Many places, one shared future

The Sussex and Brighton Prosperity Strategy

Draft for consultation

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Board foreward

"For more than a thousand years, Sussex has been a place with many voices. Now, for the first time, those voices speak together. Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex sit around the same table with a shared mandate and a grand ambition for the place we all call home. This strategy is the first we have written together. It sets out what that ambition means for everyone who lives and works here.

"Each of our places brings its own strengths. Brighton & Hove is our largest city, with a diverse, productive economy, thriving creative and digital businesses and a cultural life known around the world, from its festivals to the Albion on match day. West Sussex combines a deep history with growing international reach. Gatwick and Shoreham Port connect us to the world, Manor Royal and Goodwood bring global businesses and skilled work, and new industries, from life sciences to quantum technology, are taking root. East Sussex is home to some of England's finest landscapes, from the Seven Sisters to the High Weald, and to the farmers, growers and fishing communities who care for them and feed all of us.

"On their own, these are real strengths. Together, they become something greater. A researcher in Brighton, a precision engineer in East Sussex and a supplier near Gatwick can all be part of the same growing economy. A young person in Hastings or Whitehawk should have the same chance as one in Crawley or Crowborough to build a good life where they grew up. That is what partnership makes possible.

"We have made a strong start. Since the Authority was established in the spring of 2026, we have unlocked £117 million of government investment over the next four years, the first part of a 30-year settlement worth more than £1 billion. We are making the case to government that Sussex deserves the same voice as the more established mayoral areas. And through this strategy, we have brought councils, businesses, universities and community organisations together to agree on what matters most.

"Our idea of prosperity is broader than economic growth. It means homes people can afford, reliable and sustainable heat and energy, with the roads, buses and trains to support them. It means good jobs with real routes to progress, and journeys that put those jobs within reach. It means backing businesses of every size, and caring for the land, coast and countryside that sustain our food, our livelihoods and our sense of who we are.

"We cannot do everything at once. We will need to make clear choices on where working together can make the biggest difference. But the benefits must reach every part of Sussex - our cities, our coastal and market towns, and our rural villages alike.

"Devolution gives us new tools, and the election of our first Mayor in 2028 will amplify our voice further. But the real strength of this Authority lies in our inclusive, collaborative and consensus-driven partnership: between our three areas, with district, borough, town and parish councils, and with everyone who has a stake in our future.

"This is a draft, and we want to hear from you. Tell us what is right, what we have missed, and how you can help. Many places, one shared future, are our inheritance. Making it real is a task we will share.

Councillor Bella Sankey
Chair, Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority, and Leader, Brighton & Hove City Council

Councillor Andy Woolley
Co-Vice Chair, Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority, and Leader, East Sussex County Council

Councillor Jay Mercer
Co-Vice Chair, Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority, and Leader, West Sussex County Council

A shared future for Sussex and Brighton

Many places, one shared future

The name Sussex has travelled down the centuries from the South Saxons, surviving conflict, division and reinvention.

In 1066, William landed at Pevensey before the battle near Hastings changed the course of English history. Over time, East and West Sussex, and Brighton and Hove have developed their own identities and institutions, yet a shared sense of belonging endures in people's ties to the land, the sea and one another.

The new Strategic Authority brings together all parts of the county: cities, coastal and market towns, historic centres and countryside villages, all connected to the wider world through a major international airport, working ports and harbours, and a shared coastline and marine environment.

Each place has its own character and contributes to a shared Sussex story, from Brighton & Hove's thriving economy and lively urban coastline to our market towns and rural villages.

The South Downs and the High Weald carry the traces of generations who farmed, grazed, quarried, built and made things here. Along the coast, communities have lived with a shoreline that is both livelihood and landscape, constantly changed by weather, water and human effort. At Amberley, old chalk pits and limeworks still speak of the materials that shaped buildings and working lives. Around Hastings, the changing shoreline is inseparable from the history of fishing and the Stade, and in Brighton & Hove, the fashion for sea bathing helped shape a different relationship with the coast, creating the seafront squares, terraces and promenades that still draw the world to the city.

These are small details in a much larger story, but they reveal a place continually shaped by its environment and the people who have lived and worked in it. Our farms, fisheries and coastal waters produce food, sustain local jobs and shape Sussex's identity. Access to the Downs, countryside and coast helps people stay active, connect and live well. The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere connects Brighton & Hove and Lewes with the Downs, coast and sea, bringing communities, businesses and researchers together to pioneer ways of restoring nature, improving wellbeing and building prosperity within a thriving landscape. These assets bring a strength and direction to prosperity in Sussex.

This blend of both a shared identity and the confidence to celebrate difference has also shaped our unique cultural landscape.

Hove helped pioneer moving pictures, while Chichester built a theatre from local ambition and community effort that became a national institution. In Lewes, the bonfire societies carry neighbourhood loyalties and a tradition of independence through the streets in torchlit processions, while on match days, Brighton & Hove Albion brings generations together in the stands, letting their voices ring for 'Sussex by the Sea' and carrying pride in place far beyond the ground.

Sussex is made manifest through these expressions of both shared and distinct identity - in neighbourhood activity, village life, local sport and music, and in our world-renowned institutions and events such as Glyndebourne and Goodwood.

These local identities have been shaped by generations of people arriving, leaving and bringing new ideas to Sussex. London has exerted its pull for hundreds of years; a place to influence, and be influenced by. Now Gatwick, Newhaven, Shoreham, our universities and global businesses such as American Express and Rolls-Royce have increased the flow of people, ideas and investment.

People arrive for work, study, family and opportunity, adding their stories and new layers to what *belonging* means here. Young people, families and those who study and settle in Sussex help renew its skills, enterprise and community life; older residents also bring experience, care, volunteering and relationships that sustain community life. Our diverse population is a strength, enriching the relationships and ideas through which places develop.

Prosperity in Sussex & Brighton

Prosperity in Sussex & Brighton is when people, place, the economy and nature are resilient and thrive together, now and in the future[1]. We are building from a strong base:

Brighton and Hove

Brighton and Hove is Sussex's largest city, bringing a global reputation and its unmistakable energy to our shared future. Financial and professional services, health and education underpin a diverse economy, alongside thriving digital, games and creative businesses. Its seafront, festivals and independent shops give it a distinctive character; its universities attract talent and turn research into new businesses and technologies. The city is an engine of future shared prosperity: people across Sussex will drive its growth as entrepreneurs, workers and researchers, and benefit through rewarding careers, stronger local businesses and new opportunities close to home.

East Sussex

East Sussex is home to some of England's most spectacular landscapes, from the Seven Sisters and Cuckmere Valley to the wooded High Weald. Glyndebourne, Charleston, Towner Eastbourne and De La Warr Pavilion bring world-class culture to this setting. Its businesses reach equally far: specialist vacuum technology, mu-metal and precision engineering supply advanced industries worldwide. Viticulture is a growing strength, supporting investment, skilled work and wine tourism. Bexhill is a centre for financial services; Newhaven's working port connects Sussex to European markets and serves the offshore wind industry. Eastbourne and Hastings are shaping ambitious plans for the future, renewing town centres and seafronts, creating homes and jobs, and celebrating the heritage and character that draw people to the coast.

West Sussex

West Sussex combines international connectivity, business innovation and exceptional natural assets from the South Downs to the coast. London Gatwick Airport, Shoreham Port and Manor Royal link businesses to national and global markets. Aviation in Crawley, automotive engineering in Chichester, specialist manufacturing in Horsham, life sciences in Worthing and quantum technology in Haywards Heath support skilled work and growing businesses. Horticulture and food production on the coastal plain sit alongside award-winning vineyards. Goodwood's international events, Arundel Castle and gardens including Wakehurst draw visitors. West Sussex brings the connections, productive capacity and enterprise to attract investment and drive growth across Sussex.

Building on these strengths means addressing the barriers that prevent people and businesses from thriving. High housing costs make it harder to put down roots and stay

[1] We are indebted, for this elegant definition, to the authors of the open letter, *A prosperous Sussex is a resilient Sussex* (24 August 2026)

close to family. Expensive or unreliable journeys can put a good job or college course out of reach, while employers struggle to find the people, premises and infrastructure they need to grow. Across our coastal, urban and rural communities, deprivation and poor health limit opportunities, including in neighbourhoods within otherwise affluent places.

As our population ages, we will need to respond to changing needs for work, housing, care and support. Employers will need to replace skills as people retire and adapt jobs to help people remain in work. Families and communities will need support to sustain the care and relationships on which so many depend. Prosperity must offer security, dignity and opportunities at every stage of life, recognising the many ways people contribute through work, care and community life.

Our future prosperity also depends on how we build resilience to environmental change and disruption, and accelerate the transition to clean energy and greater energy independence. Flooding, drought, heat and coastal change threaten homes, livelihoods and nature, while failures in essential infrastructure can affect whole communities. The decisions we make about homes, businesses, services and landscapes today will shape our ability to withstand these pressures, recover and adapt over the decades ahead.

A strategy for our shared future

Many places, one shared future is both our inheritance and our task. Sussex and Brighton has the talent, enterprise and natural wealth to build a more prosperous future. Our task is to turn those strengths into better prospects for people across our cities, towns and villages: homes they can afford, work they can reach, businesses they can grow and places where they can live well.

This strategy sets out how we will pursue that ambition together. Four pathways connect the things that shape people's lives: homes and journeys; learning, work and support; our living landscape; and the businesses that create jobs and wealth. Strong, safe and healthy communities underpin them all. The pathways are interdependent; their order does not imply a ranking. Progress depends on them working together, with investment in one strengthening the others, supported by public service reform that can bring help earlier and improve wellbeing and participation.

Across those pathways and their shared community foundation, twelve proposed priorities identify where we should focus joint effort, begin practical work and prepare for larger opportunities. The graphic below brings together our pathways, priorities and the changes we want people and businesses to experience. They give the Strategic Authority and its partners a shared direction for the decisions and action that follow.

Pathways	Our priorities	What success looks like
Connecting people and places	**1. East-west connectivity** **2. Joined-up everyday transport** **3. Affordable homes and infrastructure**	• Dependable, affordable journeys to jobs and services • Homes and employment supported by infrastructure • Greater independence and less isolation for people with limited transport options • Wider benefits from Gatwick, ports and London
Helping every generation build a future here	**4. Skills and routes into work** **5. Joined-up neighbourhood support**	• Clear routes from learning into good work • Opportunities to retrain and progress throughout life • Joined-up support that removes barriers to learning, work and community life
Enriching our living landscape	**6. Nature recovery on land and at sea** **7. Water and energy infrastructure** **8. Cultural partnerships and participation**	• Healthier landscapes, rivers and marine habitats • Thriving rural, marine and clean-energy businesses • More people enjoying nature and culture • Development that respects nature and withstands climate change
Backing business across Sussex and Brighton	**9. Innovation partnerships** **10. Business growth and investment**	• More firms investing, innovating and growing locally • Research and creativity generating commercial success • Local firms reaching new markets and supply chains • Secure work and more value retained locally
Our shared foundation **Strong, safe and healthy communities**	**11. Community voice and partnership** **12. Place-led safety and resilience**	• More people participating and influencing decisions • Safe, welcoming places that support health and connection • Communities and businesses better able to withstand, respond to and recover from shocks

Connecting people and places

Our ambition

Our ambition is to connect people to good jobs, learning, services and one another through dependable, affordable journeys. We will bring homes, employment and infrastructure planning together. Better connections between our cities, towns, coast and countryside will help more communities share in Sussex and Brighton's prosperity.

The Sussex and Brighton opportunity

Gatwick, the Brighton Main Line and M23/A23 connect the area to London and international markets. Chichester has important links with Hampshire and the Solent. Newhaven and Shoreham connect businesses and communities with the sea. These gateways create greater value when residents can reach their jobs, local firms can enter supply chains and visitors can explore more widely.

Slow, unreliable east-west journeys limit recruitment and put work, college and services out of reach. The A27 links several of our main centres; the A259 continues the coastal connection through East Sussex towards Rye. We will consider road, rail and bus choices together, pursuing early improvements while preparing the case for larger investment.

Everyday access differs sharply. Smaller rural communities often have limited alternatives to driving, while urban residents can live close to jobs and services yet face barriers through cost, congestion, poor interchange or inaccessible routes; more than a third of households in Brighton and Hove, for example, have no car or van. The route to a bus stop or station, service hours, interchange, cost and confidence in safety determine whether a journey works. Gigabit-capable broadband and reliable mobile coverage are essential to business growth and access to work, learning and services. Digital access can widen choices, but coverage remains weaker in parts of Chichester, Wealden and Rother, and people also need devices, skills and affordable services.

Housing and transport shape the same opportunities. High costs near jobs push people into longer journeys and make it harder for employers to retain staff. Elsewhere, weak development viability holds back affordable homes and regeneration. We will plan new homes alongside transport, water, energy, schools and health services, and support warmer, safer existing homes that meet people's changing needs.

The Authority will work with councils, housing partners, operators and utilities to align decisions about homes and journeys. Good design, accessible public space, local services and long-term stewardship of community assets will guide our approach to places where people want to live and invest.

Gatwick as a gateway for the whole region

Gatwick's reach extends well beyond the airport boundary. It supports a major cluster of jobs and businesses, links the region to international markets and provides an arrival point for millions of visitors. The opportunity is to connect that gateway more deliberately to the wider economy, so that local firms can enter supply chains, residents can gain the skills needed for new jobs, and visitors can be encouraged to explore more of Sussex and Brighton. Realising that value will require coordinated decisions on transport, housing, business support, skills, visitor information and the environment.

Our priorities

1. Make east-west journeys faster and more dependable

We will make better east-west connections, particularly along the A27 corridor and A259 coastal route, a sustained regional priority. Road, rail and bus choices will be considered together, linking coastal towns with employment and learning centres. Local transport plans will develop the options, sequencing and case for investment, including connections across neighbouring boundaries.

2. Make everyday journeys work better for more people

We will build a more joined-up transport system around how people travel across Sussex and Brighton. Better public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling, flexible services and connections with car journeys can widen access to work, learning and services. Maintaining existing networks, reducing road danger and making journeys safe and usable are part of that task. Cars will retain an important role, particularly in smaller rural communities. We will plan for transport electrification and charging alongside the energy networks they require. Consideration of bus policy will follow the planned study, later in 2027/28.

3. Deliver affordable homes with the infrastructure communities need

We will work with districts and boroughs, Brighton and Hove City Council, registered providers and the South Downs National Park Authority to expand social rent and other affordable housing, including community-led provision, and bring stalled opportunities forward. Affordability must reflect what local households can sustain on their incomes, alongside homes that are accessible and adaptable. The Spatial Development Strategy and developing Homes England Strategic Place Partnership will connect housing and regeneration opportunities with employment and infrastructure. Improving existing homes through insulation, ventilation and protection from heat and cold will support lower running costs, health and independence.

Sussex ports and harbours

Sussex's ports and harbours are working assets whose value reaches far beyond the waterfront. Freight moves through Shoreham and Newhaven's ferry connects Sussex with France, while rail links the port to the wider region. Chichester Harbour supports sailing, boatbuilding, marine services and tourism within a nationally protected landscape. Fishing boats, workboats and leisure craft use harbours from Littlehampton to Rye, sustaining jobs and activity along the coast.

Their greatest potential lies in their connection to the wider regional economy. Offshore wind, clean energy and lower-carbon freight can create new markets for engineering, construction and logistics businesses. Investment in port infrastructure and adjoining sites can provide commercial space, attract firms and support regeneration. Stronger collaboration between ports, colleges, local authorities and businesses could help residents gain relevant skills and local firms win more work, making these assets a stronger source of skilled employment, business growth and coastal prosperity.

The change we want to see

We want people to reach more jobs, learning and services through affordable, dependable journeys, and employers to recruit more widely. Affordable homes will come with the infrastructure communities need; warmer, safer existing homes will support health and independence.

Helping every generation build a future here

Our ambition

Our ambition is for every generation to build a good life here: young people finding their path, adults developing skills and changing direction, and older people living independently and contributing their experience for the greater good. We will connect support across places and services to help everyone stay active and involved, with security and dignity throughout life, recognising the care people give and receive and the many ways they contribute beyond paid work.

The Sussex and Brighton opportunity

Employers across Sussex and Brighton need people with the skills to sustain essential services, grow businesses and adapt to changing technologies. Our universities, colleges and training providers develop that talent, connecting learning with opportunities across the economy. The Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology shows how technical education can build routes into skilled work through close relationships with employers.

A route into the economy of the future

Crawley contains one of the largest concentrations of employment in the South East, centred on Gatwick, Manor Royal and a growing group of aviation, logistics, engineering and life sciences businesses. Employment is high, while the share of residents with higher-level qualifications remains below the regional average.

The Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology provides a foundation for stronger technical pathways. Its value will grow through close relationships with local schools, colleges and employers, allowing more residents to move from first awareness and work experience into technical learning, apprenticeships and higher-value jobs.

Some young people, including care leavers and those with special educational needs and disabilities, lose contact with education or support as they move between institutions. Employers can find that offering placements or shaping meaningful training opportunities takes too much time, money or coordination. Family networks, health, travel and location often determine access to an apprenticeship or first job. We will strengthen connections between schools, providers and employers so young people can see and take their next step.

Adults face similar barriers at different stages of life. A parent returning after care, someone recovering from illness or a worker whose job is changing may need advice, learning and health support to fit together. Housing costs, childcare, transport and

course timing can determine whether an offer is usable. Adult and community learning can help people regain confidence and take a first step towards further learning or work.

An ageing population makes retaining and developing skills more urgent. It will also increase the importance of care and the need for flexible, sustainable work. Our older residents have so much to contribute through employment, mentoring, volunteering and care. Supporting independence and connection strengthens community life as well as the workforce.

The NHS, councils and emergency services demonstrate the contribution anchor employers can make through recruitment, apprenticeships, research and procurement. We will build on devolved skills funding and Get Sussex Working to connect employers, education and services around people's circumstances.

The NHS as an anchor for skills and opportunity

The NHS illustrates the potential of an anchor employer. It employs around 60,000 people across Sussex and is linked to about one in every 14 jobs. It trains clinical and non-clinical staff, offers apprenticeships and works with universities and colleges on medical education, research and workforce development. Its scale gives it a wider role as an anchor institution. Recruitment, progression and procurement choices can open routes into good work, strengthen local supply chains and support the growth of health and life sciences. Closer alignment with the Strategic Authority can connect these opportunities to residents and businesses across the region.

Our priorities

4. Build skills for secure futures and changing working lives

We will work with employers, further and higher education institutions and training providers to strengthen apprenticeships and other routes into rewarding work. Credible transitions for young people, including care leavers and people with SEND, and opportunities for adults to adapt and progress will inform policy, alongside inclusive recruitment, retention and access to lifelong careers guidance.

Building on the Get Sussex Working Plan and the Local Skills Improvement Plan, and using our developing commissioning powers, we will connect careers advice, learning and employment opportunities. Early collaboration will widen access to placements and training, particularly for people and smaller employers who find it difficult to secure opportunities. Employer insight will shape provision for growing industries and essential services.

5. Rewire support around people, families and neighbourhoods

We will build public service reform from existing programmes and prepare to take a leading role in further devolution of skills and employment support through Rewiring the State. We want to bring commissioning and funding decisions together across Sussex and Brighton, connecting them to neighbourhood services that organise support around people and families.

With councils, the NHS and community partners, we will explore earlier, more coordinated support across learning, employment, physical and mental health, housing and family support. This will complement neighbourhood-based care and respect partners' responsibilities. The scope of practical support and any joint commissioning arrangements will be developed with the relevant bodies through agreed governance and resources.

We will build on relationships through Get Sussex Working, the Local Skills Improvement Plan and health and employment programmes. Devolved adult skills funding will give us a further way to connect residents' needs, employer demand and provider capacity.

The change we want to see

We want young people to see clear routes ahead and gain meaningful experience of work. Adults will find learning and support that fits their health, work and caring responsibilities. Employers will find it easier to develop staff and recruit locally. Connected support will help people at the points when they risk losing work, learning or independence.

Enriching our living landscape

Our ambition

We will connect nature recovery, productive land and sea, secure water and energy, and creative activity to sustain thriving communities and viable businesses. Our ambition is a healthier natural environment and a flourishing cultural life, caring for the assets on which Sussex and Brighton's future depends.

The Sussex and Brighton opportunity

The South Downs, High Weald, rivers, farmland, urban green spaces and coastal waters form a connected living system. What happens upstream affects flooding and water quality downstream and at sea. Farmers, growers, fishers and land managers produce food, sustain livelihoods and care for much of this landscape. Their ability to remain viable matters to food security, nature and the character of our places. Changing rainfall, temperature extremes and disruption to growing conditions put farming, food production and habitats at risk, making adaptation part of sustaining this productive landscape.

Sussex's pioneers show what we can build on. Knepp connects ecological restoration with research, food and visitors. Sussex Bay brings partners and communities together around marine recovery. Wakehurst and the Millennium Seed Bank connect global science with education and public experience. We will build from Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Weald to Waves and existing landscape and catchment partnerships to connect action at a wider scale.

Water and energy capacity increasingly determine where homes and businesses can grow. Brighton and Hove depends heavily on the South Downs chalk aquifer; water stress, drainage and flood risk shape choices across Sussex. We will connect planning and investment in heat networks, energy efficiency and clean generation with future demand, enabling business expansion, regeneration and the electrification of homes, transport and industry. Flooding, drought, heat, wildfire and coastal change require us to plan beyond individual projects and council boundaries.

Brighton's festivals, Chichester's theatre, Towner Eastbourne, Glyndebourne, Charleston, Bexhill's De La Warr Pavilion, Goodwood and a galaxy of creative talent and local practitioners strengthen identity, enterprise and the visitor economy. Income, access and transport affect participation. Culture also helps communities interpret change and shape their places.

Culture as a city-making force

Brighton shows how culture can shape the identity and the economy of a place. Brighton Festival, Fringe, Pride and The Great Escape sit alongside the Royal Pavilion, Brighton Dome, museums, independent venues and the year-round work of artists and creative organisations. Creative and digital firms and universities extend the same culture of experimentation into business and technology. The Brighton Fuse research identified the value created where creative practice and digital capability meet.

This ecosystem draws visitors, attracts talent and investment, creates work and keeps public life open to new ideas. Sustaining it means protecting affordable space, widening routes into creative careers and connecting major institutions with grassroots organisations and communities across the city and wider region.

By connecting this work, we will support productive landscapes, rural enterprise and resilient water systems. We will pursue wider access to nature and culture alongside stewardship that protects sensitive places. Appropriate development and infrastructure need to work with environmental capacity, recognising where adaptation or mitigation is possible and where limits must shape growth.

Our priorities

6. Lead a movement for nature and prosperity on land and at sea

We will connect the people and partnerships already caring for Sussex's land and sea with communities, strategic planning and investment. We want Sussex and Brighton to lead in using and restoring natural capital to sustain prosperity and long-term resilience.

We will build on Local Nature Recovery Strategies and existing partnerships to connect nature recovery with productive landscapes and sustainable land and marine use. Stewardship, partnerships and routes to investment can help renew Sussex's relationship with nature on land and at sea.

Knepp, Sussex Bay, Wakehurst and The Living Coast

Knepp, Sussex Bay, Wakehurst and The Living Coast show how Sussex is developing a distinctive approach to nature recovery on land and at sea. Knepp has demonstrated how ecological restoration can reshape a working estate and create activity around research, food, tourism and culture. Sussex Bay brings organisations and communities together around the recovery of the coastal and marine environment. At Wakehurst, the Millennium Seed Bank and surrounding landscape connect global science with education, creative practice and public experience. Across city, countryside and sea, The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere brings communities, businesses and researchers together to show how nature recovery can support livelihoods and everyday life.

Together, they show how environmental repair can generate knowledge, enterprise and participation. Through science, storytelling and public involvement, they carry ideas beyond their boundaries and help define Sussex as a place where nature recovery, modern technologies and human creativity strengthen one another.

7. Secure the water and energy infrastructure our future depends on

We will connect water and energy planning with housing, transport and economic priorities, building on Sussex Energy, coordinated heat-network proposals and existing partnerships. Using new devolved powers and influence, we will bring government agencies, utilities, councils, businesses and landowners together to align clean generation, networks, heat, energy efficiency and water resilience with future demand. This will help overcome constraints on homes and business growth, strengthen energy security, support decarbonisation and attract investment that creates skilled work and opportunities for local supply chains.

8. Make culture a stronger part of every place's future

We will bring cultural institutions, independent practitioners and communities together to widen participation and develop shared projects. Early partnerships will connect venues, festivals and local talent with regeneration and the visitor economy. Through creative activity and two-way conversations rooted in local identity, we will involve communities in shaping Sussex and Brighton's future.

The change we want to see

We want healthier land and sea to sustain livelihoods, and reliable water and clean energy infrastructure to support homes and businesses within environmental limits. Land-based, marine and clean energy businesses will create skilled work and retain more value locally. More people will enjoy and help shape Sussex's natural and cultural life.

Backing business across Sussex and Brighton

Our ambition

We will connect Sussex and Brighton's research, industrial and creative strengths with the skills, finance, premises and markets firms need to invest, innovate and grow. Our ambition is more good work and more value retained locally, with smaller businesses across the economy able to adapt and prosper.

The Sussex and Brighton opportunity

Sussex and Brighton has a broad, adaptable economy, combining internationally competitive industries with the businesses that sustain everyday life. Advanced manufacturing, life sciences, financial and professional services, and creative and digital industries provide several sources of growth. Our visitor economy, food production and local services support enterprise across towns, coast and countryside. Brighton and Hove's productive economy and international reputation help attract talent and investment, connecting financial and professional services, research and creative and digital firms with wider markets and supply chains. This range of capabilities gives us a strong base for investment and helps us respond as markets and technologies change.

Our opportunity is to make more of these strengths work together. Growing firms need skilled people, suitable premises, reliable infrastructure and access to finance and customers. Stronger relationships between businesses, researchers, training providers and investors can help firms develop products, enter supply chains and expand here. These connections will also help established businesses adopt technologies that improve productivity and pay.

Quantum technology illustrates the potential. University research, commercial development and specialist vacuum and mu-metal manufacturers already give Sussex different parts of an emerging industry. Bringing those capabilities together can turn scientific advances into investment, orders and skilled work. Similar opportunities run across our economy, connecting the expertise we already have with the businesses and markets of the future.

Sussex Quantum

Sussex has the foundations of a significant quantum technology cluster. The University of Sussex brings together more than 80 researchers working across quantum computing, sensing, imaging, clocks and networks. Universal Quantum, based in Haywards Heath, has grown from this research base and secured major international contracts. Across the wider region, specialist vacuum and mu-metal manufacturers provide components and expertise that are critical to quantum systems.

Investment in Sussex Quantum would connect these strengths through shared facilities, coordinated skills pathways and a clearer offer to investors and government. It could help research become commercial products, open new markets for local suppliers and create routes from vocational training to highly skilled scientific and engineering careers. The opportunity is to retain more of the investment, ownership and good work created by a technology in which Sussex already has a distinctive advantage.

Most Sussex firms are small. Independent shops, builders, care providers, hospitality businesses, farms, manufacturers and professional practices sustain work and services in every part of the area. An owner-manager may be responsible for sales, finance, recruitment and compliance. Losing a skilled worker or failing to find suitable premises can stop investment. Useful support must be available when a firm is ready to act.

Town and city centres concentrate employment, commerce, culture and public services. Renewing premises, public space and connections can help these centres adapt and support the businesses and communities around them.

Through Growth Hubs, a stronger business voice and the ten-year Local Growth Plan, we will connect advice, research, finance, premises and markets around firms' ambitions and spread the benefits of innovation across the economy.

Our priorities

9. Turn Sussex and Brighton's innovation strengths into local growth

We will build partnerships between research institutions, universities, NHS organisations, businesses, public services and communities to connect research with established industrial capabilities. We will build on quantum and related advanced manufacturing, life sciences, clean energy, creative and digital industries, and other sector strengths.

We will strengthen routes to research, testing, customers, supply chains, finance and suitable premises, helping innovators grow locally and established firms and public services adopt new technologies. This includes opportunities in creative and digital

industries, life sciences and MedTech, clean energy and advanced manufacturing. Communities can help shape technologies and their application through appropriate engagement and co-production.

10. Enable more local businesses to invest, adapt and reach new markets

We will give business a stronger voice in shaping Sussex and Brighton's future. The new Business Advisory Board will lead a renewed partnership across sectors, business sizes and places. Business insight will shape the Local Growth Plan's stable ten-year economic strategy and investment priorities.

We will connect advice through Growth Hubs, skills and finance around firms' ambitions, including smaller businesses and rural and coastal enterprise. Support should be accessible to a diverse range of founders and established businesses, and we will also build relationships with Gatwick, the ports and major buyers to open routes to markets and supply chains and encourage firms to invest. We will work with the Sussex and Brighton Local Visitor Economy Partnership and destination partners to connect visitor businesses to this wider growth agenda.

We will connect this business support with the wider strategy. Affordable homes help employers retain workers; transport widens recruitment and market access. Water, energy and suitable premises determine whether expansion can proceed. Through planning and investment, the Authority will help bring these conditions together around credible opportunities. Energy efficiency and clean generation also give firms opportunities to manage costs, invest and supply the transition.

The change we want to see

We want more firms to invest and adopt technology, with growing businesses finding finance, people and space locally. Research will generate commercial activity, local suppliers will win work, and communities will gain secure jobs and stronger town centres.

Strong, safe and healthy communities

Our ambition

Our ambition is for people to feel safe, find trusted support, contribute to community life and influence decisions that affect them. We will build on the relationships, good health and preparedness that underpin all four pathways, helping people participate, businesses trade and places respond to shocks and recover.

The Sussex and Brighton opportunity

Community organisations, libraries, faith groups, sports clubs, cultural venues and informal networks connect people across our cities, towns and villages. They provide help, create places to meet and carry knowledge that regional statistics cannot capture. Voluntary and community organisations also contribute to services, prevention and the local economy, often while facing pressure on their own capacity.

Shaping services together in East Sussex

The East Sussex Commissioning Excellence Programme brings voluntary organisations, the County Council and NHS partners together to improve how services are designed and commissioned. Developed jointly by the East Sussex VCSE Alliance and East Sussex County Council, its first phase began in 2023. Participants explored practical barriers, challenged assumptions and tested more collaborative approaches. The programme shows how community organisations can contribute their knowledge and experience to decisions about services, building relationships with public bodies and helping shape support around people's lives.

Safety affects whether people use a high street, take an evening bus, visit a venue or accept a job. Retail crime and antisocial behaviour place costs on businesses and staff. Violence against women and girls, abuse and exploitation can restrict lives even where headline crime rates are relatively low. Busy centres, visitor destinations and transport gateways face different pressures from dispersed rural communities, where harm may be less visible or harder to report.

Secure homes, good work, accessible services, green space and social connection help people stay well. Poor health and deprivation can reinforce one another within neighbourhoods. Councils, health services, emergency services and communities need to recognise risk and act together early enough to prevent harm. Earlier support can improve life chances and reduce the need for more intensive services. Mental health and overlapping inequalities in safety, inclusion and access will inform the Authority's policy choices across all four pathways.

Flooding, heat, utility disruption and cyber incidents can affect several systems at once. The Sussex Resilience Forum and volunteers such as the Sussex Community Search Team connect formal response with local knowledge and support.

Our priorities

11. Connect community organisations to the decisions that shape Sussex and Brighton

We will give community organisations a meaningful role in shaping the Authority's plans, programmes and partnerships, building on councils' local relationships and engagement arrangements. Parish and town councils, voluntary organisations and local networks bring knowledge, relationships and capacity that Sussex-wide decisions need.

We will develop accessible routes for community organisations to propose opportunities, influence choices and work with public services and businesses. Their knowledge will help us understand different circumstances and make better decisions about the places and people this strategy serves.

12. Pioneer a place-led approach to community safety and resilience

We will bring policing, fire and rescue, public health and other council services, and communities together around the places and situations where harm, fear and disruption limit people's lives.

As responsibilities transfer, we will connect safety with transport, housing, public spaces and prevention, giving attention to violence against women and girls, hate crime and harassment. We will support existing OPCC policies linked to road safety and prevention of harm, and work with partners to consider further priorities through transition.

Alongside the Sussex Resilience Forum, we will strengthen preparedness for severe weather, infrastructure failure, cyber threats, infectious disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies. We will use experience to guide longer-term investment, developing strategic oversight that respects the operational responsibilities of police, fire and rescue and other responders.

Community volunteers ready to respond

The Sussex Community Search Team brings trained volunteers together to support police searches for vulnerable missing people across Sussex. Its members can respond at short notice, working alongside professional services. Their contribution extends to wider emergencies: supporting the NHS during the pandemic, distributing bottled water during supply disruptions, assisting with flood warnings and taking part in emergency-service exercises. This practical partnership connects community commitment with formal response arrangements, showing the value of building skills, trust and readiness before an emergency occurs.

The change we want to see

We want community organisations to shape decisions and partnerships, and people to take part in local life, use shared spaces with confidence and reach trusted support. Services and communities will act together earlier to prevent harm. Businesses, public services and neighbourhoods will strengthen their ability to withstand, respond to and recover from shocks.

Delivering our shared prosperity

The pathways set our direction. We will advance them by using devolved powers, aligning investment and working with the councils, businesses, public services and communities that make change happen. The choices ahead concern where we focus effort, how we bring opportunities forward and how we learn from the results.

What devolution makes possible

Devolution gives Sussex and Brighton new ways to act on the priorities set out in these pathways. East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove can bring political leadership, devolved responsibilities and longer-term investment to decisions that cross their boundaries. The election of a Mayor in 2028 will strengthen our voice with government, investors and national institutions.

The Strategic Authority connects local places and their representatives with the national bodies, investors and networks that shape their prospects. An employer's recruitment may depend on housing costs and transport in neighbouring places. A housing site may need coordinated water, energy and road investment. Research may need industrial partners, finance and premises elsewhere in Sussex to become a growing business. We will bring those decisions and resources together to help opportunities progress.

The Local Growth Plan and Spatial Development Strategy will turn this shared direction into clearer economic, investment and spatial priorities, connecting homes, jobs, infrastructure and environmental capacity over the coming decades. A single Local Transport Plan will align investment around the journeys people and businesses need.

A partnership with clear responsibilities

Councils remain central to delivery and local democracy. Local planning authorities, including the South Downs National Park Authority, retain statutory planning responsibilities. Councils retain their housing duties. Town and parish councils and wider partners bring essential knowledge and capacity. District and borough councils will help shape the Authority's priorities through the Representatives Panel, with parish and town council perspectives brought to that group through the East Sussex and West Sussex Associations of Local Councils.

The Authority will lead where it has a duty, coordinate shared decisions and support delivery by others. Devolution is developing in the context of local government reorganisation, requiring close working with all tiers of government.

Making choices for shared prosperity

Delivering our pathways means choosing where joint effort can achieve most, how different places will benefit and what needs to happen first. Funding, staff, land and infrastructure are limited. We will concentrate resources where action can unlock progress, while preparing the sustained investment and partnerships that longer-term renewal requires.

Build on strengths and invest in renewal

Gatwick, the M23/A23 corridor, Brighton and Hove's diverse economy and Sussex's specialist industrial clusters offer established opportunities for investment. Businesses, skills, institutions and markets already come together in these places, providing a strong base for attracting capital and creating good work.

Other opportunities are more dispersed or need longer preparation. In some communities, lower earnings, poor health, weaker connections and development viability reinforce one another. Sustained work on sites, skills, transport and business capacity can help these places realise their potential.

We will pursue both approaches. Investment in established strengths should open jobs, customers and supply chains to surrounding communities. Regeneration should build from each place's assets and help residents and firms participate. Different starting points require different timescales and measures of success.

Bring homes, jobs and infrastructure forward together

Coordinated investment can unlock homes and employment together, connect residents to employers and give businesses room to expand. Housing costs restrict recruitment in strong labour markets; low values prevent development elsewhere. Workspace, water, energy, transport and digital capacity determine what can proceed.

The Spatial Development Strategy, Local Growth Plan and transport plans will develop together, with local planning authorities helping shape choices about locations and sequencing. Some well-connected centres and stations offer opportunities to build on existing infrastructure. Other places need enabling investment first.

We will concentrate effort where improvements reinforce one another, considering health, insecurity and community capacity alongside economic role and development potential. Transparent choices will recognise need, including disadvantage within otherwise prosperous places and rural isolation. Detailed investment decisions will be made through the relevant programmes.

Grow specialist industries and strengthen everyday businesses

Quantum technologies, advanced engineering, life sciences, and creative and digital industries offer opportunities for investment, exports and higher-value work. Strong relationships between firms, researchers, training providers, customers and investors will help these industries grow.

Better management, technology and skills can also improve productivity and pay across the businesses that sustain everyday life. The Local Growth Plan will identify where specialist support can achieve most and how innovation, procurement and supply chains can benefit the wider economy.

Across this work, we will seek to retain more value locally. Good work, affordable homes, local suppliers and stronger communities should shape investment propositions from the outset, with expectations grounded in what projects can deliver.

Sustain the natural assets that underpin prosperity

The South Downs, High Weald, farmland, rivers, coast and sea sustain food production, businesses, water supplies, health and identity. Their condition and capacity must shape decisions about growth, alongside local character, protected landscapes and climate risk.

Investment can strengthen several of these assets together. Restoring catchments can improve water quality and reduce flooding; healthier soils can support food production, wildlife and resilience. We will weigh immediate opportunities alongside long-term environmental capacity, statutory requirements, public benefit and commercial realities. We will consider nature-based solutions alongside engineered approaches to infrastructure challenges, assessing their effectiveness, cost and wider benefits.

These choices require us to work across boundaries while drawing on local knowledge and relationships. The Authority will bring partners together where coordinated decisions can change the outcome. Our growth, spatial and transport plans will turn this shared approach into more specific choices about places, investment and delivery.

Investment that advances our priorities

Investment is one of our key ways to drive prosperity. Alongside planning, skills, commissioning and partnership, we will use our funding and influence to bring homes, infrastructure and business opportunities forward. Our ambition is to attract substantially more commercial investment into Sussex and Brighton, connecting capital with opportunities that deliver good work, thriving places and lasting public benefit.

We will play an active role in developing public-private partnerships and connecting businesses, landowners, developers and institutional investors to strategic opportunities. This means shaping credible propositions, testing commercial viability and bringing partners together around delivery, funding and risk. Sometimes public funding will unlock a stalled project or provide enabling infrastructure. Elsewhere, coordinated decisions on planning, skills or utilities will help investment proceed without an Authority funding contribution.

Three connected pipelines will organise opportunities: housing and regeneration with Homes England, as we prepare a Strategic Place Partnership to address capacity, infrastructure and viability; transport, drawing initially from the Local Transport Delivery Plan; and a wider Prosperity Pipeline for business growth, innovation, employment and skills, energy, nature and culture. Working with our partners, we will develop projects with clear objectives, accountable sponsors and practical routes to delivery. Sustained relationships with businesses and investors will help us understand expansion plans, identify barriers early and match opportunities with potential capital.

The Authority's investment position will develop further through planned fiscal devolution, access to public finance institutions and Rewiring the State. Future funding and flexibility will shape the delivery plan alongside opportunities to attract additional investment.

We are developing proposals for a Good Growth Fund, bringing public resources together with private and institutional capital, including exploring partnerships with pension funds (recognising their existing fiduciary duties and governance). Its design will follow the opportunities: projects must deliver public benefit and meet investors' requirements for returns and risk. A full Investment Strategy will follow adoption of the Prosperity Strategy, with individual decisions appraised and assured through the Local Assurance Framework.

Help shape our shared future

This draft draws on feedback from our Board members and partners, a range of existing information in local and partner strategies, thematic working groups and whole-place policy sprints that brought together colleagues from across Sussex. A foundational evidence base for the strategic authority is available to read at www.sussexandbrighton-cca.gov.uk/prosperity-strategy.

Residents, businesses and organisations across Sussex and Brighton can now help shape the direction we are proposing.

Tell us whether the pathways, community foundation and twelve priorities reflect what matters to you. Which would make the greatest difference, what needs to change, and what have we missed? We want to understand the opportunities and pressures in different places, the choices and consequences we should consider, and where the Strategic Authority can make the greatest contribution alongside councils and partners. Your experience is valuable, whether or not you have read the full strategy.

We also welcome ideas for delivery and investment, and offers of partnership, expertise or other contributions. Tell us what opportunity you see, where it could make a difference and who could help take it forward. We will retain suggestions for future consideration as plans and partnerships develop; submitting an idea does not secure funding or approval.

Take part in the consultation and help turn Sussex and Brighton's strengths into a shared future.

The consultation will run from the week commencing 16 November 2026 to midday on 18 January 2027. Take part at www.haveyoursay.sussexandbrighton-cca.gov.uk/. You can respond as an individual, organisation or community group. For an alternative format or to discuss your feedback, contact enquiries@sussexandbrighton-cca.gov.uk. Consultation materials and the website will explain accessible and offline routes and targeted engagement with communities less often heard.

We will use the findings, alongside further evidence, national policy and local circumstances, to refine the Strategy and Prospectus and explain how responses have shaped them. An Outcomes Framework and Delivery Plan will accompany the final Strategy, reflecting agreed priorities, resources and partner discussions.