

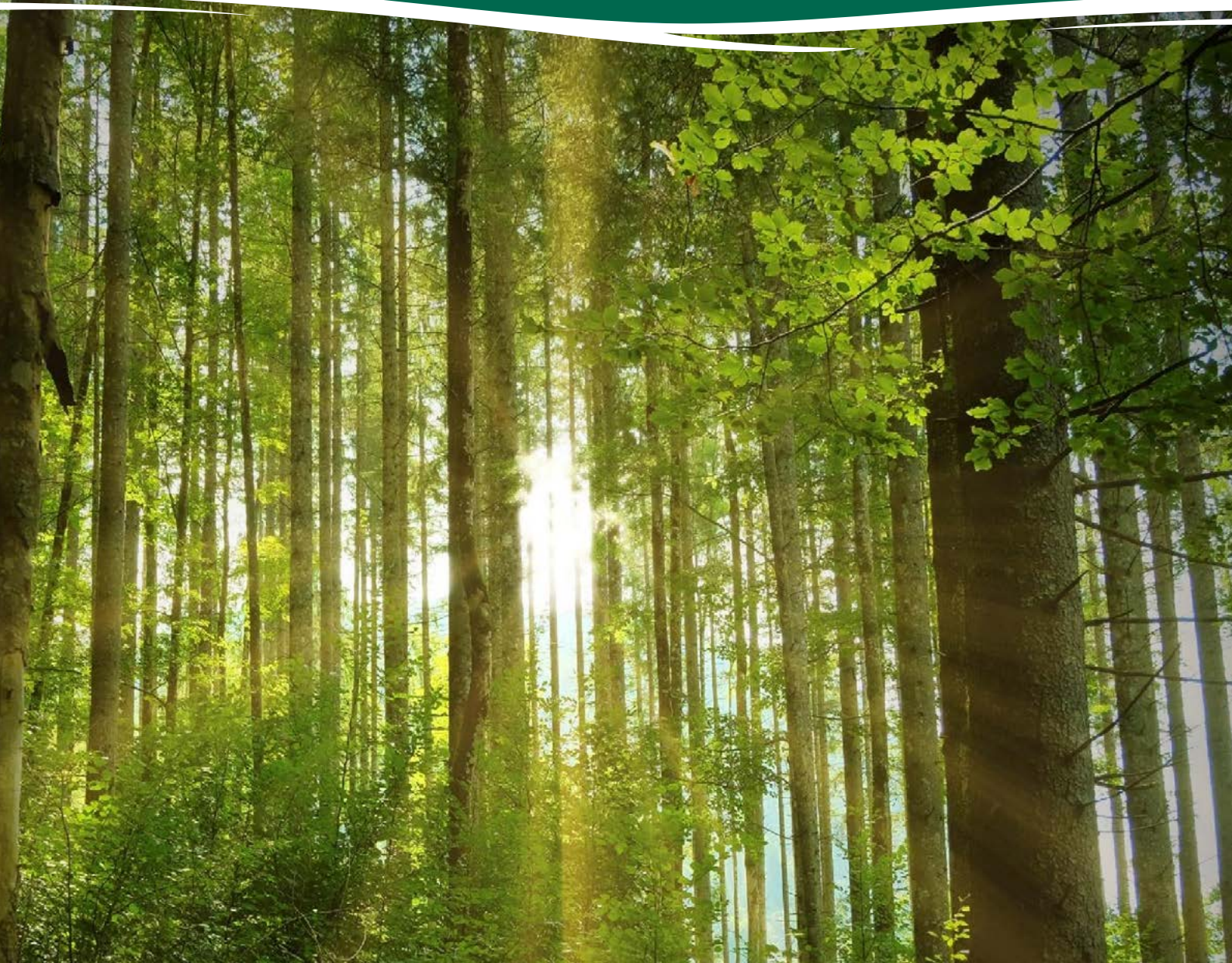


Forest of Dean
— DISTRICT COUNCIL —

Sustainable Economy Strategy

2024-2028

Fostering economic prosperity while ensuring environmental sustainability and social well-being over the longer term.





Opening statement from Councillor Johnathan Lane – Cabinet Member Economy

Our Sustainable Economy Strategy (SES) covers a 4-year period with a detailed plan of action for 2024-25. The Strategy dovetails neatly with the Council Plan and touches all three plan priorities.

Through our 'Listening to Business' visits, Forest Economic Partnership events and our baseline research we are aware that there is a fair degree of uncertainty around the economy with concerns around staff shortages, energy costs, transport issues, an ageing population and the cost of living day-to-day in our community. At the same time, we are welcoming new investors to the area who are leading exponents in their fields from vertical farming, marine engineering and the creative industries.

In response, we are choosing to take a bold path with our new Strategy and our intention is to explore the principles of Doughnut Economics in decision making at Cabinet level. We are keen to learn from other Councils who are well advanced in using this approach to balance the boundaries of a thriving community with those of a thriving planet. Our ambition is to explore new opportunities for community wealth creation and redistribution and find the middle ground where community and planet can both thrive.





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Executive Summary

The Forest of Dean District Council's Council (FODDC) Plan 2024-28 has an overarching principle to strive to meet the needs of the Forest of Dean while taking into account the needs of the Forest's future generations. Economic prosperity can be achieved by embracing innovation, promoting lifestyle changes and new ways of doing business that are truly sustainable. The Council Plan is our local response to the global climate and nature emergency and outlines our priorities towards creating thriving and inclusive communities, decarbonising and fostering a sustainable economy.

Our Sustainable Economy Strategy (SES) touches all three priorities but primarily is responding to the sustainable economy priority. As we explore local areas of focus and actions to deliver in a sustainable way, there will naturally be a fair amount of cross-over and inter-dependencies with our other priorities. These include reaching net zero, reducing pollution, protecting biodiversity and improving health, wellbeing and resilience for the community. Overlap with emerging FODDC policy documents includes the Local Plan 2041, the Active Travel Strategy, the Arts, Culture & Heritage Strategy; and adopted policies: Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan and Procurement & Contract Management Strategy.

Our sustainable economy objective is to foster economic prosperity while ensuring sustainability and social well-being over the longer term, akin to the DEAL definition highlighted below. Accordingly, the SES will respect the Council Plan objectives and also embrace the principles of 'Doughnut Economics' as we shape and deliver against our six local areas of focus:

1. **Workforce Skills**
2. **Infrastructure**
3. **Circular Economy**
4. **Business Support**
5. **Natural Capital Preservation**
6. **Sustainable Towns**

Delivering against these areas of focus will involve co-creation, collaboration and reciprocity to strengthen our community networks and work with a spirit of trust. The Council has a strong track record of working in partnership with other organisations. The SES will help direct Council resources and use these to best effect to deliver the sustainable economy priority.

This strategy will therefore be subject to quarterly monitoring and an annual review process to ensure that the SES and future action plans are dynamic and able to respond to new opportunities or challenges that may present themselves along the way.



“Economic sustainability refers to practices that support long-term economic growth without negatively impacting social, environmental and cultural aspects of the community.”

Source: Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL)



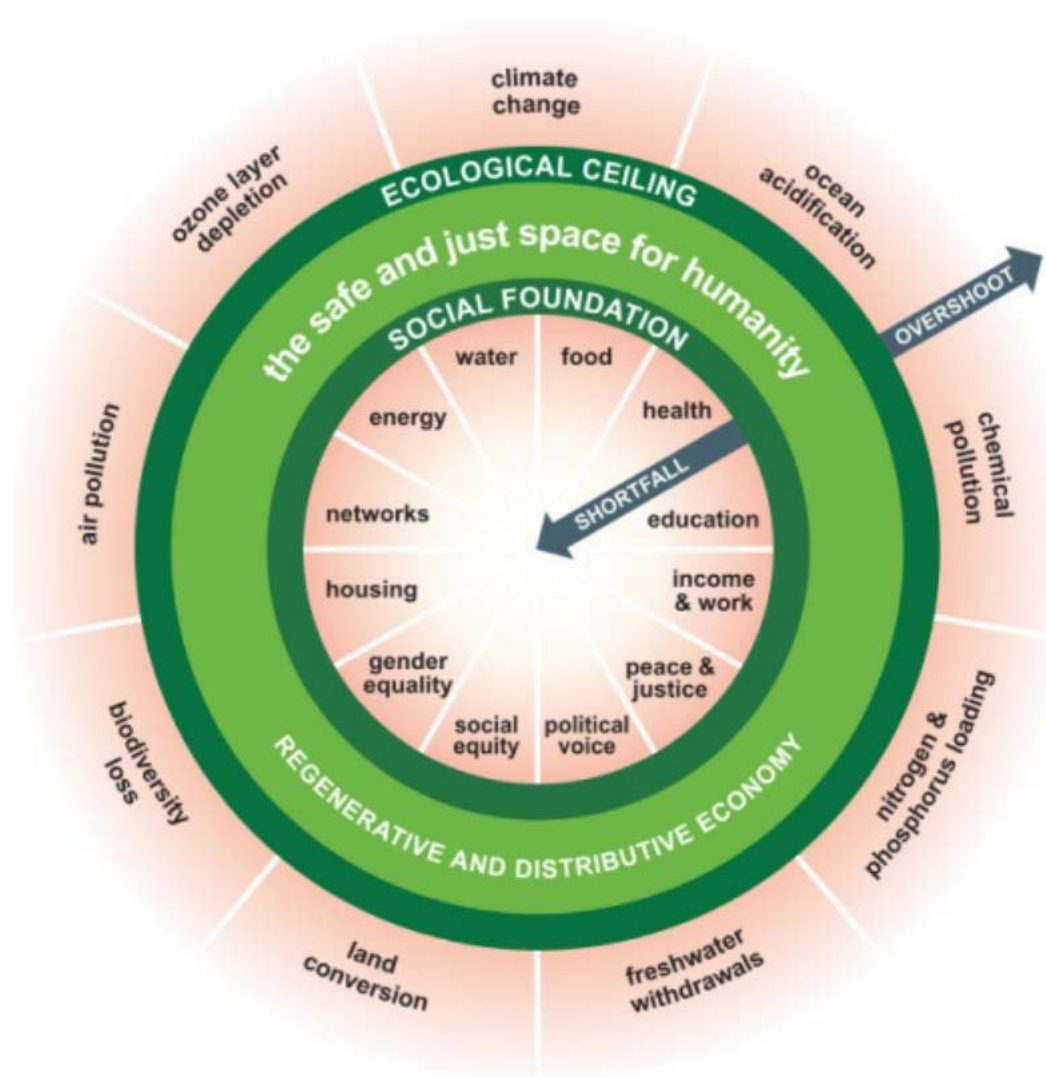
1. Introduction

What is a sustainable economy?

The Council's sustainable economy objective is to foster economic prosperity while ensuring sustainability and social well-being. This new Sustainable Economy Strategy is proposing to look through a regenerative economy lens for the first time. The Council would like to use this strategy to explore how best to embed the Doughnut Economics mindset within future Council decision making to enable positive benefits over the coming years.

First published in 2012 by Kate Raworth, the Doughnut offers a vision of what it means for humanity to thrive in the 21st century - and Doughnut Economics explores the ways of thinking needed to get us there. It's not a fixed set of policies and institutions, but rather a way of thinking to bring about the regenerative and distributive dynamics that this century calls for.

Figure 1 – Doughnut Economics infographic



KATE RAYWORTH

April 2018

<https://youtu.be/Rhrcbcg8HBw>

The Doughnut consists of two concentric rings: a social foundation, to ensure that no one is left falling short on life's essentials, and an ecological ceiling, to ensure that humanity does not collectively overshoot the planetary boundaries that protect Earth's life-supporting systems. Between these two sets of boundaries lies a doughnut-shaped space that is both ecologically safe and socially just; a space in which humanity can thrive. The starting point of Doughnut Economics is to change the 20th Century goal of striving for GDP growth to 21st Century thinking of thriving in the Doughnut. At the same time, see the big picture by recognising that the economy is embedded within, and dependent upon, society and the living world. Doughnut Economics recognises that human behaviour and well-being can be nurtured to be cooperative and caring, just as it can be competitive and individualistic.

An early action for the strategy will be to research how to apply Doughnut thinking to Forest of Dean District Council decision-making. The Council will seek to learn from other practitioners like Cornwall Council and Bath & North East Somerset Council.

Why do we need a sustainable economy strategy?

The global pandemic, conflicts around the World, the national cost of living crisis and an ageing population are all impacting the local economy in the Forest of Dean. The results of the 2021 Census now provide a firm evidence base, enabling us to better identify and understand the district's various economic and demographic strengths and weaknesses.

In recent years, the Forest of Dean has succeeded in attracting Government funds to aid economic development from the Single Local Growth Fund, Building Back Better, Coastal Community Fund, Levelling Up Fund and most recently UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund. Although these resources have been limited to date, they have nonetheless provided a welcome addition to boost Council budgets and enable economic regeneration priorities based on local need.

Forest of Dean's core economic challenges and opportunities are around an ageing society where there are key sectoral shifts in the economy away from manufacturing and skilled trades towards professional roles and jobs or business creation in the service

sector. Increased broadband connectivity and internet speeds are supporting the trend to work from home. House prices continue to rise and so the demand for affordable housing is also rising for people who cannot afford to pay £246,115 to buy a semi-detached house here.

The four market towns are struggling to compete with online retail and need to adapt to provide a more mixed-offer to attract families and young people to increase local spend. As a rural area, car use still dominates with poor public transport failing to offer timely, reliable services to connect residents to places of work, schools or other training venues.

Resilience is also important for the Forest of Dean, in the context of future-proofing the economy against challenges such as climate change, global economic disruptions, or unforeseen crises, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Having a clear and concise Sustainable Economy Strategy for the district will strengthen our hand for future funding bids and opportunities arising from devolution in Gloucestershire. The strategy will also detail the economic priorities outlined in the Council Plan and emerging Local Plan 2041.

Our ambition for the strategy is to embrace the Doughnut Economics mindset to provide a level of certainty needed for residents, local businesses, students, strategic partners and any public/private/social enterprise planning to invest in the Forest of Dean.





2. Methodology

In developing a new Sustainable Economy Strategy for the Forest of Dean, it is important that the document is not written in isolation by the District Council and that the policy landscape is reviewed, evidence is collected and stakeholders are consulted to support the local areas of focus that emerge. This process of evidence gathering has taken a number of forms to help improve our understanding:

- a) **Establishing a baseline**
- b) **Engaging with stakeholders and partner organisations**
- c) **Reviewing existing and emerging economic policy**

2a) Understanding the local economy

Why do we need baseline data?

- **Assessment and monitoring**

Without a baseline, it's difficult to assess the effectiveness of any actions taken to promote sustainability in the economy. Monitoring progress against this baseline helps us to understand whether our strategies are working or if adjustments are needed.

- **Trend identification**

By comparing current or new data with the baseline, we can identify whether the economy is moving in a sustainable direction or if there are concerning deviations. This information is essential for making informed decisions.

- **Accountability**

It provides a reference point for evaluating the success or failure of economic policies and initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability. This accountability is crucial for maintaining public trust and support for sustainability efforts.

- **Resource Allocation**

By understanding the current state of the economy and its environmental and social impacts, we can prioritise investments and allocate resources where they are most needed to achieve sustainability goals.

- **Risk Management**

By understanding the baseline conditions, we can better anticipate and mitigate risks associated with unsustainable practices, such as environmental degradation, social inequality, or economic instability.

Our baseline data has interrogated several open-source data sets against a range of key economic indicators:

- **Unemployment rates, people classified as NEET (not in employment, education or training)**
- **Apprenticeships and qualifications**
- **Business and industry information**
- **Town centre footfall**
- **House prices**
- **Internet download speeds**
- **Commute information**

Appendix 1. contains the baseline data used to underpin this strategy. Key findings are as follows:

- **Unemployment rates align with regional trends** – Comparing the unemployment rates across Gloucestershire, the Forest of Dean exhibits a slightly higher rate than the county average, but does remain lower than the South West and national rates.
- **Stable NEET rates below regional and national averages** – The Forest of Dean NEET rate stands at 12.23% compared to a national rate of 12.25%, and 13.02% for the South West.

- **Mixed success in apprenticeship goal attainment** – The District achieves a 46.5% success rate in apprenticeship goal attainment. This is on the lower scale when comparing to the rest of the County.
- **Some shifts in occupational composition** – The Forest of Dean had experienced notable shifts in occupational composition. Managerial and professional roles have grown by 65.6% and 60.8% respectively, while administrative, service, and skilled trades occupations have declined by -41.0%, -66.0%, and -25.0% respectively. Elementary occupations have seen a growth of 44.0%, while machine operative roles have decreased by -28.1%. These changes reflect significant transformations in the region's employment landscape.
- **Stability in qualifications among the workforce** – There is stability in the percentages of individuals with qualifications specifically from 2022 to 2024. In the first quarter of 2024 there is an increase in Level 3 and 4 qualifications, which may suggest a desire to upskill.
- **Predicted gradual growth in business counts and GVA despite fluctuations** – There have been fluctuations in business counts over the past 10 years. There are some signs and predictions of gradual growth, albeit at a slower rate than those in the rest of the County. Micro, small and medium sized businesses have seen an increase over the past 10 years. It should be noted that there are population differences, with the Forest of Dean being less populous than its neighbours. This may account for the lower business counts.
- **Services sector dominates GVA contributions** – The service sector is the largest Gross Value Added (GVA) contributor; it should be noted this sector accounts for about 80% of the UK's economic activity. Retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and wholesale trade following in second and third place respectively.
- **Varied footfall recovery rates across locations** – there have been varied footfall counts across the district's four main towns. There is a clear impact of COVID-19 in the data, and the subsequent recovery. Recovery rates are lower than pre-pandemic, with Newent seeing the slowest recovery and Lydney seeing the highest rate.
- **Smaller business footprint compared to neighbouring areas** – the Forest of Dean has seen stability in business floorspace compared to the rest of the County however there has been a small decline of -1.69%.
- **Rising median house prices with steady growth projected** – house prices in the district have continued to rise. The average property price has increased from £265,000 in March 2022 to £285,000 in March 2023. House prices are predicted to continually increase in future.
- **Significant increase in homeworkers** – the number of homeworkers across the district has almost doubled, this is a comparable increase with the rest of the County as people are seeking a better work/life balance post COVID-19.
- **Significant increase in download speeds** – internet speeds have increase significantly from 2022 to 2023, with download speeds increasing by 49%. Increased internet download speed can have an impact on economic growth.

2b) SWOT 2024 Analysis

The Council has been working with Forest Economic Partnership (FEP) to run an online survey asking FEP stakeholders to comment on the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the Forest of Dean economy as they see it.

The SWOT exercise was also conducted at the Council's Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7th March and at the SES Workshop Event on 9th May. An extract of the results is shown in the table below with all responses detailed in Appendix 2:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative & diverse businesses i.e. DEEP • Natural capital, landscapes, heritage • Good visitor attractions • Strong town identities, strong cultural connection and pride, and sense of community • No bridge tolls • Largely local workforce • New rural high speed fibre broadband network • Hartpury College & University – leaders in agritech and sport education • Commercial land is cheaper in FOD • Rich agriculture & farmland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low incomes meaning people have to travel for decent wages • Poor transport connections & dispersed community • Lack of business engagement with schools and careers due to lack of capacity • Poor digital connectivity • Struggling town centres • Lack of EV infrastructure • Poor grid capacity • Bus Service - Frequency and reliability • Lack of quality, available commercial floorspace - old stock, lots of embedded carbon. In need of investment, refurbishment and retrofit
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest offers unique location to grow & market a green/sustainable enterprise • Embracing smart tech in manufacturing • Unique landscape & rich cultural heritage a massive draw for production & filming • UNESCO biosphere resulting in international interest • Electric vehicle/active travel – communal sharing points • Countywide economic strategy • Levelling Up funding to support deprived communities • Local renewable energy generation & supply • Working from home – more opportunities for younger workers/families to move in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnected public transport • More jobs than workers • Climate change impacts on transport, business, weather • Lack of proper investment to raise the profile of FOD • Congestion issues on the A48 • Young people leaving due to lack of opportunities • Lack of joined up thinking/connectivity • Risk of becoming dormitory towns. More people leaving than entering to visit, especially for leisure time and fun! • Poor quality development, poor design standards and urbanisation of the Forest

2c) Policy context

National, regional and local policies have an influence on how we operate and how we live. The development of this strategy has been undertaken within the context of these policies.

The strategies that are most relevant to the district's Sustainable Economy Strategy are indicated below:



NATIONAL:

Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth

Levelling Up

UK Innovation Strategy

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

REGIONAL:

Western Gateway – Plan for Sustainable Growth

COUNTY:

Transport Strategy for Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire Economic Strategy

Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement

LOCAL:

Council Plan

Local Plan

Climate Emergency Strategy & Action Plan



3. Key areas of local focus

KEY POLICY & STRATEGY ALIGNMENTS:

- FoDDC Local Plan 2041
- FoDDC Climate Emergency Strategy & Action Plan
- Gloucestershire
- Economic Strategy
- Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan

3.1 Workforce Skills

In July 2024, the Government launched Skills England to transform opportunities and drive growth. This new organisation is intended to provide strategic oversight of the post-16 skills system and bring together key partners to meet skills needs over the next decade. The construction and healthcare sectors are highlighted as having some of the greatest skills shortages.

Prior to this announcement, the Skills for Jobs White Paper of 2021 outlined the importance of ensuring technical education could be driven by employer's needs, creating a "strengthened and unified post-16 education and skills system that will benefit individuals, the economy and the nation." Business West were designated Employer Representative Body in 2022, led the preparation of the Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and worked closely with the former GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership, GCC, colleges and independent training providers.

The Gloucestershire LSIP focusses on 4 priority sectors alongside cross-cutting themes key to economic change and prosperity:

1. **Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering**
2. **Construction**
3. **Agriculture, Agri-tech & Food Production**
4. **Digital Industries**

In addition to Level 3 and 4 skills, the SES is seeking to inspire and encourage aspiration for all age careers. Higher level degrees and postgraduate opportunities are also an important part of the picture for young people starting their career journey and for older learners looking to develop their skills to re-enter employment or start their own business. Raising aspiration and promoting social mobility align with the SES overarching objective to foster economic prosperity.

Innovation and education are crucial for driving sustainable economic growth and social well-being. Using UK Shared Prosperity Funds, the Council is working with training providers to deliver skills training against two of these countywide priorities: digital skills and green construction skills.

Building on the LSIP priority sector to support agriculture, agri-tech and food production the SES will seek to connect with land based farms, horticulture, aquaculture and forestry businesses. Through the Action Plan the council will work with GCC and Business West to collaborate with partners to identify & meet local skills needs and gaps identified by employers in this sector.

In the Forest of Dean, Hartpury College & University, Gloucestershire College, Gloucestershire Engineering Training and Accxel are the key post-16 vocational skills and apprenticeship training organisations.

The Forest Economic Partnership continues to focus on education and skills. FEP leads the Inspiring Forest programme which is working to connect school students with local businesses and support enterprise skills training delivery.

The SES presents an opportunity to underline the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and successful delivery is intended to help better reflect all communities of interest, some of whom may face impediment or lack of visibility on socio-economic and employment issues, particularly in a rural setting.

3.1.1 Green Skills

In April 2023, GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership published the Low Carbon Skills Report. Key findings in this report are as follows:

At the current rate of deployment of insulation and heat pumps, Gloucestershire is expected to miss its net zero targets. For example, it will take an estimated 609 years to install sufficient levels of solid wall insulation at current deployment rates.

Gloucestershire requires significant growth in insulation retrofit specialists and low carbon heating installers to meet its net zero targets. For example, up to 1,164 additional solid wall insulation installers will need to be trained by 2027 under the Urgent Action Scenario.

Gloucestershire requires significant growth in solar PV installers to achieve net zero. For example, to meet net zero, 514 installers are required by 2026 in the Urgent Action Scenario, compared to 285 and 208 installers required by 2036 in the Balanced Approach Scenario and the Gradual Intervention Scenario respectively.

In 2024-25, FODDC is working with South Gloucestershire & Stroud College and investing UKSPF funding to help address this training need and deliver: introductory green skills training and upskilling training for electricians and plumbers for solar photo-voltaic and air source heat pump installation.

3.1.2 Digital inclusion and digital transformation

In Gloucestershire, the county council typically leads on local authority-led education and learning services. GCC is responsible for Early Years, Post 16, Adult Education, Inclusive Employment and the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Hub.

In 2023, the Digital Divides Gloucestershire Steering Group published Digital Divides – Working towards digital equity in Gloucestershire. Funded by Gloucestershire County Council and Barnwood Trust, this report provides an overview of the Digital Divides programme, approach, key findings that emerge from the local evidence and makes eight recommendations for addressing digital exclusion in Gloucestershire. The report invites further Local Authority and partner input to engage with the Steering Group to consider how to collectively take steps to close the digital divides. In the Forest of Dean, Cinderford, Newnham and Blakeney are

highlighted as places at high risk of digital exclusion. www.digitaldivides.co.uk

Digital transformation is recognised as a key area for investment and will help address the rapid technological changes across all employment sectors.

GCC, FoDDC & FVAF are all working with training providers to deliver digital training programmes in the Forest of Dean. In 2024-25, the Council's UKSPF Investment Plan, is supporting the delivery of Employment Skills Hub Outreach (ESHO) which includes an element of digital skills training. ESHO is working with learners who are currently economically inactive or classified as NEET.

UKSPF is also supporting the delivery of free entry level and Level 1 accredited digital skills training from the Accxel Construction Centre in Cinderford. GCC's Adult Education service also offers free 7-week long basic computer training through the local libraries. The courses offer basic keyboard & mouse skills, getting online, online safety, email basics and an introduction to Microsoft Word.

3.1.3 Sustainable tourism skills

Sustainability continues to be a key concern in tourism – from managing ecological impact to waste management. There is more scrutiny over the balance between protecting communities and cultural capital. The authentic experience and the rise of “slow travel” will be important for future travellers making genuine connections with local people and cultures along the way. This approach fits with the Doughnut Economics approach as travellers become more aware of how their visit impacts the environment.

Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism is the Council's Destination Management Organisation and they work to an Annual Sustainability Action Plan. The Plan looks to change behaviour in three ways, by providing training and support to visitor economy businesses, to influence visitors and to make changes within the business to drive sustainability. In addition to this, Cotswold's Plus LVEP Sustainable Travel Action Plan aims to deliver 'always on' social content that promotes sustainable ways to travel to and around the destination to cut carbon emissions. Cotswold Plus DMOs have started a process of website improvements/overhauls to allow us to show train and bus times and links to ticket purchasing.

3.1.4 Research and Development.

The Council works closely with Hartpury University and College. The University has research and development strengths in agri-tech, equestrian, animal and veterinary research, sports science, digital technologies, and sustainable practices.

There is scope to bring an international perspective to this areas of focus. Working with our education and training providers we can explore international models of success and draw on best practice. This international lens may help to forge new international links and promote the Forest of Dean as a desirable location for travel and investment.

3.1.5 Volunteering

Volunteers are a key asset in the Forest of Dean. Village halls, Parish Councils, local voluntary and community organisations and many local community activities would not exist without them.

Our volunteers are guardians of local built heritage, the natural environment and enhance our cultural provision. The Council has a Service Level Agreement with Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF) and so is directly supporting the delivery of a range of volunteer opportunities to help many people across the district <https://www.fvaf.org.uk/volunteering>

FVAF are involved in a wide range of activities and one key area of overlap is the digital inclusion agenda. FVAF's Digital Hubs allow volunteers to support members of the public with basic digital needs, online safety and 1-2-1 support to help build skills and confidence in an increasingly digital world.

3.1.5 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI is making an impact on society akin to the arrival of the internet and is on the verge of reshaping how we all live, work, socialise and study. AI applies advanced analysis and logic-based techniques to interpret events, support and automate decisions and actions. At present, there is no universally accepted definition for AI as there are such a wide range of ways in which AI can support and automate human activities.

The role of AI is increasingly streamlining customer services and supporting data collection. For example, AI software supported by machine learning is helping the Council to collect and analyse footfall data by

logging GPS data points from smartphones/tablets/laptops carried by users over any 24-hour period in the four Forest towns. This data is presented annually in the Town Centre Audit Reports to provide a picture of how each of the towns is performing.

Chatbots are becoming one of the most used tools on websites and messenger apps due to their efficiency. Chatbot technology continues to get more sophisticated and is getting better at simulating human-like conversation. In the visitor economy sector, chatbots will increasingly be used like a personalized booking assistant to help tourists make the right decisions based on their preferences and budget. According to Gartner research, by 2025, 85% of customer interactions worldwide will take place via these “smart conversationalists”.

Generative AI are text orientated large language models (LLM's) and have been widely publicised since OpenAI's ChatGPT entered the market in 2022. LLM's are trained on large volumes of text and are enabled to interpret textual inputs and generate human-like textual outputs. Innovation in the LLM field has the potential to radically change the way any organisation conducts business, notably within customer services, marketing and sales.

A recent study by Business Financed (Source: BF, 2024) identified Bristol, Gloucester & Cheltenham in the top 20 of 59 the UK's leading towns and cities for fostering artificial intelligence (AI) enterprises. The BF study identifies the most advantageous environments for AI business growth and sustainability. The Sustainable Economy Strategy presents an opportunity for the Council to learn from these successful locations in the south-west region, to foster AI development and

attract businesses to locate here. It would also be helpful to develop a better understanding of the demand for AI-related skills locally to help our University, Colleges and independent training providers tailor their programmes to better prepare the future workforce.





3.2 Infrastructure

KEY POLICY & STRATEGY ALIGNMENTS:

- FODDC Local Plan 2041
- FODDC Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan
- Gloucestershire Economic Strategy
- Western Gateway Missions

3.2.1 Spatial planning

The district's population is approximately 87,000 as recorded in the 2021 census, increasing some 6.1% since 2011. The four primary settlements are Lydney (8,960 residents), Coleford (8,351 residents), Cinderford (8,116 residents), and Newent (5,073 residents). It must be noted that the Tutshill, Sedbury and Beachley settlements, which are all neighbouring have a combined population of 5,316 residents and is also a key settlement and growth area in the district. In 2023, the Beauhurst Local Growth Index reported 4,400 active businesses.

The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan 2041 (LP) which will allocate land for new housing and employment, to provide for the future needs of local communities. It also sets limits to the extent that towns and villages can grow into the surrounding countryside. The new Local Plan policy framework presents an opportunity to support the delivery of housing provision at scale to respond to local need and the affordability issues we currently face.

It provides strategies on how to protect the places we care about, like historical buildings, parks and town centres. It also guides the design of new places so that they are pleasant, attractive and respond to local needs. The LP strategy was agreed in May 2024 and the final round of consultation will run through summer. The plan will then be submitted for examination in summer 2025, so it can be examined and formally adopted by the Council.

The overall vision for the new LP is set out in Figure 2 below. Many individual strands of the vision are also addressed by other documents such as the Council Plan but need the LP to bring them about. Direct actions by the Council, especially through promoting the move to net zero carbon emissions and its sustainable economy initiatives will be essential, as will public and private investment.

The draft LP Economic Development policy (LP39) seeks to implement part of the LP's economic objective, setting out the aims of new employment provision. It provides for a more diverse economy using well located sites. Overall, the Council seeks to promote enterprises that support a 'circular economy' modelled on the elimination (minimisation) of waste, re-use of products and by-products and regeneration.

The SES will align with this approach as it works with stakeholders to facilitate modern business workspace development and promote co-working locations. Other proposed SES actions include working with Western Gateway, Gloucestershire County Council and key business sectors to encourage appropriate home grown and inward investment to find a suitable home in the Forest of Dean.



Figure 2.

Forest Of Dean Local Plan Vision

- The district is actively engaged in pursuing a low carbon future and new development is designed to enable this while being able to adapt to climate change.
- In 2041 younger people are more likely to want to stay in the district with good access to education, employment and housing.
- The needs of an ageing population have also been incorporated into the design of new development.
- It is a place where healthy lifestyles are an everyday part of living and working in the district.
- The implementation of sustainable development enhances the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.
- The diverse landscapes and heritage of the area is so distinctive that it is nationally and internationally recognised.
- A thriving tourism market is underpinned by a high quality natural and built environment.
- The lack of affordable housing has been addressed through imaginative and sustainable ways providing an appropriate range of tenures which support local communities, services and facilities.
- The area has resilient and diverse employment opportunities with strong links to good local schools embracing, in particular, industries of the future.
- The district is better connected through improved transport, digital and mobile data connections which reduce the need to travel and provide a distinctive local offer.
- The Forest of Dean is known as an amazing place to start and grow business.

3.2.2 A priority place

In 2021, the Government identified the Forest of Dean as a Priority Place as part of the Levelling Up programme. The Council submitted a successful £20 million funding bid under the regeneration and culture investment themes. This funding has enabled three projects to go forward: a new build Innovation, Careers and Enterprise centre and EV car parking at Hartpury University/College's main campus; new leisure, community, education and business space at the Council owned site at Five Acres; and three Cinderford town centre buildings to be brought back into productive life. Delivery of the Levelling Up funded works will complete during the life of the Sustainable Economy Strategy and the outcomes that flow from this investment will contribute to new facilities infrastructure to support health and well-being and will help to raise aspirations across the wider Forest.

3.2.3 Conservation and heritage

Another timely opportunity in 2024 will be to work with Historic England to review the historic assets in the area. The Council will be working with built heritage specialists to review all 27 Conservation Areas to identify what scope there may be to conserve, enhance and protect historic buildings and investigate the regeneration potential and wider community benefits of investing in existing building fabric and the public open spaces between buildings to promote a high quality street scene. This work will also inform the Market Towns Regeneration Framework delivery as part of the Sustainable Towns local area of focus.

3.2.4 Energy resilience

The SES recognises the need for the Forest of Dean to work with partners to build renewable energy and grid capacity to help support both indigenous growth and support inward investment to this area. The council will need to work with National Grid and Distribution Network Organisations to ensure that this area remains a viable location. Energy infrastructure investment will need to be prioritised to support this through the life of the SES and beyond.



3.3 Circular Economy

KEY POLICY & STRATEGY ALIGNMENTS:

- Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (2020-2041)
- FODDC Active Travel Strategy
- FODDC Market Towns Regeneration Framework

3.3.1 Transport transformation

The Forest of Dean District is accessed primarily through three primary A-roads, the A40, the A48 and A417. The A40 cuts east to west, whilst the A48 routes from the A40 at Highnam to Tutshill and Sedbury to provide access to Chepstow and the M48/M4 motorways. The A417 almost forms the north-eastern boundary of the district, routing from Gloucester to Ledbury and also provides access to Hartpury University and College. The northern area of the district is divided by the M50 motorway.

Lydney Railway Station, the only main line station and is served by Transport for Wales offers services to Gloucester, Cheltenham, Chepstow, Newport, and Cardiff and is a key interchange for the south of the district. Lydney Railway Station accommodated 145,000 entries and exits in 2022-2023 according to Office of Rail and Road (ORR) data.

In terms of cycling infrastructure, the Forest of Dean District contains two National Cycle Network routes, 42 and 45 and extensive on/off road leisure routes.

The Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan 2020-41 sets out the long-term strategic transport vision for the County which includes new policy and strengthened targets to reduce carbon emissions. The LTP's ambition is for transformative new

public transport infrastructure that brings different types of transport (public transport, cycling, cars) together at Transport Interchange Hubs, improving travel connections.

The emerging FODDC Local Plan 2041 has an Active Travel Policy (LP24). Future development proposals will be required to support safe active travel provisions for new & existing routes and make contributions to enable their use and introduction.

The emerging FODDC Active Travel Strategy will also set out a clear vision and objectives and identifies interventions to support Active Travel to encourage more opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling. It aims to reduce carbon emissions, improve access to the rich resources within the district, and create opportunities for employment and education. Furthermore, it seeks to complement the existing transport network by enhancing interchange with bus and rail public transport, enabling everyone to reap the benefits of active travel.

The Council is using UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity funds for Active Travel Strategy preparation and to launch a new Active Travel Grant scheme. This funding has also supported Hartpury University & College to undertake cycling feasibility to identify cycle routes to connect the main campus to Newent and Gloucester.

The Council is collaborating with GCC and Lydney Dial-A-Ride to help them to acquire their first electric minibus which will service their existing bus route 777 from Lydney to Coleford.

The Council's Destination Management Organisation is also working with Great Western Railway to actively promote train travel, to encourage visitors to the area to use the train to arrive in the Forest.



3.4 Business Support

3.4.1 Listening to Business

Continue our programme of business visits to improve local intelligence and awareness of issues and opportunities being faced by our local businesses. This programme visits new start-ups, new investors to the area and long-established home-grown businesses. In 2024-25 there will be a specific focus on visiting town centre retail, hospitality and service sector businesses to link with the delivery of our Market Towns Regeneration Framework.

3.4.2 Direct grant support

Continue to support business births in the Forest of Dean to drive up the number of businesses in the Forest in comparison with the other Gloucestershire Districts. Using our established Business Start Up Grant Scheme. In 2024-25 the eligibility criteria of this grant scheme will be reviewed in a bid to directly support land-based businesses working to support long term sustainability of our environment and economy. This action links to our Natural Capital Preservation local area of focus.

Continue to deliver the Rural Business Grant (RBG) scheme funded by the Rural England Prosperity Fund in 2024-25. The RBG has an energy efficiency, and decarbonisation focus and is already helping many businesses to install renewable energy systems to reduce energy costs and lower the cost of production/operation.

3.4.3 Information, advice and guidance

Working with volunteers and stakeholder partners will continue to disseminate business information, advice and guidance. The Council will signpost businesses and non-for-profit social enterprises to known sources of assistance including referral to the Business Navigators working from the Forest Growth Hub in Mitcheldean. The Forest Growth Hub is part of the Gloucestershire Growth Hub Network (GGHN) and this venue will continue to host training & networking events. The Council is an active funding partner of the GGHN and in 2024-25 will be funding core services using support from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.



3.4.4 Social value model

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (the Act) provides a legal obligation on public bodies to consider how the services they commission and procure, over the thresholds provided for in the Public Contract Regulations, might improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the local area and how, in conducting procurement it can secure Social Value.

The Social Value Act does not define what ‘Social Value’ means. In 2023, the Council has approved the Publica Councils’ definition of Social Value: “Social Value is the wider social, environmental and economic benefits that we will secure from commissioning and procuring activities.”

The Council will take a holistic approach when considering its policy and spending decisions and take into account the wider economic, social and environmental effects of its actions. In essence, Social Value serves as an umbrella term for these broader effects, and organisations, which make a conscious effort to ensure that these effects are positive, can be seen as adding social value by contributing to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of individuals, communities and society in general.

The Social Value model below sets out the Governments Social Value priorities for Procurement. There are five themes and eight policy outcomes, which flow from these themes:

Themes		Policy Outcomes
Theme 1	COVID-19 recovery	Help local communities to manage and recover from the impact of COVID-19
Theme 2	Tackling economic inequality	Create new business, new jobs and new skills
		Increase supply chain resilience and capacity
Theme 3	Fighting climate change	Effective stewardship of the environment
Theme 4	Equal opportunity	Reduce the disability employment gap
		Tackle workforce inequality
Theme 5	Wellbeing	Improve health and wellbeing
		Improve community cohesion

The Council will be led by the Government’s social value models as we develop new strategies, business cases for programmes and projects and procurement specifications. Social value and wider social well-being within the district will be key for all residents and communities.

In February 2024, the Council approved an Ethical Investment Policy to include assets owned, treasury investments or ongoing and new capital programme expenditure. The Policy sets out how the Council will avoid direct or indirect investment or borrowing activities with organisations whose core activities include: fossil fuel extraction and combustion, oppressive regimes, armaments, gambling, pornography, tobacco and pay-day loans. The Council will seek to directly invest in organisations or financial products whose core focus includes: renewable energy, green investment products, social and low carbon housing.



3.5 Natural Capital Preservation

3.5.1 Slow Tourism

Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism Limited operating under the brand name Visit Dean Wye is a membership based Destination Management Organisation (DMO). The Council works closely with the DMO through the current Service Level Agreement 2022-2025.

The DMO is cross-border and supports over 150 businesses across the visitor economy in England & Wales through subscription-based packages and covers Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB's) in the Forest of Dean and the Wye Valley. The organisation works collaboratively with the DMO's in the region and further afield with Visit West to compete for the domestic market as visitor numbers recover from the Covid pandemic.

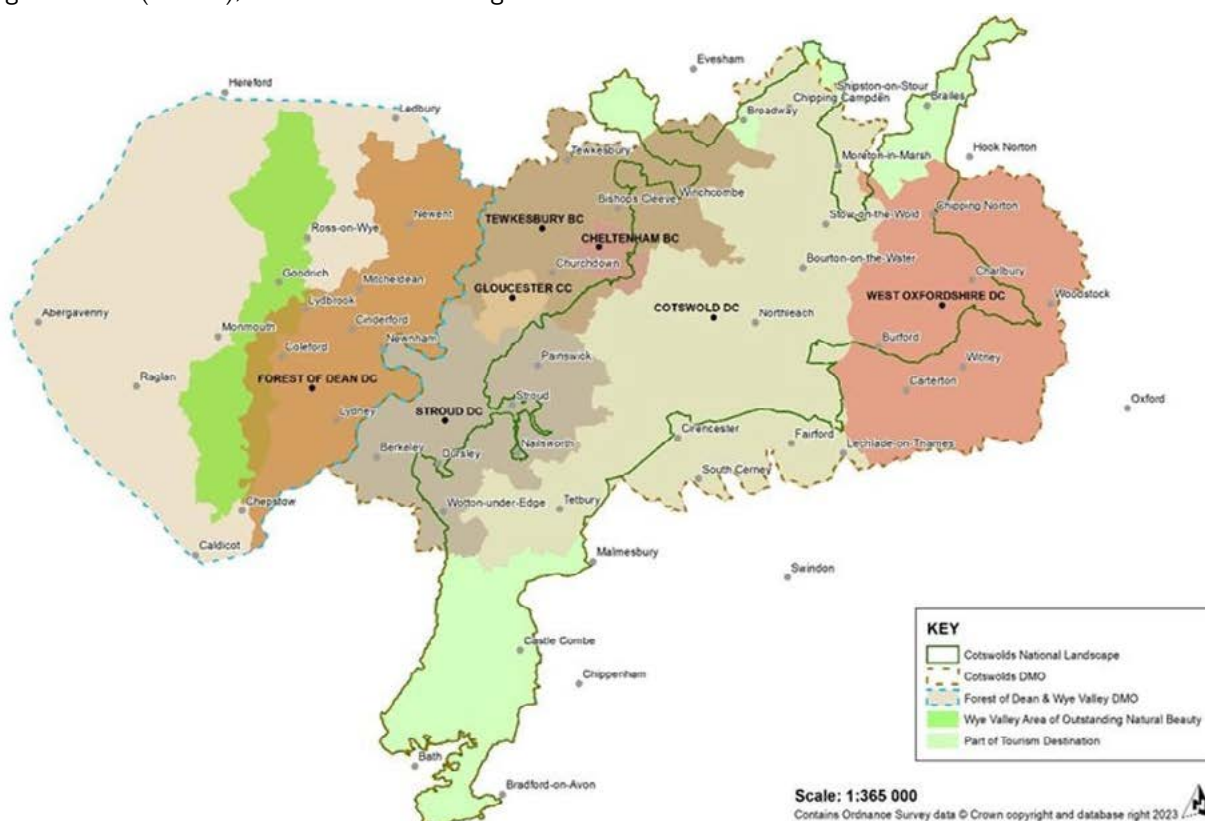
In 2022, the visitor economy attracted a total of £145 million visitor spend. The sector employs some 2,451 people, some 7% of all working age employees in the Forest of Dean. Further volume and value metrics are included in Appendix 1.

In 2023, the local Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), who have worked together

successfully for many years, were awarded Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status as Cotswolds Plus by Visit England. This is a collaborative partnership of five local DMOs - Cotswolds Tourism, Forest of Dean & Wye Valley, Marketing Cheltenham, Visit Gloucester and Visit Gloucestershire – with Cotswolds Tourism as the lead organisation.

Cotswolds Plus will not be a consumer facing brand but will work 'behind the scenes' to shape and deliver national strategy and activities, as well as to bring a coordinated, strategic approach to key issues such as sustainability, business support and research. LVEP status ensures increased support, training, and collaboration with VisitEngland and VisitBritain in core areas such as accessibility, business support and engagement with travel trade operators and event planners.

The map below illustrates the extent of the Cotswold's Plus LVEP which is centred on the Cotswolds National Landscape area and includes the whole of the Cotswold's AONB area, the whole of Gloucestershire, West Oxfordshire and the Wye Valley.



At present, there is no direct funding being offered to LVEPs and local authorities will need to engage and partner with LVEPs, so the official accreditation can be used when bidding for other Government funding. In time, future VisitEngland funding streams will be channelled through the LVEPs. LVEP status ensures increased support, training, and collaboration with VisitEngland and VisitBritain in core areas such as accessibility, business support and engagement with travel trade operators and event planners.

Post-pandemic and during the cost-of-living crisis businesses in the visitor economy remain under great pressure not only through their own increased overheads and staffing issues but also the pressure their customers are under in terms of disposable income and discretionary spend - upon which the sector relies.

Visit Dean Wye report that there is a huge opportunity to provide visitors with added value experiences. Promoting the Forest of Dean as a place of authentic experiences and advocating slow tourism to increase dwell time and active travel modes in the area, will be an important positioning during the life of the Sustainable Economy Strategy and an important selling point for the destination, supporting our independent retail, hospitality and service sector offer in our market towns and larger villages. Slow tourism links to our Market Towns Regeneration Framework vision where FODDC seeks to support and enable citizens, business owners and town councillors to create thriving, prosperous, sustainable and resilient town centres that cater for a variety of demographics and support the ambitions of future generations in the Forest of Dean.

The Council is investing UKSPF funding with Visit Dean Wye, to improve website functionality and to specifically promote the Forest of Dean as a film and TV-friendly location in a bid to attract further film and TV production and to benefit from the positive effect of screen tourism, as visitors want to see where Star Wars and Sex Education have been filmed.

Tourism activity has the potential to increase second home ownership and reduce housing stock available for local people. Promotional activity tends to raise awareness of any destination as a holiday option and so more people may look to buy holiday lets in their favourite locations. It is important to note the scale of this issue on the Forest of Dean. In 2023-24 there were 310 registered holiday lets (0.07%) compared with a total 39,838 domestic dwellings.

3.5.2 A Biosphere Reserve for the Forest?

Building on research and arts led community engagement work commissioned by the Forest Economic Partnership, the Council is exploring the concept of a Biosphere to cover the Forest of Dean District boundary. A Biosphere Reserve is a designated area in which to explore and demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development on a regional scale. Biospheres are the world's only internationally recognised accolade for demonstrating excellence in sustainable development practices. There are currently over 700 biosphere reserves in 124 countries, with only 7 in the UK.

A Biosphere has 3 functions; nature conservation, sustainable socio-economic development, and development of and sharing knowledge, learning and awareness. These functions are situated within three zones of the biosphere reserve:

- **The core zone - devoted to nature conservation and legally protected**
- **The buffer zone - which incorporates an area where only activities compatible with conservation objectives of the core zone are allowed**
- **The transition zone - where sustainable development objectives are encouraged and enacted, this where most people live and work (including market towns).**

In 2024-25, the Council will invest UK Shared Prosperity funding to appoint a new officer to continue community engagement and to further test the appetite for UNESCO biosphere reserve designation within the Forest.





3.6 Sustainable Towns

3.6.1 A new regeneration framework for the market towns

The rise of online shopping and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the way people shop and use their town centres. In the Forest of Dean, we know there is a will to change and modernize our town centres to work better for our residents and visitors.

In 2024, the Council commissioned a piece of research to help identify the unique qualities, public sentiment, and opportunities for our four historic Market Towns: Cinderford, Coleford, Lydney and Newent. Around 1,000 residents contributed to the research. Four key themes were identified to help form future town regeneration strategies:

- 1) **Improve shopping, employment and recreational activities**
- 2) **Tidy up buildings and shop fronts**
- 3) **Improve walking and cycling infrastructure, and signage - in and between the four Market Towns**
- 4) **Create more socialising spaces which aren't part of a 'pub' culture, especially in the evenings**

You can read the full Market Town Regeneration Report and Market Town Style Guide [here](#). From this research, the Council has identified the below actions to support the regeneration of our four Market Towns:

- 1) **Work with retailers, landlords and local property agents to reduce the number of vacant high street properties and improve the appearance of shop fronts and buildings**
- 2) **Introduce a 'shop local' campaign and strategy that rewards people for shopping locally and aims to reduce the distance residents must travel to shop**

- 3) **Work collaboratively with town councils to develop a Market Towns Regeneration Framework (MTRF) which explores cross-town regeneration opportunities including indoor or outdoor markets and implementation of the Market Towns Style Guide**
- 4) **Continue publishing our Town Centre Monitoring Reports to track progress of the above actions from 2024 to 2028 and consider adding climate and nature resilience measures**
- 5) **Work with local arts organisations and town/parish councils to promote cultural events and activities within the towns and larger villages.**

Stakeholder engagement work has been undertaken to complete the MTRF and the Council is now working to deliver 9 specific actions under the following three priorities:

- **Thriving and inclusive markets**
- **Tidy and accessible towns**
- **Community wealth building**

Appendix 4 provides further detail about how each of these priorities will be implemented during the life of the Sustainable Economy Strategy.

3.6.2 Climate adaptation in the market towns

The subject of climate adaptation and resilience are an important part of the SES vision for future sustainable economic prosperity. Working in partnership with the Town Councils, climate adaptation risk assessments and plans have been completed for each of the four towns. It will be important for the SES annual performance report to monitor climate impact and introduce measures to track the progress that these adaptation plans are making.

4. Action Plan 2024-2025

Actions tracked & monitored in the Council Plan on a quarterly basis

1. Workforce Skills		
	Key Action	Delivery lead(s)
1.1	Work with stakeholders to deliver training for the economically inactive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCC/CCP to lead Employment Skills Hub Outreach – funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund
1.2	Work with GCC Adult Education, Cotswold Plus LVEP, FoDWVT, Colleges & independent training providers to deliver: AI, digital, green construction & sustainable tourism skills training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accxel to lead the Digital Skills Training – funded by UKSPF GCC – Adult Education – Basic Computer Skills South Gloucestershire & Stroud College to lead Green Construction Skills Training – funded by UKSPF FDWVT to deliver sustainable tourism training through Service Level Agreement
1.3	Work with school/college/university and other stakeholders to promote apprenticeship, work placement & volunteering opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to fund apprenticeship staff training FODDC & FEP to support GCC led Careers Hub and Employment & Skills Hub activity FODDC to promote GoVolunteerGlos employer supported best practice guide
1.4	Continue to be an active and influencing partner on Forest Economic Partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FEP Education & Skills Sub-Group to continue leading the Inspiring Forest programme.
1.5	Continue as a partner of the Gloucestershire Growth Hub Network to support local businesses, people and skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCC led business support through Forest Growth Hub
1.6	Support implementation of the Local Skills Improvement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCC to collaborate with partners to identify & meet local skills needs and gaps identified by employers
2. Infrastructure		
	Key Action	Delivery lead
2.1	Deliver the Levelling Up The Forest programme (including the Five Acres project) to create modern leisure, community, education and business facilities for the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC, Hartpury University/College & Cinderford Town Council.
2.2	Progress the draft Local Plan 2041 to promote and achieve sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC ongoing consultation.
2.3	Work with stakeholders to facilitate modern business workspace, commercial development and co-working opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to update the Asset Management Strategy. FODDC to continue to be an active member of One Gloucestershire Estate.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to signpost enquiries to other public & private sector owned vacant premises.
2.4	Work with stakeholders to explore new finance models to reduce installation costs and advance renewable energy installations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC – Southwest Net Zero Innovation Fund to research investment opportunities for Five Acres and Cinderford town centre.
2.5	Work with Western Gateway, GCC and key business sectors to encourage appropriate home grown and inward investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to promote the Forest of Dean as being “Open for Business” to target high value sectors at specific business events. FODDC to research opportunities for AI & digital investment to be a part of the Western Gateway digital super cluster.
2.6	Work with stakeholders to improve high speed broadband, wi-fi and mobile phone coverage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FEP, GCC & Herefordshire Council – Project Gigabit
2.7	Work with Historic England to review Conservation Areas and examine opportunities for heritage led regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HE/FODDC funded Conservation Area Review.
2.8	Work with Forestry England to develop a Recreation Plan for FoD within their West District operational area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC/FODWVT to support consultation process FE to lead expansion of Cannop Cycle Centre
2.9	Complete the Council’s Active Travel Strategy & Action Plan to promote walking, wheeling & cycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to complete Active Travel Strategy FODDC to launch UKSPF/REPF funded Active Travel Grant scheme
2.10	Work with stakeholders to promote bus, rail and demand responsive bus travel for residents and visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GWR/FDWVT rail travel campaign GCC – The Robin minibus service
2.11	Support green travel options to local shops & services. Work with stakeholders to promote electrification of public/ community transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCC/FODDC/Lydney Dial-A-Ride – funding approved to support EV vehicle purchase & charging infrastructure
2.12	Continue to lobby Government, Western Gateway, Local Highway Authorities, Network Rail, bus & train operators to improve rural transport connectivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC/GCC/FEP monitor policy & funding landscape.
3. Circular Economy		
	Key Action	Delivery lead
3.1	Invest time to research and develop a tailored methodology for relevant future Cabinet decision making to explore the principles of Doughnut Economics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to join the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) FODDC feasibility study to develop a technical platform & training programme to build competencies across the organisation.
3.2	Embed the Council’s approved social value statement in procurement and evaluation activity when proportionate and relevant to do so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC Procurement & Contract Management Strategy – build in social value metrics to monitor local supply chain & employment benefits.

3.3	Develop a shared social value toolkit to support inclusive and sustainable growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCC to lead collaboration with all county Local Authorities & private sector partners.
3.3	Encourage ethical & reliable supply chains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to explore working with Together Gloucestershire GCC to continue Made in Gloucestershire campaign to support buying locally within food & drink sector.
3.4	Introduce a 'shop local' campaign and strategy that rewards people for shopping locally and aims to reduce the distance residents have to travel to shop.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to deliver Market Towns Regeneration Framework
3.5	Explore opportunities for community wealth building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC
3.6	Introduce a new digital climate collaboration tool for businesses to share their needs with solution providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC Low Carbon Business Advisor to develop a new digital platform using UKSPF funding
4. Business Support		
	Key Action	Delivery lead
4.1	Continue the Listening to Business programme to gain insight and build relationships with local businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to visit new start-up and existing businesses. Focus on town centre businesses in 2024-25.
4.2	Deliver direct grant award schemes to support business birth & survival.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC Business Start-Up Grant FODDC implement UKSPF/REPF funded rural business grant scheme.
4.3	Work with stakeholders to offer business information, advice & guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to appoint a Low Carbon Business Advisor UKSPF funded FODDC to signpost enquiries to Forest Growth Hub – Business Navigators Forest Growth Hub to host training & networking events
4.4	Continue to support the Innovation Lab at Coleford Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCC to lead ongoing support for freelancers, creatives, students and makers.
4.5	Work collaboratively to promote the Forest of Dean as a TV & film location to harness the benefits of screen tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative England/FODWVT/GCC Highways/Forestry England – film friendly campaigns, working with influencers & location managers
5. Natural Capital Preservation		
	Key Action	Delivery lead
5.1	Support the marketing & promotion of slow tourism to encourage more overnight/longer stays in destination & active travel modes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to promote through the Service Level Agreement with FODWVT
5.2	Support food and drink sector, agriculture/farming and land based businesses, working to support long term sustainability of our environment and economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FODDC to review criteria for Business Start Up Grants

5.3	Explore the opportunities for helping to promote regenerative farming and forestry practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCC/Gloucestershire Agri-Tech Partnership/Forestry England
5.4	Explore the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve concept as one way to protect the natural environment and support the nature tech sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FODDC Environmental Research & Development Officer funded by UKSPF to lead this action.
5.5	Collaborate with farm businesses & other Local Authorities adjacent to the River Wye & River Severn to improve water quality, protect biodiversity and restore traditional fisheries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FODDC to engage with stakeholders to research/map current/planned activity.
6. Sustainable Towns		
	Key Action	Delivery lead
6.1	Work with retailers, landlords, local property agents and town councils to reduce the number of high street vacancies and improve appearance of shop fronts and buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FODDC to explore the case for Town Centre Management
6.2	Complete annual town centre audit reports informed by AI footfall data collection & analytics. Consider options for including climate & nature resilience measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FODDC data reports published on website
6.3	Work collaboratively with town councils to deliver the Market Towns Regeneration Framework which explores cross-town regeneration opportunities (See Appendix 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FODDC, Cinderford Town Council, Coleford Town Council. Lydney Town Council and Newent Town Council
6.4	Work with local arts organisations and town/parish councils to promote cultural events and activities within the towns and larger villages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts Council England funded Arts Festival 2024-25 – led by Canopy Creative Network from June 2024 to Dec 2025.
6.5	Promote slow/sustainable tourism to increase dwell time in the towns and active modes of travel to explore the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FODWVT to promote slow tourism to visitors and lead training for sector businesses.



Image: Gloucestershire Engineering Training, Cinderford



5. Measuring Success

Success will be measured against the delivery of the actions outlined in this Strategy supported by the resources allocated within our Medium-Term Financial Plan. The actions listed within this Strategy are designed to align with the Council Plan and will also need to be integrated within any future service level plans to be carried out each year.

Where a particular action cannot meet these criteria, it will be amended, removed or replaced with an alternative action where the criteria can be met. This will allow the Strategy to be able to react to significant policy changes at national, regional or countywide level through to 2028.

We will continue to monitor the longer term economic, social and environmental trends of the Forest of Dean through data collection and from feedback we receive from businesses, partners and stakeholders. Our local actions may only have a modest impact against global and national pressures but working with Gloucestershire County Council and the Western Gateway, we will work to maximise the positive impact of our actions to address the economic challenges impacting local residents and our businesses.

A final monitoring report will be published in 2029 providing a detailed analysis of the Strategy, its actions, outputs and overall impact. This work will help to inform future strategies and actions aimed towards supporting a sustainable economy in the Forest of Dean.

An annual report will be published providing a RAG (red, amber or green) rating for each action along with a brief update on how each action is progressing. All actions need to:

- 1. Provide a positive impact.**
- 2. Provide added value.**
- 3. Avoid duplication.**
- 4. Offer good value for money.**
- 5. Align with the Vision and 3 Priorities within the Council Plan.**

It should be noted that we will work with colleagues in the performance management team to incorporate all such reporting within the performance management framework.



6. Glossary of Terms

AI – artificial intelligence

CCN – Creative Canopy Network

Cotswolds Plus LVEP – Local Visitor Economy Partnership

DEAL – Doughnut Economics Action Lab

DMO – Destination Marketing Organisation

FEP – Forest Economic Partnership

FODDC – Forest of Dean District Council

FDWVT – Forest of Dean & Wye Valley Tourism

FVAF – Forest Voluntary Action Forum

GCC – Gloucestershire County Council

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GVA – Gross Value Added

GWR – Great Western Railway

LSIP – Local Skills Improvement Plan

LVEP – Local Visitor Economy Partnership

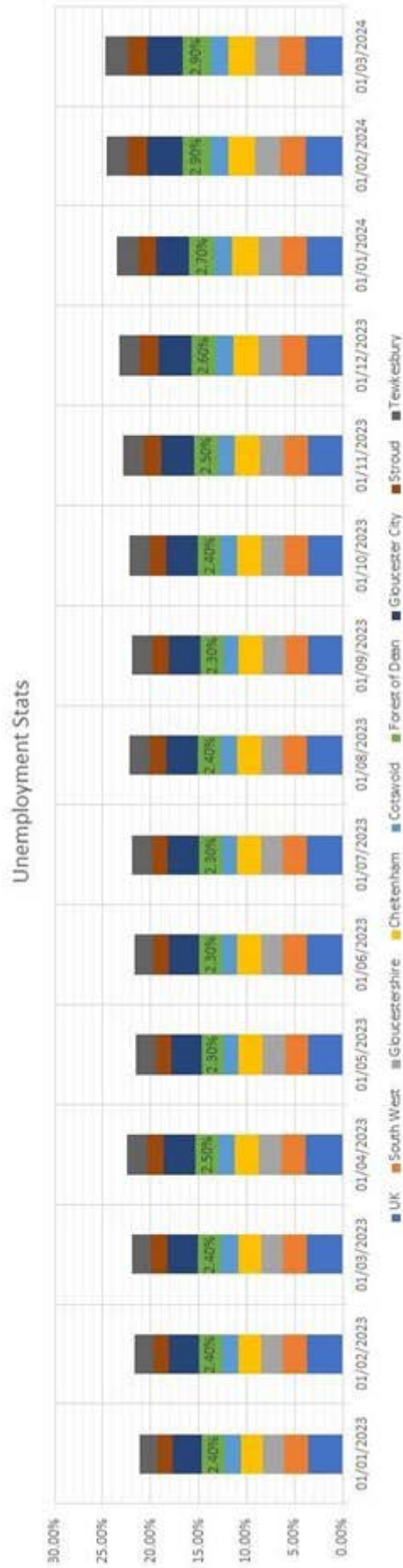
REPF – Rural England Prosperity Fund

UKSPF – UK Shared Prosperity Fund

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Baseline data

Unemployment



Comparing the unemployment rates across various regions in Gloucestershire, the Forest of Dean consistently exhibits a slightly higher unemployment rate than the county average but remains lower than the national and South West regional averages.

From January 2023 to March 2024, the Forest of Dean's unemployment rate ranged from 2.90% to 2.60%, with minor fluctuations. While its rate aligns closely with nearby Gloucester and Tewkesbury, it is generally higher than Cheltenham and Cotswold, which consistently maintain lower unemployment rates.

Despite this, the Forest of Dean's rate demonstrates resilience compared to the national and regional trends, where unemployment rates tend to be higher.



Forest of Dean
— DISTRICT COUNCIL —

Source: Office for National Statistics, Crown Copyright Reserved (Nomis)
Produced by: Data & Analysis Team, Corporate Resources,
Gloucestershire County Council

NEETS vs Regional and National Level

(not in education, employment or training)

Source: Universal Credit Claimants, 18-24 year old claimant count as a proportion of the cohort or total employed and unemployed.

In the Forest of Dean, NEET rates from 2019 to 2023 fluctuate slightly but consistently remain below both the South West regional and England national levels, indicating stable youth engagement in education and employment compared to broader areas. Throughout this period, Forest of Dean's NEET rates range from 6.8% to 12.6%, while the South West region's rates range from 8.0% to 13.6%, and England's rates range from 7.4% to 12.7%.



Apprenticeship Starts and Achieved 2022- 23

In comparison to other areas, Forest of Dean achieves a 46.15% success rate in apprenticeship goal attainment, which is slightly lower than Stroud and Tewkesbury. Gloucester City and Cotswold also have similar success rates at 46.67% and 46.51% respectively. Cheltenham leads with the highest success rate at 54.39%.









Data rounded to the nearest tens to prevent disclosure.

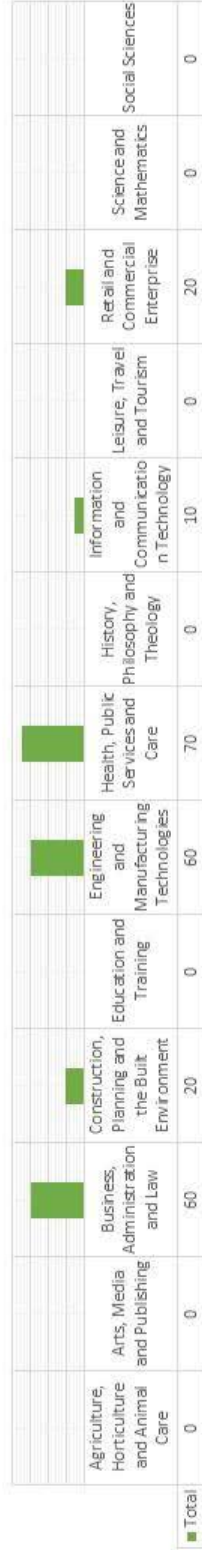
Source: Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) Link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships>



Apprenticeship Achieved by Sector 2022- 23

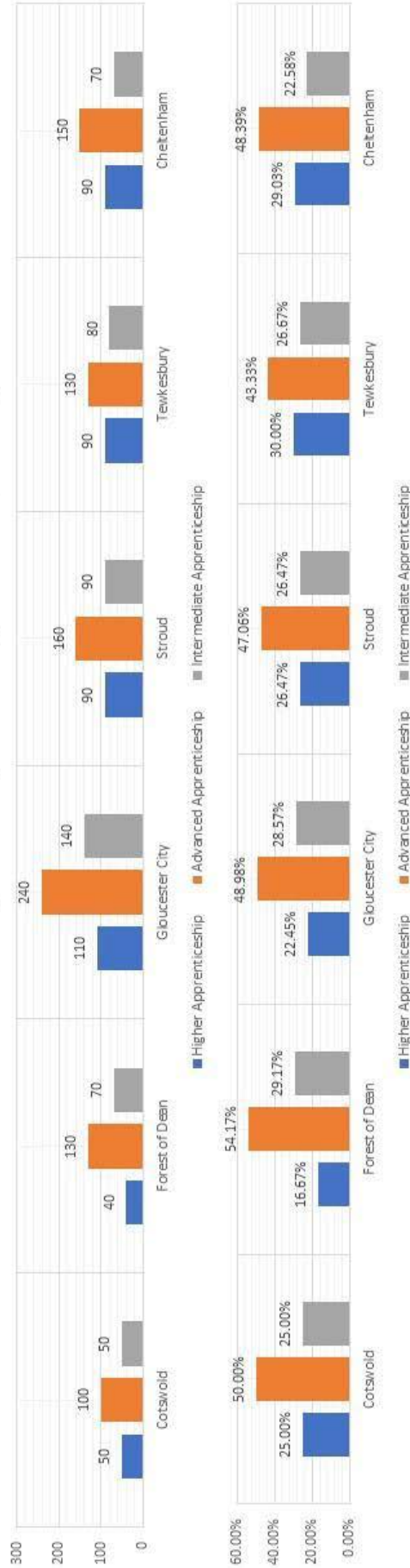
<p>Forest of Dean</p>  <p>Forest of Dean's top three percentages in achieved apprenticeships are in Health, Public Services, and Care at 29.17%, followed by Business, Administration, and Law at 25.00%, and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies at 25.00%.</p>	<p>Cotswold</p>  <p>Cotswold's top three percentages in achieved apprenticeships are in Health, Public Services, and Care at 30.00%, followed by Business, Administration, and Law at 25.00%, and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies at 20.00%.</p>	<p>Gloucester City</p>  <p>In Gloucester City, the top three percentages in achieved apprenticeships are in Health, Public Services, and Care at 32.65%, followed by Business, Administration, and Law at 22.45%, and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies at 18.37%.</p>
<p>Stroud</p>  <p>In Stroud, the top three percentages in achieved apprenticeships are in Health, Public Services, and Care at 32.35%, followed by Business, Administration, and Law at 23.53%, and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies at 17.65%.</p>	<p>Tewkesbury</p>  <p>In Tewkesbury, the top three percentages in achieved apprenticeships are in Business, Administration, and Law at 26.67%, followed by Health, Public Services, and Care at 26.67%, and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies at 20.00%.</p>	<p>Cheltenham</p>  <p>In Cheltenham, the top three percentages in achieved apprenticeships are in Business, Administration, and Law at 25.81%, followed by Health, Public Services, and Care at 25.81%, and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies at 19.35%.</p>

Forest of Dean Total Achieved by Sector



Apprenticeship Achieved by Level 2022- 23

Forest of Dean exhibits a lower percentage of achievement in Higher Apprenticeships at 16.67%, indicating a comparatively weaker performance in this category. However, it stands out with a higher percentage in Advanced Apprenticeships at 54.17%, surpassing other areas, suggesting a particular strength in this level. In terms of Intermediate Apprenticeships, Forest of Dean performs moderately well at 29.17%, falling within the range of other localities. Overall, Forest of Dean demonstrates varied attainment rates across apprenticeship levels compared to neighbouring areas.


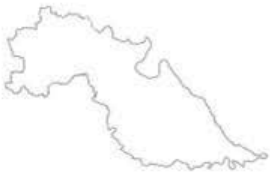



Source: Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) Link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships>

Data rounded to the nearest tens to prevent disclosure.

Apprenticeships Achieved at National/ Regional Level 2022- 23

In the context of apprenticeship achievement rates, the Forest of Dean region stands at 46.15%, slightly below both the South West's rate of 51.25% and England's rate of 48.15%. Despite falling marginally behind these averages, the Forest of Dean's commitment to apprenticeship programs remains evident, albeit with room for potential improvements to match or exceed the broader regional and national standards. Efforts to bolster apprenticeship training and support mechanisms could further enhance the Forest of Dean's contribution to workforce development and skill acquisition initiatives within the region.





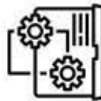













<p>South West</p>  <p>Achievement Rate: 51.25%</p>	<p>Forest of Dean</p>  <p>Achievement Rate: 46.15%</p>	<p>England</p>  <p>Achievement Rate: 48.15%</p>
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Source: Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) Link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships>

Data rounded to the nearest tens to prevent disclosure.

Employment by Occupation from 2022 - 2024

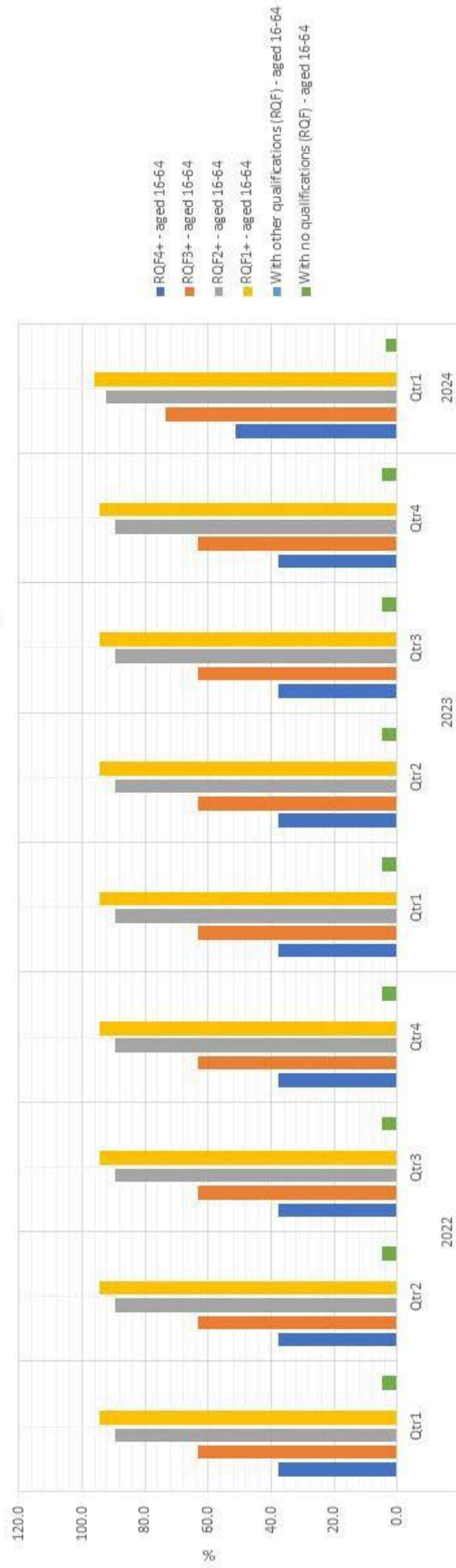
Managers, directors and senior officials  Growth of 65.6% 	Professional occupations  Growth of 60.8% 	Associate professional occupations  Small reduction of -4.9% 
Administrative and secretarial occupations  Reduction of -41.0% 	Skilled trades occupations  Reduction of -25.0% 	Caring, leisure and other service occupations  Reduction of -66.0% 
Sales and customer service occupations  Reduction of -45.5% 	Process, plant and machine operatives  Reduction of -28.1% 	Elementary occupations  Growth of 44.0% 



The Forest of Dean has experienced notable shifts in its occupational composition. Managerial and professional roles have grown by 65.6% and 60.8% respectively, while administrative, service, and skilled trades occupations have declined by -41.0%, -66.0%, and -25.0% respectively. Elementary occupations have seen a growth of 44.0%, while machine operative roles have decreased by -28.1%. These changes reflect significant transformations in the region's employment landscape.

Source: ONS annual population survey NOMIS

Employment by Qualifications (Regulated Qualifications Framework RQF)



In the Forest of Dean, the employment data by qualifications from 2022 to 2024 demonstrates stability in the percentages of individuals with qualifications across different levels. The proportion of individuals aged 16-64 with qualifications at RQF4+ level shows a notable increase from 37.7% in 2022 to 51.3% in the first quarter of 2024. Similarly, there's a steady rise in the percentages of individuals with qualifications at RQF3+ and RQF2+ levels over the same period. Notably, the percentages of individuals with other qualifications (ROF) and those with no qualifications remain consistently low throughout the analysed years. This suggests a relatively stable educational landscape in the Forest of Dean, with a gradual increase in higher-level qualifications among the workforce, potentially reflecting efforts towards upskilling and education within the community.

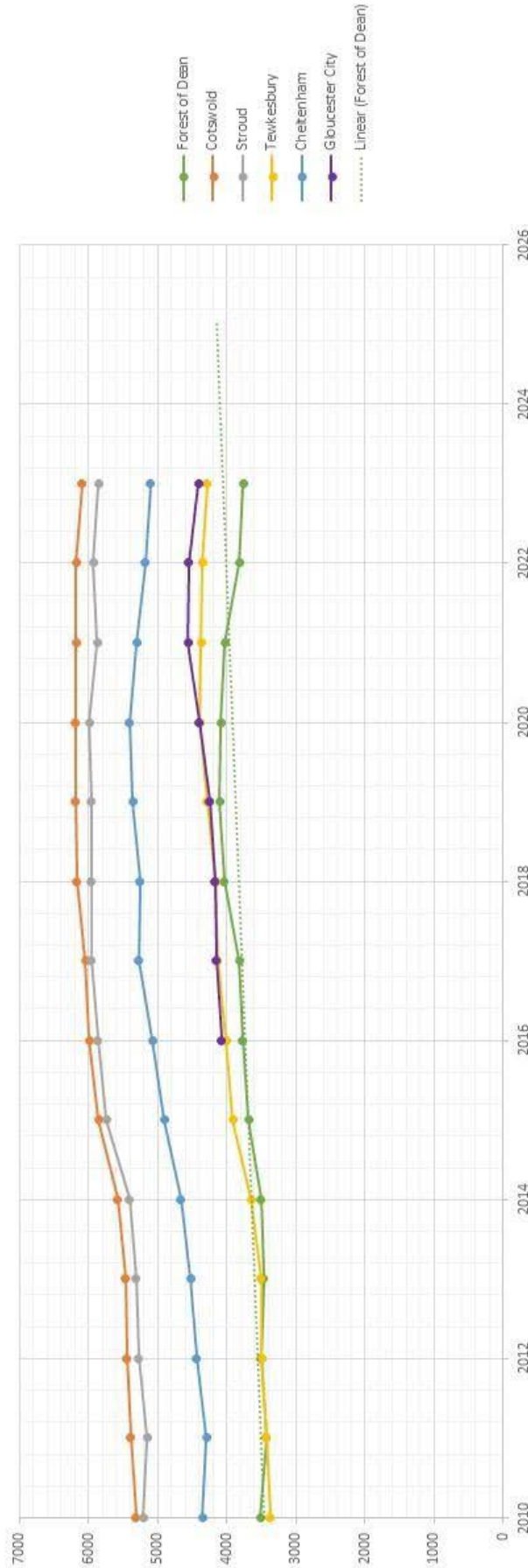
Source: ONS annual population survey NOMIS, [ROF definition](#)



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Business Counts

Source: The main administrative sources for the IDBR are VAT trader and PAYE employer information passed to the ONS by HM Revenue & Customs under the Value Added Tax Act 1994 for VAT traders and the Finance Act 1969 for PAYE employers; details of incorporated businesses are also passed to ONS by Companies House. Estimates in the table are rounded to five percent disclosure






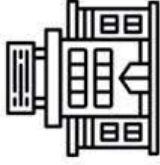
Despite fluctuations, the Forest of Dean experiences some growth, indicating economic activity. In addition to having fewer businesses, it's worth noting that the Forest of Dean generally has a smaller population compared to the other localities. This could partially explain the lower business counts, as there may be fewer potential customers or a smaller workforce available for business operations. Despite this demographic difference, the Forest of Dean still exhibits some growth in business counts over the years, albeit at a slower pace compared to its more populous neighbours.

Analysing the growth trend in business counts for the Forest of Dean using linear regression reveals a gradual increase over the years. While there are fluctuations in the data, the overall trend suggests a positive slope, indicating a slow but steady growth in business numbers.



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Business Counts by Size (Grouped by Headcount)

<p>Micro (0 to 9)</p>  <p>Micro businesses in the Forest of Dean have fluctuated but have experienced a 6.40% overall increase from 2010 to 2023.</p>	<p>Small (10 to 49)</p>  <p>Small businesses in the Forest of Dean have shown a steady upward trend, with a 12.73% increase from 2010 to 2023.</p>
<p>Medium-sized (50 to 249)</p>  <p>Medium-sized businesses in the Forest of Dean have experienced fluctuations over the years, with a notable 50.00% increase from 2010 to 2023.</p>	<p>Large (250+)</p>  <p>Large-sized businesses have remained stable throughout 2010-2021, a few businesses have closed from 2022 to present.</p>



Source: The main administrative sources for the IDBR are VAT trader and PAYE employer information passed to the ONS by HM Revenue & Customs under the Value Added Tax Act 1994 for VAT traders and the Finance Act 1969 for PAYE employers; details of incorporated businesses are also passed to ONS by Companies House. Estimates in the table are rounded to five percent disclosure

Business Counts by Sectors (Top 3)

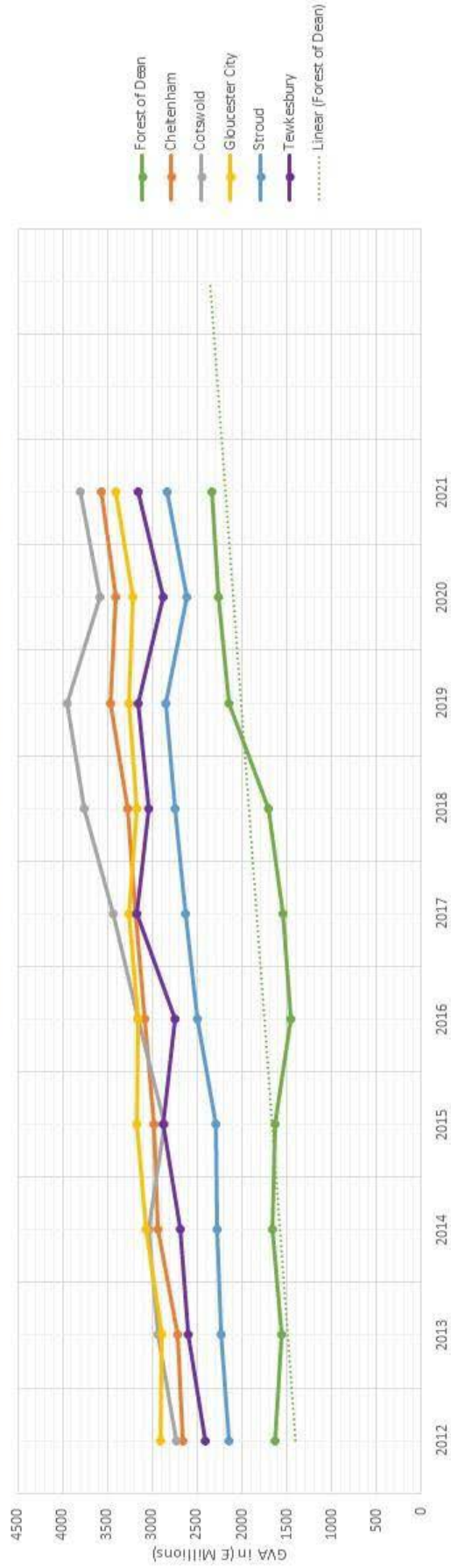
<p>1) Construction (570)</p> <p>Construction stands out as the most prominent sector in the Forest of Dean, reflecting its significant role in the local business landscape and suggesting a robust construction industry within the region.</p> 	<p>2) Agriculture, forestry & fishing (515)</p> <p>Agriculture, forestry & fishing is the second highest type of business in the Forest of Dean, with 515 establishments, indicating its significant role and prominence within the local economy.</p> 
<p>3) Professional, scientific & technical (465)</p> <p>Professional, scientific & technical services emerge as the third most prominent sector in the Forest of Dean, indicating a notable presence of professional and specialised services within the region's business community.</p> 	



Source: The main administrative sources for the IDBR are VAT trader and PAYE employer information passed to the ONS by HM Revenue & Customs under the Value Added Tax Act 1994 for VAT traders and the Finance Act 1969 for PAYE employers; details of incorporated businesses are also passed to ONS by Companies House. Estimates in the table are rounded to five percent disclosure

GVA (Gross Value Added)

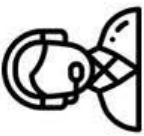

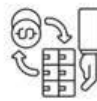
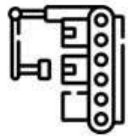




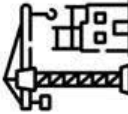

Analysing gross value added (GVA) in £ millions for the Forest of Dean alongside other localities from 2012 to 2021 reveals fluctuating trends. The Forest of Dean generally exhibits lower GVA compared to Cheltenham, Cotswold, Gloucester, Stroud, and Tewkesbury over the years. The Forest of Dean is comparatively smaller in economic terms compared to other localities in the region. Despite some fluctuations, there's a gradual increase in GVA for the Forest of Dean from 2012 to 2021, reflecting potential economic growth and development within the locality. However, its GVA remains consistently lower compared to other areas in the region. The Forest of Dean's linear regression analysis suggests a potential trajectory for gradual economic growth in the future.



Source: NOMIS official census and labour market statistics. Annual estimates of balanced UK regional gross value added (GVA(B)). Current price estimates, chained volume measures and implied deflators for local authority districts.

Top 10 GVA by Sector 2022

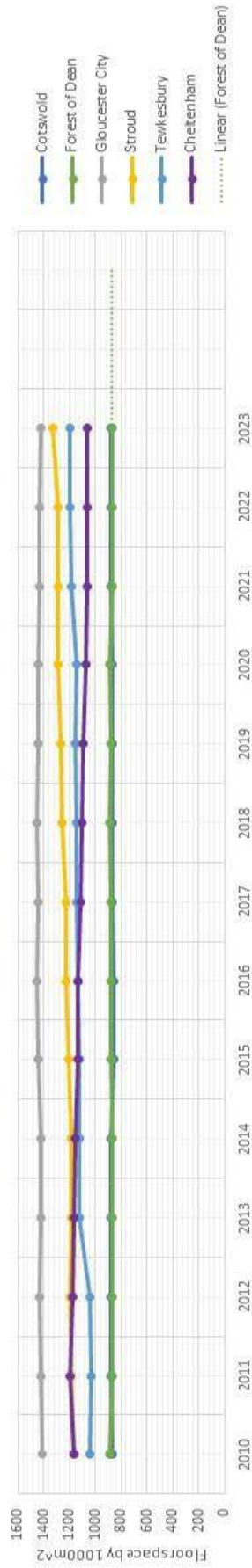
In the Forest of Dean, the services sector is the largest contributor to Gross Value Added (GVA) with £1.426 million, showcasing its significant role in the economy. Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, and wholesale trade follow closely behind, contributing £668 million and £612 million respectively. Manufacturing and real estate activities also make notable contributions, each accounting for £229 million. Sectors such as education, construction, and agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water, and waste contribute to the overall GVA but to a lesser extent, indicating a diversified economic landscape.

1. Services sector GVA: (£ Millions) 1426 	2. Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles GVA: (£ Millions) 668 	3. Wholesale trade GVA: (£ Millions) 612 	4. Production sector GVA: (£ Millions) 334 	5. Real estate activities GVA: (£ Millions) 279 
6. Manufacturing GVA: (£ Millions) 229 	7. Owner-occupiers' imputed rental GVA: (£ Millions) 229 	8. Education GVA: (£ Millions) 120 	9. Construction GVA: (£ Millions) 117 	10. Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste GVA: (£ Millions) 105 

Source: NOMIS official census and labour market statistics. Annual estimates of balanced UK regional gross value added (GVA(B)). Current price estimates, chained volume measures and implied deflators for local authority districts.

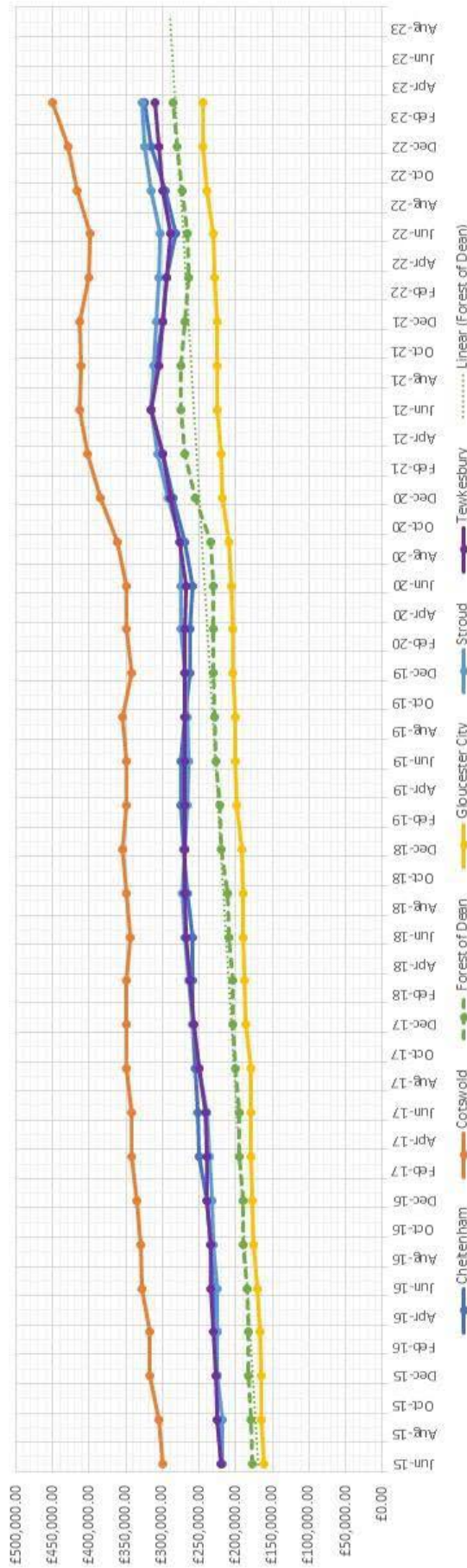
Business Floorspace

Analysing business floorspace in thousand meters squared across various localities reveals that the Forest of Dean consistently maintains a smaller footprint compared to others in the region. While there's stability in business floorspace for the Forest of Dean from 2010 to 2023, the figures remain consistently lower compared to neighbouring areas such as Cotswold, Gloucester, Stroud, Tewkesbury, and West Oxfordshire. This indicates a relatively smaller overall business presence in the Forest of Dean, suggesting potentially limited economic activity or development in comparison. Despite some fluctuations in other areas, the data underscores the size disparity between the Forest of Dean and neighbouring localities in terms of business floorspace, emphasising the need for targeted efforts to bolster economic growth and business expansion within the region. The linear regression analysis indicates a stable trajectory for business floorspace in the Forest of Dean, with no significant trend of increase or decrease projected for the future.



Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/non-domestic-rating-stock-of-properties-2022>; Floorspace by (thousand meters ^2); Stock of properties including business floorspace; Total floorspace by administrative area

House Prices





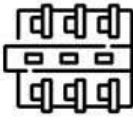


Median house prices in the Forest of Dean have shown a consistent upward trend from June 2015 to March 2023, albeit at a slower pace compared to neighboring regions like Cheltenham and Cotswold. Despite being relatively more affordable, the Forest of Dean tends to have lower median house prices compared to these areas. This suggests stable demand within the housing market of the Forest of Dean. The linear regression analysis for the Forest of Dean's median house prices indicates steady growth projected for the future.



Source: Calculated using open data from HM Land Registry, Median Price Paid

House Prices by Type of House (2015 - 2024)

<p>All property types</p> <p>All property types in the Forest of Dean experienced a growth of 67.22% from 2015 to 2024, with prices rising from £192,122 to £285,799.</p> 	<p>Detached houses</p> <p>Detached houses experienced a growth of 66.97%, with prices rising from £251,446 to £375,473.</p> 	<p>Semi-detached houses</p> <p>Semi-detached houses saw a growth of 66.61%, with prices increasing from £163,943 to £246,115.</p> 	<p>Terraced houses</p> <p>Terraced houses exhibited a growth of 67.72%, with prices rising from £137,418 to £202,921.</p> 	<p>Flats and maisonettes</p> <p>Flats and maisonettes demonstrated the highest growth rate at 75.23%, with prices increasing from £93,584 to £164,397.</p> 
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From 2015 to 2024, all property types in the Forest of Dean experienced strong growth in both percentage increase and monetary value. Detached, semi-detached, and terraced houses showed similar growth rates around 67%, while flats and maisonettes exhibited the highest growth rate at 75.23%.

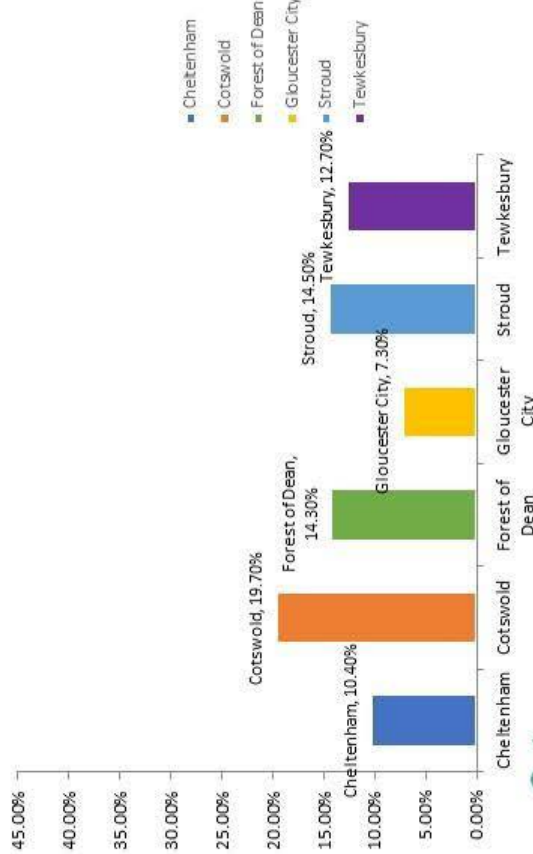


Source: Calculated using open data from HM Land Registry. Median Price Paid

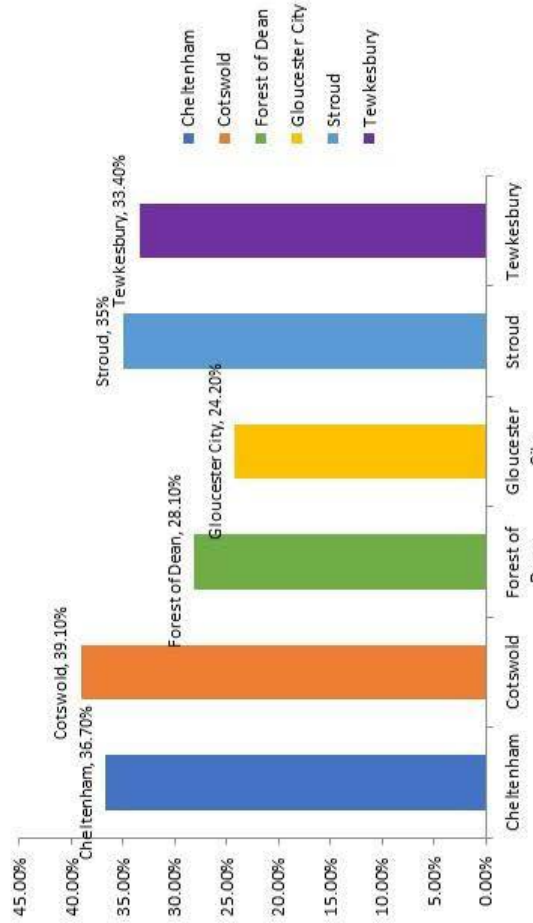
Homeworkers

The data reveals a substantial increase in the percentage of homeworkers among the population over the age of 16 and in employment in the Forest of Dean from 2011 to 2020. In 2011, the percentage stood at 14.3%, while by 2020, it had risen significantly to 28.1%. This upward trend suggests a notable shift towards remote work arrangements, likely influenced by technological advancements, changing work preferences, and the impact of global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The Forest of Dean's trajectory mirrors broader trends seen across the region, with substantial increases in other areas such as Cheltenham and Cotswold. This indicates a significant transformation in the way people approach work, with remote employment becoming increasingly prevalent over the past decade.

2011 % of Homeworkers Aged 16 over in Employment



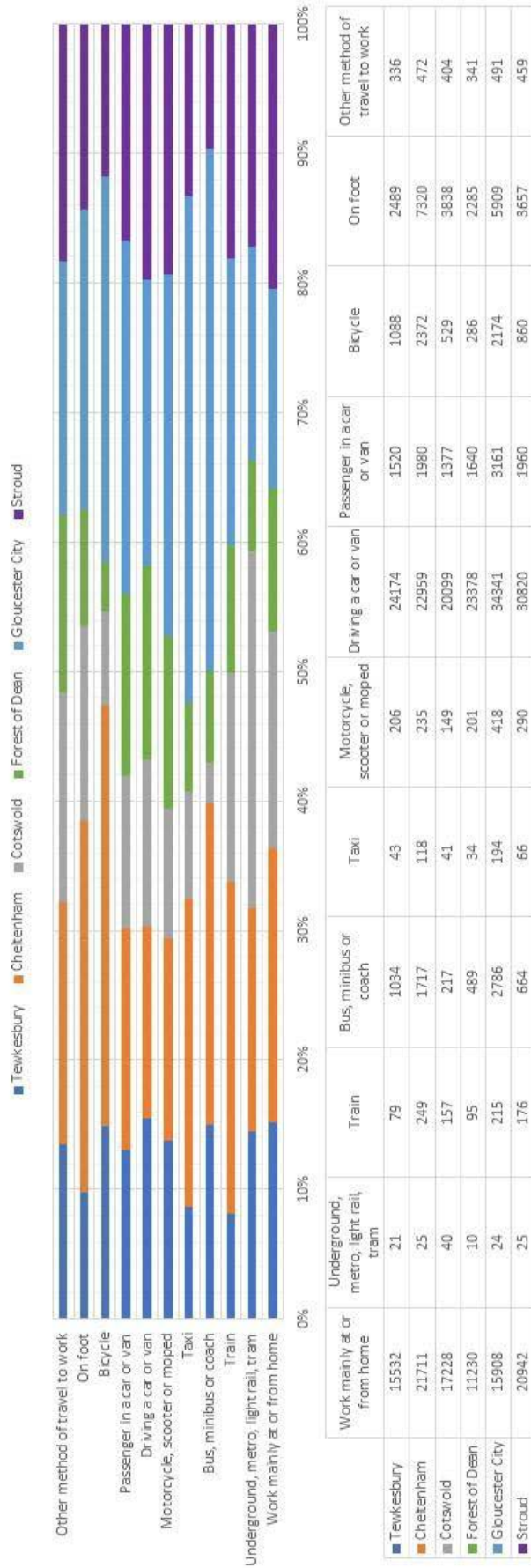
2020 % of Homeworkers Aged 16 over in Employment



Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/traveltoworkenglandandwales/census2021> Aged 16 years and over in employment

Mode of Travel for Commuters

In the Forest of Dean remote work emerges as significant, with a considerable 11,230 individuals primarily working from home. Driving a car or van is the dominant mode of transportation, while commuting on foot and by bicycle also holds a notable share, reflecting a mix of urban and rural commuting habits. These patterns highlight the unique blend of remote work opportunities and active transportation methods shaping the Forest of Dean's commuting landscape within the region.



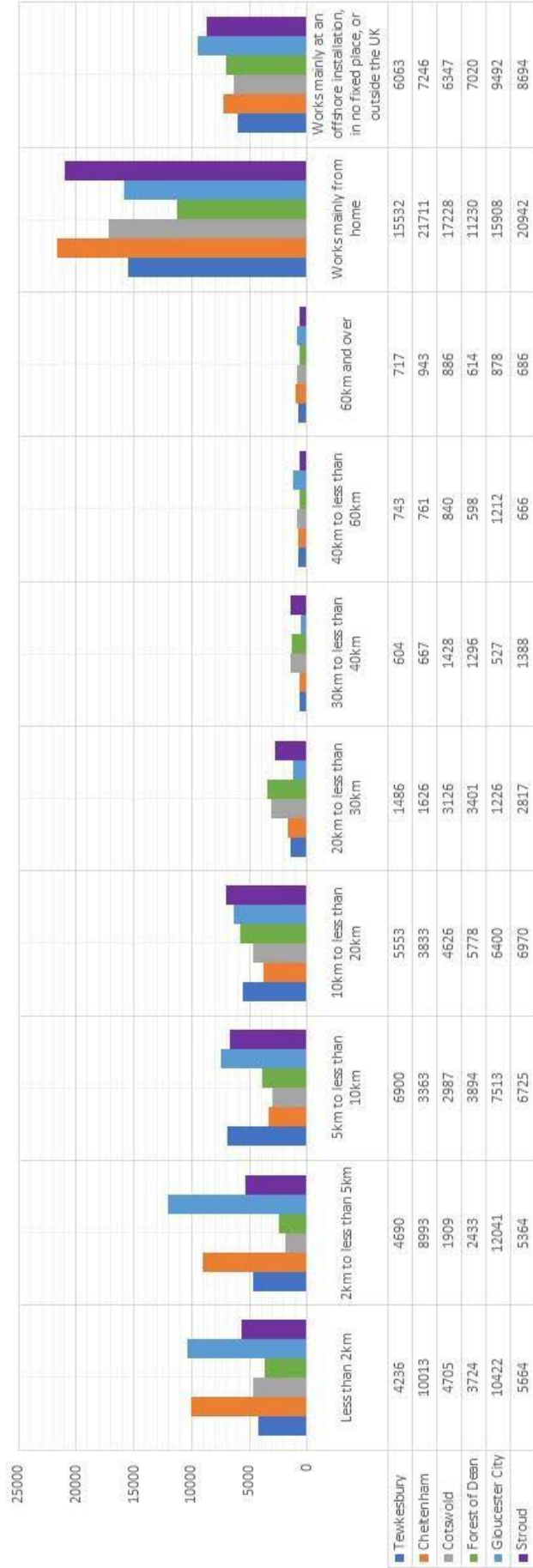
Source: <https://www.censusdata.uk/> Method of travel to workplace:
Total: All usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment.



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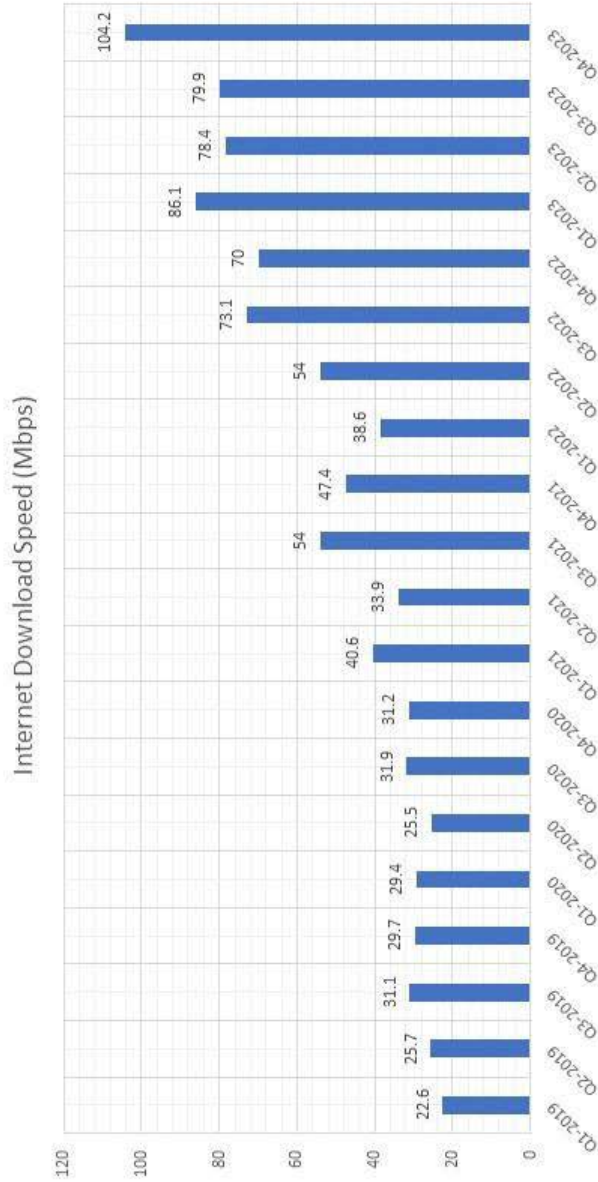
Distance Travelled to Work

In the Forest of Dean, commuting patterns differ notably from neighbouring areas. The data shows that a substantial portion of residents work mainly from home, with 11,230 individuals in the Forest of Dean, suggesting a significant trend towards remote work. Additionally, fewer individuals in the Forest of Dean commute shorter distances compared to some neighbouring areas like Cheltenham and Gloucester City, possibly indicating a more dispersed population or a higher prevalence of local employment opportunities. However, the Forest of Dean has a higher proportion of individuals commuting longer distances, particularly in the 10km to less than 20km and 20km to less than 30km categories, suggesting a reliance on neighbouring areas for employment.



Source: <https://www.censusdata.uk/> Method of travel to workplace:
Total: All usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment.

Internet Download Speed (Mbps)



As of Q4 2023, download speed is at 104.2 Mbps, an increase of 49% since the same period the previous year.

- Enhanced connectivity and communication
- Economic growth and potential job creation
- Education and skill development
- Potential increase in property value
- Quality of life and community well being

Faster download speeds can make the Forest of Dean a more attractive place to live, work and invest, assisting with unlocking the economic potential of the district.

Source: Thinkbroadband
 Estimated Maximum Mean Download Speed:
 This figure is based around everyone buying the fastest Virgin Media, KC or Openreach product available to them, based on current product availability. Distance limitations of ADSL2+ and VDSL2 are factored into the calculation.



Tourism

The value of tourism in the Forest of Dean in 2022 (Source: South West Research Company - Jan 2024):

Key Facts	
305,000	Staying visitor trips
1,014,000	Staying visitor nights
£68,366,000	Staying visitor spend
1,962,000	Day visits
£71,713,000	Day visitor spend
£140,079,000	Direct visitor spend
£4,948,000	Other related spend
£145,027,000	TOTAL VISITOR RELATED SPEND
£162,900,000	TOTAL BUSINESS TURNOVER SUPPORTED
2,514	Estimated actual employment
1,816	FTE employment
7%	Proportion of all employment

Appendix 2 – SWOT responses to 17.05.24

This document compiles all responses to the SWOT analysis feedback activity, including from FEP stakeholder meeting in 6th March, 7th March Scrutiny Committee, SES workshop on 9th May and online survey which closed on 17th May 2024.

Strengths

- Innovative & diverse businesses i.e. DEEP
- Working from home revolution
- Low rents
- No bridge toll
- Natural capital, landscapes and heritage
- Exciting local businesses
- Strong student voice
- Good tourist attractions e.g. Lydney Harbour & unique areas e.g. Puzzlewood
- Attractively priced unit base facilities, location fees and highway charges encourages filming crews.
- Vibrant and diverse industrial estates
- Ecologically diverse and a stronghold for nature - a range of species that are struggling to survive in the wider countryside are thriving in the Forest for many reasons. This is different to ecologically diverse. Linkage between the Severn Estuary and the wooded forest core gives a visual diversity and strong sense of place - the land between two rivers.
- The communities' acceptance and accommodation of filming enquiries (i.e. Gloucestershire Highways).
- Strong town identities, strong cultural connection and pride, and sense of community
- Improving schools – none in special measures

- New rural high speed fibre broadband network creates opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses to operate. Also, improves entertainment and educational opportunities previously restricted to urban areas.
- Unique independent shops.
- District council is interested in the community and supportive.
- Attractive for children/families
- Affordable access to outdoor space and great range of outdoor activities - great for walking, cycling and canoeing. Lakes and proximity to rivers offers watersport opportunities.
- New GlosCol campus
- Hartpury College & University – leaders in agri-tech and sport education. New Aspiration Centre
- Good pubs and restaurants
- Safe & low crime compared to cities
- Great for a positive work life balance
- Geographical location. Close proximity to major cities/towns and good access to M4/M5 = access to Bristol, London, Wales, South-West – for business & pleasure.
- Relatively free from congestion
- Good volunteer networks
- Sustainability activity being undertaken
- The Growth Hub
- Network of cycle/walking tracks within the Forest benefit community and tourists
- Growing demand for rail services – commuters and day trippers
- Robin Service
- Electrical Buses e.g No 77
- Strong appetite from businesses to engage with schools and vice versa
- FEP, their work in the community and their projects e.g. Inspiring the Forest
- Enthusiasm for tourism and the employment opportunities it brings
- Tourism board sustainability group provide a specific focus on green tourism
- Huge carbon sink
- DoFE hotspot
- Potential for work experience opportunities for young people e.g. fieldwork
- There is a will from people and the community to support change
- Good examples of 'best practice' being demonstrated in each town and know what 'good' can look like
- Slow tourism and experiences are growing in the Forest of Dean
- Largely local workforce
- Land is cheaper in FOD (£5-5.50 per sq. foot vs Gloucester £8)
- Houses are affordable
- Towns are recovering from Covid
- Desirability to live in the forest is improving
- Strong entrepreneurial spirit and enterprise
- Rich agriculture and farmland

Weaknesses

- Low incomes meaning people have to travel for decent wages
- Limited economic links to Monmouthshire
- Poor transport connections and dispersed rural district limits dwell time and spend – worse in evening.
- Lydney train station - No dedicated bus service connecting Lydney rail station to town centre and further afield, infrequent, unreliable, and poor car parking. Lack of business hotspots industrial areas beyond Mitcheldean
- Lack of business engagement with schools and careers due to lack of capacity
- Re filming/TV production potential - poor transport infrastructure for crew, distance from the main production hub of Bristol, lack of point of contact within the FoDDC to manage enquiries and a landing page on the councils website to redirect productions to the FoD&WV Tourism.
- Limited local supply chains for large businesses
- Perception that tourists destroy the FoD through overcrowding and damage to wildlife.
- Lack of investment in business and community, resulting in lack of jobs.
- Being cut off from most of the county and lack of cultural exposure/influence - people don't look outside of their community for opportunities.
- Road structure (effectively one road in/out - A48)
- Lack of large conference facilities

- Racism, lack of diversity & insular communities
- Lack of post 16 opportunities and limited ability to progress e.g. through degree apprenticeships
- Parking in towns
- Poor digital connectivity
- Struggling town centres
- Lack of awareness of FOD businesses within schools
- Ageing population
- Ingrained lack of aspiration at home & at school
- External perception of FoD
- Lack of skills for business, schools focus on academia driving students away from FoD.
- Division between settlements,
- Resistance to change/growth or development
- Seasonality of the area – especially for tourism • Unattractive town centres and housing in some areas.
- Lack of accommodation for visitors.
- Political direction of the local council – previous administration fostered economic vibrancy
- Lack of EV infrastructure
- Poor grid capacity
- Bus Service - Frequency and reliability. No dedicated bus service connecting to Cinderford hospital, particularly Coleford/Lydney
- Lack of bridge tolls - Significant increase in people travelling through/along A48 Chepstow. Consistent travel issues and queues, worse if there is an accident.
- Monopoly for public transport
- Road Infrastructure limit's movement
- Road quality
- High foodbank use
- No job centre in Lydney, one of the largest towns, so people have to travel to Cinderford
- Not an AONB
- Poor road closure organisation
- Cannot get all produce locally
- Slow to act Forestry England
- Lydney lacks facilities - no evening attractions or good pubs as in surrounding villages
- No third river crossing - would shorten drive times and open up employment opportunities
- Not enough cycle paths/footpaths to encourage sustainable travel
- No relationship with landlords who are key to help make change in town centres
- Unclear what the rules or regulations are in town centres to help enforce change
- No consistent opening times for shops, cafes or restaurants. There is a need to establish a 'rhythm' or trading pattern to maximise sales as a business community.
- No 'theme' for each town therefore don't know what you're going for or what to expect
- Most people still have to commute for work, even more so by car
- Lack of quality, available commercial floorspace - old stock, lots of embedded carbon. In need of investment, refurbishment and retrofit.
- Core sector - engineering sector skills gaps. Finding apprenticeships for growth
- Lack of affordable housing, difficulty in bringing land forward, no 5 year land supply, drainage and ecological restrictions
- Housing development costs are increasing
- NEET gap is increasing - how to fill skills gaps
- Working in silo
- Vacant units
- WFH - negative impact on mental health

Opportunities

- Biodiversity
- Forest offers unique location to grow & market a green/sustainable enterprise.
- Regeneration of town centres
- Economic plan to link with local spatial plan.
- Businesses offering degree level apprenticeships to access skilled staff.
- Growing recognition of the importance of collaboration amongst businesses/training providers.
- Launch of a local/digital currency pegged to a local commodity.
- Education provisions- cyber, media, creative industries.
- Embracing smart tech in manufacturing

- Unique landscape of the Forest of Dean and its rich cultural heritage is a massive draw for production and filming opportunities. Increase profile of the available locations in the area and there is opportunity to drive production activity and bring in inward investment. Opportunity to work with local crew and provide work experiences/shadowing opportunities.
- Development of the creative sector for employment opportunities
- Taking full advantage of tourism potential and growth in tourism economy/interest in the FoD- Commercial gain from short term/weekend leisure visitors.
- Investment in slow/eco-tourism with quality destinations and visitor hubs.
- Local renewable energy generation and supply
- Circular economy opportunities to become an exemplar Decarbonised Rural Economy
- Expand the wooded core / land where nature conservation / wildlife is an equal to sustainable production of food and timber.
- Investment in schools, GP's, Hospitals – better infrastructure in turn creating more job opportunities.
- Levelling Up funding to support development of deprived communities, e.g. Five Acres
- Programmes to support people into work
- Gigaclear
- Community hospital - Look at transport routes, where is the demand?
- Easy travel in from Bristol/Wales
- No bridge toll = easier for tourists and daytrippers
- Good local practice amongst FEP; GROWS, Growth Hub
- Building skills in Forest to bring businesses into area = inward investment.
- Working at home = more opportunities for younger workers/families to move in. Digital and tech could thrive here as many firms operate fully work from home policies. Also offers a target market for local towns and businesses to cater for
- Lots of passion for the Forest
- Employers/organisations attempting to remove employment barriers in FoD
- Using brownfield sites to attract large commercial businesses
- FODDC and FEP to convince big players to move here. Be a flagship on how to do this properly.
- Web3, block chain and AI hub
- County wide economic strategy - don't reinvent the wheel
- Pioneer in work life balance
- Network for alternative modes of transport
- Park and Ride - Is this commercial viability?
- Robin Service - Where is demand from? Look at areas to improve.
- Electric vehicles/active travel opportunities - Communal sharing points
- Utilising parent network for careers programmes and educating on jobs available
- Development of a holistic, tailored and flexible careers support for young people. Linking in with local businesses for real world practice e.g. support businesses on a specific project, e.g.
- developing a sustainability strategy. Could be integrated into FoD curriculum via workshops, mentorships etc
- 'Green skill's' training - Apprenticeships/ internships in green skills can be embedded in education.
- Older people training in 'green skills' - funding by Adult Education Budget?
- UNESCO Biosphere resulting in international interest
- Development of learning resources for specific skills
- Improved dialogue with Forestry England so they are fully involved in tourism strategy - "Our Shared Forest".
- Improve planning and comms from those 'in charge' i.e. road closures, makes it easier to travel round
- Abundance of local produce
- Develop individual town retail, food and drink strategies which cater for their residents and visitors.
- Introduce hotels, B&B's in town centres in particular Lydney and Coleford
- Development of alternative transport links e.g. cycle paths = no cars required. Review the walking routes around the town centres. Have nature / wildlife corridors been considered? Can people get around easily by walking? Are visitor attractions, other towns and walking routes suitably signposted?

- Better connected suburb villages to town centres to create more of a town 'ecosystem' and increase footfall and spend. How easily can people in suburb villages get to the town? Do they have to drive?
- Investment in green energy - turbines, solar farms and tidal power
- Blue infrastructure?
- Up & coming venues for arts/culture/ performance events e.g. The Church/ Manna House in Newent
- Encourage involvement from children/young people in arts/performance spaces
- Integrate different communities in FoD & take opportunity to educate. Develop cohesiveness between villages/towns
- Identify vacant units for arts/performance events
- Community/business shared space
- Hybrid working encouraging sustainable travel
- Young people leaving due to lack of opportunities
- Lack of funding across the board
- Lack infrastructure for new families - schools, public transport, shops etc.
- Too much development means FoD is seen as a glorified activity centre.
- Major business leaving or not investing in the area.
- Carving up of the Forest to meet 'economic' needs without considering the real opportunity of the Forest itself being the attraction.
- Deprivation, poverty and lack of investment in early years = disadvantaged young people and growing gap between group
- Poor choice of schools and further education.
- Travel into Gloucester for both school and work - daily delays make this unviable.
- Developments of boxy houses with no acknowledgment of the architectural vernacular
- High taxes
- Lack of political will
- Cost of living
- Lack of joined up thinking/connectivity
- Poor maintenance of roads and footpaths
- Additional cars coming into the area
- Pollution in the Wye
- Cheaper holidays abroad
- People get lost or deterred from the town centre for not being able to find what they need or shops/cafes being closed, therefore won't return again or go elsewhere.
- Missed retail and business opportunities
- Risk of becoming dormitory towns. More people leaving than entering to visit, especially for leisure time and fun!
- Lack of active travel strategy

Threats

- More attractive funding/grant schemes to go to South Wales/Monmouthshire/Chepstow
- No bypass plans for Chepstow
- Disconnected public transport
- Disjointed food economy not supporting local farmers/growers/makers.
- More jobs than workers.
- Any over-development or destruction of the Forests USP. The lack of resources and capacity to manage filming may potentially drive productions to seek filming elsewhere. The lower rates and high incentives provided by Screen Wales does drive productions to look at opportunities to film on location in Wales instead of the English regions. Climate change impacts on transport, business, weather
- Poor quality development, poor design standards and urbanisation of the Forest.
- Lack of understanding of what is special about the Forest e.g. its history, ecology.
- Lack of proper investment to raise the profile of FOD.
- Congestion issues on the A48
- People moving in pushing house prices up makes it harder for FTB

SWOT responses as part of Consultation Draft feedback Sep-Oct 2024

- housing associations will help to deliver a number of new affordable homes over the life of the strategy as well as improving the energy efficiency of their housing stock hopefully meaning large investment in the area. does not seem well reflected in the SWOT analysis this potential **opportunity** and benefit of working with such partners.
- **Strengths:** Highlight the role of education and training institutions like Hartpury in driving innovation, attracting talent to the region and providing skilled College and University graduates. Recognise the significant economic benefit that having a University in the District can bring. Hartpury's economic impact on the local area is estimated at over £300m, supporting 800 employees and creating opportunities to support local spending and trade which in turn can support town centres, tourism and businesses. **Weaknesses:** Consider the potential gap in advanced digital and green infrastructure and skills to support climate adaption and resilience. Identify the need for more robust support for business start-ups to support innovation and economic growth. **Opportunities:** Emphasise the potential for partnerships between education and training providers and local businesses to foster innovation, raise aspiration and drive commercial opportunities. **Threats:** Address the risk of not keeping pace with technological advancements, which could hinder economic growth.
- **Threat** – potential overtourism and pressure around villages and roads near to popular Forestry England sites such as Beechenhurst, Wenchford, Mallards Pike. Potential destruction of local environment and increased litter at popular sites.
- **Opportunities** such as collaboration with nearby cities (e.g., Bristol). This would help address issues like the lack of high- value jobs locally and could foster more cross-border economic linkages to offer potential for business expansion and workforce movement.
- **Weaknesses:** Poor mobile phone network (if it is not included in digital connectivity already).
- **Opportunities** for active travel and public transport; and discourage the use of private cars. It should be noted that Lydney has an Air Quality Management Area (i.e., an area declared as having pollution levels that exceed national limits further incentivising an active travel and public transport focus). Thus, it must be considered that although electric vehicles (EVs) are significantly “greener” than existing fossil fuel vehicles, they still emit particulate matter emissions which have health and climate implications.
- From Hartpury's perspective, specific economic **threats** that need to be included are:
 - Lack of funding or investment: The risk of falling behind other areas of the UK and exacerbating social inequality and deprivation if unable to access central government funds, and also the risk losing key investments in the District due to market volatility and rising costs.
 - Technological lag: The risk of falling behind in adopting new technologies due to structural barriers, which could impact competitiveness as a district.
 - Brain drain: The potential loss of young talent to more urban areas or outside the District and County if local opportunities are not sufficiently attractive.
 - Climate change: The broader impacts of climate change (e.g. flooding) on agriculture and local industries, which could affect economic stability.
- The future price of gas and electricity for businesses and householders – price spikes due to ongoing wars and other global factors. The cost of retrofit for business and householders, still a cost pressure despite a variety of grants available.
- Precarious financial security for agricultural and horticultural businesses. Shortage of seasonal and permanent staff.
- Ageing/ill health of workforce population.
- Cost of housing.
- The risk of young people leaving the Forest of Dean for better opportunities elsewhere due to limited post-16 education and career progression locally.
- Detailed attention to how climate change impacts (such as extreme weather) could disrupt local industries, particularly in tourism, agriculture, and transport – i.e., how can businesses be supported against extreme weather?
- Cost of transport.
- The positive benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) align well with the county council's Economic Strategy and advances a multitude of technologies and research projects that offer potential to engage and act as a catalyst for growth across many sectors and industries.

Appendix 3 – National, countywide & local policy references (April 2024)

National

Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth, March 2021

A publication setting out the government's plans to support economic growth through significant investment in infrastructure, skills and innovation. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth>

Construction Playbook, December 2020

The Construction Playbook sets out key policies and guidance for how public works projects and programmes are assessed, procured and delivered. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-construction-playbook>

Community Ownership Fund, March 2021

The £150 million Community Ownership Fund will help community groups buy or take over local community assets at risk of being lost. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund>

Cycle infrastructure design (LTN 1/20), July 2020

Guidance for local authorities on designing high-quality, safe cycle infrastructure <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

Clean Air Strategy, January 2019

This strategy sets out our plans for dealing with all sources of air pollution, making our air healthier to breathe, protecting nature and boosting the economy. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019>

Clean Growth Strategy, Updated April 2018

An ambitious blueprint for Britain's low carbon future. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>

Destination Management Review Independent Review (The De Bois Review), August 2021

An independent review to examine and assess the role, structure and performance of DMO's.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-destination-management-organisations><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-destination-management-organisations-dmos><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-independent-review-of><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-independent-review-of-destination-management-organisations-in-england>

Energy White Paper, December 2020

Energy white paper setting out how the UK will clean up its energy system and reach net zero emissions by 2050. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-white-paper-powering-our-net-zero-future>

Green Book Supplementary Guidance on Accounting for the Effects of Climate Change, Updated December 2020

Supplementary guidance to the Green Book covering the consideration of natural capital and environmental impacts in policy appraisal.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-book-supplementary-guidance><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-book-supplementary-guidance-environment#~:text=Accounting%20for%20the%20Effects%20of%20Climate%20Change%20is%20Supplementary%20Green,consider%20flexibility%20in%20decision%20making>

Heat and Buildings Strategy, October 2021

This strategy sets out how the UK will decarbonise homes, and commercial, industrial and public sector buildings, as part of setting a path to net zero by 2050.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heat-and-buildings-strategy>

Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, Updated April 2021

This strategy sets out how industry can decarbonise in line with net zero while remaining competitive and without pushing emissions abroad. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-decarbonisation-strategy>

Levelling Up Prospectus, March 2021

HM Government guidance on the Levelling Up Fund

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966138/Levelling_Up_prospectus.pdf

Levelling Up White Paper, February 2022

The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how Government will spread opportunity more equally across the UK. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61fd3c71d3bf7f78df30b3c2/Levelling_Up_WP_HRES.pdf

Magenta Book - Theory of Change (Section 2.2.1), Updated April 2021

HM Treasury guidance on what to consider when designing an evaluation <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book>

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Appraisal Guidance, December 2016

A document explaining the economic framework, assumptions and metrics used in the economic appraisal of DCLG policies.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-communities-and-local-government-appraisal><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-communities-and-local-government-appraisal-guide>

National Infrastructure Assessment, July 2018

An assessment of the United Kingdom's infrastructure needs up to 2050.

<https://nic.org.uk/studies-reports/national-infrastructure-assessment/>

National Infrastructure & Construction Pipeline, June 2020

A forward-looking pipeline of planned procurements for the 2020/21 financial year in economic and social infrastructure. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-infrastructure-and-construction-procurement-pipeline><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-infrastructure-and-construction-procurement-pipeline-202021>

National Infrastructure Strategy, November 2020

The National Infrastructure Strategy sets out plans to transform UK infrastructure in order to level up the country, strengthen the Union and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-infrastructure-strategy>

Net Zero Review, December 2020

The interim report from the Treasury's Net Zero Review.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-review-interim-report>

Net Zero Strategy, October 2021

This strategy sets out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet our net zero target by 2050.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

Office of National Statistics, Population Estimates for England and Wales, 2022

National and subnational mid-year population estimates for England and Wales by administrative area, age and sex. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationestimatesforenglandandwales/mid2022>

Our Plan for the High Street, October 2018

The Budget announces Our Plan for the High Street, including a business rates discount and a Future High Streets Fund. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-for-the-high-street-budget-2018-brief>

Planning for the Future, August 2020

The Planning for the future consultation proposes reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

Project Gigabit, April 2022

Project Gigabit is the government's £5 billion programme to enable hard-to-reach communities to access lightning-fast gigabit-capable broadband. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/project-gigabit-uk-gigabit-programme>

Science and Technology Framework, March 2023

The Science and Technology Framework sets out our approach to making the UK a science and technology superpower by 2030. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-science-and-technology-framework>

Skills for Jobs Policy, January 2021

Reforms to post-16 technical education and training to support people to develop the skills needed to get good jobs and improve national productivity. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/601980f2e90e07128a353aa3/Skills_for_jobs_lifelong_learning_for_opportunity_and_growth_web_version.pdf

Streets for a Healthy Life, July 2022

A guide to best practice in street design for highway authorities and housing developers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/streets-for-a-healthy-life>

Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, November 2020

Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution for 250,000 jobs

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution/title>

Towns Fund

A £3.6 billion fund investing in towns as part of the government's plan to level up our regions.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/towns-fund>

Transformation Infrastructure Performance, December 2017

This report outlines the government's plan to improve the delivery and performance of infrastructure and boost construction sector productivity. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-infrastructure-performance>

Transport Decarbonisation Plan, March 2020

Document stating the current challenges and steps to be taken when developing the transport decarbonisation plan.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-the-transport-decarbonisation-plan>

Union Connectivity Review, October 2020

Release of the terms of reference of the union connectivity review headed by Sir Peter Hendy.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/union-connectivity-review>

UK Infrastructure Fund, March 2021

This document outlines further detail on the mandate and design of the new UK Infrastructure Bank ahead of its launch later in spring 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policy-design-of-the-uk-infrastructure-bank>

UK Shared Prosperity Fund, March 2021

Government's proposed Shared Prosperity Fund, which will replace EU structural funding now that the UK has left the EU <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus-2021-22>

25 Year Environmental Plan, January 2018

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment', sets out what we will do to improve the environment, within a generation. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

County

Cotswold Plus LVEP

Local Visitor Economy Partnership webpage <https://www.cotswolds.com/trade/cotswolds-plus-lvep>

Gloucestershire Economic Strategy Evidence Base, December 2023

Evidence base document to support the development of the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/inform/inform-news/economic-evidence-base-2023/>

Gloucestershire LSIP, July 2023

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Gloucestershire <https://www.businesswest.co.uk/grow/LSIP/lsip-gloucestershire>

Gloucestershire Tourism Strategy 2021 - 2024, April 2021

Tourism Strategy for Gloucestershire

<https://visit-gloucestershire.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Gloucestershire-Tourism-Recovery-Strategy-Action-Plan-2022-24.pdf>

Transport Strategy for Gloucestershire 2041

Transport Strategy for Gloucestershire covering 2020 - 2041

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/gloucestershire-local-transport-plan-2020-2041/>

Bus Service Improvement Plan - GCC

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/greener-gloucestershire-climate-dashboard/transport/public-transport/bus-service-improvement-plan-bsip/>

Zero Emissions Buses Regional Area – GCC

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/gloucestershire-bus-strategy/zebra-zero-emission-bus-regional-areas/#%3A~%3Atext%3DPlease%20see%20government%20information%3A%20Zero%20Emission%20Bus>

Gloucestershire Transport Hubs – GCC

ADD LINK

Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plans – GCC [https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/lcwip/#%3A~%3Atext%3DLocal%20Cycling%20and%20Walking%20Infrastructure%20Plans%20\(LCWIPs\)%20set](https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/lcwip/#%3A~%3Atext%3DLocal%20Cycling%20and%20Walking%20Infrastructure%20Plans%20(LCWIPs)%20set)

Local

Annual Monitoring Report (Local Plan), Forest of Dean District Council 2020-2021

The report reviews the extent to which policies within the LDF are being successfully implemented and how effective this implementation may be in meeting stated policy goals.

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/bfnfqfbr/2020-2021-authorities-monitoring-report.pdf>

Corporate Plan, Forest of Dean District Council, 2019 - 2023

Outlines areas where FODDC want to concentrate work both within the Council and with partner organisations, to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors, and address the climate change emergency <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/hgwfyfbv/corporate-plan-2019-to-2023.pdf>

Council Plan, Forest of Dean District Council, 2024 – 2028

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/5cvhr4dn/forest-of-dean-district-council-plan-2024-to-2028-v2.pdf>

Climate Emergency Strategy & Action Plan, 2023

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/tcqjxequ/climate-emergency-strategy-and-action-plan-2022-2025-version-jan-2023.pdf>

Economic Needs Assessment 2020

ENA provides a high-level assessment of the Gloucestershire economy, investigating the economic potential of Gloucestershire and identifying realistic yet aspirational growth scenarios based on economic forecasts and modelled scenarios for the delivery of employment land

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/3otmd5cb/gloucestershire-economic-needs-assessment-2020.pdf>

Forest of Dean Local Plan Evidence Base

Evidence base to support the Local Plan

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/our-current-local-plan/local-plan-evidence><https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/our-current-local-plan/local-plan-evidence-base/base/>

Housing and Economic Needs Assessment, July 2019

Identifies land which may be suitable for accommodating housing and employment site development in the future.

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment/>

Local Plan, July 2022

Forest of Dean District Council Emerging Local Plan

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/developing-our-new-local-plan/>

FODDC Ethical Investment Policy, Feb 2024

Forestry England

Our Shared Forest - 100 year visionary land management plan for the Forest of Dean <https://www.forestryengland.uk/oursharedforest>


Land Management Plan - <https://www.forestryengland.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Our%20Shared%20Forest%20-%20Forest%20of%20Dean%20Land%20Management%20Plan%20published%20June%202019.pdf>

MARKET TOWNS REGENERATION FRAMEWORK (MTRF)

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY: SUSTAINABLE TOWNS / COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024 - 2028

Recommendations for Market Town Regeneration: The recommendations below have been extracted from the Market Town Regeneration Report which was produced by consultancy company Flying Geese and published in February 2024. These recommendations support the MTRF produced by the Regeneration Team however other recommendations may be more suitable for other FODDC departments to implement or collaborate on. Find the full report [here](#).

- Gold and Silver Thread Key:**
- Arts, Culture & Heritage
 - Active Living & Nature

MTRF Project	Market Town Report Recommendation	FODDC Regeneration Comment
3 Destination Town Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Organize large scale touring events where food, music, workshops, creative skills, crafts, and interactive heritage activities combine to make an iconic travelling market which visits each town in rotation. A large scale event will create a buzz amongst the community (akin to a travelling fairground) and will give people a sense of safety in numbers and something worth coming into town for." 	<p>The Flying Geese report recommends organizing large scale events however FODDC believes the activities mentioned in this recommendation could be achieved through a co-ordinated 'Destination Town Markets' plan for weekly or monthly town markets i.e. food, music, craft and interactive activities. The Council plans to work with the Town Councils and grassroots organizations to use the Flying Geese Report & Style Guide to create relevant markets in each town and increase dwell time and visitor spend. For larger events, Canopy Arts are working on a 'touring' the towns plan over the next two years, it is suggested the Communities team pick up larger community events as part of their emerging Arts, Heritage & Culture strategy.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Support new and emerging musicians and artists who struggle to afford performance spaces by offering outside performance spaces in the town centre – perhaps in the form of open mic nights or introducing a 'busking' spot in the town centres. New and live music uplifts the spirits of those walking through the towns and the artists themselves are likely to bring their own audiences who will come and go for their favourite musician or stay and support other artists with performance slots." 	<p>The MTRF recognizes the importance of this recommendation for ensuring towns have the infrastructure in place to support music and performance spaces in town centres.</p> <p>To help create interactive markets, this could mean identifying a busking spot in the town centres and ensuring it has an electricity point. Possibly advertise the spot with a floor sticker, poster and slogan. The busking spot would be managed by the town centre manager.</p> 
6 FODDC Housekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Prioritise the upkeep and improvement of walkways and cycle routes in town centres by clearing brambles, installing lighting and raising the profile of distance markers and signage that encourage people to use these routes as part of their every day fitness." 	<p>There are several live FODDC projects to support this recommendation: Active Travel Strategy, Toilet Improvement Scheme, Coleford Community Regeneration Proposal and Communities OPCC funded 'target hardening' work.</p> <p>The MTRF can support by ensuring the outputs of these projects are visible and promoted in the town centres. Also, explore how best practice in one town can be replicated and funded in another.</p>

MARKET TOWNS REGENERATION FRAMEWORK (MTRF) SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY: SUSTAINABLE TOWNS / COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024 - 2028

Recommendations for Market Town Regeneration: The recommendations below have been extracted from the Market Town Regeneration Report which was produced by consultancy company Flying Geese and published in February 2024. These recommendations support the MTRF produced by the Regeneration Team however other recommendations may be more suitable for other FODDC departments to implement or collaborate on. Find the full report [here](#).

Gold and Silver Thread Key:
● Arts, Culture & Heritage
● Active Living & Nature

MTRF Project	Market Town Report Recommendation	FODDC Regeneration Comment
7 Shop Local Strategy & Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Develop individual town retail strategies to reflect the interests of residents in each town. For example, arts, crafting and outdoor sports shops in Cinderford, walking, cycling and gift shops in Coleford, leisure and wellbeing shops in Lydney and food, music and gardening shops in Newent." 	Through town centre visits and FODDC's Listening to Business programme, the Regeneration team can begin to understand what the citizen need is for retail in rural towns and work with existing business groups to promote gaps in the retail offer – helping give a presence to either new or existing businesses in town centres. Also, work with services to ensure people can get what they need in town centres.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Consider expanding successful examples of 'out-of-town' retail or industrial park visitor destinations, such as The Forest Upcycling Project into the High Street, possibly through smaller franchised stores or 'pop-up' shops." 	As above
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Find solutions with landlords to offer favourable rates to new 'active or nature focused' businesses who start up in the Market Towns, such as retail establishments i.e. cycling, skating and gardening shops. This would make it more possible for new independent business owners to occupy currently underused spaces, or for the established outdoor adventure businesses within the wider Forest to develop a new income generation stream of retail to the town centre market." 	As above. With the additional challenge of networking and building relationships with town centre landlords, which would be a priority for the new Market Towns Manager.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Work with landlords to find attractive rates and dynamic schedules for small independent class teachers who could deliver movement, wellness and active sessions in vacant units. Consider ways in which multiple independent teachers or practitioners might be able to pool their commitment to one landlord to find a workable solution between independent practitioners who may work only a few hours on occasional evenings per week, with the landlords desire for a full-time income." 	As above

MARKET TOWNS REGENERATION FRAMEWORK (MTRF) SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY: SUSTAINABLE TOWNS / COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024 - 2028

Recommendations for Market Town Regeneration: The recommendations below have been extracted from the Market Town Regeneration Report which was produced by consultancy company Flying Geese and published in February 2024. These recommendations support the MTRF produced by the Regeneration Team however other recommendations may be more suitable for other FODDC departments to implement or collaborate on. Find the full report [here](#).

Gold and Silver Thread Key:

- Arts, Culture & Heritage
- Active Living & Nature

MTRF Project	Market Town Report Recommendation	FODDC Regeneration Comment
<p>8 Made in F.O.D Shop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Enable, encourage and foster public-private partnerships that leverage the strengths and resources of both sectors. Examples from the private sector can improve resilience in the creative sector, and inspiration from the creative industries can lead to ground breaking innovation in the private sector." 	<p>FODDC has had conversations with Coleford Town Council who are supportive of incorporating the 'Made in F.O.D Shop' as part of their regeneration tourism arrival strategy. FODDC has identified the opportunity to use the Made in F.O.D shop to encourage public-private partnerships to show case the best of Forest produce and support the regeneration of Coleford Town Centre.</p>
<p>9 Multi-use, Inclusive & Accessible Community Space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Support the transformation of disused buildings into vibrant cultural and wellbeing centres that host a variety of activities such as film screenings, yoga classes, toddler sessions, live performances, lectures, and cultural workshops. These centres can serve as hubs for community engagement and creative expression. Or low-cost studio space for active practitioners and grass-roots organisations who need a low-cost flexible space to work in." ● "Explore how underused buildings can be transformed into creative hubs, studios and coworking spaces, where people working in any sector can find a sense of community working from home or in a co-working space. This is particularly beneficial for start up businesses, artists, designers and entrepreneurs who are restricted financially and struggle to find affordable spaces to work in. These spaces can also foster a sense of community and support career progression, especially for people who may not want to go to university or on to further formal education pathways." ● "Explore ways in which vacant retail outlets can be transformed into galleries, art studios, and intimate performing spaces, providing space for local artists to showcase their work and engage with the community through exhibitions, workshops, and open studio events." 	<p>These three recommendations form part of an overall strategy to reduce vacant retail unit space and explore opportunities to create more diverse, recreational town centre activities (with a complimentary, relevant retail offer.).</p> <p>From these recommendations, we can use a multi-use community space to deliver the below activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Studio space for yoga, dance, pilates and other holistic health practitioners - Educational space for workshops and lectures (this could link to activities identified as part of the FEP Education & Skills subgroup, for example Young Enterprise or with Hartpury as part of their new outreach centre at Five Acres, as well as other smaller, independent tutors who may need a space to work in) - Start up-business space. Low-cost, flexible retail space for small, independent businesses to have a presence in town centres. A 'try before you buy' model, so they can test their business before committing long term. - Exhibition and performance space. For pop-up galleries & performances.



Forest of Dean
— DISTRICT COUNCIL —

for a Fairer Greener Forest

Forest of Dean District Council
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For more detailed information go to: www.fdean.gov.uk



Image: Aerial of Newent