to adapt to the significant challenges to day-to-day economic activity posed by the Covid-19 pandemic including the immediate shift to home working for many workers, and balancing competing demands associated with family and childcare responsibilities during the various periods of lockdown. Whilst these short-term adjustments have begun to revert back to ‘normal’ more recently, the pandemic has rapidly accelerated other structural shifts in working practices such as more hybrid and remote patterns of working which are here to stay.

We therefore need to ensure that our talented workforce base is equipped with the skills and tools they need to positively embrace these changes and more proactively promote positive mental health amongst businesses and employees across the Solent.

A more explicit focus on health and wellbeing also provides new skills development opportunities that we must explore and facilitate, by engaging with education and training providers across the Solent to examine particular skills innovation opportunities associated with key growth sectors such as life sciences, social care and medical technology.

Portsmouth Medical Education Facility

Proposals are underway by Portsmouth University and Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust to create a new multimillion-pound medical school in the city to train the next generation of doctors as part of a major strategy to 'level up' Portsmouth. The aim of the new health hub would be to revolutionise medical training in the city and attract talented students from deprived communities who ordinarily may not consider a career in medicine. The project is bringing together some of the city's biggest partners in industry, health, politics and business to form a new alliance to tackle long-term educational inequality, provide and support initiatives to fill health and care gaps, as well as boosting the economy, promoting diversity and opening up university institutions to the public.



Embracing and Innovating New Technology



As healthcare technology continues to develop and become more innovative, this provides a major opportunity for our existing knowledge assets in the Solent to play a greater contribution to driving productivity growth and prosperity for the benefit of our local resident and business base. We have seen many examples of our healthcare and technology strengths come to the fore through the area's health response to the Covid-19 pandemic, through for instance Covid-19 vaccine trials led by the University of Southampton; we need to build on these successes by making more of the ground-breaking research that takes place across the Solent, and bringing partners together to support a nationally-leading cluster for innovation within the sphere of health and wellbeing.

Placemaking



Success of our strategy will rely upon creating and maintaining strong, healthy and resilient communities where people want to live, work, visit and invest. We know that the Solent faces some stark existing health inequalities with some communities struggling to achieve their potential as a direct result. A key focus of our Solent 2050 Strategy is therefore on tackling these inequalities and removing related barriers to economic and labour market participation, some of which may have changed as a result of the socio-economic disruption brought about by Covid-19.

Solent Wellbeing Scheme

In partnership with FSB Hampshire & Isle of Wight, the Solent LEP launched a new Solent Business Wellbeing Scheme to provide all Solent business owners access to a free and confidential health and wellbeing support service. The series of online events showcase simple strategies that small business owners can put in place to look after themselves and overcome the stresses brought about by running their business through the challenging circumstances associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.



Our Future Actions

To achieve this priority, we will focus on the following key actions:

1. Work with local partners to **monitor the evolving impacts of new ways of working post Covid-19 upon the region's business and workforce base** and co-ordinate targeted intervention to raise awareness and take-up of health and wellbeing support services, including opportunities to better connect our remote workforce.
2. Via the Solent Growth Hub, raise awareness of the many existing resources available to **promote positive mental health amongst businesses and employees** across the Solent, including the 'mental health toolkit for employers' developed by Public Health England to help employers take positive actions to build a culture that champions good mental health.
3. Explore the potential to introduce a **specific health and wellbeing dimension into the LEP's Assurance Framework** and associated criteria for funding.
4. Working with the Solent Skills Advisory Panel, **explore the skills development opportunities associated with a more explicit focus on health and wellbeing**, engaging with education and training providers across the Solent to examine particular skills innovation opportunities as society adapts to a 'new normal'.
5. Via the Solent's existing business, skills and careers networks, establish a **health and wellbeing ambassadors programme** to champion the importance of good physical and mental health and wellbeing within all aspects of our economy, and provide our ambassadors with the tools, resources and support they need to raise awareness, promote and share good practice.

5. Implementation and Funding

We will work with national and local stakeholders to deliver on priority projects that will deliver progress and build momentum towards our vision.

5.1 Implementation

This section outlines how the Solent 2050 strategy will be delivered. It outlines broad priorities for interventions, describes the stakeholders who will be involved in shaping and delivering the priorities of our strategy and sets out the approach to financing and funding arrangements. The following chapter describes how progress will be monitored and evaluated.

Solent 2050 is designed to be an ambitious, high-level strategy that seeks to remain relevant in a changing world. Many of the initiatives outlined in this document are projects for future decades and the technologies they will bring. In the short term we must focus on tackling the structural deficiencies and challenges that are holding back productivity growth within the Solent, whilst also planning for an ambitious longer-term vision that recognises the Solent's tremendous potential for driving UK growth and competitiveness on a global stage.

Although it is not possible to outline a precise timetable for implementation as part of this plan, we have identified a number of short-term actions within each of the seven priorities as a mechanism for mobilising action over the coming months and years:

A world-leading marine and maritime economy

The Solent will aim to lead the way in developing the ambitions of the Maritime 2050 strategy, maximising the short to medium term growth and innovation opportunities brought about through establishing and delivering a Solent Freeport.

Pioneering approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation

An important part of our offer to central government is a thought experiment on what climate change may mean for the environment and industry in the Solent, leveraging off the expertise that exists within the region's universities and private sector. This exercise will seek to draw out lessons relevant for regions across the UK and internationally.

The UK's capital for coastal renaissance

Exploring innovative new green transport solutions – for instance making greater use of the waterways, as well as developments such as drone corridors – are a priority for connecting coastal communities. The roll out of 5G networks is also a priority in this area.

A thriving visitor, creative and cultural economy

Working with the industry to establish a unified identity and offering for visitors to the Solent is a priority, in particular better engagement with the population of cruise visitors. This will be supported by crucial pieces of investment, such as the recently approved expansion of Southampton Airport.

Developing a world-class talent base

Increasing the provision of apprenticeships and courses, encouraging better integration of business and academic providers and encouraging mentor-mentee relationships are all priorities in making progress towards this priority, as we deliver our Skills Strategy and Action Plan for the Solent.

A world class business environment

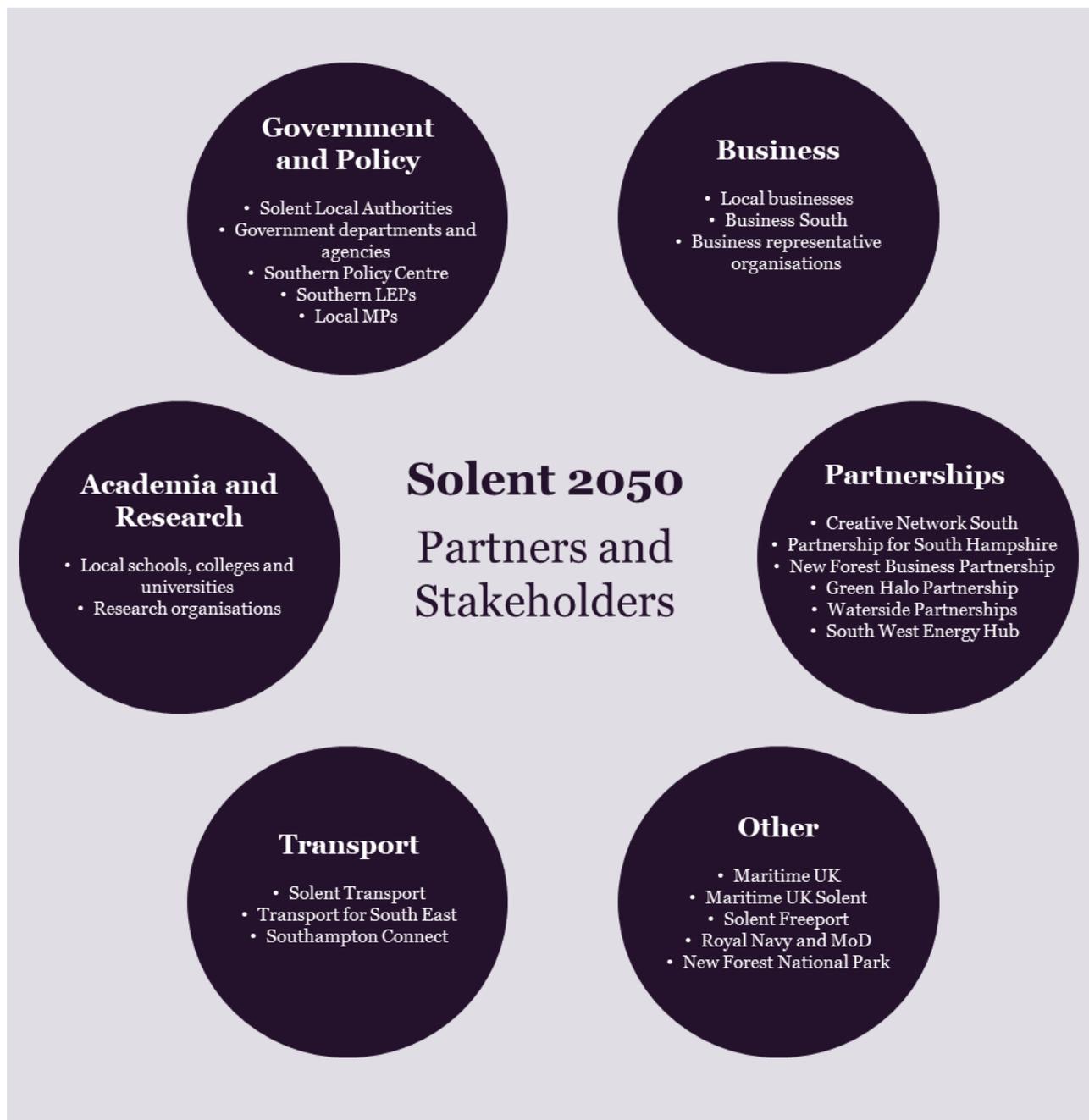
Responding to the ongoing economic challenges by providing a comprehensive business support package and resilience programme, and facilitating a world-class business environment in the Solent over the longer that enables businesses of all sizes and sectors to thrive.

Health and wellbeing at the heart of economic success

Embedding healthier ways of living and working as we look to level up opportunity across all parts of the Solent and ensuring that the Solent's health and wellbeing assets and business base more broadly are equipped to seize growth and innovation opportunities as society adapts to a 'new normal'.

5.2 Working with Partners and Stakeholders

Realisation of the Solent 2050 will not be possible without consultation and collaboration with local and national stakeholders. The diagram below outlines our network of stakeholders and potential partners, which will be vital to utilise when delivering our vision.



5.3 Funding and Financing

This strategy document has outlined a wide range of initiatives, all of which aim to build towards our vision of how we want the Solent to look in 2050. The diversity of these initiatives means that a variety of different funding and financing models will be required.

For some projects – for instance significant pieces of infrastructure investment – central government funding is likely to be an important part of the picture. For smaller initiatives that will generate clear revenue streams, private financing or public-private partnerships are likely to play a bigger role.

We are also looking to build the international profile of the Solent to attract overseas investment into the region, through key initiatives such as the Solent Freeport and Solent Maritime Innovation Gateway.

We will look to work with central and local government to unlock sources of funding and financing - both public and private – that will help support progress towards the Solent 2050 goals. For example, we look forward to engaging with DfT on the Maritime 2050 sector deal and what this will mean for major ports such as Southampton and Portsmouth.

5.4 Asks and Offers

The successful implementation of Solent 2050 will increase our region's contribution to national economic growth, enabling the UK to become more competitive on a global stage and addressing the economic recovery challenges set out in the Government's Build Back Better plan for growth. We want to work collaboratively with government and set out overleaf the significant potential that the Solent has to offer and where we are seeking specific government support to help realise this potential.

<i>What the Solent can offer</i>	<i>Our 'asks' of government</i>
<p>A world-leading marine and maritime cluster, building on the unique existing strengths of the Solent that already contribute £5.8 billion of GVA each year.</p>	<p>Support to implement the Solent Freeport in 2022, following development of a full business case.</p> <p>Work with the area to deliver the Solent Institute of Technology to ensure employment and training opportunities are created within the marine and maritime sector over the medium to longer term.</p> <p>Investment in a state-of-the-art terminal at Portsmouth International Port to ensure the country's best-connected port remains competitive on a global stage.</p>
<p>A commitment to transition the Solent to a Net Zero carbon economy by 2050, and Southampton by 2030, by enhancing economic resilience to climate change, improving energy efficiency and stimulating innovation across a range of clean growth activities and applications.</p>	<p>Funding and support to enable the Solent to achieve its 10 Point Plan for Building Back Greener in the Solent.</p> <p>Funding and support to launch the Solent as a national pilot/test bed area to develop a Nature Based Solutions Hub to trailblaze our green recovery and transition to a zero carbon economy.</p>
<p>To pioneer the next generation of coastal-urban living by adopting innovative practices and smart technologies in terms of improved transport and digital connectivity, and coastal living.</p>	<p>Funding and support for the Solent to accelerate delivery of key development and regeneration projects, and investment to improve transport and digital connectivity, through funding allocations from the Levelling-up Fund, UK Community Renewal and Shared Prosperity Funds and/or other equivalent economic support measures.</p>
<p>To bring forward pilots for new virtual learning environments to maintain and grow the Solent's R&D capabilities – working with further and higher education partners – that can in turn provide a test-bed to enable application at scale across the UK, as part of delivering our Skills Strategy and Action Plan.</p>	<p>Funding and support for the Solent in line with the government's policy commitments to put employers at the heart of post-16 skills through the Skills for Jobs White Paper⁵.</p>
<p>To develop a distinctive tourism, creative and cultural offering for the Solent that capitalises on our unique assets, to facilitate a thriving visitor economy that also raises the profile of our superb creative businesses and cultural offer.</p>	<p>The designation of Southampton as City of Culture 2025, celebrating Southampton's cultural, community, arts and heritage offer and linking these with wider growth opportunities associated with the Solent visitor economy.</p>
<p>An exemplar regional economy in embedding healthier ways of living and working as we look to level up opportunity across all parts of the Solent and with the rest of the UK.</p>	<p>Support to create a new dedicated Medical Education Facility in Portsmouth to train the next generation of doctors as part of a major strategy to 'level up' Portsmouth.</p>

⁵ Department for Education, [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#) (January 2021)

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Solent LEP will put into place a robust evaluation plan, to monitor the progress of agreed projects and make strategic changes accordingly.

The Solent 2050 Strategy will build in a proportionate and transparent monitoring and evaluation plan from the start, specifying what success looks like and plans for tracking progress and learning for the future. This approach will be designed proportionately to the scope and scale of the policies proposed.

Once the design of the monitoring and evaluation process has been completed, the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership will set out its approach to the evaluation of the 2050 Strategy against the following two key objectives:

- The Solent is able to increase its overall productivity and realise its unique potential; and
- The Solent is able to set out the spatial impacts of its policies across cities, towns and rural areas, demonstrating how all communities will contribute to and benefit from economic prosperity.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be closely linked to, and integrated with, the LEP's Annual Performance Review process, which assesses each LEP in the country annually in terms of Delivery, Governance, and Strategy. This will focus in particular upon the following four activities required by LEPs to support the development and delivery of their Economic Strategy:

- **Strategy:** Developing an evidence-based economic strategy that identifies local strengths and challenges, future opportunities and the action needed to boost productivity, earning power and competitiveness across their area;
- **Allocation of funds:** Identifying and developing investment opportunities; prioritising the award of local growth funding; and monitoring and evaluating the impacts of its activities to improve productivity across the local economy;
- **Co-ordination:** Using their convening power, for example to co-ordinate responses to economic shocks; and bringing together partners from the private, public and third sectors; and
- **Advocacy:** Collaborating with a wide-range of local partners to act as an informed and independent voice for their area.

Appendix A: Consultees

49
5 by 5 Associates
24:7 Living UK
2MV Logistics
Action Coach
Action Hampshire
Adido
Admiral Lord Nelson School
AECOM
Ageas Bowl
Ageas Insurance
Airbus
Aligned HR Services
Aluminium Boats
ARC Consulting
Arkenley Lane
Artswork
Arup
Associated British Ports
Autism Hampshire
Autumn Live
Babcock International Group
BAE Systems
Barclays
Barratt Homes
Barton Peveril Sixth Form College
BBC
BCM
BDO
Beaulieu Motor Museum
BEIS
Berthon Boat Company
Best Business English
Beyond Encryption
Blake Morgan
BLH
Bournemouth University
Bridgemary School
British Business Bank
British Marine
Britten Norman Limited
Brockenhurst College
Brookfield Community School
Business Doctors
Business South
BV-UK
Cabinet Office
Cantell School
Carnival UK
Carswell Gould
Cass Productions
CBI
CDA
Chamberlayne College for the Arts
Charles Hope Apartments
Cheryl Butler
Cities and Local Growth Unit
Clean Air Southampton
CoachDirectors
Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership
Colt International Limited
Community Empowerment
Community First Wessex
Company of Makers
Condor Ferries
Construction Surveying & Consultancy
Cooper Hart
Corrotherm International
Cowes Enterprise College
Creative Network South
Crestwood Community School
Crofton School
Crystal Spring Consumer Division
CSW Group
D&T Precision Engineering
DA Training and Consultancy
Deacon Design
Deep South Media
DEFRA
Denique TS
Department for International Trade
Department for Work and Pensions
Destination Southampton Conference Bureau
Diamond Print and Mail
Diocese of Portsmouth
Dorset Growth Hub
DP World
Dragonfly
DSTL
Dyer and Butler
East Hampshire District Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Eastleigh College
EBP South
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Education Development Trust
Eidos Consulting
EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership
Empactis
Enable Ability
Energiseme
English Heritage
Enterprise First
Enterprise South
Environment Agency
Ernst & Young
Escape Yachting
Exbury Gardens and Steam Railway
Export UK
ExxonMobil
Fareham Borough Council
Fareham College
Fareham Council
Fawley Waterside
First Hampshire, Dorset & Berkshire
Firwood SCI
FLIR Systems
Flitetrak Limited
Forty1 kitesurfing
FSB
Go New Forest
Go South Coast
Go Southampton
Good Mental Health
Gosport and Fareham Multi-Academy Trust
Gosport Borough Council
Gosport Council
Gosport Labour Party
Griffon Hoverwork
Gunwharf Quays
Hamble Aerostructure
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
Hampshire conference Bureau
Hampshire County Council
Hampshire Cultural Trust
Hampshire Fare
Hampshire Rural Forum
Hants County Council
Havant & South Downs College
Havant Academy
Havant and South Downs College
Havant Borough Council
Hellier Langston
Hendy kia
Hentys Corporate
Highbury College
Highways England
Hilsea Lido
HIT Training
Hive Portsmouth
HJS Solutions
Holloway Iffle & Mitchell
Hover Travel
HPW
HTP Apprenticeship College
HW Conveyancing Searches
IBM
India Business Group
Innova Design and Build ltd
Inspiring Enterprise
Intraserve Ltd & First UK
Isle of Wight Chamber
ipconsult
Irwin Mitchell
Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce
Isle of Wight College
Isle of Wight Council
Isle of Wight Studio School
Itchen Sixth Form College
James Cowper Kreston
JLL
Kaizen Effect
Kern Ltd
Kier
Knights Brown
KTN UK

L3 Harris	Peoply Limited	Springfield School
Lakeside School	PETA	Stagecoach South
Lambert Smith Hampton	Peter Ashley Activities Centres Trust	Stride Treglown
Landacre Devs	Peter Brett	Strippy Lightbulb CIC
Landsec	Phoenix Systems UK	Sustrans
Lanson Consultants	Port of Southampton	Tapnell Farm
Learning Curve Group	Portsmouth City Council	Tekever Ltd
Lee Peck Media	Portsmouth College	Test Valley Council
Leonardo	Portsmouth Guildhall	TISE
Liftshare	Portsmouth Hospital	The Academy
LiveLink Technologies	Portsmouth International Port	The Business Magazine
Make UK	Portsmouth Museum	The Careers and Enterprise Company
Makers Guild	Position Systems Limited	The Garlic Farm
Marina Projects	PRIAM	The Glow Studio
Marine South East	Proactive Trading (Hampshire)	The Henry Cort Community College
Maritimeindustries	Propernomics	The Key
Marriott Hotels	Puma PE	The Marketing Collective
Marwell	PwC	The Mary Rose
Mary Rose Trust	QinetiQ	The News, Portsmouth
Mayfield School	Quattro Foods	The Polygon School
Meachers Global Logistics	RAD Propulsion	The Rees Group
Medina College & Sixth Form	Radian	The Seaview Hotel
Metro Bank	Ramboll UK	Thornden School
MGPS Commercial	Real Estate Strategies	Totton College
MHI Vetas Offshore	Red Funnel	Tourism South East
Microlink PC UK	ReesLeisure	Toynbee School
MicroProcessor Engineering	Richardson Yacht	Traco UK
Mogstar Marketing	Rowner Community Trust	Transport Works
Morgan Sindall Group	Royal HaskoningDHV	Turley
National Museum of the Royal Navy	Royal Hotel	University Hospital Southampton
National Oceanography Centre	Royal Navy	University of Portsmouth
National Regional Property Group	Saab Sea Eye	University of Southampton
Natural England	Savills	University of Westminster
Natural Enterprise	Seekers Create	UTC Portsmouth
NatWest	Set Squared	Vail Williams
NCFE	SGN	Vectis Ventures
Network Rail	Shaping Portsmouth	Ventor Botanic Garden
New Forest Business Partnership	Shoosmiths	Vikoma International
New Forest District Council	SIRIO Business Transformation	Visit Britain
New Forest National Park Authority	Smart Training & Recruitment	Visit England
New Milton Council	SMR-Automotive	Visit Isle of Wight
New Place Hotel	Social Enterprise Link	Warblington School
NHS Southampton Hospital	Society of Maritime Industries	Warren Boats
NOCN	SoCo Music Project	Wartsila
Northrop Grumman	Solent Business Academy	Wates
Ocean World Travel	Solent Gateway	We Make Southampton
OFG Limited	Solent Local Enterprise Partnership	Wessex AHSN
Oil Spill Response Limited	Solent Steel	Wessex heartbeat
Ordnance Survey	Solent Transport	West Quay
Osprey Technical Consulting	Solent University	WFBA
Oxford Innovation	South Western Railway	Wheatsheaf Trust
Paris Smith	Southampton City College	Wightfibre
Parity Trust	Southampton City Council	Wightlink
Park Community School	Southampton International Airport	Wildern School
Park Families	Southampton Marine and Maritime Institute	Winchester City Council
Parliament	Southern Water	Worthwhile Works
Pathfinder Personnel	Southpoint Films	WSX Enterprise
Paultons Park	Sovereign Housing	XCX Consult
PCSG Limited	SPI Lasers	Yarty Cordials

Appendix B: Mapping Solent 2050 with Levelling Up White Paper Missions

	Solent 2050 Strategic Priority							
	A world-leading marine and maritime economy	Pioneering approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonisation	The UK's capital of coastal renaissance	A thriving visitor, creative and cultural economy	Developing a world-class talent base	An outstanding business environment	Health and wellbeing at the heart of economic success	
Levelling Up Mission	Living Standards	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
	Research & Development (R&D)	✓	✓			✓	✓	
	Transport Infrastructure		✓	✓	✓		✓	
	Digital Connectivity	✓		✓	✓		✓	
	Education			✓		✓		
	Skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Health			✓				✓
	Well-being		✓	✓	✓			✓
	Pride in Place	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
	Housing		✓	✓			✓	✓
	Crime			✓				✓
	Local Leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

