

Energising Dorset

Economic Prospectus - Growth Strategy
2025 - 2030



Dorset
Council

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Introduction – Our Ambition

Dorset is a dynamic and vibrant county.

Our business base is resilient, expanding and full of entrepreneurial spirit. There are significant investment opportunities in a county that is already forward-thinking and ambitious.

We have the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the sovereign security of the UK through the generation of clean energy, the development and manufacture of defence related capabilities, and the production of high-quality food and drink.

We can capitalise on our natural landscape and geography whether through our world class tourism offer, or through the use of natural resources to generate power or capture carbon emissions.

However, many of our strengths are hidden in plain sight. To make the most of these we need to address our inter-related challenges of high house prices, an aging population and low productivity growth. The aim of setting out our Growth Strategy is to realise the full economic potential of the county through a coordinated plan that addresses these challenges and is at the same time dynamic but coherent and, whilst ambitious, is persuasive, achievable and sustainable.

This strategy identifies the ambitions and intentions of a range of stakeholders and partners, to help make Dorset an even better place for business through working together and being ambitious for growth. This is just the start. We aim to be aspirational and forward thinking, to look beyond what is currently planned, identify new opportunities and build a brighter future.

We look forward to working with you to deliver this Growth Strategy for Dorset.

Leader / Richard signature



Working together, Ambitious for Dorset: a new, focused approach

Our approach will be unique and innovative. We're excited to explore new strategies and make a positive impact. Let's embrace this opportunity to stand out and achieve great results together.

We are ambitious in delivering economic change by focusing on large scale and strategic projects that represent the best prospect for transforming the Dorset economy.

Underpinning all this will be a relentless focus on delivering new, highly paid jobs for the Dorset economy. These jobs will help address the critical challenges in housing affordability, social mobility, skills availability, and low productivity.

This Growth Strategy sets out how Dorset Council will work to grow our economy. It focuses on a series of key opportunities that will contribute to the growth of the county and shows that Dorset is:

1. Ambitious for Clean Energy
2. Ambitious for Innovation
3. Ambitious Regeneration for Weymouth and Portland
4. Ambitious for Jobs
5. Ambitious for University and Skills
6. Ambitious for Market Towns and Tourism

It sets out how the public sector, in an enablement role, can create the conditions to encourage economic growth but also focuses on where private sector investment can drive long term structural change.

Our Growth Strategy has four key roles:

1. to support the growth of the Dorset economy by identifying priority projects:
2. to attract investment to Dorset and raise our profile as an investment location:
3. to facilitate the generation of high value and highly skilled jobs:
4. to provide Dorset with clear priorities for negotiations with government and local / regional partners.

This strategy showcases investment projects throughout the county, poised to attract over £28 billion in private sector investment. These opportunities leverage Dorset's economic strengths, promising long-term, sustainable, and well-paid jobs. This initiative will create a lasting legacy, transforming the county's image positively.



The Growth Strategy marks the commencement of our exciting project, showcasing that Dorset is thriving and ready for business. By leveraging our shared strengths and addressing common challenges with neighbouring areas, this strategy will foster closer collaboration and drive forward our devolution goals. We want people to be excited about the county, to invest in our future, and to contribute to what we have to offer.

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Ambitious for Clean Energy

A green growth revolution is underway which positions Dorset as a new UK destination for international investment in clean energy. Bringing together private sector organisations, the Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster is on a mission to unlock investment and align processes to ensure the UK Industrial Strategy can be delivered in Dorset and the English Channel. This will strengthen UK security and resilience, accelerate economic restructuring and transition whilst complimenting energy projects in the Celtic Sea and other parts of the UK.

Dorset presents multiple opportunities to advance Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects by harnessing its unique geography and geology, whilst leveraging the exceptional deepwater port at Portland. With an estimated investment level across all projects of £28 billion – the UK and Dorset has a strategic opportunity to enable a once in a generation transformation to drive and deliver green growth and clean power. This accelerates progress towards delivering Government ambitions set out in Invest 2035 and its commitments to clean power by 2030 and Net Zero by 2047.

Investment opportunities are centred around Winfrith and Portland Port with its deep water, sheltered harbour and minimal tidal range, and availability of land and buildings that can be adapted to provide accommodation and manufacturing space. They include:

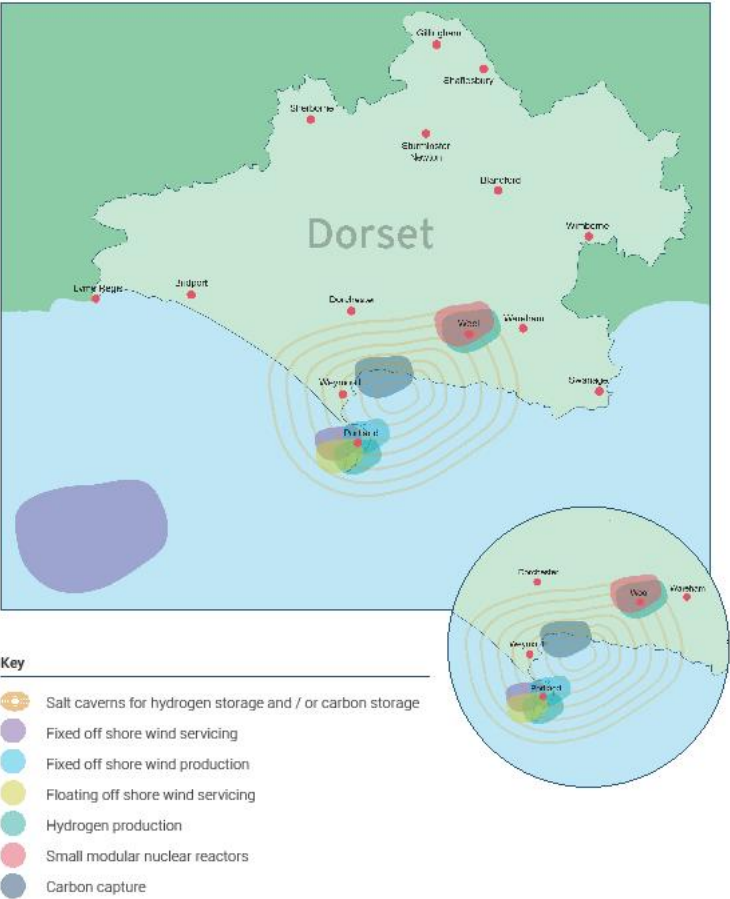
- Offshore Wind in the English Channel and Celtic Sea
- A deepwater, offshore wind hub to construct and service the renewable sector
- Carbon dioxide (CO₂) capture and storage (CCS)
- Clean hydrogen import and storage
- Hydrogen production
- Nuclear Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) at Winfrith
- Related opportunities such as grid improvements floating solar and desalination
- Improving digital capabilities including high-capacity fibre spine and data centres.

By capitalising on south Dorset's unique, geological and geographical and physical assets such as grid connection points, nuclear license, deep water harbour and salt caverns, a strong investment proposition for Dorset is being made.

We want to work in partnership with the private and public sector to maximise these opportunities. In doing this we can make positive contribution to England's energy security and achieve sustainable future-looking growth for Dorset. Furthermore, with the levels of energy being produced, opportunities for further private sector investment, such as for data centres, can be harnessed.



South Dorset clean / green energy map



Energy type	Process	Locations
Hydrogen	Storage	Dorset salt caverns
Hydrogen	Production	Portland and Winfrith
Carbon	Capture from sea water	Weymouth bay
Carbon	Storage	Dorset salt caverns
Floating off-shore wind	Servicing	Portland
Off-shore wind (fixed)	Production and servicing	Portland
Nuclear	Small Modular Reactors (SMR)	Winfrith

These future looking industries and environmentally sustainable new technologies are attractive to younger people, providing secure, skilled and well-paid jobs. Science



technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education in schools, and higher education provision will be supported and enhanced to provide for the development, skills and research for these industries. We want to collaborate with regional universities on industry and academia collaboration, including the take up of research and development, technology transfer and the location and support for university spin-out businesses. We can build on our existing contacts, such as Exeter's University's carbon capture from sea water pilot demonstration project, to do this.

How we will do this

- Work with partners to secure Portland as a location for servicing and manufacturing of fixed and floating off-shore wind farms
- Secure in south Dorset projects delivering Carbon Capture and storage and hydrogen production.
- Develop, adopt and implement a new masterplan for the Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) Winfrith site prioritising clean energy production.
- Encourage and facilitate investment in digital infrastructure to provide a foundation for economic growth and prosperity and so we can capitalise on the clean energy generation to power data centres and AI Growth Zones.
- Pursue a Devolution Deal with neighbouring authorities to secure devolved powers and funding from government which can support green energy projects, and digital and transport infrastructure

Target Measures

By bringing productivity up to the UK average, we would generate an additional £1.6 billion for Dorset, leading to higher paid jobs and greater disposable income. We want to:

- narrow the Dorset to UK productivity gap by 5% by 2029

The emerging clean /green energy super cluster is an area of significant opportunity for Dorset. We want to:

- generate over 2000 jobs and over £500m of private sector investment in renewable energy projects by 2029



Ambitious for Innovation

Dorset Innovation Park is an important employment site in Dorset as a high security business park and the location of Dorset's Enterprise Zone. We want to build on the existing defence, security and maritime cluster on site by attracting additional advanced engineering and manufacturing businesses. With an accelerated planning process in place, new and expanding businesses benefit from swifter planning decisions.

We want to bring about the expansion of Dorset Innovation Park as the county's premier location for high technology businesses. We have established a new arms-length company that has responsibility and autonomy for the delivery of the Innovation Park as a major employment and investment site.

We want BattleLab to be the headquarters of the new Defence Innovation Organisation, capitalising on the facility's remit to support our growing SME base through innovation and collaboration with MOD personnel and major companies in the MOD supply chain. Access will be provided to the Lulworth ranges, uniquely enabling companies to conduct live testing of equipment and systems across air, land and sea capabilities.

We will lobby Innovate UK to make BattleLab the new Defence Catapult Centre, and a part of the wider governments catapult network, pulling in research and development opportunities in partnership with Dorset's own SME community.

We will partner with universities for collaboration, research and development opportunities and create spaces on site where universities can conduct their research and teaching. We will also work with further education and higher education institutes to develop a programme of graduate placements and encourage spinout businesses.

In Dorset, we need to develop our economy by embedding digital technology across all sectors, investing in our niche and specialist advanced engineering and manufacturing sector. With it's sector specialisms and a secure 5G network, Dorset Innovation Park is well placed to make more of our natural advantages in clean energy and defence. Increasing levels of successful innovation is key to securing well paid jobs, increasing productivity, improving wages in Dorset.

How we will do this

- Support and develop the operations of the arm's length company to manage and run Dorset Innovation Park with responsibility for selling land and commercial space, and creating a high-quality network of defence related businesses centred on the Innovation Park.
- Capitalise on opportunities for industry / academia collaboration by working directly with universities to provide student placements, research facilities at the Innovation Park and research projects.



- Negotiate with the MOD the future role of BattleLab as a centre for defence innovation and collaboration and as home of the UK Defence Innovation service.
- Promote inward investment in Dorset to innovative sectors and companies, such as those in defence, security, clean/ green energy technologies, marine and maritime, and provide a specific inward investment package as an offer to attract companies.
- Encourage incubation of innovative business through a range of commercial units and workspaces, including collaboration and coworking spaces, and a package of bespoke support to growing businesses.
- Expand the size and capabilities of Dorset Innovation Park through the acquisition of neighbouring land including the current NRS owned site, ensuring the Innovation Park's role as a long-term generator of jobs and investment.

Target Measure

To enable private sector investment into the build out of Dorset Innovation Park, a new delivery company for the innovation park will be launched in 2025, bringing opportunities for growth. We want to:

- create 300 jobs at Dorset Innovation Park by 2029



Ambitious Regeneration for Weymouth and Portland

Weymouth and Portland boast a plethora of distinctive features that together create a compelling and unique selling proposition. Weymouth's town beach is among the finest in Europe, complemented by magnificent Georgian-era seafront architecture. The active working harbour adds vibrancy and interest for visitors, alongside a marina with over 650 boat berths.

Portland enhances this offering with the National Sailing Academy and additional marina berths for 500 boats. It is a regional hub for water sports, such as kite surfing, sea kayaking, and wind surfing and is internationally known for sports climbing.

Both Weymouth and Portland are prominent features on the Jurassic Coast UNESCO World Heritage Site, making tourism a major industry for the area. We aim to capitalize on the natural beauty of the Jurassic Coast by enhancing the value of our tourism offerings through major projects like Eden Portland – an Eden sponsored attraction focused on the science of species diversity, evolution and extinction, as told through geological records utilising old mine workings on Portland as gallery space. We additionally plan to extend the tourism season by providing year-round points of interest and activities.

Key Features:

- **Europe's Best Beach:** A stunning town beach.
- **Georgian Seafront:** Magnificent architecture.
- **Vibrant Harbour:** Over 650 boat berths.
- **National Sailing Academy:** Located in Portland.
- **Water sports Hub:** Kite surfing, sea kayaking, wind surfing.
- **Jurassic Coast:** UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **Marine Conservation Areas:** Nearby.
- **UK's Longest Beach:** In proximity.

Challenges:

- **Economic Decline:** Increasing deprivation and low social mobility.
- **Tourism Dependency:** Seasonal and low-wage employment.
- **Harbour Maintenance:** Significant repair needs.



- **Inner Harbour Environment:** Dominated by busy roads and unattractive buildings.

Vision for Regeneration:

We are embarking on a transformative journey to reinvigorate Weymouth, maximizing the regeneration and renewal opportunities provided by the harbour and marina. Our goal is to turn these waterside locations into focal points for an expanded maritime leisure offer.

We will rejuvenate the local economy through a comprehensive redevelopment of the harbourside and old ferry terminal at the peninsula, creating high-quality public spaces where people want to spend time and money. This will reduce dependence on seasonal work, enhance the vibrancy of the town centre, and establish a high-quality leisure destination.

Through targeted interventions at underutilised council sites and properties, we will support the long-term regeneration of the town. This includes cultural facilities, active leisure facilities, educational premises, wide-ranging retail opportunities, and an extension of the public realm to attract both local residents and tourists.

We aim to elevate the town's attractiveness as a national and international tourist destination by offering premium, high-quality hospitality and retail sectors backed by exceptional architecture and built environment. Our goal is to increase tourist spending to levels comparable with Bournemouth and Poole.

We will promote the area as the location for a world-class tourism attraction, such as Eden Portland, located predominantly underground in the mines, providing year-round, weather-proof leisure activities that attract higher tourist spend.

How we will do this

- Seek development partners to develop underused sites with high quality residential, retail and leisure schemes to enhance the town's offer and vibrancy.
- Create a "growth corridor" with Portland and Dorchester, bringing economic benefits to the wider area
- Encourage increased levels of sustainable, high value tourism and extend the visitor season throughout the year
- Give cross-council support for developers and builders to provide the right new and affordable homes in the right place for sale or rent
- Promote the designation of suitably located and deliverable employment land allocations
- Promote and seek investment in Eden Portland, a world class tourism attraction focusing on the science of the Jurassic Coast UNESCO World Heritage site



- Use Local Development Orders (LDOs) on town centres and existing industrial estates to simplify and speed up planning permission.

Target Measure

Through working in partnership, we want to:

- support community-led masterplans in at least 70% of the coastal and market towns by 2029
- increase total visitor-related spend in Dorset by 5% by 2029
- implement approved new models of delivery to increase affordable housing supply making best use of council assets

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Ambitious for Jobs

Dorset is a hot bed of innovation and entrepreneurship. Over 1,500 new companies are started each year in Dorset, many of them in high technology sectors. Our Small and Medium size Enterprise (SME) base is the bedrock of the economy with over 90% of all companies being either a micro or SME businesses.

Supporting businesses that have the greatest capacity for growth will create our next generation of successful companies and enhance their ability to create high value jobs. We will adopt a focused approach to business engagement and support, targeting resources towards those businesses with the best growth prospects in our key sectors.

Our major employers and most prominent businesses will be able to access dedicated one to one support to assist them with their growth proposals. We will create a team that signposts to finance and support, assists with planning or regulatory queries and permissions, builds relationships with politicians and senior managers, and lobbies on behalf of business within the council.

The Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Business, as representative organisations, are critical in highlighting the key concerns experienced by the Dorset business community. The council will build strategic relationships with both organisations to better understand the everyday challenges faced by their members and to identify solutions to these problems.

We will form a new dedicated Dorset Growth Board which will champion Dorset, and Dorset businesses, within the county and at a national level. Led by the private sector and with representatives from key sectors, the Dorset Growth Board will advise on emerging concerns and opportunities for the Dorset Economy and how best to respond to them.

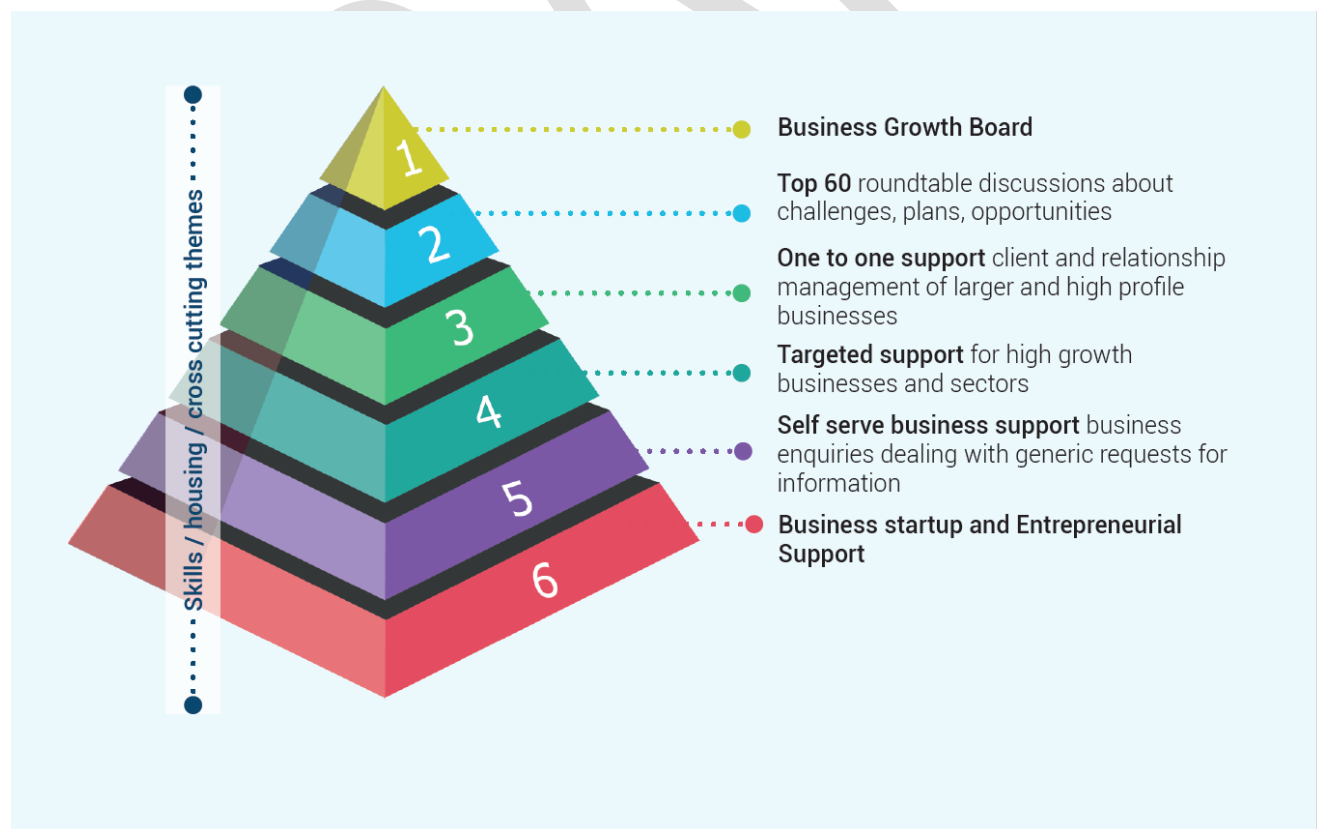
The Board will promote Dorset and lobby on behalf of the county to government departments and agencies, investors and other decision-makers on all matters relating to the county's strategic economic development.

Alongside our established businesses there is significant potential to capitalise on the spirit of entrepreneurship that exists across the county. We will provide people looking to start their life in business with the resources and head-start that makes this journey less difficult. Bringing together dedicated expertise, funding, and access to programmes such as Dorset Business Mentors, we will increase the number of new business start-ups and give them the best possible chance of success.



How we will do this

- Establish a new Dorset Growth Board made up of local business leaders and relevant representative bodies
- Develop a strategic relationship with the Dorset Chamber of Commerce and support the development of local chambers and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to generate business engagement and intelligence.
- Target the use of government support towards businesses who can provide higher paid jobs, research and development opportunities, and are more productive.
- Introduce a new approach to business support provision - with resources, most effort will be put into the businesses which offer the greatest opportunity for economic growth and productivity gains.
- Work with schools and colleges, alongside Dorset Careers Hub to embed entrepreneurship into the delivery of the curriculum.
- Establish and roll-out a business start-up programme targeted at young people in the 16 to 34 age range.
- The model below shows how Dorset Council will support and target its interaction with key businesses. For smaller businesses a self-service option with signposting will be available.



Target Measures

By bringing productivity up to the UK average, we would generate an additional £1.6 billion for Dorset, leading to higher paid jobs and greater disposable income. We want to:

- Narrow the Dorset to UK productivity gap by 5% by 2029

Retaining and attracting entrepreneurial young people will be key for the future success of Dorset's economy. We want to:

- create 1,000 business start-up courses for 16 to 34 year-olds to encourage young people into entrepreneurship by 2029

By working together in partnership, we want to:

- increase total visitor-related spend in Dorset by 5% by 2029

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Ambitious for University and Skills

In Dorset, we want to attract and retain young people. With limited higher education provision, Dorset's brightest students often move out of the area to study and then not return until much later, if at all. A university in Dorset will provide a source of graduates for local businesses offering high quality jobs.

University provision in Dorset, linked to our growth sectors, will provide improved careers choices, awareness and opportunities for young people. This will inspire them about Dorset and create the ambition to succeed. We want to increase the take up of STEM subjects in schools - driving attainment through ambition, tackling social mobility and inspiring our children for the future.

The evidence is clear, increasing the level of skills in the workforce is fundamental to long-term economic growth. The UK economy is moving to more high performing and high value-added sectors, which needs more people to be employed in higher skilled jobs. Higher education courses are key to increasing the skills base of Dorset's workforce.

It is vital that we ensure that young people have the skills that they need to work locally. Promoting STEM subjects in schools linked to our high growth sectors is important for achieving this. Additionally, working closely with universities, which have these specialisms, will provide people with greater visibility of training and development opportunities to upskill and achieve their potential. Through this collaboration between businesses and education institutions, training provision will be responsive to changing and emerging business and skills needs.

With the Health Sciences University, which has existing student facilities in Bournemouth (Boscombe) and London (Southwark), we are planning to establish a training hub specialising in reablement and nursing facilities. The hub will be able to provide on-site training up to masters' level.

Working closely with universities which have specialisms in our growth sectors will provide opportunities for university spin out businesses to be supported and nurtured in locations such as Dorset Innovation Park. The benefit from the commercialisation of university research is that it feeds through to knowledge transfer to Dorset businesses. This drives technological and productivity improvements, as well as attracting young people into increased numbers of secure, high skilled and well-paid jobs.

How we will do this

- We will work with schools and businesses to increase the visibility and take up of STEM subjects and to raise the aspirations of young people, demonstrating the progression routes to high level achievement and well-paid secure jobs.



- Work with regional and local colleges and universities to increase higher education and university student work placements in Dorset focusing on our growth sectors.
- Collaborate with regional universities on industry and academia, promoting the take up of research and development, technology transfer and the location and support for university spin-out businesses.
- Develop a new university campus in Dorset, focusing on healthcare, with associated student facilities and accommodation.
- Establish a business broker service between the Dorset business community and Weymouth College to facilitate the update of industry specific courses, and development of students with a skills set to fit with local business needs.
- Raise skills levels in priority and future growth sectors, including advanced manufacturing, and clean energy, through new and enhanced provision of further and higher education in Dorset.
- Establish higher education provision on Dorset Innovation Park linked to defence and advanced engineering
- Develop Dorset Careers Hub activities to build greater awareness of Dorset careers

Target Measures

Retaining and attracting technological knowledge transfer, university spinout businesses and entrepreneurial young people will be key for the future success of Dorset's economy. We want to:

- encourage young people into entrepreneurship, we want to create 1,000 business start-up courses for 16 - 34 year olds by 2029.

By working together in partnership, we want to:

- transfer up to £500,000 a year of Dorset Council's apprenticeship levy to increase the number of apprenticeships offered by local businesses and organisations
- improve educational attainment by working through leadership in the education community: increase Dorset's Key Stage 2 results (55% in 2024) to be as good or better than the national average levels by 2029 (60% in 2024)



Ambitious for Market Towns and Tourism

For Dorset to be successful, it needs to promote economic growth across all its communities. To do this we will work in partnership with the Town and Parish Councils to celebrate their uniqueness, and support what works well in their areas for their businesses and communities.

Often our market towns are reliant on a small number of businesses for the majority of the area's employment. It is important that we support these businesses and ensure that they have the space to grow and thrive. In planning for the future of our towns we need to ensure that there is good supply of land, in the right places, which is allocated for work and employment. We want all of Dorset's market and coastal towns to each have a sizable allocation of deliverable employment land to facilitate local company growth.

Additional growth should be targeted along communications corridors. Providing affordable housing, in perpetuity for local working people, in locations where they can easily access employment is vital for the future growth of Dorset's economy and the continued sustainability, vitality and viability of its towns and villages.

Dorset has a strong history of tourism, supported by its cultural, literacy, and geographical assets. Dorset is internationally recognised for its outdoor sports and leisure activities. Younger couples and groups looking for unique, good quality experiences in Dorset are strong and growing markets. Furthermore, Dorset excels at attracting overseas visitors from places like Germany, the Netherlands, and the USA.

Visit Dorset, the county's tourism organisation, collaborates with local and national businesses and partners at all levels, including VisitEngland, the national tourism body, to support and promote Dorset's visitor economy. It promotes the whole of Dorset including the rural parts of the county to help spread the benefits of visitor spend over an extended tourism season, through:

- encouraging more off-peak visits
- specialist marketing campaigns, aimed at the off-peak periods
- promoting rural events
- promoting businesses on social media, highlighting the uniqueness of rural Dorset.
- working with market towns to promote events and activities such as the Purbeck Walking Festival
- promoting unique events and activities that will encourage visits like the Dark Skies campaign
- hosting town micro-sites on their award winning and acclaimed tourism website

Visit Dorset is excited about joining the nationally accredited, Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) Programme. Working collaboratively with Dorset Tourism



Association, it has demonstrable strengths in destination management. Visit Dorset prides itself on bringing together all elements of the local visitor economy and providing them with a strong voice. LVEP participation will give Dorset the opportunity to work in a proactive partnership with Visit England and help shape and deliver national strategies in Dorset.

The key goals for Visit Dorset are to:

- increase the individual levels of spending per visitor
- spread the benefits of tourism across the County, focusing on the more inland areas and market towns
- ensure tourism provides a year-round driver of economic activity throughout Dorset

To provide a high-quality tourism offer, covering accommodation, hospitality and attractions throughout Dorset, requires the industry to focus on innovation to increase its productivity, profitability and sustainability. It is vital that all facilities and amenities are inclusive and accessible for both tourists and residents. Through this the tourism industry will be able to provide skilled, decently paid, year-round employment.

In developing Dorset's tourism offer to bring the benefits of high-value tourism to all parts of the county, Visit Dorset will work in partnership with Town and Parish Councils to promote the richness of the area's offerings, focusing on identified growth markets of:

- Luxury and Learning
- Nature and Culture
- Comfort and Convenience
- Fun and Relaxation
- Active and mindful

How we will do this

- Encourage increased levels of sustainable, high value tourism and continue to explore ways to extend the visitor season throughout the year
- Develop a coastal and market towns strategy framework to support growth and regeneration, working in partnership with town and parish councils.
- Give cross-council support for developers and builders to provide the right new homes in the right place for sale or rent, including affordable housing
- Promote the designation of sizeable, suitably located and deliverable employment land allocations through the local plan for each of Dorset's coastal market and towns.
- Use LDOs on town centres and existing industrial estates to simplify and speed up planning permission.



Target Measure

By working together in partnership, we want to:

- support community-led masterplans in at least 70% of the coastal and market towns by 2029
- implement approved new models of delivery to increase affordable housing supply making best use of council assets
- increase total visitor-related spend in Dorset by 5% by 2029

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Ambitious to deliver

The scale of our ambition is significant. We want to have conversations with investors and prospective partners interested in helping us achieve our aspirations.

To speak to someone about the implementation of our Economic Growth Strategy please contact:

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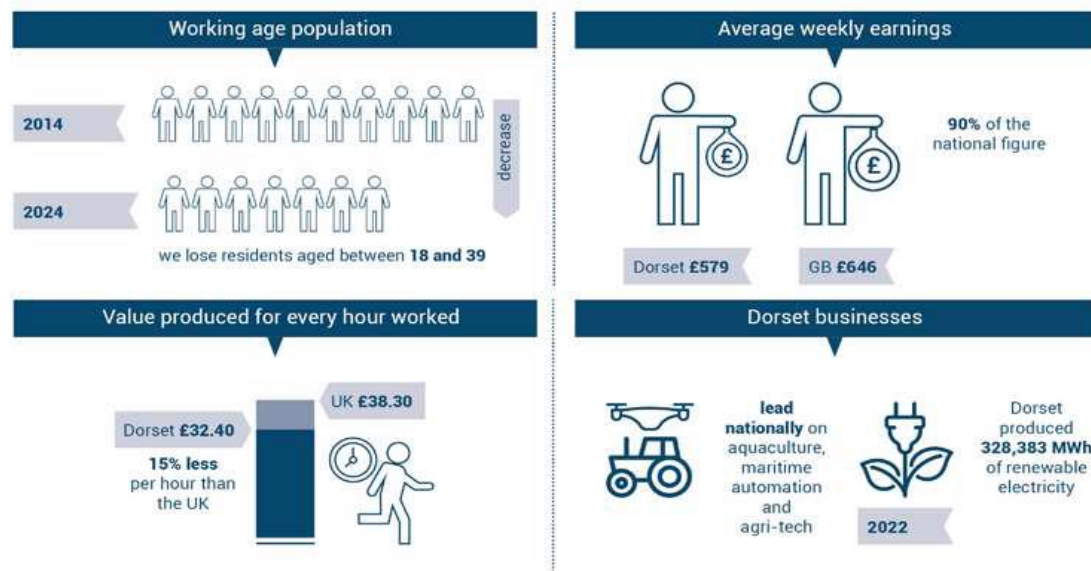
Part 2: Ambitious for Dorset - Dorset at a glance

Dorset at a glance

Ageing population



Economy

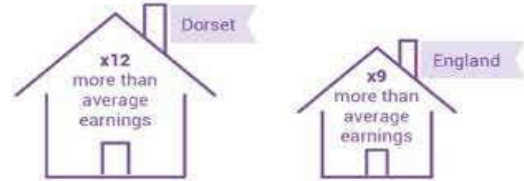


Housing

Average property prices



Average property prices are...



Private rental prices:



Rurality

Connectivity



Access to services



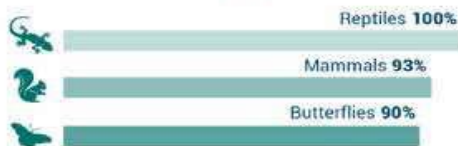
Limited public transport



Services to rural areas



Native species living in Dorset



Natural status



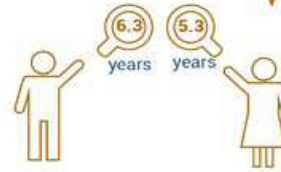
Health and deprivation

Deprived areas



10 out of 11 deprived areas are in **Weymouth & Portland**

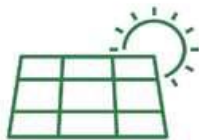
Life expectancy gap



age gap between most deprived and least areas of Dorset

Climate

Renewable energy production in Dorset



2022
16%

increase over last year

Greenhouse gas emissions



2019-2021

4% reduction

greenhouse gas emissions fell by over **4%** from **2019-2021** and by a **third** since **2005**

Dorset environmental economy



...is valued at up to **£2.5bn per year** of the local economy and supports up to **61,000** jobs

Crime

total crime per 1,000 population



Dorset
4th lowest



unitary authorities in UK



per 1,000 population

