



Devon Plymouth Torbay Partnership for Enterprise

business and local government
supporting enterprise

Growing a prosperous economy through an effective public and private sector partnership, ***significantly accelerating economic growth to achieve greater productivity and profit for our businesses, more jobs, and increased prosperity for all our residents.***

John Hart
Leader, Devon County Council

**Chairman, Devon Federation of Small
Business**

Prospectus for a Devon Plymouth Torbay Enterprise Partnership

Leader, Plymouth City Council

**Chairman, Plymouth Chamber of
Commerce**

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Nick Bye
Elected Mayor, Torbay

Chairman Torbay Business Forum

Creating economic wealth, resilience and sustainable private sector jobs.

Introduction

We have a strong track record and long-standing tradition of working together across the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay regional economy. Our businesses, workforce and communities have not been confined by administrative boundaries for a long time. Changing from the past generic approach based on regional averages to one acknowledging local needs and attributes will increase our opportunities.

This prospectus sets out our proposal to create the right economic environment to allow our economy to grow and flourish. It outlines our rationale and approach to achieve an effective private and public sector partnership to realise this ambition in the form of a Local Enterprise Partnership.

Our prospectus is a joint submission by business representatives and the leaders of the two unitary authorities covering Plymouth and Torbay and Devon County Council. It has been developed through consultation and engagement with a wide range of private and public sector partners, including key employers and business associations.

We have no ambition to create an unwieldy or large organisation, or to add layers of complexity and cost. Rather, our proposal is for a lean, focused and business-led partnership, which will drive forward our ambitions for economic growth through strong leadership and local accountability. It is our intention to build on existing and successful delivery arrangements across the area. We will streamline and align activities to gain maximum impact and benefit.

Similarly, we have no intention to stand alone. There will be occasions when working with others will be the right thing to do. We will embrace opportunities for wider collaborations with our immediate neighbours and on issues that look further a field.

Our area has a number of strengths and has strong expertise and knowledge in low carbon and marine technologies and tourism. We recommend that Government recognises this and adopts us as the national lead and centre of excellence for the country in these fields.

With an economy worth over £17 billion, a population above 1.1 million people and over 45 thousand businesses we have a truly significant economy.

Creating the conditions for businesses to prosper.

Our Vision and Aims

Our aims are based on the shared vision of business and local authority leaders in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay,

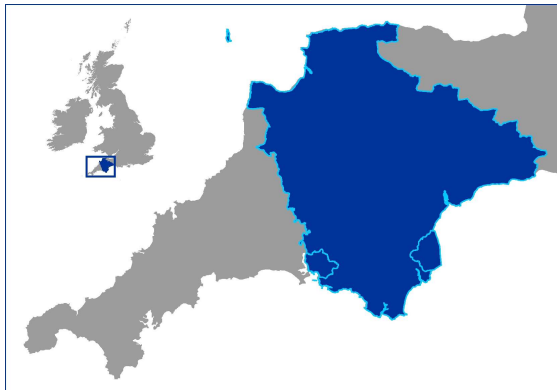
significantly accelerating economic growth to achieve greater productivity and profit for our businesses, more jobs, and increased prosperity for all our residents.

The Partnership will develop a Strategy for Growth as a priority. This will be supported by an action plan to achieve our ambition, building on our strengths and addressing the number of challenges we face. The action plan will bring focus, coordinating existing activity behind core issues identified by the LEP, to create the synergy and scale critical to have impact.

The underlying aims for the Partnership are to:

- Develop the right environment and conditions to deliver real economic growth and prosperity. Enabling private enterprise to grow, reducing the current dependence on public sector employment.
- Place businesses front and centre to give an enterprise-led focus to our activities and programmes.
- Capitalise on our natural advantages and use our unique selling points to best advantage, encouraging private sector investment.
- Put in place effective arrangements to facilitate the transition from regional structures to a local enterprise partnership arrangement, retaining the expertise and knowledge we have across the area.
- Build on existing capacity, and remove that which is inefficient or ineffective.
- Directly focus activity and resources on issues which are critical to growing our enterprise culture. Capturing the opportunities of moving to a low carbon future.
- Ensure all our enterprises exploit the opportunities of new technologies to improve productivity and resilience.

Big enough to make sense, small enough to be relevant



Devon-Plymouth-Torbay

There are a number of opportunities for the combined economy of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

Our area has a growing knowledge and science base: the expanding Tamar Science Park in Plymouth is home to many companies involved in research and development and, in particular, those relating to the medical sector.

The University of Plymouth has strong faculties of science and technology. The Peninsula Medical School, which incorporates the Peninsula Dental School and Radiology Academy, has increased the city's standing in the medical sector and built up specialist health care expertise.

The knowledge infrastructure will soon be augmented by a new Science Park at Exeter. This builds on Exeter University's existing Innovation Centre and will accelerate the growth of knowledge based enterprise. The new Science Park will capitalise on the world class research undertaken at the University of Exeter strengthening its commercial activity and attracting knowledge enterprise.

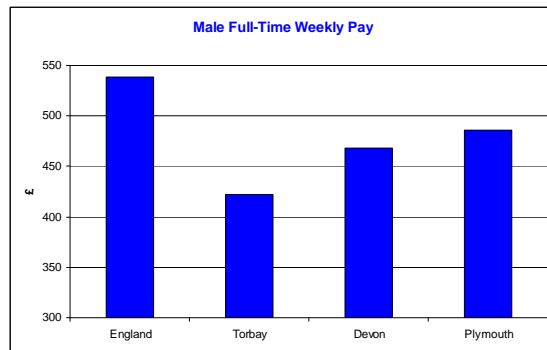
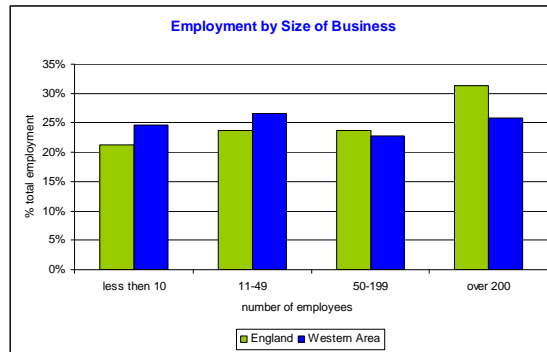
Devon is one of the largest economies in the South West covering a land area of 6,564 square kilometres. It is home to almost 400,000 economically active people, 32,000 VAT registered businesses and around 70,000 self employed people. It is also a very diverse economy with as many people employed in farming as there are in financial services.

Exeter is a dynamic city, with a thriving financial sector and a number of key private sector employers. It is, however, strongly reliant on the public sector with large scale employers such as the Met Office and a number of emergency service headquarters.

One of the largest and most strategic cities on the south coast, Plymouth has a very strong link with the defence sector. This has influenced its industrial structure. Considerable diversification has broadened its industrial base with electronics, healthcare, advanced engineering, food and drink and boat building being well represented, but the public sector still dominates employment in the city.

In common with many cities Plymouth has a younger population than the national average - 63.9% of working age,

Improving wage levels through attracting knowledge based and more productive jobs



compared to 59.8% for the South West and 62% for England as a whole. In the rest of Devon it is much lower at 58.1%. Plymouth is home to a large university with over 30,000 students and 3,000 staff (many of whom are based in Plymouth); one of the UK's three main naval bases - Devonport dockyard (privately owned) employs around 4,000 people refitting and building ships; Plymouth also has a relatively large manufacturing base.

Almost 20% of people who work in Plymouth do not live there but commute in; over half of these come from Cornwall. The number of people commuting out of the City is less than half this level.

Torbay comprises the three towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham, and has a stunning natural waterfront setting. Its architecture and miles of golden beaches have made it a popular visitor destination.

Torbay does suffer from peripherality – its economic catchment area is limited: bounded by 22 miles of coastline along its eastern edge and further restricted by relatively poor road and rail connectivity to the northern edge. Wages, income and output within Torbay are low, and the area suffers from a narrow industrial base with

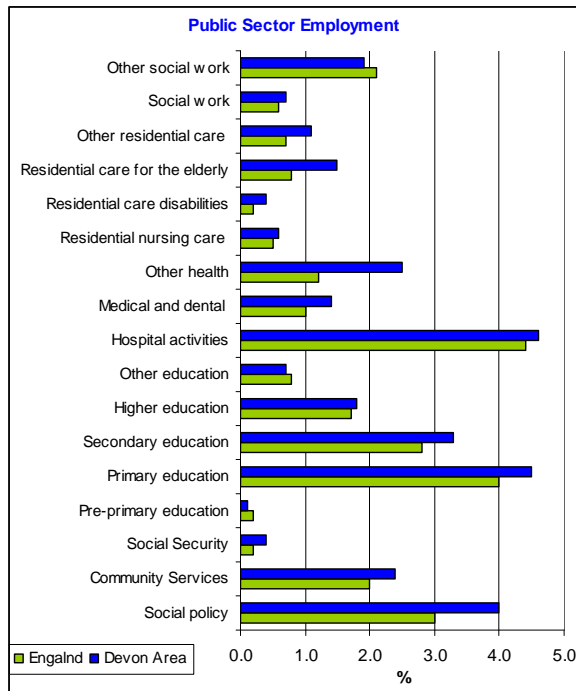
a reliance on low wage industries, including tourism, retail and social care. There are some strengths, however, including business services and technology. There is a significantly lower proportion of the population with higher level qualifications (NVQ 3 or above) in the Torbay areas compared to either the regional or national averages.

In Torbay the average productivity levels are now less than 75% of the EU average. However, it is not that the wealth levels in Torbay have actually fallen, rather they have not increased in line with the national or regional rates. Since 1997 GVA per head in Torbay has grown by 26% compared to growth of 48% for Devon, 51% for the South West and 52% for England.

With a total population of over 1.1 million people and a combined economic output of £17 billion, the combined area of Plymouth, Torbay and Devon makes a significant economic entity. But it is isolated and it is not without its challenges.

Our combined area has productivity levels significantly below the national average. Output per worker for the UK economy is over £45,000, but for our economy it is less than £32,000 .

Working in partnership to create an enterprise led economy.



There are a number of reasons why productivity levels are low across the whole of our area. The impact of peripherality cannot be ignored. Although a population of over 1.1 million is significant, it is a small market and to bring wealth in, goods must be sold to customers outside the area. Distance to major population areas and weak transport infrastructure increases the cost of reaching these markets, reducing the competitive position of our firms. This drives down final prices, local wages, profitability and productivity. As the economy modernises, infrastructure still holds back productivity growth. Increasing use of ICT and knowledge driven businesses is limited by poor broadband connectivity across our combined area.

The combined low productivity levels of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay contribute to low profitability for local firms - limiting their ability to invest and expand - and low wage levels. Earnings are amongst the lowest in the country: male earnings are significantly below the English average and amongst the lowest in England.

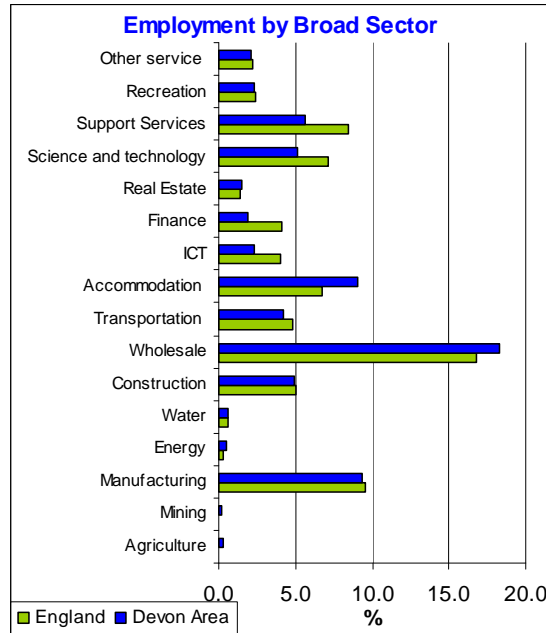
With low incomes forcing many house-

holds to seek dual incomes unemployment rates are relatively low across the area. The number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) is below the national average.

But there are certain groups and locations where the rates are noticeably higher, such as rural towns. Unemployment here increased dramatically throughout the recent recession doubling over the 18 months to autumn 2009.

There is some relationship between wage levels and unemployment; the low wage levels keep employment relatively high. There are other factors, too. The high proportion of self employed people – around a third higher than the national average – do not count as unemployed even if their work diminishes, the large number of part time workers (over a third of the workforce) and the preponderance of seasonal workers act to inflate employment levels but do not bring wealth creation or higher incomes.

Celebrating our entrepreneurs and encouraging new business start ups



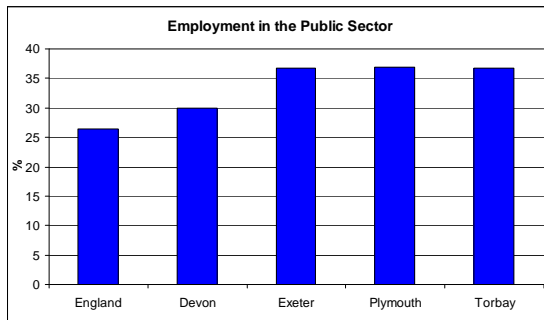
The juxtaposition of low earnings and the high quality of life manifest in a very tight housing market. Nationally, the ratio between average earnings and average house prices is 6.3:1; however only in Plymouth is the affordability ratio this low. Elsewhere across the area it is significantly higher. The market for second homes, holiday lets and retirement properties for the ageing population has driven house prices up. In parts of Devon the ratio reaches 10:1.

Agriculture is a major employer and is a bedrock of wealth creation. But our landscapes support labour-intensive farming activities, which are at the lower end of the output profile. It is these same landscapes that support another major industrial sector: the tourism industry. Whilst direct employment may only be around 10% of the total workforce, it is a surprisingly productive sector, with output per worker for the Hotel and Catering sector above the South West economy-wide average.

The secondary impacts of the tourism industry are also significant. The level of spend during the holiday season is critical to supporting the retail sector and local supply chains. Attracting around 7

million staying visitors per year, the area is the favourite destination for domestic visitors with more staying visitors, more day-trippers and more visitor spend than any area outside London.

Even in sectors where productivity is high, there are structural weaknesses that limit further growth. There are over 45,000 businesses in the area, the majority of which are micro or small sized enterprises. Some are 'lifestyle business' with no ambition for growth and innovation; others are family businesses struggling with the trade-off between growth and control. Around a quarter of all enterprises in the area have turnover below the VAT threshold – this includes a significant number of self employed people. Nationally over 30% of employees work for a business that employs 200 or more workers, whilst in our area it is less than 26%. By contrast, over a quarter of people work in a firm employing fewer than 10 people, although nationally it is less than one fifth.



Our urban areas are dominated by employment in the public sector. In Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter the concentration of public sector employment is amongst the top ten highest in England. Whilst the public sector has an important role to play in any economy it is not a driver of growth and wealth creation. With over a third of employees working in the public sector, the scope for our economy to grow is limited.

There is a pressing need to diversify and grow both our productivity and employment base, which can only come from the private sector. The Devon, Plymouth and Torbay economy shares a number of issues which fundamentally affect economic growth and bind it together in seeking unified solutions.

The richness and diversity of the area's business base is matched only by its landscapes: this includes two national parks, three world heritage sites, a UNESCO Geopark, two cities as well as a spectrum of market and coastal towns. A shared culture and heritage, shaped by a strong tradition of farming, seafaring and maritime industries, tourism and an unrivalled quality of life make our area

unique.

Growing a new enterprise-driven economy across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay we face a number of common challenges:

- The need for increased housing supply particularly affordable housing
- Improving wage levels which are amongst the lowest in the UK
- A dependence on the public sector
- Transport and communications infrastructure frustrating the flows of goods and people between our key markets
- Poor broadband connectivity
- Financing growth, addressing the regulatory environment for business and ensuring the supply of skilled and work ready people
- Over the next 10 years the national population will grow by just over 5.3%; here it will expand by 7.6% whilst the proportion over the age of 65 will grow by almost 12% across the area and less than 9% nationally

Rights and Responsibilities

The success of our Enterprise Partnership will be judged by overcoming the challenges we have outlined, and exploiting our strengths to deliver real economic growth. This requires a focused approach to our priorities, strong leadership as well as effective and appropriate delivery mechanisms.

The Enterprise Partnership will take forward and build on the area's track record in creating economic prosperity. In order to achieve this, the Partnership's Board will accept responsibility for:

- o **Strategic Leadership.** Using the evidence base created as part of the Local Economic Assessments for the area, we will develop a Strategy for Growth focused on our core strengths and where we can deliver real business benefits. This will be used to measure the success of private and public sector investments and our approach.
- o **Innovation and Knowledge.** Building on our excellent research and development base across our

combined area we will take a strong focus on developing knowledge-intensive employment, supply chains and fostering productive links between our Higher Education partners and local businesses. We acknowledge that innovation will be led by Government; we wish to engage fully with Government and any national delivery arrangements, such as the Technology Strategy Board. This will be essential if we are to exploit our research base and infrastructure to improve our competitiveness.

- o **Transport and Infrastructure.** A key role for the Enterprise Partnership will be to influence and secure improved transport and communication links. These are the life blood for our area and vital for business to reach customers, suppliers and exchange knowledge and information. ICT infrastructure is critical for improving productivity and increasing employment; it will be a particular priority.

Focusing where we can really make a difference and leading by example.

- o **National Lead and Centres of Excellence.** We feel that our area has specific strengths, expertise and knowledge in two key fields. The first is in low carbon technologies and marine sciences, and the second is tourism. We would like to lead the development of these fields for the country and become a centre of excellence, engaging with Government and other partners from the UK and Europe to support the growth of the national economy.
- o **Business Support.** With a high number of SMEs in our area, the provision of effective and valuable business support and advice is vital to the future prosperity of our area so the Partnership will facilitate the provision of such services. This includes supply of adequate work space, access to finance, sector support (priority sectors include renewables, tourism), and the active promotion of self employment. We will work with a range of providers to align these activities to give a coherent, responsive and tailored service.
- o **Skills Development.** This is recognised as an important economic driver and we will review existing employment and skills boards, taking on the responsibility for directing skills provision across the area.
- o **Housing and Planning.** The partnership will develop a vision, and provide coordination to enable the private sector in particular to inform the statutory planning process. This will ensure there is a greater alignment between housing provision and employment growth. Local planning authorities would retain their regulatory roles.
- o **Inward Investment.** There is a role to support UKTI and the national agenda for inward investment. Aligning and coordinating our image and brand campaigns to attract investment, people, skills and knowledge in to the area.

A national lead and centre of excellence for low carbon technologies and tourism

Governance and Delivery

The Enterprise Partnership will have a business-led board with representation from local authorities to give democratic accountability. The Board will actively seek to work with other LEPs on shared ambitions, whether on key themes such as the rural economy, or place-related issues such as transport across the South West peninsula.

Much of the proposed delivery framework already exists and will be built upon as the Partnership evolves. The framework we are proposing will provide effective delivery at an appropriate local level, whilst ensuring economies of scale are achieved and resources are maximised.

Across Devon, a new Rural Board will be created, bringing together business, National Parks and local authorities to consider the specific challenges faced by rural enterprise.

Exeter acts as a key gateway into the wider Devon area but its opportunities for growth are under constraint. An Exeter Area Board based around removing the impediments to private sector growth will

be formed to address the opportunities and challenges.

In Plymouth delivery will be a joint effort between the Plymouth City Council and private sector partners including the University of Plymouth, Destination Plymouth and the Chamber of Commerce.

The Torbay Development Agency (TDA) will take on the role for Torbay. The TDA is the economic development company for Torbay and has recently completed the economic assessment and economic strategy for the Torbay area. It has a strong track record of delivery and is currently leading the establishment of an asset backed vehicle for Torbay Council to deliver a series of major regeneration projects.

We recognise that there are a number of existing local delivery arrangements across the area. These will need to be reviewed to ensure capacity is used efficiently and effectively, removing any duplication and ensuring delivery takes place at the right scale.

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Leadership & Strategic Direction

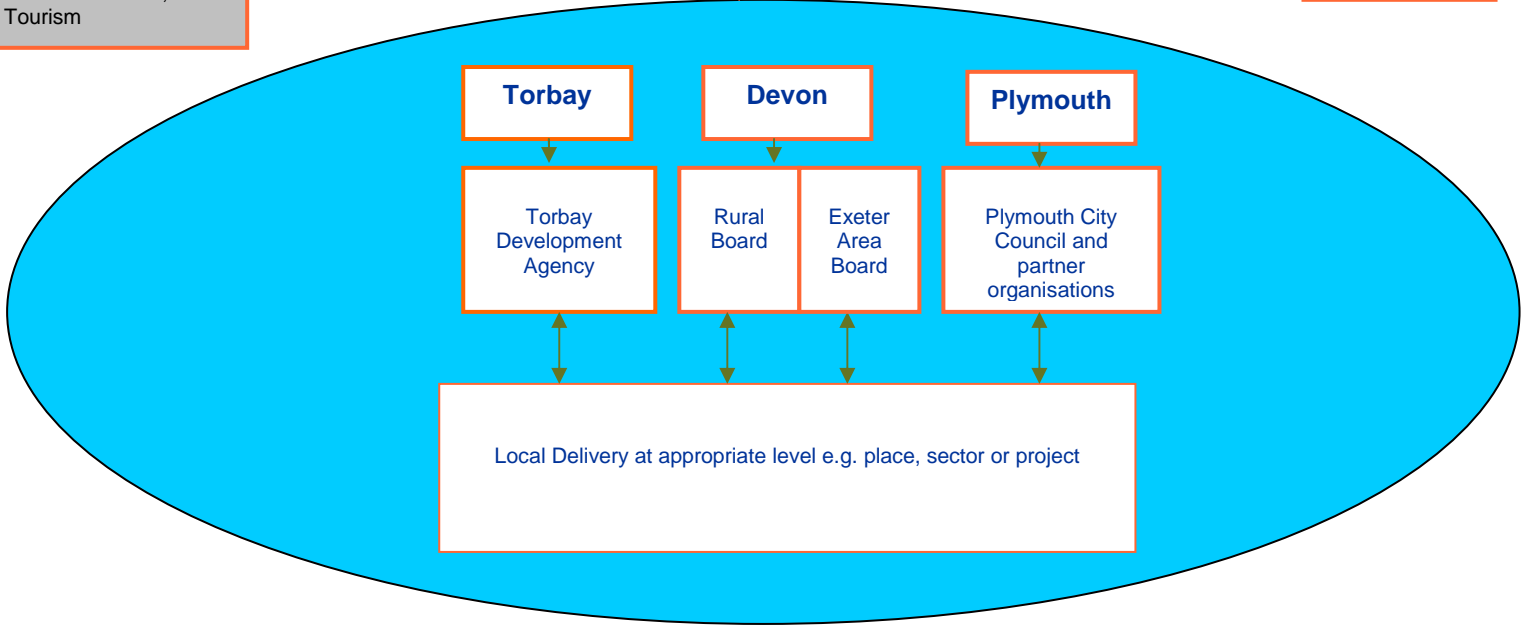
Delivery Framework

Government

Devon Plymouth Torbay Enterprise Partnership

Collaborate other LEPs
 Themes e.g. ICT, rural issues etc
 Place e.g. transport and infrastructure etc
 National Lead –e.g. Low Carbon and Marine Sciences, Tourism

National Networks
 - BIS
 - DEC
 - DEFRA
 - CLG
 - FSB,
 - NFU
 - CLA
 - UKTI



Adding value and streamlining current structures to focus on delivering real benefits and growth.

David Incol, Chief Executive South Hams and West Devon District Councils

Over the next 12 months, the Enterprise Partnership will:

- Build a united, common and clear vision that will create the right conditions for economic growth and prosperity for the region
 - Enable businesses to have real influence and engagement on economic policy and strategy
 - Work towards a resilient economy based on enterprise-led employment with a world-class reputation in low carbon technologies and marine sciences and tourism
 - Create an effective structure to lead the strategic direction of economic development policy, which has the support and buy in of all partners and focuses on delivering real business benefits
 - Remove bureaucracy, complexity and layers of administration to create a lean, focused and relevant structure with business in the driving seat
- Improve links between education and employment
 - Improve ICT connectivity and the adoption and usage of IT to support home-based working, enterprise growth and increase the area's competitive position

Attracting private sector investment and harnessing resources to bring sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

[endorsement from SW Investment Group]

Freedoms and Flexibilities

We are committed to attracting private sector investment and channellin our collective resources into the priorities outlined in our emerging Strategy for Growth. We are clear that we cannot expect central government to fund our aspirations. Consequently we will be looking to support future growth from the resources within our area. We will be exploring the following mechanisms:

- Better use of existing capacity within local authorities, especially the sharing of resources and professional expertise
- Better use of existing capacity within businesses using the private sector as a delivery partner
- Bid into the Regional Growth Fund to deliver our economic priorities and create private sector led employment
- Acting as the local managing agent or delivery body for national programmes to ensure they are appropriately set within the local context

- New innovative financing mechanisms such as Accelerated Development Zones, loan schemes, and retaining local business rates to support local economic growth
- Importantly, we must end the 'grant' culture. Any public sector funds must be seen as an investment that generates a return and payback
- The efforts we make to enhance our enterprise base will benefit all aspects of the public sector. We need to work out with Government how to share in these benefits.

We also recognise that to achieve our vision we need Government to offer us some flexibility. Specifically:

- **Transfer of Assets.** An agreement to transfer the ownership and associated funding of assets currently held by the Regional Development Agency and the Homes and Community Agency to the upper tier local authorities. Any surplus generated from these assets will be redistributed to support the priorities agreed by the LEP.

Leadership. Formal recognition of our lead role in aligning and coordinating activity. We have demonstrated our value in delivering the Exeter Gateway study and could lead on similar transport issues. Linked to this we could take on a role in managing the Regional Infrastructure Fund for the peninsula.

- o **Consultations.** Agreement to the Partnership being a statutory consultee on strategic planning applications, BIS policy and any new enterprise regulatory reforms and changes, and an equal opportunity to be a pilot for new Government initiatives and proposals such as rolling out rural broadband.
- o **Local Business Incentives.** Agreement for the partnership to retain local business rates generated by successful economic growth locally to be applied to the priority actions outlined in this proposal.
- o **National Centres of Excellence.** Agreement for this Partnership to take a national lead on driving a low carbon economy and tourism. These national lead roles are currently undertaken by the SW Regional Development

Agency and we are seeking the transfer of this responsibility with the current level of funding and assets given to these areas. Potentially, this could also include staff and resources based in Whitehall.

- o **EU Funding Programmes.** Agreement to transfer the management of the current ERDF and RDPE programmes to the upper tier authorities. This will retain expertise and knowledge, avoiding any disruption to existing initiatives that are already underway and are supporting the growth of the local economy. This would include the transfer of the relevant resources held by the SW Regional Development Agency, including its single pot regeneration budget. Whilst any staff would be housed in Local Authority offices they would report to and be in the employment of the relevant Government Department.
- o **Transitional funding.** We do not want long term state hand outs, but equally we cannot be saddled with the transitional cost associated with moving to a more efficient future.

Endorsement

We have developed this prospectus by working collaboratively across the private and public sectors. A range of meetings, discussions, workshops and communications have taken place to encourage dialogue, and for views and opinions to come forward.

What is outlined here is a consensus of many organisations and individuals on the best approach to achieving the economic ambitions we share for our area, and indeed the contribution we feel we can make to a productive national economy.

We have consulted through a survey, promoted through a wide range of local authority and business networks and encouraged open feedback and input.

We look forward to receiving the support of Government for this proposal and the agreement for us to make this a reality, bringing future prosperity and growth to an area in which we are justifiably proud.

The following businesses and organisation support this prospectus:

Annex – Our Offer: National Centres of Excellence

Marine Science, Climate Change and the Environment

“Creating jobs, businesses and economic success from science and innovation related activities in marine renewables, engineering, marine science and other technologies.”



Plymouth is already established as a centre of excellence for marine sciences and the marine environment. The Plymouth Marine Science Partnership includes a number of world leading organisations including the Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Sir Alistair Hardy Foundation, the Marine Biological Association

and the National Marine Aquarium.

The Universities of Plymouth and Exeter are national centres of research in marine sciences and engineering. These universities have now come together to create the **Peninsula Research Institute for Marine Renewable Energy (PRiMARE)**, a new institute working with industry to research all aspects of marine renewable energy.

Created as part of the Plymouth Science and Innovation programme, Plymouth will soon host a new marine building which will provide a centre for innovation and technology development as well as providing a much needed wave and tidal test tank facility.

While Plymouth has become a leading centre for marine sciences, Exeter hosts the UK MET Office. With the University of Exeter, they are developing a world class research capability to enhance our understanding of the impacts of climate change on human and natural systems. This will enable governments, businesses and other organisations to understand and respond to the risks associated with increased rates of climate change.

Our Local Enterprise Partnership Proposal

Based on our world class research capability and facilities, the LEP will work to establish a national centre of excellence for **Marine Science, Climate Change and the Environment**. The level of business engagement and commercial opportunity in this area is considerable and includes high growth sectors such as environmental consultancy, climate change mitigation, marine renewable energy and marine sciences. Working in partnership with industry, we will ensure that our research capability is fully exploited to create new jobs and drive business innovation.

A key priority for the LEP will be to support the Atlantic Array wind farm off the coast of North Devon. In doing so the LEP will work with local and south west based businesses to ensure that we maximise the economic benefits for the local community and the UK. Already we have plans to develop an operation and maintenance facility in North Devon and also to establish a wind farm training centre and apprenticeship scheme.

In the marine energy sector we will also work closely with Cornwall, West of England and other LEPs in the south west to combine our resources and support initiatives such as the Wave Hub, PRiMARE and the National Composites Centre in order to drive forward the expansion of the offshore renewable energy sector.

National Centre for Sustainable Communities in the rural and built environment



“Bringing businesses and society together to put sustainable energy and communities at the heart of the Low Carbon economy”.

We already host a number of exciting and innovative community based initiatives. Totnes in South Devon, one of the winners of the Low Carbon Community Challenge, is the home of the Transition Town movement. This community-led initiative aims to promote sustainable economic and community development while reducing our dependence on oil and gas and the impact of climate change. The success of this innovative approach is evident; there are now over 300 Transition Towns worldwide as the concept has spread across Europe to Canada, US, Chile and Australia..

Totnes is one of many innovative community based initiatives in the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay area. Another good example is the work being done on Exmoor National Park where six rural communities have also won Low Carbon Community Challenge support to fund renewable energy projects such as a wood pellet heating system, solar installations and a community owned hydropower turbine.

The aim of the Local Enterprise Partnership will be to capture the enthusiasm and ambition of local communities and, by working with business and local authorities, make sustainable communities a new force in the local low carbon economy. The **Communities for Renewables** programme, which is being piloted by **Regen SW**, is a

good example of how this can be done. The starting point for this initiative is to identify communities that want to host renewable energy schemes, then to work with the community to develop their ideas and eventually take them to the renewable energy industry. Local authorities have a potentially key role to play by providing land and other resources to make the scheme happen. The main advantage is that the money earned from the renewable energy scheme can be used to pay for additional community services such as a rural bus route, leisure facilities, libraries etc. So, through a partnership between a community, businesses and local authority, the programme will generate renewable energy, promote local enterprise and pay for additional community services.

Not all community renewable energy schemes start with a community initiative. Cranbrook, a new housing and business development being built outside Exeter, will incorporate a shared biomass energy centre to provide distributed heating to householders and business users. The partners in this groundbreaking scheme include the land developer, utility company (Eon) and local authorities.

Elsewhere in our area, Plymouth City Council is currently exploring the feasibility of establishing a city-wide Energy Services Company (ESCO). Working with the forestry commission Regen SW has been managing the South West Bioheat programme, which has been successful in bringing woodland owners, woodchip producers and biomass users together to create integrated local supply chains. Regen SW is currently developing a new programme in partnership with a major local agriculture business to provide renewable energy solutions to farmers and rural communities. Energy Action Devon and Renewable Energy for Devon (RE4D) led by Devon County Council are two further examples of organisations working closely to

bring energy efficiency and renewable energy to individuals and local organisations. Devon, Plymouth and Torbay are also about to roll-out a major energy efficiency 'whole house retrofit' programme, working with local housing associations.

The Cranbrook scheme, the new ESCO proposed by Plymouth Council, and Regen SW's Bioheat and Communities for Renewables projects are all excellent examples of the type of innovative local business models that are required to drive the transition towards a Low Carbon Project.

Our Local Enterprise Partnership Proposal

Building on the breadth of community initiatives in the region, the LEP proposes to establish a **National Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Communities in the Rural and Built Environment**.

As part of this centre of excellence the LEP hopes to establish a '**Renewable Futures Institute**'. This centre will showcase new technology and demonstrate innovative new business models, accelerating the deployment of renewable energy in the community. The primary role of the Institute will be to enable businesses, communities and public sector to come together and facilitate the development of new sustainable energy projects.

The centre of excellence plans to develop a number of innovative approaches supporting the deployment of community-based energy schemes. The starting point of this approach is to identify what communities really need in terms of their energy requirements, and the services and benefits they expect from a commercial scheme. The key challenge is to find the right business model that works for the community, the landowner and the energy developer. By breaking new ground, the centre of excellence will provide

blueprints that can be shared with other LEPs and other communities around the UK.