



heart of the  
south west

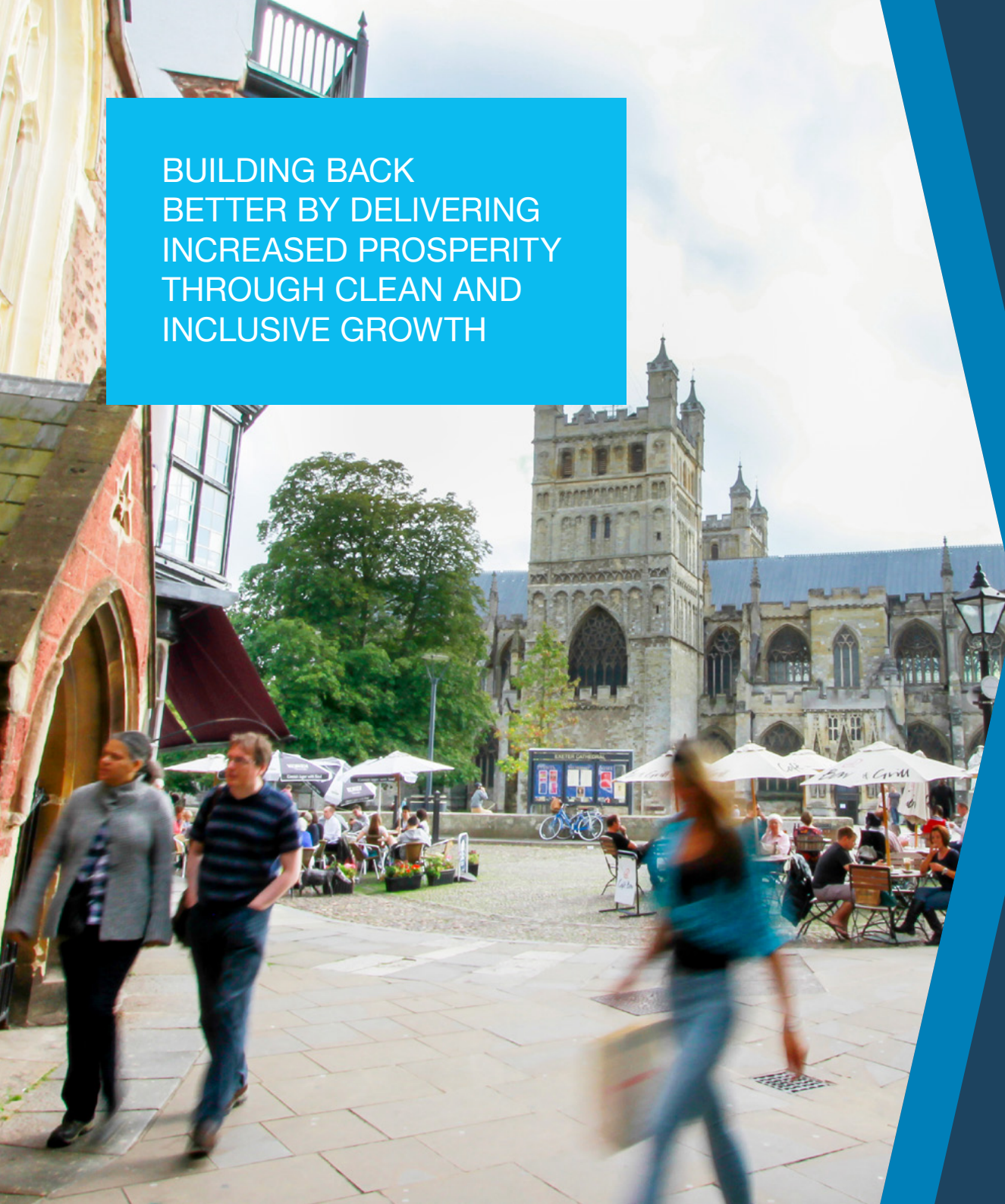
# Build Back Better

TRANSFORMATIONAL  
OPPORTUNITIES IN  
THE HEART OF THE  
SOUTH WEST

**Leaders**  
for the Heart of the South West

 heart of the  
south west  
local enterprise partnership





## BUILDING BACK BETTER BY DELIVERING INCREASED PROSPERITY THROUGH CLEAN AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

## INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has been a dislocation as severe as any ever experienced. As well as the personal cost, the economic and societal impact has been profound with the crisis extending longer than many had thought and increasingly contributing to significant inflationary pressures, labour shortages which are being exacerbated by further international instability.

It has exposed a number of our pre-existing structural challenges and there is considerable uncertainty over the longer term effect on parts of our economy such as the high street. At the same time, there has been a positive acceleration of some trends, such as digital growth, with new opportunities opening up. Huge investment went into immediate protection from the worst economic impact of the pandemic but it is essential that at the same time, we make similarly strenuous efforts to ensure the area's economy provides better jobs and better incomes as the recovery gathers pace; future prosperity and resilience demands this. Within this context Build Back Better therefore sets out Heart of the South West's key transformational opportunities to unlock investment, boost job creation promote Global Britain and deliver carbon-net zero in response to the climate change emergency declared by many of our local partners. It should be considered in conjunction with local recovery plans and is particularly focused on medium and longer term revitalising and growing the HotSW economy as opposed to immediate recovery. It is supported by leading figures from the region in business, academia, the social economy and the public sector and is led by the Heart of the SW LEP. It updates key priorities in our agreed Local Industrial Strategy but maintains our commitment to increasing prosperity through increased productivity by clean and inclusive growth.



## COVID IMPACT ON THE HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST ECONOMY – KEY FACTS

The mix of businesses in much of our area is skewed towards those sectors most exposed to the crisis such as tourism, hospitality, retail, manufacturing and construction, with smaller firms in the area continuing to be most adversely affected. This made the immediate impact more severe with recovery likely to take longer than elsewhere. Exports in the South West saw a steeper contraction than seen nationally. The prospects for recovery have been made significantly more challenging through headwinds from sharply rising costs particularly in energy, labour and skills shortages. The crisis affected those furthest from the labour market, the young and the poorest most significantly, with a disproportionate impact also seen in some geographic areas. This analysis has been confirmed by a range of commentators, including the IFS in the autumn 2020 Green Budget <https://www.ifs.org.uk/green-budget>



# WHAT DOES BUILDING BACK BETTER MEAN TO US?



Extensive efforts have been made by Government and local authorities to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and we continue to work with and support them on recovery plans for the hardest hit places and sectors. These collective efforts will help our communities and businesses recover and ensure that national initiatives work for us. But it is also essential to look ahead – to innovate, plan and invest now for the sort of long-term future our area needs and to affirm the key transformational opportunities that will turbo-charge the future in addition to those local recovery initiatives. Build Back Better is not on its own a recovery plan but is rooted in the ambitious vision of our Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) which has a distinctive focus to deliver on clean and inclusive growth. The robust evidence base – confirmed through the Covid-19 pandemic – identifies Energy, High Value Engineering and Digital as the dynamic heart of our local economy with opportunities to drive clean and inclusive growth across multiple sectors. Build Back Better therefore focuses on accelerating those opportunities through the delivery of eight transformational LEP sponsored programmes of activity. Realising the potential of these transformational opportunities will enable us to rebalance and repurpose our economy, supporting the green revolution and responding to global imperatives where we have unique capabilities such as in renewable energy.

Transformational change, however, has to be built on the right skills and business support, along with the creation of new ideas, products and services, all of which must be grounded in the places where we live and work. Our plan is therefore underpinned by three enabling programmes which are closely aligned with local recovery plans and the need to level-up our economy. These closely match the key drivers of productivity and the economy. Through these collective efforts, Build Back Better will contribute to the delivery of a more prosperous, fairer economy, ensuring better standards of living for all the people who live in Heart of the South West and ensuring that the area is better able to weather future storms.





## WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE?

The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership has invested almost £260 million in the local area as part of a total £990 million portfolio which to date has created over 6,000 jobs, supported over 11,300 businesses and unlocked development of over 9,500 homes. This will continue into the future, creating the conditions for long term growth through business support, skills infrastructure, innovation facilities, better access to digital, provision of workspace, and improvements to local transport. We published a route-map to recovery in the summer of 2020 ([here](#)) focusing on three phases to recovery that would enable us to re-start, revitalise and grow. And we are now setting out a programme for action through the recovery phase.

## WHAT DO WE NEED?

Our programmes – both transformational and enabling – can only be delivered through collective efforts. Strong partnerships will be required between our communities, Government and other stakeholders in the Heart of the South West for us to Build Back Better. Our collective efforts can be strengthened as we take our next steps by:

- ▶ **Co-design on taking forward key parts of the programmes we have identified,** e.g. scope and implementation of a rural productivity deal;
- ▶ **Powering locally-led delivery through locally-designed funding.** The UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling-Up Fund are important opportunities to support local and regional recovery; localities are best-placed to match funding to need and ensure it compliments other activity on the ground. We are concerned however that the funding available falls significantly short of that previously available under EU funding.
- ▶ **Local decision-making on innovation and growth:** putting local areas at the centre of setting out how places will reach the UK 2.4% R&D target, working with local partners to develop the right ecosystem to help local businesses generate new products and services including;
- ▶ **Supporting business growth:** with scale-up, start-up and Covid-19 support for business by extending and increasing Growth Hub Funding for the duration of Parliament, extending Enterprise Zone benefits to 2030 and supporting a Heart of the South West Freeports programme; and
- ▶ **Enabling areas to develop local talent:** a further commitment to Skills Advisory Panels, retraining and furthering devolution of skills funding. This should also include support for careers hubs and Digital Skills Partnerships alongside the devolved funding above.

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Covid-19 has had an immense effect on the Heart of the South West economy due its sectoral mix; although the Heart of the South West had comparatively low levels of corona virus cases, the pandemic had a more severe impact here than elsewhere in the country. The challenges in the recovery adds to the pre-Covid structural challenges which were particularly acute in our coastal towns that were already in need of support to boost economic prosperity as part of the Government's commitment to level up across the country.

References: RSA, Centre for Progressive Policy and Oxford Economics Impact Reports for South West Councils. Moving to the Next Level, EY Dec 2020.

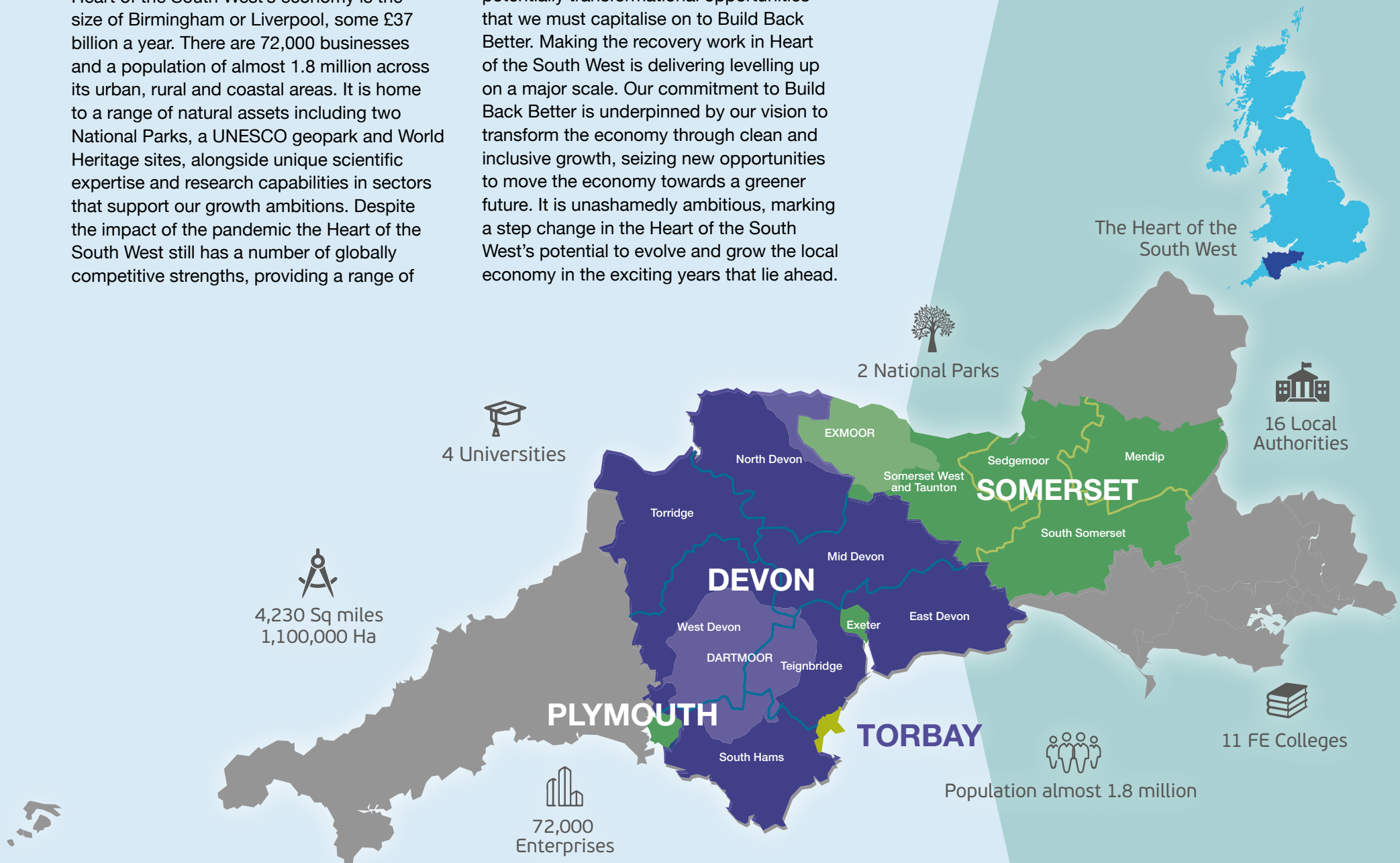




Heart of the South West's economy is the size of Birmingham or Liverpool, some £37 billion a year. There are 72,000 businesses and a population of almost 1.8 million across its urban, rural and coastal areas. It is home to a range of natural assets including two National Parks, a UNESCO geopark and World Heritage sites, alongside unique scientific expertise and research capabilities in sectors that support our growth ambitions. Despite the impact of the pandemic the Heart of the South West still has a number of globally competitive strengths, providing a range of

potentially transformational opportunities that we must capitalise on to Build Back Better. Making the recovery work in Heart of the South West is delivering levelling up on a major scale. Our commitment to Build Back Better is underpinned by our vision to transform the economy through clean and inclusive growth, seizing new opportunities to move the economy towards a greener future. It is unashamedly ambitious, marking a step change in the Heart of the South West's potential to evolve and grow the local economy in the exciting years that lie ahead.

Figure 2. The Heart of the South West



## WHAT IS THE CLEAN GROWTH OPPORTUNITY?

The UK was the first major economy to embrace a legal obligation to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and the Government's Ten Point Plan has laid the foundations for a Green Industrial Revolution to deliver new high value jobs, disruptive businesses ideas and innovative technologies. The Heart of the South West is in a unique position to take a lead on this. As well as its unrivalled set of industrial, academic and research assets aligned with clean growth and the abundance of natural capital, there is a growing political will among the area's constituent local authorities and public sentiment associated with the climate emergency that is stimulating the development of collective processes to achieve net zero carbon emissions.

Clean growth is at the core of our plan to Build Back Better – enabling us to focus on growing the economy whilst protecting the environment, lowering emissions and enhancing natural capital. We will capitalise on the dynamic heart of the economy through the transformational programmes and deliver a low carbon energy powerhouse, drive innovation to make our aerospace and maritime sectors cleaner, exploit the digital expertise in environmental science, geospatial mapping and agri-food systems, and support our bedrock tourism and food & farming sectors to benefit from the transition to a net zero future.

We will also embed our commitment to clean growth in the enabling programmes to stimulate ideas that address environmental challenges and deliver nature based solutions, ensure business and people have the right support and skills to benefit from clean growth, and encourage the sustainable development of our urban, rural and coastal communities.

We intend to be recognised as leaders in clean growth by ensuring the aim of achieving net zero informs future investment decisions, by collaborating with others to deliver shared priorities and added value, and by developing







## WHAT IS THE INCLUSIVE GROWTH OPPORTUNITY?

Although the economy was operating at close to full employment before the pandemic there had been significant inequality in economic performance, these being strongly linked to social mobility and life chances for individuals and the situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Although the consequences of the pandemic have been significant for the whole area, they will be felt deeper across particular sectors, places and parts of our workforce. It is essential that actions to drive social and economic inclusion are embedded across our short, medium term and longer-term ambitions for Build Back Better, supporting the area's natural capital.

Like clean growth, inclusive growth is at the core of our plan to Build Back Better – enabling us to focus on levelling up and providing the opportunity for everyone to contribute to and benefit from growth. We will galvanise the work of our Expert Panel which will accelerate and mainstream plans for inclusive growth both socially and spatially across our area.

With an initial focus on financial instruments we have already invested in SW Mutual which is a regional bank being set up across Cornwall, Heart of the South West and Dorset, the benefit being that deposits from businesses and individuals are re-invested locally rather than nationally/internationally and could be directed towards developing the economy. Beyond this we will co-create a programme of work to ensure that plans are truly inclusive, drawing on the social economy as an engine for social innovation and dovetailing with local activity.

## PROGRAMME 1

### Proposition:

**We will capitalise on the area's nuclear and onshore and offshore renewable energy potential and be a green energy powerhouse.**

### The Opportunity:

The Heart of the South West has made substantial strides towards becoming a green energy powerhouse. It will be home to the first new nuclear power station in decades, Hinkley Point C in Somerset, with associated opportunities estimated to be worth over £50 billion to the region.

The area is already generating 1.8GWs of onshore renewable energy, with ambitions to increase this significantly and realise the addition of 4GWs of floating offshore wind in the Celtic Sea. This unique combination is helping to unlock the area's huge potential to become self-sufficient in clean energy.

There are also opportunities to accelerate the transformation of the energy system with the introduction of local energy markets, distributed systems and energy storage, and to take advantage of the growing enthusiasm and capacity within towns and villages to deliver local community energy initiatives.

### Supporting Build Back Better:

We will stimulate new thinking and new technologies to accelerate the move to a greener, more prosperous economy and increase the critical mass of businesses operating within or supplying to the energy sector in order to create

a globally recognised cluster. Our goal is to anchor the high value engineering sector in the area, facilitating a pipeline of long term opportunities, and encourage the generation of more renewable energy both onshore from wind and solar and offshore by deploying floating wind technology in the Celtic Sea. This will create a major national and international clean growth opportunity for existing and new businesses and increase the potential for inward investment whilst delivering inclusive growth through lower cost energy and community energy solutions.

### Key Actions:

We will anchor the nuclear sector by facilitating a pipeline of long term opportunities such as decommissioning, defence and fusion, and open these opportunities to energy and engineering businesses across the South West.

The deployment of more large scale onshore renewable energy and floating offshore wind will be facilitated and local economic benefits realised whilst also encouraging local community energy solutions. We will explore ways to test and commercialise local energy markets and distributed systems alongside support for upgrades to the existing grid network. Plans for the clean growth Enterprise Zones (Gravity, Exeter & East Devon and Oceansgate) will be accelerated to develop strong clean growth clusters. We will continue to develop the skills infrastructure which includes the National College for Nuclear and two Institutes of Technology.

## TRANSFORMATIONAL PROGRAMMES







## TRANSFORMATIONAL PROGRAMMES

### PROGRAMME 2

#### Proposition:

**We will build a high-tech marine and maritime supercluster focused on autonomous and digital systems, clean propulsion and cyber-secure smart ports.**

#### The Opportunity:

Marine autonomy is a growing, disruptive technology that has the potential to transform the marine sector, replacing traditional ship-based alternatives for marine monitoring operations and harnessing an integrated and powerful digital infrastructure to realise huge benefits. The UK has also taken a proactive role in achieving zero emission shipping, developing alternative fuel or battery powered vessels as well as integrating ports into a decarbonised energy network. The Heart of the South West is well placed to lead the testing, development and manufacture of autonomy, digital and clean ocean technologies. We are home to a range of assets such as the UK Hydrographic Office, alongside extensive research capabilities and innovative coastal testing facilities such as Smart Sound and a strong commercial base with a concentration of defence primes, marine platform manufacturers and supply chain companies stretching from Plymouth and the south coast, through northern Devon and throughout Somerset.

#### Supporting Build Back Better:

We will lead in the testing, development and commercialisation of autonomy, digital and clean ocean technologies, becoming recognised as a global Centre of Excellence. This will unlock public and private investment in this highly productive clean growth sector, underpinned by our manufacturing base, and delivering inclusive growth by creating jobs across the full range of skills levels. Further impetus will come through the Ocean Futures Partnership and our High Potential Opportunity (HPO) in Marine Autonomy, supporting inward investment.

#### Key Actions:

We will focus on delivering Ocean Futures, an ambitious and coordinated investment programme overseen by a public-private-research partnership in collaboration with other key sectors such as defence and energy. The Oceansgate enterprise zone will be completed and Plymouth and South Devon Freeport designation secured. Building on our Marine Business Technology Centre and the Smart Sound we will leverage R&D and innovation, supported by our technopole, to place the UK as a world-leader in advanced maritime technology.



## TRANSFORMATIONAL PROGRAMMES

### PROGRAMME 3

#### Proposition:

**We will grow the photonics and microelectronics cluster, underpinning growth in digital and autonomous systems.**

#### The Opportunity:

Photonics is a £13.5 billion industry nationally, projected to grow by more than 20% between 2020 and 2025 and microelectronics is at least as large again. There is a strong and established cluster of 174 companies, employing over 3,000 highly skilled people across the Heart of the South West, contributing over £690 million per year. The cluster boasts a broad range of capabilities across the value chain and is a key cross cutting technology supporting multiple key UK industries, from telecommunications to transport and aerospace with robust and resilient solutions, with significant opportunity for growth in more secure and autonomous systems.

#### Supporting Build Back Better:

We will target the opportunity to integrate the critical light and electronics based solutions demanded by the global connected and autonomous vehicles industry across land, sea and air, collaborating with the marine, aerospace and space sectors. Through our High Potential Opportunity (HPO) in photonics we will attract inward investment, supporting the development of a world class cluster that places us at the forefront

of cutting edge innovation with a focus on 5G, Big Data and autonomous vehicles. We will also build on this with support for skills, local financing and innovation in scalable sustainable processes, and ensure adequate grow-on facilities are available to support local manufacturing.

#### Key Actions:

We will focus on upgrading the Electronics and Photonics Centre (EPIC) to a full Innovation Hub employing engineering expertise to support state-of-the art high volume, high productivity, reduced carbon, manufacturing of electronics and photonics systems. The hub will connect to national innovation centres, focusing on the challenges in combining multiple technologies together to provide robust, resilient, agile solutions and with lower carbon footprint. The industry defined high level skills will be developed with leading local universities and colleges. Locally focused collaborative R&D and investment financing will support innovators over cross-cutting technology growth barriers accelerating time and impact on markets and exports. We will build an Electronics and Photonics Production Park to support business growth and increase local manufacturing. These actions will enable the cluster to make the most of global opportunities and move higher in the value chain to capture more value in the UK.





## TRANSFORMATIONAL PROGRAMMES

### PROGRAMME 4

#### Proposition:

**We will deliver a Future of Flight Programme for sustainable aviation technologies and fuels.**

#### The Opportunity:

The Aerospace Sector Deal looks to position the UK to take advantage of global moves toward cleaner aircraft, as well as to exploit new markets such as electric aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles and urban air mobility. The Heart of the South West, in partnership with neighbouring LEPs through iAero, the SW Aerospace Cluster and the evolving Heart of the SW Sustainable Aviation Cluster, is well placed to support this challenge, being host to key industry players including the only industry prime in the UK with a complete end-to-end capability in rotary technology.

#### Supporting Build Back Better:

We will position the Heart of the South West to take advantage of the global ambition to decarbonise the aerospace and aviation sector, exploiting our strengths in developing new markets in electrical and hydrogen propulsion and maximising digital innovation leading to smart and sustainable solutions. Through the establishment of a High Potential Opportunity (HPO) proposition we will attract high value

foreign direct inward investment, as well as growing our own capability. By utilising the associated skills and R&D opportunities, this programme will strengthen both the Yeovil and Exeter & East Devon aerospace clusters, anchoring this high value sector in the area and delivering inclusive growth through increased supplier capability, jobs and skills.

#### Key Actions:

We will provide demonstration facilities and support the design of new airport infrastructure to accommodate smart aviation technologies and fuels, helping to deliver the government's Future Flight Programme. We will establish the area as a demonstration zone, building the ecosystem around Exeter Airport and encompassing Yeovil. Utilising the iAero Centre we will grow the capability of the local supply chain to innovate and adapt to new aviation technologies. Working with key stakeholders within the Sustainable Aviation Cluster and in the context of our Skills Strategy, we will implement a roadmap of future skills and workforce requirements for this sector that can be delivered locally. Alongside our HPO proposition, we will promote and raise the profile of the opportunity across the region to raise our profile nationally and internationally.



## PROGRAMME 5

### Proposition:

**We will tackle economic and societal challenges through analytics and digital innovation.**

### The Opportunity:

The Heart of the South West is home to two national capability government labs with a focus on environmental and geospatial data – the Met Office, which is one of only two wide area forecasting networks in the world, and the UK Hydrographic Office, which over 90% of ships trading internationally rely on to help them navigate safely and efficiently. They sit alongside expertise in the universities of Exeter, which has five of the top 21 environmental scientists globally, and Plymouth, with one of the largest marine and maritime portfolios of any institution in Europe. Together with these assets, we have a growing commercial capability in the application of data and machine learning and are attracting partnerships with global organisations such as Amazon Web Services, Microsoft, Google, IBM, the World Health Organisation and NASA, as well as talented academics from around the world. We have an ambition to grow this market, catalysing the development of a multi-billion pound global market for big data to deliver a transformative effect and help achieve net zero.

### Supporting Build Back Better:

Through the exploitation of Environmental Intelligence (EI), the UK has the potential to be a world leader in environmental and climate change solutions. Spearheaded by the Joint Centre

for Excellence in Environmental Intelligence, a partnership between the University of Exeter and the Met Office, we will increase research and innovation in EI to inform decision-making, improve risk management and lead the deployment of EI technologies across multiple sectors and domains. Led by the UK Hydrographic Office, we will maximise the potential from marine geospatial innovation to develop new solutions for the maritime community across areas including offshore renewable energy, marine insurance and ecosystem services. Our capabilities will also be harnessed to reduce emissions from agriculture through the development, commercialisation and dissemination of data analytics and AI technologies. With a focus on delivering net zero ambitions, we will also increase digital innovation through more 5G pilots.

### Key Actions:

We will develop key assets including the Digital Innovation Centre in Taunton and Environmental Intelligence Innovation Hub in Exeter. We will collaborate with the UK's Agri-Tech Centres and Satellite Applications Catapult to accelerate development, commercialisation and dissemination of data analytics and AI technologies within the farming sector, progressing plans for a Living Lab with mobile testing platforms enabled by satellites, tackling environmental and agricultural challenges. We will develop Smart Sound Connect as the world's first ocean based 5G network and explore opportunities to build on this world first.

## TRANSFORMATIONAL PROGRAMMES





## PROGRAMME 6

### Proposition:

**We will position the Heart of the South West as a health technology pioneer.**

### The Opportunity:

By 2046, one in four people in the UK will be aged 65 or over and the Heart of the South West is significantly ahead of the UK's ageing curve, spread across a peripheral-dispersed population. It is also home to a number of exceptional regional assets with investment in hospitals and health technology innovation capabilities, based in our universities and clinical trials units as well as in the wider business and social enterprise ecosystem, presenting us with a range of market opportunities. Through utilisation of our regional assets and health tech innovation capabilities, the area is exceptionally well placed to develop, evaluate and apply new sustainable solutions to the healthcare challenges of the 21st Century, playing an important role in driving the area's economic development and recovery from COVID-19.

### Supporting Build Back Better:

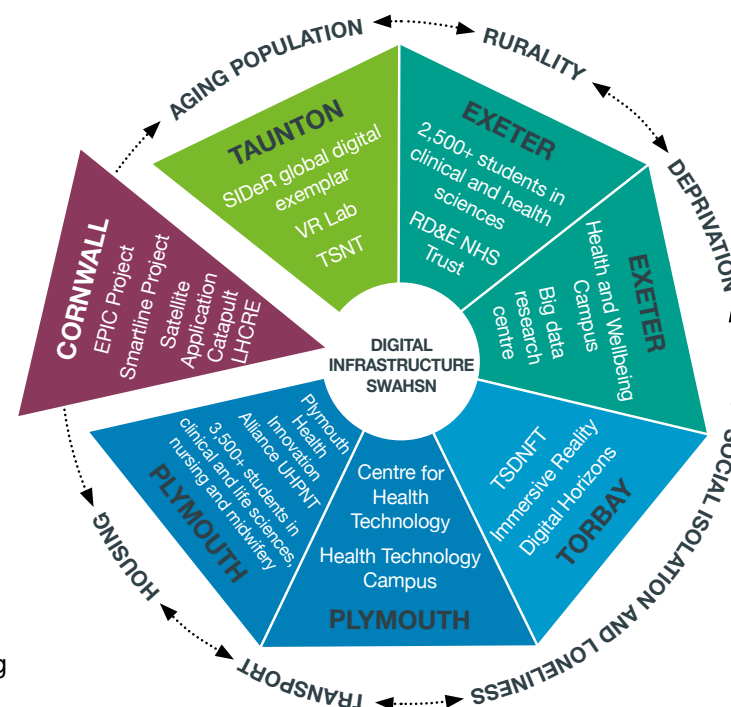
We will capitalise on the challenges presented by the area's ageing demographic and health research assets to position us as a Health Technology Pioneer, providing a national centre for the development, evaluation and application of solutions to the challenges of an Ageing Society. Digital products and services will enable clean growth and also contribute to inclusive growth objectives by improving the experience of end users within the context of the UK Ageing Society Grand Challenge mission. An overarching

regional framework for innovation and technology in care and health, will develop specific health tech innovation sites at different locations across the region.

### Key Actions:

We will establish a regional demonstrator project which will support the user-led design and adoption of digital health technologies across the region that are not found elsewhere in the UK. This will include developing key assets as part of this, such as the Plymouth Health Technology Innovation Hub at Plymouth Science Park, which will incubate and support health technology businesses and accelerate new technologies in the sector.

## TRANSFORMATIONAL PROGRAMMES



## TRANSFORMATIONAL PROGRAMMES

### PROGRAMME 7

#### Proposition:

**We will establish a data-led, year-round, green and accessible visitor economy**

#### The Opportunity:

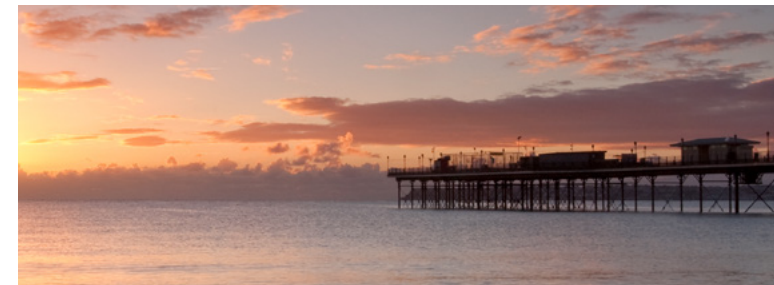
Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Heart of the South West had been working on plans to improve the productivity of the visitor economy and generate higher value tourism. Efforts to support this bedrock sector are even more crucial, it being one of the hardest hit sectors, but they should be aligned to longer term strategic development priorities as well as addressing the immediate recovery. The framework for recovery and longer term vision for the region, 'Towards 2030', has been published – a collaborative plan for the Great South West Tourism Partnership that is aligned to Government's priorities for tourism recovery and to build back better. It renews our focus on establishing a data-led, year round, green and accessible visitor economy.

#### Supporting Build Back Better:

We will support some of our hardest hit communities which are reliant on the visitor economy through the Towards 2030 framework for recovery. The programme of work will focus on seven key themes – zero carbon, accessible and inclusive, improving productivity (to include addressing seasonality and improving data and insight), building resilience and sustainability, skills and employment, connectivity, and region-wide marketing and communications.

#### Key Actions:

Our priority will be to deliver a Tourism Data Hub that builds a sustainable comprehensive data and research programme to drive productivity. It will provide DMOs/businesses with consistent and valuable data insights into consumer and business behaviours to enable more efficient market targeting and product development to drive recovery post-Covid. The Hub will enable data insights, lessons learnt and development of best practice to be shared and maximised amongst businesses and key stakeholders, improving productivity including increasing visitor spend; extending the season and developing new off-season products. We will also target measures to establish the Heart of the South West as one of the greenest and most accessible destinations in the UK. In partnership at regional level, we will grow our overall share of the market and increase repeat visits to the region, as well as working across interconnecting and complimentary sectors particularly the creative and cultural sector and food and drink providers.





## PROGRAMME 8

**We will develop the Heart of the South West as a test bed for new food and farming practices and nature based solutions.**

### **The Opportunity:**

The food and farming sector is an important part of the economy and rural life across the Heart of the South West and it is inextricably linked to the area's natural capital. We have a higher than average concentration of farmers, fishers and food producers, are home to more cattle than any other LEP area in England, and Brixham and Plymouth are two of the top fishing ports in England. The area also has an abundance of natural capital in our marine and land use environments that provides valuable ecosystem services such as carbon sinks and flood management as well as clean air, water and low carbon energy, plus it supports much of the economy including agriculture, food and drink, and tourism. If current patterns of food consumption persist, 60% more food will need to be produced globally by 2050 at the same time as we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within agriculture. 'Sustainable intensification' will enable yields to be increased without adverse environmental impact and without the cultivation of more land. The agricultural transition provides us with an opportunity to lead the way in sustainable food production that goes hand-in-hand with enhanced environmental delivery.

### **Supporting Build Back Better:**

We will support the recovery and future of agriculture by ensuring advice is provided on a whole farm basis and is linked to support that addresses other long term challenges that lie behind the sector's relatively low productivity, ensuring a future for our family farms.

We will drive a culture change within the public sector and make public procurement more accessible to regional producers and suppliers. Where there are opportunities to expand the local food economy we will add value by enabling more food and drink from the region to be processed locally, to supply our local communities. Our research capabilities will also be harnessed to develop agri-technologies and increase their use in farming, in turn increasing yield, efficiency, and profitability. We will maintain and enhance ecosystem services to provide resilience and support a positive transition to net zero.

### **Key Actions:**

We will provide a one stop shop to the agricultural sector that provides targeted advice on a whole farm basis to enable the take up of the new Environmental Land Management scheme and other funding opportunities whilst also accessing other business support services that will improve the sector's resilience and productivity, at the same time as reducing its carbon footprint. We will support farmers to adopt technological innovation and improve all elements of the farming and growing process, with a particular focus on increasing productivity and transitioning to net zero. We will act on the recommendations of the public sector food procurement research by supporting dynamic purchasing platforms and proposals that will increase local processing of key food products. We will invest our £1 million Natural Capital Demonstration Fund in a way that tests innovative finance mechanisms for natural capital projects whilst delivering clean growth and wider economic benefits, linked to a new and verified Heart of the South West green and blue carbon offset scheme. We will champion the embedment of natural capital in more traditional economic development projects.



## ENABLING PROGRAMMES



### PROGRAMME 9

#### **Enabling transformation by developing and delivering a comprehensive skills strategy.**

In a modern, innovative and creative economy, an area's most significant asset is its people. Ensuring the Heart of the South West's workforce, and training/education offer, emerges more skilled, more flexible and more economically focused than before is crucial if the area is to achieve its ambition to Build Back Better. Skills development at all levels is essential in addressing the levelling up and inclusive growth agenda. Led by the Heart of the South West Skills' Advisory Panel, the area's Skills Strategy focuses on maximising our opportunity sectors and rebuilding and reinforcing our skills foundations and wider social inclusion. The strategy creates clear pathways into work, progression and higher earning as well as addressing unemployment, underemployment, low skills low pay and higher level skills. Partners

will co-fund and communication efforts to reinforce routes to academic and vocational/apprenticeship success; reinforce support into work/ progression through work for adults; widen our existing strengths in technical skills and further and higher education alignment; and seek to create a skills and training landscape both better able to drive the recovery and meet the needs of our future economy. To achieve this, the area will seek to fully harness the tools now at its disposal, including England's largest Careers Hub, our two Institutes of Technology and excellent partner colleges, our world class universities, our nationally recognised pathfinder activity around digital skills and adult retraining, as well as the Government's new universal skills offer for adults, employment and Kickstart programmes, and wider support for employers and learners alike as we emerge.



#### **ENABLING PROGRAMMES**



## PROGRAMME 10

### Enabling transformation through effective business and innovation support.

The Heart of the South West is home to 72,000 businesses across a wide range of sectors and industries. This includes a number of high-profile businesses that exhibit best practice and have transformative potential. It also includes a growing social enterprise sector, providing an important opportunity to support inclusive growth. With an ambition to be one of the best areas in the UK to start and grow a business, we are developing a strong and joined-up business support infrastructure. Operating as a hub and spoke model over a large geographic and dispersed geography the Growth Hub will contribute to the Build Back Better goal with increased digital delivery to increase its reach. Central to this is a public/private partnership approach to providing business support, advice and guidance alongside support for apprenticeships, shorter supply chains, increased inward investment and exporting. With a dedicated team of specialists, we will help businesses navigate the support available, promoting the area's strong and emerging sectors as well as supporting entrepreneurship and start-up companies, ensuring businesses at all stages receive the right support at the right time. Throughout our delivery we will promote and encourage good employment practices, alongside environmental support for "cleaner" business.

With Covid having accelerated existing trends, it is more likely that digital business practices, including selling on line, future home working will increase meaning that digital will be a greater driver for productivity and clean growth in the future. Additionally, we will develop a financial support package enabling our business to access the finance they need to invest and grow, plugging known gaps around attitudes to risk.

The Heart of the South West has unparalleled place-based opportunities for innovation, commercialisation and the dissemination of ideas that have both commercial and societal value. We also have many of the ingredients necessary to capitalise on these opportunities, including demonstrable research excellence in a range of technologies and sectors, together with a vibrant community of research-intensive businesses. However, the area still exhibits comparatively low levels of innovation activity and businesses face a number of challenges in bringing ideas to market. To address these challenges, we will lead a partnership in the creation and delivery of a Marine and Environmental Science Accelerator; creating the world's first Maritime Autonomy Assurance Testbed in Plymouth, an Environmental Intelligence Solutions Hub would be formed in Exeter and a technopole would support start-ups and scale-ups by priming relationships with academics, investors and more, improving access to funding for businesses innovate and bring ideas to market.



## ENABLING PROGRAMMES

## PROGRAMME 11

### Enabling transformation by supporting left behind places and ensuring strategic connectivity.

It is essential that no communities or places are left behind in our plans to Build Back Better. To ensure this we will work with our local authority partners, building on their existing efforts to support cities, rural areas, coastal communities, market towns and parishes right across the patch. Taking into account the need for strategic employment land, this will include a workspace offer, expanding the reach across our diverse network of settlements, designed for a post-Covid world. Linked closely with the Technopole this will support both urban and rural enterprise and innovation, including in peripheral areas. We will also consider how best to support the longer term sustainability of these communities and also our high streets along with those places which have a high reliance on the hardest-hit sectors, working with them to develop plans to mitigate the

immediate impact and open up opportunities in new growth sectors. Strategic connectivity will be a key part of this effort, supporting our drive to increase both competitiveness and inclusion. Given that the Heart of the South West suffers significantly through long standing poor infrastructure, securing our economic recovery has to be underpinned by a stepchange in improvements. This includes digital connectivity which can also reduce the need to travel, alongside making the case for road improvements (e.g. A303/ A30/ A358 corridor and the A38), electrification of the main rail line and network rail improvements to ensure the resilience of lines into and through the Heart of the South West. Links within the area will also be prioritised, potentially including cycle route development. The strategy will align with our clean growth priorities and build on the work of our Rural Productivity Commission.



### ENABLING PROGRAMMES



## WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

This document sets out our ambitions for delivering a stronger, greener and more inclusive future for the Heart of the South West.

We know that there are challenges ahead but we have the vision, energy and commitment to seize the moment and Build Back Better. With the right investment, these opportunities can become reality.

Our plan requires collaboration and partnership both within and beyond our region. But we are confident that by working together with all of our partners across and with government we will achieve a better future.

Building Back Better by delivering increased prosperity through clean and inclusive growth.







Building Back Better  
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**Leaders**  
for the Heart of the South West

