

**The 10 Year
Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy
for North Somerset**

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1. Foreword

Economic development and regeneration policies and programmes are changing rapidly at European, national, regional and sub-regional levels and it is important that North Somerset is prepared for these changes. North Somerset Council is working closely with its partners within the North Somerset Partnership to produce and deliver a ten year Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy.

The document sets out a framework to promote sustainable long term economic development and regeneration. It has evolved through public and stakeholder consultation including workshops and a full conference, and identifies the major areas of work to be addressed to strengthen the local economy, expand the range of opportunities for residents and businesses, provide housing that matches the needs of communities, and ensure that the benefits of economic prosperity are spread for everyone's benefit.

We anticipate that in working together to deliver this Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy for North Somerset we will bring significant development and broaden our economic base, and in particular will achieve:

- A knowledge driven economy with an overall increased proportion of jobs in this sector.
- Weston-super-Mare as a thriving and diverse economic hub, supporting the wider North Somerset economy through increased high reward jobs.
- Significant reduction in poverty/disadvantage at a neighbourhood level so everyone can contribute to, and benefit from our future thriving economy.

To succeed, we need the active and ongoing participation of local businesses, communities and agencies. We welcome your contribution to implementing this important work, to support a thriving local economy in which all local people can be active and benefit.

Bob Wayne

Chair

North Somerset Partnership

2. Introduction

The 10 year Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy for North Somerset is informed by information and intelligence about the key economic issues and trends in our local economy, drawn from a range of sources (as detailed in appendix A).

Its strategic aims and objectives are informed by partners and stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors, and by national, regional, and sub-regional strategy frameworks. It will require activity undertaken by a wide range of partner organisations in North Somerset to achieve the range of development and ambitions set out below.

How the strategy was developed

The strategy was developed using a process called a “route map” developed by I&DeA (an organisation that promotes best practice in local government). The route map draws on the experience of those local authorities that are identified as “beacons” for good practice in economic development and regeneration. The route map was used by the Economic Development and Regeneration Group of North Somerset Council to prepare this strategy, in consultation with partners and stakeholders.

The route map identifies a wide range of factors influencing economic development and regeneration, and requires that a wide range of interested local people, agencies, and businesses contribute ideas, and priorities to inform the strategy. Since November 2005, a number of open meetings have been held to draw in these views. In addition, a wide range of research material has been drawn on, and the work has taken account of strategic policy and strategy development at local, national and regional levels, so North Somerset businesses, agencies, and communities can maximise future opportunities that these will offer.

Next Steps

This will now be subject to discussion and development through a range of consultation activity. All stakeholders are invited to share further ideas, identify which of the aims and key actions are the most important, and how they can work with others to deliver these. For full information about the consultation process please contact

Jean Erskine, Economic Development and Regeneration Group Manager at North Somerset Council

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Or see the information on the North Somerset Council website: www.n-somerset.gov.uk or North Somerset Partnership website <http://www.northsomersetpartnership.co.uk/>

If you would prefer simply to send your views about the strategy and how your agency or organisation would wish to contribute to its delivery, please write to:

☐ Jean Erskine
North Somerset Council
Town Hall
Walliscote Road
Weston-super-Mare
BS23 1LH

3. Issues the strategy needs to address

Economic performance is affected by a range of inter-related issues and conditions. We have researched historical and current trends, to identify the actions we need to take to best support the development of the economy of North Somerset.

Some of the work needed to address the economic development and regeneration of North Somerset is already subject to in-depth consultation and action planning. These action plans are not duplicated in this document; but where another plan contributes to the delivery of the aims of this strategy, it is identified with contact information for that plan.

This strategy describes the research and statistics used for initial discussions available under the headings below (in detail in appendix A):

- The overall context and infrastructure of North Somerset (including population and trends, housing, transport, the port and airport)
- The Macro-Economic Performance of North Somerset
- Business Structure
- Business and Enterprise
- Employment Land and Business Space
- Employment, Employment Forecasts, and the Labour Market
- Education and Skills
- Economic Exclusion

Stakeholder views

In addition to commenting on the above issues during the initial consultation process, stakeholders also described the need for a focus on the development of the economy of Weston-super-Mare, and the need to address environmental issues and the impact of economic development and regeneration on the environment. They also identified aspirations for the Council to be more ambitious for the area; thinking “bigger and bolder”, requiring high quality development and urban design.

The business sector wants to work with the Council and others to lobby for more resources to support economic development and regeneration, and there is a general concern that local media coverage of economic development and regeneration issues in the area is very unhelpful in attracting new business in the Weston-super-Mare area in particular. Consultation identified there is a need for all stakeholders to portray North Somerset, and especially Weston-super-Mare in a positive and attractive light, matching our ambition and the significant opportunities that exist here.

Stakeholders consider that the South West Regional Development Agency and Government need to clearly support the development of our economy, which stakeholders increasingly view as part of the Bristol city-region, and that a high level of leadership will be required to take forward a long-term strategy.

Stakeholder views relating to issues arising from our research can be found in appendix A.

4. Local and regional policy and strategy priorities

A number of broad common themes emerge from the strategic policy context. The key framework documents are listed below. The key themes may be summarised as follows:

- Economic development and regeneration based on economic, social and environmental sustainability (to support the development of sustainable communities).
- Improving business productivity and promoting innovation.
- Increasing employment and job opportunities.
- Promoting economic inclusion and providing support for economic development and regeneration in disadvantaged communities.
- Improving the availability of skills in the workforce.

North Somerset Community Strategy

Vision: By 2025 we will have:

- A local economy in North Somerset that will be more competitive providing good quality employment in modern businesses.
- Growth in employment will be in innovative small and medium sized enterprises including those that reflect the changing and diverse nature of our communities.
- Investment in new technology will create jobs in the knowledge based industries supported by a high level of collaboration between business and the public sector.
- New businesses will be established in the less prosperous areas of the district and social enterprises will be supported to meet community needs.
- Reduced the very significant gap between those on very low income and the rest of the population.
- Developed Weston to be a growing urban centre with a rejuvenated seafront and town centre with a family friendly night-time economy with a sustainable balance of housing and employment.
- A high proportion of goods and services will be purchased locally especially in the food and drink industries.
- Developed the skills of the local workforce and these will be enhanced and updated through improved local provision of further and higher education and contribute significantly to our knowledge driven economy.

The priority objectives for economy and employment in the North Somerset Community Strategy are to:

- Improve the economic sustainability of North Somerset providing more local employment opportunities that match local people's skills, particularly in Weston-super-Mare.
- Improve skills to meet the needs of employers.
- Ensure the vitality and viability of all our town centres is maintained and enhanced, improving both the range and quality of the offering, therefore reducing the need to shop outside of the area.
- Increase employment.
- Recognise the importance of existing employers and maximise the opportunity for them to fulfil their potential within North Somerset. Support small business to reduce the burden of regulation.

A table identifying how this Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy will contribute to the implementation of the Community Strategy can be read at appendix D. The Community Strategy will be revised following consultation in 2006, and consultation on "Towards an Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy for North Somerset" will contribute to this revision.

Weston-super-Mare Area Development Framework

The vision statement in the Weston Area Development Framework is as follows:

Weston will achieve a sustainable balance of housing and employment, reducing the need to travel. It will provide good quality employment and opportunity for residents through growth in modern, growing sectors of the economy. It will have defined its own role within the sub-regional economy and become noted as a place of positive economic change and sustainable growth.

North Somerset Council Corporate Plan

The key economic aim in the North Somerset Council Corporate Plan is to “increase prosperity throughout North Somerset by developing a more sustainable local economy that meets the needs and aspirations of residents and businesses alike, taking advantage of North Somerset’s location as a gateway to the South West”.

The Council’s corporate economic and regeneration priorities are to:

- Increase local job opportunities and reduce the need to out commute.
- Reduce poverty and respond to the identified needs in pockets of deprivation.
- Achieve the objectives set out in the Weston Area Development Framework.

West of England Economic Strategy

West of England Partnership’s Economic Vision:

In 2026 the area will have:

- One of Europe’s fastest growing and most prosperous regions which has closed the gap between disadvantaged and other communities – driven by major developments in employment and government backed infrastructure improvements in South Bristol and North Somerset.
- A buoyant economy competing internationally, based on investment by innovative knowledge based businesses and a high level of graduate and vocational skills.
- A rising quality of life for all, achieved by the promotion of healthy lifestyles, access to better quality healthcare, an upturn in the supply of affordable housing of all types and the development of sustainable communities.
- Easier local, national and international travel, thanks to transport solutions that link communities to employment opportunities and local services, control and reduce congestion, and improve strategic connections by road, rail, and through Bristol International Airport and seaport.
- Cultural attractions that are the envy of competitor city regions across Europe, making the West of England the place of choice for talented, creative workers and affluent visitors.

The vision for the economy in the sub-region refers to:

- South Bristol and Weston-super-Mare benefiting from increased business investment, economic growth, accelerated regeneration and an improved local environment following government investment in a strategic road network.
- Regeneration of Weston-super-Mare including RAF Locking.
- Securing the economic regeneration of disadvantaged communities and under performing locations in particular South Bristol and Weston-super-Mare.
- The benefits from the growth and development of Bristol International Airport, the Port and other strategic sites have been maximised.
- Understand, strengthen and promote key business sectors in the sub-region namely:
 - Airport and Port
 - Information, Communication and Telecommunications Creative and Media
 - Tourism and Retail

- Environmental Technology
- Advanced Engineering Including Aerospace and Defence
- Financial Services
- Construction

An Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy for the West of England is being prepared for publication early in 2007.

Regional Economic Strategy for the South West of England

The South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) has published an economic strategy for the South West Region 2006 – 2015.

The strategy identifies five critical issues:

- Population growth, ageing and distribution
- Business creation and retention
- Rapidly changing industrial and employment mix
- Technological and other knowledge dissemination
- Energy, use of resources and climate change

The three strategic objectives are:

Strategic Objective 1: Successful and Competitive Businesses

- Support business productivity
- Encourage new enterprise
- Deliver skills for the economy
- Compete in global market
- Promote innovation

Strategic Objective 2: Strong and Inclusive Communities

- Improve participation in the economy
- Regenerate the most disadvantaged areas
- Plan sustainable and successful communities

Strategic Objective 3: An Effective and Confident Region

- Improve transport networks
- Promote and enhance what is best about the region
- Improve leadership, influence and partnership

The Regional Economic Strategy targets support to key growth sectors in the South West region, which are: aerospace and advanced engineering, food and drink, creative industries (especially digital media) , tourism , marine industries, bio-medical and healthcare, information and communication technology (especially semi-conductor design and wireless networks) and environmental technologies.

The South West Regional Spatial Strategy

In 2006 the South West Regional Assembly published a Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006 – 2026.

The South West Regional Spatial Strategy aims to:

- Redress imbalances in towns and cities between jobs and resident population.
- Facilitate spatial links between skills development, business productivity, prosperity and sustainable skills.
- Reduce the need to travel through the provision of live/work space to enable home working.
- Provide a larger number of smaller sites to meet organic growth and rural investment; review those sites and take greater account of the role on non B class users as generators of employment.
- Assist sectors that are important to the local economy whose expansion needs to be safeguarded, for example, those related to airports and ports.
- Apply the established sequential approach to location of new retail development, with schemes on previously developed land in established town centres the priority.
- Provide for additional office space between 2.7 and 3.2 sq. m. representing 32 to 44% of existing stock.
- Undertake town centre assessments when reviewing other issues such as, employment land supply and demand and urban housing capacity.

The principles and policies set out in Chapter 8 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006 - 2026 (Enhancing Economic Prosperity and Quality of Employment Opportunity) are broadly in alignment with existing and emerging policies for economic development and regeneration in North Somerset.

In North Somerset these matters are being addressed through:

- The North Somerset Replacement Local Plan.
- The Weston Area Action Plan.
- The expansion of Weston College, the ready4work project and engagement with West@Work.
- Allocation of new mixed use sites allocated in the Replacement Local Plan.
- The West of England Small Workspace Strategy.
- Masterplanning for the Port and Airport.
- Regeneration plans for Weston Town Centre and Portishead.
- Provision of land for office development in Portishead and Weston-super-Mare.

Further information on the national and european policy framework is given in appendix B.

5. The Aims and Key Actions of the Strategy

The aims and key actions reflect:

- evidence from the economic profile of North Somerset and
- the findings from the local consultation workshops
- discussions among partner agencies (e.g. the North Somerset Partnership - NSP)
- the Economy and Employment theme of the Community Strategy

These are set out in detail in the appendices.

There are some developed plans that contribute to implementing the Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy aims. These are noted in the action plans for this strategy. There is a need to develop detailed action plans for some aspects of the Strategy; the Economy and Employment Delivery Partnership of the North Somerset Partnership will develop further plans required, working with neighbouring local authorities, strategic partnerships and others, as appropriate.

The action plans for the Strategy reflect the diversity of activity or range of partners required for the plan to be a success. This will require further negotiation and resourcing over the coming months and years to develop a sustainable economy in North Somerset to benefit all our communities.

The aims and key actions follow:

Aim A. To deliver a more sustainable approach to economic development and regeneration in North Somerset through addressing infrastructure issues and deficits.

This will be addressed by the following actions:

Promote a confident and strategically significant role for North Somerset in the context of planned growth over the next two decades through sub-regional partnership working and in particular through the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Secure an improvement in transport infrastructure to minimise the costs to business of congestion and improve the movement of goods and services including investment in strategic highway links, motorway access, strategic rail services and integrated public transport.

Improve the availability of affordable housing.

Maximise new opportunities for investment in economic development through Section 106 agreements.

Prioritise initiatives to tackle climate change, for instance through reducing energy use in the business sector, better travel planning and reducing the need for transport of goods and people

Contribute to the development of a 'One Planet Economy' by promoting environmental best practice in business as an integral part of improving business performance, for example through better waste management and the development of environmental management systems

Prioritise employment led regeneration in Weston-super-Mare to reduce out commuting and provide a more sustainable community.

Further develop new facilities for further and higher education in North Somerset.

Aim B. To support business and enterprise growth and development in North Somerset to maximise our role in maintaining the West of England's growth and prosperity.

This will be addressed by the following actions:

Increase the available supply of land and premises to meet business needs.

Develop specific proposals to encourage enterprise and innovation in small and medium sized businesses.

Provide a comprehensive business support and advice service for small and medium enterprises for start up and further development.

Promote inward investment and provide support services to existing employers, with partners.

Deliver a programme aimed at improving business confidence and investment in North Somerset, with partners.

Deliver our regulatory services so that they support business needs for efficiency and clarity.

Deliver an environmental improvement programme to support the upgrading and image of existing industrial estates.

Bring forward actions to address business related crime.

Support business networking and local supply chain/purchasing policies where appropriate.

Aim C. To develop North Somerset as a location for innovation and knowledge based business within a broad based business structure.

This will be addressed by the following actions:

Bring forward proposals to encourage investment in knowledge based business with key partners.

Develop a “knowledge cluster” through new site development at Weston-super-Mare.

Support the sustainable growth of Bristol International Airport that maximises the use of existing land and premises as a major driver of the regions economy.

Support the sustainable growth of the Royal Portbury/Avonmouth docks that maximises the use of existing land and premises.

Promote North Somerset’s tourism and visitor attractiveness.

Promote environmental technology including exemplar development.

Fully utilise business and employee skills in the aerospace and defence sectors.

Develop a specific programme to support businesses in rural areas including the food and drink sector.

Equip creative businesses to fulfil their potential.

Support social enterprise initiatives.

Promote environmentally responsible businesses and business practices in both urban and rural areas.

Aim D. To support and regenerate the district’s main town centres as locations for retail, civic and cultural activity together with new employment and housing opportunities.

This will be addressed by the following actions:

Establish strong public/private ownership of town centres through having in place joint town centre management arrangements for each of the four towns.

Promote employment and commercial development in Portishead.

Deliver the Weston-super-Mare Regeneration Plan that aims to unlock investment in a number of strategic sites in the town centre.

Bring forward a programme to unlock strategic town centre sites in Nailsea, Portishead and Clevedon.

Support investment in cultural and leisure related development including new library provision in Portishead, the Tropicana redevelopment and promoting the Winter Gardens as a commercially viable major conference facility.

Aim E. To address economic exclusion in North Somerset through the development of area-based community regeneration and renewal activity (targeting areas of poor housing, poor health, poor education, fewer job opportunities and high crime rates).

This will be addressed by the following actions:

Identify and develop new community regeneration and renewal opportunities following voluntary transfer of housing stock, major built environment regeneration schemes etc. (e.g. local labour schemes through Weston Area Action Plan).

Develop area-based regeneration initiatives, which bring together public agencies, local business and local communities to develop local action plans that address poverty and exclusion through mainstream public services, and support development of local community groups and voluntary sector infrastructure working in less prosperous areas. Pilot these works in Weston-super-Mare's south ward, using Safer and Stronger Communities Neighbourhood Element and Cleaner Safer Greener Government funds targeted to this area, and apply learning to other areas as appropriate.

Support provision of local services in local centres serving less prosperous communities, to include benefits and financial advice, financial services through Community Finance Initiatives (e.g. Credit Union, enterprise loan schemes,) and development support to local business.

Support tailored employment and learning programmes providing access to employment, and development of formal learning provision close to/in areas of disadvantage.

Provide tailored business start up programmes to encourage new business in less prosperous areas of the district.

Support social enterprise initiatives in Weston-super-Mare South and Central Wards as a means of providing alternative access to employment and enterprise.

Identify barriers and develop further actions to address these in relation to access to work and training among those living in less prosperous areas, through transport initiatives, neighbourhood nursery and other childcare, etc.

Maximise external funding opportunities available to all sectors to address disadvantage in geographic and communities of interest.

Aim F. To further enhance and develop the skills of the workforce across North Somerset and promote a learning culture that supports entrepreneurialism and business innovation.

This will be addressed by the following actions:

Further develop educational and skills attainment in North Somerset and address inequalities in attainment in different areas of the district.

Support access to further and higher education including vocational training.

Provide information, guidance and learning support to individuals to maximise opportunities to develop skills and knowledge.

Encouraging target groups of young people and adults to develop skills and experience through the Young Enterprise award programme, LPSA7, promoting enterprise in schools and further education establishments and links with employers.

Promote the improvement of skills in the workforce and staff development in existing employers and key growth sectors.

Aim G. To secure the sustainable regeneration of Weston-super-Mare as a focus for growth and development within the West of England sub region.

This will be addressed by the following actions:

Provide significant new employment and business development opportunities in Weston-super-Mare in order to achieve a more sustainable balance between homes and jobs.

Provide serviced land and property for business investment.

Promote the clustering of economic activity particularly for knowledge based businesses.

Develop projects to support business enterprise and confidence in Weston-super-Mare.

Bring forward proposals and deliver strategies to strengthen the town centre including the development of the night time economy and an expansion of retail activity and leisure.

Address the impact of any poor quality HMOs and drugs and alcohol treatment services in the area.

Improve the gateway to the town centre as a location for business investment.

Secure the effective implementation of key regeneration sites including Knightstone Island, Birnbeck Pier and the Tropicana.

Appendix A

Economic Profile of North Somerset: Views from partners and stakeholders

Information in this section has been taken from several reports on the North Somerset economy and the economy in the West of England sub-region (listed in appendix F).

This section also contains comparative information from a report entitled the “State of North Somerset”, an audit of economic, social and environmental conditions produced by the Local Futures Group. The audit compares the economic performance of North Somerset with the other unitary authorities in the West of England sub-region and with a group of comparable local authority areas elsewhere in the UK. These are referred to as “comparator authorities” and they are:

- Poole,
- Bath and North East Somerset,
- East Riding of Yorkshire,
- Southend-on-Sea,
- Stockport,
- Sefton,
- York,
- Solihull,
- Bristol and
- South Gloucestershire.

These authorities are used for this purpose because they are either the other unitary authorities within the sub-region, or those used to benchmark the performance of North Somerset by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The audit also includes comparisons between the economic performance of North Somerset, the South West region and Great Britain as a whole.

The overall context and infrastructure of North Somerset

Population

The population of North Somerset measured in the 2001 census was 188,564 and it was 177,472 in 1991, an increase of approximately 6% over that decade. The population forecast for 2011 is 204,800 (ONS, July 2005). The age profile of the population in North Somerset shows a bias towards older age groups compared with the average in England and Wales.

The forecast total population growth in North Somerset in the next decade is around 8% with similar rates of growth forecast for 2026 (Office for National Statistics 2003). The forecast increase in population in North Somerset is unevenly distributed with higher levels of growth forecast in the age group 65+ and lower levels of growth in the age group from 0-19.

In 2001 there were 134,132 people of working age living in North Somerset and 91,767 were in employment; an economic activity rate of 68.4%. This is very close to the economic activity rate of the West of England sub-region which was 68.8% in the 2001 census.

In the forecast to 2015 there is strong growth in the age groups 20-24 and 25-29, but a decline in population in age groups 35-39 and 40-44. A broadly similar pattern is evident in the next decade.

The economic implications of these findings are as follows:

- There will be a general growth in demand for goods and services within the local economy as a result of population growth.

- There will be a growing demand for specific services used predominantly by older people e.g. care homes.
- There will be a shortage of younger people and possibly of people in the mid- range of working age to meet the recruitment needs of local employers.

The potential for overall labour shortages, however, are likely to be reduced if higher rates of economic activity are secured. This outcome would be encouraged by a buoyant labour market and above all, by older workers choosing to delay their retirements as a result of improved working conditions e.g. more flexible working arrangements for older workers and rising concerns about pensions. Recent demographic projections for the West of England sub-region acknowledge the prospect of higher economic activity rates compensating to some degree for the ageing of the workforce.

Housing

The average house price in North Somerset in 2005 was £197,209. This compares to the average of £250,160 in Bath and North East Somerset, £180,000 in South Gloucestershire and £180,000 in Bristol. House prices have increased by approximately 108% since 2000. During this time, median wages increased by approximately 25% to £23,171, resulting in an overall decline in the affordability of housing in the area. Source: www.intelligencewest.gov.uk

In 2004 the Housing Market Study undertaken in the West of England by Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset showed these areas make up a complete housing market. It identified that 40% of new households cannot afford to access housing through the housing market place and also that while the West of England has 20% of population of the South West within it, it has 50% of our regions homelessness. It must therefore be recognised that any growth within our market area will influence the choices and decisions of residents/people who work in the area. The way our housing infrastructure is developed will support or hinder.

Between 1996 and 2005 there were 8,645 completed dwellings in North Somerset corresponding to 961 per year. According to the strategic plan for housing development this leaves a requirement of 6255 dwellings to be constructed between 2005 and 2011.

Views expressed by Partners and Stakeholders on this issue are:

- There is a shortage of affordable housing.

Transport Infrastructure

The Local Futures audit assesses how connected an area is through transport links including the local concentration of motorway junctions, airports, ports and mainline railway stations. It also takes the distance from London into account. It calls this an assessment of “connectivity”. North Somerset score relatively highly on overall connectivity ranking 181st in Britain out of 408 local authorities. However North Somerset has a comparatively high proportion of people travelling to work by car, a low proportion travelling to work by public transport and below average proportions walking or cycling to work.

There is a high level of commuter traffic on the M5 to the North of Weston-super-Mare, and both the Portishead (J19) and Weston-super-Mare (J21) junctions are currently saturated during peak hours in common with many junctions throughout the UK. However, there are developer funded improvements programmed for both junctions in 2006/2007 that should mitigate some of the problems.

The unitary authorities in the West of England sub-region have jointly funded the Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study with the Highways Agency, the Regional Development Agency and the Department for Transport. The study will consider improvements required for the sub-regional strategic transport network and further inform the development of a Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) for the West of England sub-region for the period 2006-11. Along with the JLTP, the four unitary authorities expect to submit a bid to the Government to fund a network of 'showcase' bus services, two of which would run between Weston-super-Mare/Bristol and Portishead/Bristol. If successful, these will be introduced from 2006-11.

The consultation of the Joint Local Transport Plan identifies several potential major transport schemes, including a Weston-super-Mare package (various improvements to transport infrastructure within the town), an A38-A370 Link Road and enhancements to the local rail network. The Joint Local Transport Plan also identifies potential demand restraint measures e.g. congestion charging that could, if implemented, give the local authorities additional funding from the Government as well as revenues from the charges to fund more improvements to the sub-regional transport infrastructure e.g. light rapid transit network.

Views expressed by Partners and Stakeholders on this issue are:

- Congestion at Junction 21 and Junction 19 is a serious and growing problem.
- Finding a solution to congestion through Banwell is a priority.
- Improvements are needed at the railway stations in Weston-super-Mare but the impact of any relatively minor improvements will be limited as long as the stations are not on the main line.
- Rural transport should be improved.
- Public transport and road links to Bristol International Airport should be improved.
- A rail link between Bristol and Portishead is needed.
- A new link for freight between Royal Portbury Dock and Avonmouth is needed.
- Staff travel plans should have a higher profile.
- Small improvements in the transport system in Weston-super-Mare Town Centre e.g. signage, parking, could substantially improve the perception of the town centre.
- Traffic congestion is a major cost burden for the business community.

The Port and Airport

Bristol International Airport (BIA) has enjoyed significant growth over the last ten years averaging 13.3% passenger growth per annum. A survey of passengers undertaken in 2003 showed that around 20% of passengers using Bristol were travelling for business purposes, a higher proportion than many other airports in the UK. The Government's forecast suggests that Bristol will remain the region's largest airport and if the expansion of Bristol International Airport is supported, BIA forecast that 8 million passengers per annum will use the airport by 2015. Around 2500 workers were employed at Bristol International Airport during the summer of 2004. A further 1350 jobs are estimated to be generated by the airport through companies supplying the airport or through the spending of wages by employees.

Royal Portbury Dock has grown rapidly and consistently throughout the 12 years since it was purchased by First Corporate Shipping. Over £450 million has been invested in new port infrastructure and facilities and the volume of freight handled has more than doubled. The port comprises two dock areas, Avonmouth and Royal Portbury Dock, a total of 2,419 acres. The vast majority of its trade is imported goods - coal, oil, aviation fuel, cars, containers, fertiliser, grain, forest products and metals. The port supports 7,660 jobs in port operations and a further 1,765 jobs in the port estate (Economic Assessment of Bristol Port, Roger Tym/E.T. Laing March 2004).

The port has grown rapidly and consistently in recent years and there is considerable potential for future growth within various markets including the current sectors. Scenarios explored in the economic assessment of the Port include a growth in the total volume of freight from approximately 10 million tones in 2002 to approximately 24 million tones by 2022. Growth rates of this magnitude could create up to 7,000 more jobs in the local economy by 2022. The port's growth since 1991 has been facilitated by the land available within the port estate. However, land within the existing port estate is becoming increasingly constrained and capacity for future growth may require new land for expansion and/or a more intensive use of the existing land.

Views expressed by Partners and Stakeholders on this issue are:

- Public transport and road links to Bristol International Airport should be improved.
- A new link for freight between Royal Portbury Dock and Avonmouth is needed.

Macro – Economic Performance

The Local Futures audit uses the following measures for macro-economic performance

- Average gross weekly earnings 2003
- % change in average gross weekly earnings 1999-2003
- Change in Gross Value Added (GVA) per head 1998-2001
- Gross Value Added (GVA) per head 2000-2001

These macro-economic indicators present a strong all round economic profile with high levels of average earnings and productivity and an improvement in the Local Futures productivity ranking from 113 to 105 in the period 2004-2006.

Business Structure

North Somerset has a concentration of businesses in high performance engineering, health and social work, transport, storage and communications, wholesale and retail. This is illustrated in the following table of location quotients for North Somerset compared with the other unitary authorities in the West of England sub-region. (Note: A location quotient measures of the proportion of employment in a specific sector in a particular area compared to the average for Great Britain.)

District	High Performance Engineering	Health and Social Work	Transport Storage and Communications	Wholesale and Retail
North Somerset	1.29	1.12	1.30	1.25
Bath and North East Somerset	0.16	1.05	0.45	0.95
Bristol City	0.23	1.07	0.65	0.95
South Gloucestershire	4.72	0.69	1.50	1.04
Great Britain	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

Source: *Local Futures 2006*

North Somerset has a comparatively high proportion of small businesses, with less than 60 employers having more than 100 employees (appendix E). Source – *North Somerset Business Directory*

Views expressed by Partners and Stakeholders on this issue are:

- Tourism and leisure will continue to be very important but the tourism offer needs to change and develop with the market.
- The standard of hotel accommodation needs to be improved.
- A higher quality leisure offer is needed e.g. ice skating, snow dome, casino, health spa.
- The shortage of skills in the tourism industry is most acute at intermediate level e.g. chefs, supervisory staff. The high level of seasonality leads to recruitment difficulties.
- The cultural offer in Weston-super-Mare and in the other main centres of population should be improved to make North Somerset more attractive to modern businesses.

The performance of the North Somerset economy is fundamentally influenced by its industrial structure. Structural change in the economy has been marked by a long term shift from manufacturing to services with production activity in the UK declining year after year. In advanced economies the critical structural trend is the growth of the “knowledge economy” marked by rising levels of innovation, technology, creativity and entrepreneurship and by a need for a more skilled and educated workforce.

The Knowledge Economy

High technology and knowledge based services such as computer services can boost productivity and competitiveness of the enterprise sector through technical research and development, new business location, participating in international production processes, brand-building activities, reducing distribution costs, and better business risk management. A full range of enterprise can benefit, from international finance organisations to small local tourism businesses that develop websites to access new markets.

However, the “knowledge economy” may not be high-tech. For example, applying new techniques to subsistence farming can increase yields significantly, using information and logistical services can allow traditional craft sectors to serve much wider markets than before, or applying new environmental technologies and practices enable the ‘greening’ of business in general. The key to a knowledge based economy can be the development of a culture of continuous learning and adjustment to maximise the benefit of that learning. There is wide agreement that future economic growth and sustainability will require full development of, and participation in, the knowledge economy.

The Local Futures audit assessed North Somerset’s industrial structure from the new knowledge economy perspective distinguishing between knowledge based production (like high technology engineering), and knowledge based services (like computer services). The audit found that 18% of employment in North Somerset is in the knowledge driven sectors. This is below the national proportion of employment in the knowledge economy (23%) and the regional proportion (20%). Between 1998 - 2004 employment in the knowledge economy grew by approximately 10% - again below the national and regional averages and indicating that North Somerset is falling behind in the development of the knowledge economy.

Business and Enterprise

The Local Futures audit gives insight into North Somerset’s business and enterprise base. For this purpose the audit utilises a range of measures:

- Businesses per thousand head of population
- Average business size
- New business formation rate 2002
- Business closure rate
- Self employment rate
- % change in total VAT registered business stock 1994 – 2003

- New business survival rate from 2000
- Proportion of businesses in knowledge sectors 2002

The combined result shows that North Somerset ranks slightly above average by comparison with the UK as whole, but is out performed by the majority of the other authority areas North Somerset is compared to (see the list of comparator authority areas).

Views expressed by Partners and Stakeholders on this issue are:

- Communications with the business community need to be improved.
- The Council needs to improve the sharing of information on local companies across service areas.
- The Council should offer advice to businesses on improving the quality of the environment e.g. on business parks.
- Some in the business community perceive that the Council should give a lower priority to consultation, strategy and planning and focus on more service delivery to businesses.
- Traffic congestion is a major cost burden for the business community.
- The availability of land and premises for employment should be improved, especially freehold land and premises for local businesses.
- The level of innovation in local businesses is perceived to be low but it is important to support innovation especially in small high technology companies.
- Public procurement is a major opportunity for local businesses.
- Working in partnership with business is important and this will require effective leadership.
- Broadband capacity should be increased to the levels available in London and the South East.
- More support is needed for new start businesses especially in deprived areas.
- Workspace for artistic and cultural activities is needed.

Employment Land and Business Space

107 hectares of employment land has been developed in North Somerset between 1996 and 2006, providing 222,048 square metres of floor space for business use. However 37.2 ha of this total was used for car storage at Royal Portbury Dock. This is classed as a business use but did not provide a large number of jobs.

Of the remaining 69.8ha developed, 0.4ha was in Clevedon and 4.6 ha was in Portishead, the latter consisting mostly of offices at Gordano Gate.

3.6ha of development has taken place in Nailsea. Over the past 12 months, 2 developments have been completed within the curtilages of established employment sites.

13.7 ha of the total hectareage was developed in Weston-super-Mare. The completion of the magistrates' court and probation service office building adjacent to the B3340 Bristol Road in Worle has provided a large number of office jobs. Further development is underway at Aisecombe Way and other completions in Weston-super-Mare over the past few years include industrial and warehousing sites on Langford Road, Winterstoke Road and Herluin Way and offices on Warne Road.

Of the 47.5 ha across the rest of North Somerset, the 5/20 development at Kenn, Clevedon and the Eden Office Park development on the former Ham Green Hospital site in Pill are major contributors. Both sites have recorded large numbers of completed units over the past few years and works are still continuing on both sites.

Losses of allocated employment land to other uses have been recorded in both Weston-super-Mare and Portishead over the past year. Portishead saw the completion of a retail development on Wyndham Way and in Weston-super-Mare losses were recorded on two sites to an adult mental health centre and a motor dealership.

Over the past 10 years, 6.4 hectares of allocated employment land was developed for other purposes, mainly in and around Weston-super-Mare.

10 additional sites have been recommended for allocation in the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan by the Inspector at the Public Local Inquiry that took place from June to November 2005. These sites are at Weston Gateway, Locking Castle, the former Gasworks, land south of Herluin Way, Bridge Farm, land at Winterstoke Road, Weston Airfield and RAF Locking. Sites outside of Weston-super-Mare include land to the west of Kenn Road, Kenn, Clevedon and the Paper Mill site in Portishead.

Views expressed by Partners and Stakeholders on this issue are:

- The Weston Area Development Framework should be a supplementary planning document
- The retail parks need to be improved
- Some highly visible “early wins” in terms of new development in Weston-super-Mare are needed to boost confidence
- The availability of land and premises for employment should be improved especially freehold land and premises for local businesses
- Workspace for artistic and cultural activities is needed

Employment

The number of jobs in North Somerset is estimated as approximately 70,000 with around 95,000 residents employed in North Somerset or elsewhere. Of these 70,000 jobs, over 30,000 are in Weston-super-Mare, a further 10,000 are in Portishead and Portbury and approximately 8,000 are in Clevedon and Nailsea.

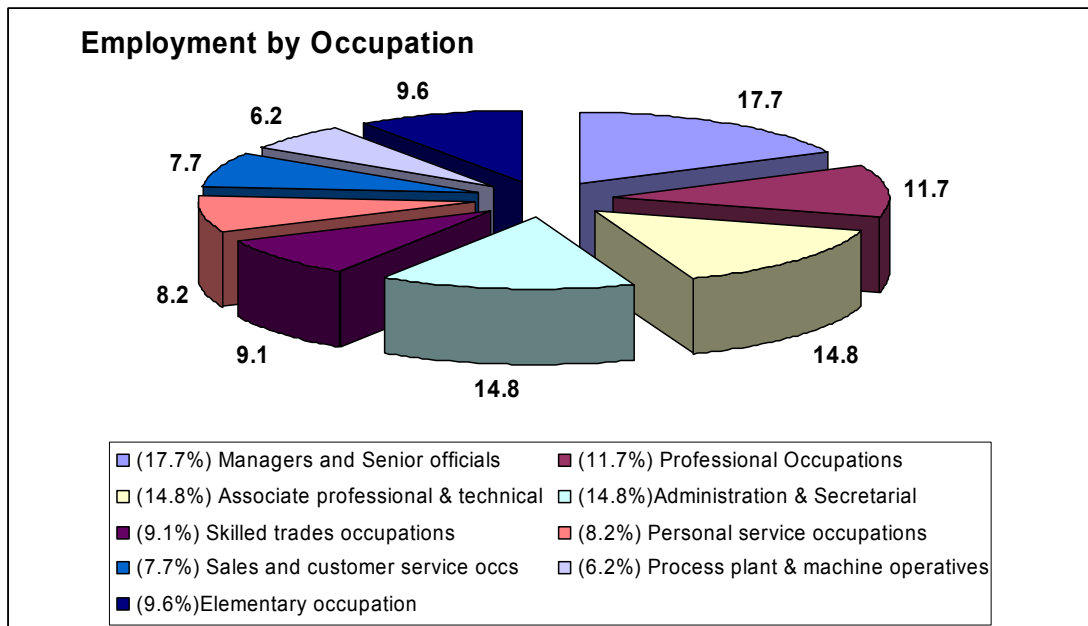
The 2001 census data shows 34,151 residents of Weston-super-Mare are in employment, with 21,974 of these working in the town, and 12,177 travelling to jobs outside. The level of “self containment” in Weston-super-Mare is 64%, the lowest of all of the Principal Urban Areas in the South West region. This compares with self containment percentages of 85% in Bristol and 71% in Bath. (Self containment is defined as the % of residents living and working in the same area).

Census data shows that between 1991 and 2001, the expansion of employment in Weston-super-Mare continued to lag behind the growth of the resident workforce, leading to a further rise in the outflow of commuters (+4,850). In 2001, 65% of residents were employed in the town with nearly half of the remainder (6,250) travelling to the Bristol area. Traffic surveys indicate that much of this outflow is from the new residential developments on the edge of the town. Confirming this pattern, Census data for the area shows comparatively lengthy journeys to work (36% travelling more than 10km).

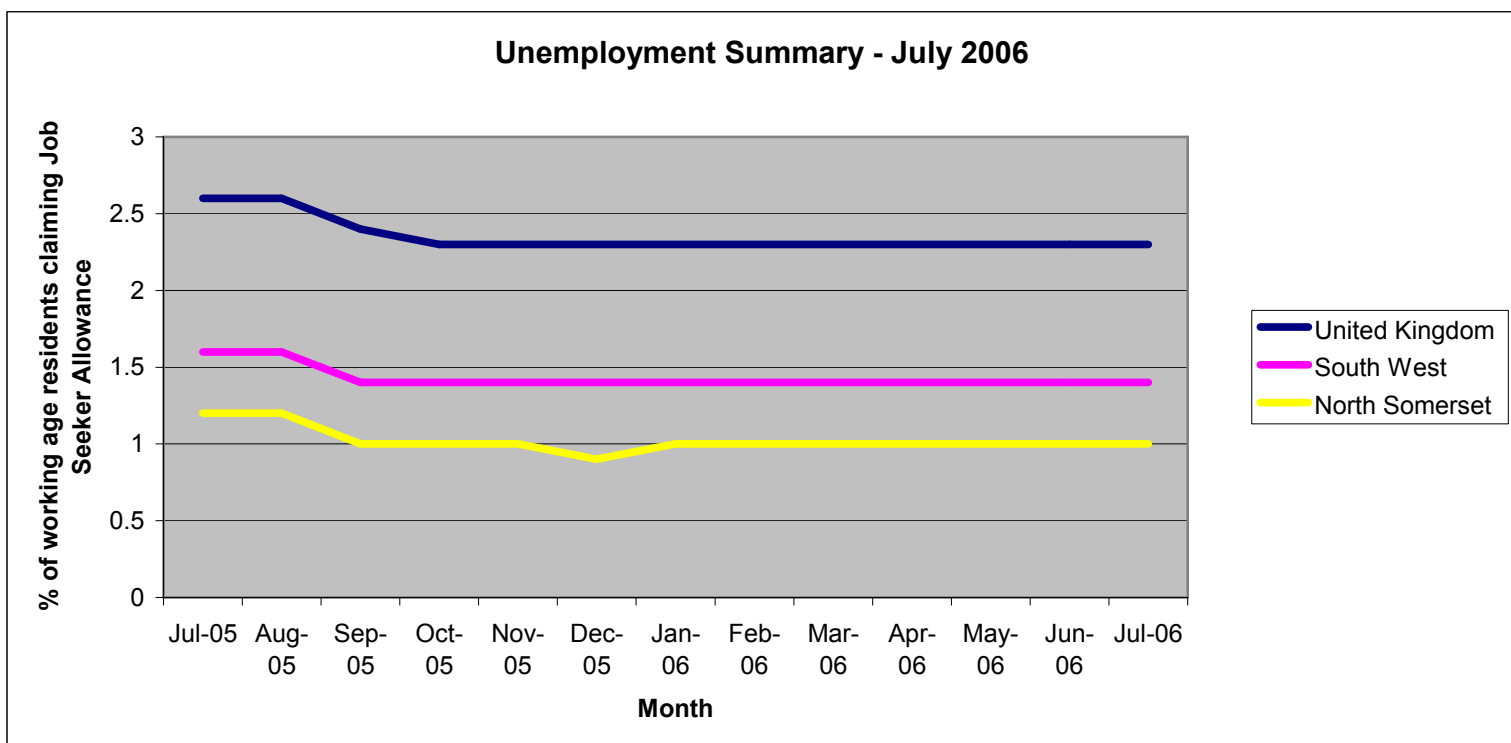
The services sector is the largest employer with a concentration of employment in retailing, health, business services and hotels and catering. The tourism industry remains an important source of employment in North Somerset. In 2005, the number of visitors to North Somerset was estimated as 5.8 million generating a total expenditure of approximately £268 million. In the same year the estimated number of people employed directly in tourism was estimated as 5,300. In recent years there has been an upward trend in visitor numbers, expenditure and employment in tourism.

In common with the other areas in the West of England sub-region and the South West as a whole, jobs have been lost in agriculture in North Somerset since 1990. Employment in rural areas has also been affected by the closure of local services such as village shops and post offices.

Approximately 9,300 jobs in North Somerset are in the managerial sector (18.5% of the total number) although around 17,000 residents are employed as managers. The area is therefore, home to a considerable proportion of higher paid employees, but many of these work outside the district. There is an under representation of employees in the banking, insurance and finance sector.



Source: Local Area Labour Force Survey (Mar 2004-Feb 2005)



Source NOMIS

The level of unemployment in North Somerset is low and has declined in recent years. However, the level of unemployment in Weston-super-Mare is higher than the rest of North Somerset with the highest levels found in certain town centre neighbourhoods.

Employment Forecasts

Past employment growth in North Somerset has exceeded the national rate of growth, and also the average rate of growth in the West of England sub-region. Between 1991-99 the number of jobs in North Somerset grew by 15,400, an average rate of 3.4% p.a. This compares with 1.5% p.a. for the West of England sub region and 1.2% for the UK as a whole. The largest growth sectors were business services, transport, retailing and public administration.

A forecast for 2001-2016, based on the growth sectors in the UK as a whole and taking into account the current level of employment in specific economic sectors in North Somerset, indicates that:

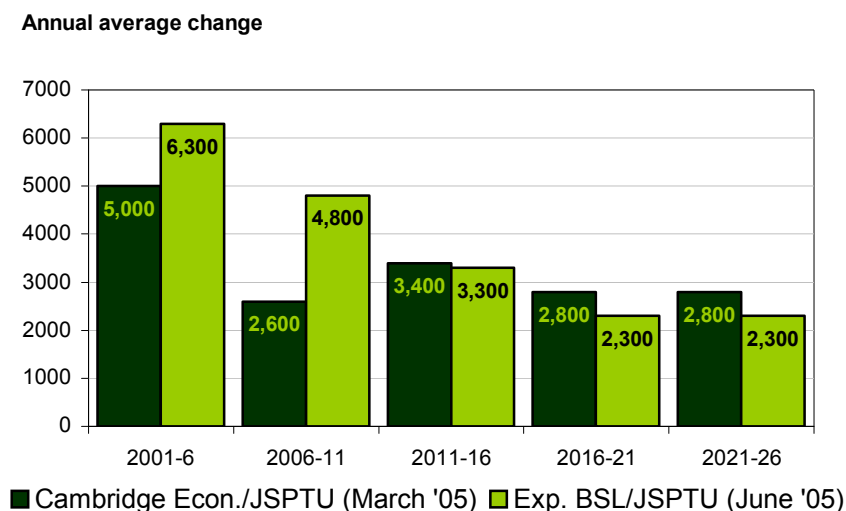
- Approximately 8,500 new jobs will be created in North Somerset.
- Employment growth in North Somerset will be above average for the UK in health services, which include significant growth in the care sector (including domiciliary care, residential and nursing home care), business services, hotels and catering and retailing.
- Education, banking, insurance, communications, and electrical equipment and construction are also likely to be important growth sectors in the local economy.

The baseline forecast growth of employment in Weston-super-Mare to 2021 is 3,100 new jobs. However the successful implementation of the Weston Area Development Framework will attract new investment and create additional employment - an estimated total of up to 10,060 new jobs in Weston-super-Mare by 2021.

Forecasts must be considered carefully as they are based on past trends and may not accurately predict future outcomes. A recent employment projection undertaken by Cambridge Econometrics (March 2005) shows employment in the West of England sub-region rising by an average of 3,465 p.a. between 2001 and 2021 (and by an average of 3,324 p.a. between 2001 and 2026 if the trend between 2016 and 2021 is projected to 2026). An alternative recent projection from Experian BSL (June 2005) shows the level of employment in the West of England rising at a slightly higher rate, by an average of 4,250 p.a. between 2001 and 2020. (This would be an average of 3,800 p.a. between 2001 and 2026 if the trend between 2016 and 2020 is projected to 2026).

Both Cambridge Econometrics and Experian BSL show the rate of employment growth in the West of England tailing-off sharply over the future. Increases of between 5-6,000 between 2001 and 2006 are forecast to fall away to about 3,300 between 2011 and 2016 and to below 3,000 over later years.

Figure 4.1: WEST OF ENGLAND- EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS



The projections show broadly similar patterns of change in the industrial structure of employment. Manufacturing employment is forecast to fall (by about -1,000 p.a. compared with -500 p.a. through the 1990s) with retailing, hotels and catering, business and professional services, public administration continuing recent trends of growth.

There is a growing interest and potential to develop employment in the social economy - enterprises established to benefit the community. An audit of employment in the social economy in Bristol undertaken by Bristol City Council in 2001 found that 9,400 people were employed in social enterprises in Bristol, equivalent to 4.6% of the local workforce. Research undertaken by the South West Forum and Plymouth University found that 4% of Gross Domestic Product in our region is created in the social economy sector. These findings highlight the potential for the growth of the social economy in North Somerset.

Views expressed by Partners and Stakeholders on this issue are:

- More jobs are needed in Weston-super-Mare to limit the growth in out commuting; younger skilled people are leaving Weston-super-Mare to find work elsewhere.
- A sector based approach to promoting future employment in North Somerset may not be a sound approach as there are no well established specific industrial sectors. However, it is important to sustain manufacturing industry in the area and there is some potential for growth in financial services.
- The distribution industry has the potential for creating new jobs as in Bridgwater and Highbridge.
- Jobs are being lost through the closure of village shops and other services in rural areas.
- Farm diversification will create new jobs in rural areas and will provide new opportunities for the growth of small businesses.
- There is a high level of confidence in the local housing market. A high level of confidence in the industrial, office, leisure and retail development must be developed.

The Labour Market

In the Local Futures audit the state of the local labour market is assessed on:

- The proportion of the population in employment
- Inactivity due to long term sickness
- The rates of short term and long term unemployment
- Claimant count rate

Based on these measures the Local Futures audit concludes that North Somerset performs reasonably well in respect of it's labour market ranking 116th out of 408 districts in the country. However rates of short and long term unemployment are low resulting in a tight labour market and potential difficulties with recruitment for local employers.

Economic Exclusion

Economic exclusion in North Somerset is concentrated in some neighbourhoods in the centre of Weston-super-Mare. Economic exclusion is described in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) published by Government in 2004. It measures deprivation at neighbourhood level in small areas called Super Output Areas (SOAs). Each electoral ward in the country is made up of several SOAs.

The IMD identifies multiple deprivation particularly in some SOAs in south and central wards in Weston-super-Mare. One SOA in south ward is shown to experience multiple deprivation amongst the 3% most deprived of all SOAs in England. Five areas of south and central ward have deprivation levels amongst the worst 8% of all areas in England.

The IMD shows that North Somerset has two SOAs that are in the most deprived 1% of all SOAs in the South West region, and 1 in the most deprived 3% of all in the country.

However, the two wards in the most deprived 1% have significant opportunity for improvement and development. They include a mix of housing including Victorian and Georgian terraces, semi and detached houses, offering potential for further renovation and development. The housing stock offers cheaper housing (though still unaffordable for many), than in other parts of our sub-region, which has a very expensive housing market overall. The voluntary transfer of social housing stock across North Somerset will bring alternative resources for investment in social housing, again with potential significant impact, particularly in south ward. Both Wards are in central Weston-super-Mare and will benefit from the ambitious programme of employment-led development through the Weston Area Development Framework, with significant development opportunities in and near the town centre.

Currently, the IMD identifies specific kinds of deprivation and where they are located, showing:

Education, Skills, and Training:

In relation to the educational attainment, skills and training of local people, North Somerset has six SOAs among the most deprived 10% of all SOAs, and all are in Weston-super-Mare's South Ward. One of these is in the most deprived 2% of all SOAs in England.

Employment:

North Somerset has ten SOAs in the 10% most deprived SOAs in the country in relation to employment and unemployment; all but one are in Weston-super-Mare's south and central wards. The remaining one is in Weston Clarence and Uphill ward. One SOA in central ward is amongst the most deprived 2% of all areas in England in relation to employment.

Household Income:

The four SOAs that experience the greatest poverty in North Somerset are all in south ward, and all are among the worst 10%. In one area of south ward local people experience poverty among the worst 2% of all areas in England.

Health and Disability:

There are seven SOAs in the 10% of wards with highest levels of people who have ill health or are disabled and all are in south and central ward. Disability and ill health limit opportunities for people to undertake full time work so it has a direct economic impact.

Crime and Disorder:

North Somerset has five SOAs that experience levels of reported crime and disorder within the worst 10% in the country. There are two in south ward, two in central ward, and one in the Wraxall/Long Ashton ward.

Views expressed by Partners and Stakeholders on this issue are:

- Regeneration policies and programmes should continue to address issues in the most deprived wards in North Somerset but support for improvements and regeneration is also needed in the other main centres of population.
- More support is needed for new start businesses especially in deprived areas.

Education and Skills

In 2004/2005 58% of students achieved 5 or more A*-C grades, an increase of 2% from the previous year, and slightly higher than the national average of 56%. Schools in Weston-super-Mare are below the North Somerset average at 47% but they have shown an improvement year on year since 2002 and this year's figure is 5% up on 2003/2004. The 'A' level candidate points score in North Somerset was 279.1; this is also slightly above the national average of 277.6.

Recent studies of the available skills in the local labour market have identified that there are current shortfalls in the areas of ICT, customer care and interpersonal skills. A shortage of general and financial management and manual craft skills were also identified. More specific skills in short supply are electrical and mechanical engineering, construction and cooking/chef skills. In low skill sectors such as catering and cleaning, barriers to recruitment are low wages, unattractive working conditions and unsociable hours. There is a strong demand for labour in retailing, office work, and in the tourism industry.

The Local Futures audit uses a range of measures to assess the local levels of skills and qualifications. These are:

- Proportion of working population qualified below NVQ2
- Proportion of the working population with National Vocational Qualifications at levels 2, 3 and 4
- Percentage of school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs grades A- C
- Proportion of employees who have received job training in the last 13 weeks

The audit shows North Somerset has above average proportions of residents qualified to NVQ levels 2, 3, and 4, and levels of attainment at GCSE are also above the average for Great Britain. The overall Local Futures conclusion for education and skills is that North Somerset performs well in respect of education and skills and qualifications ranking 98 out of 408 local authority areas.

Views expressed by Partners and Stakeholders on this issue are:

- The development of higher education at Weston College should be supported.
- There is a shortage of skills in the construction industry and the tourism industry.
- The shortage of skills in the tourism industry is most acute at intermediate level e.g. chefs, supervisory staff. The high level of seasonality leads to recruitment difficulties.
- The low level of educational attainment in schools in Weston-super-Mare is a major concern.
- More support should be given for work experience in schools.
- The service sector is increasingly part of the knowledge economy and will require higher levels of skill in future.
- School buildings could be used more outside of term time.

Other Views and Issues Raised by Partners and Stakeholders

In addition to commenting on research and other information, throughout discussions partners and stakeholders identified the important role the economy of Weston-super-Mare has for the whole of North Somerset, and raised the following issues and suggestions:

A Focus on Weston-super-Mare

- We need a clearer vision for the future of Weston-super-Mare as a place to live, a tourist destination and a location for business.
- Improving Weston-super-Mare's town centre is a key issue, a comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of the town centre is needed.
- A comprehensive plan for redeveloping the town centre is needed but visible early wins are also important to boost confidence.
- The links between the town centre and the seafront area should be improved.
- The development of a "café culture" will contribute positively to the development of the town centre economy (although a proliferation of bars and clubs should be restrained).
- Small improvements in the transport system in Weston-super-Mare town centre e.g. signage, parking, could substantially improve the perception of the town centre.
- More jobs are needed in Weston-super-Mare to limit the growth in out commuting; younger skilled people are leaving Weston-super-Mare to find work elsewhere.

- Some highly visible “early wins” in terms of new development in Weston-super-Mare are needed to boost confidence.
- Create a more positive image and perception of Weston-super-Mare. A current negative image is affecting investor confidence.
- A new branding and extended marketing campaign are needed.
- Some routes into Weston-super-Mare show the attractiveness of the town, but the key gateway from the motorway is unattractive so undermines the appearance of being a prosperous and successful town. This central gateway should be improved as a priority.
- The Weston Area Development Framework should have status as a supplementary planning document.
- The town centre is fragile and could decline.
- Improving community safety and perception of safety is a high priority. Town centre improvements should aim to “design out crime”.
- The retail offer needs to be substantially improved.

Environmental issues

- Energy consumption should be reduced, combined heat and power systems and other more sustainable sources should be incorporated into new developments.
- The natural environment is a significant asset in North Somerset.
- Weston woods are under used and under managed.

General concerns and key messages from partners and stakeholders

- Fear of crime and actual crime have an impact on the local economy and the potential for local people to play a full role in this and in other aspects of their lives. Actions to reduce crime and fear of crime must be incorporated into the Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy.
- The Council should be more aspirational about the future developments “think bigger and bolder” and go for quality development.
- The Council should promote high quality development and urban design.
- The Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy should link with the policies for sustainable development including e-commerce, public procurement and use of renewable energy.
- The business community and the Council need to work together to lobby for additional resources to sustain economic development and regeneration.
- Some highly visible “early wins” in terms of new development in Weston-super-Mare are needed to boost confidence.
- Improved information on local products and services would be useful.
- The media coverage of economic development and regeneration in North Somerset needs to be improved.
- In economic terms North Somerset is increasingly perceived to be part of the Bristol City region.
- A high level of leadership will be required to take forward a long term economic strategy.
- The Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy needs to gain support from stakeholders, the Regional Development Agency and Government.

Appendix B

Strategic Policy Context and Summary

The North Somerset Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy is set in the context of other related local, national, regional and European policies and programmes. Clear links and coherence with these will allow us to maximise opportunities for sustainable economic development and regeneration in North Somerset. The key economic policies, programmes and strategies giving the context for our Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy are briefly illustrated on page 35 (more detail on the local and regional policy and strategy context is given in section 3).

It is possible to identify common themes from this strategic policy context. They are:

- Economic development and regeneration based on economic, social and environmental sustainability.
- Improve business productivity and promote innovation.
- Increase employment and job opportunities.
- Promote economic inclusion and provide support for economic development and regeneration in disadvantaged communities.
- Improve the availability of skills in the workforce.

North Somerset Community Strategy

- Provide good quality employment in modern business.
- Growth of SMEs reflecting change and diversity.
- Invest in new technology and increase in knowledge based industries.
- New business in less prosperous areas and growth of social enterprise.
- Reduce gap between those on low income and rest of the population.
- Thriving Weston super Mare with broad based economy.
- Local purchasing to support local business.
- Further develop the skills of local workforce through local HE and FE provision.
- Housing to meet a range of needs.

Weston Area Development Framework

- Achieve a sustainable balance of housing and employment, reducing the need to travel.
- Provide good quality employment and opportunity for residents through growth in modern, growing sectors of the economy.

North Somerset Council Corporate Plan

- Increase local job opportunities.
- Reduce poverty and respond to needs in pockets of deprivation.
- Achieve the objectives identified in the Weston Area Development Framework.

The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

- To ensure that no-one is significantly disadvantaged by where they live, within 20 years.

Ten Year Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy for North Somerset

The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy

Sustainable communities feature:

- A wide range of jobs and training opportunities.
- Sufficient suitable land and buildings to support economic prosperity and change.
- Dynamic job and business creating, with benefits for the local community.
- A strong business community with links into the wider economy.
- Economically viable and attractive town centres.

South West Regional Economic Strategy

- Raise Business Productivity.
- Increase Economic Inclusion.
- Improve Regional Communications.

West of England Economic Vision

- One of Europe's fastest growing and most prosperous regions, which has closed the gap between disadvantaged and other communities.
- A buoyant economy based on investment by innovative knowledge based businesses.

More detail about the national and European strategy framework is given below.

National Policies and Programmes

Improving Productivity

The UK economy shows very wide variations in levels of productivity between regions and within regions. Those regions and localities that under-perform tend not to use new technologies to full potential, and tend not to invest as much as others in research and development. The Government has put in place a range of measures to promote innovation and research and development, largely delivered through Regional Development Agencies.

Local Authority Business Growth Incentives

The Government proposes to allow local authorities to keep some of the business rate receipts associated with economic growth (provided that a year on year level of economic growth exceeds a target determined by the historic level in the local authority area). This scheme was introduced in 2005/2006.

Enterprise Areas

The Government has designated the 15% most disadvantaged areas in the UK as enterprise areas and is implementing a number of policies to support and promote enterprise in these areas. This includes exemption from stamp duty, potential new funding for small businesses, and a range of business support services. The designated enterprise areas in North Somerset are south and central wards in Weston-super-Mare.

Business Improvement Districts

The government is encouraging local authorities and private sector partners to establish a scheme to improve the delivery of services to the business community, and the quality of the environment within a specific area such as a shopping centre. A Business Improvement District is operated as a partnership and funded by an extra business rate paid by those businesses in the area, to provide improvements specified by the business community.

Sustainable Communities

The national Sustainable Development Strategy - Securing the Future (1995) aims to create sustainable communities in England that embody the five principles of sustainable development at the local level:

- Living within environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Achieving a sustainable economy
- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibly

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They balance and integrate the social, economic and environmental components of their community, meet the needs of existing and future generations, and respect the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally to make their communities sustainable.

Sustainable communities are diverse, reflecting their local circumstances; there is no standard template to fit them all. However, to be sustainable, they should reflect the following conditions:

- **Active, inclusive and safe** – fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities.
- **Well run** – with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership.
- **Environmentally sensitive** – providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment.
- **Well designed and built** – featuring a quality built and natural environment.
- **Well connected** – with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services.
- **Thriving** – with a flourishing and diverse local economy.
- **Well served** – with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all.
- **Fair for everyone** – including those in other communities, now and in the future.

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy covers the period up to 2020 and has been agreed by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to provide a consistent approach and focus across the UK.

National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

This strategy aims to ensure that no-one is significantly disadvantaged by where they live within 20 years (from 2000). It is focused on the most significantly deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

Government anticipates that the learning from implementing the neighbourhood renewal strategy and associated processes/actions will be applied to tackling deprivation across all deprived neighbourhoods in every local authority area. This should mean the benefits of neighbourhood renewal are more widespread than the targeted funding process might suggest.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has allocated an initial "round" of funding through its Neighbourhood Renewal Unit to tackle the most deprived neighbourhood in Weston-super-Mare from 2006.

National and Regional Skills Strategy

The national skills strategy is set out in a white paper called "21st Century Skills, Realising Our Potential: Individual, Employers, and Nation."

The Strategy seeks to address historic weaknesses in productivity, and skills gaps in the UK. It brings a range of current activities into a coherent strategy, setting out the rights and responsibilities of employers, individuals and providers. The five key areas identified for action are:

- Ensuring employers' needs are centre stage
- Helping employers use skills to achieve more ambitious longer term business success
- Motivating and supporting learners to re-engage with learning
- Making colleges and training providers more responsive to employers' and learners' needs
- Better joint working across Government and public services

The priorities for the National Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2005/06 include:

- Make learning truly demand led so that it better meets the needs of employers, young people and adults
- Strengthen the role of the LSC in economic development and regeneration to provide the skills needed to help all individuals into jobs

The South West Enterprise and Skills Alliance (SWESA) found that employers often need to look beyond their immediate locality for skills required. By understanding the skills requirements of businesses of all types and sizes, and the skills of individuals living and working in the region, SWESA will be able to steer the development of skills provision to reflect the changing needs of employers.

European Policies and Programmes

The enlargement of the European Union in May 2004 saw a further 10 countries joining, so increasing the membership to 25 States. This has increased the size of the single market in Europe, boosting competitiveness and offering significant opportunities for future trading and employment to businesses in North Somerset.

EU Lisbon Strategy

The EU Lisbon Strategy sets out a commitment to economic, social and environmental renewal across the EU in the 21st Century. At the Lisbon Summit in 2000 the European Union agreed a ten-year strategy aiming to move Europe towards being the world's most dynamic and competitive economy.

The achievement of this goal is being measured with indicators covering six broad areas:

- the general economy,
- employment,
- innovation and research,
- economic reform,
- social cohesion and
- the environment.

The European Commission is using European Structural Funds to achieve this agenda and all the regions of Europe are expected to fully engage with it and help achieve it.

EU Structural Funds

One of the founding principles of the European Union is to ensure the economic and social well being of all parts of the community. The European cohesion policy aims to support a balance in development of the regions. The structural funds are used to achieve this. The structural funds will change in after 2006, and a developing cohesion policy will shape the forward funding programme.

North Somerset accesses Objective 3 European Social Fund to address disadvantage experienced in employment by particular groups until 2006. Future European programmes will continue to support economic development and regeneration based on economic, social and environmental sustainability. The proposed new funding framework will require partnership working, shared learning and experience through best practice exchange, and local development. The framework will still have a targeted geographical approach to use of structural funds, North Somerset's economy may benefit more broadly from the funding after 2006.

Key European Policy Issues:

- Enlargement of the EU offers new trading and employment opportunities for businesses in North Somerset
- The re-modelling of existing structural funds may bring more economic benefits for North Somerset after 2006
- Engagement with the regional partnership (SWUKBO) to influence the EU structural funds consultation process should keep North Somerset's priorities at the forefront of developments

Appendix C

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats - SWOT Analysis of the North Somerset Economy

Drawing on the evidence and information and consultations collated for this strategy, a SWOT analysis of North Somerset's economy highlights the following issues.

Strengths

- North Somerset has beautiful countryside and attractive towns and villages.
- Growth in population and housing provide growing markets for goods and services.
- High levels of attainment by school leavers at GCSE and A Level.
- High levels of skill in the workforce.
- High levels of employment and self employment.
- High levels of take up of employment land in Clevedon and Portishead.
- North Somerset attracts a large number of tourists and visitors.
- Proximity to three high performing universities in the West of England and growing further education provision through Weston College.

Weaknesses

- Low level of development of growth sectors in the sub-region.
- House prices have increased relative to average wages.
- Poor rail infrastructure.
- Low proportion of large employers.
- High levels of unemployment in deprived wards.
- Quality of the retail offer in Weston-super-Mare's town centre.
- Skills shortage in specific industries.
- Low levels of employment in the knowledge economy.
- Negative image of Weston-super-Mare as a business location.

Opportunities

- Growth of small businesses will create diversity in the local economy.
- Growth in further and higher education provision.
- Incentives for enterprise in deprived wards.
- New resources available to promote economic development and regeneration from Central Government and the Regional Development Agency.
- The sub-regional Economic Strategy promotes investment and employment growth in Weston-super-Mare.
- Expansion of the local food and drink industry.
- Expansion of Royal Portbury Dock.
- Expansion of Bristol International Airport.
- Development of social enterprise.
- Availability of new land for employment in Weston-super-Mare in the medium term.

Threats

- Improvements in transport infrastructure do not keep pace with economic growth.
- Failing to achieve above trend growth in employment in Weston-super-Mare.
- Shortage of high quality business space in Weston-super-Mare.
- Failure to modernise and improve the tourism offer in line with market demand.
- Economic growth will impact on the overall quality of life in North Somerset.
- Failure to achieve more sustainable mixed use forms of development.

the changing and diverse nature of our communities.

Investment in new technology will create jobs in the knowledge based industries supported by a high level of collaboration between business and the public sector.

New businesses will be established in the less prosperous areas of the district and social enterprises will be supported to meet community needs.

Reduced the very significant gap between those on very low income and the rest of the population.

- Promote environmentally responsible businesses in both urban and rural areas.
- Develop specific proposals to encourage enterprise and innovation in small and medium sized businesses.
- Promote inward investment and provide support services to existing employers, with partners.
- Promote the clustering of economic activity particularly for knowledge based businesses.
- Provide support for new business start ups and development.
- Provide tailored business start up programmes to encourage new business in less prosperous areas of the district.
- Support social enterprise initiatives in Weston-super-Mare south and central wards as a means of providing alternative access to employment and enterprise.
- Identify and develop new community regeneration and renewal opportunities following the voluntary transfer of housing, major built environment regeneration schemes, etc (e.g. local labour schemes through WADF).
- Develop area based community regeneration initiatives which bring together public agencies, local business and communities to develop local action plans that address poverty and exclusion through mainstream public services, including joint working between communities, piloting this work through the “4 Estates Forum”.
- Support provision of services in local centres serving less prosperous communities, to include benefits and financial advice, financial services through Community Finance Initiatives (e.g. Credit Union, enterprise loan schemes etc.), and development support to local businesses.
- Support tailored employment and learning programmes providing access to employment and development of formal learning provision close to/in areas of disadvantage.
- Identify barriers and develop further actions to address these in relation to access to work and training among those living in less prosperous areas, through transport initiatives, neighbourhood nursery and other childcare, etc.
- Maximise external funding opportunities available to address disadvantage in geographic, and communities of interest and support to develop local community groups and voluntary sector infrastructure working in less prosperous areas.
- Further develop educational and skills attainment in North Somerset, and address inequalities in

Developed Weston-super-Mare to be a growing urban centre with a rejuvenated seafront and town centre with a family friendly night-time economy with a sustainable balance of housing and employment.

A high proportion of goods and services will be purchased locally especially in the food and drink industries.

Developed the skills of the local workforce and these will be enhanced and updated through improved local provision of further and higher education and contribute significantly to our knowledge driven economy.

- attainment in different areas of the district.
- Encouraging target groups of young people and adults to develop skills and experience through the Young Enterprise Award programme and LPSA7 and promote enterprise in schools and further education establishments and links with employers.
- Promote improvement of workforce skills and staff development in existing business and key growth sectors.
- Prioritise employment led regeneration in Weston-super-Mare to reduce out commuting and provide a more sustainable community.
- Improve the availability of affordable housing.
- Deliver the Weston-super-Mare Town Centre Action Plan, which aims to unlock investment in a number of strategic sites.
- Support investment in cultural and leisure related development.
- To support business networking and local supply chain/purchasing policies where appropriate.
- Develop a specific programme to support rural business and enterprises (including the food and drink sector).
- Support access to further and higher education including vocational training.
- Provide information, guidance and learning support to individuals to maximise opportunities to develop skills and knowledge.
- Encouraging target groups of young people and adults to develop skills and experience through the Young Enterprise Award programme and LPSA7 and promote enterprise in schools and further education establishments and links with employers.
- Promote improvement of workforce skills and staff development in existing business and key growth sectors.
- Identify barriers and develop further actions to address these in relation to access to work and training among those living in less prosperous areas, through transport initiatives, neighbourhood nursery and other childcare, etc.
- Further develop educational and skills attainment in North Somerset, and to address inequalities in attainment in different areas of the district.
- Promote new technologies (e.g. Broadband) to support existing business in North Somerset.

To improve the economic sustainability of North Somerset providing more local employment opportunities that match local people's skills, particularly in Weston-super-Mare.

Improve skills to meet the needs of employers.

Ensure the vitality and viability of all our town centres is maintained and enhanced, improving both

- Prioritise employment led regeneration in Weston-super-Mare to reduce out commuting and provide a more sustainable community.
- Increase and promote the available supply of land and premises to meet business needs.
- Promote inward investment and provide support services to existing employers, with partners.
- To improve information and advice services to local business, in partnership with Business West.
- Deliver the Weston-super-Mare Town Centre Action Plan, which aims to unlock investment in a number of strategic sites.
- Support investment in cultural and leisure related development.
- Provide significant new employment and business development opportunities in Weston-super-Mare in order to achieve a more sustainable balance between homes and jobs.
- Provide serviced land and property for business investment.
- Develop projects to support business enterprise and confidence in Weston-super-Mare.
- Bring forward proposals to strengthen the town centre including the development of the night time economy and an expansion of retail activity and leisure.
- Improve the gateway to the town centre as a location for business investment.
- Secure the effective implementation of key regeneration sites including Knightstone Island, Birnbeck Pier and the Tropicana.
- Fully utilise business and employees skills in the aerospace and defence sectors.
- Support access to further and higher education including vocational training.
- Provide information, guidance and learning support to individuals to maximise opportunities to develop skills and knowledge.
- Further develop educational and skills attainment in North Somerset, and to address inequalities in attainment in different areas of the district.
- Identify barriers and develop further actions to address these in relation to access to work and training among those living in less prosperous areas, through transport initiatives, neighbourhood nursery and other childcare, etc.
- Encourage target groups of young people and adults to develop skills and experience through the Young Enterprise Award programme and LPSA7 and promote enterprise in schools and further education establishments and links with employers.
- Promote improvement of workforce skills and staff development in existing business and key growth sectors.
- Establish strong public/private ownership of town centres through having in place town centre companies for each of the four towns.
- Provide high quality serviced business park development at Portishead and Weston-super-Mare to

the range and quality of the offering, therefore reducing the need to shop outside of the area.

Recognise the importance of existing employers and maximise the opportunity for them to fulfil their potential within North Somerset. Support for the Small Business Service to reduce the burden of regulation.

support a range of sectors.

- Deliver the Weston-super-Mare Town Centre Action Plan, which aims to unlock investment in a number of strategic sites.
- Bring forward a similar programme for Nailsea, Portishead and Clevedon.
- Support investment in cultural and leisure related development.

All objectives in the Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy contribute to increasing employment.

- Develop specific proposals to encourage enterprise and innovation in small and medium sized businesses.
- Promote inward investment and provide support services to existing employers, with partners.
- To support business networking and local supply chain/purchasing policies where appropriate.
- Develop a specific programme to support rural business and enterprises (including the food and drink sector).
- Deliver an environmental improvement programme to support the upgrading and image of existing industrial estates.
- Promote improvement of workforce skills and staff development in existing business and key growth sectors.
- Promote new technologies (e.g. Broadband) to support existing business in North Somerset.
- Increase and promote the available supply of land and premises to meet business needs.
- Deliver our regulatory services so that they support business needs for efficiency and clarity.

Appendix E: List of major employers in North Somerset (using employee numbers)

Firm Name	Activity Description	Employee Numbers
North Somerset Council	Local Authority	6,500
Tesco Stores	Supermarket	2,000
Weston General Hospital	Hospital	1,500
First Somerset & Avon	Coach & Bus Services	1,000
Hydrex Equipment (UK) Ltd	Plant, Tool & Machinery Hire	862
Lane Group Plc	Warehousing Services	780
Asda Distribution	Warehousing Services	650
Clerical Medical Investment Group Ltd	Life Insurance & Pensions Company	600
Monaghan Middlebrook Ltd	Mushroom Growers	600
The Bristol Bulk Co Ltd	Shipping	600
North Somerset Primary Care Trust	Health Authority	552
Yeo Valley Farms (production) Ltd	Dairy Products Manufacturer	500
Knightstone Housing Association Ltd (Arcadia Housing Group)	Housing Association	435
Asda Superstore	Supermarket	430
Homeserve Plc	Insurance	400
J Sainsbury Plc	Supermarket	370
Lafarge Plasterboard Ltd	Plasterboard Manufacturer	350
Avon & Somerset Constabulary	Police	327
Weston College	Further Education	320
Claverham Ltd	Actuation Technology	300
Vecto Gray Controls Ltd	Oil & Gas Field Services & Supplies	300
Walon Ltd	Transport Services	300
Wessex Water	Water Supply	300
Kerry Ingredients	Food Manufacturer	300
Homeserve Plc	Warranty Provider	300
Wiltshire (Bristol)	Printers	250
Servisair	Aviation Service Provider	200
British Airways	Aviation Company	200
Bristol International Airport	Airport	200
Easyjet	Aviation Company	200
I SKY Europe Plc	Telecommunication Services	200
Select Service Partners	Aviation Company	200
Agresso Ltd	Computer Software & Systems Development	200
Cadbury Garden and Leisure Group	Garden Centre & Retail Nursery	182
Ampep Plc	Bearing Suppliers	170
Corus Hotel Bristol	Hotels	165
Welcome Break Ltd	Restaurant	160
Bob Martin (UK) Ltd	Pet Supplies	150
GKN Aerospace Engineering Services	Aeronautical Engineers	150
B O C Edwards	Detector Manufacturers (gas abatement)	150
Initial Security	Security Firm	150
Quadron Services Ltd	Building Maintenance Contractors	150
Sarma UK Ltd	Aeronautical Engineers	150
Smurfit Group	Packaging Materials	150
Hutton Moor Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre	130
Bakers Dolphin Coach Travel Ltd	Coach & Bus Services	120
Co-operative Pioneer	Supermarket	120
Bristlewand Ltd	Civil Engineers	120
ANC Express Parcel Services	Courier Service	100
Brabantia (UK) Ltd	Housewares	100

Elliot Group Ltd	Buildings - Portable	100
Mitchell Cotts	Gearboxes	100
Starline Van Service	Commercial Vehicle Dealers	100
Tarmac Southern Ltd	Quarry	100
Titan Ladders Ltd	Ladders Manufacturer & Supplier	100

Appendix F: References

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