

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

The 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 (TVCC) is the independent voice of business in the region.

Swindon is home to numerous world-class companies, contributing to a strong and vibrant local economy. The Swindon Chamber represents businesses of all sizes across an array of sectors, including advanced engineering, creative industries, life sciences, robotics, space, and technology.

#### Aim and Objective

This policy statement summarises the core local policy priorities this Chamber will support throughout 2022. Like the strategic priorities set out in the [Business Manifesto 2022](#), they reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and how we deal with the continued challenges of the EU transition.

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:

- Be the independent voice of local business, providing decision makers and key stakeholders with informed input that promotes the value of community engagement and business reputation.
- As appropriate and relevant to our business community, seek to support proposals that deliver projects that facilitate local economic recovery.
- Encourage proposals that can help secure the appropriate mix of development and the highest standard of urban design, planning, and infrastructure provision (e.g., Cultural Quarter at Kimmerfields, the [Heritage Action Zone](#), linked to the Swindon railway village).
- Challenge the key decision makers to revisit commitment to the deliver a knowledge-driven, innovation-led science park.
- Preserve our active partnerships with relevant key stakeholders and anchor institutions, to achieve our wider policy aims and objectives.

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- Promote initiatives that support a green recovery, and proposals that are helping to build a local economy centred around net-zero, sustainability principles and social purpose.
- Foster stronger business-focused relationships with all levels of education, including New College Swindon and the [Swindon & Wiltshire 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 encourage business and academic institutions to focus on skills transfer and diversification to help our workforce adapt.
- Support proposals that strength public transport connections to Heathrow airport.
- Maintain our challenge to relevant key stakeholders to deliver sustained levels of activity that secures higher volumes and value FDI projects.
- Maintain support to existing exporters and help new businesses grow their trade activity.
- 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.
- Monitor progress in the preparation of the revised draft Swindon Local Plan 2036, following the Regulation 19 [consultation response](#) (in 2021), and consider representations to the Examination in Public at the appropriate time.
- 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:
  - 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.
  - Supporting appropriate new infrastructure projects and road safety improvement measures, including 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.

- Maintaining our support to appropriate initiatives sponsored by 'England's Economic Heartland' (EEH)
- Support initiatives that re-imagine Swindon 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 appropriate levels of investment and active town centre management that will help secure their future vitality, vibrancy, and employment opportunities.

## Strategic Policy Background

Our LCAG priorities form an integral part of the wider TVCC regional programme detailed in the three main priorities set out in the Business Manifesto 2022. Together, they form policies and actions behind which the whole Chamber network will focus:

- 1. Helping secure investment in resilient infrastructure, utility, and sustainable networks:** promoting the need for investment to deliver resilient digital and transportation networks across the Thames Valley that will support the region's future sustainable economic growth, showcase innovation and green technologies, and which support our move to a net-zero economy.
- 2. Ensuring trade and inward investment continues to flow in a post-EU transition environment:** providing Thames Valley businesses with the relevant, direct, and practical information and support they require to 'build back better', trade overseas more efficiently and improve UK plc's inward investment and trade figures; Lobby Government to ensure we have frictionless trade, freedom of movement for the workforce and investment in appropriate skills.
- 3. Regional leadership and showcasing the region as a key contributor to levelling-up:** supporting initiatives that invest in the success of the region's sustainable economic growth and productivity; Showcase the contributions investing in the Thames Valley can make to the levelling-up agenda.



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