

Kent and Medway Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan

Backing jobs and businesses; building a sustainable future

August 2020



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Foreword

Covid-19 has been one of the greatest crises of our generation. Over 1,500 people have lost their lives in Kent and Medway and unprecedented measures have been necessary to protect public health.

The economic cost has also been severe. In some of our most important sectors, business activity was almost halted, unemployment has risen sharply, and almost all of us have seen widespread disruption.

At the start of August, there are welcome signs of a return to growth. But we are not out of the crisis yet: we anticipate that the downturn this year will be sharp, and there is a risk of future public health restrictions.

Yet we look to the future with optimism. The response by central and local government has been positive and decisive – and businesses and communities have proved to be adaptable and innovative in the face of the challenge.

Looking ahead to the next 18 months, this Plan sets out our priorities to support economic renewal and the development of an economy that will be more resilient in the long run. That means doing everything we can to support jobs and businesses over the medium term – and taking action now to build an economy which is greener, fairer and more adaptable for the future.

In developing this Plan, we have benefited greatly from the insight and expertise of a range of businesses, public authorities and educational institutions from across Kent and Medway. We are very grateful for this commitment in a time when many are under great pressure: it truly demonstrates the strength of Kent and Medway's economic partnership.

This Plan is, however, the start of a journey, not the end. In a rapidly changing economic (and public health) situation, we must remain agile, adaptable and responsive – and we welcome new ideas and innovation.

Realistic and open about the challenges we face, optimistic for the future and focused on backing jobs and businesses: let's move forward for Kent and Medway.



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Executive Summary

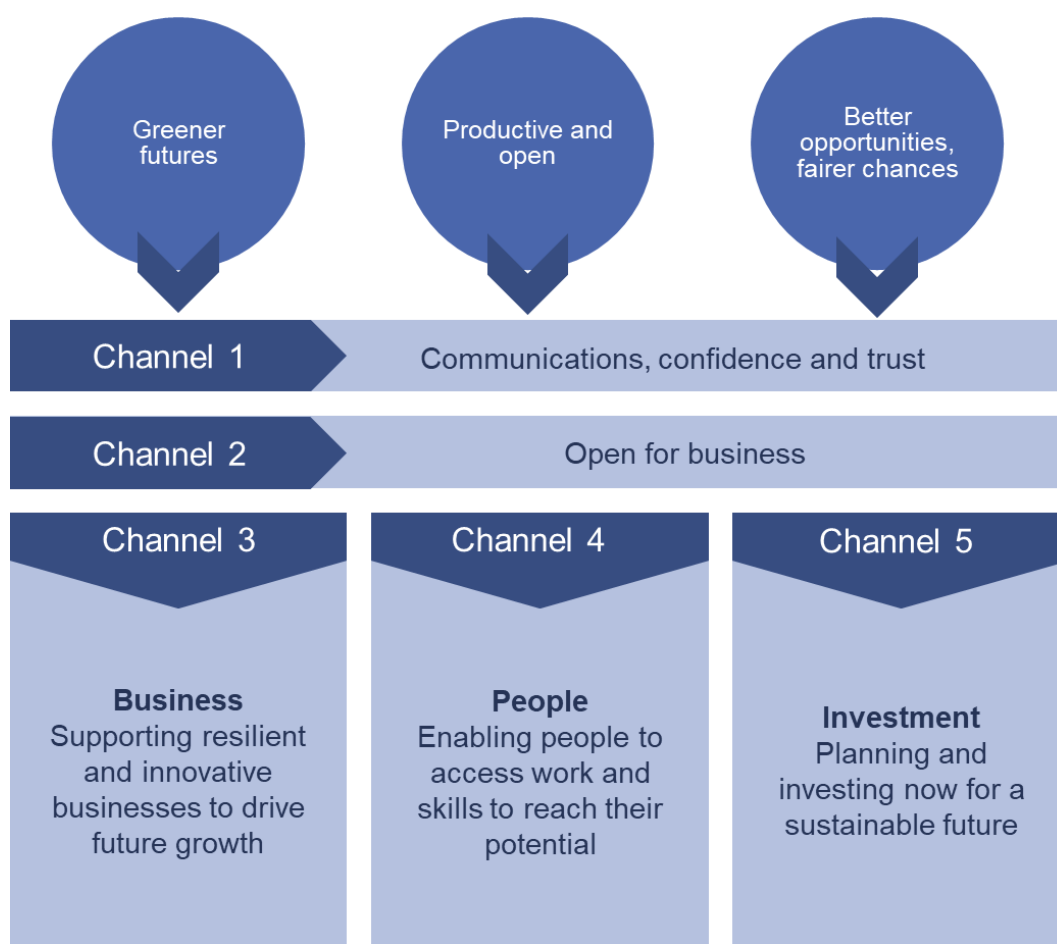
The end of the Covid-19 pandemic is not yet in sight, the economic consequences are likely to be severe and the outlook is uncertain. Together, we need to work to back jobs and businesses through the crisis, and build a more sustainable economy for the long term. Looking ahead to the next 18 months, this Renewal and Resilience Plan sets out a framework for action for the medium term.

Introduction

1. The global health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic rapidly became an economic crisis. Between March and May this year, UK output fell by 19% and in Kent and Medway, the claimant count more than doubled.
2. The Government acted swiftly to put in place measures to mitigate the impacts on businesses and workers. Kent and Medway's local authorities have played a vital role in the delivery of these and they helped to stabilise the economy in unprecedented circumstances. Businesses also responded with innovation and ingenuity, adapting to changing demand and working practices.
3. Since June, the restrictions imposed due to the public health crisis have been relaxed and economic activity has increased. But the outlook remains very uncertain, and measures to contain the public health emergency are unlikely to end any time soon. The economy is likely to contract by 11-14% in 2020, and there is a high risk of rising unemployment as the Government's emergency measures wind down later this year. Left unchecked, younger workers are likely to be especially vulnerable and the long-term scarring effects may be significant.
4. As we move into the next phase of the crisis, it is essential that we take action to support jobs and businesses, and we must do this with the aim of building a greener, more productive, fairer economy that will emerge stronger and more resilient than before. While central Government will be a vital partner, this means local leadership and action, working closely with Kent and Medway's businesses and building on the county's distinct strengths and assets.

The framework for action

5. Across all its actions, the Renewal and Resilience Plan seeks to deliver against three key principles, focused on **Greener Futures** (building a more sustainable, lower carbon economy); **Open and Productive** (supporting long term productivity growth in an economy that welcomes investment and trade); and **Better Opportunities, Fairer Chances** (ensuring that people are supported through recession and stand to gain from a more resilient economy in the return to growth). To make these happen, it sets out five 'channels' of activity:



Communications, confidence and trust

6. We will strengthen the relationships between economic development agencies, support providers and businesses to provide more integrated services, developing a stronger evidence base to guide our approach to renewal and resilience.

Open for business

7. Our hospitality, retail and cultural sectors have been amongst the worst hit during the pandemic. We will build confidence among visitors and residents, demonstrating that our county and our towns are 'open', within Government guidelines. Immediate actions include a new campaign to attract visitors from the South East to enjoy the county's hospitality, with a potential further campaign later in the year to drive bookings for 2021.

Business: Supporting innovative and resilient businesses to drive future growth

8. We will provide better co-ordinated business advice as the starting point for a more integrated and comprehensive business support offer. Immediate actions include the extension and further development of the Kent and Medway Growth Hub's support service and a further £6 million for the Kent and Medway Business Fund, offering loan support for firms with the appetite and capacity for growth.

9. We will also support those clusters of activity in which Kent and Medway has distinctive assets and capabilities, building our innovation infrastructure for the long term. These include distinctive centres of applied research, such as NIAB-EMR in the horticultural sector and the county's four universities; alongside opportunities to drive innovation, technology adoption and greater resource efficiency across the wider economy.

People: Enabling people to access work and skills to reach their potential

10. We will work with central Government and with partners across Kent and Medway to address the pressing challenge of rising unemployment. We will establish an Employment Task Force as a time-limited, action-focused body to coordinate a Kent and Medway-wide response and take an active role in the labour market.

Investment: Planning and investing now for a sustainable future

11. We will accelerate capital investment, where it will support a sustainable, lower-carbon recovery and will support local employment and supply chain growth, and we will seek to invest in energy efficiency and green infrastructure to support immediate employment and longer-term benefits.

Moving forward

12. The economic (and public health) situation is changing rapidly, and the policy response from central Government is also likely to evolve. The Renewal and Resilience Plan will therefore need to be treated as a 'living document' and reviewed in the light of events. We anticipate that it will next be reviewed in autumn 2020.
13. We are also open to new ideas, suggestions and collaborations. These are uncertain and unusual times: we do not have all the answers, and new approaches and innovative thinking are welcome.

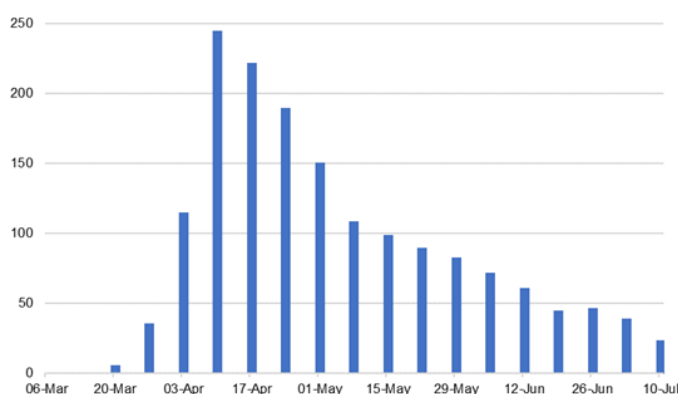
1. Introduction

Background: The Covid-19 economic crisis

Into the storm...

- 1.1 At the start of 2020, an outbreak of novel coronavirus infections in central China seemed a distant threat. Within three months, it had led to a global pandemic: by the start of July, Covid-19 had led to over 48,000 deaths in England, over 1,500 of which were in Kent and Medway. Source: ONS, Deaths by local authority and cause of death
- 1.2 The health crisis rapidly became an economic crisis. In the UK, measures announced to in March to contain the health risks led to the effective closing down of much of the economy. Globally, other countries took similar action, with a consequent fall in international trade and traffic.
- 1.3 The Government responded quickly with a substantial package of measures to protect jobs and businesses during the emergency, including a scheme to furlough workers and a series of grant and loan products. Local partners have been central to the delivery of this, with Medway Council and the Kent Districts rapidly implementing rate relief and business grant schemes. Separately, a channel for support and advice was rapidly set up through the Kent and Medway Growth Hub; and Kent County Council and other partners delayed repayments on existing business loans.

Figure 1-1: Weekly deaths through Covid-19, Kent & Medway



Source: ONS

The current situation

- 1.4 The public health measures taken in March have, so far, been successful in controlling the pandemic. Death and infection rates have fallen, restrictions on movement have been relaxed and economic activity has increased. But the outlook remains uncertain. It is unlikely that life will be 'back to normal' any time soon: social distancing measures could remain in place or the rest of the year or longer, and there is likely to be a need to impose localised restrictions where outbreaks occur. This will lead to continuing impacts on sectors reliant on bringing people together and face-to-face customer interaction, as well as wider disruption. The scale of the recent fall in economic activity will also have longer term

consequences, especially as some of the early Government mitigation measures are unwound later this year. The path out of lockdown is unlikely to be smooth.

Looking to the future

- 1.5 The next 12-18 months are therefore likely to be challenging as we navigate what may be a rocky road to economic ‘recovery’. However, **we look to the future with a positive perspective**. The Government continues to take active measures to protect jobs, with a programme of new initiatives announced in the July mini-Budget¹. Businesses have proved to be adaptable to new technology, ways of working and changes in demand. Local authorities have acted quickly to safely ‘reopen’ high streets. More globally, the public health measures taken over the past few months have only been viable because of advances in communications technology and the resilience of our digital infrastructure; and the UK’s life science industry is at the forefront of the global search for a vaccine and new treatments.

Towards renewal and resilience: Developing the Plan

- 1.6 In this context, this **Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan** focuses on the measures that we need to take to support Kent and Medway’s economy as it manages and emerges from the next phase of the crisis:

Renewal	<p>The crisis is likely to lead to some permanent changes, as markets change, new technologies, ways of working and patterns of consumer behaviour become embedded: the future will not simply be about ‘recovery’ to the position that the economy was in before March.</p> <p>So as well as mitigating the negative impacts of the crisis, our response must support adaption, innovation and new ideas, renewing the economic environment and driving the growth of a cleaner, fairer and more productive economy.</p>
Resilience	<p>The crisis has highlighted the need for economic resilience – and has demonstrated both strengths and vulnerabilities.</p> <p>While our immediate priority is to respond to the current crisis, the actions that we take in the short to medium term must support our economic capabilities in the longer term. That means building in resilience to longer term change: taking action now to respond to the climate emergency and ensuring that our businesses and workforce are resilient and responsive to changing markets (especially following Brexit transition) and technologies.</p>

- 1.7 Recognising the rapid pace of events and current uncertainty, **the Plan focuses on the medium term**. We see this (broadly) as the next 18 months, running to the end of 2021, illustrated in the gold bar in the centre of the chart below. However, as the concepts of ‘renewal and resilience’ set out above suggest, the actions taken forward as part of the Plan must inform and contribute to our longer-term strategy:

Figure 1-2: Response phases and indicative timescales



1.8 Three other points are also important to note:

- First, the Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan has been developed in parallel with a more wide-ranging **Kent and Medway Recovery Strategy**. This Recovery Strategy considers the post-crisis response in relation to several other aspects of public services and community resilience – so within this Plan, we focus on those issues that relate primarily to jobs, business growth and investment.
- However, **economic sustainability is fundamental to any broader concept of wellbeing**. High employment and secure work supports better social outcomes; economic growth ultimately feeds through into more money for public services and long-term investment; interventions ought to have positive implications for environmentally sustainable growth, and so on. The links to wider resilience are therefore key.
- Second, we recognise that **local economic ‘levers’ are limited in the context of the scale of the Covid-19 shock**. The emergency response to date has required very substantial central Government firepower, and an interventionist Government approach will need to be maintained for some time. We will need to work in this context – ensuring that central action meets local need, supplementing it where possible, securing the right level of investment in Kent and Medway and making sure that we are trusted partners with the capacity to pilot new approaches.
- Third, at this stage, **there is still much that we don’t know**. Five months into the crisis, we have emerging evidence of the economic impact of the crisis. But there is a range of plausible scenarios for the future: these will be revised in the weeks and months ahead and will of course be dependent on the wider health situation. The national policy response will also be dynamic in response to the changing evidence.

1.9 Bearing in mind the rapidly changing landscape, this Plan provides a framework within which more detailed actions can be developed. It builds on a consultation draft prepared in early June, taking into account the consultation feedback and further evidence and thinking – but it should be regularly reviewed as the economic and policy situation evolves.

Plan structure

1.10 The remainder of this draft Plan is structured in three sections:

- Section 2 provides a **summary of the potential economic impact** on Kent and Medway. This draws on nationally-available information (including sector studies and Government and independent forecasts), supplemented by locally-gathered business insight. It highlights our *current* assessment of the economic challenge, although we recognise that the evidence base is developing rapidly
- Section 3 introduces a **framework for action**. It outlines three principles that should underpin activity over the next 18 months and introduces a series of 'channels' through which action should be progressed
- Finally, Section 4 explains **how the Renewal and Resilience Plan will be reviewed** and revised to respond to changing circumstances.

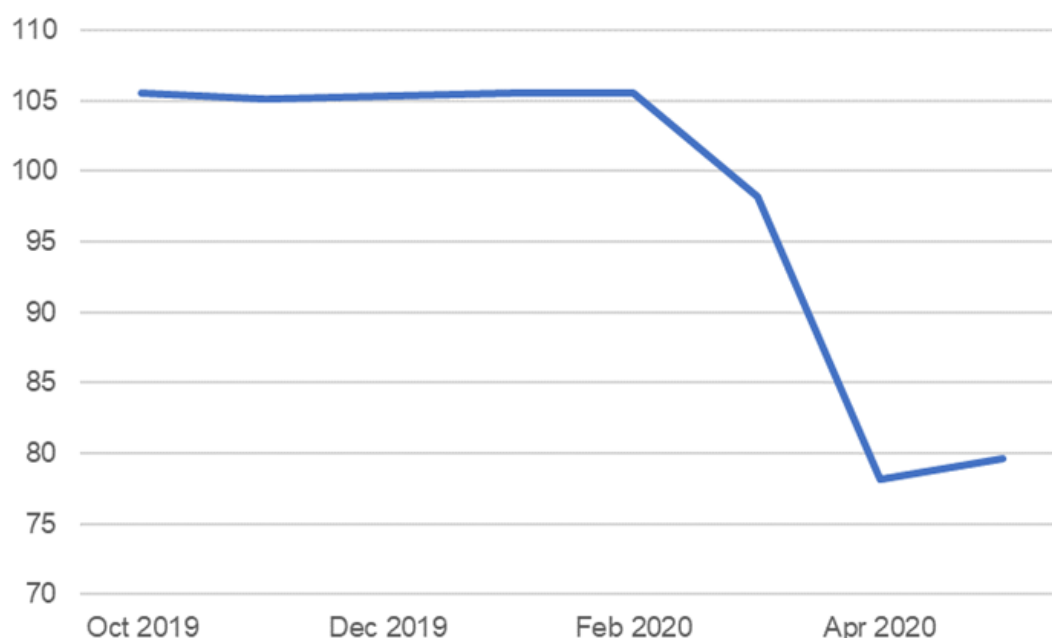
1.11 A supplementary **Economic Impacts Evidence Base** has also been prepared to accompany this Plan. This provides further information to support the analysis in Chapter 2. As with this Plan, the impact evidence paper will be kept live to incorporate new information as it becomes available.

2. The economic impact

The initial economic shock

- 2.1 The scale of the short-term economic shock caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has been extraordinary. In February, when the Office for Budget Responsibility closed its forecasts for the March 2020 *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*, the near-term outlook for the UK was little changed from the previous forecast a year before, with GDP growth of 1.4% expected in 2020.
- 2.2 This forecast was rapidly overtaken by events, as lockdown was imposed in March. Between March and May, the UK's GDP fell by around 19%, with all sectors of the economy experiencing contraction (with the exception of public administration and defence)². Unsurprisingly, the output loss was greatest in those sectors that were largely 'shut down': for example, output in hospitality and food service activities fell by 72%.
- 2.3 The greatest fall in output took place in April, when restrictions on activity were most severe. Across the UK, May saw a very modest return to growth of 1.8%, illustrated in the small uptick in Fig. 2-1. Recent weeks have also seen a rise in consumer spending, much of it online and partly linked with suppressed demand during the lockdown phase. But output in May remained around 25% below February levels, and it remains to be seen whether the small observed uptick will translate into a sustained recovery.

Figure 2-1: Index of UK GDP (2016=100), October 2019-May 2020

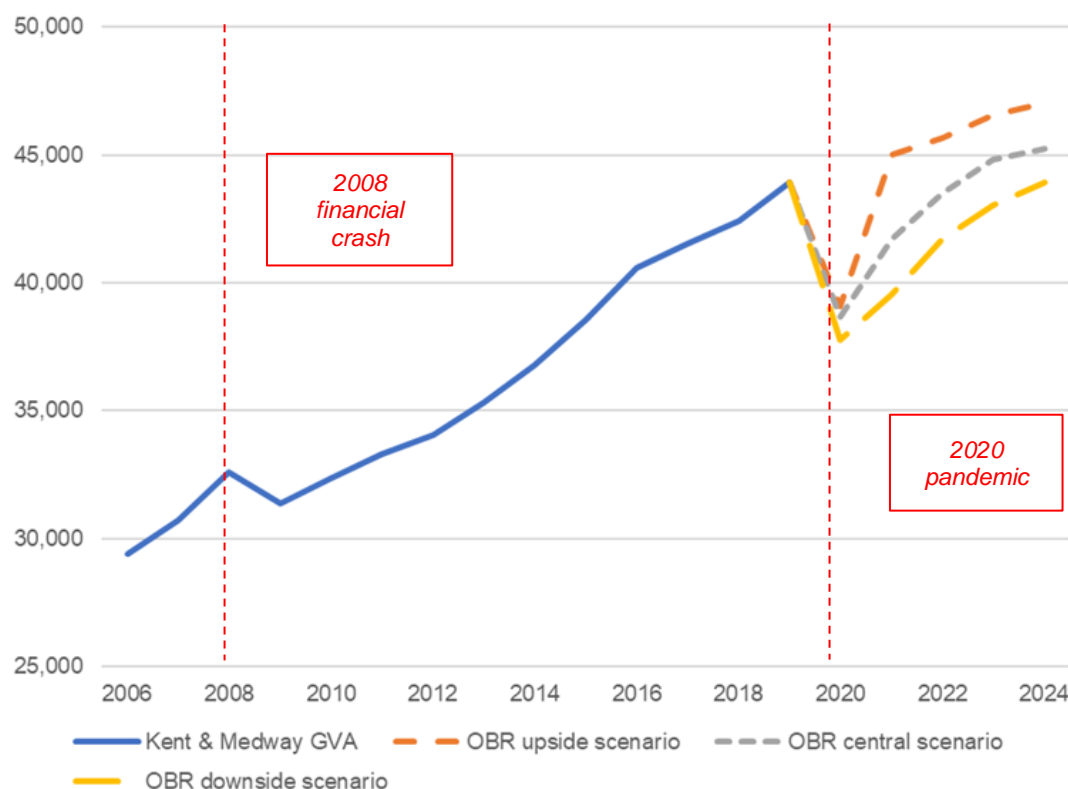


Source: ONS, GDP Monthly Estimate, May 2020

The outlook for 2020 and beyond

- 2.4 Looking to the future, the Office for Budget Responsibility has prepared three projections for growth, based on 'upside', 'central' and 'downside' scenarios. Despite growth in the rest of this year as restrictions ease, all three scenarios anticipate a sharp contraction in 2020, ranging from -11% to -14% over the course of the year.
- 2.5 The OBR has not published any sub-national estimates based on these calculations (and it acknowledges that they are high-level and sensitive to changes in assumptions). But applying the broad rate of contraction to the Kent and Medway economy, we might expect an output 'loss' of between £5 billion and £7 billion this year. This is substantially sharper than the loss of output following the 2008/09 financial crash, which saw a year-on-year reduction to Kent and Medway's GVA of around £1.2 billion (or 3.8%).
- 2.6 In all scenarios, the loss in 2020 is followed by a return to growth in 2021. However, as Fig. 2-2 illustrates, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the strength of this 'bounce back'. On the most optimistic scenario, output returns to its pre-Covid trajectory next year (a 'v-shaped recession'). On the 'downside' scenario, the economy does not return to its 2019 level of output until at least 2024.

Figure 2-2: Kent and Medway GVA (£m, 2016 prices)



Source: ONS, SQW analysis

- 2.7 This range of estimates is unsurprising, given how novel the current situation is. Within the *Economic Impacts Evidence Base* which accompanies this Plan, we have considered each scenario in detail and outlined the implications for Kent and Medway, recognising that the situation may become clearer over the coming months. But for now, the key points are that: a) there will be a sharp contraction this year; and that b) while there is likely to be some (possibly strong) recovery in 2021, the shape of this is uncertain and the outlook is risky.

It remains quite likely that recovery will be uneven and will involve significant disruption, with the risk of longer-term damage through labour market scarring and loss of capacity.

Sectoral implications

- 2.8 Sectors are an imperfect way of thinking about the economy: increasingly, businesses are engaged in activities that cut across conventional sector definitions. But they are widely understood, and there is evidence that the current crisis will impact different sectors in very different ways. Drawing on business feedback and published evidence, the *Economic Impacts Evidence Base* sets out how we think each of Kent and Medway's main sector groups will be affected. In summary:

Table 2-1: Summary of sectoral impacts

Sector	Summary impacts
Hospitality and tourism	Severely impacted , with most of the sector closed during the lockdown phase and social distancing continuing to affect how businesses are able to operate. An increase in domestic tourism demand could lead to additional activity, although there is still likely to be a substantial fall in output this year, and risks to businesses as Government support measures come to an end.
Creative and cultural	Severely impacted : the crisis is likely to be protracted for the sector, with the prospect of live events and cultural activities limited for the rest of the year, and significant vulnerabilities associated with freelance employment
Retail	Retail spend has 'bounced back' after a sharp slump – but much of it is online . There has now been a return to mostly 'normal' trading, but the crisis will likely compound longer-term structural challenges facing the sector.
Food production	Generally resilient in terms of demand , but there is a risk of labour supply problems, given reliance on seasonal, and often migrant, workforces
Manufacturing	Manufacturing has been an important driver of the small return to growth . While parts of the sector are experiencing severe difficulties at present (such as aerospace and aviation), Kent and Medway's exposure to these is relatively limited. However, most manufacturers nationally are operating below capacity
Construction	There has been sharp growth in construction activity nationally , largely driven by the residential market. Sustaining this will be important to Kent and Medway, given the relative size of the sector
Transport	Freight volumes have risen again since the depths of the pandemic , and the sector in Kent is nationally vital for imports and exports. But the local demand-driven public transport sector has already faced a collapse in demand, and recovery is likely to be very slow
Education	Higher education faces significant, potentially structural, challenges , as international students are slow to return and other sources of income are more challenging to access
Community & voluntary	While public services will be resilient (in employment terms) in the short term, the crisis has impacted on Kent's substantial – and diverse - voluntary and community sector (for example, through reductions in fundraising events and volunteer capacity).
Life sciences	A small sector in employment terms but strategically important – and likely to see rising demand for accelerated medicines development and digital health

- 2.9 In general, almost all sectors of the economy have been hard-hit by the crisis so far – and the picture would be much more negative had the Government’s package of measures not been introduced so quickly. However, there are opportunities for growth, particularly in digital products and services. **There is also much evidence of business innovation and agility** in switching to new markets, adapting processes and working practices and developing new products.
- 2.10 We are continuing to gather further information on the differential sectoral aspects of the economic crisis: a series of ‘round table’ discussions with businesses started in May and will continue; and the Kent and Medway Growth Hub provides continuing insight. This will be reflected in further iterations of the *Economic Impacts Evidence Base* and in the development of this Plan. We will also consider further the specific impacts at district level, and the opportunities for growth linked with Kent and Medway’s strengths and assets:

What makes Kent and Medway’s economy distinctive? Key assets

Kent and Medway’s economy is diverse – and this diversity has been a source of resilience in responding to previous recessions. But it also contains some distinctive characteristics and assets, which will be important as we plan for long-term renewal. These include:

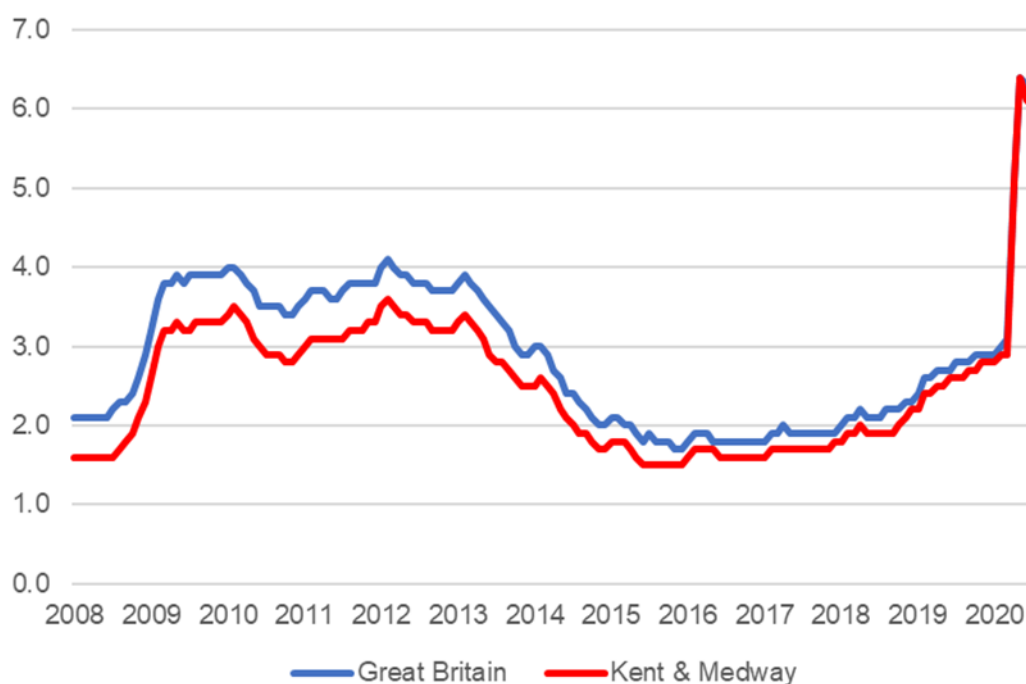
- **Leading centres of applied research, linked with areas of growth and relative advantage.** For example, NIAB-EMR is an internationally-significant centre for horticultural research, integrally linked with Kent’s growing food production sector. Growth in the relatively small, but high-value, life sciences sector focused on Discovery Park and elsewhere, is complemented by increasing investment in the health economy (including the new Kent and Medway Medical School). Building on these, and embedding links between the knowledge base, leading businesses and the wider supply chain will be a key element of our longer-term strategy.
- **Opportunities associated with planned housing and population growth.** Kent and Medway is growing rapidly, with an additional 280,000 residents anticipated by 2038. This brings opportunities for innovation to drive a more sustainable, lower carbon model of development, adding value to the county’s large construction industry and supporting growth in local demand-responsive services.
- **Key locational advantages** as the Gateway between the rest of the UK and Europe, with some of the UK’s most critical infrastructure at the Port of Dover and the Channel Tunnel. This brings challenges as well, especially in managing traffic and freight volumes – but it provides the county with a distinctive investment proposition and defines its visitor offer.

Across all of the above, the economy is also strongly oriented towards smaller businesses: around 90% of firms employ fewer than ten people, and there are relatively few larger employers. Plans for Renewal and Resilience need to reflect this: supporting small businesses with prospects for growth, building supply chain links and raising productivity across the diverse business landscape.

Implications for employment

- 2.11 The impact on the labour market has already been significant. Between March and May, the count of people claiming work-related benefits in Kent and Medway increased by 122%, a far higher increase than that experienced following the 2008 crash. While this was followed by a slight fall in June, there were still around 36,000 additional claimants compared with the position in March:

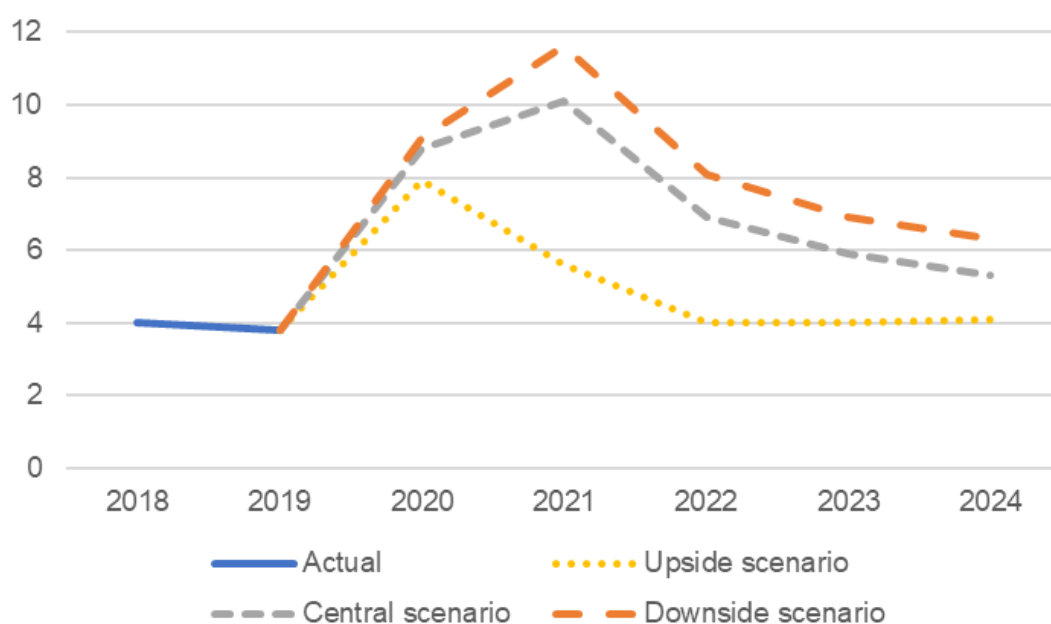
Figure 2-3: Claimant count as % of population aged 16-64



Source: ONS, DWP

- 2.12 However, the rise in unemployment has been mitigated so far by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS; the 'furlough scheme') and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, both of which provide support to keep people in employment during a temporary loss of work. Currently, over 300,000 workers in Kent and Medway benefit from the two schemes. Both taper down in 2020, and it is widely expected that we will see a rise in unemployment as a result, especially in the event of the more negative growth scenario.
- 2.13 In the event of a significant rise in unemployment, there will be a need for new policy approaches. We have not had high levels of general unemployment since the early 1990s, and in recent years, the causes of unemployment have mostly been either 'churn' as people quickly move into new jobs, or individual challenges. This year, the rise in unemployment will be driven by a very substantial loss of jobs. It is also likely (based on experience in previous recessions) that unemployment will remain relatively high, even after there has been a general return to output growth. According to the scenarios developed by the OBR, there is a strong possibility that unemployment will not return to 2019 levels until after 2024³:

Figure 2-4: Unemployment scenarios (UK, unemployment rate, %)



Source: OBR

- 2.14 Typically, unemployment disproportionately impacts younger workers, as new recruits are simply not hired. This is important, since the ‘scarring’ effects of unemployment on school and college leavers tend to be long-term. At the same time, there are likely to be challenges for older workers in re-entering the labour market: a situation which could present greater difficulties this time than in previous employment crises, given the later state pension age and the increasing tendency for people to work past typical retirement ages.
- 2.15 It should also be noted that the nature of employment has changed since we were last faced with very high unemployment. In particular, recent years have seen a trend towards increased self-employment and freelancing, both at the more precarious end of the labour market (the ‘gig economy’) and in more highly-paid occupational groups. This is especially significant in parts of the creative economy and emerging digitally-based sectors.
- 2.16 Responding to these challenges, the Government announced a major package of employment-related measures in the July mini-Budget. These include the Kickstart job guarantee scheme for younger workers and additional support for Apprenticeships and Traineeships. Ensuring that these schemes benefit people and businesses in Kent and Medway – and supplementing them where appropriate – will be an important part of our Plan.

Looking to the longer term

- 2.17 In the longer term, the impact on the shape of the economy, coming at the same time as Brexit, could be profound. At this stage, it is too early to make a judgement, but popular attitudes to supply chain resilience, the costs of international travel and the funding of the care sector could all have an impact on policy and on the fundamental structure of some industries – as could the greater use of digital communications and home working during the crisis. Some of these impacts will be positive, with the crisis driving innovation and new solutions. Identifying and supporting these will be at the heart of renewal and resilience.

Key principles for renewal and resilience

We face a challenging economic context. But as well as mitigating the impacts of the current crisis, renewal and resilience means **building an economy that is stronger in the long term**, and which is better able to manage economic shocks in the future.

Our actions will be guided by three principles, which underpin everything we do to support renewal and resilience:

Principle 1: Greener futures

We will develop an economy which is more sustainable in the long term, contributing to the vision set out in the Kent and Medway *Energy and Low Emissions Strategy* of net-zero emissions by 2050 and the broader goals of the *Kent Environment Strategy*. This means:

- Ensuring that actions taken to support economic recovery make a positive environmental contribution and avoid ‘building back’ carbon-intensive solutions.
- Backing measures to support decarbonisation and sustainable development where they contribute to jobs, innovation and future economic growth
- Helping businesses that receive loan or grant support, or business advice take measures to improve their energy efficiency and reduce resource consumption.

Principle 2: Open and productive

In the long run, the economy will only grow through increased productivity. So the actions that we take will promote the skills development, business capacity, technology capabilities and stronger supply chain networks that will support productivity growth in the long term.

At the same time, Kent and Medway is an open and dynamic economy: we are outward-facing, we want Kent and Medway businesses to trade across the UK and internationally, and we welcome inward investment.

Principle 3: Better opportunities, fairer chances

The worst impacts of recession are on those with the weakest position in the labour market – and for young people especially, the long-term ‘scarring’ effects of unemployment can be severe. We want to create an economy in which all have a stake: our actions now must help us achieve that goal.

That means ensuring that all actions over the next 18 months have positive employment outcomes; ensuring that access to employment is linked with access to longer-term prospects, through skills development opportunities, support for workplace health and ‘fair work’ agreements with employers; and ensuring that those most disadvantaged in the labour market are not left behind.

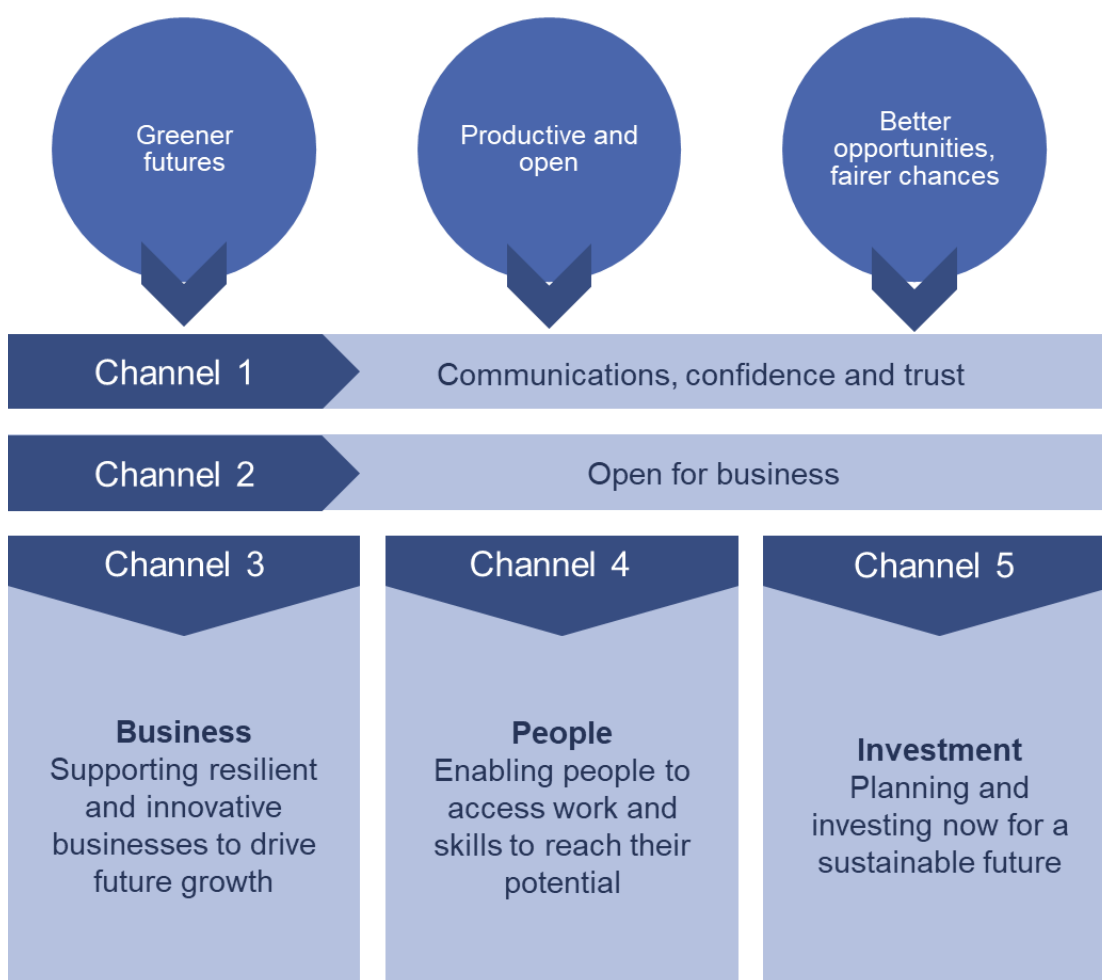
All these principles add value to each other. Together, they provide a guide to ensure that all our activities deliver a more sustainable economy in the long term.

3. A framework for action

Five channels of activity

- 3.1 Supporting the underpinning principles we have identified, this chapter sets out **five 'channels' of activity** that form the basis of our medium-term recovery plan. Two of these are over-arching, relating to communications and coordination and the need to demonstrate that the county is 'open for business', with the other three relating to support for businesses, the labour market and future investment:

Figure 3-1: Renewal and Resilience: Key principles and channels of activity



- 3.2 This chapter outlines the broad action areas that we aim to take forward within each 'channel'. Rather than a detailed action plan, the headings that follow form a framework to guide our activities over the next 18 months. As the economic (and public health) situation is subject to change, we expect that these will be subject to regular review.

Channel 1: Communications, confidence and trust

- 3.3 There is no single agency responsible for ‘delivering’ *Renewal and Resilience*, and success will depend on open communications and coordination across a range of partners. Since the start of the crisis, partners have come together to improve coordination between the county’s business support providers, and we have built a stronger pool of information about its impacts.

Strengthening collaboration

- 3.4 Building on recent experience, we will seek to improve referrals and dialogue across the range of public agencies responsible for interaction with business. There is evidence of a real appetite for this from providers, with improved collaboration leading to direct business benefits in the short run (as firms are better able to access services and greater efficiency makes them more likely to seek support in the first place), and in the longer term (as gaps in provision are identified and measures put in place to address them).
- 3.5 In the first instance, additional resourcing (over and above service provision itself) is likely to be minimal: the task is to work together to respond effectively, not to create a new overarching infrastructure. This action is therefore a continuation of work underway. However, it will depend on the continuation of funding for service provision, the case for which strengthened collaboration and increased demand will help to support.

Building a robust evidence base

- 3.6 Since the crisis began, we have built a stronger knowledge base, drawing on national information and insight from business (especially through the support channels highlighted above). This has informed the *Economic Impacts Evidence Base*, which accompanies this Plan, with a new [Economic Recovery Dashboard](#) containing the latest economic data in an accessible format⁴. Maintaining this insight will be important as we seek to build more detailed understanding, to offer better support to business, increased planning capability and better evidence with which to engage with Government. We will also work closely with colleagues in London to understand the impacts on the London employment market, which is vitally important for many Kent and Medway residents and communities.
- 3.7 We recognise that in some cases, specific business issues and difficulties will be commercially sensitive. We need a mechanism for managing this, so that there can be trusted dialogue. There are already established routes for this (for example, via Locate in Kent, Visit Kent and Produced in Kent), which are in regular dialogue with industry: it will be important to use these to ensure that assistance can be provided where appropriate.

Developing an overall communications plan

- 3.8 Across Kent and Medway’s business support providers, we have improved communications since the start of the crisis – and the small business grants schemes and the enhanced role of the Kent and Medway Growth Hub has increased interaction between business and the support offer. We will build on this to develop a better coordinated communications plan, including communications with Government, businesses, provider organisations and the wider public in Kent and Medway.

Channel 2: Open for business

- 3.9 The sectors that were worst hit by the crisis were those that rely on direct customer contact, especially the tourism, hospitality and cultural sectors. While most of the restrictions imposed at the start of the crisis have been relaxed, social distancing rules are likely to remain in place for some time, and (at the time of writing) most events remain restricted.
- 3.10 As we emerge from crisis, we want to support Kent and Medway's visitor economy and our retail, leisure and cultural industries by demonstrating that the county is 'open for business' and welcoming to visitors and residents, while making sure that we follow the latest Government health and safety guidance and making sure that we play our part in ensuring that Kent and Medway's workplaces are 'Covid secure'.

Focused efforts on place marketing

- 3.11 Even though the tourism and hospitality sectors face a severely challenged summer season, it is vital that we maintain Kent and Medway's profile as a destination. Investment has been made into online resources to support the brand, and earlier in the crisis, Visit Kent invested in the *Protect, Respect, Enjoy* campaign to promote responsible visits to the county's natural environment.
- 3.12 To back our tourism sector, **Visit Kent will launch a new campaign to encourage visitors from the South East to enjoy the county's hospitality**, with a focus on driving demand at the end of the 2020 season. Building on this, plans are underway for a longer-term campaign to support advanced bookings for 2021.

Moving forward for Kent

All economic activity in Kent and Medway has been impacted by the crisis – whether by temporarily closing down, radically changing working practices, or in some cases increasing production to meet rising demand. As activity returns, the **Moving Forward for Kent** campaign provides a flexible marketing tool for businesses to talk to customers, employees and communities about the measures they are taking to get back to business safely.

We will continue to showcase the county's success in making a positive recovery, working together with business and support organisations.

Capturing the gains from a return to trade

- 3.13 The crisis is likely to reinforce some of the structural shifts in consumer behaviour that have impacted on traditional retail models, especially in town centres. Longer term, there is a need to rethink town centre roles. But in the shorter term, efforts to attract custom and promote confidence will be important – through a combination of **town centre/ High Street promotional activities, local purchasing campaigns and smaller-scale capital investment** to attract and retain visitors and support active travel. Given each town's unique offer (and set of partners) the 'drive' for this needs to be local. However, we will support collaboration across districts on funding and sharing of delivery expertise and good practice.

Channel 3: Business: Supporting innovative and resilient businesses to drive future growth

- 3.14 Direct financial support to business was a core element of the Government's initial economic response to the crisis. This support was delivered at scale, and included a combination of rates relief, VAT deferrals and an extensive programme of loan and grant support, as well as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Most businesses have benefited from the support package, which has played a crucial role in helping firms (and their staff) to weather the storm. The Kent and Medway local authorities have been central to the delivery of this: by the start of July, the Kent Districts and Medway Council had allocated some £373 million in cash grants to small businesses, around 87% of their original Government allocation.
- 3.15 However, this level of support cannot be maintained indefinitely, and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the loan and grant packages will start to wind down shortly. At local level, we clearly cannot replace the recent scale of central Government intervention – but we must ensure access to advice and information together with a more targeted approach that will back those firms that are able to grow, innovate and create jobs in a more resilient economy.

Advice and support

- 3.16 At the start of the crisis, the local authorities provided funding to Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce to deliver the Kent and Medway Growth Hub Covid-19 Helpline, providing businesses with advice and support, including in accessing Government support schemes. **Funding for this service will continue for a further three months**, with the service evolving into a broader business recovery support programme.

Since March, the Covid-19 Helpline has taken over 8,000 calls and over 1,800 webchat contacts, and has delivered over 3,000 telephone advice sessions – with intelligence from the programme informing our understanding of the crisis

Loan finance for innovative businesses

- 3.17 In terms of direct financial assistance, the focus in the 'emergency' phase was on the major programmes backed by central Government. In a crowded 'market' for financial support, it is important that local schemes clearly add value and make a difference.
- 3.18 With schemes such as the Bounce Back Loan now clearly established, and as the grant support programmes come to an end, the time is right for a focused programme of additional loan support to assist firms with the appetite and capacity for growth and renewal. To deliver this, **we will refocus and relaunch the Kent and Medway Business Fund**, making £6 million available in loan support, with up to six years interest free.

Better coordinated business services

- 3.19 Over the past few months, we have seen much greater joint working between partners as we work together to support businesses through the crisis. We want to build on this by creating a **better co-ordinated business support service**, at the centre of a programme

of activity to support innovation and adoption, leadership capacity and growth. This will involve a range of agencies working together, and could include activities related to:

- **Innovation:** Supporting firms in the development of new products, goods and services has long been an objective of business support. Alongside national support (e.g. via Innovate UK), potential interventions could include advisory support (e.g. through leadership and innovation advisory activities); and ‘challenge-based’ approaches to develop solutions to identified needs in the public sector.
- **Adaption and adoption:** Before the crisis, there was an identified need to support firms in adapting to new technology and entering new markets. This will continue to be important: it is likely that for some businesses, the experience of the crisis will have increased their appetite for change, although there may still be significant cost barriers. Potential areas for action could focus on:
 - Advisory and potentially financial support in implementing **digital technologies or measures that will reduce firms’ carbon footprint** (this could include cash support for carbon reduction, where this can help to deliver savings to businesses in the medium-term and help drive demand for trades-related activity, such as electrical installation, glazing and so on).
 - Support in **diversifying or accessing new markets**, through adapting firms’ product range or mode of delivery to meet new demand (or accommodate forced constraints on demand), or through export.
- **Supply chain development:** There are long term ‘resilience’ benefits in strengthening local supply chains and building networks between firms. We will increase opportunities for local procurement, where this can help to safeguard local jobs and businesses and increase firms’ stake in the local community.
- **Securing and sustaining investment:** Kent and Medway has a strong track record in attracting national and global investment. We will work to attract and retain investment in a changing market, reinforcing the links with our technology, supply chain and skills offer.
- **Sector-specific support:** Some sectors are more conducive to local, place-based support than others. In addition to the substantial national package of support for arts and creative industries, Kent’s Arts Development Fund has been refocused to support businesses through the crisis – and this will continue to be a high priority as the sector continues to be severely impacted. There are also established sector-focused support programmes for the food and farming sector (via Produced in Kent) and the visitor economy (via Visit Kent), which also offer a route to the innovation, adoption and adaption activities highlighted above.
- **New entrants:** New business starts and growing early-stage businesses are important to the dynamism of the economy, and may be hampered if there is a general unwillingness from commercial lenders to take risks. There could be a value in support for new starts where there are clear business plans and potential to scale up – including through flexible workspace and access to advice.

- 3.20 This is a complex package of measures, which will require funding from a number of sources and could be delivered by a range of different providers. Many of the 'building blocks' are already in place (for example, through Locate in Kent, Visit Kent the LOCASE low carbon programme, Kent International Business, the innovation services delivered by the universities, services provided at local level, and so on), but there could be scope for further investment from (for example) residual ERDF funds or other funding packages that the Government might seek to devolve.
- 3.21 As the business need is likely to be significant, the first step is to develop a package of potential products, scalable over time, which could either seek funding or be supported by existing partners. In the first instance, this will take a high-level business case approach, considering evidence of need (in the context of the existing available product range and the likely 'market' – i.e. what's the gap?), delivery capacity and capability, financial viability and anticipated benefits, taking into account:
- Actions that are being delivered already and will support recovery (i.e. relevant 'business as usual')
 - Additional measures that could be taken by joint working among local partners or through the redeployment of existing resources
 - Measures that will only be possible with additional or external resource, and which will likely need to form the basis of an 'ask and offer' of central Government.
- 3.22 We will seek to progress the development of a package of interventions over the rest of the quarter, with a view to developing a credible programme that could (in whole or in part) secure investment.

Supporting the anchors of innovation and growth

- 3.23 As well as the wider business population, there are some **sectors and technologies in which Kent and Medway has significant assets**. Examples of these include the concentration of horticulture and plant science R&D at NIAB-EMR in East Malling, and the life science capabilities at Discovery Park. While relatively small in terms of overall employment and business stock, these offer scope for higher value employment, links with the higher education base and potentially clustering effects. More broadly, Kent and Medway's **higher education** sector is an important driver of science and innovation, vitally important in developing advanced skills to support the local economy and in directly supporting the wider business base.
- 3.24 Developing these assets will an important part of Renewal and Resilience – and will contribute to long-term productivity growth. We will support and seek to add value to proposals to the Strength in Places Fund and similar programmes, and we will build our understanding of Kent and Medway's innovation landscape (across business and higher education), to identify where focused support can best make a difference.

Channel 4: People: Enabling people to access work and skills to reach their potential

- 3.26 The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to lead to an employment crisis. As the evidence in Chapter 2 sets out, claimant count numbers have more than doubled since March, and as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme comes to an end, it is highly likely that we will see a significant rise in unemployment. Even on its most optimistic scenario, the Office for Budget Responsibility anticipates that unemployment could rise to around 9.7% by the end of 2020. We also know that younger workers are likely to be more vulnerable, and the 'scarring' effects on those just entering the labour market are greater.
- 3.27 In anticipation of rising unemployment, the Government's *Plan for Jobs* announced a series of labour market measures, especially focused on younger workers. These include:
- a new **Kickstart** scheme. This will offer 6 month paid work placements for 16-24-year olds on Universal Credit, broadly similar in concept to the Future Jobs Fund established following the financial crash in 2009, although this time involving private sector employers
 - additional funding for employers providing work experience and Traineeships
 - additional funding for employers for each new Apprentice that they hire
 - a substantial expansion of careers and work advisory services
- 3.28 In the past, local partners have had a major role in the delivery of counter-recessionary employment schemes. For example, the Future Jobs Fund was mostly delivered by local authorities: our experience in Kent and Medway was that local dialogue with employers and the supplementary support that we were able to provide to prospective recruits were very important to the success of the scheme.
- 3.29 Further information is awaited from Government as to how the newly-announced schemes will be rolled out – but it is again likely that local partners will have an important role in making these initiatives deliver for the people of Kent and Medway. In any case, the likely scale of the crisis means that it is vital that we take urgent and coordinated action to respond.

Employment Task Force

- 3.30 To manage our response, **we will establish a Kent and Medway Employment Task Force**. This will build on previous experience of successful task forces – temporary, task-oriented and focused on the central challenge of rising unemployment and what we collectively need to do to limit and reverse it. It will exist in the context of the Government's proposed interventions, and will identify how these can be best supported, and where they can be supplemented by additional local action.
- 3.31 The key terms of reference for the Task Force are set out below:

Employment Task Force: Headline terms of reference

The Kent and Medway Employment Task Force will

- Identify and progress initiatives that will mitigate the extent and impact of unemployment, under-employment and economic inactivity, including:
 - Temporary employment and employment subsidy schemes, including those recently announced by Government
 - Intermediate labour market initiatives
 - Jobs brokerage and information, advice and guidance schemes
 - Sector-specific initiatives, including driven by the private sector
 - Additional training and re-training capacity
 - Measures to maintain demand for training and skills (especially Apprenticeships and work-based learning) during recession
- Secure resources to meet identified needs
- Identify opportunities for innovation in addressing the employment crisis
- Maintain an awareness of the current state of the labour market
- Ensure that actions progressed in support of future employment contribute to the three principles for Renewal and Resilience set out in the Plan (Greener Futures; Productive and Open; and Better Opportunities, Fairer Chances)

- 3.32 This is an extensive agenda. To deliver it, it will be important that the Task Force engages effectively with DWP/ Jobcentre Plus in central Government, higher and further education and with other delivery partners in Kent and Medway. We will be open-minded about the role that local partners will play, drawing on – but not being limited to – our experience of delivering employment and brokerage schemes following the previous recession.
- 3.33 The Task Force will publish an initial action plan, following further guidance from Government on the operation of the national response. In the meantime, to support the work of the Task Force, we will refresh Kent and Medway's Workforce Skills Evidence Base to provide an up-to-date source of information on likely sources of employer demand.

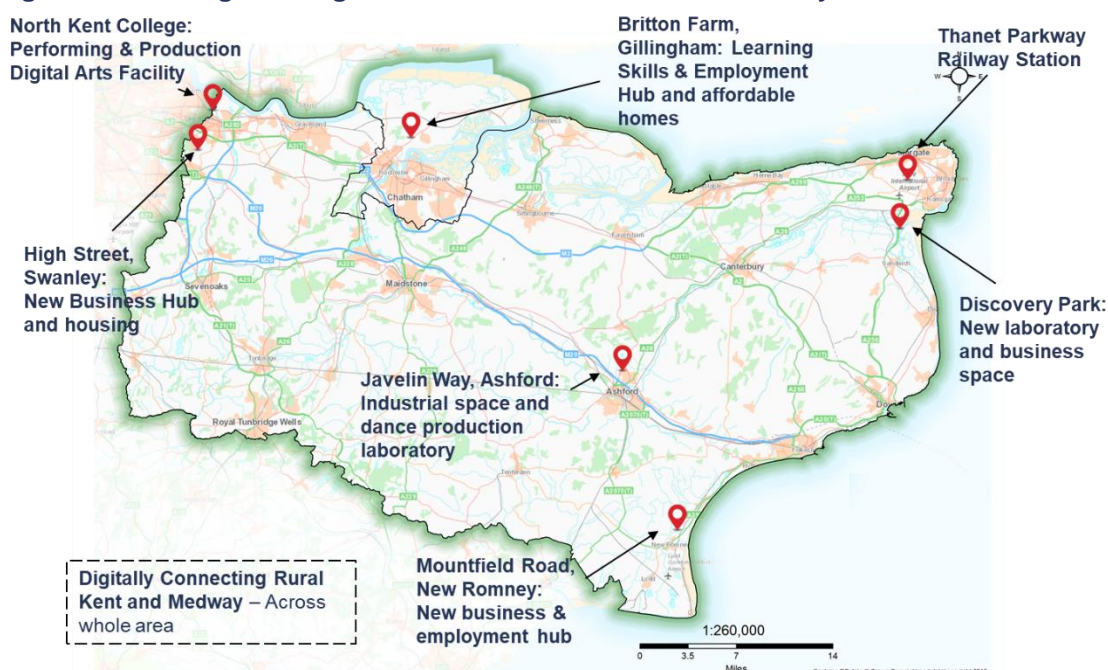
Channel 5: Investment: Planning and investing now for a sustainable future

- 3.34 Long-term capital investment is important for renewal and resilience. Most major projects will fall outside the scope of this 18-month Plan, but we will progress future investment planning and we will aim to bring forward capital spending where it will help to deliver a greener, more productive economy.

Accelerating infrastructure investment

Accelerating capital projects can be a useful counter-recessionary measure. This includes £37 million investment from the **Getting Building Fund**, which will support the delivery of eight projects across Kent and Medway over the next 18 months – stimulating economic activity and advancing investment for the long term:

Figure 3-2: Getting Building Fund investment in Kent and Medway



Kent County Council. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2016

- 3.35 We welcome these initiatives – and we anticipate that there may be further schemes announced. To ensure that Kent and Medway is on the ‘front foot’ in responding to what are often very short-term timescales, **we will build a longer-term pipeline of infrastructure projects**. Consistent with our key principles, we will concentrate on projects that promote long-term sustainability and decarbonisation, and which support innovation and business growth.
- 3.36 It is also important that counter-recessionary accelerated investment schemes create value in the short-term for local residents and help to drive the skills and employment objectives set out in Channel 4. We will expect schemes to actively recruit local labour and to engage with Jobcentre Plus, skills providers and any brokerage or other labour market initiatives that the Employment Task Force brings forward.

Supporting a Green Recovery

Many short-term capital interventions can deliver long-term environmental benefits as well as more immediate employment outcomes. The Government has already announced a series of measures (including the Green Homes Grant retrofit scheme and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme). There will be an important role in making sure the benefits of these ‘stick’ locally – for example, through the ongoing development of Kent and Medway’s low carbon supply chain.

More broadly, a wide range of energy efficiency and ‘natural capital’ schemes offer the potential to create jobs and opportunities for SMEs while being relatively quick to deliver and low cost in capital terms. Within our pipeline of infrastructure projects, we will identify and make the case for ‘shovel-ready’ environmental works, so that these are ready to come forward when investment opportunities arise.

Building a digital future

- 3.37 The pandemic has accelerated our use of digital technology as more people have worked from home and adopted new methods of communicating with colleagues, friends and family. It has also demonstrated the resilience of our digital infrastructure.
- 3.38 However, for many in rural Kent and Medway, broadband connectivity remains insufficient for modern needs. We are already putting additional investment into the Kent Broadband Top-up Voucher scheme and we will seek further funds to expand this to meet demand.

Unlocking infrastructure

- 3.39 We are already building the case for the delivery of advance infrastructure through the proposed **Kent and Medway Infrastructure Proposition**. The timescale of this will run beyond the horizon of this Plan, but the current crisis may change the balance of the economic case (for example, if private sector delivery is unviable in the medium term without upfront infrastructure investment).
- 3.40 Meanwhile, **we will explore measures to bring forward housing and commercial development** where schemes have stalled in the short term. This will include working with Government and developers to identify opportunities for temporary financial solutions.

Investing in the Gateway to the UK

Kent has a vital role as a Gateway between Europe and the rest of the UK. Its resilience is essential to national trade and prosperity, especially in the context of the UK’s changing trading relationship with the EU.

We will take forward opportunities to strengthen the infrastructure and economic base of our ports, including through Freeport designation at the Port of Dover and associated sites. Through the Straits Committee, will continue to maintain and strengthen our dialogue and cooperation with our neighbours in France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Capital intervention to protect jobs and businesses

- 3.41 Finally, **there may be situations in which the public sector needs to intervene in a direct way to safeguard employment**, to secure new investment in an environment which is likely to be highly competitive (in the context of over-capacity), or to secure land and premises for future economic use or housing delivery once the current crisis has passed. Historically, agencies such as the Regional Development Agencies and English Partnerships would have taken this role (and Homes England potentially still could in respect of housing sites). But there may be a role for local partners as a strategic actor. This should be considered carefully, and with a view to longer term strategy, although in the shorter term, we will work to explore the viability of potential structures, building on (for example) City Deal partnerships elsewhere.

4. Moving forward

Developing Renewal and Resilience

- 4.1 This Plan is written in the context of a rapidly changing economic and public health landscape. The framework for action will therefore need to be kept under review alongside the impacts evidence base and the Government's evolving policy stance. It should therefore be regarded as a 'living document': we envisage an initial review in autumn 2020.
- 4.2 In the meantime, the actions highlighted in the Plan need to proceed at pace – especially the establishment of the Employment Task Force, which should have a central role in addressing the anticipated jobs crisis.

Ownership

- 4.3 All partners have a stake in overcoming the economic crisis and 'building back better'. The Renewal and Resilience Plan will therefore be owned by Kent and Medway Economic Partnership, bringing together leaders in business, local government and education, and KMEP and its members will regularly review progress.

Ways of working

- 4.4 Aside from formal governance, the way in which we work to progress Renewal and Resilience is important. This will be underpinned by:
- **Partnership:** Some areas of activity will likely require district leadership, some will probably be driven at county-wide level; all will require business insight; and all ought to relate to initiatives that emerge nationally. Strong local partnerships and 'governance' (both formal and informal) will be essential in ensuring a focus on those issues that are of distinctive importance to the Kent and Medway economy. KMEP, Business Advisory Board and Kent and Medway's local authority economic development teams will all have an important role.
 - **Initiative:** The current crisis is unusual, in that it is universal: *everywhere* in the UK (and most of the world) is affected. Government intervention will be demanded everywhere, and the Government's measures will be economy-wide. So local initiative ("doing it anyway") will be important. In that context, thinking through the deployment of available funds and how they could make the most significant impact should be taken into consideration alongside the channels of action set out above.
 - **Pragmatism:** Typically, interventions seeking government funding go through a business case process. This needs to be proportionate to the scale of the crisis and the speed of the response. In every case, we will start thinking now about the high level case for intervention ("*why do we think this will work, and how will we know when it has?*"), and we will be robust in that analysis – but in the current context, delivery at pace is the primary consideration.

Annex A: Summary of sectoral impacts

A.1 The table below summarises the implications of the Covid-19 crisis on selected sectors in Kent and Medway:

Table A-1: Sectoral impacts with current jobs and relative concentration in Kent and Medway

Sector	Scale and concentration	Potential impacts
Agriculture and horticulture	11,000 jobs LQ: 2.3	Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -6.3% Estimated output loss in 2020: 0% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector generally resilient given steady food demand, although demand from catering/ hospitality sector slow to return Labour shortages due to loss of migrant labour
Energy, utilities and environmental technologies	8,800 jobs LQ: 0.9	Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -8.0% Estimated output loss in 2020: -4% to -7% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely to be resilient as most output serves essential demand Strong longer term prospects for growth in Kent & Medway
Manufacturing	47,000 jobs LQ: 0.8	Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -18.0% Estimated output loss in 2020: -10% to -17% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to growth following relaxation of restrictions. Almost all firms operational, although many below capacity Kent's exposure to vulnerable sectors (e.g. automotive, aviation) limited Risk of loss of skills through workforce attrition Risk of 'no deal' Brexit impacting on markets and supply chains
Construction	45,000 jobs LQ: 1.4	Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -29.8% Estimated output loss in 2020: -14% to -25% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major contraction in lockdown; sharp return to growth since (esp. in residential market) Substantial experience of cyclical peaks and troughs, so resilience – but recession typically means loss of skills and lengthy time to rebuild
Transport and logistics	40,000 jobs LQ: 1.2	Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -29.5% Estimated output loss in 2020: -17% to -29% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return of demand and activity in freight sector Passenger transport still very subdued Reliance on ageing workforce with implications for absence
Retail and wholesale	123,000 jobs LQ: 1.2	Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -23.7% Estimated output loss in 2020: -15% to -26%

Sector	Scale and concentration	Potential impacts
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Switch to online retail, accounting for much of the return of demand Crisis likely to accelerate longer term structural shifts
Visitor economy	69,000 jobs LQ: 1.0	<p>Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -71.7% Estimated output loss in 2020: -23% to -44%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collapse in demand, likely to last for some time as social distancing persists and consumers lack confidence Specific challenges including loss of summer season, and likely loss of much international trade
Digital tech	16,000 jobs LQ: 0.7	<p>Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -10.8% Estimated output loss in 2020: -5% to -8%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term sector growth and rising demand for digital solutions (although loss of trade in marketing and local demand-responsive activities) High dependence on freelancers in some sub-sectors
Cultural and creative	12,000 jobs LQ: 0.7	<p>No OBR estimated output loss, but likely to be similar to visitor economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major shutdown of activity in short term. Likely to persist for some time High reliance on freelance/ self-employment
Finance and professional services	135,000 jobs LQ: 0.8	<p>Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -2.5% (finance); -28.3% (business admin & support) Estimated output loss in 2020: -5% to -8% (finance); -8% to -14% (business admin & support)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weaker demand, although likely to be generally resilient Some other business services likely to be more strongly hit Although not visible in jobs data, the sector is a large employer through jobs in London and is dependent on future City growth
Health and social care	95,000 jobs LQ: 1.0	<p>Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -24.2% Estimated output loss in 2020: -5% to -8%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rising demand for health services, investment potentially increased following crisis
Education	72,000 jobs LQ: 1.2	<p>Output change Mar-May 2020 (actual): -37.8% Estimated output loss in 2020: -13% to -23%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially severe impacts on university sector through loss of international student income and perhaps (in recession) weaker domestic demand
Life sciences	2,000 jobs LQ: 0.7	<p>No estimated output loss, but likely to be resilient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High investment overall, likely to be reinforced through crisis

Annex B: References

1. HM Treasury (July 2020), *Plan for Jobs* (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>)
2. ONS, GDP Monthly Estimates, May 2020
3. The data presented in the chart is for the UK: the OBR has not prepared sub-national estimates for its scenarios. However, unemployment in Kent and Medway generally tracks the national average, and has done so for many years (usually, the Kent and Medway rates are slightly below the national picture).
4. Kent County Council (<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent/economy-and-employment>)

This document is available in alternative formats and can be explained in a range of languages.
Please contact alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk

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