



2024



THAMES VALLEY
**CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE**
GROUP

BUSINESS MANIFESTO

LOCAL ENGAGEMENT
REGIONAL REPRESENTATION
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY



PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

On behalf of the Thames Valley Chambers of Commerce (TVCC) it is with immense gratitude that I thank Martha Lane-Fox for contributing to this year's Business Manifesto and I should like to congratulate her on her re-appointment as the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC)'s President.

Welcome to our seventh annual Business Manifesto. It has been a successful year for the Chamber, notwithstanding a challenging one for the UK, and with a unique year ahead it is a moment to reflect.

But first, may I thank you, our members, for your continued support and commitment and putting your trust in this Chamber of Commerce. Most especially, I thank those who have responded to my calls to action and have helped us to deliver a wide range of activity, events, training, and who have informed our work throughout the year. **My highlights include:**

- Celebrating the successes of our members at the annual Business Awards.
- Being entrusted by Government to spearhead the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). We published two business-led reports, connecting with over 1000 SMEs to shape future technical skills provision to meet workforce needs.
- Hosting our first International Green Technology Conference and two Windsor Debates highlighting leadership and the future competitiveness of the Thames Valley.
- Introducing new customs and advisory support services for our international trade customers and courses to upskill importing and exporting SMEs.
- Launching our Thames Valley Assembly (TVA) to represent our key sectors, and businesses large and small.

We provide the independent voice of business for one of the UK's most consistently high performing, most productive and economically successful regions. We have a long and successful record of representing all businesses across the Thames Valley, whatever their size, and sit at the heart of a unique network of businesses across all sectors, doing business within the UK and around the world.

We are also a respected voice for business. Our opinions are regularly sought by policymakers and parliamentarians, and we have been helping to shape the Thames Valley, and UK's, business agenda for almost 80 years.

We place the respect we have earned and our meeting of the highest standards of professional integrity and good modern governance, at the very centre of everything we do and who we are.

Always evolving and responsive, it was a privilege to launch the TVA. It is providing an opportunity for our business leaders to come together to promote, and drive, the future competitiveness of the region; shape policy and influence government and champion the business credentials of the Thames Valley with a unified pan-regional voice. It is about talking politics without being political.

In 2024, the election cycles of the European Union (June), the United States (November) and the United Kingdom come together for the very first time. Alongside Russia (March) and India (April-May) these elections will shape global affairs and the future of the world economy during the second half of the decade. Combined, these elections will cover a population around 2.3 billion people, and a GDP of approx. £34.5 trillion. The results will set the tone for global interactions and geopolitics into the 2030's. As a truly global economy, the Thames Valley will be affected and, I know, will be ready to respond and innovate to meet changing circumstances and opportunities.

Representing all sizes of businesses, our five priorities have, once again, been informed by and will be delivered in partnership with our membership. They are, in summary:

1. Infrastructure network resilience and adaption
2. Shaping our future skills needs
3. Pathway to net-zero and climate change
4. Trade and Inward Investment
5. Delivering regional leadership

These priorities are defined by several actions within each of our six core themes of **Ambitious**, **Competitive**, **Connected**, **Global**, **Influential** and **Working** Thames Valley.

We continue to put our members first. This year will see us working with our business community to build stronger connections with technical education and training providers; advance the regional leadership work of the TVA and our sectoral working groups as well as sustaining local engagement through the Chamber's local area assemblies and selected consultations.

We will champion the region at a national level. Working with the BCC to help shape the structure and priorities of its new Business Council means that the voice of our local businesses will provide evidence to drive real change in policy. We will maintain our involvement and input into the BCC's policy priorities and campaign, where they align to our own Business Manifesto priorities. Listening to our members. We will be exploring the merits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the implications for business. This conversation is well underway and will feature as our key theme for the spring Windsor Debates. We want to ensure that SMEs are making informed decisions.

Working with the BCC we will be challenging government to provide greater business certainty and deliver the appropriate legislation and regulation changes to keep business moving. We must embrace digitalisation and ensure the effective and efficient free movement of trade, services, and talent to achieve growth. We will also look to highlight the hidden issues and risks associated with companies ignoring the important policy changes that affect their business.

Finally, whilst we have seen government 'flip-flopping,' we remain steadfast behind the importance of our continued pathway to net-zero and delivering a green industrial revolution.

I leave you, once again, with a 'call to action.' Please get involved in our work, engage in our events, and help shape the future direction of our policy programme towards securing a thriving, green and healthy Thames Valley.



Bill Gornall-King
Group President



FOREWORD

One of the reasons I was thrilled to be invited to contribute to this, your seventh Business Manifesto, was because TVCC represents the best of business large and small from across the region.

You sit alongside a unique network of UK Chambers who collectively are pulling together, have got an amazing voice and punch way above its weight. I respect how Chambers – your Chamber - on an individual level but also at a national level, have built a real force to be reckoned with, and which the Government takes seriously, which is no mean feat.

Chambers provide invaluable support to ensure businesses can expand, invest, and trade and it's pleasing to see TVCC doing so many great things focused on championing the region and helping Thames Valley businesses thrive.

Having founded and run my own businesses, I know first-hand the challenges firms across the Thames Valley are up against. Now more than ever, businesses must come together to share experiences and tackle the challenges they, and the UK economy, are confronting. In the face of post-pandemic economic disruption and with a general election looming, it is important businesses engage with the Chamber to ensure the independent voice of business is heard loud and clear by policy makers.

Launching the BCC's national Business Council in 2023 I was pleased we had your Chambers involvement and help in shaping the agenda that allows for a powerful and engaging debate about the problems but also helps to identify the solutions. For BCC to make a national impact, we rely upon the evidence and input of companies into their local Accredited Chamber, and we can see from the significant contributions to the BCC Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) and national consultations, that we have an engaged and informed business community in the Thames Valley.

Complementing the Council is your own Thames Valley Assembly (TVA), strengthening this engagement, drawing on the expertise and experience of business leaders, to inform your exciting policy work and to ensure your business community is the best place to live and work.

Highlighting three areas I encourage you, the business community of the region, to put your shoulder to, to make sure we have representation into all sides of Government

- Technology has been the cornerstone of the Thames Valley's growth over forty plus years, and technology isn't slowing down. It's speeding up with digitalisation. 'Businesses need to think of themselves as digital businesses to survive by 2030'. Whilst AI is clearly now the dominant media story, I've warned against becoming "too hysterical or hype-driven" over AI. I welcome the focus of Windsor Debates, on AI and technology in the Spring of 2024, and invite you to take time to consider "whether we're going to digitise in a way that is ethical, that is inclusive, that is sustainable."
- The State of the Region report on sustainability is an exemplar worth highlighting. Setting out a pathway to net-zero, driven, for the first time, by business it is rightly ambitious and challenging. I believe digitalisation and climate-related innovation both hold significant potential to grow our economy and business over the coming years. So too, having an inclusive approach, which reflects the Sustainability Working Group's (SWG) activity to date, in bringing large corporates and smaller businesses together to share information, knowledge, information, and skills.
- We need different voices to be raised up. We need to make sure that different voices are embedded in the heart of policymaking. And that is what the Chamber is doing, what I know the businesses that work in the wider Chamber network are doing, and what I want to encourage you to do as well.

As we move towards a general election, we see our economy not growing at the pace we would like it, businesses not investing the way they should, productivity levels stubbornly remaining below competitors and structural things that happened during the pandemic still taking effect (including geopolitical circumstances).

As a business community we are realistic and understand the financial limitations that the governments of both today and the next five years will be facing. Now more than ever, businesses must come together to tackle the challenges facing the UK economy. People, skills, and how companies are shaping their businesses over the next decade matter.

It is through partnership, and initiatives like those TVCC are leading on, that we can work collectively to make a real difference for businesses on the frontline of the economy and give them the tools they need to succeed.

The region, and the whole of the United Kingdom, has so much opportunity for growth. I have been struck again and again by the immense determination of members to grow their business but also to grow their local areas and community. We will face many challenges over the next decade but by working together with purposeful leadership, we can do it.



Martha Lane Fox
Rt Hon Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho CBE Hon FREng
President of the British Chambers of Commerce



Thames Valley Assembly Parliamentary Question Time at the University of Reading with Lord David Blunkett, the Rt Hon Theresa May and Catherine Bearder

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the seventh iteration of the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC) Business Manifesto - our key policy document.









Whatever their size, we have been providing the independent voice of business for the Thames Valley for almost 80 years. We sit at the heart of a unique network of companies across all sectors, doing business in the UK and around the world, we are the respected regional voice for business and hold this position with great respect and responsibility. Our opinions are regularly sought by policy makers and parliamentarians, in helping to shape the Thames Valley, and the UK's, business agenda. In this Business Manifesto we are setting out five main priorities that the Chamber will champion this year.

The main strategic priorities are:

- Infrastructure network resilience and adoption – promoting the opportunities of the technology and supporting investment that can future-proof our region.
- Shaping our future skills needs – implementing the next steps of the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and shaping the future of the Thames Valley Skills Unit. (TVSU)
- Pathway to net zero (and climate change) – advancing the work around sustainability as outlined in our State of the Region report.
- Trade and Inward Investment - delivering services that enable high value and volumes of trade and inward investment continues to flow.
- Delivering regional leadership, championing the Thames Valley – putting and representing businesses at the heart of stakeholder engagement and political decision making, ensuring they invest in success, and that we promote our wider sector and market strengths.



Our work programme has been informed by the Thames Valley business community we represent and is focused on impact. It is shaped around the following six core themes - **Ambitious, Competitive, Connected, Global, Influential** and **Working** Thames Valley. Selected highlights for the coming year include:

 <p>Announcing a new Trade consultancy including the offer of a trade customs health check.</p>	 <p>Contributing to the BCC's National Business Council and wider accredited UK network.</p>	 <p>Launching new training initiatives to support organisations in their recruitment, retention, upskilling and workforce development.</p>	 <p>Leading ambitions on regional and systems leadership through our Thames Valley Assembly.</p>
 <p>Preparing SMEs for the developments and implications of Artificial Intelligence and sharing practical support on delivering carbon-reduction and journey to net-zero ambitions.</p>	 <p>Promoting the Osaka World Expo 2025 and laying the foundations for a trade missions and the associated business opportunities.</p>	 <p>Relaunching the Thames Valley inward investment portal to promote the region as a leading international business location.</p>	 <p>Spearheading the BCC's national evaluation of LSIPs to highlight the merit of local businesses working with educators to co-develop new provision.</p>

Committed to a mantra of local engagement, regional representation, and global opportunity, we are part of an accredited and global network of Chambers across the UK under the affiliation of the BCC. This provides our business community unique access to the heart of government.

In 2024 we will continue working with the BCC to help shape the structure and priorities of its new Business Council and in so doing, representing the local and regional interests of our membership.

Our operating model is dependent on our members and wider business community's continued involvement, direction, and support. It is based on the objectives to develop and deliver outstanding services, and to play an active part in providing regional leadership and working in partnership to ensure we have the skills, solutions, and ambition for a prosperous Thames Valley for the future.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Reflecting on what we delivered in 2023 is an important measure of intent and the action focused nature of the Business Manifesto. Success and impact can be measured by our work which includes:

Bank of England: Hosted quarterly inflation report briefings with the Bank of England in both Reading and Swindon.

British Council: Assisted the BCC in shaping the new Business Council, part of a national offer designed to drive the future of the British economy.

Business Alliance Dinners: Held five BA dinners with speakers from Thames Water, Royal Holloway, University of London, Buckinghamshire New University, Equinix, and Heathrow.

Business Leaders Forums: Continued to host the popular series of forums targeted at our Inspire tier of membership.

Business 101 Roundtables: Launched a new engagement programme targeted at our Discover tier of membership.

[Business Voice](#): Published our quarterly members magazine distributed to over 5000 businesses.

Centres of Excellence: Hosted centres of excellence for inward investment and international trade.

Consultation Panel: Established a [consultation panel](#) of members to help represent the voice of business.

Chamber Awards: Championed business success and innovation through the 2023 [Chamber Business Awards](#). [Thomas Franks](#) were crowned the ultimate 'Thames Valley Business of the Year' along with securing the Employer of the Year category.

Events: Delivered over 100 events throughout 2023, including a Parliamentary Question time, held in partnership with the University of Reading.

[Heathrow](#): Continued to promote and reinforce the importance and value of the UK's only hub airport and largest port to the UK, including providing members with the opportunity to exhibit at the Heathrow Business Summit and meet Tier 1 suppliers.

Human Resources Forum: Launched a new HR Forum, hosted by Cliveden House, bringing together HR practitioners to share expertise and discuss themes of common interest.

International Green Technology Conference (IGTC): In partnership with Microsoft, and for the first time since 2019, held the [IGTC](#). A [themed agenda](#) focused on sustainability and the impact technology is having on helping our pathway to net zero.

Inward Investment: As a local delivery partner to the Department for Business and Trade, we have supported 1,000 projects.

Local Business Groups: Maintained our local engagement of business through the high energy and active [Local Area Assemblies](#) (LAAs).

LSIPs: Published two LSIP reports, following Department for Education (DfE) approval, for [Berkshire](#) and [Oxfordshire](#). As the voice of employers, industry and business across our two LSIPs, we have engaged over 1000 employers, including hosting a very successful 'Shaping the Future Workforce' event.

Mental Health Charter: First championed by our former Prime Minister, Mrs Theresa May, we have continued to host this group, bringing together businesses wishing to learn from good practice and pledge to support the good mental health of their employees.

Multi-modal transport: Continued to support proposals that deliver sustainable, integrated, multi-modal travel systems.

[Quarterly Economic Survey \(QES\)](#): Completed Britain's biggest and longest running business survey. Secured the publication of quarterly regional 'QES' reports, and, in partnership with BDO LLP, held four national and regional economic briefings for our members.

Regional representation: Maintained our efforts lobbying government, and political parties, to ensure we highlight the benefits of investing in success, unblock constraints to do business and they create the right policy environment to help business growth.

Regional Reports: Secured quarterly regional 'QES' reports and, in partnership with BDO LLP, held four national and regional economic briefings for our members.

Sustainability and pathway to net-zero: Published the region's first [State of the Region report](#) on sustainability. Continued to [showcase good practice](#).

[Thought Leadership](#): Continued to showcase in-regional thought leadership from a wide selection of our members.

Thames Valley Assembly (TVA): Established a leadership forum of key businesses, anchor institutions and stakeholders to represent the Thames Valley and inform our engagement with government.

[Western Rail Link to Heathrow](#): Having secured the original economic data from the Department for Transport (DfT), we commenced a refresh of the economic case for this project.

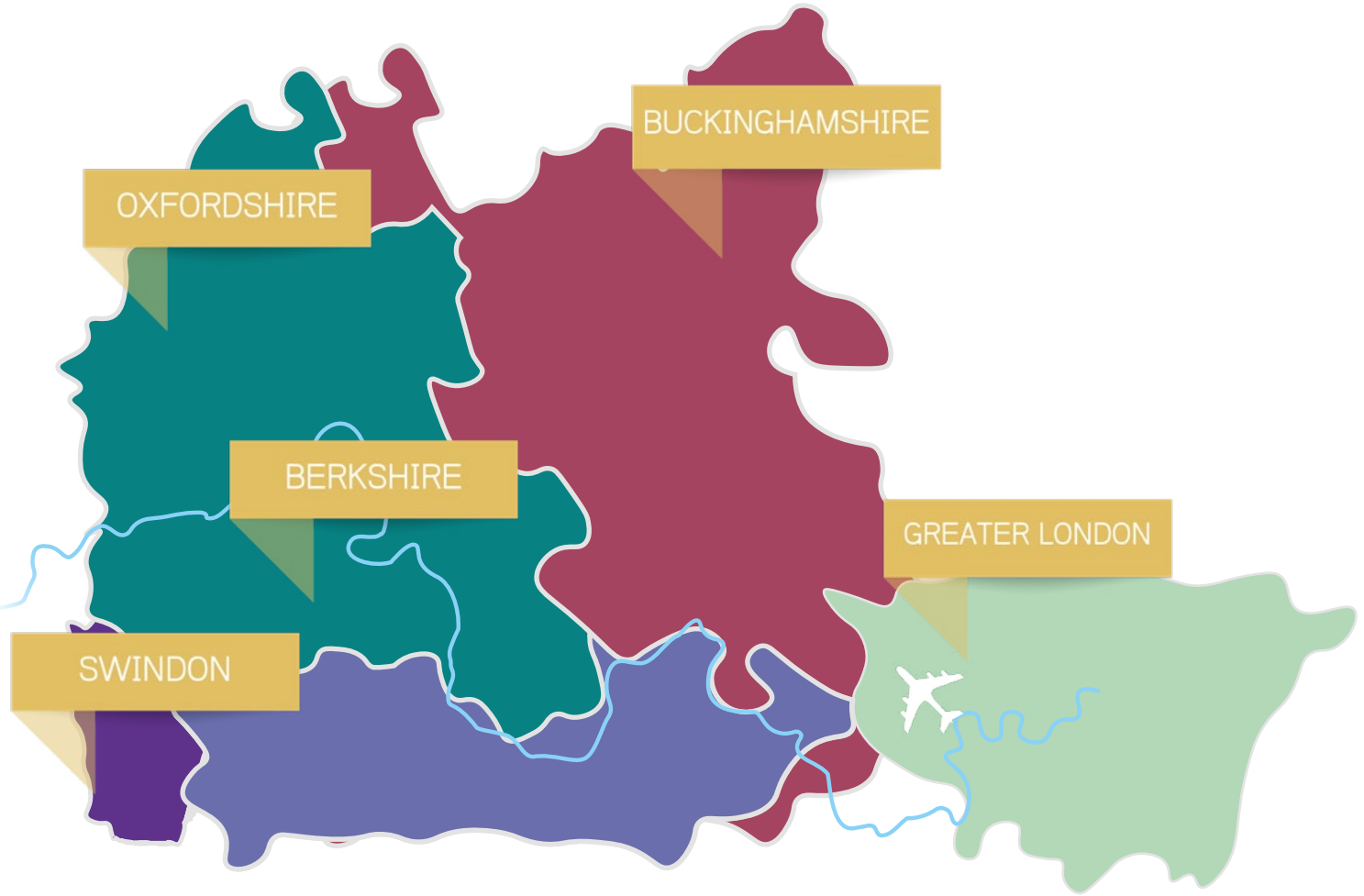
[Windsor Debates](#): Hosted events on [Leadership](#) and the [Future Competitiveness of the Thames Valley](#).

WHY THAMES VALLEY

Considered the UK's true turbo economy, the Thames Valley prevails in its position as the second engine of growth of the UK (outside of London).

The Thames Valley is the fastest-growing region in the UK outside of London, boasting a dynamic economic environment that is fuelled by its status as a science and tech superpower. Encompassing an interconnected business community of multinational companies from a wider range of sectors and withholding a reputation as the 'Silicon Valley of Europe', it is therefore, the place to be.

Our business strength as a region spans across sectors, including Advanced Engineering, Health and Life Sciences, High-End Television and Film, and Motorsport and Technology; with the region being home to one of the largest data centre clusters in Europe. The Thames Valley has and continues to attract world leading companies who choose to invest and expand their operations in the region.



The resilient Thames Valley has played an important role in transforming the country's economy post-COVID-19, because we are home to:



The No.1 University in the World: The University of Oxford has been recognised for the eighth consecutive year as the world's best University.



Rising GVA: Thames Valley's GVA growth rate of 2.4%, set to be the strongest performing region in 2024-2026.



Highest Performing Cities: Oxford was ranked as the top performing city in PwC's Good Growth for Cities Report (2023), a position it has held since 2017, with Swindon in second place, and Reading performing above the UK average and the region expecting to experience positive growth of 0.75% of growth in the future in 2024.



Heathrow Airport: Heathrow is the UK's only hub airport and the world's most connected airport with over 214 global destinations in 84 countries, handling over 75 million international passengers. It also the UK's largest port by value, overseeing more cargo than all other UK airports combined.



The European Cities and Region of the Future report (2023) ranked Reading as the 3rd small European city overall and 1st for business friendliness; with Slough 1st for connectivity and Oxford within the top 10 small European cities of the future.



Windsor & Maidenhead, Oxford and High Wycombe, ranked in top 10 locations for vitality in the UK according to Lamber Smith Hampton's 2023 Vitality Index.



AMBITIOUS THAMES VALLEY

Our priorities will include:

- Being the advocate for the Thames Valley region, providing regional leadership and an independent voice of business.
- Highlighting the leadership and support that the regions' business community has regarding delivering their net-zero targets and the pathway to net-zero.
- Providing high-calibre inward investment and international trade services.
- Showcasing the benefits of investing in the Thames Valley to overseas investors.

By 2025, measure us by the following outcomes:

- Actively represented businesses in shaping the regional policy agenda and ensuring a regional perspective is heard on national issues.
- Deepened the meaningful connections between industry and education through our LSIPs to help deliver the future needs of business.
- Delivered the Trusted Services that the Chamber provides for local businesses to help them trade internationally.
- Engaged government to ensure they are creating the right conditions for businesses to succeed.
- Highlighted the region's sector strengths and how the importance of investing in the success of the Thames Valley economy is a driver of the UK's economic prosperity.
- Hosted our five flagship business events (two Windsor Debates, Technology and Global Trade Conferences and Business Awards).
- Maintained the momentum and impact of our business-led sector roundtables.
- Helped shape the regional and wider UK's business agenda as our opinions are regularly sought by key stakeholders, policymakers, and politicians.
- Represented the region and the interests of our members, ensuring the true, independent voice of business for the Thames Valley is heard.

AMBITIOUS THAMES VALLEY

TVCC sits at the heart of a unique network of businesses of all sizes across all sectors, within the UK and around the world coordinated by the BCC.

We believe it is our relationships that leads us to achieve goals beyond those we could ever achieve alone. We are the only organisation that helps Thames Valley businesses to build relationships on every level and provides a direct voice into government.

As part of the BCC network, we are the only Accredited Chamber for the Thames Valley. Across this network, we can connect businesses locally, nationally, and internationally, with other businesses, with decision-makers and with opportunities.

Our opinions are regularly, and increasingly, sought by key stakeholders, policymakers, and politicians and we have been helping to shape the regional and wider UK business agenda. Valuing and respecting the trust business places upon us to be their advocate, we understand this trust is earned. We are passionate about ensuring that we maintain our position as the true, independent voice of business.

Our ambition has always, and remains, to help business connect, succeed, and grow.

The global opportunity for the UK remains having a government (whatever colour) focused on enabling business investment and innovation, reducing burdensome regulation and taxes and to create the right conditions for businesses to succeed which will in turn create jobs, wealth and drive economic growth and higher rates of productivity.

WESTERN RAILWAY LINK TO HEATHROW

We have maintained our commitment to securing the timely delivery of the WRLtH scheme – a transformational, carbon-reduction project that improves connectivity to the UK's only hub airport to 14m people. This is a scheme that MPs, across the political spectrum, have voiced their support. Working with partners located across the southeast, southwest and Wales, we continue to present the business case and benefits, and lobby government and stakeholders for their support.

In 2024 you can expect a continued commitment and for us to complete a refresh of the business and economic case for the scheme. Having provided the original data for the case (approved in late 2019), the DfT invited us to progress with a new assessment using most current data. We will look to report back on this assessment and utilise the report findings to re-engage government and call for commitments to include the delivery of the scheme in Party Manifestos as we lead up to the next general election.



Wonderful to see so much cross-party support in Parliament for the WRLtH. As MPs representing constituencies across the UK, we know the huge benefits our constituents could experience once this vital link is built. Greatly improving connectivity, bringing in countless economic and environmental benefits, I look forward to progress on delivering this officially recognised 'nationally significant infrastructure project.

Tan Dhesi, MP, Co-chair of the WRLtH APPG

What matters?

Investing in Success – we remain focused on ensuring the Thames Valley continues to be a key part of the new Government's plan to unlock business investment and grow the size of the British economy.

International Trade – over 60% of Chamber members export compared to just 10% of firms across the UK. We are experts in international trade and supporting trade locally, nationally, and globally remains a key mission.

Net-zero Targets – delivering on net-zero targets remains a non-negotiation commitment for the long-term success of business. We are focused on sharing good practice, knowledge and understanding that helps companies understand how to decarbonise their operations and continue their pathway for net-zero.

Regional Leadership – representing and shaping the regional policy agenda and ensuring the voice of business is heard. We listen and know from our business community that putting forward regional perspectives and addressing sector specific issues (e.g., on regulation) at national levels are important.

Skills - entrusted to lead the LSIPs for the Thames Valley (Berkshire and Oxfordshire) we will continue to deepen the meaningful connections between industry and education to deliver the future needs of businesses.



COMPETITIVE THAMES VALLEY

Our priorities will include:

- Calling for reforms that will unlock the planning system and help release the economic potential of the Thames Valley.
- Championing the conditions that help ensure businesses create a thriving economy for the Thames Valley.
- Co-developing solutions which support our business priorities, with local authorities and our anchor institutions.
- Helping to build the eco-system of purposeful collaboration with local and national government.
- Highlighting the region's sector strengths and our truly global assets to the international marketplace.
- Securing appropriate investment in local economic development capacity.

By 2025, measure us by the following outcomes:

- Engaged businesses and promoted the sectors where we have evidential strength, and global competitiveness.
- Focused efforts to ensure government are investing in the success of the Thames Valley and delivering the right economic and policy foundations to enable business to succeed and grow.
- Highlighted in-region thought leadership and research that helps drive our IP-rich economy.
- Partnered with the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to secure foreign direct investment and promote the Thames Valley to an international audience.
- Promoted the contribution our international trade services and inward investment activity makes to the Thames Valley and UK economy.
- Provided an independent voice of business into government through our work programme and wider policy work.
- Showcased the Thames Valley as a destination for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), strengthening sector-based relations with key markets for both investment and trade.

COMPETITIVE THAMES VALLEY

Every sector, every size and everywhere, TVCC is the largest and broadest representative membership organisation, and independent voice of business in the region. Our continued focus is to ensure the Thames Valley remains one of the UK's most competitive economies and contributes to wider ambitions of UK plc.

The Thames Valley is the fastest-growing region in the UK outside of London and one of the world's truly global business destinations. It encompasses companies from all over the world, in every sector, world leading research and development assets and institutions, and an incredibly talented, skilled workforce, who are brought together in a connected business community. For this reason, the Thames Valley is the UK's true 'turbo-economy,' the 'Silicon Valley of Europe' and therefore, the place to be.

We are supporting wider calls for reforms to unlock the planning system which currently is a barrier to investment and economic growth. A planning system is required that supports our transition to net-zero; one that places planning for economic development higher up in the priorities alongside housing. It is essential that there is good quality land reserved for businesses. We are encouraging a clearer role for the Planning Inspectorate to scrutinise the employment land component of all local plans and increased resources for our local planning authorities. Flourishing economies need the right balance of land for jobs and homes.

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Regional Leadership means leading across boundaries; building the culture, structures, partnerships, connections and the relationships that solve some of the complex economic, social and environmental we are facing problems through multi-organisation collaboration – and I believe the TVCC is best placed to lead and has the mandate from business to do so.

Professor Robert Van de Noort, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Reading

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Thriving businesses create thriving economies that fund our public services and support the most vulnerable members of society. However, our research indicates companies across the region continue to struggle with a cumulative burden of costs, accessing the world's best talent, and legislative inertia that is severely restricting their investment plans. Business craves for an era of economic security, a credible long-term plan, an incentives package and a strategy that reduces the overall cost of doing business, to enable them to invest more. We want a clear vision for business and our economy.

The region's anchor institutions matter. They are the bedrock of the past, present, and future Thames Valley economy. We are a part of a group of businesses, academic institutions, public authorities, and landowners who develop and own a collective vision for the region. We are stakeholders providing the regional leadership that our future success will be built.

Our business supply chains continue to face major challenges, as the impact of the pandemic lingers and inflation remains, including higher industrial energy costs. Gross domestic product (GDP) rates are persistently low and geopolitical risks have surged to their highest level in many years. All the while, climate indicators generate further uncertainty.

Including energy prices, employment, property & asset, consumption, regulatory and reporting requirements
e.g., investment in skills, research and development, green-tech, and digitalisation.
e.g., capital allowances, R&D tax credits (and follow-on manufacturing tax credits)
Examples include a reform of business rates and finding a fair and equitable way to tax online sales.

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP NEEDS SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP AND A MOBILISING FORCE

If we want to be part of a thriving, green and healthy Thames Valley, we need holistic thinking and to embed systems leadership in what we do. Speaking at our Windsor Debates, Professor Robert Van de Noort outlined the need for systems leadership or: leading across boundaries to address large, complex, difficult and seemingly intractable problems that one organisation cannot solve on its own.

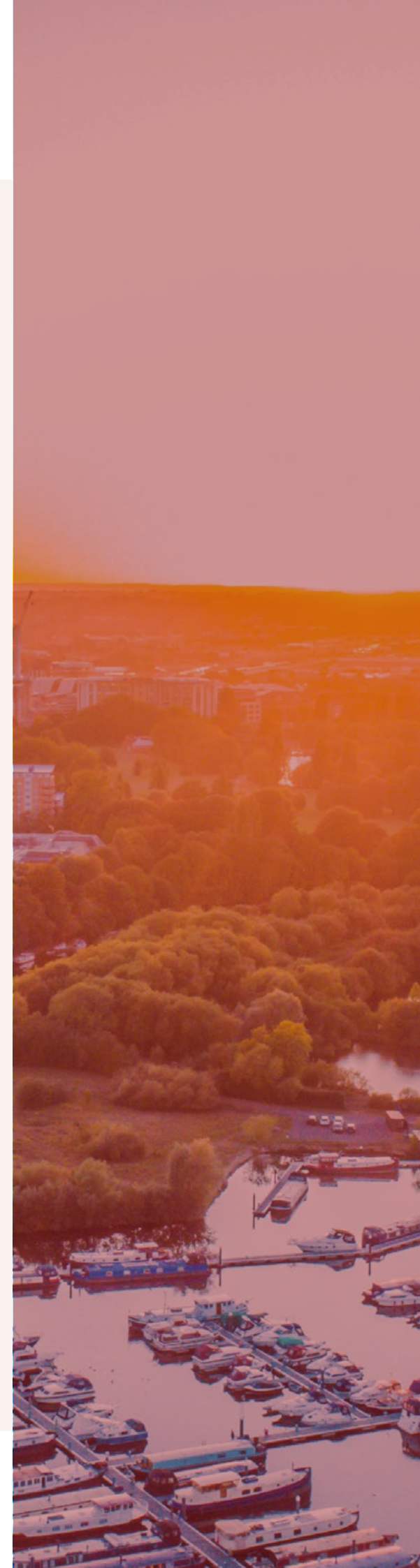
We can use systems leadership to catalyse, enable, and support a process of systems-level change that will help deliver the future prosperity of the region. Businesses, communities, and political leaders need multi-organisational, collaborative leadership to enable learning, build trust and deliver empowered action amongst stakeholders who share this common goal.

We need the tactics of coalition building and advocacy to develop alignment and mobilise. We need to share our wider understanding of the complex issues and challenges to be address on a unified platform. Robert called on the Thames Valley to come together, develop a clear proposition and act proactively at finding solutions and being a part of the solution.

Leading an institution that has secured over £1bn worth of investment into the region, Robert says developing a proposition for the Thames Valley and building stronger, sustained, political engagement is vital for us to secure our future success as thriving, green and healthy.

In so doing, he accepted we remain on a journey, and called for a more consistent and strategic, not piecemeal, promotion of the region – a strong 'compelling' proposition to national government and international investors and a clear articulation of what and who we are and how we are actively supporting international business growth.

In 2024, our two institutions continue our commitment to regional leadership and working in partnership to ensure we have the skills, solutions, and ambition for a liveable Thames Valley (and planet) for the future.





CONNECTED THAMES VALLEY

Our priorities will include:

- Encouraging and supporting policy decisions that will deliver greater connectivity, predictable journey times and sustainable, accessible, integrated, multi-modal travel systems.
- Lobbying on the benefits of delivering and funding the region's key rail projects, including [Western Rail Link to Heathrow](#) (WRLtH) and [East-West Rail](#).
- Maintaining our partnership with Heathrow to ensure it delivers key economic growth and sustainability targets.
- Promoting the need for an improved, sustainable energy supply and appropriate investment in networks that support electric transition.
- Supporting appropriate proposals that will improve the safety, sustainability, and quality of our regional infrastructure network.

By 2025, measure us by the following outcomes:

- Ensured Thames Valley representation on the BCC's national infrastructure group.
- Highlighted the benefits of the timely delivery and long term funding of this region's Bus Enhanced Partnerships and Bus Service Improvement Plans.
- Lobbied our political leaders to commit to and deliver the long-term infrastructure, including digital infrastructure such as 5G that our region and country needs and to build a low-carbon transport system.
- Maintained our strong and valued partnership with Heathrow to help them deliver their future ambitions and targets and ensure the airport is placed at the heart of the UK's trading infrastructure.
- Raised awareness and greater understanding for the need to deliver resilient infrastructure networks.
- Raised the profile, widened awareness, and supported the campaign of [making public transport even safer](#).
- Worked with the two sub-national transport bodies to ensure the appropriate business focus to their work, action, and priority setting.
- Undertaken a business-led refresh of the business and economic case for the [WRLtH](#) rail project.

CONNECTED THAMES VALLEY

A connected Thames Valley supports and drives the UK economy, helping to enable UK plc to realise and unlock its full potential, deliver improved productivity levels, and achieve levelling-up objectives. It contributes to our ambitions to build a better, more sustainable future and meet our net-zero targets.

In 2023 we commended the [MPs push for revival of WRLtH](#) but we noted, in October, the scheme wasn't included in the numerous proposals that the Prime Minister listed would be delivered following the cancellation of HS2. Supporting the timely delivery of WRLtH has been a consistent focus for the Chamber and we continue to lobby Parliamentarians accordingly. Despite the failure of others, we are pioneering the movement, with a clear evidence base to support the project. We will represent the case to the DfT and call on HM Treasury to enable an appropriate funding model to be approved to deliver the scheme. Business, as opposed to the public purse, will undertake a refresh of the business and economic case for the scheme.

Backed by government in 2012, the planned 6.5km rail link would create west-facing direct rail access from the Great Western Main Line to Heathrow Terminal 5.

London Heathrow is the [most internationally connected airport](#), the UK's only hub airport, an engine of growth that boosts Thames Valley and helps all UK regions to unlock their economic potential. [Six critical measures](#) shape the airports ask of government and ambitions to [build a better and more sustainable airport](#) for which we support.

We put our business shoulder behind the: "Making Public Transport Even Safer" and healthier campaign, to support the conversation, raise the profile, and get everybody to think about the issues that people may face when they are using bus, coach, and rail services. Safety and people's well-being matter.

We will work to showcase how businesses are building the supply chain for the future through, for example, connected and autonomous supply chain ecosystems, and investing in supply chain sustainability and resiliency to boost returns on investment and growth.

Building resilience in our infrastructure networks and speeding up the energy grid connections that we need are fundamental issues for business. We are calling for an improved, sustainable energy supply, and the appropriate network investment to ensure we deliver our sustainability targets, productivity, and economic ambition. The speed of infrastructure roll-out, especially for electric vehicles (EVs), needs to be quicker and located in both residential and commercial locations. These are the critical building blocks we need in place to be the global science and technology super-power we are striving to be and enable our electric transition.

“

The partnership between the Thames Valley region and Heathrow Airport is a symbiotic relationship that benefits both entities in numerous ways. In an ever-changing world, where competition is fierce and borders are becoming more fluid, it's vital to recognise the unique strengths of the Thames Valley region. The proximity of major cities like London, Oxford, and Reading makes this region a true powerhouse. Their rich history, world-class universities, and a vibrant tech scene have positioned the Thames Valley as a magnet for talent and innovation.

Nigel Milton, Chief of Staff, Heathrow

”

We will work with the region's two transport bodies – [England's Economic Heartland](#) and [Transport for the South East](#) to help ensure their work is informed by business. We remain focused on shaping their plans, [priorities](#) and actions to support the delivery of sustainable, integrated, multi-modal travel systems and [future mobility](#), and [enhance partners' capacities and capabilities](#).

HEATHROW'S SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY - 'ON-TRACK' AND 'PROGRESSING'

The UK's only hub airport is leading the world as a test bed for innovative green technology that could drastically reduce aviation's carbon emissions. Plans are outlined in Heathrow's sustainability strategy – Heathrow 2.0 – which details the airport's commitment to delivering net-zero aviation and making Heathrow a great place to live and work. This includes reducing emissions both on the ground and in the air. Sharing progress against the airport's targets, Heathrow can report that over half of the commitments towards have been marked as 'on-track' or 'progressing':

Emissions from airport vehicles were 52% lower than 2019 levels and trials of electric cooling for aircraft have cut engine idling, reducing emissions whilst aircraft are on stand. Within the local community, over 100 local SMEs attended Heathrow's annual Business Summit, delivering against its target of over 50% of local suppliers being SMEs. It has secured SBTi (Science Based Target Initiative) validation for its 2030 carbon reduction goals, confirming they are in line with a 1.5-degrees pathway. The airport kickstarted a ground-breaking new trial, exploring the viability of lower carbon concrete, which cuts emissions by 50% compared to a conventional concrete.

Matt Gorman, Director of Carbon Strategy said: 'A year on from the launch of Heathrow 2.0, I am thrilled our 2030 carbon reduction goals have achieved SBTi validation and are consistent with a 1.5 degree carbon reduction trajectory. We still have a long way to go, but our world leading SAF incentive programme demonstrates that greener, cleaner flying is possible'.

This year, Heathrow will be focused on developing nature positive and zero waste strategies. The progress made on Heathrow 2.0 demonstrates the incremental change required to reach its overarching carbon goals – 15% cut in carbon from flights and at least 45% cut on the ground by 2030, whilst remaining a responsible neighbour.





GLOBAL THAMES VALLEY

Our priorities will include:

- Championing the Thames Valley as a trading hub and investment location of choice.
- Delivering inward investment services in partnership with the [DBT](#).
- Safeguarding the volume and value levels of investment from foreign owned multinationals investing in the region.
- Partnering with [London Heathrow](#) to promote the importance of the UK's only hub airport and largest port to the economic well-being of the Thames Valley and driver of global Britain.
- Promote the merits of bilateral trade and encourage and support local businesses to go global.
- Providing value added services through our centres of excellence for inward investment and international trade services.
- Providing a wide range of skills development training for importers and exporters.







By 2025, measure us by the following outcomes:

- Continued the investment in our service centres of excellence for inward investment and international trade services.
- Created momentum behind our awareness campaign to promote a programme of deliverables associated with the [World Exposition 2025](#) being held in Osaka, Japan.
- Delivered the outcomes of the Inward Investment Partnership Manager contract with DBT.
- Engaged our international business community through an effective key account management programme.
- Launched the Chambers new Customs health check package.
- Lobbied Government to ensure they create the right conditions for the retention and free flow of global talent to enable our business and academic institutions to thrive.
- Maintained and widened the reach of our [market specialisms](#) covering Romania and Japan and maintained our strategic partnership with the Osaka Chamber of Commerce.
- Provided direct support and services to companies wishing to trade and foreign owned companies looking to invest in the Thames Valley.
- Worked alongside our co-partners, including [James Cowper Kreston](#), to deliver inward investment services to foreign owned companies.

GLOBAL THAMES VALLEY

The [Thames Valley's](#) business community is 'born global', with a depth of IP-rich companies, international trading, and international based workforce we are rightly proud to promote.

The Thames Valley remains one of the fastest-growing regions in the UK outside of London. It brings together over 240,000 companies, employing over 1 million people, covering a wide range of sectors. We are a truly global business community that continues to attract foreign direct investment and companies who wish to trade internationally:

-  An economy conservatively estimated to around **£88.4 bn** (as of 2021).
-  Between 2024-2026, the **strongest performing region** in the UK by Gross Value Added (GVA), with one report highlighting a **2.40% predicted growth**.
-  Gateway to the **UK's space industry** at [Harwell](#).
-  **2nd largest global data centre** cluster in [Slough](#).
-  The **highest number of tech unicorn** founders
-  The region hosts around **29 FTSE 350** and **56 AIM All Share** companies.

MODERNA

In April 2023, Moderna announced it had begun construction of the Moderna Innovation and Technology Centre (MITC) at the Harwell Science Campus, Oxfordshire, creating more than 150 jobs during construction and operation. This is a significant milestone for Moderna, as the MITC is being built to deliver against the commitments laid out in Moderna's ten-year strategic partnership, which aims to boost vaccine manufacturing and research capabilities in the UK as part of the government's "100 Days Mission" to reduce the impact of future pandemics.

Moderna's decision to build in the Thames Valley was based on the area's renowned scientific community and strong heritage. The MITC will consist of a drug substance manufacturing unit and Moderna's only Clinical Biomarker Laboratory outside the US.

Once operational, the manufacturing facility will have the ability to produce up to 250 million domestically manufactured mRNA vaccines a year, providing onshore supply chain resilience in case of a pandemic, while also ensuring endemic supply during a normal winter season.

UK-MRNA-2300075 | November 2023



TVCC is a centre of excellence for inward investment and international trade services and we will continue to provide the highest standards of assistance, practical guidance, and access to services that enable foreign owned and international trade-orientated companies to succeed and grow.

We are focused on both promoting and showcasing the region's truly unique, truly global assets and investable commercial opportunities to the world. We do this through the support and investment of our members with whom we represent without public subsidy. Our services include an initial non-chargeable soft-landing service delivered in association with key and valuable co-partners.

Building on the Global Innovation Forum we continue our commitment to deliver the widest range of international trade services. This includes, for example, the widest range of completion guides and essential forms; our market specialist desks; and the Global Business Opportunities Platform which promotes Connects - a unique international online trade platform, which has been specially designed for members of Chambers of Commerce.

We will continue to represent our members and trade customer views to key stakeholders and policy makers on trade related issues affecting their ability to trade. Reflecting on the ever-changing trade environment our programme of skills development and accredited training for importers and exporters will include delivering a portfolio of workshops, short course modules and webinars.

There are businesses that trade, and then there are Chamber businesses that trade – 60% of Chamber members export whilst only 10% of UK businesses export.

In addition, TVCC boasts a range of impressive statistics including a combined number of 215,000 staff employed by our members and we work tirelessly to keep business moving.



215,000
Employees



191
Destinations



79
Sectors

VALUE EXPORT FACILITATED

£6,512,246.949
Oct 22- Sept 2023



£5,803,732,500
Jan - Sept 2023

The Thames Valley's relationship with London Heathrow is very important. As the UK's only hub airport and largest port, the airport is a significant driver of foreign direct investment, trade, and economic growth. Our region's future prosperity, and the success of global Britain, is intrinsically linked to that of the airport and our connectivity to it.

As the UK's true 'turbo-economy' and often referred as the 'Silicon Valley of Europe', the Thames Valley is best placed to help government deliver its single goal: to cement the UK's place as a global science and technology superpower by 2030. To achieve this, our message to government remains clear – invest in the success of the Thames Valley to enable you to deliver this goal and your wider policy and economic objectives.



INFLUENTIAL THAMES VALLEY

Our priorities will include:

- Actively sustain our lobbying of government, regional bodies, and other key stakeholders for the benefit of our members.
- Being the independent voice of business in the Thames Valley, representing business large and small.
- Preparing in advance of the next general election, for policy makers with key evidence of an effective place and sector-based business environment to inform their decisions and intentions.
- Providing the regional leadership and strategic vision for the Thames Valley.
- Remaining focused on championing the region as a destination of choice for FDI and export trading companies.
- Maintaining an informed challenge and constructive scrutiny of government.

By 2025, measure us by the following outcomes:

- Actively involved and represented our membership on the BCC, Business Council.
- Expanded the content on our thought leadership section of the Chambers website to showcase in-region expertise and innovation.
- Continued to actively lobby government, regional bodies, and other stakeholders on a range of issues relevant to our membership and wider priorities.
- Maintained our position as one of the key contributors to the largest independent business survey in Britain, the [Quarterly Economic Survey](#) (QES).
- Promoted the role of the Thames Valley Assembly (TVA) as the go to forum for local and national policy makers seeking to engage with business.
- Provided practical examples of the issues and challenges facing business as they operate in the Thames Valley.
- Worked alongside the BCC to develop and deliver on the key strategic priorities affecting UK businesses.

INFLUENTIAL THAMES VALLEY

Regardless of your sector, size, or location, we strive to address your diverse needs in the modern business landscape. Businesses trust us to be their advocates, and we are passionate about helping them trade and grow.

We have been building Thames Valley businesses since 1948, making the region one of the best places to build and grow a business for nearly 80 years. We represent over 4,000 members and customers active trading customers and have played an active part in delivering over 1000 foreign direct investments into the region in the past 10 years.

We are one of the largest accredited Chambers within the BCC network. Whilst representing large corporates and international business, most of our members are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), reflecting the fact that SMEs account for approximately 95% of the Thames Valley's business population, three fifths of the employment and around half of the private sector turnover. Our membership also includes academic institutions, charities, and public sector organisations, we are your voice for the whole local economy.

We are proud of our longevity and status as one of the Thames Valley's anchor institutions. Businesses trust us to be their advocates, and we are passionate about helping them trade and grow. Working closely with members, we drive real change from the ground up. Ultimately, our bottom line is empowering companies, places, and people to achieve their potential.

HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES WORKING GROUP

The TVCC's Health and Life Sciences Working Group has revitalised its efforts as the region's only sector-based working group, reconvening in-person to bring together Thames Valley companies, industry leaders and academic institutions and creating a forum to explore the future and address the challenges of the sector, ensuring the region remains one of the strongest for health and life sciences. Sponsored by Greenpark Mapletree, the group is chaired by Sue Staunton, Managing Partner and Head of Life Sciences at James Cowper Kreston.

Over the past year, the working group revisited its strategy and mission; to advance the Thames Valley's leadership in the sector, to grow the industry, add value to the healthcare system and improve patient lives. Responding to working group interest, the group focused on AI, with its recent rise in popularity and utility within healthcare and the wider sector, and the potential future applications of AI within it. The group remains receptive to the ever shifting landscape which affects the sector, proactively evolving to meet the challenges and bring the Thames Valley health and life sciences community together to explore the solutions.

This is a call to action to in-region health and life sciences companies, to get involved and to help build the constantly increasing momentum of the Thames Valley's Health and Life Sciences working group.

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The Health and Life Sciences Working group is the region's only sector-based working group which provides a forum for in-region companies to discuss the opportunities and address the challenges of this important sector, its strengths and weaknesses, the future and how we plan to get there. Bringing together industry leaders from global corporates, SMEs and academic institutions, it plays a vital role in helping the Thames Valley remain one of the UK's strongest regions for the health and life sciences sector.

Sue Staunton, Managing Partner, James Cowper Kreston

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Through business engagement and account management we listen to our members, and wider business community. An extensive programme of activities informs and shapes our work programme and policy priorities, including:

- Our annual Thames Valley [Business Awards](#).
- A business-led sector working group covering [health and life sciences](#), hosted in partnership with James Cowper Kreston and Green Park – a Mapletree property.
- Engaging with Parliamentarians through our Political Working Lunch programme, hosted in partnership with Microsoft.
- Hosting our inaugural TVA Parliamentarian Question time, in partnership with the University of Reading.
- Local Area Assemblies – our local forums which represents the business communities across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Swindon.
- Primary research and selected surveys, including the QES, [State of the Region report](#) on sustainability, and selected consultation responses.
- Two [Windsor Debates](#) which in 2024, alongside a wider programme, will explore the merits of AI as a force for good (e.g., raising productivity and SME preparedness).
- A Global Trade Conference and our International Technology Conference which in 2024 will be hosted at 3M, Bracknell





Our priorities will include:

- Amplifying the awareness of the commercial benefits of driving diversity, increasing inclusion, and building belonging within organisations.
- Continuing to host and facilitate a hybrid portfolio of online and face-to-face events and training programmes.
- Delivering the next stages of our Local Skills and Improvement Plans (LSIPs) for Berkshire and Oxfordshire, including working in partnership with Further Education (FE) Colleges and other training providers to ensure funding investment and new courses are in line with LSIP priorities and recommendations.
- Placing a strong and continued commitment to engage and listen to our members through key account management programme.
- Promoting the value and importance of good mental health and well-being in the workplace.
- Delivering wider decarbonisation initiatives, support proposals that will increase the 'Green' Bus Service Operators Grant and funding to operators to enable them to maintain the £2 fare cap.

By 2025, measure us by the following outcomes:

- Delivered a high standard, wide ranging and relevant events programme.
- Developed new modular workforce development courses to support local businesses in addressing their recruitment, retention, and skills development challenges.
- Engaged and lobbied government on the need to invest in the success of the Thames Valley.
- Established a LSIP Employer Board, Workforce Development Partnerships and published our annual LSIP progress report.
- Launched and grown a new HR Forum.
- Maintained our efforts to highlight and showcase good mental health and wellbeing, and diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

WORKING THAMES VALLEY

Our Chamber Network exists to support and connect companies, providing practical support to help businesses trade locally, regionally as well as nationally and globally. We sit at the heart of the Thames Valley business community and, through our network in every part of the UK, we're uniquely placed to help businesses of every size and sector to thrive.

We recognise that the UK economy remains in a challenging place, with continued cost pressures, skills shortages, and political uncertainty not assisting the certainty businesses craves. Through our LSIPs, and newly created TVSU, we are supporting initiatives that not only help our future workforce, but those currently in work and looking to retrain, moving into more productive and resilient sectors present in the region. This will include working in partnership with FE Colleges and other training providers to ensure funding, investment and new courses are in line with LSIP priorities and recommendations.

As drivers of a successful working Thames Valley, we continue to build our own awareness, and share good Practice, on the benefits of diversity and inclusion in the workplace; fostering a sense of belonging and highlighting the importance of mental health and fitness.

Our wider priorities are centred on helping ensure policy and decision makers are focused on creating and sustaining the economic conditions that enable Thames Valley businesses to succeed and grow. We recognise the Chamber has and continues to play an important role in working to representing the voice of business. We will remain active in responding to selected [consultations](#) and invite interested businesses to get involved in our [policy groups](#). In 2024 we will launch a new HR Forum, to support practitioners in businesses large and small in addressing today's workforce development related challenges.

“

Employers are crying out for more people with technical skills and will be keen to hear more about the proposals for new technical colleges. Working alongside business led LSIPs, these must help ensure people are training for in-demand skills and giving employers access to a skilled workforce.

Shevaun Haviland, Director General of the BCC

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Accredited Chambers of Commerce are leading 32 of the 38 LSIPs to plan for the skills needed to boost local economies and improve opportunities for individuals. The TVSU is supporting a national evaluation of the impact of the LSIPs.

TRANSFORMING SKILLS IN THE THAMES VALLEY

At the heart of TVCC lies a powerful commitment to championing the interests of employers, industry, and businesses. As an integral part of the national Chamber network, we've taken on a pivotal role in the delivery of LSIP that are reshaping the skills landscape in the region.

In Berkshire and Oxfordshire, our new TVSU efforts have successfully connected with over 1,000 employers, fostering meaningful engagement. The LSIPs have identified key priorities for change, with a particular focus on greater engagement between employers and training providers to help navigate through the complex skills system.

In response to these priorities, we now champion a range of transformative recommendations:

A 'Guide for Working Together,' a virtual compass to shape the regions workforce for success.

Developing Workforce Development Partnerships, to bring industry and educators together to tackle skills challenges.

Development of new education and training provisions to meet the high-demand skills required in our region.

What matters?

Engaging and lobbying government - at all levels to ensure they hear, support, and deliver on the needs of business. Policy matters and influencing how it is shaped requires the Chamber to understand businesses.

Mental Wellbeing – we will continue to provide a forum for businesses wishing to learn more, share good practice and pledge support to ensuring the highest quality of business environment that enhances mental fitness and belonging for employees.

Representing the Thames Valley – and ensuring the economic, social, and environmental well-being of our region is and remains healthy.

Skills - entrusted to lead the LSIPs in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, we will continue to deepen the meaningful connections between industry and education to deliver the future needs of business.

Thought Leadership – showcasing innovative, insightful, and valuable ideas from leading experts within the Thames Valley is invaluable in sharing good practice.

STATE OF THE REGION

From its origins as a centre of industry to its status as a home to major multinational organisations and tech giants, the Thames Valley region has experienced a remarkable journey of progress and transformation. Nonetheless, this progress has been accompanied by challenges, particularly in the context of the environment, as the Thames Valley faces the pressing need to adapt and advocate for sustainability in the years ahead.

At the Chamber, we recognise the critical importance of sustainable development, and have collaborated with leading businesses, thought leaders, and academics, to establish the [SWG](#) and produce a [State of the Region report](#). The recent State of the Region report, initiated by the SWG has not only shone a light on the urgency of the situation, but assisted in curating a pathway for the Chamber and the Thames Valley region to follow throughout 2024.

Key focus areas for the Thames Valley, drawn upon from the State of the Region report:

 <p>It appears from the survey that sustainability is more important to larger businesses. However, this is most likely due to the government regulation targeted at larger businesses driving focus and action.</p> <p>LARGE BUSINESSES</p>	 <p>Leadership engagement in sustainability is the biggest single differentiating factor between businesses that are doing the most to drive positive environmental action and those that aren't.</p> <p>LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT</p>
 <p>Businesses of all sizes consistently cite the importance of regulation to drive positive change across the business sector.</p> <p>IMPORTANT REGULATION</p>	 <p>The lack of quality data is the most pressing challenge when it comes to measurement for businesses of all sizes</p> <p>LACK OF QUALITY DATA</p>

The Chamber's outlined initiatives in the report highlight the concerted efforts to mobilise and support the business community effectively. As part of our comprehensive plan, we aim to develop a programme of podcasts featuring industry experts, providing advice to support businesses with a proactive approach to facilitating knowledge sharing and practical solutions. Additionally, by working in partnership with the BCC, we aim to expand the community and lobby the government, utilising the findings of both the state of the region report and the BCC's '[The Power of Partnership: Unlocking Business action on Net zero](#)' report.

By promoting a unified framework for sustainable practices and facilitating collaboration, we intend to support the drive of Thames Valley's transition to a greener and more resilient economy.

Looking ahead to 2024, the Thames Valley must intensify its efforts to accelerate the shift towards a sustainable and climate-resilient future. The region's commitment to nurturing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and solutions associated with sustainability will be critical in securing a brighter future for generations to come.



"As custodians of this remarkable place in which we live, we must do everything we can to work towards a greater understanding of the challenges and solutions that will secure a better future for the region and for the planet"

Professor Ed Hawkins MBE, Professor of Climate Science | Creator of Warming Stripes, University of Reading

BUSINESS AWARDS 2023



The annual Chamber Awards is a key event in the Chamber calendar. Showcasing why the Thames Valley is known as the UK's true turbo economy.

The Awards receive widespread interest as they are unique in identifying the best from across the Thames Valley. The highly anticipated evening was facilitated by the esteemed Sally Gunnell OBE, renowned for her unprecedented feat of concurrently holding four major track titles – Olympic, World, European, and Commonwealth.

Consistently a firm favourite in the events calendar for the region, this sold-out black-tie event in June welcomed 240 guests, who walked the red carpet on arrival, posed for photos and couldn't escape the giant TVCC light up letters which added extra sparkle to the arrival room.

The evening was opened by Chamber CEO Paul Britton who described the business community as 'vibrant, dynamic, resilient and innovative' and expressed how delighted he was to be back once again celebrating achievements of businesses large and small from across the Thames Valley.

Host Sally Gunnell delighted the crowd with a wonderful opening address as well as taking time in-between hosting and presenting the Awards to chat with guests, take numerous selfies and show her medals. Our 2024 Awards will be taking place on Thursday 27th June and to accommodate growing demand will be held at a new venue, the Select Car Leasing (formally The Madejski) Stadium in Reading.



The Thames Valley is an integral part of the Thomas Franks story: it is where Thomas Franks was founded and remains our home after 19 years. The TVCC has played such an important role in developing the area's industry and we are truly honoured to be named Employer of the Year and Business of the Year 2023. We cannot wait to connect with even more local businesses to explore opportunities, share ideas and create a network of support within the community.

Frank Bothwell, Thomas Franks



THOMAS FRANKS - WINNERS OF THAMES VALLEY BUSINESS AWARDS 2023

Our sustainability goals at Thomas Franks focus on six key areas. Clients at the core of our operations; a true family culture; health and nutrition; ethical, local supply chains; environmental leadership and community investment. We aim to lower our carbon emissions, reduce packaging and food waste, continue using local, UK suppliers and spread awareness through education inside and outside of our business.

We have a network of local family-run suppliers that provide the highest quality British produce whilst also meaning fewer food miles, more seasonal produce and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Investing in these small businesses in our communities is key to us and in the Thames Valley, we work with several Oxfordshire-based suppliers to assist in delivering to our locations using innovative 100% electric lorries.

Working with the Soil Association, we are rolling out Cool Food Pro in our Thames Valley locations to measure and find ways to lower our carbon footprint. This programme suggests simple ways to create carbon savings and students love getting involved in the educational aspects of this such as less and better meat or switching to organic products. To cut out single-use plastic, we use plant-based, biodegradable packaging such as Notpla.

Our charity initiatives in the Thames Valley are strong and varied. At St Joseph's College, Reading, we support the school's twice-weekly homeless feeding programme through our Feeding Communities initiative. We cook and provide the ingredients for the hot meals through our Surplus to Purpose programme, intercepting surplus food destined for landfill to create nutritious, tasty meals. In the coming years, we aim to be both thought and deed leaders, using food as the driving force for sustainability both within our own business and that of our clients.



HEAR FROM OUR MEMBERS

ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

In order to maintain and direct the positive momentum built up through keynotes and associated discussions at two successive Windsor Debates during the COVID pandemic, the Chamber established its SWG in late 2021. I was delighted to be invited to serve on its steering committee, along with selected representatives from the membership with expertise that could be deployed for the good of the membership as a whole.

Our initial task was to identify how best the Chamber could most usefully add value to what members are already doing in relation to environmental and climate change challenges. To this end, we held several workshops with a cross-section of the members recruited to capture the diversity of sectors, firm sizes and geographical locations within the Thames Valley. As a result of these discussions, it was collectively determined that prioritising support for the SME sector was paramount, given their inherent challenges in managing the intricacies of sustainable transitions with limited resources. As a response, we developed a user-friendly assessment tool for SMEs to gauge their current environmental practices, resource management, and carbon footprint reduction efforts, which was successfully launched in autumn 2022, garnering substantial uptake across the region.

Building on this progress, a comprehensive online questionnaire was introduced in spring 2023, accessible to all TVCC members, to evaluate advancements made since the tool's initial rollout. The ensuing insights were meticulously examined and consolidated into the State of the Region Report. Furthermore, a comprehensive follow-up, including in-depth interviews conducted by Mark Sterratt during his MSc placement with the Chamber and for his dissertation at Royal Holloway, contributed valuable perspectives for future initiatives envisioned by the SWG.

Looking ahead to 2024, armed with the invaluable findings from the report, the Chamber is aiming to collaborate with industry experts across various fields in the development of an informative podcast series. This strategic initiative aims to offer comprehensive guidance and support to both large businesses and SMEs as they navigate the challenges presented by the climate crisis.

Business engagement is important to all local authorities. Our developing evolving partnership with TVCC is vital if we are to maximise our capacity to look, learn and gain insights into the business needs of the region and embed the trust that will secure our economic future and prosperity

Susan Halliwell, CEO, Bracknell Forest Council

Held at the historic St Georges House in the grounds of Windsor Castle, Windsor Debates repeatedly affords us the opportunity to set aside undivided attention to examine and debate important topics which often go overlooked and drowned out by the hustle and bustle of everyday life. I am proud to work with TVCC on the Debates as a important voice of business for the region.

Iain Anderson, Executive Chairman, H/ADvisors



RESOURCE PRODUCTIONS

Resource Productions has been a member of the chamber since 2013 starting as a local sole trader, struggling to pay membership each year, growing to a 20 person team, with international clients. Our organic growth was unarguably boosted by our involvement with TVCC/Department of Business and Trade. The team at TVCC saw potential in us and our services, that we ourselves had not yet fully realised. Primarily a video production company and Arts training agency with a social purpose, we never really considered ourselves of international relevance.

TVCC/DBT let us know that international investors were looking to expand and were trying to identify space to grow in the UK. Fast forward 10 years and this support resulted in transatlantic relationships and visits to Malaysia and LA, which led to requests for quotes for our services to act as agents on the ground in the UK and to provide support with the development of skills plans and navigating local council requirements and needs.

We secured more than five high value inter clients through these initial interactions, ultimately enabling us to set up Berkshire Film Office. The Film Office was given a further boost after an exciting 'Windsor Debates' in 2021, which further cemented relationships and brought us and our clients together with Shinfield Studios, University of Reading and international independent Producers. This was the pivotal moment that led to a collaboration of partners, that resulted in Resource Productions securing £600k of national lottery funds from the British Film Institute to establish the BFI Skills for Screen Cluster, launched officially in October 2023 as Screen Berkshire.

Screen Berkshire is set to bringing more than £1.2m cash into the screen sector in Berkshire, likely to stimulate more than three times that into the local economy.



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