

# Invest Herefordshire

Herefordshire's Economic Vision



Invest  
**Herefordshire**





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# Foreword

Herefordshire is a dynamic, vibrant and growing county. It has areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of specific scientific interest, with wildlife and conservation sites covering 9% of the county. It is popular with tourists seeking to experience the outdoors, natural beauty and is home to towns hailed as the birthplace of British tourism- Ross-on-Wye. Every May and December, thousands of visitors arrive to the Hay Festival of Literature in the Welsh border town and the River Wye attracts water-based activities all year round.

It is not only tourists who enjoy Herefordshire. The county's entrepreneurial spirit and room to grow has proved fruitful to business, including Bulmers (Heineken), British Land, Cargill, Weston's Cider, Bloor Homes and Tyrrells Crisps. The defence industry is well-represented across the county, as home to the Special Air Service and a short distance from Gloucester-based Government Communication Headquarters.

The commitment to superfast broadband is connecting creative and diverse businesses across the county, with big business existing alongside successful smaller businesses. There are significant investment opportunities in a county that is already forward-thinking and ambitious. A number of schemes are underway, with the Hereford Bypass in progress and significant city-centre refurbishment and investment creating an exciting and sympathetic historic shopping and leisure destination.

There is commercial potential to capitalise on the county's links to the Midlands, the South West and Wales alongside local specialisms in defence and security, manufacturing, food, drink and tourism. This economic vision identifies key projects and investment opportunities across the county and starts the conversation between local partners and the investment and development community.

As we all expect to be able to connect online, offline, to commercial centres and with natural surroundings, we need a thriving economy that creates high value jobs, whilst maintaining and enhancing the quality of life and natural capital of this fertile county. This economic vision identifies the ambitions and intentions of a range of stakeholders and partners, to help make Herefordshire an even better place to live, work and learn.

This is just the start. We aim to be aspirational and forward thinking, to look beyond what is currently planned, identify new opportunities and build a bigger picture. We look forward to working with you to deliver this economic vision for Herefordshire.



# Why an economic vision?

■ Britain's economy is changing. Regions must compete ever more effectively for investment, whether from the private sector or the public sector. Herefordshire is performing well – and competitively – in attracting inward public investment into our county's infrastructure, but we cannot depend upon public investment to drive our economy in the long-term, or to unlock its real potential.

The aim of setting out the economic vision is to realise the full economic potential of the county through a coordinated plan that is at once dynamic but coherent and, whilst ambitious, is persuasive, achievable and sustainable.

The economic vision focuses on a broad investment picture. It identifies a series of private sector investment opportunities that will contribute to the growth of the county. It also sets out what the public sector, in an enablement role, will provide in terms of creating the conditions to encourage economic growth.

The economic vision has four key roles:

1. to support the growth of the Herefordshire economy by identifying priority projects:
2. to attract investment to Herefordshire and guides it within the County:
3. to raise the profile of Herefordshire and the investment opportunities:
4. to provide Herefordshire with clear priorities for negotiations:

Alongside local stakeholders the principle audience is intended to be the development and investment community. Consequently the vision aims to demonstrate the economic momentum and opportunity within Herefordshire.

The timescale of the vision is set over fifteen years, split into three blocks each of five years. This gives focus on the projects which are already in development whilst also allowing an element of ambition and vision to be articulated over a longer time period.





## SECTION 1

# Herefordshire the county

■ Herefordshire is an entrepreneurial county, 15% of the population are self-employed; there are excitingly high levels of patent registrations; and good business survival rates. The county's business base is both diverse and healthy.

Despite its relatively rural location the county benefits from being on the motorway network linking South Wales to the West Midlands in addition to having direct and regular rail links to London, Birmingham, Manchester and Cardiff. Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff airports are all accessible within a 90 minute drive.

manufacturing, defence and security, food and drink production, agriculture and tourism. Within the county a number of global companies – including Cadbury/Mondelez, Heineken, Cargill, Kingspan, and Special Metals, operate alongside well known British brands – including Tyrells, Weston's Cider, and PGL, most of whom have started and grown in Herefordshire.

To support the county's continuing growth, Herefordshire Council has recently adopted a local plan which by 2031 will have delivered 16,500 new homes; new bypasses for Hereford and Leominster to reduce congestion and improve access to markets; and sufficient employment land to meet the needs of a growing business base.

Much has already been achieved in recent years to implement this proactive pursuit of growth. Major investments include:

- The Old Market retail and leisure development. This £90m development, in partnership with British Land, brought a new cinema, retailers that include a department store and high end supermarket and restaurant chains reinforcing the role of Hereford as a retail destination.
- Fastershire. A £32.5m programme of investment in superfast broadband infrastructure, delivering a 21st century digital network, to 55,000 homes and businesses countywide.
- Hereford Enterprise Zone. A 74 hectare new business park development which has already secured over £23m of public and private investment delivering business growth and new job opportunities.



The largest business sectors are currently



- Halo Leisure. Investment of £10million in the redevelopment of a range of sports and leisure centres to bring facilities into the 21st century, enhance the user experience, and improve the company's economic viability.
- Securing over £43m from central government for road infrastructure schemes which will enable the development of several hundred city centre homes, and form the first section of a Hereford bypass.
- Investing £7m in the construction of a new Livestock market to facilitate the retail and leisure development within the city and provide a state of the art market to serve the Marches agricultural sector.

These and other investments represent well over £250m of recent public and private investment in the county, improving the economic infrastructure and enabling private sector growth.



# Economic Challenges

As with any county or region there are challenges affecting the economic and social character of Herefordshire.

## ■ Challenge 1 – Productivity and a low wage economy

Herefordshire has very low unemployment, 3.5% over the period July 2015 to June 2016, finding jobs is not an issue within the county. However in 2016 Herefordshire finds itself within the bottom 5% of council areas across Great Britain in terms of average weekly wage. This is largely a legacy of an economy built upon agriculture, food and drink processing, and manufacturing. It impacts on the resident population's disposable income, social mobility and living standards. Our solution to these social and economic issues is to aim to become a higher value economy with a focus on knowledge intensive employment and businesses.

When measured per head of population, Herefordshire's gross value added (GVA) in 2013 was £17,900, highlighting lower levels of economic productivity when compared to both regional (£19,400) and national (£24,000) GVA per capita.

The knowledge economy (founded on technological progress and advanced products and supported by highly skilled workers in financial and business services, communications and information) has driven UK economic growth for the last 40 years. Yet within Herefordshire these sectors make a significantly lower contribution than the more traditional sectors of agriculture, public administration, and manufacturing.

Herefordshire is moving towards a more knowledge based economy. This is bringing forward improved communications infrastructure, upskilling of the workforce, attracting highly skilled employees who benefit from the opportunities on offer and the high quality of life within the county.





# Economic Challenges

## ■ Challenge 2 – Skills and Higher Education

Herefordshire has a very high proportion of good and outstanding early year's providers, schools and colleges. The sixth-form college is one of the best performing in the country and was voted Times Educational Supplement Sixth form College of the Year in 2016.

The education System in Herefordshire is highly collaborative; this has led to a year on year improvement in education outcomes, moving Herefordshire from below average performance to second and top quartile performance nationally for most children.

Whilst qualification performance is strong, further improvement is needed in developing the right match of skilled employees for current and future business needs. We want to achieve this through strong and enduring relationships with the business sector.

9.4% of the working age population have no qualifications (8.6% nationally) and it is recognised that local engineering and manufacturing companies are struggling to recruit people with the right skills.

The evidence is clear that increasing the level of skills in the workforce is fundamental to economic long term growth. As the national economy moves to a model characterised by high performing and high value added sectors, this in turn requires more people to be employed in higher level jobs with the skills to match.

Key to increasing the skills base of the local workforce is the provision of higher education courses. The current lack of a university within the county leads to a significant proportion of college graduates leaving the county to further their education. Few make an immediate return leading to a localised “brain drain” that is not reversed until people enter their late thirties, start families and begin to have a different set of priorities.

It is therefore vital that we ensure that young people have the skills that they need to find work and that people are supported throughout their lives to upskill and achieve their potential. Provision of a higher education institution will help to replace the students choosing to study out of county and provide a source of graduates to local businesses. Collaboration between businesses and skills providers will need improving to be responsive to changing and emerging business and skills needs.

## ■ Challenge 3 – Infrastructure and capacity

Large areas of the county are a considerable distance from the national motorway network. Other areas may suffer from slow broadband connectivity or unreliable mobile phone coverage. In the “digital age” any under provision of electronic communication can be as big an inhibitor to growth as the lack of road, rail or utility infrastructure: To address this infrastructure challenge the council and BT are investing £32.5m in the Broadband network locally.

The significant growth in housing and employment sites planned for the county can only be accommodated if the required supporting infrastructure is in place. The challenge is to ensure this infrastructure is in place in time to facilitate the growth.

The current principle infrastructure constraints relate to the road infrastructure in and around Hereford, with similar but smaller scale issues to be addressed in Leominster. Additional constraints apply to the capacity to treat waste water and mitigate phosphate discharge, and the provision of suitable broadband speeds to meet the needs of businesses and residents.



## SECTION 2

# Vision, aims and outcomes

*The Herefordshire economy will be grown by delivering new jobs which generate increased output per head through exploiting knowledge whether in the manufacturing, leisure, or service sector.*

Our vision will be delivered through implementation of seven Aims

### A Great Place for Business

Creating the conditions in Herefordshire to encourage new business start-ups and an increase in productivity leading to higher value employment and greater innovation.

### A Great Place to Learn

Increasing the range of higher education provision and improving the balance between business demand and the supply of skills and qualifications.

### A Great Place to Live

Offering diverse and well located new homes and a broader range of jobs whilst maintaining and improving the quality of life within the county.

### A Great Place to Visit

Developing a broader range of visitor and leisure attractions and increase the length of visitor stay and amount of spend.

### Great movement and accessibility

Improving the connectivity of people and business to jobs and markets.

### Countywide Ambition

Enabling Market Towns and rural communities to maximise their role in building thriving, distinctive, service centres that support their communities and rural hinterlands.

### A Great Environment

Improving competitiveness and growth through energy and resource efficiency and implementing a range of landscape enhancements.

# Vision

*Herefordshire will offer an unrivalled balance of economic opportunity and quality of life. The much sought after Herefordshire rural and urban living environments will be further enhanced by thriving communities and economies that are better connected and made more sustainable by conserving and enhancing the natural environment. The County will host a range of exciting investment opportunities and be open and welcoming to external investment.*

*Businesses that exploit knowledge will start-up, grow and invest in a supportive environment. A diverse range of high value jobs will be produced in sectors where there is a competitive advantage. The county will become a world class choice for students in specialised disciplines whilst retaining and attracting young people and skilled workers.*



# Aim 1 - A great place for business

Creating the conditions in Herefordshire to encourage new business start-ups and an increase in productivity leading to higher value employment and greater innovation.

## ■ Vision

Assets will exist in the form of a nationally important cyber security centre of excellence and a suite of business incubation centres. Dedicated facilities on the Skylon Park enterprise zone will enable collaborations between local businesses, the New Model in Technology and Engineering (NMiTE) university and other higher education partners. Hereford will be a sub-regional office location serving the county, eastern Wales and beyond, catering for a growing professional services and creative industries sector. All of the above will create jobs in higher value sectors and boost GVA.

The enterprise zone will be fully occupied and a range of relevant, attractive business parks will operate within the city and the market towns in locations that capitalise on the motorway and trunk road network. Electronic communications will benefit from a superfast broadband infrastructure that enables connected work environments throughout the county. Herefordshire companies will have access to a supportive business landscape where company growth is encouraged by a supportive regulatory framework, specialist advice, and a range of finance options.

School and college students will recognise starting a business as a viable and achievable career choice and will have access to a range of support and accommodation to facilitate their business growth.

## ■ Outcomes

Increase GVA per head by 10% in real terms, from £19,500 to £21,500 by 2031 (at 2015 prices).

Directly assist in the creation of 1,000 new businesses by 2031.

Create 10,000 new jobs by 2031.



## Projects

1. Development of a new Hereford central business district as a sub-regional office centre meeting increased demand for office space from professional services and creative industries.
2. Construction by the University of Wolverhampton of a new Cyber Security centre of excellence which facilitates collaboration between research faculties and businesses.
3. Continued commitment to the build out of the Hereford Enterprise Zone and investment within the existing Rotherwas industrial estate.
4. Development of an entrepreneurial culture among school and college children to create a genuine future career option of starting a business.
5. Build out of the Model Farm enterprise park at Ross on Wye and encouraging delivery of existing major employment allocations at Three Elms in Hereford, Moreton on Lugg, and the market towns;
6. Construction of a range of new or refurbished business incubation centres within Ross on Wye, Leominster, Ledbury, Bromyard and Kington.
7. Development of the Marches Growth Hub offer to coordinate and maximise the range of advice, funding and support available to businesses across the county.



# Aim 2 - A great place to learn

Increase the range of Higher Education provision, improve the balance between business demand and the supply of skills and qualifications, and strengthen the relationship between business and schools

## ■ Vision

Higher Education provision at the College of Arts and Hereford and Ludlow College the city and wider county will become home to a vibrant and growing student population. There will be an innovative and successful cluster of spin out businesses from several institutions locating in a series of business incubation centres across the county. Herefordshire business will have access to a range of opportunities to engage in research and development in collaboration with local Universities and other private sector facilities.

Businesses will have a strong relationship with schools, through the provision of business governors, involvement in curriculum opportunities and careers development and developing a better understanding of skills requirements

Herefordshire schools, colleges and training providers will have benefited from £100m of public – private sector investment to improve the learning environment and give Herefordshire children the best possible start in life.

## ■ Outcomes

Provide 1,500 HE student places in county by 2025.

Increased take up of apprenticeships.



## Projects

1. Implementation of the New Model in Technology and Engineering University, as a regional centre of engineering excellence, with associated teaching and administration space, student accommodation, and linked laboratory and development workshop space.
2. New build student accommodation and associated facilities for students attending the Hereford College of Arts.
3. Investment in the Holme Lacy campus and development of the campus and college farm for an expanded range of courses and outside, but linked, activities.
4. Increased linkages between the county's schools and colleges and the local business base, expansion of entrepreneurship based programmes such as Young Enterprise.
5. Implementation of the £100m schools capital investment programme over the next twenty years.



# Aim 3 - A great place to live

Offering diverse and well located new homes and a broader range of jobs whilst maintaining and improving the quality of life within the county.

## ■ Vision

The county will offer an unrivalled work / life balance. Improved road and electronic communications will facilitate greater access to markets. Supportive planning policies and improved broadband infrastructure will make home working and live / work units a genuine work choice for significant numbers of people. The City of Culture bidding process will have led to increased participation in cultural activities across the county and an expansion of the existing vibrant arts and cultural offer.

Herefordshire will be known across the country for its natural capital and access to an outdoor lifestyle. The county will be host to a number of regional or national level sporting or leisure events that capitalise on significant local participation and a number of purpose built facilities.

Each market town and the city will have built on their distinctiveness and vibrancy. A range of sympathetic and high quality developments will enhance the residential, leisure and commercial offer improving the viability of the town centres. New build housing will have been encouraged towards energy minimisation and Passivhaus developments will be an increasingly common form of new build.

## ■ Outcomes

Construct 16,500 new houses including maximising the number of affordable housing units by 2031.

Increase gross weekly pay from £420 to £460 by 2031 (at 2015 prices).



## Projects

1. Continue the development of the urban village within Hereford city as a mixed use site providing jobs, housing and public services;
2. Promotion of the Berrington Street area as an opportunity for a new 'city living' development with small scale/niche retail accompanied by cafés, bars and food outlets alongside live/work units and residential or student accommodation.
3. Working with Hereford Football Club to refurbish the Edgar Street ground to provide a range of ancillary uses and improve the facilities available to the club and supporters.
4. Development of a calendar of outdoor sporting or leisure events of regional or national standard that build upon the creation of locally available facilities and locations.
5. Submission of the city of culture bid to improve the range and profile of cultural activities and increase the local engagement with various cultural assets and facilities.
6. Encouragement of housing schemes and business premises that minimise energy consumption with particular focus on the provision of Passivhaus standard homes and office locations.



# Aim 4 - A great place to visit

Developing a broader range of visitor and leisure attractions and increase the length of visitor stay and amount of spend.

## ■ Vision

Building on current strengths Herefordshire will become nationally known for its outdoor sporting and leisure competitions and experiences. Organised competitive and recreational events will be held across a range of disciplines supported by facilities that offer a year round opportunity for more casual and leisure use. At the forefront of this outdoor offer will be the River Wye, access to, and use of, the river will be improved at key locations to develop its economic potential.

The local food and drink sector will present a significant tourist attraction. Building on the growth of local food entrepreneurs the county will attract those who want to sample high quality cooking using traditional and local ingredients. There will be the opportunity to experience not only local food and drink but a range of music, arts and other cultural events through a range of festivals, producer tours and open days, street events and specialist retail outlets supporting local producers.

Building on the history and cultural offer of the county a number of new visitor attractions will have opened under private ownership. Combined with the Cathedral, National Trust properties, and other existing attractions significant numbers of visitors are drawn to the county to experience its history and heritage in a variety of forms.

Underpinning the entire visitor offer will be a wide range of quality and unique accommodation experiences including yurts, Hobbit Holes, bivouacs, and high-end glamping. At the other end of the scale, Hereford will feature a new high quality hotel to meet the increased demand from visitors to the new university and increased business and cultural tourism.

## ■ Outcomes

Increase the total visitor spend by 7.5% (from £442 million to £475 million) by 2021.

Increase the total number of annual visits by 10% to over 5.5 million visitors.



## Projects

1. Development of a 'river quarter' within Hereford to open up access to the river and provide a focal point for the county's recreational and outdoor pursuits offer.
2. Utilisation of elements of the Hereford racecourse and surrounding area to develop an enhanced hotel and conferencing facility with wraparound leisure offer.
3. Working with local communities and organisations to expand upon and better promote the distinctive and sustainable music, arts and other festivals and events (h.Art, Three Choirs Festival, Hay Festival, Ledbury Poetry Festival) run throughout the year.
4. Working with specific attractions and landowners to develop a series of facilities that will accommodate sporting and leisure competitions that would ultimately be able to host a regional or national level event.
5. Continued support of the local food and drink sector in the enhancement of their visitor offer and experience and in the development of a series of food and drink orientated events and festivals which showcase the best the county has to offer.
6. Development and implementation of a Herefordshire Destination Management Plan to coordinate tourism activity and encapsulate new visitor economy drivers.
7. Support to new visitor attractions that add to the cultural and economic diversity of the county and have the potential to expand the visitor offer and generate additional visitor spend.



# Aim 5 - Great movement and accessibility

To improve the connectivity of people and business to jobs and markets.

## ■ Vision

Hereford's bypass will enable the growth of the city. Through a network of attractive routes the participation in walking and cycling into and across Hereford will be increased. A range of street enhancements will link between the city core and the residential areas to the west and north by introducing pedestrian friendly crossing points and removing underpasses. New multi storey car parks will be situated in locations where they divert commuters and visitors before they impact on the city centre traffic, while the railway station will feature a public transport hub to combine bus, rail, and taxi provision.

Across the wider county improvements will be made to the A road network reducing journey times and improving safety. Railway stations throughout Herefordshire will feature enhanced car parking provision and, to improve reliability, the line between Hereford and Ledbury will be twin tracked.

The whole county will benefit from superfast broadband, enabling businesses to operate flexibly and allowing residents to benefit from the latest communication media and electronic leisure entertainment.

## ■ Outcomes

By the end of 2018 everyone in Herefordshire will be able to access the broadband services they need.

A 30% reduction in Hereford through traffic average journey times (A49 to A49) by 2031.

100% increase in the number of people cycling regularly by 2021, and a 200% increase by 2031.



## Projects

1. Implementation of new public realm, bus and active travel measures across the city, including:
  - Continuing the road surface treatment on Newmarket Street along Blueschool Street and into Commercial Street.
  - Future road surface improvements along Edgar Street and Victoria Street towards the current road bridge over the River Wye.
  - Removal of the underpasses at Eign Gate and the Barton Road junction.
2. Development of new multi storey car parking sites to serve commuters and visitors to the city centre.
3. Construction of a new transport hub interchange at Hereford railway station to link rail, bus and taxi users.
4. Continued improvements to the cycle and footpath networks across Hereford city and the market towns to help increase walking and cycling options for commuters, school children and college students.
5. Implementation of the Hereford bypass transport package including an A49 to A49 bypass of Hereford and a range of active mode measures and behavioural change projects to encourage walking and cycling across the city.
6. Implementation of car parking improvements at Leominster and Ledbury railway stations to improve facilities available to passengers and increase usage.
7. Investment in the Hereford to Ledbury railway line to include twin tracks wherever possible to improve reliability, reduce journey times, and increase rail usage.



# Aim 6 - Countywide ambition

Enabling market towns and rural communities to maximise their role in building thriving, distinctive, service centres that support their communities and rural hinterlands.

## ■ Vision

The market towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster, Ross on Wye and villages across the county will be vibrant places with a clear sense of community. They will all have built their own distinct identity focussing on identified target audiences to create a sense of distinctiveness and a niche tourism offer. Town centres will be sought after places to live, shop and visit. They will support small scale production, niche retailing and a growing local food, drink and hospitality sector.

Through the neighbourhood planning process new residential developments will be integrated into existing settlements, enabling sustainable growth for communities of all sizes. A series of premises will have been developed or converted to provide accommodation for small scale production and niche retailers alongside localised services such as post offices, business start-up space, and community facilities.

## ■ Outcomes

Reduce shop vacancy rates to 10% or less in each market town by 2025.

Develop and promote a distinctive visitor offer in each of the five market towns.



## Projects

1. Development of a suite of managed workspace or 'business centres' across the county to encourage small, creative and innovative businesses.
2. Development of a series of rural employment and service centres where a combination of small scale production and niche retailing can flourish for example in craft and arts or food and drink based industries.
3. Redevelopment of specific and appropriate sites within the market towns to enhance the retail, service, employment and residential offer, starting with the redevelopment of Leominster Broad Street car park.
4. Establishment of business improvement districts in the market towns to give each a definitive business plan owned by local businesses and finance to deliver a range of improvements and programme of activity.
5. Growth of the emerging local food and drink and hospitality sector which is typified by the growing number of craft pubs, breweries, pop-up food outlets and speciality offers, to attract a wider and more diverse customer base.
6. Development of specialised retail and visitor propositions within each of the market towns based on local niche markets and linked to relevant local leisure and tourism offers.



# Aim 7 - A great environment

Improving competitiveness and growth through energy and resource efficiency and implementing a range of landscape enhancements.

## ■ Vision

The overall quality of Herefordshire's landscape will have been enhanced through a series of conservation and ecology projects that attract visitors and serve local communities. Sites will be linked by a series of trails and facilities that encourage participation and access to conservation activities. Additionally projects will maintain and enhance the county's natural capital by increasing resilience to flooding, climate change, and loss of pollinators that service agriculture.

Work will continue on the delivery of the Nutrient Management Plan, specifically with the water companies, farmers, landowners and housebuilders to minimise the amount of phosphate reaching the watercourses.

The Urban Village development in the city centre will be served by a new district heating and energy system that offers a low carbon solution and reduces heating and power costs across this new and sustainable community.

Villages and communities elsewhere across the county will have introduced measures that lead to energy self-sustainability such as local energy schemes that allow revenues to be shared among local communities and bring about a reduction of numbers of households in fuel poverty.

## ■ Outcomes

Carbon dioxide reduction of 179,000 tonnes by 2021 a saving of £41m.

Number of visitors to Living Landscape projects – 150,000 by 2031



## Projects

1. Delivery of the Lugg Living Landscape project restoring habitats and ecology across the river valley with accompanying access improvements and associated visitor and tourism facilities.
2. Implementation of the nutrient management plan to reduce phosphate levels, improving water quality and unlocking future development land.
3. Implementation of a range of localised energy schemes that contribute to increased energy self-sufficiency by delivering secure, low carbon and affordable energy.
4. Implementation of a range of other Living Landscape projects across the county in appropriate locations.
5. Development of Herefordshire's strong environmental technologies sector and provision of support to the fitting of energy efficient measures within business, community and public buildings.
6. Constructing a district heat and energy scheme for the Urban Village development utilising the requirements of the Heineken and Cargill factories alongside the demand created by the hospital and emerging NMiTE university proposals.

