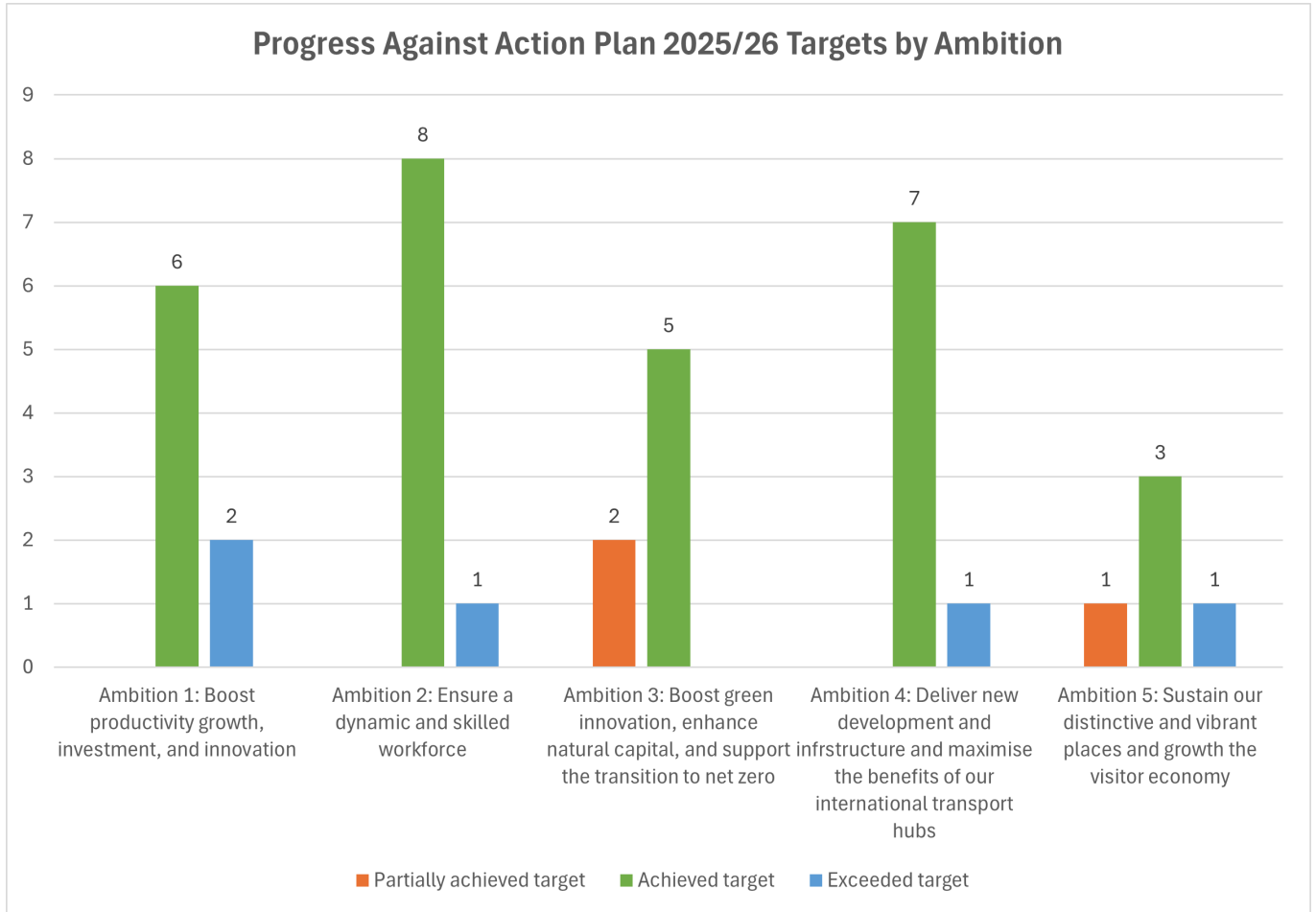


West Sussex Economic Strategy 2025 – 2035

Action Plan: Progress Update 2025 – 2026

Figure 1 - Bar chart of progress against Action Plan targets for 2025/26



The table below provides further narrative detail on the progress against the targets for each action area in the Action Plan.

Action Areas	25/26 Target(s)	Actuals (as of 31 Mar 2026)	Commentary
1. Start-up and business support across the county including delivery of Growth Hub service	Better coordinated approach to business support provision Delivery of Growth Hub service with 500 businesses supported in 25/26 Respond to new national Business Growth Service	Achieved – Growth Hub supported 440 businesses in 25/26	The Growth Hub achieved its 25/26 target for supporting businesses.
2. Boost the adoption of digital and other advanced technologies for businesses	Delivery of Made Smarter for manufacturing businesses, with 7 supported in West Sussex by March 2026	Exceeded target - Made Smarter supported 30 businesses in West Sussex in 25/26	Made Smarter exceeded its 25/26 target with 30 West Sussex businesses being accepted onto the programme.
2. Boost the adoption of digital and other advanced technologies for businesses	Growing Sussex 5G Innovation Region	Achieved	The Growing Sussex project is in delivery with partners and was awarded an additional £700k in funding in May 2025 for additional use cases to be developed.
3. Agree priority sectors, cluster, and innovation development, and establish working arrangements for taking the work forward	West Sussex Economic Growth Board (WSEGB) sign off Develop agreed sector propositions by March 2026 Secure funding for workstream	Achieved	The WSEGB agreed the priority sectors and clusters for growth and a research exercise was undertaken in Autumn 2025, followed with an engagement event in February 2026 with a variety of partners to discuss findings from the research. Funding has been secured for taking this forward and will be considered in the 26/27 Action Plan.

Action Areas	25/26 Target(s)	Actuals (as of 31 Mar 2026)	Commentary
3. Agree priority sectors, cluster, and innovation development, and establish working arrangements for taking the work forward	Delivery of Create South East in 25/26 to target at least 10 West Sussex businesses	Exceeded target – Create South East supported 44 business in 25/26	Create South East in West Sussex exceeded its 25/26 target. Two local West Sussex legacy events were held where 40 businesses attended.
4. Agree positioning on international trade and inward investment	Gatwick Airport Economic Zone proposition agreed Attend UKREiiF 2025 as Gatwick Airport Economic Zone delegation in May 2025	Achieved	Attended UKREiiF 2025 as part of the Gatwick Region Airport Economic Zone delegation. The delegation included 27 partners from across the public and private sectors. Attendance at the Gatwick Economic Summit conference in November 2025 to provide input into the AEZ discussions and planning for 2026.
5. Consider and propose interventions on working age population challenges	Review existing activity across the county Agree initial action areas by March 2026	Achieved	Various activities are currently in delivery in support of these challenges through collaborative programmes such as, Skills Bootcamps, Connect to Work and the Get Sussex Working Plan. New areas of work for 26/27 include the Work Well initiative.
6. Ensure local skills provision is responsive to emerging and changing needs	Deliver priorities as agreed by Future Sussex Delivery of LSIF projects	Achieved	Attended Skills Summit in Summer 2025 and contributed to the development of LSIP 2.0.
7. Respond to Skills England review of post-16 provision	Review and respond to findings from engagement on the Growth and Skills Levy in early 2025	Achieved	Work is already in development through Skills Bootcamps, and we will promote messaging on apprenticeship reforms through social media channels.

Action Areas	25/26 Target(s)	Actuals (as of 31 Mar 2026)	Commentary
8. Support the provision of training to meet the needs of occupations and industries	Deliver higher-level technical qualifications in engineering, construction, digital, and business and management in 2025/2026	Achieved	The Sussex & Surrey Institute of Technology (IoT) officially opened in October 2025 and will be delivering courses throughout 26/27.
8. Support the provision of training to meet the needs of occupations and industries	Deliver 28 courses through Skills Bootcamps in 25/26	Exceeded target with 40 courses available in 25/26	Skills Bootcamps was launched in Summer 2025 and exceeded its 25/26 target by delivering 40 different courses with 991 learner starts.
9. Ensure delivery of green skills provision	Promote take up of green skills courses to local businesses	Achieved	A range of green skill courses were promoted as part of Skills Bootcamp delivery and are being incorporated into the LSIP 2.0.
10. Link schools and colleges with businesses to provide careers education reflecting the local economy	Achieve 5.7 out of 8 Gatsby Benchmarks by September 2025 –which provide a blueprint for schools and colleges to achieve ‘good careers education’.	Achieved 2.9 (against revised benchmark of 2.5)	The Gatsby Benchmarks have been updated by the Gatsby Foundation and adopted into government guidance for schools, colleges, and independent training providers from September 2025. Due to this, a ‘data reset’ is underway across the system, with self-assessment tools for schools and colleges being used to measure careers education against the new benchmarks. The 2.9 is based against the new benchmarks.
11. Support priority groups into employment	Connect to Work programme launch by October 2025	Achieved	The Connect to Work programme launched in autumn 2025 and achieved 175 programme starts by the end of March 2026. 175 residents were enrolled and actively receiving support from a 1-1 Employment Advisor.
11. Support priority groups into employment	Develop local Get Britain Working plans by Autumn 2025	Achieved	The Get Sussex Working Plan was agreed in autumn 2025. The final plan and supporting implementation plan were published in early 2026.

Action Areas	25/26 Target(s)	Actuals (as of 31 Mar 2026)	Commentary
12. Support businesses to reduce energy waste and decarbonise	Solar group purchasing offer for businesses launched by autumn 2025 Agree wider energy infrastructure support by March 2026	Partially achieved	Procurement for the delivery partner of the solar group purchasing offer was delayed until early 2026 as no suitable tenders were received. Local Area Energy Markets and Local Area Energy Planning were discussed as part of wider support for 26/27.
12. Support businesses to reduce energy waste and decarbonise	WSCC action with top 50 spend suppliers in 2025/2026 District and Borough support programmes	Achieved	West Sussex local authorities worked together to capture emissions from suppliers through the Climate Essentials platform, as part of a 2-year pilot. There is currently data from 100 suppliers, representing 40% of spend for 23/24.
13. Create carbon offsetting offers for businesses	Business offsetting propositions agreed by March 2026	Achieved	South Downs National Park has developed carbon offsetting solutions for businesses.
14. Support environmental projects as nature-based solutions for diversification for land-based sectors	Develop models of best practice by March 2026	Partially achieved	Took part in conversations around nature-based solutions and alignment with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for West Sussex. Work is underway to progress a pipeline of nature-based solutions in line with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for inclusion in the 26/27 Action Plan.
15. Engage the National Energy System Operator (NESO) on issues raised by businesses regarding national grid capacity	Convene conversations with businesses on capacity issues by March 2026	Achieved	Several discussions took place with land-based industries and business parks in 2025 to feedback on strategic energy investment needs from 2028-2033.

Action Areas	25/26 Target(s)	Actuals (as of 31 Mar 2026)	Commentary
16. Delivery of existing Growth Deals to enable place based growth	Seven Growth Deals on track for delivery in 25/26	Achieved	All Growth Deals were on track for delivery in 25/26. Projects included; Bognor Regis Esplanade Public Real improvements, Manor Royal Superhub bus stop transformation, Worthing Montague Gardens transformation, and revitalisation of the West Green in Littlehampton.
17. Agree refreshed Growth Deals informed by place based and Economic Strategy priorities	Seven refreshed five-year Growth Deals agreed by March 2026	Achieved	All Growth Deals have been refreshed in line with the West Sussex Economic Strategy ambitions and priorities.
18. Lobby for and deliver strategic transport infrastructure improvements identified in West Sussex Transport Plan to support economy priorities, including through Transport for the South East (TfSE)	Deliver priorities identified in the West Sussex Transport Plan in 2025/2026 Ensure alignment with new TfSE Transport Strategy, with representation by the WSEGB on the TfSE Business Advisory Group in 2025/2026	Achieved	The latest Annual Monitoring Report for the Transport Plan was published highlighting an overall positive improvement against performance. The West Sussex Economic Growth Board regularly discuss transport infrastructure and provide feedback through the TfSE Business Advisory Group.
19. Enable digital infrastructure in hard-to-reach areas	Project Gigabit delivery on track to reach 72% premises able to access gigabit-capable connectivity.	Exceeded target at 77.5% in March 2025	By March 2025 77.5% of premises had access to gigabit-capable connectivity with more work delivering in 26/27.
20. Progress plans on the future of high streets and town centres	Locally determined	Partially achieved	Various initiatives delivered through District and Borough plans and discussions took place as part of the new Business Growth Service.
21. Collaborate to maximise opportunities from the visitor economy	Sussex Strategy for Growth delivery plan on track in 2025/2026 Local destination plans	Achieved	The Sussex Strategy for Growth launched in 2025. LVEP Advisory Board appointed in May 2025.