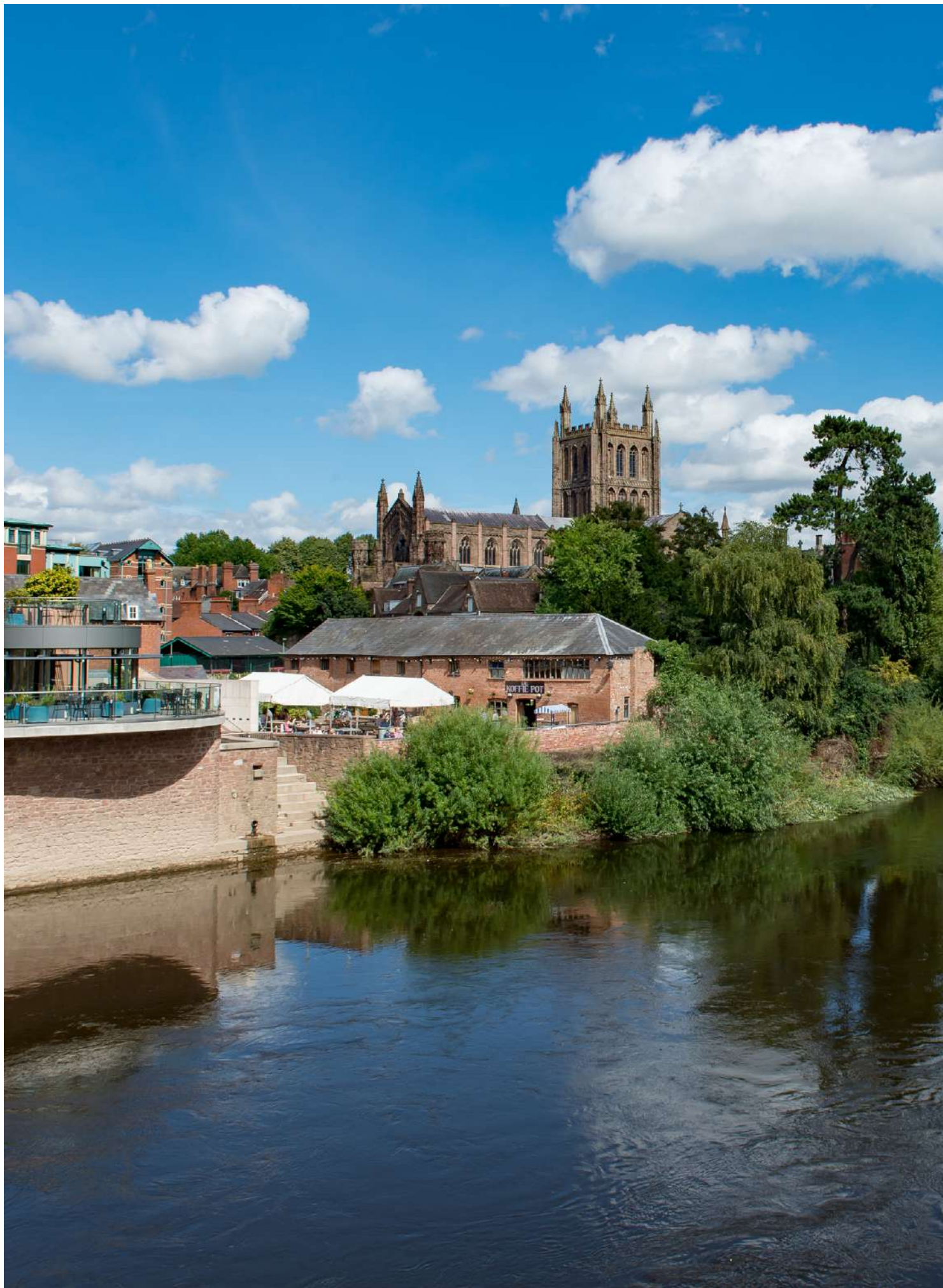




2050 ECONOMIC PLAN

Herefordshire's vision for a
sustainable and successful future





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Herefordshire aims to be an exemplar 21st century rural county. The talent of our people will drive both economic success and positive environmental and social change.

In doing so Herefordshire will create new opportunities for local people and businesses and good jobs, whilst protecting our natural environment and quality of life, and contributing to solving national and global challenges. This plan sets out our long-term vision and the outcomes we want to achieve, together with the actions we are going to take over the next 5 years.

Herefordshire is a distinctive mix of modern and historic, with strong rural communities, flourishing market towns and a unique city. Our businesses are outward-looking, supplying global markets and with important connections to Wales, the West Midlands, Bristol, Cardiff, Worcestershire, and Manchester. This is a healthy place to live and work, with a very high quality of life, attracting people who want access to those major cities and clusters whilst also enjoying our natural environment and wide range of accessible sporting and outdoor opportunities.

Our economy is a distinctive mix of the very new and long-established. We have talented people and businesses, including in cyber and technology, culture and creative industries, arts and heritage, construction, agriculture and food production, and manufacturing and engineering. Our visitor economy is high value and growing fast, reflecting our offer of arts, culture and food alongside the natural environment and high-quality places to stay. Many of our firms are leading the way in environmental technologies that are key to the UK's low carbon transition.

The global and national economy is in a period of deep uncertainty and inflationary pressure, which has already reduced living standards locally and held back investment and growth. At the same time, our local environment and the wider climate are under great pressure.

Our Big Economic Plan sets out what we intend to do to support economic growth to improve wages and opportunities for all our residents, whilst also reducing carbon use, tackling river pollution, increasing the sustainability of our supply chains and making it easier for businesses to improve productivity and grow. The actions set out in this plan are designed to support the opportunities and tackle the challenges ahead, drawing on the evidence and input from a wide range of partners.

We will work together to secure funding and deliver the stronger and more resilient transport, digital and energy infrastructure that we need to transition to a low carbon, greener and more successful economy. Action on connectivity is also vital to enable existing residents and businesses to access new skills and opportunities and to attract new people to live and work in the county. We also need to invest in improving the energy efficiency of our existing housing and buildings, as well as pioneering modern methods in construction. Local firms, landowners and the Council will work together to deliver the right mix of housing needed for our existing and future population, alongside the types of employment land needed in all parts of the county.

We want to maximise the potential of all residents to contribute to the local economy and community groups. We have a rapidly ageing population and recruitment is an issue in all sectors. We will put in place new support to help young people understand and access the opportunities that exist in Herefordshire. We have an excellent and growing education offer, including NMITE, our new University. We will support older people to remain healthy and economically active through reskilling. We will also work together to design and deliver services differently, using technology and the skills of our voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations alongside

local businesses, to meet the needs and opportunities of an older, dispersed population.

These actions will help tackle the constraints on productivity and business growth which in turn mean that wages here are often lower than they could be. There is a strong link between income, health and wellbeing and too many of our residents struggle to afford a

'Transition to a low carbon, greener and more successful economy.'

decent standard of living and housing. Whilst many of these challenges are national and global in scale, we cannot rely on markets and national Government action to solve them locally.

Our aim is not economic growth for its own sake, or the pursuit of increased Gross Value Added (GVA) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a crude measure of increasing output at the expense of our environment and communities. This plan sets out a balanced set of measures that we will use to track progress, including wage levels and differentials, public transport connectivity, carbon emissions and skills levels. This strategy starts to show how we can use the levers we have locally to create a more inclusive distribution of opportunities and

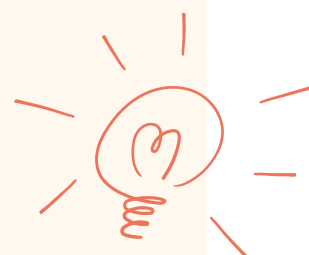


wealth, empowering people and enabling them to benefit as we work together to create a more sustainable economy, for the long term.

We will also work with our neighbouring counties and regions on shared business and funding opportunities. We will monitor Government policy on devolution and local economic growth and explore opportunities for additional investment and powers if they arise, but this plan focuses rightly on what we can do ourselves.



Partners in Herefordshire are committed to working together, focusing on what we can do locally and how we use our collective agency, resources and levers. We know that a clear and collective plan and agreed direction will enable us to achieve more with our existing resources. Our Big Economic Plan sets out our collective vision for Herefordshire, the outcomes we are seeking and the actions to be delivered over the next 5 years.



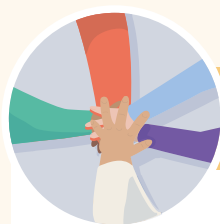
2050 VISION

In 2050 Herefordshire is a vibrant, healthy, zero-carbon, and inclusive place to live, work, study and visit at all stages of life. Our rural communities, market towns and university city are thriving with high-quality employment, housing and services. A high-technology, higher value and creative economy has enabled living standards to rise. We have protected our rich natural environment.



PEOPLE

A great place to grow up and to grow old, with a growing, highly skilled population, attracting young people and families who move here and stay. A thriving university city and strong offering of colleges and training organisations.



COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIPS

Strong and inclusive communities in our towns, villages and rural areas, with flourishing high streets and services. Herefordshire people working effectively together to take opportunities and solve social and environmental challenges.



ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE

A zero carbon and nature-rich county, with a leading reputation for local energy solutions, enhanced natural landscapes, clean rivers and improved biodiversity.



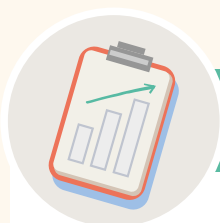
ENTERPRISE

Innovative businesses, increasing value and productivity, including in cyber and technology, culture and creative industries, tourism, construction, agriculture and food production, manufacturing and engineering, and health care. Resilient local supply chains, with a circular, sustainable economy.



INFRASTRUCTURE

More reliable and resilient road, rail, active travel and public transport infrastructure. Rapid EV transition. High quality, energy efficient housing, with local construction suppliers and supply chains. Super-fast mobile and broadband coverage and stronger energy networks.



INVESTMENT

Increased investment in infrastructure, alongside growing inward and business investment, throughout the county.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEREFORDSHIRE

Partners are clear that we have to work together to bring expertise, resources and advocacy to deliver the vision and actions in this plan. We have agreed 5 changes that will underpin Herefordshire's way of working:

- 01** We will take a proactive and purposeful approach to land use planning, including employment land, housing and natural capital, with an implementation plan that sits alongside the local plan and is delivered through partnerships with developers and investors – including plans for our market towns and Hereford, being clear about where growth will happen and considering how best to protect biodiversity and our environment.
- 02** We will commit to growing and retaining value locally – developing services and solutions with local voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations and networks, and local businesses. We will also create a clear statement or charter setting out our expectations of investors, businesses, landowners, and others, in terms of job quality, local procurement and environmental improvements, bringing benefits for staff retention, local supply chains and carbon reduction.
- 03** We will establish a new Herefordshire Economy and Place Board – as a strategic public and private partnership with shared responsibility to drive delivery of major elements of our 2050 vision and Big Economic Plan, including maximising Government investment and reviewing priorities and progress. We will put in place appropriate delivery mechanisms for individual major projects and developments.
- 04** We will support local businesses to scale and grow, including those solving the challenges of low carbon transition and environmental and social renewal – supporting our existing county-based businesses as well as encouraging entrepreneurship and new enterprises.
- 05** We will develop and deliver a new approach to inward investment and place marketing – promoting our sectoral strengths and assets into a range of new markets. This will include a new inward investment offer to attract external private sector investment, for example through help and support around finding sites, place marketing, skills and education, workforce development and strengthening local supply chains.

DELIVERY AND MONITORING PROGRESS

We have developed a detailed Delivery Plan for the actions we have agreed for the first five years. This is a living document that will evolve over time as funding opportunities emerge. Overall progress and priority actions will be overseen by our new Economy and Place Board. We will monitor and measure progress using metrics that reflect our vision and outcomes.



INTRODUCTION

Our Economic Plan has been developed by a Steering Group of businesses and business groups, voluntary, community and social enterprise sector groups, Herefordshire Council, Further and Higher Education institutions, and others.



The vision, outcomes and actions have been informed by an extensive economic evidence base and interviews and workshops involving over 100 different people from community groups, young people's groups, businesses, arts organisations, investors, the NHS and elected councillors.

From the outset, partners were clear that they wanted a vision for Herefordshire's economy that went beyond economic growth for its own sake or increasing output at the expense of our environment and communities. They were also clear about needing a new way of working through public and private partnership to deliver transformational change for the county.

A SIX CAPITALS APPROACH

Our vision and the outcomes are aiming to reflect this strong local consensus about the importance of working across all aspects of our economy. Our work has been informed by the Six Capitals approach, a robust and well-established approach developed by Diane Coyle and Benjamin Mitra-Kahn of the Bennett Institute, Cambridge. It was designed post-2008 financial crisis as a response to measuring wealth that goes beyond GVA or

GDP focused models. It reflects the strong evidence that overly focusing on these narrow definitions of economic output has failed to reverse social, health and spatial inequalities and does not encourage an approach to resource use that is consistent with tackling a wide range of environmental pressures.

This model looks at the economy through six elements: Physical, Natural, Human, Knowledge, Social and institutional, and Financial Capital. We have built on and adapted this approach to reflect the Herefordshire context. This approach is used as the framework to structure the vision, outcomes and actions in our Economic Plan.





HEREFORDSHIRE TODAY



Herefordshire is a £3.6bn economy, with 187,100 residents, over 10,600 businesses and 90,000 jobs¹. Hereford is a unique cathedral city, with a new university.

We have distinctive and growing market towns and beautiful rural areas. Our high quality of life, culture and heritage, natural environment and strong communities make Herefordshire a great place to live, visit, study and work. Many more people are choosing to live here and work remotely for some or part of the time. This section summarises the evidence alongside the challenges and opportunities ahead for the different parts of our economy.

PEOPLE

Herefordshire has a strong and growing educational and skills ecosystem and offer, including Herefordshire and Ludlow College, Hereford Sixth Form, Hereford College of Arts, the Royal National College for the Blind, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association and NMITE. Developing our education and learning offer at all levels, including schools, higher and further education, is essential to attract more people to live and work in the county. NMITE is core to increasing skills and opportunities in engineering and related disciplines, underpinning investment in the sector. The county performs well for mid-level and technical qualifications, and we have distinct specialisms linked to our rural heritage, for instance the National School of Blacksmithing at Herefordshire and Ludlow College.

Fewer working-age residents have higher-level qualifications and in a tight labour market with an older and ageing population, businesses find it difficult to recruit, particularly higher skilled staff. We need to ensure that the Local Skills



20.8% qualified to NVQ3 (16.8% nationally); 39% to NVQ4+ (43% nationally)

Sources: ONS Annual Population Survey (APS) (2021)

¹ONS GVA Chained Volume Measures in 2019 money value (2015-20); ONS Population Estimates (2016-21); ONS Business Counts (2017-22); ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) (2016-21)

Improvement Plan delivers what is needed for Herefordshire, with high quality HE and FE provision that is working directly with local firms. NMITE, the College of the Arts and Hereford College provide the core of our opportunity to further align skills and training provision with business needs. At the same time helping local people access and see the opportunities that are available, supporting upskilling, multiskilling and re-skilling, as well as the development of work ready and soft skills. It is important also that we create skills and employment opportunities accessible for those who are currently at risk of missing out, for instance for residents with Special Educational Needs, disabilities and caring responsibilities.

Herefordshire is a great place to live, work and age healthily, but like many other rural places with an older and ageing population in dispersed rural communities we face higher and increasing demands on health and care, which will require doing things differently. We will support good health outcomes for residents

across their lives, including supporting older residents to be economically, physically and culturally active, including through investing in easy to access facilities, services and housing.

Despite there being overall higher than average levels of healthy life expectancy (64.2 years for men compared to 63.1 years in England and 66.3 years for women compared to 63.9 years in England), there are inequalities across the county with men born in the most deprived areas living 5.4 years less than those in the least deprived areas (4.0 years for women)². There are 11 neighbourhoods in the most deprived 25% nationally in Herefordshire, many in the south of Hereford, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye.

Our economy is less productive and wages are lower here than other parts of the country. The evidence is clear that there is a strong link between income, health and wellbeing, with residents on low wages increasingly likely to struggle to afford a decent standard of living and housing³.



² ONS (2018-20) Health state life expectancies

³ Institute of Health Equity (2010) Fair Society, Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review)

COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Herefordshire has strong and resilient communities with 88% of residents reporting that they feel they belong to the local area, 89% believing their local area is a place where people of different backgrounds get on well together, and 82% feeling that the community supported each other during Covid-19 and the flooding⁴.

Herefordshire has a network of 137 democratically-elected parish councils, five town councils and one city council⁵. There is a thriving voluntary, community and social enterprise sector with over 2,300 organisations, reaching almost 109,000 residents and making an annual social and economic contribution of £355m to the county's economy⁶. Talk Community connect residents to services, groups, events and information to help them stay well, support their wellbeing and independence, and build friendships, through a network of 68 hubs across the county⁷.

Our large health and care sector provides 11,000 jobs⁸. We can build on existing innovative approaches to community engagement, such as through Talk Community, and develop new, more collaborative approaches to health and care commissioning and service design, especially for our older residents. Diversifying supply chains offers an opportunity to help further grow capacity in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, where over 40% of organisations offer health, social care and wellbeing services⁹, supporting further growth and retention of wealth in the local economy. There are also opportunities for innovation in health and care using new technologies.

It is important that we utilise people's skills at all ages, but there are opportunities to draw on the experience and knowledge of our older residents

to support the local economy by maximising volunteering opportunities and providing support and advice to business and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. Our older and retired residents are a major asset, contributing to our economy by supporting local businesses, their expenditure on local goods and services, and volunteering with arts, culture and community organisations. There are growth opportunities for businesses catering for older people across all sectors.

We need to raise the quality and standards of existing jobs, for instance in our high employing sectors such as health and care, retail and hospitality. As major anchor institutions, Herefordshire Council and Wye Valley NHS Trust employ over 4,350 people¹⁰, and play an important role in supporting positive health outcomes and reducing health inequalities through the provision of good quality employment opportunities.



⁴ Talk Community (2021) Community Wellbeing Survey

⁵ Herefordshire Council About parish councils

⁶ Talk Community (2021) The state of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector in Herefordshire 2021

⁷ <https://www.talkcommunitydirectory.org/hubs>

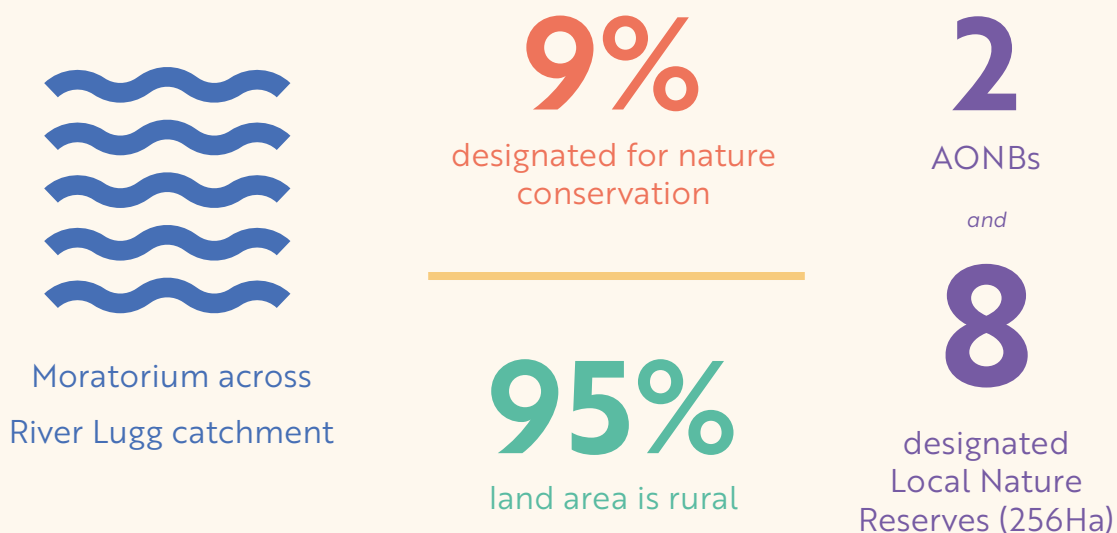
⁸ ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (2020)

⁹ Talk Community (2021) The state of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector in Herefordshire 2021

¹⁰ Herefordshire Council employed 1,357 people in December 2021 – Herefordshire Council (Jan-Dec 2021) Equality in Employment. Wye Valley NHS Trust has a workforce of around 3,000 – About Wye Valley NHS Trust.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Securing the long-term future of our natural assets is vital if we are to improve biodiversity and tackle the climate and environmental crisis we face. Our environment is a core part of our offer to visitors, new residents and businesses. In 2019 we declared a Climate Emergency and have set an ambition to reach zero carbon from our current and higher than average territorial carbon footprint of 1,998kt¹¹. We have developed a detailed Climate and Nature Action Plan to reach zero carbon, focusing on reducing carbon emissions in housing and buildings, transport, food consumption, land use and farming, and waste management. Phosphate levels in our rivers have posed a particular challenge, causing significant biodiversity loss, water quality problems and, in the case of the River Lugg, a moratorium on planning approvals that is holding back investment and the development of housing and employment land.



Sources: Herefordshire JSNA (2021); Natural Resources Wales, Environment Agency & Natural England (2021)

We have the talent, skills and businesses locally to solve these challenges and to do so in a way that will create both good jobs and long term environmental and habitat improvements. We are working together to understand and develop solutions, making a contribution locally, nationally and internationally.

But we need to go further and faster, integrating climate action into all decisions going forward. It is important that all sectors and businesses take transformative action to reach net zero. Our Greener Footprints communications and engagement campaign is inspiring and mobilising organisations across Herefordshire to be part of a county-wide 'movement of positive action' on a significant scale to tackle climate change and protect our rich nature and wildlife.

This transition is a major opportunity for our economy and we have the potential to grow our strengths in modern, low carbon agriculture and sustainable construction. We are at the forefront of innovation in local energy networks, addressing grid and energy constraints that are barriers to business growth and delivery of housing and employment sites.



¹¹ Herefordshire County Council (2022) Herefordshire's Carbon Footprint

ENTERPRISE



Herefordshire is a good place to set up and run a business, with high survival rates (46.2% of businesses are in business after five years compared to 39.5% nationally)¹². Most successful businesses in the county are home grown and we have a strong base of micro businesses and SMEs, making up 99.7% of the business base¹³. There are many more sole traders and micro enterprises that are not captured through conventional data sources¹⁴.

Many of our business strengths are closely linked to our natural landscapes, farming heritage and rural skills. Our large agriculture and food production sector ranges from high-tech and large-scale production through to artisanal, niche producers. Innovative businesses in the sector have diversified to create and capture more value through higher value processing. Local food and drink, together with a growing arts and cultural scene, and outdoor pursuits, are part of a growing visitor offer in the county and our towns.

We have strengths in niche, high-end manufacturing and engineering, linked to agriculture and food production, but also in defence, medical, motorsports and environmental technologies. NMITE, the new engineering university, will support innovation and supply skilled engineers to our local business base, supporting further business investment and improved productivity. There are firms working in green tech, including insulation and domestic energy.

Herefordshire is part of Cyber Valley, a strategic defence, security and technology arc running from GCHQ to Qinetiq to Hereford. In the south of the county, we have a cluster of cyber and technology businesses and Cyber Quarter at Skylon Park, linked to an established and internationally recognised defence and security sector. Herefordshire is nearly equidistant to Birmingham, Cardiff and Bristol, three large and fast-growing centres of film, creative content and TV production, and many firms in the county are working as part of wider clusters and networks in these cities. Our relationship to Birmingham and the West Midlands brings opportunities to strengthen supply chains, attract investment and develop partnerships with regional higher education institutions.

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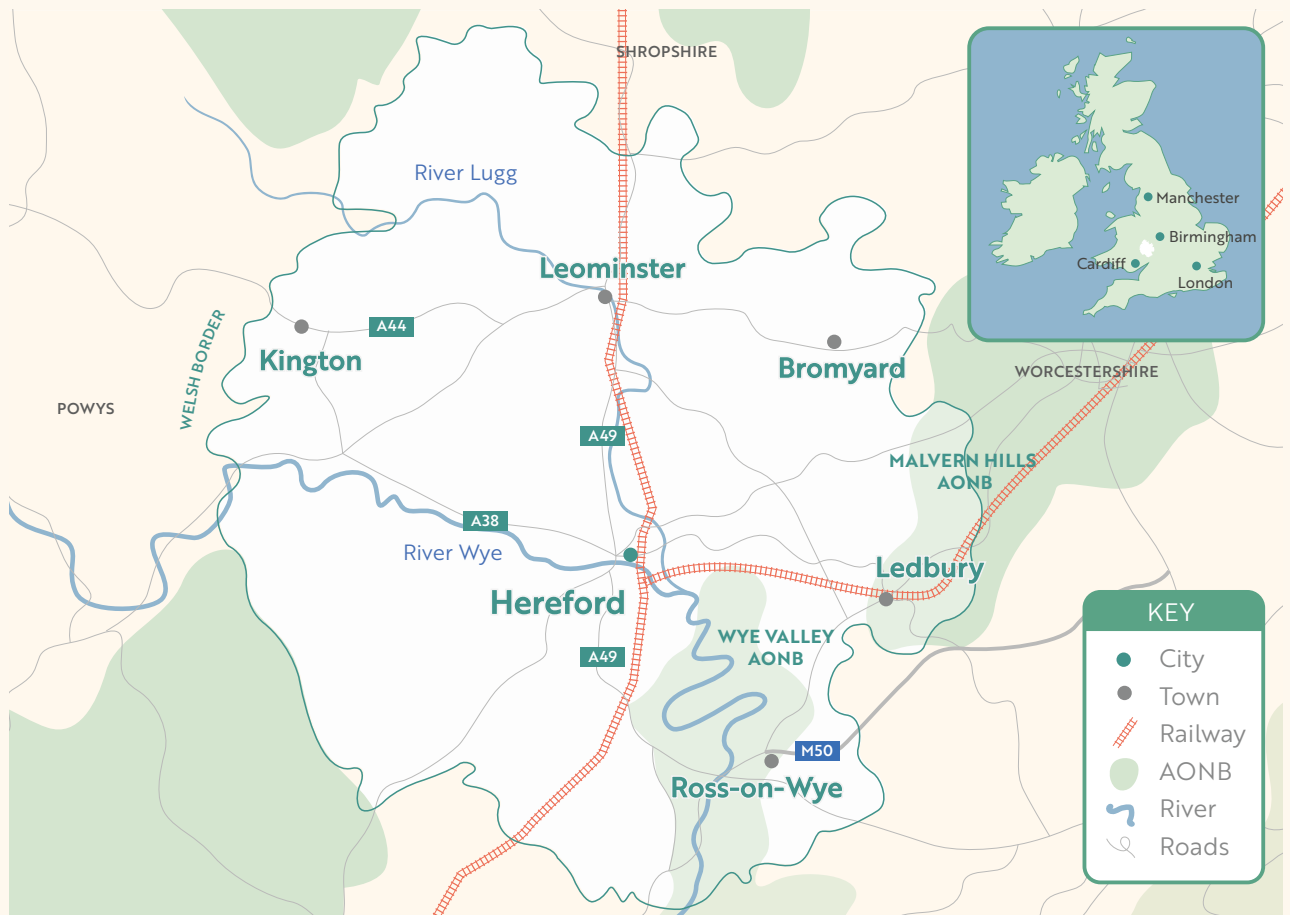
¹² ONS Business Demography (2021)

¹³ ONS Business Counts (2021)

¹⁴ As they are not VAT and/or PAYE registered.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Herefordshire is an important part of the UK, our labour markets and businesses have strong connections with Powys, South Wales, West Midlands, Malvern and Worcestershire, and Manchester. Major road and rail connections support these links and the transit of goods through Herefordshire to and from other markets.



There are major challenges around the resilience and reliability of our transport system. Long journey times for road freight, with major bottlenecks around Hereford, can lead to increased costs for businesses and discourages investment. This is largely caused by reliance on short car journeys around Hereford and the constraints of the city's location on the river. This in turn creates localised air quality problems and constrains the economic health of the city centre. We also have direct but relatively slow rail links to major cities and low public transport provision locally. These infrastructure challenges make it harder for people, especially younger and older residents, to access training, work, leisure and services. They are a significant contributor to lower business productivity, competitiveness and growth.

We have good full fibre coverage for a rural county, with 50% of premises having full fibre availability compared to 42% nationally¹⁵. We have made good progress through the Fastershire Broadband Project to bring superfast broadband to homes and businesses, with this speed broadband available to 90.7% of premises. This is still below the national average (97%) and 50% of premises have access to Gigabit speeds, compared to 70% nationally. Overall broadband and mobile connectivity could be enhanced to support our businesses to thrive and innovate and facilitate remote and hybrid working.

Business development and growth is also held back by constraints around grid and energy capacity. Across the Marches, there is a significantly constrained electrical grid in terms of both generation and supply, which can lead to challenges around connecting new developments and energy generation assets, and the rural nature of the county means that some areas are not connected to gas, leading to widespread use of high carbon and high-cost fuels¹⁶.

Through the engagement to underpin the development of this plan, many businesses have also highlighted the need for available employment land with potential for development, and sites with a mix of start-up and grow-on space. Businesses are committed to Herefordshire but long-term success will require investment in employment space, building on the success of Skylon Park Enterprise Zone.

Herefordshire has challenges around the affordability of housing with house prices almost 10 times as high as workplace-based earnings¹⁷. This is driven by low wages rather than higher than average house prices. It is important that we provide affordable homes to rent and buy, but also that we ensure that we have the right mix of housing for local people and to attract professionals and families.

INVESTMENT

We have seen recent investment in Hereford through NMITE, £22.4m from the government's Towns Fund and the Enterprise Zone at Skylon Park, as well as recent growth in Ledbury and Leominster. These investments are already having an impact on local people and supply chains and bring opportunities for further renewal and investment. We have the opportunity to get more out of both public expenditure and private capital, in particular through building on the links between our growing HE offer and local businesses. We will increase the amount of money that stays in Herefordshire by developing strong, local supply chains and using commissioning and procurement.

Targeted effort will be needed to increase inward investment. Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire currently account for £19.5bn (1%) of the UK's inward Foreign Direct Investment¹⁸. We need to create the conditions to support our businesses to invest, stay and grow in the county, and provide support to increase our success rate with attracting innovation funding.



¹⁵ Connected Nations (2022)

¹⁶ The Marches LEP (2021) Marches LEP Energy Strategy

¹⁷ ONS (2022) House price to workplace-based earnings ratio

¹⁸ ONS (2022) Foreign direct investment, experimental UK subnational estimates

DISTINCTIVE MARKET TOWNS AND A UNIQUE CITY

As we consider the six sections of the economy we also need to take account of our city and market towns as centres to live, work, visit and invest in. They have distinctive strengths, opportunities, assets and challenges.

HEREFORD CITY

Hereford is a cathedral city, located on the scenic River Wye at the heart of the county. With 64,000 residents, it is the main service centre, with a hospital, higher education institutions and a range of shopping and leisure facilities, such as Church Street and Old Market. It has an opportunity to establish itself as a green and pioneering university city, built around the long term strategic growth of NMITE, the College of Arts and their links to higher value sectors.

We will take a strategic approach to the university, businesses and land, including through implementing the Hereford Masterplan. Building on its strong cultural and heritage assets, including the Cathedral and The Courtyard, Hereford will have a vibrant historic core and new high-quality housing and employment space in the city centre, alongside a renewed retail, leisure and culture offer. It will address challenges around congestion and poor connectivity within Hereford and to other places in the county through transport improvements and modal shift.

The delivery of successful employment zones, including Skylon Park and other priority sites, will support business growth and innovation.





BROMYARD

Bromyard is a small market town of 4,700 residents in the north east of the county. Known as the 'town of festivals', Bromyard hosts Bromyard Folk Festival, Bromyard Speed Festival, Bromyard Gala and Nozstock. The town is an emerging foodie destination with a traditional high street of independent shops and eateries, selling local produce. Sitting on a hilltop, Bromyard has good access to walking and cycling routes in the surrounding countryside. Bromyard has potential to bring these assets together to develop its tourism offer. There is also the potential to create jobs in the town's manufacturing and engineering sector with a focus on green technology by increasing the availability of employment space. Bromyard has good accessibility to South Wales, Birmingham and the Midlands, but travel within the town will benefit from improved green transport connection links and active travel.



KINGTON

Kington is the smallest of the market towns with a population of 3,300. It is a gateway into Wales, located on the crossroads of the A49 and A44, 2 miles from the Welsh border. Kington is a key service centre for its rural hinterland and is an attractive visitor destination with historic buildings, art galleries, independent shops, cafes and delis, and access to walking routes, including the Black and White Villages Trail and Offa's Dyke Path. Travel to and from the town is mainly reliant on private car with some limited bus services, but no rail connections to other parts of the county. There is potential to promote Kington as a walking destination with a strong food and drink offer and crafts sector through promotional activities and high street enhancements.



LEDBURY

Ledbury is a thriving market town in the eastern part of the county, bordered by the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The railway station has services to Hereford, Malvern, Worcester, Birmingham and London. It has a population of 10,000 and is a service centre for the surrounding rural areas. The town centre has many independent shops and eateries, as well as an extensive Conservation Area with many historic heritage assets, including listed buildings. Enhanced visitor infrastructure and greater promotion will enable Ledbury to grow its tourism offer and increase the number of visitors staying overnight. There is a thriving light industrial base with companies including Amcor, Heineken and Bevisol based in the town. Expanding the technology corridor from the Midlands via Malvern and increasing provision of employment space has the potential to diversify the local economy, support the growth of local manufacturing and engineering firms and attract high-tech and innovative businesses to the town.

LEOMINSTER

Leominster has a population of 12,400 and is the service centre for many parishes in the north of the county. The town centre, known for its medieval, Tudor and Georgian architecture and antique shops, has recently been identified as a Heritage Action Zone. There is access to castles, historic houses, gardens, and the Black and White Villages Trail. Like other towns in the county, there is potential to increase value in the visitor economy and grow the number of people staying overnight. The town has good digital connectivity and is strategically located on the crossroads of the A49 and A44 with good road access to Wales, as well as Hereford, Shrewsbury, Cardiff and Manchester via train. There is a strong manufacturing and engineering sector and industrial skills base, and high demand for employment space for start-ups and growing companies, in addition to the existing large industrial estates.



ROSS-ON-WYE

Ross-on-Wye is an important gateway town in the south of the county, with good road links via the A40 to Gloucester and Abergavenny and M50 to Birmingham and the Midlands, and a population of over 11,000. The town is home to independent shops and historic buildings, including Market House and The Prospect, and is located in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in close proximity to the River Wye. There is an opportunity to increase the availability of employment land through the development of the Enterprise Park.





2050 VISION

In 2050 Herefordshire is a vibrant, healthy, zero-carbon, and inclusive place to live, work, study and visit at all stages of life. Our rural communities, market towns and university city are thriving with high quality employment, housing and services. A high technology, higher value and creative economy has enabled living standards to rise. We have protected our rich natural environment.



The following sections set out more detailed outcomes for each of the six elements of our economy, based on the evidence set out above and delivered through the actions we are going to take over the next five years.



PEOPLE

A great place to grow up and to grow old, with a growing, highly skilled, population, attracting young people and families who move here and stay. A thriving university city and strong offer across our colleges and training organisations.

Herefordshire in 2050 will give children the best start in life. They will be safe and healthy, growing up with the confidence and skills to reach their full potential. Our educational and training organisations will nurture home-grown talent and will attract young people to learn in the county. Hereford will be a thriving university city, where NMITE is integrated within the fabric of the city and core to higher value business growth, creating opportunities for students and the wider community and residents.

Our residents will be equipped with the skills that local businesses need and will enable them to access opportunities, progress and earn more, if they choose to. We will have a sustainable and resilient workforce, creating the wealth needed locally to maintain our high quality of life and good services.

The county will be an attractive place for young people, professionals and families to move to with access to education and training, quality housing (set out in detail in Infrastructure), competitively paid job opportunities, high-quality services, and an arts, heritage, food and drink, and leisure scene. Overall wage levels will have risen in real terms, with more people working in high quality and higher skilled jobs.

Older people living here will age healthily and be economically active for as long as they want to be, with Herefordshire making the most of their talents and experience and with reskilling opportunities easily accessible.



OUR OUTCOMES AND 5-YEAR ACTIONS

The table below sets out the outcomes we will achieve, linked to the evidence, and delivered through a set of 5-year actions.

OUTCOME	ACTIONS
All residents have access to training and development at all stages of their working life in skills that will enable them to access opportunities locally, with a specific focus on green economy, low carbon transition, digital and technology skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the development of a Skills Brokerage Programme, targeted at micros and SMEs, to help businesses identify and solve their skills needs • Prioritise training courses which respond to local skills demand by working with education and training providers • Form career and development pathways in tourism, construction, and manufacturing and engineering by encouraging SMEs, education and training providers and NMITE to work together • Develop training in higher level technical skills, including in manufacturing and engineering, and digital • Promote our Higher Education offer through a co-ordinated campaign between providers • Ensure the development and delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Plan
Young people are empowered to shape a future for themselves in the county through a wider range of employment and training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the development of a Youth Enterprise programme, providing tailored support to young entrepreneurs, such as micro loans and hotdesking space • Deliver a Careers in Cyber and Technology programme, developing a talent pipeline of young people into entry level cyber and technology careers • Explore the development of a Young Person's Entitlement or Passport, enabling young people to build their identity and cultural confidence by linking them to opportunities in the county • Run inspirational career development events for 16-24 year olds, building on the Rural Media creative industry sector events

OUTCOME	ACTIONS
More young families and highly qualified professionals are attracted to live and stay in the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop messages and a campaign to attract families and young people to relocate to the county, highlighting high quality schools, services and improvements to infrastructure
Residents across all ages, particularly for children and young people and our older residents, have good physical and mental health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a positive environment for children and young people, making Herefordshire a child-friendly county • Explore the development of healthy workplace standards for employers • Encourage residents to be active, getting outdoors, volunteering and using active travel • Establish joint work between local employers to enable older people to remain in the workplace through adoption of health and wellbeing support and more inclusive and flexible employment practices • Work with local business representative groups and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to develop a programme for older professionals who may have taken early retirement to advise SMEs and organisations • Explore the potential to become an Age-friendly Community, adapting structures and services to meet people's needs as they age • Work closely with Herefordshire's Health and Wellbeing Board to support delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIPS

Strong and inclusive communities in our towns, villages and rural areas, with flourishing high streets and services. Herefordshire people working effectively together to take opportunities and solve social and environmental challenges.

Herefordshire in 2050 will have empowered and resilient communities that are inclusive, well connected and engaged in decision making, creating balanced and thriving places. A core part of this is a dynamic voluntary, community and social enterprise sector with the capacity and resources to support the codesign and delivery of critical services, and to create and retain value in the local economy through local supply chains and employment. Partners across the public, private and third sectors will have formed established ways of working to deliver our shared vision and outcomes through transformational and meaningful action, drawing on our collective resources and levers.





OUR OUTCOMES AND 5-YEAR ACTIONS

The table below sets out the outcomes we will achieve, linked to the evidence, and delivered through a set of 5-year actions.

OUTCOME	ACTIONS
Businesses, anchor institutions and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations are working together to deliver this vision for our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Herefordshire Economy and Place Board with a clear remit to oversee delivery of our vision and Economic Plan
Local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector networks and capacity has grown and strengthened, with increased involvement in service design and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a new Commissioning and Procurement Framework, building on the Council's Social Value Policy, to support the diversification of supply chains and service delivery, focusing on health and care Strengthen the relationships between anchor institutions and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to codesign solutions and codevelop services Invest in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups, drawing on UKSPF and RPF investment
Quality of work has improved, especially in lower paid roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate as a group of anchor institutions to commit to a set of shared employment practices around diverse and inclusive recruitment, wages and conditions, training and development, and health and wellbeing, and promote this through a county-wide campaign Encourage people to develop and progress their careers in social care through the growth and recognition of this as a profession
Local firms have access to strengthened peer to peer support and business networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Herefordshire business directory, supporting local supply chains and invest in increased peer to peer networks and events



ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE



A zero carbon and nature rich county, with a leading reputation for local energy solutions, enhanced natural landscapes, clean rivers and improved biodiversity.

Herefordshire in 2050 will be a leader in net zero, sustainable, rural living. Our businesses will be integral to this shift and transition. We will have transformed our land management and farming practices to support sustainable food production and the restoration of natural and environmental systems. Development and growth will be sympathetic to enhancing our natural landscapes, for instance by not allowing building on flood plains. Our rivers and streams will have high levels of water quality.





OUR OUTCOMES AND 5-YEAR ACTIONS

The table below sets out the outcomes we will achieve, linked to the evidence, and delivered through a set of 5-year actions.

OUTCOME	ACTIONS
The phosphate pollution crisis in our rivers has been resolved and the moratorium on planning has been removed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore public and private sector solutions to protecting and restoring the biodiversity and health of the River Lugg and River Wye • Continue to invest in developing and restoring wetlands to reduce pollution and support biodiversity
Sustainable and low carbon energy, and improved energy efficiency has primed our transition to a zero carbon economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Herefordshire Zero Carbon and Nature Rich county-wide action plan • Support businesses to transition to low carbon through a programme of targeted support
Herefordshire is a leading place in innovative approaches to land management and use to improve biodiversity, soil quality, energy use and efficiency, including in agriculture and food production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with agricultural communities and farmers to pilot small scale land-based businesses and restore some land as a net carbon sink, whilst still retaining productive land for farming
The county has driven transformational change as a national leader in modern, low carbon agriculture and food production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on recent investments at Holme Lacy Campus to establish a Low Carbon Technology Centre, alongside provision of training in low carbon agriculture • Deliver the Marches Regional Food Hub, connecting local food producers to public bodies
Our nature, environment and habitats are protected, restored and enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore establishing a Shires National Park, delivering a park-wide strategy for the recovery of nature and improvement to habitat focused on the Wye and Severn







ENTERPRISE

Innovative businesses, increasing value and productivity, including in cyber and technology, culture and creative industries, tourism, construction, agriculture and food production, manufacturing and engineering, and health and care. Resilient local supply chains, with a circular, sustainable economy.

Herefordshire in 2050 will be known as a good place to start and grow a business, both for people within and outside of the county, with access to sites, infrastructure, support services and networks. We will be at the forefront of green and technological growth, building on our distinctive strengths, assets and supply chains. We have an opportunity to join up activity and build networks across our business strengths and assets.

Herefordshire businesses will work together to pioneer new, innovative approaches to construction, local energy generation and storage, farming and environmental stewardship, manufacturing and engineering, and cyber and technology, overcoming and solving our major social and environmental challenges. The actions in relation to phosphate levels in our rivers in Environment and Climate Change will be crucial to boosting business confidence and investment. We will have a thriving arts and heritage sector, which combined with the natural beauty of the county, will be at the heart of our thriving places and high streets, attracting and retaining young people, professionals and families. Access to employment space, transport and digital infrastructure, and energy are crucial to the growth of businesses but are set out in more detail in Infrastructure.

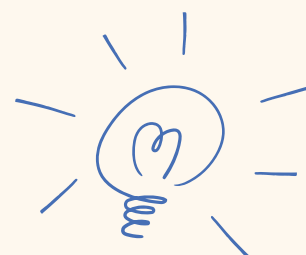


OUR OUTCOMES AND 5-YEAR ACTIONS

The table below sets out the outcomes we will achieve, linked to the evidence, and delivered through a set of 5-year actions.

OUTCOME	ACTIONS
Our cyber and technology, culture and creative industries, construction, food production, and manufacturing and engineering clusters have developed and grown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the opportunities for applying research and enabling innovation within our local businesses from the NMITE Centre for Advanced Timber Technology and Centre for Automated Manufacturing • Grow our cyber and technology specialisms by maximising the impact of the Midlands Centre for Cyber Security through our collaboration with the University of Wolverhampton • Consider location support and incentives, including additional Enterprise Zones / extension • Invest in activity to develop networks and connect assets across our business strengths • Develop collaboration and career pathways between the Hereford College of Arts Digital Skills Centre and Hereford's Digital Culture Hub and local businesses
Herefordshire is further strengthened as an arts and heritage destination, celebrating our artisanal rural skills and crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the £18m Hereford Museum and Art Gallery • Create a cultural quarter in Hereford, bringing together our cultural assets, the Cathedral and museums, together with public realm improvements • Enable our cultural, historical and heritage institutions and activities to thrive • Develop and expand the county's programme of festivals through a new strategy • Support the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership and other collaborative groups in bid development for investment • Strengthen collaboration and networking between commercial, public and cultural businesses, building on Business and Culture Working Together
A dynamic and year-round tourism offer supports our place branding and inward investment strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the county through a place marketing strategy, building on our strong visitor economy offer and the work of the Hereford Business Improvement District (BID) and Herefordshire County BID • Develop a cohesive tourism offer across our city, network of towns, villages and rural areas, building on our Market Town Investment Plans

OUTCOME	ACTIONS
Enterprise and entrepreneurship levels have increased, particularly for those who otherwise miss out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a meanwhile use scheme, connecting entrepreneurs and social enterprises with vacant units • Establish a start-up programme and private sector led incubation space, potentially drawing on UKSPF investment and building on the success of the Shell Store
Our existing businesses have grown and scaled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure our business support programmes prioritise investment in workforce development / skills, tech, financial planning, project / product design, bid writing, business models, leadership and management , including for sole traders and freelancers • Establish a scale up programme to support businesses to grow in the county, in light of forthcoming UKSPF investment
More established commercial and research strengths, including in health and care, particularly for our rural communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop links with major regional universities and bodies such as the Applied Research Collaborations (ARCs) and Academic Health Science Networks (AHSN) around health improvement • Work with the health and care sector to develop, invest in and deliver digital health solutions and skills to service our rural and older communities





INFRASTRUCTURE

More reliable and resilient road, rail, active travel and public transport infrastructure. Rapid EV transition. High quality, energy efficient housing, with local construction suppliers and supply chains. Super-fast mobile and broadband coverage and stronger energy networks.

Herefordshire in 2050 will be better connected and more accessible, underpinned by a new link road and river crossing in Hereford. Alongside high levels of EV usage and good charging infrastructure, there will be improved public transport from and between our rural areas and market towns to education, training and businesses with widespread use of electric buses. Cycle greenways will also enable more active travel for residents and tourists. Transport hubs in Hereford and our market towns will enable secure cycle storage, electric vehicle and bike recharging, and bus and train transfer.

All existing housing and employment space will have been retrofitted to be at EPC level C or above, and all new domestic and commercial buildings will be built to the highest energy efficiency standards. Our residents and businesses will be connected digitally through high-quality, reliable networks. The county will generate 1.5 times the electricity demand with a significant proportion owned by shares from local communities with locally generated energy sold directly to local houses and businesses with the additional grid capacity needed. High streets in Hereford and our market towns will be thriving centres with a diverse residential, employment, leisure, retail and public service offer.

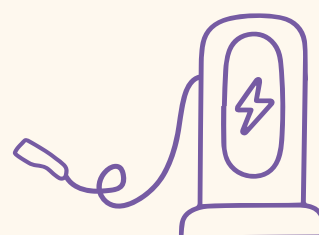


OUR OUTCOMES AND 5-YEAR ACTIONS

The table below sets out the outcomes we will achieve, linked to the evidence, and delivered through a set of 5-year actions.

OUTCOME	ACTIONS
Time reliability, network resilience and capacity has improved within and into the county, and in particular, access in and out of Hereford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the integrated modern public transport interchange at Hereford Station, supporting modal shift • Progress the eastern link road and river crossing • Develop the case for investment in a new Hereford Parkway Station at Rotherwas
A shift to a more sustainable transport network through local active travel, improved public transport and faster EV rollout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rollout EV charging points across the county • Enable modal shift by delivering current active travel programmes • Deliver Hereford 'City Zipper', connecting the city's transport, cultural, retail and hospitality hubs • Explore the case for reopening Pontrilas Station in Herefordshire
High quality, low carbon, energy efficient, mixed tenure housing, suitable for our changing demographic needs, has been delivered, focusing on our market towns (and growing villages), and there has been investment in retrofit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local developers to identify and prioritise locations for the most energy efficient, sustainable homes, prioritising local supply chains and talent • Deliver retrofit of existing housing, including through developing an evergreen investment fund
Increased private sector investment in and successful delivery of employment space for county-based and new businesses, including start-up space, small units and grow on space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver a pipeline of developable employment land and sites across the county, reflecting demand, including building out Skylon Park and delivering Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park • Deliver employment space schemes included in the Local Plan and Market Town Investment Plans, where funded
All parts of the county have access to high quality digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Fastershire Broadband Strategy • Explore new investment and commissioning routes to speed up rollout

OUTCOME	ACTIONS
Grid capacity and access has improved in the long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise major sites and work with regulators and National Grid to ensure the long term improvement needed, including additional private investment where feasible • Increase the resilience of electricity and gas networks, and storage capacity of the energy grid to enable more distributed renewable energy generation • Maximise potential for renewable energy generation by working with WPD and Cadent
High streets and town and local centres are vibrant and diverse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver town centre and high street improvements proposed in the Local Plan and Market Town Investment Plans, where funded • Explore potential to improve youth service activities across Hereford city and towns, working with partners



INVESTMENT

Increased investment in infrastructure alongside increased inward and business investment, throughout the county.

Herefordshire in 2050 will have higher levels of investment. We will have a strategic plan for delivering capital investment, drawing from a range of sources, including private capital, central government funding, Section 106 funding, Community Infrastructure Levy, UK Infrastructure Bank Investment, Public Works Loan Board lending and Council own borrowings. We will have a strong inward investment offer and be successful at attracting private capital from outside of the county, as well as enabling county-based businesses to invest and grow in the county. We will be successful at securing public funding and using this to lever in investment from other sources, to enhance our infrastructure, city and market towns, and invest in innovation.





OUR OUTCOMES AND 5-YEAR ACTIONS

The table below sets out the outcomes we will achieve, linked to the evidence, and delivered through a set of 5-year actions.

OUTCOME	ACTIONS
Increased levels of private sector inward investment, focusing on our priority sectors and our environmental challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Capital Investment Plan, linked to our housing, employment and natural capital delivery plans, and underpinned by a Herefordshire Investment Fund • Deliver a new Inward Investment Strategy for the county promoting our quality of life and culture, as well as our sectoral strengths and assets into a range of new markets – link to specific cluster development with e.g. Midlands Cyber • Develop a Herefordshire pitchbook with worked up propositions to engage the private sector, and an established route to delivery
Additional investment and growth in existing businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen business support services through greater information sharing, relationship management with major firms, advice and signposting, and remove barriers to investment
Greater success in Herefordshire businesses securing innovation funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote opportunities for innovation through business support and networks, and ensure support is in place to assist businesses with innovation project development and bid writing
Government investment in our transport, housing growth areas and high street regeneration has been secured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and manage an investment pipeline of sites and projects, potentially in partnership with a major institutional investor and strengthen our partnership with Homes England











DELIVERING OUR PLAN

Our Big Economic Plan sets out an ambitious vision to 2050 for our county. To help deliver it we need to work together in new ways, bringing together the talent, experience and funding of a wide range of public and private organisations. We need a proactive and purposeful partnership, working together to take decisions and having a shared responsibility to get things done.

The Economic Plan aligns with and complements a number of other plans and strategies being delivered by our partners, as shown below:

PARTNER STRATEGIES	 PEOPLE	 COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIPS	 ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE	 ENTERPRISE	 INFRASTRUCTURE	 INVESTMENT
Local Skills Improvement Plan	•					
Herefordshire & Ludlow College Mission & Vision	•					
Hereford College of the Arts Strategic Plan	•					
NMITE Strategy	•					
Herefordshire Council Health & Wellbeing Strategy	•					
NHS Wye Valley Trust Sustainable Development Management Plan	•					
UKSPF Investment Plan	•			•		•
HVOSS Strategy		•				
Talk Community Hub		•				
Market Town Investment Plans		•		•	•	•
Climate and Nature Partnership Board Action Plan			•			
Herefordshire Council Carbon Management Plan			•			
River Wye Phosphate Action Plan			•			
Wye Valley AONB Management Plan			•			
Herefordshire Cultural Partnership Cultural Strategy				•		
Visit Herefordshire				•		
Herefordshire County Destination BID & Hereford BID Business Plans				•		
Marches LEP Visitor Economy Strategy				•		
Herefordshire Council Local Plan					•	
Hereford Masterplan					•	
Herefordshire Council Transport Strategy Review					•	
Midlands Connect Strategic Transport Plan					•	
Fastershire Broadband Strategy					•	
Herefordshire Council Housing Strategy					•	
Marches LEP Digital Strategy					•	
Marches LEP Energy Strategy					•	
Hereford Town Investment Plan						•

FIRST 5 YEAR DELIVERY PLAN

We will implement this economic plan through working together on a 5-year Delivery Plan. This is a living document that will evolve over time as funding opportunities emerge.

For each action it sets out:

- 01** **Next steps** – specific activities to progress each of the actions, either for one or multiple organisations.
- 02** **Rationale** – linking back to the vision and outcomes.
- 03** **Lead organisation(s)** – either one organisation or a group.
- 04** **Benefits** – for communities, businesses and the local economy.
- 05** **Deliverability status** – assessing funding, capacity, approvals (e.g. planning permission) and interdependencies with other actions, using a three-scale RAG rating.
- 06** **Dependencies** – explaining where funding, capacity and approvals need to be secured, or where interdependencies need to be considered.
- 07** **Timescales** – for delivery of the action.

New board to oversee delivery - HEREFORDSHIRE ECONOMY AND PLACE BOARD

We will establish a new overarching Economy and Place Board that will oversee the delivery of major elements of our Economic Plan. Partners will continue to meet during early 2023 to agree the approach and membership. Initially partners have agreed the following aims and principles to guide our collective work.

AIMS FOR COLLECTIVE WORKING AND DELIVERY

- We recognise the importance of public and private partnership to deliver the Big Economic Plan and our collective ambitions around net zero and the climate.
- That partnership should involve businesses, the Council, Higher and Further Education, the NHS, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. The work of the partnership and appointments to its governance should be open and transparent with a clear and focussed terms of reference.
- We are clear about the importance of meaningful youth engagement.
- A new Board or leadership group will build on and consolidate existing governance and delivery models and will carry out genuine engagement with other groups and networks.
- The Board will focus on priority outcomes over the year with responsibilities distributed across the partnership, and will make a difference through collective agency, resources and levers.
- An early priority will be to further develop the trajectories we expect for our key metrics (overleaf)

MONITORING PROGRESS

We will monitor progress against delivering our Big Economic Plan and use metrics to support decision making and enable different options to be considered. We are not setting hard targets at this point, given the deep uncertainty about the wider performance of the UK economy. We will put in place a set of core outcome measures to monitor the impact of our Plan, as well as a set of wider metrics, both of which reflecting the six capitals used as a framework in this strategy. We will first benchmark our performance against appropriate comparators regionally and nationally and monitor progress as we implement our Delivery Plan.

CAPITAL	CORE OUTCOME MEASURES	METRICS
PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earnings (including gender and age differentials) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills levels Young people in education, employment or training Working age population (and growth) Over-50s employment rate
COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs earning above Real Living Wage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anchor institution spend within county
ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon footprint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phosphate levels in River Lugg and River Wye Transport emissions Properties with an EPC rating A-C
ENTERPRISE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productivity per hour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business birth rate Start-up space Innovate UK grants awarded/patents High growth businesses per 1,000 businesses
INFRASTRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced congestion and journey times into Hereford Active travel connectivity to town centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment land delivered Housing completions and type Public transport connectivity to town centres Digital connectivity (take up and speed)
INVESTMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall levels of inward and business investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inward investment Number of businesses locating in the county Public sector investment

The Herefordshire Big Economic Plan has been developed by the Herefordshire Sustainable Growth Strategy Board working with a wide range of partners from across the county



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