

Bridport Town Council

Bridport Investment Plan

We have consulted with Bridport's business community and identified 3 key investment opportunities that will increase the resilience of Bridport's local economy and drive future sustainability. Responding to the needs of the community, especially young people, developing skills for reaching net zero targets for Bridport sit firmly at the heart of the investment proposals.

To achieve this ambitious plan, we are looking for a total investment of £9m. At this stage this represents an additional £2 of private and public match for every £1 of investment, resulting in a programme of significant local and regional impact.

1 - Background

Bridport Town Council has been working with local businesses to develop an Investment Plan for Bridport. The plan will form **the basis for funding bids** to improve the Town Centre and support businesses in the Bridport area to undertake the transition to a net zero future.

The Town Council recognises that a **coherent plan developed with widespread stakeholder engagement** will put Bridport in a good position to secure the much-needed funding required to support community and economic regeneration.

The investment plan looks to align with the governments levelling up mission to:

- improve public transport and local connectivity;
- transform digital connectivity;
- improve education outcomes;
- increase the number of adults who complete high quality skills training.

2 - Investment Plan Consultation

Throughout the development of this Investment Plan there has been close engagement with local businesses and their representative bodies. During July and August 2022 an online questionnaire was used to gather investment proposals for consideration. In September 2022 the Town Council hosted a series of Focus Group meetings, primarily for local business interests, to share the responses to the online questionnaire, discuss investment priorities and agree how an Investment Plan for Bridport can be used to lever in funding.

- Online questionnaire feedback – see: <https://www.bridport-tc.gov.uk/bridport-investment-plan/>
- Focus sessions on key investment themes – see: <https://www.bridport-tc.gov.uk/bridport-investment-plan/>

3 - Context for the Bridport Investment Plan

It is important to understand the context in which this Investment Plan has been developed. Bridport is a unique place to live and visit. It has a reputation for independent thinking and as a centre for arts and culture. The twice weekly street market together with a strong independent retail offer, makes Bridport a popular destination as well as a thriving market town supporting a hinterland of rural villages.

Bridport did seem to have survived the worse economic impacts resulting from the Covid pandemic, with the [Town Centre Health Check](#), undertaken in July - Oct 2021, showing how footfall and business confidence had 'bounced back' to pre-2019 levels. However, since 2021 feedback from retailers has been less upbeat, identifying issues with business costs, reduction in consumer spend and the impact of shop closures on the viability of the local economy. In October 2022 the announcement of the closure of a longstanding business, Leakers Bakery, underlines a new sense of precariousness about the economic wellbeing of the town.

Increasingly local business is calling for invest to address issues now rather than wait for the situation to deteriorate further.

Bridport Mayor, Cllr Ian Bark has made listening to and supporting young people in Bridport a theme for the town this year. In the summer 2022 organisations in Bridport, led by the Lyric theatre, supported young people in setting up and running their own 'jubilee event' at Plottingham Field. Together with the new youth-led art mural running along the Football Club wall this demonstrates a commitment to hear and respond to the needs of young people.

[The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036](#) contains policies and projects to deliver a collective vision for the Bridport Area.

Bridport Area contains two of the most deprived areas in Dorset – see Appendix

Town Councillors are aware that over the last 12 years there has been little or no funding to support economic development in Bridport. Conversations with the local MP and the Local Enterprise Partnership have led to a request for a coherent plan for investment in the town and surrounding areas as a basis for pursuing funding bids.

“The value of a young person eventually achieving a Level 3 – having started at Level 1 or 2 and progressing upwards - pays back both to the individual student and to the wider community”

*Quote from Adam Teasdale,
Head of Sixth Form, Sir John Colfox Academy*



4 - Investment Plan Challenges

Arising from the consultation are 12 key challenges for the local community and economy:

Providing improved employment opportunities for young people in Bridport; business 'start ups' and incubation.	Supporting established businesses by actively driving digital / net zero transition.	Supporting and utilising the many skills across the Bridport workforce.
Lack of sustainable travel options for short journeys from the surrounding villages.	Managing the impacts of through traffic and car parking peaks on the town centre.	Public realm needing an uplift – improving walking and cycling as an easy alternative to cars for short journeys.
Hospitality sector & independent shops need to keep pace with changing tourism profile, digital skills and more joint marketing initiatives.	Arts and heritage sector struggling to recover from Covid and secure new funding. We have not fully realised our potential as a destination for cultural tourism which can significantly contribute to economic regeneration.	Agricultural transition to more regenerative farming systems offer opportunities to support nature recovery and address food security whilst developing Bridport as a centre for agro technology innovation.
Poor and declining public transport to and from Bridport - Too infrequent, too expensive.	Ageing population with increasing demand for care and support with mobility.	Lack of truly affordable housing and a high percentage of poor quality homes in need of retrofit.

Discussion with businesses and community representatives have helped focus in on three strategic objectives:

- To equip **people** with the skills and confidence to be active agents in transition to a net zero future – Helping young people, in particular, to achieve their potential, strengthen their progression and pathways through education, employment, self-enterprise and raise their aspirations and income levels.
- To achieve a vibrant, connected **place** to live, work, relax and visit. Improving the public realm, creating space for walking, cycling and a thriving street market. Supporting the arts and cultural sector by positioning Bridport as Dorset's Eventful town through stronger collaboration, joint marketing and providing a distinctive welcome.
- To promote nature recovery and regenerative farming in the surrounding **environment** – supporting employment in food production and land management.



Invest in People

To equip people with the skills and confidence to be active agents in transition to a net zero future – Helping young people, in particular, to achieve their potential, strengthen their progression and pathways through education, employment, self-enterprise and raise their aspirations and income levels.

Skills development is significantly cheaper than physical capital but remains a missing piece of business investment. We need to connect local business to learning opportunities to create more skilled jobs, new and adapted businesses, and increased enterprise start-ups. Through programmes of skills and mentoring we aim to prepare young people, in particular and residents, more generally, for a net zero future. Training, higher qualifications and a start in employment are the pathways to achieve higher aspirations for our young people.

- Establishing a virtual College for Sustainable Technologies – a collaboration between local business and education providers to drive net zero transition in key sectors: hospitality, care, food, horticulture and construction by providing skills training in core areas of sustainability for Bridport, such as digital, re-purposing, re-use, circular economy and carbon reduction;
- Funding to bring together ‘college principals’ from local businesses and organisations to design and deliver programmes of skills training sessions and creating more apprenticeship opportunities within 10 miles of Bridport;
- Working with landowners, St Michaels Estate, Symondsburry Estate and Dorset Council to improve work-space availability for creative industries and enterprise start ups; and
- Developing innovative approaches to ensure young people starting new retail enterprises have access to low-cost retail outlets, through innovative access to market stalls and empty shops.



Invest in Place

To achieve a vibrant, connected place to live, work, relax and visit. Improving the public realm, creating space for walking, cycling and a thriving street market. Supporting the arts and cultural sector by positioning Bridport as Dorset's Eventful town through stronger collaboration, joint marketing and providing a distinctive welcome.

We need to ensure that the physical infrastructure of the Town evolves to better serve the access and movement needs of an ageing demographic. At the same time ensuring that the expectations and needs of a wide range of visitors are considered. We know that the visual appearance and the welcome the Town presents to people is important, driving dwell time, spend and repeat visits.

Across the Bridport business community are a wealth of talents and commitment to the Town. Investing in supporting collaboration between businesses, arts and culture organisations, and local authorities is vital to better develop the cultural and retail offer of the town and attract new audiences.

- Bridport Access & Movement Study sets out a series of options for improving walking and cycling in and around Bridport and addressing the need to provide the space required for the market and retail to thrive;
- Bridport Streetscape and Heritage Interpretation project details improvements to the streetscape and an innovative approach to creating a heritage framework into which permanent and temporary programmes of education and celebration can be commissioned;
- The re development of Bridport Bus station and Plottingham to include a segregated walking/ cycling route to the new Foundry Lea development will be critical to supporting modal shift, public realm improvements and creating a new low carbon transport hub for public transport and shared electric vehicles; and
- Investing in collaboration around events programmes and joint marketing will make the most of existing skills and bring a level of professionalism and coherence to the promotion of Bridport as a destination.



Invest in Environment

To promote nature recovery and regenerative farming in the surrounding environment – supporting employment in food production and land management. There are real opportunities to better connect Bridport to the surrounding AONB designated landscape. From a nature recovery perspective connecting the green spaces around Bridport to large scale ‘re-wilding’ programmes can deliver benefits for wildlife. Connecting town to countryside areas would allow more people to easily visit nature, which has well-established physical and mental health benefits.

Food security is a growing concern and the need to increase horticulture production and enhance local food supply chains are seen as a priority. The need to de-carbonise agriculture and construction present new opportunities for growing and developing supply chains for natural materials. With the right investment the Bridport economy could benefit as a hub for processing new agricultural products.

- Work with landowners, The Land Workers’ Alliance and colleges to support skills training and apprenticeships in horticulture and food production;
- Working with landowners and local communities to drive land management in support of nature recovery. Funding for community equipment and skills development and employment targeted at young people.
- Working with local fishermen and Bridport Harbour to invest in processing for direct sales of local fish products.



The Investment Plan

Objective	Intervention – The Projects	Need Identified	Partners
People	<p>Improved skills training for sustainable technologies. A virtual college collaboration between businesses and education providers.</p> <p>Improved offers of mentoring and apprenticeships in Bridport. A hub to support businesses connect with education providers.</p> <p>Low carbon construction and retrofit skills offered through the Skills Academy based at Foundry Lea.</p> <p>Better access to workspace for enterprise start-ups.</p>	<p>Transition to a low carbon economy in key sectors; hospitality, care, food, construction and horticulture.</p> <p>Improved availability of apprenticeship opportunities and development of a skills pipeline with employers.</p> <p>Skills development for citizens, especially young people to offer creative, digital and high skilled employment pathways.</p>	<p>Colfox school Yeovil college Local businesses LSI Bridport Business Chamber Vistry Partnership Wessex Community Assets</p>
Place	<p>Improvements to public realm, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and traffic flow. Access & Movement Study options being delivered.</p> <p>Improvements to the public realm and establishing a framework for heritage Interpretation around Bridport. Streetscape and Heritage Interpretation Report implemented.</p> <p>Bus Station/ Plottingham re development.</p>	<p>Address long standing traffic and car parking issues.</p> <p>Improve walking and cycling infrastructure and increase connectivity in and around Bridport</p> <p>Streetscape improvements to drive higher footfall, dwell time and spend across the town centre.</p> <p>Make more of the links between Bridport and the AONB landscape.</p> <p>Support the art & culture sector through local commissioning.</p>	<p>WATAG Dorset Council</p> <p>Heritage Forum Bridport Museum Dorset AONB Local Artists</p>

	<p>Joint promotion and marketing of Bridport as the 'eventful town'. Collaboration between business and the Town Council.</p>	<p>Attracting new audiences to the town.</p> <p>Supporting art & culture sector through local commissioning projects.</p>	<p>Tourism businesses TIC Totally Local Bridport Bridport Arts Centre and other arts/culture partners</p>
Environment	<p>Supporting skills training, apprenticeships and new entrants in horticulture, food and fish production.</p> <p>Working with landowners and local communities to drive land management in support of nature recovery.</p> <p>Prototype for processing natural materials for use in construction developed at the Skills Academy, Foundry Lea.</p>	<p>Supporting new agro technology start ups.</p> <p>Improving access to land for new horticulture businesses.</p> <p>Improving land management and horticulture skills and job opportunities.</p> <p>Joined up management to build and extend nature recovery.</p> <p>Addressing the challenge of food security.</p>	<p>Landowners/ farmers The Land Workers' Alliance Ecological Land Co-operative Wessex Community Assets Dorset AONB Team Bridport Food Matters</p>

The Investment Plan Projects

Intervention – The Projects	Partners	Measurables	Investment Required
Improved skills training for sustainable technologies. A virtual college collaboration between businesses and education providers.	Colfox School Yeovil College Local businesses LSI	Establishment of ‘principals’ drawn from local businesses to develop and run the virtual college with a ‘hub’ for business/ school co-operation.	£10,000 pa
Improved offers of mentoring and apprenticeships in Bridport. A hub to support businesses connect with education providers.	Bridport Business Chamber Vistry Partnership/ WCA	20 skills training events per year. 30 apprenticeship places within 10 miles of Bridport available each year.	£3,000 pa
Low carbon construction and retrofit skills offered through the Skills Academy based at Foundry Lea.	St Michaels estate Symondsburry estate	15 Students achieving BTEC level 2 & 3.	
Better access to workspace for enterprise start ups.	Dorset Council	Skills Academy set up and running for 5 years. 200 sq m of new workspace made available for enterprise start ups. 6 starter stalls on Bridport market for new enterprises run by young people.	£100,000
Improvements to public realm, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and traffic flow. Access & Movement Study options being delivered.	WATAG Bridport Business Chamber Dorset Council BTC	Completion of the Foundry Lea walking/ cycling connection. Implementation of the town centre 20 mph zone with gateways and improved pedestrian/ cycling space/ crossings.	£221,000 £300,000
Improvements to the public realm and establishing a framework for heritage Interpretation around Bridport. Streetscape and Heritage Interpretation Report implemented.	Dorset Council Heritage Forum Museum Dorset AONB	Programme of de cluttering public realm Installation of core heritage interpretation system. 5 Commissions to local artists.	£85,000 £20,000

<p>Bus Station/ Plottingham re development.</p>	<p>Dorset Council BTC</p>	<p>Developing the Bus Station Feasibility Study with plans for Plottingham Field. Community consultation leading to submission of a Planning application.</p> <p>Phased development of new skate park, car parking, community building, social housing and transport 'hub'.</p>	<p>£30,000</p> <p>£8,000,000</p>
<p>Joint promotion and marketing of Bridport as the 'eventful town'. Collaboration between business and the Town Council.</p>	<p>Tourism businesses Bridport TIC Totally Local Bridport Arts Centre</p>	<p>Establishment of joint marketing team drawn from local business and Town council staff to devise and promote Bridport as the eventful town.</p> <p>Appointing a town centre curator – an annual post to drive creativity in events and promotion each year.</p>	<p>£40,000</p> <p>£15,000 pa</p>
<p>Supporting skills training, apprenticeships and new entrants in horticulture, food and fish production.</p> <p>Working with landowners and local communities to drive land management in support of nature recovery.</p> <p>Prototype for processing natural materials for use in construction developed at the Skills Academy, Foundry Lea.</p>	<p>Kingston Maurward college Landowners/ farmers WCA AONB Team Bridport Food Matters</p>	<p>Create a fund available to support coherent joined up management for nature recovery - funding for equipment, training and trees especially for community led land management.</p> <p>A programme of land management and horticulture skills training, linked to the virtual college.</p> <p>Support for 'share issues' to buy land for new start up horticulture businesses skills and job opportunities.</p> <p>Support for the local food supply chain – Bridport Food Matters/ Food hub projects.</p> <p>Working with local fishermen and Bridport Harbour to invest in processing for direct sales of local fish products.</p>	<p>£30,000 pa</p> <p>£500 per event</p> <p>£35,000</p> <p>£10,000</p> <p>£10,000</p>

Appendix - Bridport Overview

Bridport's historic role as a market town servicing the surrounding countryside continues to this day. Almost 15,000 people make their permanent home within the neighbourhood plan area, which is also a popular holiday destination and a preferred place for people to retire to. The neighbourhood plan area, which covers the parishes of Allington, Bothenhampton & Walditch, Bradpole, Bridport & West Bay and Symondsburry, is located entirely in a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its coastline, the "Jurassic Coast", is designated as a Heritage Coast and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The area has a rich and diverse heritage recognised in over 500 Listed Buildings, six Conservation Areas and many locally valued buildings, structures and distinctive features.

A local survey of employment sites was undertaken in the neighbourhood plan area in 2016, it included discussions with commercial letting agents and businesses based on industrial sites. This local research has shown that there is demand for more choice in the area for growing, relocating and start-up businesses and the greatest areas of demand are:

- for leased and freehold properties.
- for affordable units for start-ups.
- for modern and flexible space with appropriate areas for parking and deliveries. Existing businesses also identified the challenges of employing local people with the appropriate skills for their needs.

Appendix – Bridport Area in Numbers

<p>6,359 residents in employment 84% micro businesses (0-9 employees)</p>	<p>21% workforce employed in manufacturing or construction. 19% employed in Wholesale, retail and repair.</p>	<p>14% health and social care. 8% accommodation and food services.</p>
<p>96% White British</p>	<p>33% High skilled employment</p>	<p>19% low skilled employment</p>
<p>Bridport Area has a low-wage economy, with only half of households having earnings of over £25k (2014 West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland SHMA).</p>	<p>18% classified as elderly people with assets who are enjoying a comfortable retirement (8% UK figure)</p>	<p>12% population providing unpaid care</p>
<p>£57m value of tourism to the Bridport economy, equivalent to an estimated 1300 full time jobs. (SWRC 2013)</p>	<p>7,951 sq metres workspace for small and start up businesses as part re development of St Michaels estate.</p>	<p>Some 30% of Bridport housing stock fall in the lowest EPC bands E-G.</p>
<p>34% population over 65 yrs old</p>	<p>Relative poverty rate in Bridport ward 17%, approx 348 people.</p>	<p>Two LSOA areas in Bridport area in 2nd lowest income deprivation quintile</p>