

# North Somerset's ECONOMIC PLAN 2017-2036

## HIGHLIGHTS



## Location

Strategically located at the Gateway to the South West and part of the highly successful **West of England** region.



Four main towns  
Portishead, Clevedon,  
Nailsea and  
Weston-super-Mare, **25**  
miles of beautiful coastline  
and stunning countryside.  
Population of **211,700** and  
growing.

## Transport Links



**M5 motorway** runs through the area and 3 junctions connect North Somerset to Bristol, the M4, London, Birmingham and the South West.

Mainline **train stations**

**Home to**

**Bristol Airport** fifth largest airport outside of London in the UK, and the fastest growing over the last decade with direct flights to over 30 countries.

**Bristol Port**, the UK's most centrally located deep water port, which can handle vessels up to 130,00 dwt.



## North Somerset Economy



Average annual growth of 4.1% over the last 5 years – above West of England average. Economy worth £4,129m as measured by Gross Value Added (GVA).



Labour productivity over **£50,000** per full time employee.



**8,700** active businesses and growth in overall stock each year since 2011.



## Employment

**104,400** people economically active.

**100,200** in employment (80.1% vs. GB 73.4%).

**8,000** new jobs between 2010 and 2015.

## Visitor Economy



**7.9m** visitors came to North Somerset in 2014.

Total Visitor Related Spend in 2014 **£365,174,000**.

In 2015 Banksy's "Dismaland" art project attracted over **200,000** visitors from every corner of the world to Weston.

Clevedon Pier **the only Grade 1 listed pier in England**.



## Education

Weston College offers degree courses in partnership with Bath Spa University and University of the West of England.

- an outstanding FE and HE college.
- 30,000 annual student enrolments.
- £60m investment in training facilities.



Above average % of residents with NVQ4 and above in 2016.

Consistent drop in the % of residents with no qualifications since 2013.

## Investment



**20,000** new homes across the district planned to 2026.



**£142,760,000** investment, to date in regeneration of North Somerset's largest town Weston-s-Mare.

**JUNC210N**  
enterprise area

J21 Enterprise Area, Weston

Over **2 million sq ft** of commercial space.

**100,000 sq ft** recently occupied or pre-let.

Investment leading to **9,000 – 10,000** jobs by 2030.

**Food Works**  
SW

FoodWorksSW a flagship food and drink innovation centre at the heart of J21EA will create a focal point and regional centre of excellence for food and drink businesses across the South West.



Nigel Ashton  
Leader of the Council



Charles Walker  
Chair of the  
North Somerset Partnership

# FOREWORD

Our future success depends upon a thriving local economy, where business growth and investment continues to create a range of job opportunities for all.

North Somerset has a relatively strong economy, exhibiting the kind of productivity levels rarely seen outside London and the South East. Our employment and economic activity levels exceed the national average and our workforce is increasingly well qualified. The area's strong strategic location enables local businesses to connect to markets in the UK and beyond. These attributes provide a good solid foundation from which to build; however, there remain persistent challenges which we must continue to address to achieve long term economic success.

This document sets out a refreshed Economic Plan for North Somerset with an ambition to be a vibrant and successful place to live, work and study, with a distinct identity and quality of life that attracts and retains enterprise, investment, young people and visitors. Much has happened in the last four years nationally, regionally and locally, and our updated plan will help us capitalise

on the transformational opportunities that have arisen. It provides a framework to guide and influence activity, resources and investment. It will help focus us on the things that will generate the greatest returns to our economy in the long run, and set out in simple terms, why North Somerset Council and partners prioritise certain interventions.

The Plan will enable the Council and partners to continue to build relationships with key economic players, to maximise impact and secure additional investment for the area's businesses and residents. North Somerset has a lot to offer as a place to live, do business and to visit, beautiful countryside a stunning coastline and distinctive and vibrant towns and villages. It has all the hallmarks to become a significant economic player across the West of England and beyond – this plan will enable us to capitalise on our assets and face the future with confidence and growing pride in our area.

We would like to personally thank the individuals and organisations who have contributed to this plan – your input and continued support is invaluable.

**Acknowledgements** North Somerset Council would like to thank all of the individuals and organisations that have contributed to the development of this strategy including: Alun Giffiths, Ascot Group, Authentic Digital, BCE Ltd, Bristol Airport, Business West, Castelan Group, Clevedon Chamber, Clevedon Hall, Destination Bristol, Dowlas UK Ltd, DWP, FSB, Grand Pier Ltd, Invest Bristol and Bath, Midas group, Mseis, Nailsea Chamber, North Somerset Enterprise Agency, Portishead Chamber, PureComms, Rapide Systems Supplies Ltd, Revprop Ltd, Thatchers Cider, The Bristol Port Company, VANS, Viper Innovations Ltd, Weston Chamber, Weston College, West of England Rural Network and West of England LEP.

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# WELCOME TO NORTH SOMERSET

OUR AMBITION IS FOR NORTH SOMERSET TO BE A VIBRANT AND SUCCESSFUL PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND STUDY, WITH A DISTINCT IDENTITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE THAT ATTRACTS AND RETAINS ENTERPRISE, INVESTMENT, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VISITORS.

North Somerset is strategically located at the access point to the South West and is part of the highly successful West of England, where economic performance has consistently surpassed the national average and ambitions for growth through innovation, knowledge and creativity are strong.

Covering over 150 square miles, North Somerset is home to the four main towns of Portishead, Clevedon, Nailsea and Weston-super-Mare, as well as a number of rural settlements. It has a population of 211,700 and is well connected, with the M5 motorway and mainline rail services running through to London, Birmingham, the South West and beyond. There is 25 miles of beautiful coastline and stunning countryside and the area is rich in cultural and scientific heritage, with connections to Brunel, Coleridge, Tennyson, Thackeray, Eddington and Marconi.

North Somerset has a diverse range of sectors making up its economic base, including world leading high-technology manufacturers making everything from aircraft parts to plasma screens and subsea control systems. Alongside these, are makers of more traditional products originating from the natural produce of rich farmland. North Somerset also complements the region's

strengths in creative media with growing numbers of businesses working in all aspects of this dynamic sector.

A number of national and international companies are based here including GE Oil and Gas, Oxford Instruments Plasma Technology, UTC Aerospace Systems, Brabantia, Yeo Valley Farms, Thatchers Cider, Bristol Airport, The Bristol Port Company, Smurfitt Kappa, and QuEST Global Engineering Ltd.

North Somerset benefits from the designation of J21 as an Enterprise Area, offering 72 hectares of employment land with planning permission and access, excellent transport links and a highly skilled workforce. Already home to several global and national companies as well as a range of growing SMEs, the Enterprise Area provides significant scope for further growth.

The highly skilled workforce is supported by the growth of Weston College, which offers degree courses in partnership with Bath Spa University and the University of West of England (UWE). The College has invested heavily in state-of-the-art facilities and has exciting plans to further develop its Higher Education offer with a new Law & Professional Services Academy which will be a significant asset for the area.



# NORTH SOMERSET'S ECONOMY – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

North Somerset has continued to perform strongly against an uncertain national economic backdrop, experiencing impressive growth rates and consistently high rates of participation. It has all the hallmarks to continue to be a significant economic player across the West of England and beyond.

Whilst our growth has been relatively strong, however, there remain a number of economic challenges which need to be addressed in order to unlock its full potential. To support the national drive towards higher productivity, we need to target:

- The growing gap between the wages of our local workforce and residents, with the former earning on average 10% less
- A shortage of young people in the population, with many not returning after leaving for Higher Education
- An historically low critical mass of employment and therefore range of job opportunities
- Economic distinctiveness in terms of niche sectors and clusters
- Perceptions of the area to business and investors

**In developing the Economic Plan in partnership with key stakeholders and businesses, the following key opportunities were identified:**

## **Being an integral part of the West of England**

– known for its high value-added industries, universities and cultural offer.

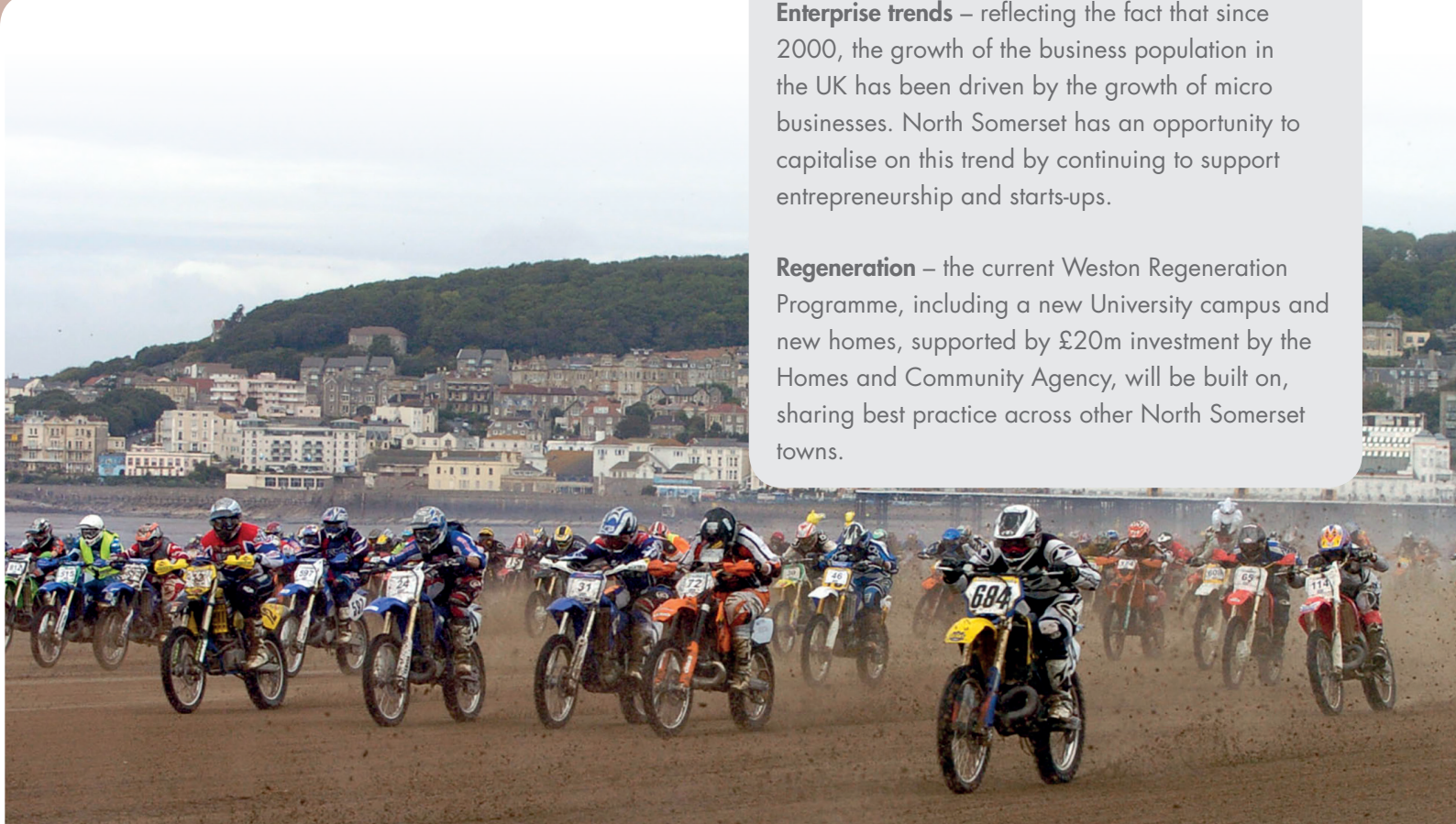
**Scope for high value employment growth** – strategic employment locations including the Enterprise Area, Airport, Port and key towns provide an opportunity to support the retention and expansion of the area's most cutting edge and innovative companies.

**Proximity to Hinkley Point C** – the largest engineering project in Europe, anticipated to create 25,000 jobs and supply chain opportunities across the South West.

**An Ambitious College of Further and Higher Education** – the growth of Weston College including University Centre Weston provides a unique opportunity to retain and attract young people into the area to study.

**Enterprise trends** – reflecting the fact that since 2000, the growth of the business population in the UK has been driven by the growth of micro businesses. North Somerset has an opportunity to capitalise on this trend by continuing to support entrepreneurship and start-ups.

**Regeneration** – the current Weston Regeneration Programme, including a new University campus and new homes, supported by £20m investment by the Homes and Community Agency, will be built on, sharing best practice across other North Somerset towns.





To be a vibrant and successful place to live, work and study, with a distinct identity and

To create the conditions for higher value local employment

To grow and enhance the competitiveness of our businesses base

To foster a culture of enterprise, innovation



## Theme 1: Facilities and Infrastructure

- **Improve** transport, accessibility, and connectivity
- **Create** the right employment space in the right locations
- **Ensure** sustainable housing growth
- **Expand** HE/FE provision and facilities

## Actions 2017 – 2036 include

- Work with partners to bring forward viable 'big ticket' infrastructure projects, including airport accessibility, Portishead Rail, A38 and J21 improvements
- Attract further investment and development at J21 Enterprise Area
- Develop a network of small incubator and grow-on facilities across the area
- Through Weston College Group and University Centre Weston develop further HE/FE infrastructure in North Somerset
- Develop a food and drink manufacturing hub through FoodworksSW and the Food Enterprise Zone in J21EA
- Through Connecting Devon and Somerset Partnership and others, secure investment in digital connectivity including innovative technologies
- Maximise the role of the airport and port as strategic employment locations



## Theme 2: People and Skills

- **Retain** and nurture talent
- **Develop** local employability and workforce skills
- **Create** a range of job opportunities
- **Address** under-employment and provide progression pathways

## Actions 2017 – 2036 include

- Work with local providers to establish effective graduate placement and internship programmes to help nurture and retain talent
- Capitalise on Hinkley Point Training Agency to maximise benefits to North Somerset residents
- Building on the success of Weston College and local universities to ensure there is growth in their offer, matched to local business needs.
- Promote work experience, apprenticeships and traineeship opportunities with employers
- Roll out Sector Based Work Academies to support residents into employment
- With West of England partners, develop a skills planning and progression framework to ensure stronger links between business providers and residents.



# AMBITION

quality of life that attracts and retains enterprise, investment, young people and visitors.

## OBJECTIVES

and aspiration

To enhance the area's skills profile

To nurture and build on the area's distinctive identity



### Theme 3: Competitive Businesses and Enterprise

- **Develop** niche clusters and supply chains
- **Encourage** innovation and collaboration
- **Support** business start-ups, self-employment, SMEs and growth
- **Attract** high profile, high value businesses to the area

### Actions 2017 – 2036 include

- Identify key clusters and develop business forums to encourage collaboration and supply chain development
- Develop a tailored business support package for high growth indigenous companies via the council's Business Engagement Programme
- Create a package of targeted support for businesses with an opportunity to supply Hinkley Point C
- Work with the port, airport and Department of International Trade to develop a campaign to encourage SMEs to export
- Develop a portfolio of 'grow on' and hybrid facilities to retain start-ups and SMEs locally
- Attract high value inward investment capitalising on identified niche clusters, supply chains and strategic transport connectivity (port and airport)



### Theme 4: Quality Places

- **Develop** vibrant and thriving town centres and villages
- **Grow** the visitor economy
- **Build** on the area's cultural identity
- **Reduce** inequality and build community cohesion

### Actions 2017 – 2036 include

- Map the area's cultural offer and develop a cultural strategy
- Support the development of cultural facilities and assets such as the Tropicana, Curzon Cinema, Piers and seafront heritage
- Develop a strategic and integrated approach to the visitor economy and destination management across the West of England
- Build on the Business Improvement District model to fund development in all town centres
- Work with key partners to position North Somerset/West of England assets on an international stage to increase volume and value of visitor spend





# TAKING IT FORWARD

## WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

North Somerset Council is committed to working with its partners and stakeholders across the West of England, regionally and nationally to deliver the overall ambitions and objectives of the Economic Plan. Whilst some existing activities are already funded, the Plan itself does not have a dedicated resource to deliver these investment themes and therefore the process for delivery through to 2036 is likely to involve:

- Direct delivery of activities
- Bidding for future national/international funding programmes
- Working in partnership with West of England partners and national government
- Working in partnership with other sub-regional agencies such as Destination Bristol and Invest Bristol and Bath
- Working with local partner agencies, learning institutions and the business community
- Influencing central government and agencies to ensure national programmes are relevant to North Somerset

## MEASURING SUCCESS

Success will be measured against eight core outcome indicators:

- Increase labour productivity
- Increase wages for people working in North Somerset
- Increase jobs density
- Maintain healthy enterprise rates
- Increase the number of businesses employing between 10 and 49 people
- Increase higher level skills in the population
- Reduce levels of deprivation
- Increase visitor spending



# PRIORITISING INVESTMENT

THE ECONOMIC PLAN PROVIDES THE STRATEGIC BACKDROP FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PRIORITISATION OF OUR ECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS; THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS SHOULD ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Does it fit strategic priorities?

Does it address market failure?

Do benefits outweigh costs?

Does it unlock private sector investment?

Is the project deliverable and outputs achievable?





# THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE



Nigel Scott

**BRISTOL AIRPORT** is the fifth largest UK airport outside London. In 2016 it handled over 7.5 million passengers, with planning approval to expand to handle ten million passengers per annum with over £150m investment in facilities since 2010. Over 3,000 employees work for over 50 businesses on-site and create £388 million in GVA.

Nigel Scott, Business Development Director

"With direct flights to more than 120 destinations – and convenient access to hundreds more via frequent daily services to major international hubs – Bristol Airport connects North Somerset to new markets, talent and tourists. By continuing to invest in our facilities and focus on customer service we can ensure that first impressions for those arriving in the area are positive."



Angela Hicks

**NORTH SOMERSET ENTERPRISE AGENCY** has delivered business support services since 1995, providing an invaluable local presence. In May 2014 it opened a new 20,000 sq ft business centre to support small businesses and allow them to start-up and grow by providing flexible office space with short term leases and expandable space. Tenants enjoy a range of on-site business support services including advice, training and networking, shared office services and meeting rooms.

Chief Executive Angela Hicks, who won the prestigious Chairman's special award at the 2014 National Enterprise Network (NEN) awards

"We have an amazing array of diverse businesses in North Somerset from new start-ups to fast growing enterprises. This presents fantastic opportunities for innovation, networking and collaboration"

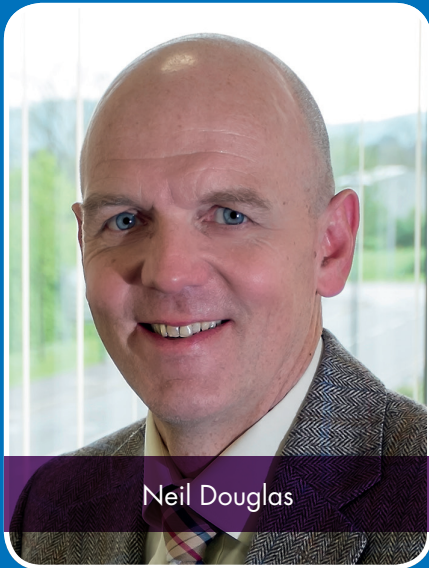


Rob Vivian

**PURECOMMS** is an award winning Telecoms and IT provider with offices in Tickenham (North Somerset) and St Austell (Cornwall). It provides Telecoms and IT solutions and services for businesses across the South West and the UK, offering unified communications and state-of-the-art technology. Established in 2009, the company's turnover has grown from zero to £2.1m, and has seen the business win several awards including 'Reseller of the Year' in 2016.

Rob Vivian, CEO

"North Somerset is a perfect place to do business. It has ideal links to other parts of the UK and we have found an exciting pool of talented people based here. We are looking forward to continuing our growth over the next few years from our base in North Somerset."



Neil Douglas

**VIPER INNOVATIONS** is based in Portishead, provides consultancy services and pioneering products to the subsea oil and gas sector. It recently won a Queen's Award for Enterprise for its ground-breaking V-LIFE Electrical Insulation Resistance Improvement System and was awarded the PWC sponsored '2017 West of England Business of Year', in the category for business with a turnover less than £30m. The company has seen year-on-year growth having invested heavily in research and development which has resulted in a number of patents.

Neil Douglas, Viper's MD  
"North Somerset is a great area for staff to live and work, which, coupled with excellent road, rail and flight communications as well as local hubs of academic excellence in Universities and colleges make it a superb location for companies to be based".



John Chaplin

**BRISTOL PORT** with a turnover of £47m per annum, is the UK's most centrally located deep water port and can handle vessels up to 130,000 dwt. It is the most economical port distribution location in the UK with 45 million people within a 300km radius, and is the only deep water port in the UK with direct access to motorway and railway to all points of the compass.

John Chaplin, Director of External Affairs and Special Projects

"Royal Portbury Dock provides cargo handling and storage for the deep-sea vessels that connect the Port to the Far East, Mediterranean, USA and elsewhere. The landside connectivity by road and rail with the very high quality of life on offer in North Somerset are a winning combination for our business"



Martin Thatcher

**THATCHERS CIDER** was first produced at Thatchers Myrtle Farm in Sandford, North Somerset, in 1904. Now employing over 200 people, this family led business has become an integral part of the regional business community, as an employer, a customer to many other regional suppliers, and as a producer of top quality Somerset ciders, nationally and, increasingly, internationally.

Martin Thatcher, Managing Director and fourth generation

"North Somerset is home to some of the most outstanding scenery, innovative businesses, and finest produce in the country. I can't think of anywhere else we would rather be to run our business."



