

## Local Industrial Strategy Big Debate

Wednesday 19 June 2019

University of Brighton, Moulsecoomb Campus

### Event Notes

The below Q&A was recorded from the Panel discussions and questions from the attendees.

- Q. You confirmed the LIS document will not be entirely place based. How can we produce a strong narrative for our diverse area without using place?
  - A. Our geographical place will be mentioned in the LIS section regarding the *5 Foundations of Productivity* under 'Places'.
- Q. After the LIS is approved by Government, how will you manage performance against the strategy?
  - A. We will work closely with Government to develop an implementation plan that aligns with national and local goals.
- Q. How will you ensure the local Members of Parliament are informed and engaged on the LIS?
  - A. The LEP has good relationships with our local politicians. We will be engaging in regular bilateral meetings to keep them informed and engaged.
- Q. What is Coast to Capital's unique selling point (USP)?
  - A. The diversity of our area and economy are the unique assets. We will need to scale up our strengths and sector specialisms.
  - A. Horticulture is a high tech industry which can genuinely benefit from automation and robotics. We need to encourage more research and development for technology in this sector to increase our productivity.
  - A. Viticulture is a fast growing sector and our economy can benefit from the high quality tourism that this encourages.
  - A. Our natural capital is an important asset that could contribute to our USP.
- Q. If we are to grow our horticulture sector, how can we ensure there are sufficient levels of labour in this area?
  - A. We need to encourage more academics to research robotics in the horticulture sector and develop a positive case for employment in this sector. If we can get robotics, then we can increase the number of highly skills jobs in this sector.
  - A. The LEP will need to petition to government the importance of this sector and potential it has to increase productivity.

- Q. How can we improve graduate retention in the area?
  - A. We are undertaking research into our urban centres and will look to see if there is more we can encourage through local plans that make them desirable places for graduates to live and work.
  - A. We will need to work together to raise awareness of the quality jobs in the Coast to Capital area. Getting better at shouting about our success.
  
- Q. What is our underlying narrative/theme to include in the LIS?
  - A. Coast to Capital is a diverse region – but an underlying theme is the resilience of our economy. We will need to measure this through the research we undertake to we can make an evidence based argument to Government.
  
- Q. What role does improvements in digital connectivity have to play in the economy?
  - A. If we can grow our invisible digital infrastructure, this will support improvements in productivity. However, we will need to ensure the right digital skills are there to meet the new infrastructure. We need to encourage our skills agencies to be more responsive to business skills needs.
  - A. Digital infrastructure and 5G technology need to explore how it can support the ageing society. More partnerships with the NHS for patient services and early diagnosis.
  - A. Using Government's National Retraining Scheme to skill up the ageing workforce before they leave the workforce.
  
- Q. How can HE and FE institutions support the economy?
  - A. Our education institutions will need to diversify their management structures and integrate more commercial strategies. Less funding from Government means these institutions will need to work closely with businesses on their skills needs and trial different ways of raising income outside of the public sector.
  
- Q. How can we make the most out of Gatwick Airport as the economic driver of the economy?
  - A. We are undertaking research into our innovation ecosystem around the airport to identify strengths and opportunities.
  - A. We need to encourage high quality commercial space in the areas around Gatwick. Businesses need more space and the current capacity limits business growth.
  
- Q. How can we support improvements in the future of mobility?
  - A. We need to look at non-rail transport improvements as well. For instance, Brighton & Hove Buses are using new technology to power the fleet and improve the mobility of services.
  - A. The LEP will also lead on this topic through Transport for the South East (TfSE).
  
- Q. Our area has issues with land use, the scarcity of land and competing priorities between central and local government. How can the LIS address these?
  - A. Our research into commercial property and urban centres will look into this. However, we will need to consider what the current market demand is and how we can accommodate that with the other priorities. For instance, we could encourage more

innovative use of industrial space on Manor Royal. Additionally, Local authorities may be able to use their local assets to trial innovative methods that can be brought forward to Government for consideration.

- Q. How can we gain regional clout, similar to likes of Midlands Engine and Northern Powerhouse?
  - A. We have established a Southern LEPs group which brings together all the Chairman's and Chief Executives of the LEPs in the south east. Together we are a significant economy that Government will take notice of.

### Closing comments

- Horticulture and Gatwick Airport are key employers that are not going to leave the area soon. We need to encourage these organisations to change in order to improve productivity.
- We need to develop a narrative that people can buy into so that the future is sustainable and they own their own economic growth.

### Hopes and Fears

At the beginning of the event we used the Slido application to facilitate a poll of the 'Hopes and Fears' of our region. We asked attendees to contribute to the poll and below is the transcript of entries, which have been grouped into themes.

#### Hopes:

##### Good employment

- Hope: strong employment
- Hope for highly and appropriately skilled workforce for the future
- Hope that there are interesting and innovative jobs created that can compete with London

##### Growth of Gatwick

- Hope: Gatwick gets a 2nd runway

##### Improved transport infrastructure

- Hope for improved Thameslink - Norwood Junction / East Croydon / Brighton
- Hope for better transport links - A27

##### Quality of Life

- To help the most deprived areas in coast to capital
- Hope that the LIS enhances quality of life in the region
- Hope: improving coastal destinations

##### Gain recognition for stand out assets

- Hope for recognition of the economic importance of area by Government Hope
- Hope: Recognised tech hotspot, using next generation/5G to be the best connected region

- Improved recognition for the area to attract investment

#### Retention of young people and graduates

- Housing and infrastructure improvements mean that we can retain young people and innovation in area
- Hope - I moved here because I love it. I would like my children to feel the same way...
- Hope. I hope that the number of Apprenticeships and job opportunities will increase for all young people

#### Environment/Climate change

- Hope to clean up the air
- Economic development does not progress at the expense of the environment
- We will rapidly transform to a net zero economy in line with the new UK 2050 commitment

#### Sustainable Growth

- Hope - the economy can continue to grow and be sustainable.
- Hope for truly sustainable growth which includes investment in natural capital
- That it has a sustainable future which balances economic, environmental and social goals.
- Hope - we can develop an exciting green tech based future in industry and farming e.g. bioplastics, renewables, sustainable farming

#### Meeting our potential

- Hope: Region can catch up with performance of other LEP areas and meet potential
- Hope- the region can meet its potential

#### Communication

- Hope better communication with small businesses on lep benefits
- Be better co-ordinated.

#### Improved productivity

- Hope - that we can find innovative ways to increase productivity in the region.
- Hope - more businesses moving into the area
- To retain and attract the most exciting, growing, job creating companies to the area

#### Sustainable transport

- Hope that investment in sustainable travel choices can be accelerated

#### **Fears:**

#### Poor transport infrastructure

- Fear: inadequate road infrastructure for business to be productive
- A27 is unresolved is a big fear
- Fear congestion will get worse
- Fear - transport infrastructure weakness will become too big a drag on economy
- Not enough travel connectivity

### Environment

- Fear that the energy revolution isn't well understood and being tackled, lots of amazing opportunities is source of hope
- Fear: CLIMATE CHANGE!!!
- Fear: environment

### The region cannot attract Government attention

- Fear we are overlooked for future UKSPF funding in favour of Government favourites North & Midlands
- Fear - that the region is overlooked by Government who continue to prioritise channeling limited funds to the Combined Mayoral Authorities in the Midlands and North
- Fear - area of declining relevance to Government compared to northern powerhouse
- Fear that central government focus is to the north and the south east becomes left behind...

### Declining retail sector

- Fear high streets are dying

### Competing priorities

- Fear: that we get distracted by Government into wasting our energy on local government reorganisation

### Stalled economy

- Fear: That growth may be stifled because talk of a joined up mobility or transport approach is silenced by the desires of car users
- Fear that too many business closing
- Loss of sizable business relocating to Europe
- Lack of critical mass for economic development

### Brexit

- FEAR: The impact Brexit will have on the economy and our region!
- Post Brexit drain of Government support for industry in C2C

## Roundtable discussions

The event ended with facilitated roundtable discussions with attendees providing feedback on the session and suggestions for the future. The themes of those discussions are detailed below.

Themes:

- Developing our strengths/assets, e.g., creative, digital, 5G railway, Gatwick airport, Manor Royal, rural economy etc.
- Agreement on the prioritisation of the Grand Challenges and economic priorities
- Further develop our international opportunities
- Retention and development of young people/skills
- Improving skills provision across the area – responding to business needs
- Maximise the strengths of our mature workforce and opportunities for up-skilling
- Define Coast to Capital USP, e.g., Natural capital, innovation ecosystem
- Clear messages
- Further engagement with universities on LIS development
- Increase awareness of LIS activities
- Partnership working with comparator LEPs, e.g., SELEP
- Improving our productivity is key to the future success of the region
- Further developing Gatwick as a key economic driver
- Address misconceptions of the region
- Develop a clear, focused and flexible strategy with a detailed implementation plan – be more than a strategy, remain flexible
- Understanding employment in our region – mix of deprivation and wealth
- Encouraging businesses to invest locally
- Improving digital and rail connectivity
- Loss of business space to residential developments
- Bringing our communities together
- We have world leading SMEs but most do not want to expand further
- Our diverse region makes us resilient – need to explore this further
- Need to develop a narrative for the area – are we ambitious enough?
- Need to coordinate plans in order to monopolise on growth through London to Gatwick corridor
- Merging the cultural/generational divide through bespoke training
- Diversification of high streets – e.g., pop-up shops, etc.
- Prepare in advance to be in the best place to apply for future Government funding