

About the Thames Valley and Swindon Local Chamber Advisory Group (LCAG)

Thames Valley is a true turbo-economy - the 'Silicon Valley' of Europe and one of the UK's most productive regions. Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group (TVCC) is the independent voice of business in the region.

As one of the best performing economies in the country (Centre for Cities Outlook), Swindon has an ambition to be the "UK's most innovative, productive, fastest-growing city" (Swindon Borough Council). Swindon Chamber represents businesses of all sizes across an array of sectors, including advanced engineering, financial & professional services, life sciences and technology.



Aim and Objective

This policy statement summarises the core local policy priorities this Chamber will support throughout 2021. Like the strategic priorities, set out in the Business Manifesto 2021, they reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and our transition out of the EU. The objective is to help ensure that our region's decision makers and key stakeholders hear a clear voice from businesses as to what we consider important and decision makers understand what to focus on delivering. It is also an invitation to those partners to engage with businesses and the LCAG to help shape, frame and deliver solutions that will secure the economic prosperity of the local area and wider Thames Valley region.

Local Policy Priorities

The Swindon LCAG has identified the following local policy priorities:

- As appropriate and relevant to our business community, seek to support proposals that deliver projects that facilitate local economic recovery.
- Be the independent voice of business in the Swindon market area, providing decision makers and key stakeholders with informed input that promotes the value of community engagement and business reputation.
- Challenge the key decision makers to revisit their decisions and commit to the delivery of a knowledge-driven, innovation-led science park.
- Foster stronger business-focused relationships with all levels of education and community, including New College Swindon and University of Gloucestershire (anchor tenant to the new Institute of Technology), to build a greater understanding of the world of work and the skills and knowledge required of business for its future workforce. Promote initiatives that are encouraging business and academic institutions to focus on skills transfer and diversification to help our workforce adapt.
- Maintain our involvement with the LEP, and relevant stakeholders, to more actively engage in actions, and take a sector approach that delivers greater volumes of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the area.

- Maintain support to existing exporters and help new businesses grow their trade activity.
- Mobilise and engage the business community behind a single coordinated long-term vision for the sustainable economic growth and wellbeing that aligns economic and spatial land-use planning to help maximise impact and the future shape of Swindon.
- Preserve our active partnerships with significant local groups to achieve our wider policy priorities and help inform developing policy and/or refreshed plans.
- Remain active participants in the working group preparing for Honda's departure from the town in 2021 to minimise the impact of job losses on the local economy and help secure the necessary inward investment to help replace jobs lost. We will continue to work with all relevant statutory agencies to secure the retention of the South Marston airfield (Honda UK Manufacturing) site as a strategic location for future employment.
- Retain our focus on lobbying public authorities to identify and deliver additional new strategic employment sites, within or adjacent to the town, that will meet the present and future needs of business, building a stronger, more resilient, economy. Promote efforts that forge stronger infrastructure links with the Thames Valley, including:
 - Championing local initiatives that support the recovery of the transport sector and rebuild confidence in travelling on public transport.
 - Continuing calls for investment along the Great Western Railway (GWR) line to free capacity and maximise the benefits to Swindon of being within 'the golden hour' of London.
 - Commitment to deliver key local infrastructure projects and road safety improvement measures, including the expeditious completion of improvement works on the M4 junction 15; lobbying for the construction of a Junction 16A, a new Western link road between the M4 (J16A) and the A419 to the north of the town, south of Cricklade and the extension of Thamesdown Drive to connect with the town centre, thereby facilitating regeneration of the Cheney Manor area.
 - Reigniting discussions around the strategic road improvement of the A420 – including its re-trunking to a motorway standard.
 - Supporting the LEP and local authority decision to join 'England's Economic Heartland' (EEH) and to strengthen its links to the OxCam Arc and Thames Valley. Seeking to be active participants in helping to develop EEH's Connectivity Studies.
- Support initiatives that re-imagine the town centre, open new possibilities for leisure, hospitality and retail and ensure the high street experience remains positive, building a strong sense of community and place. Encourage the appropriate levels of investment and active management in our town centres that will help secure future vitality and vibrancy and employment opportunities.
- Support proposals that help secure the appropriate mix of development and the highest standard of urban design, planning and infrastructure provision (e.g. the new Cultural Quarter at Kimmerfields).

- To embody the above in a **Swindon 2060 Vision** statement to support representations made by Swindon Chamber to both local and central government consultation and representation opportunities.

Strategic Policy Background

Our LCAG priorities form an integral part to the wider TVCC regional programme detailed in the four main priorities set out in the Business Manifesto 2021. Together, they form policies and actions behind which the whole Chamber network will focus:

- **Resilient Infrastructure Networks:** Promote the need for investment in a resilient infrastructure network for the Thames Valley, strengthening provision of physical and digital networks that will support the region's future sustainable economic growth and innovation.
- **Low-Carbon, Green Economy:** Be an advocate for in-region excellence and thought leadership, supporting the greater awareness and understanding of the steps we all need to take for a more sustainable, low carbon, 'green' future for the Thames Valley.
- **EU Exit Transition:** Use the Chamber's experience to provide our businesses community with relevant support and practical information as Britain transitions out of the EU and to lobby Government to ensure frictionless trade, investment and freedom of movement for the workforce.
- **Restart, Rebuild, Renew:** Support initiatives that will 'Invest in the Success' of the region, its productivity and the wider levelling-up agenda, and the "Restart, Rebuild, Renew" of the UK and Thames Valley economy, post COVID-19.



Les Durrant
President, Swindon
Chamber of Commerce



Paul Britton
Chief Executive, TVCC



www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk

