

Addendum to West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth (WKPEG) Action Plan 2019-22 – amended 22 January 21

West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth 2019-22

The WKP agreed its priorities in 2019, and published *West Kent Economic Priorities for Growth (2019-2022)*. In this strategy the key objectives of the West Kent Partnership are to:

- Deliver a dynamic and well-connected economy;
- Become a key location for business growth where businesses are supported to innovate and thrive; and
- Ensure our local population has access to skills development opportunities and high quality jobs

The Strategy states that it will support local businesses to maintain and enhance productivity through five themes:

- Ideas: Securing investment and funding to underpin innovation and growth
- People: Delivering the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network to secure its future workforce and championing training and inclusivity in the workplace
- Infrastructure: Representing the need for infrastructure and transport investment for West Kent at a local, county and regional level
- Business environment: Delivering an environment that supports start-ups and stimulates growth
- Place: Engendering a strong West Kent sense of place with vibrant town centres and a sustainable rural environment. Quality of life maintained and enhanced with a balanced approach to development and equal opportunity for all.

Recovery

This Addendum to *West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth 2019-22* has a focus on economic recovery and opportunity and aligns with the Kent and Medway Renewal and Resilience Strategy and West Kent district/borough recovery strategies. Current work streams and proposed actions in the Addendum reflect the challenges for businesses, people and the economy in the current Covid-19 crisis. The action plan seeks to meet the specific needs of our local economy to promote growth coming out of recovery and to complement the support available elsewhere.

COVID-19 continues to have a severe and damaging effect on local, regional and national economies. This addendum proposes some potential short term measures to deliver more resilience in West Kent's economic recovery. The amended WKPEG action plan in this addendum incorporates these shorter term priorities with the medium term aspirations of the WKPEG.

The action plan has an increased emphasis on the importance of skills to support sector needs moving into growth from recovery. The WKP will support the work of the Kent & Medway Employment Task Force, *which will be temporary, task-oriented and focused on the central challenge of rising unemployment and what partners collectively*

need to do to limit and reverse it. It will exist in the context of the Government's proposed interventions, and will identify how these can be best supported, and where they can be supplemented by additional local action.

Young people are particularly at risk of disadvantage by the fall-out from COVID-19 impacting on future career opportunities. Getting this cohort into work is front and forward in our approach. In West Kent, unemployment for 18-24 year olds has risen from under 2% and 480 young people in August 2019 to around 8.5% and 1920 young people in August 2020 (Nomis). It is significantly higher now than for the West Kent population aged 18-64 which stands at 4.5%. With this priority in mind, the West Kent Partnership (though Sevenoaks District Council) is registered as a Kickstart Gateway and will facilitate placements for young people with West Kent businesses in the first tranche of the scheme. [Kickstart West Kent landing page](#)

Short Term Priorities

- Delivering a West Kent Kickstart programme to support WK employers and young people
- Strategic engagement between WKP and WKEAN with Hadlow and West Kent Colleges on skills for young people and reskilling the older workforce
- Support reskilling to meet sector demand. Work through West Kent skills sub group to develop Construction skills opportunities, particularly around Government's £3Bn investment in home efficiency, and around major developments that will take place in the County (such as London Resort, LTC)
- Adapting delivery of WK Business Rates Retention Programme to promote business growth, in the light of Covid-19
- Collaboration in bringing forward new shared work spaces and models and exploring opportunities arising from decreased commuting numbers
- Enhanced delivery of WKEAN to bring forward the workforce of the future
 - Developing innovative model with the intention of delivering a cost neutral West Kent Hub September 21-August 24
 - Consolidating initiatives introduced during lockdown especially the training modules being developed by WKEAN and rolled out to Kent and wider networks
 - Developing initiatives in collaboration with business volunteer Enterprise Advisers to deliver meaningful world of work experiences within the current economic climate
 - Meeting co-funders targets and working collaboratively with colleagues at The Education People (TEP)
 - Maximising opportunities to develop networking, social media and communications interactions
- Seeking new ways to deliver business support and events that complement activity at a wider Kent and regional level
- Ensuring appropriate support continues to be provided to the rural economy, particularly agricultural businesses, as the LEADER programme comes to an end
- Seeking additional externally funded programmes that could be delivered effectively at a West Kent level

Action Plan

The WKPEG action plan has been extended to incorporate actions linked to the short term priorities above and linking them to the same 5 themes as West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth as highlighted above, viz.: Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Place.

The action plan reflects the 3 key principles of the Kent and Medway Renewal and Resilience Framework : Greener and Cleaner (G&C); Productive and Open (P&O); Better opportunities, fairer chances (BOFC).

Actions are also cross referenced to the 5 channels in the Kent and Medway Renewal and Resilience Framework.

- Communications, Confidence and Trust – providing better intelligence to inform our actions and ensuring collaboration and partnership to drive our activity (CCT)
- Open for Business – taking action to build confidence and demonstrate that (West Kent) is open and accessible (O4B)
- Supporting Business – supporting resilient and innovative businesses to drive future growth (SB)
- People – enabling people to access work and skills and reach their potential (P)
- Investment – planning and investing now for a sustainable future. (Inv)

Risk of non-delivery is shown in the action plan as low, medium or high. Where medium or high rating, mitigating action to be identified.

The three West Kent authorities share many of the same challenges and opportunities during this period of recovery as well as in times of economic stability. This action plan reflects those local priorities against a backdrop of the County approach and is a locally driven response.

1. IDEAS – Securing investment and funding to underpin innovation and growth

Objective	Action	Timesc	WKP Partners	Success Measures	Short term recovery actions	Success Measures	Risk	chnl	G&C	P&O	BOFC
1.1 Greater Access to Higher Education provision	Explore options for Higher Education provision in West Kent	Ongoing	Universities Hadlow Group	Number of HE courses on offer locally increased Additional campus facility delivered or courses delivered in West Kent	Re-engage on opportunity to establish a Degree level apprenticeship hub in WK	Hub model established	Med	P			√
1.2 Business access to innovation investment facilitated	Support the development of a new research campus and inward investment at East Malling	Ongoing	NIAB EMR and the East Malling Trust, TMBC	Creation of masterplan for the campus No of new sector specific businesses on site	Encourage development of training around viticulture as a local growth sector spearheaded by NIAB-EMR wine innovation centre and research vineyard Meeting with NIAB-EMR to be set up	Partners engaged	Low	Inv		√	√
1.3 Business access to innovation facilitated	Kent & Medway Engineering, Design, Growth and Enterprise (EDGE) Hub secured in West Kent	2021	Canterbury Christ Church	EDGE Hub in place	Foster relationships with organisations who can help West Kent deliver growth out of recovery and stimulate investment and innovation. Discussion took place early 2020 with CCCU to seek to secure benefits in West Kent from the EDGE Hub. WK ED team have also engaged with CCCU consultant on potential for developing provision and business engagement through CCCU Meadow Road site. CCCU have on hold during Pandemic	Projects scoped Local hub/facility planned	Low Low	CCT CCT		√ √	

2. PEOPLE – Delivering the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network to secure our future workforce and championing training and inclusivity in the workplace

Objectivity	Action	Timesc	WKP Partners	Success Measures	Short term recovery actions	Success Measures	Risk	chnl	G&C	P&O	BOFC
2.1 Work ready young people	Support and expand the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network (WKEAN)	ongoing	CEC/Councils FE colleges, Employers, and Schools	No. of schools engaged in the initiative and supported by an Enterprise Adviser	Deliver sustainably funded West Kent Hub for September 21 to deliver across all 8 Gatsby benchmarks and enhance opportunity and experiences within our schools	Hub in Place Funding secured	Med Med	P			√

Objective	Action	Timesc	WKP Partners	Success Measures	Short term recovery actions	Success Measures	Risk	chnl	G&C	P&O	BOFC	
2.1 Work ready young people	Promote apprentice and other pathways	Annually	FE Colleges, WK skills group	Apprenticeship event delivered	Support the promotion of the range of opportunities available to young people to help them enter the workplace including apprenticeships and supported internships Deliver a Kickstart West Kent Gateway to support young people into work with a wraparound package of support for employers and placements alike. Kickstart West Kent landing page Through the Kent & Medway EAN link to London Resort to identify world of work experiences and jobs during construction phase	Increased No of apprenticeship and internship starts	Low	P			√	
	Support delivery of Skills 30:30 events	Annually	FSB, employers, WKEAN schools	No. of employers No. of students		Gateway in place, placements supported	Low	P			√	
	Deliver West Kent Skillsfest	Annually	WK CEIAG, employers schls	No. of employers No. of students		No of schools/students engaged	Low	P			√	
2.2 Young adults attracted and retained in local economy	Promote awareness of degree appships	Ongoing	Traing provdrs	No. of Higher Level degree participants	Working Group on Degree Apprenticeship Hub project – see 1.1			P			√	
	Develop strategy to encourage graduates to live and work in WK	2021	Councils, Housing Assoc Employers	No. of graduate level opportunities with local employers								
2.3 Adults supported to be economically active/provided with opportunities to reskill	Digital Skills training facilitated/promoted	Ongoing	SDC/TWBC/TM	Ongoing social media activity	Promote WKP to business as a facilitator around skills development through WKEAN and Kickstart	Higher awareness	Low	CCT		√	√	
	Deliver West Kent Jobs & Training Fairs	2 pa	SDC/TWBC/TM JCP/employers	No employers attend No Job Seekers attend	On line events to be considered	No of employers No of jobseekers	Med	P			√	
	Support initiatives developed for unemployed and those with a disability	Ongoing			No. of people entering employment or training	West Kent Adult Skills Group now adopted as sub group of WKP	Projects delivered	Low	P			√
						Support JCP and other partners in bringing forward Youth Hubs across West Kent	Hubs in place	Low	P			√
						Work with FE colleges, skills sub group and other partners to develop viable reskilling opportunities matched to the needs of local employers and growth sectors to include, care sector and Construction skills opportunities, particularly around Government's £3Bn investment in home efficiency	Courses run to meet employer needs	Low	P			√
						Link to Kent & Medway Employment Plan Collaborate on development of Local Skills Improvement Plan	Actions aligned	Low	P			√
					Engaged	Low	P			√		

3. INFRASTRUCTURE – Representing the need for infrastructure and transport investment for West Kent at a local, county and regional level – Priorities reviewed to link to Transport for South East Strategy and Kent Rail Strategy consultation

This note lists the known infrastructure proposals that have been identified in line with the West Kent priorities for infrastructure. 2020 has seen significant change in the transport sector due to both the Covid-19 pandemic and evolving Government policies such as planning reform, decarbonisation, from 'predict & provide' to 'decide and provide', active travel, freight and future mobility aspirations amongst others. The outcomes and the way in which patterns of travel and the network infrastructure requirements to meet these and funding opportunities are likely to evolve further over the coming months.

Given this, as KCC and the District Authorities work with our partners including Transport for the South East, Network Rail and Transport Operators there will need to be a further review and testing of the current identified infrastructure priorities against the challenges emerging from strategy development and the policy ambitions of both government and local government by Summer 2021.

Road Schemes

- A21 Lamberhurst to Kippings Cross dualling - alignment safeguarded in Tunbridge Wells Local Plan, not funded.
- A228 Colts Hill upgrade – strategic outline business case will need to be developed for future funding consideration (Major Road Network) - identified to unlock growth at Paddock Wood and Capel.
- A228 J with A26 at 7 Mile Lane to relieve congestion at Mereworth
- A264/A26 local junction improvements.
- A229 / M2 / M20 junctions at Blue Bell Hill - scheme options being developed for funding consideration (Large Local Majors).
- A20 corridor improvements Larkfield to Allington – work 2020, some funding at risk.
- Relief road at Borough Green - identified in the Borough Green Gardens strategic site.
- M25 J3 / B1273 Swanley / A20 Junction – improvements required to increase capacity (inc Pedham Place) and improve accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and buses. .
- A25 corridor improvements (including Bat & Ball junction) - the junction is already over capacity so this will unlock further growth inc. Sevenoaks Quarry Strategic site.

Rail Schemes

- Hastings Line - to upgrade the Sommerhill Tunnel, currently constrained due to single track running
- Lewes to Uckfield - reopening previous Beeching closures including the link via Tunbridge Wells West Station.
- Direct service to Gatwick airport - currently there is no direct or regular train service from West Kent (Tonbridge) to the nearest airport. A rail flyover will be required at Redhill.
- London rail services to Ashford via Maidstone East – Direct Thameslink service to connect with the City of London is long overdue, and must be included in the future government service specifications for the South Eastern and Thameslink networks.
- Medway Valley Line - to improve the frequency and through routing of service to Tonbridge and improvements to make it a better choice for commuting. This line as a significant role to play in supporting cross county connectivity and providing links to London and other regional destinations. Support for the extension of high speed services that call at Snodland and Maidstone West, with improvement of all stopping stations to accommodate 12 car high speed trains

- Metropolitan Reversible line at Cannon Street.
- Power supply and signalling upgrade on Tunbridge Wells to Hastings line between Tonbridge & Bo-Peep junction. The funding required is relatively low cost for large benefits, permitting the use of more 11/12 car trains.
- Provision of additional rolling stock with adequate seating to ensure all services operating in peak periods are 11/12 carriages to maximise capacity
- Rebuild of Charing Cross station to accommodate additional train paths on the South East main line.
- Resignalling under the Digital Railway Programme between Sevenoaks and Orpington. Sevenoaks Metro services - improving service frequency and extending pay-as-you-go (PAYG) services.
- Sevenoaks Mainline services - upgrading the Polhill Tunnel, currently operating single track running, constraining capacity
- Sustainable access to stations programme working with Southeastern and Network Rail at following stations
 - Borough Green
 - West Malling
- Smart and flexible ticketing to make rail a more attractive option for local and off peak journeys as well as commuters
- Improvements in facilities at stations including real time information, high quality waiting and toilet facilities
- Station access improvements – support for better integration of buses, walking and cycling facilities with stations to provide passengers with flexible and integrated transport choices, particularly at Paddock Wood station
- Access for All improvements including the delivery of a ramp at High Brooms
- Longer term capacity improvements that will increase capacity on the network and provide sufficient paths to the relevant London termini

Integrated and Sustainable Travel

- West Kent Quality Bus Partnership with multi operators
- Mapping all modes of transport to improve traffic flows and develop integrated modes/ticketing/travel plans
- Climate change – working towards carbon neutrality by 2030
 - Digital and broadband infrastructure to facilitate home working
 - Appropriate local facilities so people have genuine mode choice
 - Adapting to emerging transport technologies such as autonomous vehicles
 - Flood defences at Paddock Wood and Leigh Storage area
- Local Cycling and Walking infrastructure plans
 - Monitoring of road reallocation schemes in response to Covid-19 for ongoing viability in changes to walking and cycling - LCWIPS
 - Developing inter-urban cycling routes
 - Secure station cycle parking, cycle hubs and park and cycle schemes

4. BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT – Delivering an environment that supports start-ups and stimulates growth

Objective	Action	Timesc	WKP Partners	Success Measures	Short term recovery actions	Success Measures	Risk	chnl	G&C	P&O	BOFC
4.1 More high growth businesses	Deliver Scale Up Programme for Potential High Growth businesses	2019-20	Growth Hub Kent County Council Kent Invicta Chamber	No. of businesses supported Growth in supported businesses	Seek opportunities to support potential high growth businesses by delivering a West Kent Scale Up or alternative programme to a second cohort of 12 businesses	No of businesses supported	Low	SB		√	
4.2 Commercial space delivered for business growth	Support the development of new commercial units Seek new opps to provide flexible co-working space for start-up businesses	Ongoing	Private Investors SDC/TMBC/TWBC	No. of new commercial units No. of new co-working/flexible working facilities in West Kent	Work collaboratively to develop a network of work hubs to provide flexible working options for former/part time commuters and to bring new business people into town centre locations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Partners to assess bringing station masters houses back into active usage as workspace hubs RTW tog developed website to promote flexible working space in TW 	Potential hub network scoped Assessments completed No businesses supported	Low Low Low	O4B O4B O4B		√ √	
4.3 Support programme available to start ups and established businesses	Promote the WK business support programme and the Kent & Medway Growth Hub and seek funding to provide an enhanced level of support	Ongoing	SDC/TMBC/TWBC Kent County Council Kent Invicta Chamber	No. of businesses using the service/Service enhanced	Seek to influence the development of funding streams that address local need New campaign to promote ongoing business support programme providing 121 support to start up and micro businesses to encourage entrepreneurship and complement support available elsewhere. Provide support to previous users of scheme if required Seek to support those businesses most impacted by Covid including hospitality and retail. Signpost to support available and identify gaps in provision which could realistically be addressed Act on the findings of KICC business surveys to understand the main issues impacting West Kent businesses and work with Partners to mitigate	Lobbying No of businesses supported Gaps in provision identified Collaborate with KICC	Low Low Low Low	SB SB SB SB		√ √ √ √	

Objective	Action	Timesc	WKP Partners	Success Measures	Short term recovery actions	Success Measures	Risk	chnl	G&C	P&O	BOFC
4.4 Regular communication/networking between WKP/Councils and business	Deliver Conference and other WK wide business events	Ongoing	Businesses and Business rep organisations	No. of events per year No. of businesses attending	Expand and adapt online training courses and networking events being delivered by WKEAN to reach a greater number of businesses	No of businesses	Low	CCT		√	
	Maintain regular messaging through social media/website and link to LA activity	Ongoing	SDC/TMBC/TWBC	Aggregated no. of businesses connected with	Ongoing messaging on business support and skills initiatives	Regular social media activity	Low	CCT		√	
	Maximise ops with Gatwick Airport and Diamond businesses	Ongoing	Gatwick Airport Gatwick Diamond	No. of events No. of businesses attending							
	Promote and support Better Business for All	Ongoing	KICC/Kent Fire & Rescue	No. of businesses using the www.bbfa.biz							
	Promote and signpost to key business funding	Ongoing	SELEP/KCC/Growth Hub	No businesses awarded funding	Promote and signpost to funding and other support for business to Kent & Medway Growth Hub	Processes in place	Low	CCT		√	
					Signposting to financial and other support available for businesses	Regular social media activity	Low	CCT		√	
					Build new business networks such as through Kickstart West Kent and expand existing networks to encourage peer to peer support	No of networks/businesses	Low	CCT		√	
4.5 Support the Rural Economy	Support LEADER delivery and provide ongoing support to rural and agricultural businesses following the closure of the LEADER programme	Ongoing	West Kent Executive LEADER action group	LEADER programme delivered	Seek to build on the LEADER programme's legacy and identify new mechanisms that will support rural and land based businesses.	Plan in place	Low	O4B		√	
				No businesses receiving support	Lobby for a successor LEADER style programme	Positive response	Med	O4B		√	
					Support the development of co-working facilities in rural locations and encourage service sector around rural homeworkers	Engaged with partners	Low	O4B		√	

5. PLACE – Engendering a strong West Kent sense of place with vibrant town centres and a sustainable rural environment. Quality of life maintained and enhanced with a balanced approach to development and equal opportunity for all

Objective	Action	Timesc	WKP Partners	Success Measures	Short term recovery actions	Success Measures	Risk	chnl	G&C	P&O	BOFC
5.1 Key locations for growth brought forward	Identify priority projects and work with Partners to secure funding and other support for their delivery, including - NIAB East Malling -Peters Village -Fort Halstead	Ongoing	SDC/TWBC/TMBC	No. of projects delivered	Support LA partners to identify and bring forward key locations for growth	Locations coming forward	Low	O4B		v	
5.2 Sustainable housing development	Support the development of new Local Plans for the WK authorities	2019	SDC/TWBC/TMBC	Allocation of sufficient sites for employment uses Adoption of the Local Plans	Support LA partners to deliver sustainable housing development		Low	O4B		v	
5.3 Vibrant town centres incorporating integrated office, retail, leisure and residential units	Seek funding to support Town Centre Teams	Ongoing	Town Teams/Town Councils/RTW BID SDC/TMBC/TWBC/ Private Investors	No. of events and initiatives delivered	Work with LA partners on initiatives to support town centres and drive custom back to the High Street	Initiatives in place	Low	O4B		v	
	Retail and mixed use dvlpmnts and townscape improvements to strengthen the viability and vitality of town centres	Ongoing		Planning permission in place for new schemes		Initiatives in place	Low	O4B		v	
	Work with Visit Kent to promote WK's tourism assets	Ongoing	Visit Kent SDC/TWBC/TMBC	No. of visitors Visitor spend	Support LA partners in delivering tourism initiatives to support the sector	Initiatives in place	Low	O4B		v	
5.4 Maximise opportunities through London proximity	Strengthen relationships with business /council groups/partnerships	Ongoing		No. of new contacts	Explore potential for remote working satellites with London businesses	Contacts made	Low	O4B		v	