

Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board

Date: Monday 13 July 2026

Time: 14:00 – 16:00

Location: Rushmoor Borough Council, Concorde Room

Present: Alastair Welch – ABP (Vice Chair) Natalie Wigman – HCC
 Cllr Gareth Williams – Rushmoor BC Stephen Martin – HCC
 Cllr Martin Tod – Winchester CC Teresa Hogsbjerg – HCC
 Julie Milburn – Sparsholt College **Guests:**
 Group David Patterson – AIGA
 Laura Read – Marwell Wildlife Sally Thompson – HCC
 Dr Angus Paddison – University of Simon Terry – Jacobs
 Winchester Tim Fill – Jacobs
 Simon Watson – M Group

Apologies: Cllr Nick Adams-King – HCC (Chair)
 Cllr Zoe Huggins – HCC
 Cllr Phil North – Test Valley BC
 Fiona Stilwell – PETA
 Joanna Butler – Butler Farms
 Ross McNally – Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
 Nicola Kildunne – FSB
 Paul West – Marketing Consultant

		Action
1.	Welcome	
1.1	- AW welcomed the attendees and noted apologies. Angus Paddison was attending to represent the universities, following Sarah Greer's resignation from the board and pending confirmation of her successor (see 5 below). - AW confirmed that the board was not quorate by one member. It was agreed that decision items would be considered by those present at the meeting, and then referred to absent members also by correspondence.	SM
2.	Minutes of last meeting	
2.1	Minutes from 1 June 2026 were agreed.	
3.	Action points from last meeting	

3.1	SM had sent a note in response to the Section 24 notice discussion at the June meeting and the board were satisfied with the explanation of the future process.	
4.	Conflicts of interest	
4.1	No conflicts were declared.	
5.	New higher education representative on HPPB	
5.1	The board noted that James Knowles had been nominated by the universities to join HPPB as the new Higher Education (HE) representative, following Sarah Greer's departure. James' position would be reviewed once two vacant Vice Chancellor roles have been filled. It was noted that Mark Smith had been recruited as an enterprise representative via interview, not as the nominated HE representative. The board also noted that the Hampshire Skills Partnership had agreed to rotate its chair between the HPPB's HE and Further Education representatives, and that Julie Milburn would therefore become chair. Decision – The board members who were present approved the appointment of James Knowles to HPPB, subject to confirmation of the decision by correspondence to all board members.	
6	Call for projects in Hampshire seeking capital funding from the LEP legacy reserves	
6.1	SM presented a verbal update on the status of the LEP legacy reserves projects, following the HPPB recommendations at the last meeting. The recommendations were considered by HCC Cabinet on 7 July, and the decision was taken to approve all the recommendations. 14 projects had therefore been approved for funding, subject to entering into funding agreements, and also subject to specific conditions in three cases. Funding agreements would be drafted by Hampshire County Council Legal Services; this process was expected to take approximately six weeks. The board recognised the huge amount of work undertaken to deliver this project.	
7	AI Growth Alliance	
7.1	Chair of the AI Growth Alliance (AIGA) David Patterson provided a presentation on the group, its objectives and work to date. The following points were discussed: Governance & Organisation • Need to ensure visibility of AIGA's activity, including benefits for and engagement in the north of Hampshire. It was noted that this is an industry-led cluster with local authority involvement. • Governance arrangements need to be clearly defined and well managed.	

- The organisation is still evolving and has not yet been formally constituted, with aspirations to become a Community Interest Company (CIC) within 12 months.
- As a potentially first-of-its-kind initiative, there are still questions to address about how it will be structured and managed.
- Not yet working directly with the Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority.

Partnerships & Stakeholder Engagement

- Need to ensure engagement with key partners, e.g. ADS (the aerospace, defence and space trade association), given its role as a strategic skills partner.
- The programme remains resource-constrained and continues to evolve through stakeholder input.
- Emphasis on maintaining a two-way dialogue with partners and stakeholders.

Funding & Resourcing

- Current support is largely provided in-kind.
- Long-term funding will need to be considered in order to sustain activity. Further work is needed to understand future funding requirements.

Responsible AI & Environmental Impact

- Strong interest in embedding responsible AI principles across the region.
- Key themes include:
 - AI use in the workforce.
 - Social and economic opportunities from AI
 - Addressing barriers to AI adoption
 - Supporting workforce skills and capability development
- Environmental impacts of AI should be actively monitored.
- Dedicated workstream proposed to:
 - Assess environmental impacts.
 - Monitor energy consumption
 - Ensure alignment with Net Zero objectives
 - Explore alternative and sustainable energy sources
- Need to better define and monitor inefficient or wasteful AI use.

Strategic Vision & Government Engagement

- Positioning differs from large-scale AI Growth Zone models focused on hyperscale data centres.
- Opportunity to develop a more distributed, locally appropriate model for Hampshire and the Solent.
- Desire to engage central government as early as possible.
- Key asks of government:
 - Seed funding.
 - Support for developing a cohesive investment proposition.
 - Support to build a clear delivery plan.
- Potential opportunities around micro-energy generation and alternative infrastructure models.

	• Aim to develop a compelling proposition by the end of the calendar year. Geography & Collaboration • Initiative should not be constrained by Hampshire and the Solent boundaries. • Opportunity to collaborate with neighbouring areas and institutions, including University of Surrey. • Shared infrastructure challenges could be addressed through a broader regional approach. • Model should be scalable without geographic limitations. Strategic Questions Raised • What specifically is being requested from local authority partners? • What role should other partners play? • What does success look like? • How should progress and impact be measured? • Should the focus be on: ◦ AI sovereignty and large-scale infrastructure? ◦ Sector-specific AI strengths where the region can compete globally? • Is a large 500MW data-centre model necessary, or would a distributed approach better suit local geography and infrastructure constraints? Emerging Opportunities • Potential to build around a globally recognised university-led AI capability. • Interest in creating a distinct regional AI proposition linked to innovation, skills, energy resilience and responsible AI. • Funding requirements need further development before progressing to government.	
8	Energy infrastructure gap analysis	
8.1	Jacobs introduced the study to the board. Key points were as follows: Network Capacity & Infrastructure • DNOs (Distribution Network Operators) face significant capacity constraints in some areas. • Greater private investment and regulatory flexibility are needed to accelerate network upgrades. • In highly constrained locations, microgrids and local energy solutions may provide faster alternatives than waiting for major network reinforcement. • Examples such as the Seegrow Saudi power development demonstrate alternative approaches to energy infrastructure delivery.	

- Networks are becoming more open to innovative and localised energy solutions.

Planning & Timescales

- Network connection delays remain a major challenge.
- There is recognition that the issue exists, and plans are being developed to increase network investment.
- Key infrastructure planning needs to align with:
 - Spatial development plans
 - Water infrastructure plans
 - Energy network investment cycles
- Once investment programmes are set (e.g. under ED3), flexibility can be limited, although opportunities may exist to reprioritise spending to support strategic projects.
- Need to influence projects before they enter formal planning processes.

SSEN Engagement

- Concerns raised about limited stakeholder engagement with SSEN within Hampshire.
- Existing engagement arrangements are experiencing teething problems.
- Stronger relationships and more regular dialogue with SSEN are required.
- Priority should be identifying and engaging with the right contacts within SSEN.

Local Energy Planning

- Local Area Energy Plans (e.g. Winchester) highlight infrastructure challenges, including developments requiring temporary generators due to insufficient power capacity.
- Need a clearer mechanism to ensure local energy requirements are reflected in network and infrastructure plans.
- There is a disconnect between planning policy ambitions (e.g. all new homes with heat pumps) and available grid capacity.

Strategic Questions

- Can the Combined Authority and partners influence network investment timescales?
- What actions can be taken now rather than waiting for network reinforcement?

	• What are the major future energy demands across Hampshire and the Solent? • How can the region better lobby for investment and influence priorities? Regional Coordination • Need a coordinated regional picture of: ◦ Current and future energy demand ◦ Network constraints ◦ Strategic development locations • Local authorities should work collectively with SSEN to identify future needs and infrastructure requirements. • Consider establishing or using existing groups to coordinate activity: ◦ Planning Officers Group ◦ Hampshire Planning Advisory Board • Encourage councils to engage proactively with SSEN and share intelligence on major developments. Potential Next Steps 1. Identify the appropriate senior contact within SSEN. 2. Engage SSEN on its 5–10-year network investment and connection plans. 3. Use existing officer and planning groups to coordinate engagement with SSEN. 4. Explore opportunities for microgrids and local energy solutions in highly constrained areas. 5. Assess where urgent infrastructure needs could justify accelerated investment or reprioritisation of network plans. 6. Strengthen relationship management arrangements between the Combined Authority, local authorities and SSEN. Action – Share the report with the Combined Authority and discuss next steps Action – Discuss the report with local authority planners Action – Invite SSEN to attend an HPPB meeting	SM
9	New workstreams requiring revenue funding	
9.1	The proposed new workstreams had been endorsed by the board at its previous meeting. The paper clarified which of these required revenue	

	funding and asked the board to recommend this to Hampshire County Council. Decision – The board members who were present endorsed the recommendations, subject to confirmation of the decision by correspondence to all board members.	
10	Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)	
10.1	LR provided a verbal update on the LVEP after the most recent advisory board meeting. Good progress had been made on the development of the Destination Management Plan. The advisory board was keen to ensure that there is not duplication of work where there are overlapping strategic aims e.g. skills delivery and business support.	
11	AOB	
11.1	Papers provided for noting (infrastructure review final report, and progress reports on the Hampshire Skills Strategy and Get Hampshire Working Plan) were noted.	