



## Greater Brighton Economic Board

### Covid-19 Sustainable Recovery Plan – January 2021 Update

#### 1.0 Introduction

Like other parts of the UK, the Greater Brighton City region has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and this looks set continue into the spring at the earliest. Gross Value Added (GVA), or economic output, a key indicator of economic health, has shrunk since March 2020; unemployment, particularly in the 18-24 age group has increased, as has the number of businesses declaring insolvency. Two thirds of businesses have made use of the Government's job retention scheme which was originally due to be wound-down in October 2020, but has now been extended until April 2021.

Sectors such as retail and tourism; performing and creative arts, leisure and hospitality have been forced to close through three national lockdowns, the third of which is currently ongoing and with an uncertain end date. What is more certain, is that the impact has been not uniformly felt across the City Region. Throughout the pandemic the Centre for Cities has published data and reports on the effect of the pandemic on cities within England. It has consistently stated that Crawley is amongst the cities impacted most greatly, whilst Worthing is amongst the least affected.

In addition to Covid-19 crisis, businesses have also had to grapple with the ongoing uncertainty around the terms under which the UK would trade with the EU after the Transitional Period ended on 31 December 2020. This uncertainty remained until a few days before the deadline with a trade deal finally agreed on the 24 December and then ratified by the UK parliament on 30 December. Whilst the detailed terms of the post-Brexit Trade Deal will have a different impact across sectors and businesses, now there is an agreed deal some uncertainty has been removed. Businesses now have more clarity on the environment in which they operate and can plan accordingly.

With all of this uncertainty it was clear Board needed to act and to provide leadership around recovery and regrowth from the pandemic. To that end, Hatch were commissioned to undertake an impact assessment to understand the challenges based on the data available. The Hatch report provided a robust, evidence-based foundation upon which to develop a series of interventions that would target the areas needing support most, and to capitalise on any opportunities. The report was presented to the Board at the July 2020 meeting. The Greater Brighton Covid-19 Sustainable Recovery Plan was then produced for the October 2020 Board Meeting, and contained a number recommendations, chiefly actions, to take forward that were approved by the Board. The recommendations were framed around the Greater Brighton Five-Year Strategic Priorities, which were agreed in January 2019. The purpose of the current paper is to provide an update on progress and outline plans for the next quarter.



## 2.0 National Picture

At the time of publication all parts of the UK are currently in a national lockdown. There is some variation in the detail across territories within the UK, but essentially all jurisdictions have closed schools, except for vulnerable children and those of critical workers. All further and higher education establishments are shut, as well as non-essential retail, personal services (e.g. hairdressers, salons), and the hospitality sector including pubs, restaurants and hotels are also once again in hibernation. This lockdown took effect from 5 January and it is currently unclear when restrictions will start being lifted.

The reason behind the national lockdown was a surge in virus cases from early December. This sharp upswing started in Kent, and as December progressed numbers also increased quickly in Essex, London, and wider south east including the Greater Brighton Region. Previously, numbers in Greater Brighton had been low, with the local authority areas of Adur and Worthing having amongst the lowest cases per 100,000 population of the whole country.

The key to restrictions being lifted is successful deployment of the vaccine. On 8 December the first of the Pfizer-BiONtech vaccines were delivered and the Oxford/Astra-Zeneca vaccine followed in early January after being approved by the regulator in late December. Mass roll-out of the vaccine commenced in the second week of January following a commitment made by Government on 7 January to have vaccinated close to 15 million people by 15 February. The 15 million would include all those identified as being in the 4 groups most at risk from catching the virus and/or becoming acutely unwell; the over 70s, care home residents and staff, frontline NHS staff, those defined as being clinically extremely vulnerable. The Moderna vaccine was approved by the regulator on 7 January, but first deliveries of this are not expected until March.

The Government has suggested that once the highest priority groups have been vaccinated and infection rates have fallen significantly, restrictions could be eased. The Government has stated that schools are “last to close and first to reopen”, so we should not expect the economy to start reopening before schools do. It is most likely that the economy will open up in reverse order to which it was closed down, so we can expect that pubs, restaurants, and indoor entertainment venues will be amongst the last to reopen. This could still be some months away given the furlough scheme has been extended to April.

Whilst the national landscape was dominated by the Covid-19 Pandemic and Brexit in 2020, the autumn Spending Review also had implications for the City Region. Once again, the narrative from Government was around green recovery and levelling up.

Greater Brighton is well placed to support the Government in achieving its green objectives through its ongoing work on the Greater Brighton Energy and Water Plans, Greater Brighton 10 pledges, and ambition to shortly establish a Hydrogen Hub. There is an opportunity for Greater Brighton to be a real leader when it comes to decarbonising energy in homes, and around the scaling of hydrogen energy. Plans are in progress to maximise these opportunities.

In terms of levelling up, the Spending Review outlined a funding pot which roughly equates to £19m per Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area. It's not clear how the funds will be



distributed across or within LEP areas, and the Board will continue to make the strongest possible case for investment into the City Region.

### **3.0 Local Dimension**

Local Greater Brighton Local Authorities continue to do everything they can to support businesses across the region. Local authority partners have awarded over £200 million in business grants to over 20,000 eligible businesses, and over £6 million in discretionary grants to support other businesses most in need at this critical time.

In addition, to the Government schemes, Local Authorities have worked collaboratively with partners to provide innovative support packages to businesses. These include Mid Sussex working with the Community Services Team on a £300,000 Covid-19 Recovery Fund to support local businesses. The emphasis of this fund was to help businesses with additional costs that are incurred whilst operating under Covid-19 restrictions and to help businesses reopen and return to business as usual in a Covid-secure way. Around half of the fund was distributed in November, following a first wave of applications, and the second wave of applications has closed recently.

It has been well documented that despite being responsible for 25% of the economic output in West Sussex, Crawley Borough Council has received some of the lowest grant funding in the county. This is largely because the funding is calculated on the resident population and not the number of businesses in the town. As Crawley remains one of the hardest hit economies in the UK, the Council continues to lobby Government for additional funding support.

Section 5 of this paper covers the role communications activity plays in supporting recovery. In addition to the work outlined in that section, communications are an important tool to reach out to businesses eligible for Government grants but have not applied. With this in mind, the Comms Team at Adur & Worthing are currently looking at boosting communications to their businesses, to look at direct sector targeting, the design of localised marketing collateral and also a local webinar in early February.

Whilst the majority of the economic news associated with Covid-19 is sobering, there have been opportunities, and some businesses have prospered through the pandemic. These businesses should be celebrated for showing entrepreneurship, resilience and adaptability in challenging times. Some examples of businesses within the City Region to have thrived over the last 12 months include;

#### **The Real Pie Company**

With restaurants closing in March as part of the national Covid-19 lockdown, many Greater Brighton businesses worked tirelessly to bring top-quality food to people's doors.

The Real Pie Company in Crawley was one of those companies stepping into the breach, its kitchen dealing with a surge in demand for its pies over the course of the lockdown.

The family-run business started life in 1999 in a Sussex butcher's shop, eventually moving into its Crawley kitchen where it ships handmade pies bound for London and towns across the south.



Just weeks before the first Covid-19 lockdown began, 14 of the company's pies were commended by the British Pie Awards, including a gold medal for its steak, mushroom and stilton pie.

So naturally The Real Pie Company's online delivery service was very popular as restrictions kept people at home.

Yet the Covid-19 pandemic has brought the firm closer to its roots than ever. In November it opened a shop in the Sussex village of Cowfold, its first retail outlet since the company closed its Crawley shop to expand its pie production.

The company hopes to open more shops in the future, buoyed by the fact its Christmas delivery slots were fully booked weeks in advance of the festive season.

### **Universal Quantum**

If the global effort to create a Covid-19 vaccine has proved anything, it is that remarkable things can be achieved when great minds come together.

Universal Quantum in Brighton hopes to apply that formula to computing, aiming to create the world's first large-scale quantum computer able to make quicker calculations than any computer which exists today.

Founded in 2018 by Dr Sebastian Weidt and Professor Winfried Hensinger of the University of Sussex, the company has had a successful 2020 amid rising global interest in scientific collaboration.

In June Universal Quantum announced it had raised £3.6 million from investors including Village Global, a firm backed by tech giants Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos. It has since signed a formal agreement with the University of Sussex's Ion Quantum Technology Group that will enable the company and the research group to work hand-in-hand in creating a new computer.

If the company is successful in its goal, its founders say their computer will be able to tackle "grand global issues of our time" such as creating new medicines and fighting world hunger by making fertiliser more efficiently.

Competitors in the field are attempting to construct quantum computers out of billions of lasers, a complicated approach which requires complex engineering and cooling the computer down to -273C.

But Universal Quantum is using different technology which they claim is more practical. This involves charged atoms and microwave technology similar to what is used in mobile phones, removing the need for laser beams and allowing the computer to operate at a 'warmer' -200C.

Since June the company is continuing to raise funds to make its futuristic vision a reality.



#### **4.0 Greater Brighton Economic Board Vision and Priorities**

The Board approved its Five-Year Strategic Priorities in January 2019, with the vision for the region to have a growing, modern economy that is international, creative, connected, talented and resilient.

The actions within the Sustainable Recovery Plan were set against the five themes. Progress updates and actions for the next quarter are highlighted below.

#### **4.1 INTERNATIONAL**

##### **ACTIONS AGREED IN THE SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN**

- Inward investment in the region is low. Greater Brighton's Inward Investment Desk currently being developed by the GBEB Business Support Team should continue to develop at pace, utilising the recently agreed place narrative for the region and an improved website and supporting businesses to relocate to the region. Funding should be identified to support this crucial work.
- The Board should also support R&D innovation led recovery and growth, through the global R&D networks of the universities and global companies across Greater Brighton, increasing the number of businesses benefiting from national schemes such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships including by:
  - Highlighting recovery-relevant academic expertise at the University Brighton, notably in Clean Growth and Innovation Management
  - Highlighting skills growth programmes within the Universities.
- The Board must support establishing positioning Brighton as a 'quantum city' supported by leading edge technological skills training at the heart of any such a plan. The ambition is to make Brighton an incubator for knowledge-economy based entrepreneurial activity, as well as a hub to create a highly skilled, creative workforce which can generate young scale-up businesses.

##### **PROGRESS MADE SINCE OCTOBER 2020**

- Work on establishing the Inward Investment Desk has been ongoing. A CRM and tracking dashboard have been developed to scan for potential opportunities and monitor them.
- The final Inward Investment Desk proposition is to be discussed at the 26 January Board Meeting with the recommendation being that small, dedicated team is established to work on inward investment full time.

##### **ACTIONS FOR FEBRUARY-APRIL 2021**

- Subject to agreement from the Board and Department for International Trade (DiT) timescales, establish a steering group to look at preparing a bid for a High Potential Opportunity (HPO) for inward investment.
- Progress other actions within the Inward Investment Desk paper once agreed by the Board
- Consideration of key questions and scenarios – see below



As roll out of the vaccine progresses, infection rates and hospital admissions decline, we look ahead to a time when we gradually return to the freedoms enjoyed pre-March 2020. There are still many unknowns as to the order and pace at which current restrictions will be lifted, but there is also one big unknown around what life will be like post-Covid. Will it return to “normal”, or is there a new normal that looks very different to what we were used to before March last year? We can't be sure but there are a several key scenarios that could be worth further exploration.

### **Future of Travel and the visitor economy**

Travel, particularly overseas, has become extremely challenging during the pandemic, and the visitor economy has suffered as a consequence. Deployment of the vaccine, both here and abroad, will open up the possibility of people being able to travel safely and freely once again, both for business and leisure. The City Region is home to Britain's second busiest airport and has a strong cultural and leisure offer, so getting people moving again is crucial to the long-term prosperity of the region.

There are a number of questions that need to be considered if we are to understand how the vaccine deployment will translate to a boost in our travel and visitor economy;

1. Need to understand how governments intend to recognise those who have been vaccinated as lower travel risk e.g. permits to travel or similar. We will be asking Government to be clear and timely with any announcements.
2. Currently there is a lack of understanding around whether the vaccine reduces transmission or just protects the vaccinated individual. We ask Government to share the data it collects in this regard so venues can make appropriate adjustments to social distancing requirements.
3. How is the UK going to recover its attraction for commercial, conference and visitor economy? How can Greater Brighton benefit from this?
4. Will Covid-19 tests still be needed if vaccinated?
5. What are the timescales around allowing the resumption of large attendance events be permitted – conferences, concerts etc? As for some of the points above, clarity and adequate notice is requested from Government.
6. If UK has a lower vaccination take up than other countries, how will it influence the above? Can Government share data around those receiving the jab vs those eligible for it?

## **4.2 CREATIVE**

### **4.2.1 Business Support**

#### **ACTIONS AGREED IN THE SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN**

- The Board will ensure that Businesses will continue to be supported to grow by the Business Hot House programme being run by the University of Chichester and C2C's Growth Hub, in addition to innovation, growth and recovery programmes being run by the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton.
- As demand for flexible workspaces continues to rise, the region should build on the successful workspaces within the region such as Platf9rm, Plus X and the





Sussex Innovation Centre (Brighton & Hove) and the Track (Bognor) and promote these more widely. Further public sector investment may become available to support this and the Board should bid for this to expand the offer in the region.

- The Board officers will act as a centralised point to help identify gaps in our Business Support activity (e.g. self-employed and sole traders) and bring together key actors to ensure there is effective sign posting between the different programmes. The Board will actively seek to invest and sponsor such initiatives.

#### **PROGRESS MADE SINCE OCTOBER 2020**

- The Business Hothouse Programme continues to attract excellent interest. As of December, over 150 businesses/individuals have received coaching support, with 55 receiving over 10 hours. There have been 119 applications made to the Invest4 Grant Programme, with a number of these approved. The value of the approved grants is around £330,000, and this brings in around £520,000 of match-funding.
- Lewes DC has been awarded just over £5m in principle funding from the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF). Being home to the Enterprise Zone, Newhaven is a focal point for regeneration activity within the City Region, and the core objective of the FHSF is to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.
- The Crawley Economic Task Force (CERT) continues to meet quarterly to evaluate and monitor the ongoing impact of the crisis on the local economy and drive the development of a coherent recovery plan for the town.

#### **ACTIONS FOR FEBRUARY-APRIL 2021**

- The Local Authorities will be alert to any new grant schemes or other incentives announced by Government and will be ready to deploy resource quickly to distribute funds to where they are needed – as has been the case previously.

#### **4.2.2 Creative Industries and the Visitor Economy**

##### **ACTIONS AGREED IN THE SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN**

- The Board welcomed the £1.57 billion Government support package for cultural organisations and will lobby Government for other support packages for cultural and heritage organisations currently deemed ineligible.
- The Board will work with partners such as Visit England, Experience West Sussex and Visit Brighton to support the visitor sector promote the region for staycation breaks and holidays.
- The Board should work with local trade bodies and Visit Brighton and Experience West Sussex to lobby national government for a Tourism Sector Deal for the region



- The Board will seek out new opportunities for business growth projects in tourism and creative industries to transform the pace of growth in these sectors, attracting new investment and moving into new markets to build back stronger.

#### **PROGRESS MADE SINCE OCTOBER 2020**

- Local authority partners have continued to distribute Government grants to business adversely affected by the crisis.
- At the 26 January Board Meeting the universities will be presenting a paper around the opportunities presented by university led innovation as a catalyst for growth.
- A Recovery Plan for Culture has been prepared which will benefit creative businesses and self-employed people across the Greater Brighton area.
- Emerging from the Sussex Resilience Forum, The Sussex Tourism and Culture Recovery Group is chaired by Nigel Lynn from Arun District Council. This working group is preparing for funding opportunities to support Sussex-wide recovery actions.

#### **ACTIONS FOR FEBRUARY-APRIL 2021**

- Move ahead with recommendations in the university paper, subject to agreement from the Board.
- See above scenarios described under International as there is clear cut-across with the Creative and Visitor economies.

### **4.3 CONNECTED**

#### **4.3.1 Digital**

#### **ACTIONS AGREED IN THE SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN**

- The Board supports the West Sussex Gigabit programme and will push for a speedy roll out of ultrafast digital infrastructure in a collaborative way, particularly within the region's rural communities to avoid digital exclusion
- The Board should develop a report on digital inclusion provision at each local authority, specifying funding levels, providers, numbers reached and future plans
- The Board should continue with the development of the Greater Brighton Digital Action Plan and stimulate the adoption of digital technologies and skills among non-digital businesses and residents, including the potential to focus on specific sectors or settings.
- The Board and its partners should work with the business sector to support local training providers to provide digital skills training required for vacant positions.
- The Board should support C2C's plan for two urban innovation districts within Brighton and Hove to provide much needed lab and commercial space, to facilitate collaboration, innovation and commercialization.



- The Board should support establishing Brighton as a 'quantum city' with quantum skills training at the heart of any such a plan to make Brighton an incubator for future entrepreneurial activity as well as a hub to create a skilled workforce.

#### **PROGRESS MADE SINCE OCTOBER 2020**

- City Fibre have confirmed their £80m investment in full fibre for Brighton & Hove, and will start the roll out of their programme in February 2021.

#### **ACTIONS FOR FEBRUARY-APRIL 2021**

- Brighton & Hove City Council will work with City Fibre to ensure the smooth running of the permitting process, enabling swift roll out whilst also minimising impact on residents and traffic flows.
- Brighton & Hove City Council and Coast to Capital LEP will finalise the Grant Fund Agreement for the Research and Innovation Fibre Ring in Brighton City Centre.

### **3.3.2 Transport**

#### **ACTIONS AGREED IN THE SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN**

- The Board should support Gatwick Airport's ask of Government in regard to the job Retention Scheme.
- The Board will support the local authority partner delivery of the Emergency Active Travel Fund schemes across the region such as the Bike Share scheme and improved cycling and walking infrastructure.
- The Board will support public transport providers to encourage users back onto the networks in a safe and socially distanced way
- The Board will lobby Network Rail to continue with the improvement plans to the Brighton Mainline.
- The Board will continue to lobby for improvements to the main transport corridors; A27, A259, A23 and A29.

#### **PROGRESS MADE SINCE OCTOBER 2020**

- Board officers have been organising a meeting with Network Rail and regional stakeholders to push the Brighton Mainline (BML) upgrade agenda.
- In November 2020 a recommendation was made to [extend the successful BTN Bikeshare scheme](#) beyond the boundary of Brighton & Hove City Council.
- In late 2020 BHCC secured £2.37m (100% of its indicative allocation) for improvements to walking and cycling in the city from Tranche 2 of the renamed Active Travel Fund (previously Emergency Active Travel Fund). Five schemes have been proposed, and public consultations will run through February and March. Schemes need to be delivered by spring 2022. The latest award follows an award of around £660k from Tranche 1 of the fund.
- The imposition of the November national lockdown and then the latest lockdown since the last Board meeting, has made it difficult to engage with providers and



encourage users back on to public transport. This work will resume when restrictions on movement start to be lifted.

#### **ACTIONS FOR FEBRUARY-APRIL 2021**

- Hold the Network Rail stakeholder event to raise awareness of the proposed upgrades and encourage partners and stakeholders to make the strongest possible argument in support of the Programme.
- Greater Brighton to be represented on the Transport for the South East (TfSE) South Central Radial Area Study Forum, which is an opportunity to make clear to TfSE and other regional stakeholders the challenges, priorities and opportunities for transport within the Greater Brighton region.

#### **Future of Transport**

In the International Section we identified a number of questions to examine in relation mainly to visitors coming to the City Region. However, Greater Brighton's near 1 million people move around and in and out of the City Region, for work, education and leisure. Hatch mapped the mobility of people during the first lockdown and found that it was reduced by around 80%. To deliver an effective and safe travel network for Greater Brighton residents we need to quickly understand what the future mobility needs are going to be, specifically;

- How are commuting patterns associated with travel-to-work and travel-to-learn flows going to change over the longer term and what does this mean for our existing travel infrastructure?

#### **4.4 TALENTED**

##### **ACTIONS AGREED IN THE SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN**

- The Board will support the new 'Plan for Jobs announced by the Government in July including investment in apprenticeships, traineeships, the National Careers Service, and a new 'Kickstart Scheme' to fund the direct creation of high-quality jobs for young people at the highest risk of long-term unemployment. The Board will promote the scheme to employers and signpost to local providers'
- With a rise in unemployment, particularly in the 18-24 age range, and some sectors struggling to need the same number of employees as pre-COVID, the Board should promote schemes to support those who wish to retain and gain new skills for sectors that are growing such as Digital and Sustainability and Clean Growth.
- The Board and its partners should work closely with the region's colleges and employers to provide face to face and on-line professional development short courses, training and upskilling for unemployed so they can be matched to vacancies.
- The Board should support C2C's efforts with partners in the public and private sector to create a world-class innovation centre within Crawley, in the heart of Manor Royal, so Crawley can diversify to support other industries in addition to aviation.
- The Board supports West Sussex CC, East Sussex CC and Brighton and Hove to work together with the Sussex Learning Network to develop a collaborative 'pan



Sussex' approach to ensuring education and training at all key stages is available locally; that learners of all ages are aware of them, including mature learners and employers; and progression pathways are highly visible.

- The Board should actively support the development of skills and employment opportunities that reflect a modern, low carbon economy. These include the huge opportunity around a large-scale retrofit programme, in which Greater Brighton could become a national exemplar.
- The Board should support the Coast to Capital LEP and the Energy Catapult with their bid to establish a Decarbonisation Skills Academy in the Greater Brighton City Region, with the support of BHCC, Crawley BC, Greater Brighton Metropolitan College, Chichester Colleges, and the University of Brighton. The Decarbonisation Skills Academy will aim to provide the skills training programmes required to deliver the skilled labour for large scale housing retrofit programmes.

#### **PROGRESS MADE SINCE OCTOBER 2020**

- An initial meeting has taken place around decarbonisation, and there is an understanding of the requirements for Greater Brighton to take a lead role.
- Brighton & Hove City Council have been working with East Sussex and West Sussex County Councils to explore the options for skills collaboration to aid Covid-19 recovery. Possible areas of collaboration identified include;
  - Knowledge share for Young People e.g. DWP Youth Hubs, sector-based partnership working, Careers Hub engagement and delivery
  - Common approaches and similar delivery models for new interventions – e.g. Plan for Jobs, National Skills Budget, Shared Prosperity Fund.
  - Overcoming differences in the focus in the LEPs to enable cross border collaboration
  - Health and Social Care, Visitor economy and Creative sectors – ensuring a skilled and retained workforce.

#### **ACTIONS FOR FEBRUARY-APRIL 2021**

- Review Government White Paper, “*Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth*” published on 21 January, to understand the opportunities for the Greater Brighton region.
- Establishment of a working group to drive forwards the decarbonisation agenda and unlock the skills and other barriers to growing this sector.

#### **4.5 RESILIENCE**

##### **ACTIONS AGREED IN THE SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN**

- The Hatch report identified the Greater Brighton region as a focus for sustainable growth. In fact, both the recently completed Greater Brighton Energy and Water plans are testament to this and provide a number of projects to help the region become more resilient. There is an opportunity to use the region's strengths in green technology and innovation to support this type of recovery. This also offers potential



for reskilling within a green economy. With the government and LEP focus on building back greener there is an opportunity to support the retrofitting of existing housing and public sector stock identified within the Greater Brighton Energy Plan. Government incentives for this include the Green Homes Grant and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grants. The Board (and composite local authorities) should bid for this funding.

- The Board should support the University of Brighton's leading role in the national Clean Growth UK Programme that has 1343 local business as members undertaking green growth activity within the region.
- The Board should create a Greater Brighton hydrogen hub to accelerate private sector production of green hydrogen drawing on the expertise of the University of Brighton's Advanced Engineering Centre and Clean Growth UK business network, as part of a wider focus on sustainable transport which reflects academic/industry partnerships in Advanced Engineering notably University of Brighton & Ricardo.
- The Board should support partners to deliver retrofit programmes for homes and buildings at a regional scale, working with leading private and community sector providers across the Greater Brighton area.
- Taking into account the Planning White Paper, the Board must support all new housing with green energy and support working from home (space and connectivity). Proximity to community social space must also be considered.
- The Board should deliver the region's digital and energy infrastructure pipeline of projects, aligning skills provision with industry specialisms to create new jobs and deliver a clean recovery.
- The Board must support the Crawley Recovery Taskforce and Recovery Board led by the Borough Council, including the Government's Towns Fund activities linked to the Crawley Growth Deal.
- The Board must support C2C's efforts with partners in the public and private sector to create a world-class innovation centre within Crawley, in the heart of Manor Royal, so Crawley can evolve to support other industries in addition to aviation.
- The Board must continue to develop the region's project pipeline, potentially leverage Local Growth Funding/Shared Prosperity Funding and highlight the potential of channelling future Government funding to the wider region and further profile and stimulate the local economy and attract growth companies.
- The Board will support positioning Brighton as a 'quantum city' with quantum skills supported by leading edge technological skills training at the heart of any such a plan to make Brighton an incubator for future knowledge economy entrepreneurial activity as well as a hub to create a highly skilled, creative workforce.

## **PROGRESS MADE SINCE OCTOBER 2020**

- Hydrogen Group established to move forwards with the work to place the Greater Brighton Region as a new Hub for hydrogen
- Project pipeline continues to grow, so the City Region has a strong bank of shovel-ready opportunities that can be mobilised at short notice
- Brighton & Hove City Council agreed a new Circular Economy Route-map in December to facilitate a transition towards eliminating waste generation,



supporting a resilient economy through sustainable growth and innovation and supporting the city's pathway towards carbon neutrality by 2030.

#### **ACTIONS FOR FEBRUARY-APRIL 2021**

- Relaunch of the Hydrogen Group in the spring
- Following Board agreement of the GB10 pledges in October 2020, discussions with the One Public Estate Programme Partners will follow to determine how to maximise the opportunity for sustainable redevelopment of those sites

#### **5.0 Communications**

The Covid-19 pandemic and the need for recovery means Greater Brighton can no longer operate on a business as usual footing in terms of communications activity. Communications plays a key role in shaping the narrative around Greater Brighton's recovery while positing the City Region as an attractive place for investment for government and private enterprise.

Since the last board meeting, a 12-month communication strategy has been agreed by the chairman and board members which has Economic Recovery at its heart. This is supported by three key broad and interconnected themes: Resources for our growing economy; Infrastructure for our growing economy and Skills for our growing economy.

To reflect the board's increasing role as a regional leader in the locality and support the proposed inward investment strategy, increased emphasis has been placed on messaging to decision makers - be that in government, business or within the Greater Brighton network. More focus has been placed on using LinkedIn as a publishing platform with training provided to Greater Brighton business managers to use it as a way to generate interest in inward investment. There also continues to be increased efforts to build closer relationships with the City Region's MPs, with briefings on key topics being offered to parliamentary representatives.

Since the last board meeting, a new Covid-19 page has been created on the Greater Brighton website which includes a series of business success stories, highlighting local firms who are continuing to grow despite the challenges presented by Covid-19. These have also started to be shared on the City Region's social media networks and generated some interest with trade / regional media.

Despite the ongoing COVID restrictions limiting some activity (such as site visits) the approach remains agile and responsive to ongoing national picture. There are plans in place to move this activity online, with a virtual event on the BML scheme planned for the spring with MPs, DfT and Greater Brighton members.

Messaging continues to complement the work being done by local authorities (recovery in individual areas), business representatives and Coast to Capital LEP (funding, business support) and educational establishments (R&D, skills) - all of whom are represented on the Greater Brighton Economic Board.



The role of board members in supporting this overall strategy remains key and they - and their organisations - are requested to continue to supply narratives around recovery projects from their own areas to the Greater Brighton Communications Team.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The Greater Brighton City Region continues to be impacted significantly by the Covid-19 pandemic. Building back a more resilient economy, environment and society is a key focus of the Sustainable Recovery Plan agreed in October, and since then real progress has been made in a number of areas. Other papers on the agenda for the January 2021 Economic Board meeting show the progress that is being made in these areas, and that this work is not just limited to implementing the Recovery Plan.

The Board's energy and water plans demonstrate that the region is seizing the initiative to initiate, support and coordinate projects which will both help the environment and lead a sustainable economic recovery. The region has strong emerging positions in the green sector, particularly around decarbonisation of homes and hydrogen. There is great potential to maximise the knowledge economy technologies and promote the accompanying skills that could have a transformative impact on the city region's offer and fortunes.

It is important to consider recovery against the backdrop of Brexit. An eleventh-hour trade deal between the UK and EU was agreed, which removes much of the uncertainty. However, the Greater Brighton Business Survey of 2019 highlighted real gaps in Brexit readiness at that time. It is likely that some businesses still need support to understand what the new trade terms present in terms of the challenges and opportunities.

The Board will continue to lobby Government for support in our hardest-hit sectors – aviation, the cultural, hospitality and leisure sectors. In particular the Board will make clear that when it comes to levelling-up, the City Region should not be lumped in with London, and as a significant contributor to the UK economy should receive its fair share of any funding aimed at levelling up the regions.

**END**