The Big Economic Delivery Plan

Developed on behalf of Herefordshire Council

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1 Executive Summary

The Big Economic Delivery Plan provides a focused, medium-term roadmap to deliver the long-term ambitions set out in Herefordshire's Big Economic Plan (BEP). The BEP, launched in 2023, establishes the 2050 vision for Herefordshire as a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable rural economy. This Delivery Plan translates that vision into prioritised, actionable steps for the next three years and reflects the changes necessary to accommodate the increased mandated housing targets.

Strategic Context

The Plan is shaped by a rapidly changing national environment, including:

- A new UK Industrial Strategy prioritising high growth sectors
- Increasing emphasis on devolution and locally led growth funding
- Significantly higher housing delivery requirements
- Growing focus on skills, economic inactivity, and workforce participation
- The need for improved infrastructure, energy, and digital connectivity, particularly in rural areas

These dynamics present opportunities for Herefordshire and have been the focus for sustained growth.

Vision and Delivery Framework

The Delivery Plan focusses on a smaller number of high-impact actions that are locally led, whilst recognising the constraints on resources, particularly the end of UK Shared Prosperity Funding in 2026.

To improve focus and accountability, the plan consolidates previous priorities into four delivery themes:

1. **Place** – Creating attractive, sustainable places through housing, regeneration, and cultural investment.
2. **People and Communities** – Building a skilled, inclusive workforce aligned to future economic needs.
3. **Business Growth** – Supporting innovation, investment, and expansion of high-value sectors.
4. **Infrastructure** – Delivering transport, digital, and energy systems that enable growth.

These are underpinned by cross-cutting principles of sustainability, partnership working, and maximising investment.

Key Priorities and Actions

Across the four themes, the plan identifies a focused set of priority interventions:

- **Place**: Accelerating housing delivery, implementing the Hereford City Masterplan, enhancing cultural assets (e.g. museum redevelopment), and addressing environmental constraints such as nutrient neutrality.
- **People and Communities**: Developing a new Employment and Skills Strategy, strengthening local skills pathways (including apprenticeships and youth support), and promoting digital and AI skills adoption.
- **Business Growth**: Expanding strategic employment sites (e.g. Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park), attracting inward investment, supporting agri-tech and high-tech sectors, and enabling businesses to scale through innovation.
- **Infrastructure**: Progressing major projects such as the Western Growth Corridor and Transport Hub, improving rail and bus connectivity, expanding EV charging, and enhancing digital and energy infrastructure.

Delivery and Governance

Implementation will begin immediately and strong collaboration with partners overseen by the Economy and Place Board with key partnerships such as the Skills Board, and Business Growth Board leading the delivery of the actions.

Funding and Investment

The plan highlights the importance of leveraging a mix of local resources, national programmes, and emerging devolved funding opportunities. As traditional funding streams end, future delivery will increasingly depend on attracting private investment, engaging with new national institutions, and funding mechanisms.

Conclusion

The Big Economic Delivery Plan sets out a clear, realistic, and partnership-driven programme for the next three years. By focusing on a small number of strategic priorities across place, people, business, and infrastructure, it aims to unlock sustainable economic growth, improve living standards, and position Herefordshire as a leading rural economy on the path to its 2050 vision.

The Plan on a Page

Delivering the 2050 Herefordshire Vision:

A vibrant, healthy, zero-carbon, and inclusive place to live, work, study and visit at all stages of life

Owned and overseen by the Herefordshire Economy and Place Board

Place: *Thriving places, with growth to meet housing demand while protecting our natural environment*

Flagship action: Cement Hereford's status as a cultural and visitor attraction centre, accelerating delivery of the Hereford Museum and Shirehall and developing a Cultural Strategy to boost local Creative Industries

- Finalise the Local Plan and Infrastructure Strategy
- Implement the Hereford City Masterplan
- Bring forward Merton Meadow and Essex Arms development schemes
- Review process for street pavement licensing and regulatory requirements
- Support developers to bring forward private phosphate mitigation schemes
- Implement the Pride in Place Programme for Hereford South West

People and Communities: *A growing, skilled and flourishing population working effectively together to solve challenges*

Delivery partner: Skills Board

Flagship action: Develop and implement an Employment and Skills Strategy, and deepen local collaboration with our local partners, including colleges, NMITE and training providers, with delivery through the Skills Board

- Establish Herefordshire as a Centre for Excellence in a local economic capability
- Modernise pathways to work for young people through apprenticeships
- Prioritise AI and digital upskilling for all generations
- Support older workers to remain in the workforce through partner working
- Review usage of planning gain (S106) and procurement levers to align with skills needs

Business Growth: *Growing and innovative businesses increasing investment, productivity and prosperity for residents*

Delivery partner: Business Growth Board

Flagship action: Deliver and attract investment into Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park, concluding construction and developing a Placement Strategy to attract firms in high-value, high-growth sectors like agri-technology

- Develop our local inward investment offer and maximise the value of the Enterprise Zone
- Support the growth of Agri-Tech businesses through innovation adoption programmes
- Secure Government Investment in Defence & Security
- Support Herefordshire's businesses to scale up, including through AI activities

Infrastructure: *Reliable and resilient infrastructure supporting economic growth and investment across our county*

Flagship action: Progress delivery of the Western Growth Corridor; commencing work on Bypass Phase 1, and securing funding for subsequent phases, unlocking of substantial additional housing growth through the Local Plan

- Support delivery of the Midlands Rail Hub, doubling Hereford to Worcester frequency
- Deliver Electric Vehicle charging facilities across the county
- Mobilise partners to improve energy access and digital connectivity in rural areas
- Deliver BSIP Funding and review public transport access to employment opportunities
- Complete construction of the Hereford Transport Hub

Underpinned by our delivery principles: Sustainability, investment and partnership working

2 Foreword

[placeholder suggested to be a joint statement by Economy and Place Board]

Suggested content:

- Vision for Herefordshire and the purpose of the Big Economic Plan
- Changing national context
- Commitment to maintaining momentum behind the plan, including with partners

[This section will highlight select priority actions, to be agreed with input from Board members, for example:

We will develop our physical and digital infrastructure, making Herefordshire a better place to live, to work, and to start and grow a business. ***Central to this will be progressing the Hereford Western Growth Corridor****. In three years, we will have completed construction of the first phase of the bypass, linking the A49 and A465 south of Hereford. We will develop a Western Growth Corridor Masterplan, setting out our longer-term proposition to further enhance Hereford's infrastructure requirements, which will unlock crucial housing growth in the city.*

We will enrich our rural and urban places, with sustainable growth that meets housing demand, while protecting our rich natural environment. ***Central to this will be refining and promoting our cultural offerings.*** *In three years, we will have delivered our redeveloped Hereford Museum & Art Gallery, cementing our status as a place where people want to visit.*

We will prioritise our people and communities, developing pathways for our young people and meeting the needs of workers of all ages. ***Central to this will be developing our Skills Strategy, shaped by partners in the Skills Board.***

We will support all businesses with the tools they need to grow, and we will make Herefordshire an attractive place for investment. ***Central to this will be delivering the Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park.*** *In three years, we will have completed construction of the first phase, filling plots with businesses in our key growth sectors, and creating jobs for local people. We will continue to develop our overarching inward investment offer, drawing on our unique strengths in cyber, defence and security and agrifood.]*

3 Introduction and context

The Big Economic Plan sets our long-term aspiration for Herefordshire; this document is the route map to get us there. The Herefordshire Big Economic Plan (BEP) launched in 2023 and sets out a vision for Herefordshire as an exemplar 21st century rural economy.

In the drafting of the Big Economic Plan, we collected evidence and drew on substantial engagement from a wide variety of stakeholders to set priorities for the county up until 2050. The high volume of actions within the original BEP requires a clearly sequenced and quantified delivery plan. We now need to translate the long-term strategy into prioritised delivery – what do we need to do first to unlock greatest positive impact for our people, businesses and places?

The purpose and objectives of this document

This document sets out a focused delivery plan. It functions as a companion document to the Big Economic Plan, setting out actions for the next 3 years under four themes of Infrastructure, People, Business, and Place.

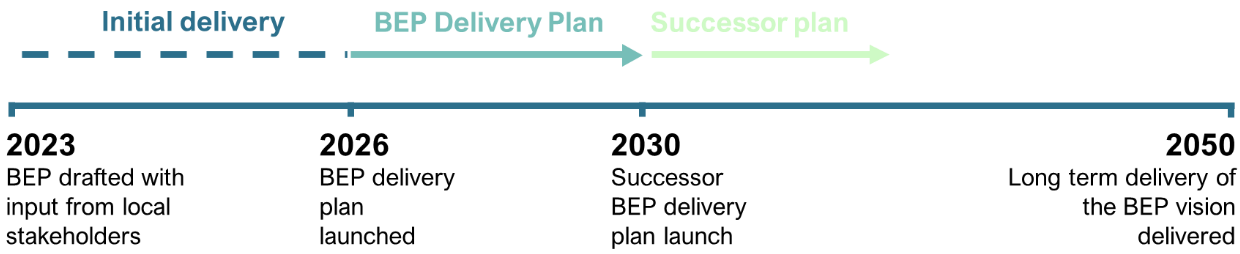
Figure 1. Function of the Big Economic Delivery Plan

This is…	It is not…
• A medium-term delivery plan for the Big Economic Plan – focused on the next 3 years • Small number of priorities and actions – that Herefordshire can own, partner and influence • Mindful of available resource (e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Funding ending in 2026), and existing levers available at the local level	• A full reworking of the Big Economic Plan • A comprehensive new evidence base • A detailed delivery plan for the activities of the Skills Board (although it will set broad priorities)

Timing and scope of plan

This plan will operate over the next three years, aligned with Herefordshire's collaborative governance. It will utilise current and future funding resources, as set out in the final chapter of this delivery plan, and is designed to be evaluated and refreshed on a rolling basis.

Figure 2. Delivery of the Herefordshire BEP timeline



Policy and delivery environment update

We designed the BEP to be agile to respond to the changing economic and policy context. This is particularly important for this delivery plan. The national policy environment has seen significant development since the launch of the BEP, with implications for delivery.

Sectors prioritised through UK Industrial Strategy

The government has adopted a new Industrial Strategy, and the Defence Industrial Strategy as an engine for growth. The county is well placed to benefit from both of these strategies through our existing strengths in defence, cyber, advanced manufacturing, autonomous systems and innovation linked to NMITE.

An expanded role for UK Public Financial Institutions

A significant proportion of this additional capital is being routed through Public Financial Institutions such as the National Wealth Fund or the Office for Investment, which are set to play a central role in government efforts to crowd in private finance.

Devolution an increasingly significant lever for places

National policy has also continued to move towards deeper devolution, expanding powers and funding. With UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) ending after the 2025/26 financial year, replacement and additional funding streams (e.g., Local Growth Fund) are likely to be channelled through mayoral authorities; an opportunity and a challenge for Herefordshire.

Housing delivery a pressing short-term priority

Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework increased Herefordshire’s housing requirement from 16k new homes to 27.5k over twenty years. Delivering housing for local people and to attract more skilled workers is a core consideration in our growth plans.

New routes to action on economic inactivity and skills

On skills, national policy has centred on reducing economic inactivity, with a particular emphasis on young people. The Youth Guarantee trailblazer and the expansion of Connect to Work sit within the wider Get Britain Working plan, which expects places to develop a local response to rising NEET rates and worklessness, with a strong focus on devolved delivery.

Infrastructure and energy policy co-ordination vehicles

New actors in the infrastructure and energy landscape include the new National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority, Great British Energy, and grid investment. Herefordshire continues to work with Midlands Connect on rail connectivity; connectivity (including grid and digital) is vital for productivity growth in rural areas.

Herefordshire: Place and Economy

Herefordshire is a predominately rural county, with the majority of the population living within a few urban centres – the market towns of **Kington**, **Leominster**, **Bromyard**, **Ledbury** and **Ross-on-Wye**, and the city of **Hereford**. As an economy, it looks in several directions, as part of the Marshes spanning the border into **Wales** and northwards into **Shropshire**, in close proximity to the major cities of **Cardiff** and **Bristol** to the South, with strong economic ties to **Worcestershire**, **Gloucestershire** and the **West Midlands** to the West.

Figure 3. Herefordshire's boundaries, market towns, and neighbours

Although the rural economy plays an essential role in Herefordshire's prosperity and represents a major specialism, many residents work in other sectors; **Manufacturing** makes up around a fifth of the local economy as measured through GVA, over twice the share across the UK, alongside key emerging specialisms in Industrial Strategy sectors like **Digital and Technologies**, **Creative Industries** and **Professional and Business Services**.

4 Our four delivery themes

We are committed to delivering the best for Herefordshire, positioning the county as the rural exemplar economy and securing the resource needed to deliver our ambitions. The vision of the Big Economic Plan remains the active guiding ambition of this delivery plan:

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 Herefordshire Big Economic Plan, 2023

In delivering against this long-term vision, reflections from governance partners and stakeholders during the drafting of this document highlighted the relatively diffused nature of objectives against the six capitals framework that is set out in the Big Economic Plan. While significant progress has been made against these objectives (as set out in brief in Annex II to this document), the number of actions and themes made it challenging to identify clear owners, resources, and lines of accountability against the actions, and to understand the interdependencies between elements of the plan.

We want to simplify this approach as we take a targeted approach to delivery. This delivery plan therefore condenses down the six capitals into four delivery themes. These will form the basis for future Herefordshire council and Board progress monitoring, reporting and evaluation, to support the delivery of the overarching 2050 Herefordshire vision. The four themes are as shown below.

Figure 4. Diagrammatic overview of the four delivery themes

Overarching delivery principles: Sustainability, investment and partnership working, to deliver the 2050 Herefordshire Vision			
Place	**People and Communities**	**Business Growth**	**Infrastructure**
Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: Thriving places, with growth to meet housing demand while protecting our natural environment	*Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: A growing, skilled and flourishing population working effectively together to solve challenges*	*Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: Growing and innovative businesses increasing investment, productivity and prosperity for residents*	*Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: Reliable and resilient infrastructure supporting economic growth and investment across our county*

Our cross-cutting delivery principles – of ensuring sustainability, maximising investment and delivering through partnership working – will inform all that we do through the plan, ensuring that we retain a focus on the environment and collaboration as was at the heart of the BEP.

The following pages set out: updated economic statistics; strategic priorities that will be addressed through use of current and future funding resources; and the actions that will be delivered over the next three years.

Delivering in Place

House price-to-earnings ratio is high at 8.8 (vs 7.7 nationally), with housing targets recently increased by around 70% from 16,100 to 27,260 homes

A strong cultural and heritage offer supports high-value tourism, with visitor spend around £1,500 per head compared to £1,000 across the West Midlands.

Phosphate pollution in the Wye and Lugg is a binding planning constraint, with development in affected catchments required to demonstrate nutrient neutrality

This theme focuses on the whole place offer and how it can be strengthened through planning, housing, regeneration, and targeted investment. It is not intended to operate as a standalone cultural strategy or to duplicate the work of specialist cultural partners. Instead, it brings together activity across housing, public realm, culture, and neighbourhood regeneration to focus on improving how places function and feel, ensuring that growth is accompanied by high-quality environments and stronger communities.

Local evidence highlights persistent housing affordability challenges in Herefordshire, reflected in a high house price to earnings ratio and a continuing need for affordable homes. The revised national standard method for mandatory targets places greater weight on affordability, resulting in a substantial uplift in Herefordshire's housing targets relative to historic delivery rates. The formula does not reflect past delivery performance, and delivery at this scale is further constrained by nutrient neutrality requirements.

Herefordshire benefits from a high quality of place, underpinned by a strong cultural and heritage offer. Ongoing investment in the Shirehall and the redevelopment of Hereford Museum and Art Gallery will further enrich this offer, strengthening the role of the city centre as a civic and cultural hub. Likewise, Pride in Place funding for the Hereford South West neighbourhood provides a focused opportunity to build on these assets, supporting neighbourhood-level improvements and extending the benefits of place-based investment more widely.

In this delivery plan we will prioritise delivering new housing in attractive, thriving, well-connected places, while protecting the natural environment

1. ***Herefordshire-led delivery*: Enhancing our distinctive urban and market-town centres through planning, housing and public transport levers**
2. ***Collaborative delivery with partners*: Supporting culture-led attractive places and communities (both to live and to visit) with a targeted mobilisation programme**
3. ***National asks and influencing*: Overcoming policy and logistical barriers to unlock stalled housing within the county**

We will prioritise the following actions:

1. Cement Hereford's status as a cultural and visitor attraction centre

Planned opening of the Shirehall Library and learning centre, and opening of the regenerated Hereford Museum and Art Gallery, and delivering a Cultural Strategy to support the wider growth of the Creative Industries

2. Finalise the Local Plan and Infrastructure Strategy

Delivering a new local plan that responds to housing targets and wider policy shifts in Herefordshire and nationally, delivering growth in Hereford and in our market towns

3. Implement the Hereford City Masterplan

Commencing implementation building on extensive community engagement to shape the long-term future of the city

4. Bring forward Merton Meadow and Essex Arms development schemes

Accelerating urban developments, ensuring sustainability and practicality through flood alleviation schemes and facilities that cater for new and existing residents

5. Review process for street pavement licensing and regulatory requirements on high street businesses

Supporting our local businesses by minimising barriers to growth and investment

6. Support the development of phosphate mitigation schemes to unlock essential housing growth

Building on phosphate, BNG and other credit schemes to enable sustainable housing and infrastructure development across the county while meeting environmental commitments

7. Implement the Pride in Place programme for Hereford South West

Effective delivery of government Pride in Place funding, into projects supported by local residents and community stakeholders

Delivering for our People and Communities

The labour market is strong, with economic activity and jobs density both better than nationally. The retired population is nearly double the national share.

Skills are strongest at mid-levels, with 69% qualified to A-level and low levels of no qualifications (3%), fewer are qualified to degree level or above than nationally

Pay is relatively low, with people working in the county earning less than commuters living in it (£697 vs £713 per week), and both below the national average (£767)

The focus of this theme is on how skills, employment, and workforce development connect to wider economic growth and delivery priorities, and how we meet our collective ambition for a child friendly Herefordshire. While detailed, domain-specific interventions will be set out through the forthcoming Herefordshire Skills Strategy, this theme concentrates on building effective partnerships, shaping and aligning programmes, and ensuring that skills activity is integrated with housing, infrastructure, and sector growth ambitions across the BEP.

Local evidence points to a relatively tight labour market in Herefordshire, which is notable given the county's older age profile and comparatively large retired population. Employment levels remain strong, but average wages are lower than in many comparator areas, reflecting a job mix weighted towards lower-paid sectors. Looking ahead, planned housing and infrastructure growth is expected to increase demand for construction and related trades, while ongoing technological change will continue to shift skills requirements across the economy, for example digital and green skills.

At the same time, the local policy and funding context is tightening. The conclusion of UKSPF-funded programmes will reduce the range of flexible, locally tailored interventions available to respond to labour market and skills challenges. Against this backdrop, the continued growth of the New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE) represents a significant opportunity to strengthen local skills pathways, including new provision such as its autonomous systems course developed in partnership with the British Army. Together, these factors underline the importance of targeted coordination across skills, employment, and growth activity.

In this delivery plan we will prioritise attracting and retaining the skilled workers the county needs in future-facing jobs

1. ***Herefordshire-led delivery*: Workforce development and attraction aligned with growth priorities**
2. ***Collaborative delivery with partners*: Developing comprehensive and well-understood skills pathways**
3. ***National asks and influencing:* Shaping of national and sub-regional skills programmes**

We will prioritise the following actions:

1. Develop and implement an Employment and Skills Strategy, and deepen local collaboration through the Skills Board

Strengthening our local skills capacity, and supporting businesses with workforce planning through the Growth Hub, while reviewing opportunities to align sub-regional skills funding with the county's priorities

2. Establish Herefordshire as a Centre for Excellence in a local economic capability

Review specialisms and opportunities in technical skills or the development of a flagship innovation asset for the county

***3.* Modernise pathways to work for young people through apprenticeships and the Youth Employment Hub, in meeting our ambition for a child friendly Herefordshire**

Supporting the Youth Employment Hub, promoting apprenticeships, and developing comprehensive skills pathways for our young people

4. Prioritise AI and digital upskilling for all generations

Push to promote digital skills, linking to the observed adoption of AI by Herefordshire businesses

5. Support older workers to remain in the workforce through partner working

Work with anchor employers through business growth board to review opportunities for older workers

6. Review usage of planning gain (S106), procurement levers and strategies to align with skills needs

Ensuring that communities benefit from new developments, with local workforces adequately equipped to support our housing and infrastructure ambitions and construction requirements

Delivering on Business Growth

Business birth and death rates are below the national average (9.5% and 8.8% vs 10.4% and 10.3%), while the share of high-growth firms is higher (5.0% vs 4.2%)

Manufacturing is a strength and accounts for 15% of employment (vs 8% nationally). That said, overall, the county's productivity is lower than nationally

The enterprise base is being reinforced through anchor sites, including Skylon Park, the Shell Store, and the developing Enterprise Park at Ross-on-Wye

This theme focuses on the enabling conditions for growth that the county can shape – bringing forward and filling employment land, supporting firms to innovate and adopt new technologies, and building a compelling investment proposition that attracts capital and anchors growth sectors locally.

Herefordshire's business base broadly reflects national patterns, though it is slightly less dynamic overall. This is offset by a marginally higher share of high-growth firms, indicating pockets of strong performance within the local economy. Manufacturing remains a particular strength for a predominantly rural county, providing relatively high-value employment, although headline productivity levels remain below the national average.

Since publication of the BEP, there has been significant activity. New employment land is coming on stream, including the commencement of construction at the Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park. To support the take-up of these sites and strengthen the county's growth proposition, the council is developing its inward investment function, with a dedicated lead in place and a new investment prospectus under development.

In this delivery plan we will prioritise stimulating the growth of more higher value jobs in growing businesses

1. ***Herefordshire-led delivery*: Increased investment in growth sectors through quality employment sites**
2. ***Collaborative delivery with partners*: Championing adoption of new productivity-increasing technologies for businesses within Herefordshire**
3. ***National asks and influencing*: Building an overarching inward investment narrative, sector and innovation-led growth and economic niche for Herefordshire within the wider region**

We will prioritise the following actions:

1. **Attract and deliver investment into Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park**

Developing the enterprise park, creating jobs for residents, including in sectors like Agri-food and agri-tech, and unlocking greater investment in our market towns

2. Further develop our local inward investment offer and capacity and maximise value of the Enterprise Zone

Further enhance the delivery of our inward investment programme, building a regional economic narrative and case for investment for Herefordshire. We will maximise the value the Hereford EZ and Ross Enterprise Park by targeting growth in high-value sectors, while supporting additional investment levers such as the hotel and conferencing proposition

3. Support the growth of Agri-Tech businesses through innovation adoption programmes

Capitalising on local strengths in automation and robotics within the agri-food and agri-tech sector, reviewing and securing wider funding opportunities, and working with neighbouring places and higher education institutions.

4. Secure Government investment in Defence & Security

Targeted promotion and influencing to highlight and seek further investment in the county's value in the sector, and promoting Defence and Security within key development and policy forums (e.g., UKREiiF)

5. **Support Herefordshire's businesses to scale up – such as through AI activities – through the continued delivery of business growth support**

Review existing AI uptake within Herefordshire's businesses and develop programmes of support based on business growth needs and opportunities

Delivering on Infrastructure

Car access is high (86% of properties vs 77% nationally), congestion remains a constraint, with the A49 among the slowest 20% of trunk roads

Full-fibre coverage is high at 81.5%, 5G remains limited at 66%, among the lowest nationally

Public transport travel times to employment are long (21.5 minutes vs 11.5 nationally), with direct but slow inter-city rail links

The focus of this theme is on the areas where Herefordshire Council and its partners can directly deliver, co-ordinate delivery, or exert influence. It covers transport connectivity, digital infrastructure, and energy and charging infrastructure that enable growth and support place-based development. Infrastructure that sits wholly outside local influence – including nationally-determined rail investment decisions or utilities investment beyond engagement and advocacy – is referenced where relevant but is not treated as a core delivery responsibility.

Local evidence highlights structural constraints for Herefordshire. Weak public transport provision and relatively slow inter-regional rail links reinforce high car dependency, contributing to congestion pressures, particularly in and around Hereford and along key corridors such as the A49. The commencement of the Hereford Bypass Phase 1 by the end of 2026 will start to address infrastructure constraints, along with developing the phase 2 business case and seeking government and developer investment as part of the Hereford Western Growth Corridor.

There have been other areas of progress since publication of the BEP; for example, investment through Fastershire has driven a marked improvement in fixed broadband coverage across much of the county, although gaps in mobile and 5G connectivity persist. The Hereford Transport Hub is under development, providing a focal point for improving public transport connectivity and integration. At a wider scale, progression of the Midlands Rail Hub has the potential, over time, to unlock additional capacity and improve service reliability on routes serving Herefordshire.

In this delivery plan we will prioritise unlocking room for economic growth over coming decades by progressing major infrastructure projects

1. ***Herefordshire-led delivery*: Delivering the foundational economic infrastructure needed for future growth**
2. ***Collaborative delivery with partners*: Rolling out new digital connectivity and energy infrastructure to Herefordshire's places**
3. ***National asks and influencing*: Improving regional rail connectivity into Herefordshire from beyond the region**

We will prioritise the following actions:

1. Progress delivery of the Western Growth Corridor; commencing work on Bypass Phase 1, and securing funding for subsequent phases

Beginning to implement phase one of the project, and finalising business cases to secure funding for the second phase

2. Support delivery of enhanced rail services such as double frequency between Hereford and Worcester

Supporting rail enhancements to better connect Herefordshire with its neighbours (within both England and Wales), and lobby to ensure prioritisation of Herefordshire components as part of the committed post-HS2 funding.

3. Deliver EV charging facilities across the county

Promoting private-led delivery of car park charging points, alongside a council-led rollout of on-street charging points, backed by LEVI funding

4. Mobilise partners to improve energy access and digital connectivity in rural areas, prioritising business growth constraints

Working with NGED and energy partners to ensure awareness of Herefordshire's grid requirements, and with digital partners to promote 5G and connectivity infrastructure in rural areas, with the potential to act as business hubs

5. Deliver Bus Services Improvement Plan Funding and review public transport access to local employment and skills opportunities

Enhancing connectivity to our major education, skills and employment centres, and throughout our rural places and market towns

6. Complete construction of the Hereford Transport Hub

Finalising construction of the Hereford Transport Hub, improving public transport connectivity to enable future growth, and aligning activities with Bus Service Improvement Plan resources

5 Next steps and delivery principles

With the publication of this plan, we will move immediately to delivery. Project leads have been identified across the council and each is building project plans to ensure that work progresses at pace. Progress will be overseen by Elected Members and the relevant Boards and KPIs will be developed related to projects. We will commit to annual progress updates that set out progress against projects as well as an update on the economic data (mindful that this has a time lag).

We will deliver through the three delivery principles of this document: partnership working, maximising investment, and ensuring long-term sustainability. These cross-cutting delivery principles are outlined in brief below.

1) Ensuring long-term sustainability in all that we do through delivery of the Plan

Sustainability is a key component of the overarching vision for the Big Economic Plan's Vision and is an essential delivery principle for all four of our themes. Through this plan, Herefordshire Council will commit to embedding sustainable growth as much as possible within all of our delivery priorities and actions. The Economy and Place Board will specifically monitor how sustainability is being achieved across the four delivery themes as part of quarterly reporting to ensure the cross cutting theme is fully embedded. The Board will ensure alignment to and support the implementation of the Environmental Improvement Plans.

Sustainable growth is also a potential strong route for growth and skilled work, rewarding work for Herefordshire; through the growth of the green economy, through housing retrofit, through renewable energy, and through grid decarbonisation and decentralisation. We will capitalise on these opportunities to generate good jobs for Herefordshire residents and explore the potential use of our levers and funding to grow nascent innovative economic clusters and specialisms within and beyond Herefordshire's borders.

2) Partnership working: the role of collaborative governance boards in delivery

Herefordshire Council, which has led the development of this plan, is part of the wider place strategic leadership, and the input and support of key partners from the private, public and third sectors will be essential to delivering the outcomes highlighted.

Collaborative place governance boards have been consulted in the development of this plan, and they will play an essential role in its delivery, as outlined below:

- The **Economy and Place Board** will play a key role in holding partners to account and overseeing the delivery and implementation of the Plan.
- The **Skills Board** will be a key partner in delivering the People and Communities theme, and partners on the board will play a significant role in delivery.
- The **Business Growth Board** will be a key partner in delivering the Business Growth theme.

We will also work with other strategic boards who have a role in delivery at a project and theme level, including the **Herefordshire Environment Board** , who will input and shape priorities across the Delivery Plan, working through and alongside the Economy and Place Board

3) Maximising investment through the Big Economic Delivery Plan

Funding and finance will be an essential component of delivery against the objectives in each theme. To date UK Shared Prosperity Fund has supported much of Herefordshire's initial delivery, but government has announced that this will end in 2026.

Based on the review of funding opportunities (included in Annex I), there are levers with flexibility, which will be available over the lifetime of this Big Economic Delivery Plan:

- **Local resources:** Locally controlled and influenced resources will be directed to support delivery. These will include Connect to Work, the Local Skills Improvement Plan process, and other levers available to local actors.
- **National partnerships:** In the medium-term, national partnerships with agencies and UK investment institutions could provide an opportunity to leverage in additional resource.
- **Devolution:** The majority of new funding available through national Government is directed through MSAs and Local Growth Plans. Therefore, in the longer term, future funding opportunities are likely to be dependent on progression of collaboration mechanisms through the devolution process.

Over the lifetime of this plan, it should be expected that additional levers will become available. Using the priorities of this delivery plan to align new resources as they are made available will ensure long-term delivery towards the policy objectives and outcomes highlighted in the Big Economic Plan.

Annex I: Funding opportunities review

This short review summarises some key funding opportunities for delivery of the Big Economic Plan, and highlights some of the potential relevance for our four delivery themes.

	National Housing Bank*: Place, Infrastructure*
Description	Launched in 2025 as a publicly owned subsidiary of Homes England, the bank is intended to provide long-term, flexible finance to accelerate housing delivery by unlocking private investment and addressing viability and infrastructure constraints on complex sites.
Implication	The Bank represents a high-impact funding opportunity with strong alignment to the BEP. In Herefordshire, the clearest potential fit is in supporting the delivery of the Western Growth Corridor, where housing growth is closely linked to the delivery of the Southern Relief Road and associated infrastructure.
	Institutional investors: *Business Growth, Infrastructure, Place*
Description	The UK institutional investment landscape has shifted significantly in recent years. At present, the domestic market for 'core+' investment, offering inflation + 3-4% returns, is limited. Instead, appetite tends to shift between low-risk, inflation-matching assets and higher-return, value-add or opportunistic strategies.
Implication	For local government, this means that partnership opportunities increasingly lie with Local Government Pension Scheme funds, specialist impact or infrastructure funds, and international investors rather than traditional UK pensions. Partnerships also bring private-sector expertise, capabilities, and opportunities to share risk, while enabling councils to leverage their land, planning powers, and convening role to attract investment, although this may be a longer-term commitment.
	Devolved funding resources: *Business Growth, Infrastructure, People and Communities, Place*
Description	Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) can draw on a wide set of funding routes, combining locally controlled fundraising. Government is expanding these mayoral-only funding routes with the Budget announcing a new £500m Mayoral Revolving Growth Fund for MSAs in the North and Midlands with an integrated settlement.
Implication	Devolved funding routes represent a high-impact and strongly aligned pathway for delivering the BEP, offering growing local discretion to combine fiscal levers, investment powers, and multi-year settlements. While this creates significant long-term opportunity, Herefordshire is at an early stage in its devolution journey.
	Modern Industrial Strategy: *Business Growth*

Descr	The Government has announced a set of funding routes to support delivery of the Modern Industrial Strategy and its priority sector growth objectives.
Implication	In practice, much of this funding will be routed through MSAs. However, where Herefordshire businesses are able to engage, the scale and potential impact of the support is significant. In advanced manufacturing, for example, the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan makes up to £4.3 billion available nationally, presenting material opportunities for local manufacturers to access investment, innovation, and productivity-enhancing support through competitive routes and partnerships.
	Programmatic funds: *Business Growth, People and Communities*
Description	A further set of funding routes comes through nationally designed, programme-specific allocations advanced to local authorities and partners, including Growth Hub funding, Connect to Work, and Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) funding. These streams vary in focus but each operates as a distinct funding track with defined objectives, eligibility, and delivery requirements.
Implication	Collectively, they are important components of the local funding mix and can support meaningful activity in their own right; however, their overall impact is typically constrained by relatively modest sums, and alignment with the BEP can be limited by relatively low local discretion.
	Pride in Place Fund: *Place, People and Communities*
Descript	Pride in Place is a Government funding programme designed to support locally led regeneration in specific neighbourhoods, with a focus on improving the quality of place, strengthening community assets, and enhancing local pride.
Implication	Similar to the programmatic funding above, there is relatively limited potential for alignment with the BEP's priorities. However, for 'Hereford South West', Pride in Place will unlock a substantial quantum of funding for a small geography, where BEP actions linked to the Place theme can augment funding delivery.

Annex II: Progress Update on the Big Economic Plan

Progress update

The BEP set out priorities through a 'six capitals' framework. The Council has reviewed relevant 2024-25 Council and partner activity since the BEP was adopted, as set out below. Across the BEP, the majority of target outcomes have seen some degree of delivery progress to date, including activity arising from actions and opportunities that were not anticipated at the time the BEP was drafted. There have been positive actions within all of the six capitals; progress has been stronger notably in the People themes (with the delivery of the UKSPF programmes), in Enterprise (with the delivery of key employment land expansion and investment projects) and in Investment (with the appointment of dedicated investment management capacity).

People

- Establishment of Skills Board and associated activity
- Delivery of UKSPF skills and wider programmes (Get Britain Working / Connect to Work)
- Establishment of Youth Employment Hub and apprenticeship awards
- Ongoing regeneration of the Shirehall Community Hub

Community and partnerships

- Establishment of Economy and Place Board and the Charities as Business Forum
- UKSPF funding committed to local capacity building
- LVEP, cultural partnership
- Stronger Towns outcomes

Environment and climate change

- Delivery of wetland schemes at Luston, Tarrington and Dilwyn
- Delivery of the new Low Carbon Technology Centre

Enterprise

- Establishment of the Business Growth Board
- Hereford Enterprise Zone expansion, Ross Enterprise Park expansion, and military sector growth
- Cultural regeneration programmes: Hereford Museum and Art Gallery Leominster HAZ
- Economic Development Programme progressing from EZ funds
- UKSPF delivery of R&D and innovation schemes
- Development of the Defence Prospectus and Defence/Cyber Sector Forum

Infrastructure

- Delivery of the Hereford Transport Hub (LUF funding)
- Progression of the case for the Western Bypass

Investment

- Appointment of an Inward Investment Manager and development of a new prospectus
- Continued business investment in the Hereford Enterprise Zone
- Recent Pride in Place funding for South West Hereford