

Stroud District Council Economic Development Strategy

2022- 2032

March 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Stroud District has a strong and prosperous economy and is home to world class companies and innovative, resilient and successful small business sector. Yet we face both short term and long term challenges to local economic prosperity.

The District Council's new Council Plan focuses on three distinct priorities, one of which is around supporting a thriving and resilient local economy through:

- helping our high streets and businesses to recover from the impacts of Covid-19;
- delivering key regeneration sites for local job and homes;
- promoting the district to attract investment in key infrastructure and jobs;
- providing support for local businesses to grow, keeping wealth in the district and supporting local supply chains and offering rewarding local jobs;
- adopting the Local Plan to provide the strategic planning framework for prosperity

To achieve our aims this Economic Development Strategy sets out in more detail what we will do, how we will work with our partners and what the outcomes will be. Our Strategy looks forward over the next ten years and aligns with other Council plans and strategies and those of our partners. It builds upon current economic information and national and county economic policies, strategies and plans.

Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is therefore to:

- provide a consistent vision with clear objectives and priorities for our district's economy;
- set out how the objectives and priorities will be translated into a framework for change together with the commitments needed;
- identify our role as a leader and exemplar within the local economy as well as an enabler and encourager of the activities of our public partners and the business community; and
- establish how we will measure and evaluate outcomes.

Strategies and Plans

The Strategy takes into account national, regional and county policies, strategies and plans relating to the economy. A brief summary of these key documents is set out in Appendix 1.

The Strategy has also been shaped by, and will integrate with, the District Council's other plans and strategies which are intended to have a positive impact upon the local economy. These include:

- Council Plan 2021-2026
- Stroud District 2030 Strategy and Masterplan
- Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 to 2041
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Equality Action Plan 2021-2025
- Stroud District Local Plan (2015 and emerging 2021), and related policies
- Stroud Districts Canal Strategy

The Strategy will complement the work streams of colleagues in the Council, including, but not limited to Planning and Economic Development, Community Services, Health and Wellbeing and Housing Services.

A brief profile of our local economy

- Stroud District is home to a large number of businesses, with c.6,000 enterprises located in the area, 89.5%¹ of which employ less than 10 employees and only 0.3%¹ of our businesses exceeding 250 employees.
- Businesses are varied, with the largest number 18.4% classed as within the Professional, Scientific and Technical sector, 12.7% within the Construction sector, 12.7% and 8.4% within Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing².
- The sectors with the greatest employees are: Manufacturing 20%, Wholesale, Retail and Repair of Motor Vehicles 16% and Human Health and Social Work 12%. The manufacturing employment rates are well above the national average of 8%³.
- Gross Value Added (GVA) is in excess of £2,642m (2018) including Manufacturing, £818m; Accommodation and Food, £104m; and Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste, £85m and Construction, £199m, further evidencing how the Manufacturing sector in the district is bucking national trends and seeing growth in both employees and productivity.⁴
- Stroud is a well-educated district, with higher qualified residents than the national average. However, within Gloucestershire, Stroud District sits within the bottom half of skills levels.⁵
- Stroud District has the second lowest unemployment figures across Gloucestershire, with only 3% of the residents currently unemployed. This is significantly lower than the national average of 4.8% unemployment.⁶
- Stroud Districts earnings by residence sit within the lower half of the County, at only £578.20 per week. This is however, higher than the national average. Earnings by place of work, are below the national average at £594.1 per week, rather than £612.8 per week. However, the district is the third highest across Gloucestershire.⁷
- The working age population is projected to decrease by 2% by 2030, whilst the older population (65 years+) is due to increase by 3.6%, having a significant impact on the availability of workers and an increased need for care provision in the district.⁸

1 – NOMIS, UK business counts, 2021; 2 – ONS, Number of VAT/PAYE Enterprises, 2020; 3 – NOMIS, Employee Jobs, 2020; 4 – ONS, Regional Gross Value Added by industry, 2018; 5 – NOMIS, Qualifications 2020; 6 – NOMIS, Labour Supply, 2021; 7 – NOMIS, Earning by residence / place of work 2021; 8 – ONS, Population Projections, 2018

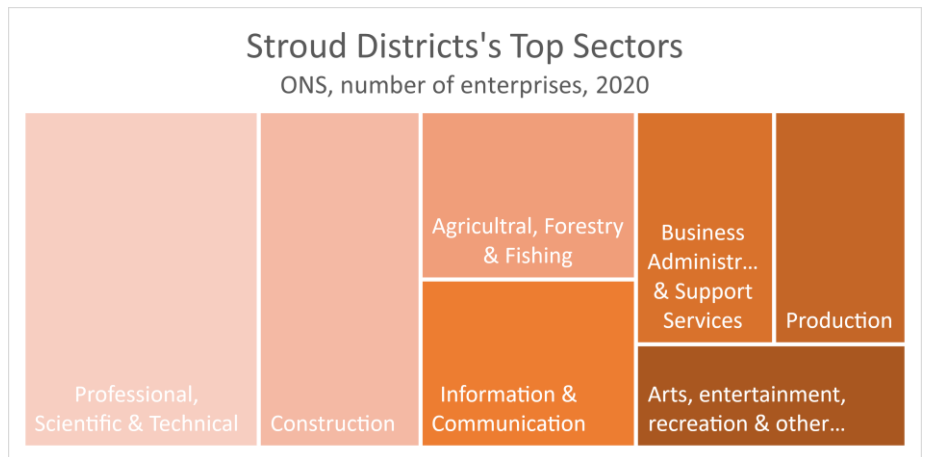
A brief profile of our local economy cont.

Population:
120,000

Projected population by 2030: 128,242
ONS Population Projection, 2018

Working Age Population:
72,000

51.4% qualified to NVQ4 or above
(11% more than UK average)
NOMIS, Stroud Profile, 2020



Qualification	Stroud District	Stroud District %	GB %
NVQ 4 & Above	33,4000	46.4%	43.1%
NVQ 3 & Above	45,400	63.1%	61.3%
NVQ 2 & Above	55,900	77.6%	78.1%
NVQ 1 & Above	65,300	90.7%	87.7%

Weekly earnings by residence:

£578.20

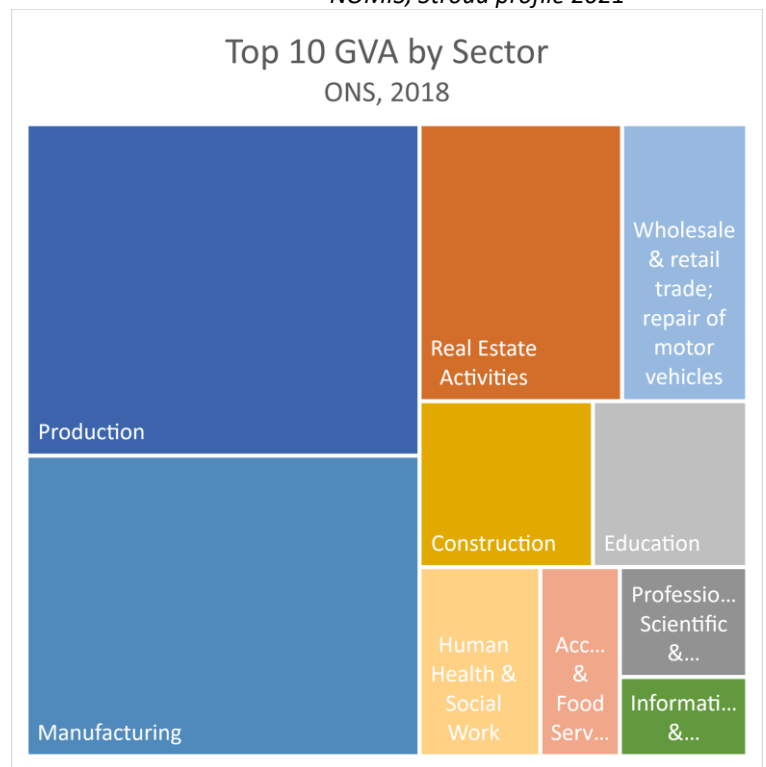
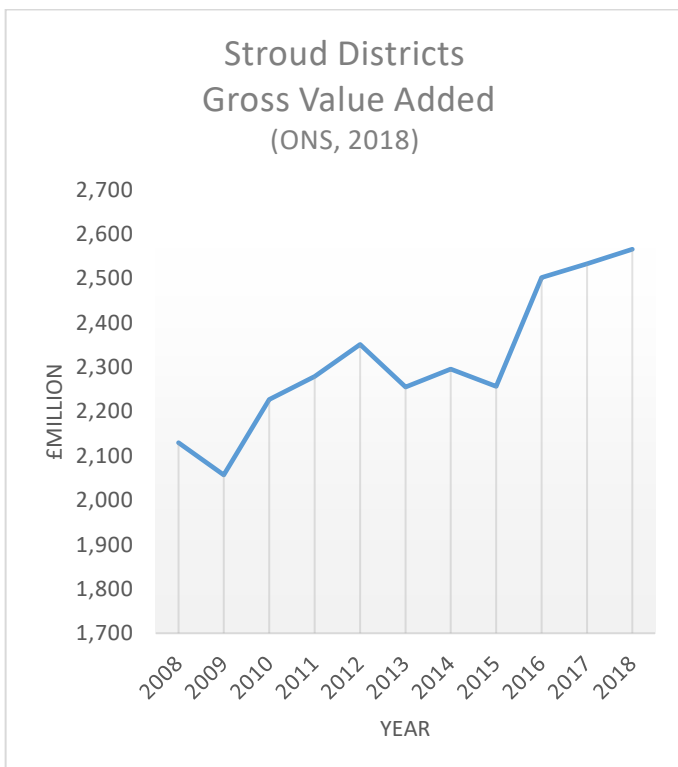
*6% less than UK av.

Weekly earnings by workplace:

£594.10

*3% less than UK av.

NOMIS, Stroud profile 2021



Current issues and challenges

Covid-19

Stroud District, like everywhere else in the UK, has been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Many businesses had to close their doors to trade, with food and hospitality, tourism and High Street businesses particularly heavily impacted. At the height of the pandemic, over 9,000 employees within the district were furloughed and unemployment rose and this has led to further disparities between more affluent and poorer areas in the district.

Some impacts from the pandemic are expected to be with us permanently; changes in working patterns to a more flexible and blended approach, an increased need for reliable and fast broadband connection, and advances in the transition to online shopping. However, there may also be opportunities to translate short term change into longer term patterns of behaviours, for example an emphasis on staycations rather than foreign travel.

Brexit

The UK's departure from the European Union has resulted in impacts on the local economy. The UK Trade Info reported a 12% decline in exports to the EU in February 2021 compared with the previous year and localised data gathered by the Federation of Small Businesses shows 20% of South West businesses have temporarily halted EU sales. As well as a reduction in exports to the EU, there are also signs of shortages within the workforce and labour market. In particular, the Tourism, Agriculture, Construction and Health Care sectors are anticipated to be most impacted.

The longer term impacts of Brexit are less certain at this stage, and there may be potential opportunities from reforms to the procurement system and international market opportunities as trade agreements are signed.

Longer term issues

There are a number of longer term issues and challenges which the Stroud District economy faces. Some of these are related to the structural characteristics of the local economy and some related to population and demographic change predicted over the next ten years. A full SWOT analysis of the local economy is set out in Appendix 2.

- Our economy has existing strengths and specialisms in the manufacturing sector, especially Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing (AEM). Whilst there is potential vulnerability if over-reliance is placed on these sectors, they offer major opportunities for strengthening Stroud District's economic role and developing a high skilled economy.
- There is a high proportion of SMEs and entrepreneurs in Stroud District, which provides an excellent opportunity for growth and innovation, but smaller businesses can also find it harder to improve productivity and future plan.
- The changing age profile of our district presents challenges, exacerbated by difficulties in retaining younger people and in attracting returners. The district's distinctive natural and built environment offers an enviable lifestyle and more could be made of this when attracting and retaining skilled workers.
- Stroud is a well-educated district, with higher qualified residents than the national average. However, within Gloucestershire, Stroud District sits within the bottom half of

skills levels, and due to out-commuting and the skills drains to larger towns and cities, our businesses struggle to employ the skilled workforce they need.

- There is considerable out-commuting to work within the district, which presents a big challenge if we are to reduce our district’s carbon footprint.
- There are well established commercial markets within the A38/M5 corridor, at Stonehouse, Stroud, Cam/Dursley, Berkeley/Sharpness and the Stroud Valleys where future economic needs will require further business space provision to meet the needs of specific sectors and businesses.
- There is a perceived lack of well-connected grow on space within the district. Twinned with a lack of affordable and connected commercial space sees the start-up rates of the district much lower than National rates, 10% compared to 32% over the last ten years.
- A recent reduction in occupied office space within the market towns has impacted on market town spend; however, there are opportunities to develop new more flexible workspace, including co-working space and to repurpose vacant units in town centres for other commercial and community uses.
- There are real opportunities for the district to take advantage of the “staycation” trend by marketing the district effectively as a tourist location. Improvements to our High Streets and visitor attractions will support Stroud becoming a year round destination and see residents accessing opportunities in their own district.
- Connectivity of public transport to hinterlands and work spaces in the district is poor, making the accessibility of some workspaces hard to access for low income residents. There are, however, opportunities to extend walking and cycling infrastructure and to design new developments to support access by public transport.
- Whilst Fastershire is making improvements to the broadband coverage of the district there are still areas with poor connectivity. This impacts on both businesses choosing to be based in Stroud, on businesses productivity and residents’ confidence working from home.

*Diagram showing location of District within County
and key local employment areas, places and connections within the District*

VISION

Our ambition is to support a sustainable, inclusive, thriving and resilient economy for our businesses, communities and visitors

Stroud District has a historic commitment to social justice and to make a just transition to a low carbon economy. We need to learn how to live well without pushing our demands beyond the limit of what our planet can support. We will learn from good practice in our own district and from leaders of place across the world to build an economic success story that reflects our district's unique strengths and opportunities in order to meet the challenges we face: rising inequality, recovery from the pandemic, and the climate emergency. In partnership with our communities, and the public and private sectors, we will harness our pride of place in our market towns and rural communities, in our unique natural environment and rich industrial heritage, to build in long term resilience and prosperity. We are committed to supporting innovation, creating locally led and distinctive approaches to economic recovery and progress and ensuring the benefits of economic development are retained locally. We believe in working to reduce inequalities and making sure that access to decent job and services is fair wherever you live.

Economic objective: Improve skills and opportunities and reduce inequality

We will work with partners to seek solutions that enable all residents fair access to valued, well paid and skilled jobs in the private sector but also the district's social enterprises, community interest companies and charities, in order that local people have a good quality of life that offers equal access to economic opportunities.

Economic objective: Reduce carbon and ecological impacts

As part of our ambitions to become the greenest district in the greenest County we will support businesses in their journey to become carbon neutral, stimulating a local, green economic sector. We will work with partners on the skills gap, encouraging the district to become a place to educate and deliver the skills needed to address and adapt to climate change. We will work to ensure businesses to have a greater awareness of their carbon footprint and have the tools to transition to a low carbon economy.

Economic objective: Boost our market towns and rural vitality

The vibrancy of our Market Towns is key to our district's resilience, with a wealth of independent traders offering a unique shopping experience within our High Streets whilst our towns provide the focus for our visitor economy and a rich arts and cultural offer, including festivals, live music and theatre which was strongly positioned prior to the pandemic. We will work with our market towns to recover from the pandemic and take advantage of the latest trends in the digital economy.

We remain a predominantly rural district, with rural areas increasingly diversifying from agricultural activities into the tourism and visitor economy, including an increase in self-catering accommodation and glamping sites. The closure of community shops and pubs and rising house prices is a threat to the vitality of our smaller rural communities. The connectivity of our hinterlands to our main towns is essential to ensuring the economy's continued development is inclusive and maximises the positive impact for all communities.

Economic objective: Support advanced and connected work spaces and communities

We must ensure that we facilitate the delivery of new employment premises and enhance existing business premises in the right locations and with the right infrastructure to meet commercial market requirements whilst being accessible to local communities. We need to consider how we can reduce the reliance on the car and continue to make improvements to our physical infrastructure to support walking, cycling and public transport. Access to superfast broadband is now essential to working life. We need to support accelerated rollout and also improvements to 4G and 5G phone coverage.

Economic objective: Support inward investment into the local economy

Seeking to support our businesses to access private and public investment is an ongoing priority for the Council. We also need to consider ways we can market effectively the district as a desirable business location to attract the right investment. At the same time, we want to capture existing community generated wealth creation, encourage local spend and develop local supply chains to maximise the value of local assets and ensure the benefits of economic development are retained locally.

Stroud District, at its heart, is a place with a sense of pride in our rich history and a vision for a better future; an innovative and progressive local economy emerging from an industrial past, set within a breath-taking environment. We possess an independent spirit that is entwined with our community led ethos, encouraging a resilient, locally led economy, not afraid of devising new ways of thinking and doing. It is vital in our future planning that we build upon our unique qualities and strengths and take the steps necessary to make Stroud District a place to live and thrive.

Priority areas

Whilst it is important to address these economic objectives for the economy as a whole, our analysis of the local economy and our review of national and county strategies and plans, has identified a series of key priority areas which drive our local economy and where the Strategy will be focussing efforts to deliver the Vision.

The Green Economy

There has been a national increase over the last decade in the green sector, with a particular focus on green technologies and innovative ways for us to live and utilise energy. The UK Government currently defines green sector businesses as those involved in: low-carbon heat and energy; alternative fuels; energy efficient products; low carbon services and low emission vehicles and infrastructure.

As a local authority with the commitment to protect and enhance our natural assets, we are proactively looking to green businesses to set up locally, supporting our ambition to be the district of choice for the emerging environmental technology sector.

The District Council is currently working closely with stakeholders to ensure the sector has access to the required skillset, with ambitious work in place already, considering the needs of specialist areas within low carbon energy and energy efficient products. However, further work is required to guarantee the district prioritises this evolving sector.

However, we want to ensure all businesses play their part in transitioning to a low carbon and cleaner economy. Further to this, we want to work with all businesses and communities to create an effective circular economy; considering different approaches to how we move people and goods around the district, the way businesses recycle, design products and consider alternative

management practices. We will work with businesses in the district across all sectors to transition to cleaner and greener ways of working; embedding positive climate change goals into their operations.

Retail and Hospitality

Stroud District is home to a range of retail and hospitality businesses; both sectors are heavily reliant on visitors and as such have been greatly affected due to the pandemic as well as longer term trends towards e-retailing in all its forms: click and collect; home deliveries; and online shopping.

There are opportunities to improve the quality of retail floor space provision within each of our main town centres in the district, although realism is required in relation to the ability for the main towns to significantly improve their respective market shares. The ongoing pattern of change suggests that for smaller retail centres such as those within our district, town centre strategies which support the evolution of the High Street are vital so we can capitalise on what makes our town centres distinctive and unique.

The UK's first national hospitality strategy was published August 2021, which outlines how to support businesses in the sector reopen and recover; with an ambitious vision to set out how the sector becomes resilient and dynamic. Businesses within this sector include cafes, restaurants, pubs, bars and nightclubs. One positive story to tell has been the rise in local food stores and food outlets, giving evidence to the trend of a newly emerging food and cafe culture. A further factor has been the growth in interest in locally sourced and organic foods and also the trend towards healthy eating.

Each of the market towns are well placed, with an array of independent retailers, public houses, restaurants and cafes, often in close proximity to tourist destinations. However, action needs to be taken to ensure the market towns thrive in the future landscape, establishing their own unique selling points and becoming destinations in their own right. Now is the opportunity to better connect communities with their market towns, enabling access to a wider variety of businesses as well as easier access for communities to services.

Tourism and the Visitor Economy

The tourism and the visitor economy sector made up 5% of the local economy in 2019 and was worth an estimated £112.4M GVA. However, more could be done to expand the tourism offer as outlined in the Economic Impact of Gloucestershire's Visitor Economy, 2019, the district ranks fifth out of the six Gloucestershire districts in terms of visitor numbers and third in terms of day visitors spend.

Stroud District forms part of "the Cotswolds" destination; whilst Cotswold District sees most of the tourism trade, the district has seen an increase in rural tourism including glamping and forms of farm diversification. We are committed to ensuring we take advantage of the increased interest in staycations through supporting low impact and sustainable forms of tourism.

Our market towns include a high concentration of independent retailers, with bespoke shops, galleries and popular farmer's markets that offer a unique experience when visiting. Because of this the location has a competitive offer when compared to other areas across the UK. This desirable combination of businesses in our market towns adds to the experiences on offer for tourists.

When considering the ratios of visitors to the area, our hoteliers note the high numbers of corporate visitors to the district. Whilst this means there are regular overnight trips to the area, the rates corporate visitors agree to are lower than the leisure market, meaning businesses have not seen

rates increase, but their overheads continue to increase year on year. There is a lack of accommodation and venues suitable for business events or training in the district near to transport hubs.

The Arts and Culture

Art and Culture contributed £58m to Stroud Districts GVA in 2018. A recent Arts Council and Centre for Economics and Business Research study found the sector to be highly productive with on average each FTE worker contributing £69,000 to the UK's economy.

There is a lively and diverse arts and culture scene within the district and performing space including at the Sub Rooms and Under the Edge Arts, but the sector has been impacted significantly by the pandemic. We must do everything we can to ensure venues can return; once more opening their doors to residents and visitors alike.

The arts and culture sector has wider socio-economic benefits creating a sense of community and civic pride and increasing health and wellbeing benefits. In addition, the more the sector grows, the more tourists and inward investment it will attract.

Moving forward we will look at how to support the sector's resilience and how to ensure they embrace environmental sustainability and digital technologies. We will work with community groups to offer creative opportunities to children and young people across the district, giving them the chances to grow their capacity for creativity. Working with partners we will encourage businesses to start up, increasing the jobs and accessibility of sector.

Agriculture, Agritech and Rural Diversification

Stroud District is largely a rural location, with communities living and working within a countryside setting. We are home to a variety of rural businesses. In addition to traditional farming, the district has seen increased diversification of agricultural businesses into the visitor economy, with farms utilising space for camping, glamping and self-contained holiday lets.

Recently, there has been an increased focus on the district's agritech business base, with the sector prioritised in GFirstLEP's Local Industrial Strategy. Stroud District is well placed to see continued advances within agritech businesses; situated within close proximity to the Royal Agricultural University where higher and further education courses are available as well as short courses and knowledge transfer partnerships on offer.

Businesses and consumers are also becoming more focussed on the circular economy of food and farming, bringing positive impacts to the sector. These aspirations compliment the needs of the wider Gloucestershire area which has ambitions to be a testbed for agricultural innovation.

The sector has faced a number of recent challenges relating to the pandemic, including a surplus of harvested crops and dairy and difficulties with staffing levels twinned with trading and markets uncertainties relating to Brexit. There are longer term challenges ahead relating to changes to land management practices and subsidy arrangements to support increasing rural biodiversity objectives. In addition, with the increased unaffordability of house prices in rural locations and continued poor accessibility to the district's hinterlands via public transport, rural businesses face difficulty recruiting and retaining staff.

We will consider ways to support our agricultural and land based businesses including to support Government schemes such as the Environmental Land Management schemes, considering how the rural economy will achieve its goals whilst committing to net zero emissions by 2030. This strategy looks at ways we can support this sector to become more resilient given these challenges.

Manufacturing and Advanced Engineering

Stroud District's manufacturing and advanced engineering sector continues to see year on year improvements, increasing its gross value added (GVA) and employment base. This is despite a decline within national trends. This is due to the district being home to high end manufacturing and advanced engineering businesses that have a strong focus on research and development.

Furthermore, Stroud District is well connected to the surrounding areas, such as Cheltenham and Gloucester, presenting a strong supply chain network within the county.

The districts manufacturing and advanced engineering businesses are innovative and forward thinking. Many of our businesses have been awarded Innovate UK grants, accessed national pilot schemes and supported the Country with the manufacturing of essential medical equipment during the pandemic. The strength of innovation through advanced engineering and manufacturing sector, positions Stroud District strongly to be at the forefront of low carbon technologies in particular.

Our businesses within manufacturing and advanced engineering are dispersed across the district, with clusters found around the key employment sites at Quedgeley, at Stonehouse, along the Stroud Valleys, at Berkeley and at Kingswood/Wotton Under Edge. With businesses in a range of specialities, including medical tech, automotive engineering and aerospace engineering, the sector is not constrained to one focus.

We recognise the strength and concentration of the manufacturing and advanced engineering within the district. We must look at ways to support their growth and development, including identifying sites and premises and the infrastructure required to support them.

Proposed commitments

Stroud District Council has an important role to play in the economy's future. As a major employer and provider of services ourselves, we must become an **exemplar**, creating a circular economy through our own procurement practices, leading on key regeneration activities and supporting our staff to develop their careers through our internal skills agenda.

Through our policies and our work in partnership with other lead organisations and businesses we can **enable** entrepreneurs to start up, promote the district as a first choice for businesses and help to align public services to the needs of our businesses; and **encourage** innovation within the local business community, supporting key stakeholders to unlock new economic opportunities.

The following table sets out a series of high level commitments which the Council will make over the ten-year period of the ED Strategy, as exemplar, as an enabler and encourager, to achieve the economic objectives set out within our Vision.

The commitments set out how the Council will intervene within each of the priority areas to deliver each of the economic objectives.

Commitment Key

The Green Economy
Retail & Hospitality
Tourism & Visitor Economy
The Arts & Culture
Agriculture, Agritech & Rural Diversification
Manufacturing & Advanced Engineering

Key Economic Objectives	Proposed Commitments		
	Be an Exemplar in our own estates and practices by	Be an Enabler as a partner and policy maker by	Be an Encourager informing and incentivising locally led action by
Improve skills and opportunities and reduce inequality	Work towards the retrofitting of all Council owned properties and working with local education training providers to develop and pilot training schemes in this specialist area.	Work in partnership with the LEP, County Council and education providers to address the skills needs of our local workforce and develop green sector specialist courses.	Partner with Further and Higher Education facilities to support businesses gain access to research and development opportunities within the green sector.
	Take on apprentices and upskill staff within the Council owned hospitality trade through our recruitment methods and HR practices.	Continue to work with partners such as DWP to support residents to take up retraining and back to work opportunities within the retail and hospitality sectors.	Utilise websites focussed on careers and skills support such as the skills portal and careers hub, these sites offer support and information on next steps when considering careers change and retraining.
	The Council will allocate resources and recruit a Tourism Officer to bring skills into the district which will promote tourism across Stroud District.	Work with the districts education provision, delivery partners such as DWP and tourist businesses to ensure residents have access to skills within the sector across all levels.	Work with partners to disseminate information including the LEP skills portal and Growth Hub to increase skills and retention within the sector.
	Develop initiatives that extend the community reach of the Councils arts and culture assets to new audiences.	Work in partnership with parishes and arts and culture businesses to market the career opportunities available across the District.	Support the arts and culture businesses to encourage residents access their provision.
	Develop a local food partnership that prioritises skills in circular economy and food production.	We will continue to work with partners across the County who can support businesses in our rural hinterlands access a new workforce and skills.	Access training on offer across the district through the promotion of college events and the LEP's skills portal.
	Promote the higher skills requirements of the sector through events, job fairs and networking.	Work with education providers to increase uptake of courses that encourages innovative and prosperous ways of working for the	Take up apprenticeship opportunities at all levels in the sector, ensuring the Districts manufacturing an advanced

		sector and continues to see GVA increases.	engineering businesses have access to their required skills.
Create advanced and connected work spaces and communities	Deliver initiatives that enable Stroud District Council's employees and visitors to use sustainable and active transport methods.	Develop opportunities for businesses and residents to make improvements to their connectivity that enable greener methods of work and travel.	Work with business groups to share best practices amongst local businesses, advocating carbon neutral changes to working practices.
	Create new procurement policies that enable Council owned food and beverage businesses to utilise local supply chain.	Continue to highlight the needs of businesses to partners to ensure all retail and food and beverage outlets have access to reliable and fast internet connectivity, giving them the chance to utilise modern payment methods.	Market best practice examples of businesses utilising net zero / carbon neutral delivery methods to customers.
	Continue to progress the restoration of Cotswolds Canal, connecting communities and increase visitor spend.	Work with partners to improve digital connectivity in rural locations, utilise marketing tools such as QR codes and virtual maps.	Utilise effective marketing that will encourage visitors to see the District as a year round destination.
	Review the Councils estate to find innovative ways to deliver fit for purpose commercial space for our arts and culture businesses.	Work with partners such as the County Council and broadband providers to develop opportunities for digital arts showcases.	Develop the community hubs in a way that promotes arts and culture provision, extending the reach and opportunities within the Districts.
	Continue to develop policies that increase the connectivity of our rural hinterlands, both physically and digitally, including the continued improvements to the canal corridor as an active commuting route.	Work with public transport providers and the County Council to develop better access for our hinterland locations.	Take up improved digital connectivity that will increase the reliability of the service to rural locations.
	Prioritise the marketing of Growth Hub activities for the sector and increase the uptake of support, particularly for our small and medium business base to ensure they	Plan for new business parks to meet the needs of the sector to be located in accessible areas through Local Plan policies, identifying and delivering major employment sites with key infrastructure.	Support the sectors accessibility of a local supply chain, encouraging a circular economy and retain spend within the District, evidencing we are an innovative and a forward thinking business destination.

	capitalise on opportunities currently available.		
Reduce carbon and ecological impacts	Ensure Stroud District estate are working towards becoming green work places through the use of and opportunities to store green energy and retrofit buildings.	Develop initiatives that encourage green working practices, positive changes to businesses ecological impact and prioritises the use of a circular economy.	Support businesses and local partners to consider green property ambitions, encouraging uptake of new energy methods and retrofitting to decrease carbon footprint.
	Initiate a programme of sustainable measures at Council owned public parking facilities at retail centres to support modal shift to active travel and public transport.	Enable the Districts hospitality businesses to reduce their ecological impact through increased local supply chains and improving their carbon food print and consider how they access community farms and orchards.	Support businesses to access food standards in environmental health and understand how they can reduce food waste.
	The Council will change the management of our estate to improve biodiversity and sequestration of our green spaces.	Create safe and accessible active travel routes from public transport hubs, creating effective last mile routes to tourism destinations.	Take up sustainable working practices by promoting the benefits and success stories of businesses within the district.
	All Council owned arts and culture assets will become net carbon zero and seek to make biodiversity enhancements, ensuring that the promotion of sustainable ways of working is done in a positive way.	Enable through working with the artistic and creative sectors to raise levels of engagement with the natural world and raise the profile of the climate and ecological emergency to have a positive impact.	
	Develop procurement policy and practices to support local food production and local supply chains.	Promote the funding initiatives to businesses in rural locations to make both sustainable improvements and encourage positive land use practices such as tree planting, re-wilding and natural flood management to the Districts eco-system to commercial properties.	Encourage businesses in rural locations to take up funding initiatives and business support that is available through partners including growth hubs to transition to sustainable practices.

	Support procurement from local businesses within the sector that can demonstrate development of low carbon goods and services.	Explore agri-tech opportunities for businesses and how they can be supported to create carbon neutral farms with improved access to technology.	Encourage the business base to consider modern practices that enable them to be greener through higher energy efficiency and low carbon production. We could do this through encouraging the shift to net zero practices through awards and accreditations.
Boost our market towns and rural vitality	Initiate a programme of measures at Council owned parking facilities to support modal shift to active travel and public transport and improve access to EV charging points.	Continue to work with transport bodies to develop better transport links that improve services between rural areas and local town centres.	Encourage businesses in the District to consider sustainable and active last mile deliver methods.
	Use Council land to support the regeneration proposals that will positively impact the retail and the night time economy.	Look to new ways of working within retail centres including “bank hubs” and maximise the opportunities for health hubs that bring back essential services for communities and businesses alike.	Develop an online presence for the Districts retail and hospitality businesses by disseminating best practice and sharing social media campaigns.
	The Council will facilitate better access to our market town centres through sustainable travel methods, including the regenerating canal corridor sites	Work in partnership with stakeholders to better promote the market towns as a tourist destination, sharing the positive experiences of visitors and creating an itinerary offer of events including the various farmer’s markets.	Identify ways extend the season and rethink the opportunities and visitor’s needs through the creation of a micro tourism offer
	Promote a programme of arts and culture events and festivals across the district that will increase attendance and economic impacts.	Facilitation of market town meetings and working with partners to understand needs through the creation of an effective network that establishes the unique needs of each area.	

	The Council will employ a dedicated resource to support the market towns vitality and connection to rural hinterland, seeking to support recovery through the delivery of unique initiatives to each location.	Develop and deliver Local Plan policies that will enable rural diversification.	Access and spend at local food markets where the districts businesses bring produce to market and encourage visitors to engage in the town.
	Investigate the opportunity for delivering start up units and shared working space for manufacturing and advanced engineering businesses, reducing their barriers to market.	Work with partners, from the private and public sectors to ensure advanced engineering and manufacturing businesses are well connected and are confident working from our rural locations with excellent access to business parks.	Invest in our well connected rural locations through effective marketing of the Districts hinterlands.
Support inward investment into the local economy	Continue to focus on how Stroud District Council develop sites and attract new, green businesses to the area.	Enable businesses in the District to access private sector investment through effective marketing of the Districts assets including our sustainable transport links, digital connectivity and green skills.	Encourage the creation of localised supply chains within the District to attract new businesses into the area.
	Continue to deliver support for the food and farmers markets through use of the land and effective marketing.	Support retail and hospitality businesses access sector specific support through key organisations such as the Growth Hub.	Encourage our retail and hospitality businesses to better promote their offers with access to increased skills of effective online marketing.
	Promote the Council's and districts assets through branded campaigns, both in partnership with Destination Management Organisations and as Stroud District Council.	Work with neighbouring authorities and Destination Management Organisations to create and coordinate accessible tourism information.	Encourage businesses to better promote themselves and increase the visibility of their businesses online including taking up support through partner and business support channels.
	Continue the Canal Corridor regeneration project, seeking to encourage visitors and localised tourists to access the canal as a key	Continue to work with partners to develop effective marketing material that enable inward investment from the private sector.	Take up opportunities of funding through the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Arts Council to deliver new programmes of work and

	area of interest and as a mode of travel.		increase the positive impacts of the sector.
	Promote best practice through our local food and drink production that will support to identify the District as a preferred place to do business.	Promote available Agri-tech courses at Higher and Further Education facilities to enable our businesses access development opportunities that offer improved productivity.	Encourage new ways of working and attendance of exhibitions for rural business owners to alter their work practices to ways that support inward investment.
	Support the website offer and one stop shop approach of the Councils support to businesses with a dedicated resource for the sector and promoting the district as a location for advanced engineering.	Work in partnership with LEP to develop funding bids for investment into local businesses and improving local infrastructure.	Encouraging the take up of existing support networks within the sector through the support available including the Growth Hub and national support on offer.

What the Strategy means for places

The profile of the current local economy means that economic activity and employment is not evenly distributed across the district. Sectors of the local economy have different locational requirements and reflect the availability of labour, access to key markets and key services and infrastructure. Equally this Strategy is focussing on key priority areas which are not currently evenly distributed across the district.

Whilst the Strategy will seek to support businesses' locational requirements, we will also seek to work with businesses, stakeholders and town and parish councils with the objective of spreading prosperity to all parts of the district, diversifying the local economy and providing resilience to local communities.

The delivery of specific physical projects will have particular regard to local development policies set out in the District Local Plan and neighbourhood development plans.

DELIVERY

Measuring success

We need to ensure that the ED Strategy delivers success for the district. If we aspire to a genuine 'green economy', in order to measure success, we therefore need to look beyond GDP and GVA. These are now being questioned as sufficient measures of success as their increases closely match the ongoing increases in CO2 emissions. We can no longer simply accept 'growth' as a measure of success alongside persisting inequality and the need to live within the finite resources of the planet. Our strategy will reflect more recent thinking on how to measure 'success' for which we can draw on some emerging tools being used by other localities.

The following table sets out the range of outcomes we believe will demonstrate the successful delivery of the ED Strategy for each of our economic objectives.

Key Economic Objectives	Proposed Outcomes
Improve skills and opportunities and reduce inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decrease in unemployment figures ▪ Reductions of NEET figures ▪ Increase in average residential gross weekly pay ▪ Increase in number of businesses accessing Growth Hub intervention and support ▪ Reduction of LSOA areas sitting in top 3 deprived areas ▪ More Living Wage Employers ▪ Increase in trade union membership ▪ Greater number of apprentices ▪ Reduced gender pay gap
Support advanced and connected work spaces and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percentage increase of digital connectivity ▪ Improvement in rail facilities ▪ Amount of new commercial space completed ▪ Amount of brownfield sites bought forward for re-development ▪ Increase in business start-up and decrease of closure rates ▪ Number of businesses in the district ▪ Greater diversity of business models: cooperatives, social enterprises, community interest companies
Reduce carbon and ecological impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in businesses powered by clean energy ▪ Number of EV charging points ▪ Number of green tech sector businesses in the district ▪ Number of retrofitted commercial sites ▪ Increase in active travel for commuting
Boost our market towns and rural vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decrease in Town Centre vacancy rates ▪ Increased Town Centre footfall rates ▪ Increased employment in towns ▪ Increase in community shops and pubs ▪ Increased connectivity of hinterland locations ▪ Increase of businesses within market towns and rural locations
Support inward investment into the local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in number of day and overnight visitors ▪ Increase in tourist spend in the district ▪ Increase in GVA ▪ Increase of local businesses awarded procurement contracts ▪ Higher local spend by key anchor institutions

Developing an Action Plan

The ED Strategy sets out a vision, objectives and high level commitments for a ten-year period. We have worked up these commitments into an initial Short Term Action Plan to identify specific deliverable projects and programmes for the period to 2025. This is set out in Appendix 3. This will be subject to regular review to ensure actions keep pace with evolving issues and challenges. The vision of the Strategy to support a sustainable, inclusive and thriving economy is one owned by the whole Council, with teams working in partnership to maximise the opportunities and support available for the area's businesses and communities. Consequently, the Strategy incorporates commitments relating to existing and proposed projects derived from other Council strategies and plans. Our priorities and objectives are cross-cutting and owned by the whole Council, and many of the projects and activities will not be solely the responsibility of one service, but a number of services.

Working in partnership

We cannot do all of this alone. Much of the ED Strategy will be delivered by partners and stakeholders. Key partners that will support us meet the needs of the local economy are wide ranging and include:

- **Public bodies** such as the County Council, neighbouring local authorities and those within the Western Gateway and town and parish councils, have the ability to work together with Government agencies to unlock national and local funding support to deliver and facilitate positive change for local communities and the local economy.
- **Businesses** from all sectors and sizes are integral partners, working with public bodies to ensure their needs are understood and interventions are what they need to support them drive the local economy.
- **Business partnerships** including GFirstLEP, Western Gateway the Stroud Growth Hub, Federation of Small Businesses, Chambers of Trade and sector or area specific local partnerships have a powerful voice advocating on behalf of businesses to central and local government to ensure their needs are represented.
- **Community hubs and social enterprises** are well established, central points of contact into the community. They are places residents feels safe and are the grass roots networks across Stroud District. They provide a valuable means by which public bodies can understand the needs of our communities.