

INCREASING SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS

The **West of England Recovery Plan** has been put together by the Economic Recovery Taskforce, chaired by Regional Mayor Tim Bowles. It has been developed with business, our councils, and representatives from voluntary and community groups.

The plan outlines how we will harness our region's creativity and diversity to protect and secure jobs, while building back greener and creating opportunities for all our residents to share in the recovery.

This work has been led by the **West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and the Local Enterprise Partnership.**

Where to get support

Businesses should visit our **West of England Growth Hub.**

W: www.wearegrowth.co.uk

E: wearegrowth@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

T: 0117 4566955

Individuals needing **employment and skills support** should visit **Future Bright** in the first instance – if we cannot help you, we will help signpost you in the right direction.

W: www.futurebright.org.uk

Bristol:

Email futurebright@bristol.gov.uk
or call 0117 9222250

Bath & North East Somerset:

Email futurebright@bathnes.gov.uk
or call 01225 395555

South Gloucestershire:

Email futurebright@southglos.gov.uk
or call 01454 866008

WECA has already committed £9.4m to our regional recovery fund, taking WECA's total investment in businesses and skills to over £100m over the next four years.

Our recovery plan aims to help businesses adapt and improve their resilience and support residents with new skills, training and employment opportunities.

The plan sets out five key ambitions:

1. Rebuilding business, helping new and existing businesses to survive and thrive
2. Getting residents back into jobs that pay above the living wage and offer employment security
3. Strengthening inclusion, building an inclusive economy where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential
4. A green recovery, using changes in behaviour brought about by the pandemic to accelerate transition to net zero carbon
5. Renewing places, creating greener, healthier, more vibrant places to live and work.

It builds on support already offered to businesses during the pandemic, which is summarised in this document.

This document summarises some of the services offered through the Combined Authority and its partner organisations:

Skills and workforce development

WECA is investing in services to provide individuals with the advice, training and support they need to stay in work, or find new opportunities.

- **Future Bright** – adapted to help people cope with the impact of Covid-19; provides dedicated one-to-one coaching and careers advice support for people who:
 - Have been made redundant or laid off
 - Are at risk of redundancy
 - Have had their hours significantly reduced (and therefore their income)
 - Are self-employed and income or ability to earn has been severely impacted
 - Are furloughed (if their reduced income means they are eligible for Universal Credit)
- £14.7m through the **Adult Education Budget** to support adult education providers, ensuring that thousands of people have access to training and re-training opportunities.
- **Productivity through People** – leadership development programme, designed by Bath University School of Management and Be the business.
- **Thrive at Work West of England** – a free tool to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) support staff with mental health issues.



- **Workforce for the Future** – an £8m programme providing free support, training, and tools to help SMEs stabilise or strengthen their businesses.
- **Careers Hub** – Our dedicated advisers are working with all secondary schools in the region to improve careers advice for young people.

Business

The West of England Combined Authority's **Growth Hub** is instrumental in helping new and existing businesses survive and thrive.

It's a free service that combines national and local business support, offering programmes that respond directly to what businesses say are critical for recovery and renewal. This includes:

Financial support and business advice

- **Financial resilience** – supporting SMEs to plan for better financial resilience and to navigate Government business support packages.
- **Intellectual Property support** – helping businesses understand the basics of IP and how best to protect it.
- **Accountancy Support Programme** – provides SMEs with a free financial check-up and bespoke guidance on effective financial management.
- **West of England Green Business Grants** – supporting SMEs to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.
- **Low Carbon Challenge Fund** – £1.7m grant funding to help firms avoid emissions that can harm the environment and contribute towards climate change.
- **Creative Scale Up** – helping creative businesses access finance through regional and national investment, also providing intensive business support.

Business continued

- **EU transition** – the latest Government guidance on guaranteed changes to import, export, hiring and service provision.
- **Universal Business Support** – provides start ups, small businesses and aspiring business owners with the support, training and resources they need to get set for success.
- **Rapid Redundancy Response** – available through the Growth Hub, this is a multi-agency group that can help businesses at risk of, or making, redundancies, and their employees.

Technology and innovation

- **Business Innovation Fund** – providing SMEs with tailored support and funding to bring new products, services and processes to market. This includes:
 - Grants between £20,000 – £50,000 to invest in innovation
 - Support and guidance to move from concept to production
 - Collaborate with our region’s leading research institutions
 - Advice on intellectual property, testing and research and development roadmaps.
- **Trading Better Online** – helping businesses improve digital presence
- We have reframed our **Digital Engineering Technology and Innovation (DETI)** programme to maximise its role in helping our region



recover. DETI is about developing and accelerating digital engineering across multiple industry sectors.

Networks and collaboration

- **Mentoring for Growth** – Rapid Response Mentoring Programme helping SMEs benefit from the expertise and experience found in larger firms.
- **Peer Networks** – peer-to-peer networking programme for SME leaders who want to grow and develop their organisation.

Invest Bristol and Bath, the inward investment service of the West of England Combined Authority, has continued work to attract new investment, development and employment to the region. Our team support businesses interested in expanding, relocating or trading in the West of England and work collaboratively with businesses to ensure new investments are a success.

ACCESS DIGITAL TRAINING THROUGH OUR EXPERT PARTNERS

European Union
European Structural and Investment Funds

WEST OF ENGLAND
Combined Authority

Transport

As the regional transport authority, WECA continues to work with bus and rail operators to ensure that the transport network operates safely with social distancing measures in place. We have also continued to support concessionary and community travel.

We are also investing in:

- **Walking and cycling** – WECA has committed £13m due to Covid-19 for measures to enable more people to walk and cycle to improve air quality, physical and mental health and reduce congestion. To support this and capture the changes in travel that coronavirus has brought, a regional marketing campaign, Joy in the Journey, is encouraging more people to cycle and walk and directing them to support.
- **Innovation in travel** – As part of our **Future Transport Zone** status, we're investing £27m in trialling new ways of moving around the region, including an **e-scooter trial**. The 12-month trial has been fast tracked following the coronavirus outbreak to offer a low-carbon, socially distanced way of travelling while public transport capacity is reduced.
- **Smart technology** – We're giving people travel and transport information in real time at their fingertips and integrating journey planning and payment to make it easier to make better choices and get to their destination in the fastest way possible. We've supported a 'book my ride' scheme to help give confidence to passengers while social distancing is in place.
- In the longer term WECA is leading work to assess a new and ambitious **mass transport system** that will revolutionise the way we move people around the region, improving congestion and air quality while reducing our carbon emissions. We are also investing in rail which could lead to over 1 million new rail journeys as well as improvements and extensions to the metrobus network.



*Support highlighted in this document is available across the West of England Combined Authority region, which includes Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire council areas. Many of our business support services are also available in North Somerset – details can be found on **West of England Growth Hub website**. All support is subject to eligibility criteria.*