

Action Plan 2030

Bringing the South West Vision to life



Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction: Creating lasting value for the South West	6
Explorative engagement	8
Theme 1: Developing the South West knowledge and skills base	9
Theme 2: Leadership, governance and coordination	10
Theme 3: Collaborating to deliver sustainable solutions	10
Public attitudes to net zero and infrastructure	11
Policy review and synthesis	12
How SWIP community feedback relates to the national documents	13
Remaining gaps and tensions	16
What can the South West do?	16
SWIP's Action Plan 2030	18



Executive summary

The South West Infrastructure Partnership (SWIP) **Action Plan 2030** sets out how SWIP will translate the long-term ambitions of the **South West Vision 2050**¹ into focused, practical action over the remainder of this decade. It represents SWIP's interpretation of the Vision, informed by extensive engagement with the regional infrastructure community, research into public attitudes, and detailed analysis of national policy and strategy.

Context: Building on regional frameworks

In 2021, SWIP published the **Net Zero Route Map**² which identifies three key pillars required to support infrastructure decarbonisation in the region:

- **Mindset and leadership:** Promoting a net zero systems approach that prioritises leadership, education, ambition, demand reduction, experimentation, reform, social value, haste, imagination and partnership.
- **Carbon literacy:** Building knowledge and skills around the net zero agenda amongst communities and organisations.
- **Collaboration:** To empower infrastructure professionals based on robust appraisal processes, stringent governance, and a shared purpose; delivering solutions through enabling technologies, digital twins, solution schemes, business investment models and better supply chain and market management.

The **South West Vision 2050**, published in 2022, built on this by articulating a shared ambition for infrastructure, setting out a strategic framework for the delivery of the following vision:

- **Net zero, climate resilient infrastructure**
- **A well connected, inclusive economy** supporting productivity and skills
- **Healthy, thriving communities** with access to services and opportunities
- **Protected and enhanced natural environments**
- **Joined-up infrastructure planning** across sectors and boundaries

Running through the Vision are cross cutting principles of net zero, climate resilience, inclusive growth, nature recovery, and integrated "systems thinking" that recognises how infrastructure sectors depend on one another.

¹ <https://southwestinfrastructurepartnership.co.uk/initiatives/south-west-vision/>

² <https://southwestinfrastructurepartnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SWIP-Net-Zero-Route-Map.pdf>



Testing our thinking in a fast-changing environment

Since the publication of the Vision, the context for infrastructure delivery has shifted significantly. National policy has moved decisively towards long-term, place-based infrastructure planning, including the introduction of a 10-year UK Infrastructure Strategy and the creation of the National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority (NISTA).

At the same time, local governance has continued to evolve, climate impacts are accelerating, cost of living pressures remain acute. Meanwhile, lines of deprivation deepen. New opportunities have emerged in areas such as clean energy and nature based solutions (Nbs).

Our process of development

In response, SWIP undertook a structured review of the Vision between 2022 and 2026. This work brought together:

- **Explorative engagement** with the SWIP community, including workshops on climate adaptation, enabling better infrastructure and future regional priorities.
- **Public attitudes research** exploring how different audiences across the South West understand, engage with and prioritise infrastructure and net zero.
- **A synthesis of national policies, strategy and professional guidance**, used to test alignment between regional priorities and emerging delivery frameworks.

The review confirmed that the **South West Vision 2050 remains robust and relevant**. However, it also identified a clear need for SWIP to sharpen its focus, strengthen its role as a regional integrator, and concentrate on the systemic enablers of delivery.

This document summarises the key themes emerging from engagement and evidence, explores how these align with national policies, and defines a focused action plan that clarifies SWIP's role, priorities and partnerships for the remainder of this decade.





Building on our Vision: Action Plan 2030

This document sets out the findings of that review and defines a focused Action Plan to 2030. It sets us on the right path to delivering against our 2050 Vision and identifies SWIP's four priorities for the remainder of the decade:

- 1. Developing regional knowledge, skills and capability** through partnerships with existing sectoral groups, collaborative learning and shared playbooks.
- 2. Drive stronger regional infrastructure coordination** through system integration, effective advocacy, and a compelling South West evidence base.
- 3. Support ongoing public engagement with infrastructure**, supporting the infrastructure community with both project-level engagement and regional storytelling.
- 4. Scaling collaboration** around resilience and NbS to deliver long-term value for communities, the environment and the South West economy.



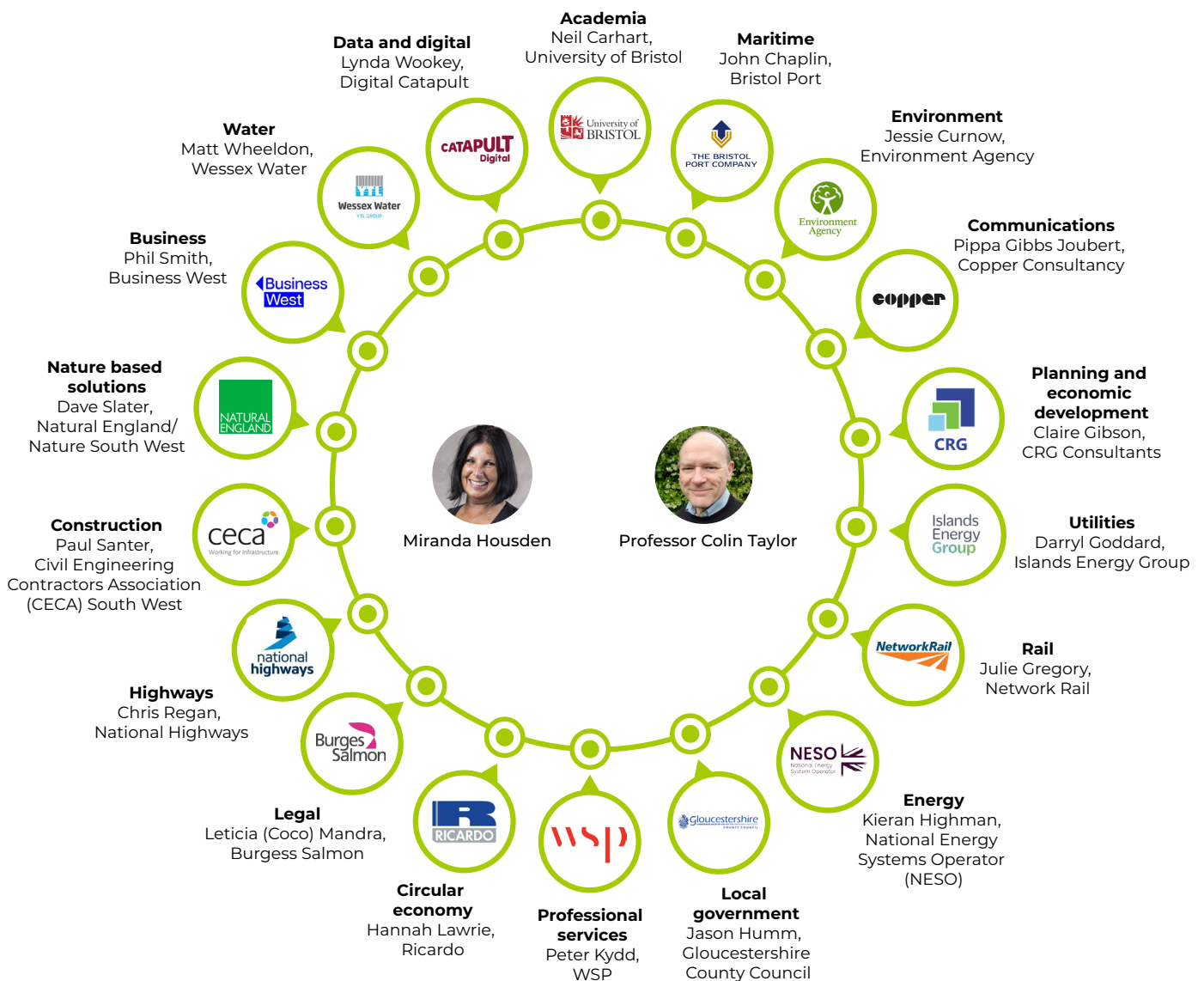
Creating lasting value for the South West

About SWIP's steering group

The South West Infrastructure Partnership is a cross-sector infrastructure community established in 2017 by the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) South West. Since then, it has sought to identify and resolve key regional issues by breaking down silos, sparking collaborative conversations and bringing people together to create an informed, coordinated regional voice on infrastructure.

The Partnership is governed by a steering group of senior leaders who represent a broad cross-section of specialist fields from the region, and representatives from across industry, academia and local government. Through sharing ongoing, cross-sectoral knowledge and insights, the steering group has been driving a region-specific approach that responds to the South West's unique challenges and opportunities, supports the delivery of resilient, future-ready infrastructure, and advocates for investment in, and recognition of, the region.

The development of this Action Plan has been driven by the combined expertise of this steering group. Alongside SWIP Chair **Professor Colin Taylor** (Emeritus Professor, University of Bristol) and co-founder **Miranda Housden** (Regional Director, ICE South West), the steering group comprises leaders from the following organisations.





Explorative engagement

Key insights from engagement and evidence

Between 2022 and 2026, we engaged with the SWIP community, exploring challenges, needs and priorities to inform our thinking, understand how best to maximise our value, and build consensus around a direction for the South West's infrastructure community.

Throughout our explorative engagement, we collected insights on the infrastructure community's needs and priorities throughout this. Across engagement activities, including workshops and roundtables, three themes, closely aligned with the Route Map Pillars, consistently emerged.



12 events



1,087 attendees

- 1. Developing the South West knowledge and skills base:** There are considerable challenges to delivering genuinely sustainable infrastructure that balances environmental, community and economic priorities. It is vital that the SWIP community pools cross-sector knowledge, skills and understanding to equip us to meet these challenges.
- 2. Leadership, governance and coordination:** Fragmented governance, gaps in data to inform decision-making, risk averse systems and short term funding cycles are preventing ambition from being translated into coordinated, large scale delivery. There is a clear gap at the regional level between national strategy and local implementation.
- 3. Collaborating to deliver sustainable solutions:** We need to harness NbS for growth, resilience and security, to future proof our critical infrastructure against climate change and its impacts on regional connectivity.





Theme 1: Developing the South West knowledge and skills base

Participants recognised that the next generation of infrastructure will be vital to decarbonising the South West, and as such we must balance environmental, community and economic priorities while ensuring resilience and value for money.

Participants recognised that 'business as usual' practices have created a range of blockers to delivering this, and highlighted the need to **develop skills, understanding and capabilities through cross-sector shared learnings**.

Challenges included:

- **Sector-specific decarbonisation:** Participants highlighted challenges across a range of sectors including food and farming, waste and the circular economy, utilities and heat networks, transport and logistics.
- **Life extension and repurposing:** The South West has considerable experience in the life extension of assets. There are many valuable lessons to be learned, including how to design in features that will aid future life extension and repurposing decisions.
- **Engaging communities:** A particular weakness identified was around building public understanding, engagement and buy-in to infrastructure delivery in the South West to enable transparent, two-way conversations that inform and shape infrastructure based on user needs. This must be addressed to enable the delivery of the right infrastructure, on time and on budget.
- **Filling the skills gap:** Participants highlighted that it is vital to identify needs and drive interest and engagement in training and development opportunities both amongst school leavers and those considering career changes.

Theme 2: Leadership, governance and coordination

Participants highlighted fragmented regional leadership, gaps in data around economic, environmental, public and resourcing needs, and a lack of regional coordination – all of which is undermining the ability to align outcomes, leverage resources, and ensure effective delivery.

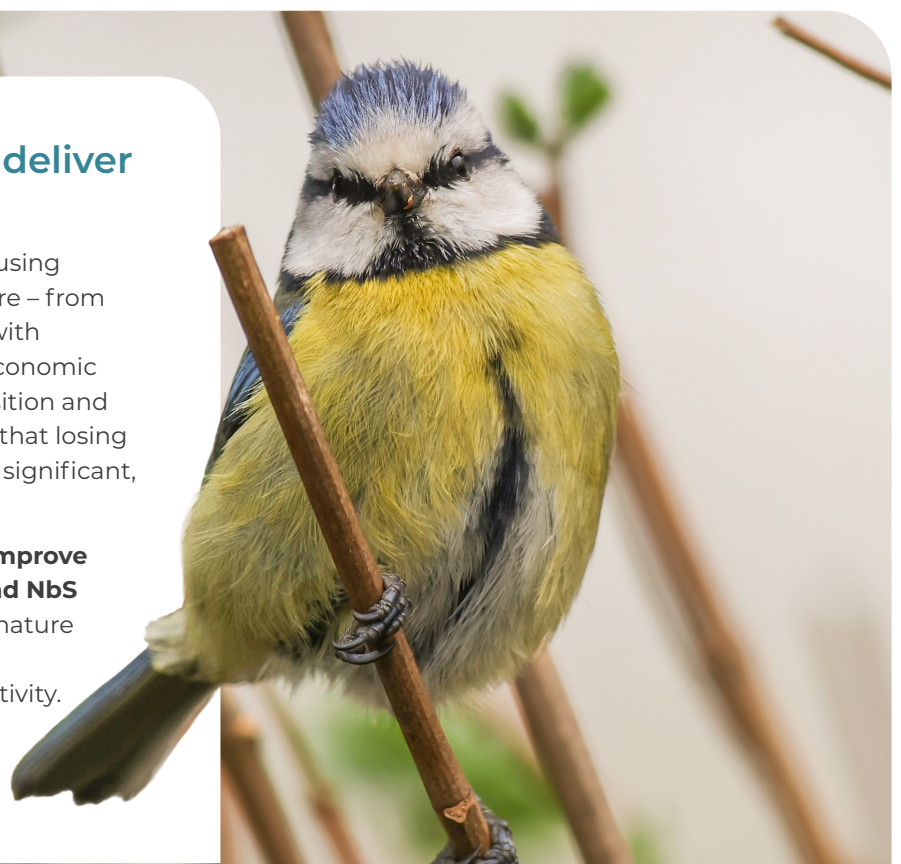
At the same time, the South West's abundant natural resources position the region perfectly to support clean energy innovation – particularly in terms of tidal, wind and geothermal energy. This can only happen by working across sectors to develop these opportunities and align investment priorities. Specific challenges and suggestions included:

- **The governance gap:** This had the most frequent and significant feedback. The National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority's (NISTA's) spatial approach to infrastructure planning and coordination across economic and social infrastructure across the South West has potential to improve regional delivery coordination.
- **Skills, capability, data and enablers of change:** Delivery is constrained by the gaps in skills, data, and institutional capability, limiting the region's ability to scale and sustain transformation. A robust dataset would inform long-term regional decision-making and could include the development of South West scenarios; human and nature needs analysis; an overarching economic impact assessment of infrastructure in the South West; and infrastructure performance monitoring.
- **Financing infrastructure:** The need for a review of different forms of infrastructure financing and how they relate to the formulation of a compelling South West infrastructure pipeline was identified.
- **Assuring ethical integrity:** Participants highlighted that the infrastructure system-of-systems is created by many actors whose mindsets, understanding, and consequent contributions must be fully and properly aligned to achieve high systemic functional integrity. A failure in ethical integrity can undermine the whole system. Maintaining ethical integrity goes beyond just maintaining a safety culture. It is the essential complement to a system's functional integrity.
- **Investment and economic incentives:** Participants highlighted that the current funding model, particularly regarding clean energy delivery, prioritises short-term, low-risk spending. This constrains investment, creating barriers to delivering truly sustainable infrastructure and causing frustration within the infrastructure community. While long-term decision-making is a clear directive within recent policy documents, the detail will significantly influence how this plays out locally. Both local government and the regional infrastructure community will require support to understand and implement new metrics around this.

Theme 3: Collaborating to deliver sustainable solutions

Increasingly severe weather events are causing significant damage to critical infrastructure – from strategic transport networks to utilities – with knock-on consequences for businesses, economic growth and communities. The unique position and qualities of the South West region means that losing connectivity to the rest of the country has significant, far-reaching impacts.

Participants recognised that we need to **improve integration with green infrastructure and NbS** – taking a partnership approach with the nature community to boost biodiversity, improve efficiencies and ensure landscape connectivity.



Public attitudes to net zero and infrastructure

SWIP and ICE South West worked with Copper Consultancy and BMG Research to explore how different audiences understand, perceive and engage with infrastructure and the net zero agenda in the South West. The report was based on the views of a demographically representative 1000 sample of people living in the region.

This research reinforced the findings set out by the infrastructure community, highlighting:

- The importance of relevance, trust and transparency in building societal support for infrastructure.
- Significant generational differences in attitudes and engagement.
- The need to communicate the near-term local benefits of decarbonisation projects rather than relying on abstract long-term narratives.



Key findings

The report identified several actionable insights, including:



Generational divides: Markedly different attitudes and behaviours between the generations – highlighting particular differences in how information is consumed across the generations, and sentiment in relation to net zero ambitions and infrastructure.



Relevance drives buy in: Support and engagement is closely linked to understanding. Visibility also shapes perceptions of value; people prioritise infrastructure that feels relevant to their lives over that which feels distant or abstract.



Building understanding, trust and credibility: This is vital to achieving acceptance and securing robust, representative feedback. This must include offering reassurances on environmental preservation, demonstrably taking community feedback onboard, and communicating transparently about disruption.



Making net zero real today, not tomorrow: Delivering net zero emissions is a long-term, global and complex concept, which can make it feel abstract and disconnected from everyday life. The term 'net zero' is inherently polarising – and views around this agenda are often driven by values instead of understanding. However, the shorter-term and local benefits it represents are popular – so it is vital to draw these out above long-term strategic goals in communications and engagement.



Rethink engagement to succeed: The research suggests that younger people are predominantly supportive of local infrastructure projects, and of the net zero agenda; but we rarely succeed in engaging these groups meaningfully. We must reconsider engagement channels, content, and mechanisms if we want to involve them in the infrastructure conversation.

Policy review and synthesis

This section provides a comprehensive synthesis of UK government infrastructure policy, professional institutional strategies, and the South West Infrastructure Partnership strategic framework. It integrates national policy, delivery system reform evidence, regional vision, theoretical underpinnings and empirical diagnostics with feedback provided by the SWIP community to understand where our areas for action should lie as we move towards 2030.

National policy and strategy papers

To understand fundamental changes to the UK's infrastructure policy landscape, and understand its relevance at a regional delivery level, we reviewed several core documents, including **The Green Book**³, **The Magenta Book**⁴, **UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy**⁵, **The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025**⁶, **UKRI Strategy**⁷, and **The Seventh Carbon Budget**⁸.

Together, these documents form a policy stack where the Industrial Strategy defines economic needs, the Infrastructure Strategy defines what must be built, the Carbon Budget sets permissible boundaries, and the Green and Magenta Books prescribe decision justification and evaluation.

Alongside this, we have drawn on the following key documents from the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and the National Engineering Policy Centre (NEPC):

- **Institutional strategies: The ICE Strategy 2030**⁹ sets organisational ambition, and the NEPC's report **Reviving our ageing infrastructure**¹⁰ which identifies seven enablers of change including strategy, finance, skills, data, innovation, societal awareness, and system coordination.
- **System-level assessments:** The ICE's **State of the Nation: Infrastructure in 2026**¹¹ diagnoses infrastructure readiness and delivery capability, reports on major project cost overruns and calls for governance, assurance, and data improvements.
- **Insights papers:** Policy guidance on sustainable infrastructure planning, climate resilience governance, housing infrastructure, and systems approaches identify system failures and propose practical recommendations.
- **ICE presidential roundtables:** Capturing expert consensus on workforce planning, energy systems, asset health, and delivery pinch points, providing sector agreement evidence.

These institutional documents emphasise the need for **system stewardship** over project-by-project delivery, focusing on skills, data, governance, asset health, and public confidence as critical enablers.

³ HM Treasury's mandatory framework for appraisal and business cases, setting out the ROAMEF cycle, Five Case Model, value-for-money principles, and place-based analysis to justify and prioritise infrastructure proposals.

⁴ Guidance on monitoring and evaluation focusing on theory of change, impact, and value-for-money evaluation to measure success post-decision.

⁵ **UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy (2025):** A whole-economy infrastructure strategy introducing long-term capital certainty (£725bn+), the National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority (NISTA), place-based business cases, and the National Infrastructure Pipeline, setting priorities for infrastructure delivery.

⁶ **The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy (2025):** A 10-year growth strategy focused on eight priority sectors, city regions and clusters, investment conditions, skills, data, and regulation, defining the economic purpose infrastructure should serve.

⁷ **UKRI Strategy 2022–2027:** National strategy for research, innovation, and clusters emphasizing people, places, innovation impact, and research infrastructures, aligning with industrial clusters and enabling conditions.

⁸ **Seventh Carbon Budget Climate Change Commission (CCC, 2025):** Statutory advice setting emissions caps for 2038–42, balanced pathways to Net Zero, and sector-specific decarbonisation trajectories, defining binding climate constraints for infrastructure decisions.

⁹ <https://www.ice.org.uk/media/2tgf2qeo/ice-strategy-2030.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://nepc.raeng.org.uk/media/fh0plphp/nepc-reviving-ageing-infrastructure-report.pdf>

¹¹ <https://knowledgehub.ice.org.uk/insight/state-nation-2026/>

How SWIP community feedback relates to the national documents

Confirming the diagnosis

Feedback from the SWIP community closely reflects the issues the national Industrial Strategy, Infrastructure Strategy and The Green Book are designed to address. Participants describe a region rich in natural assets, clean energy potential (especially floating offshore wind in the Celtic Sea), strong universities and creative industries, but one which is chronically underserved by national infrastructure investment, constrained by fragmented governance, and disadvantaged by appraisal methods that undervalue local strengths.

National policy commitments speak directly to these concerns. The Industrial Strategy's designation of clean energy as a priority growth sector, with business investment targeted to more than double to £30 billion, aligns with local frustration that the South West is not ambitious enough on clean energy¹². The Infrastructure Strategy's £7.9 billion flood defence programme, emphasis on NbS, investment in water infrastructure, and long-term funding certainty respond directly to regional concerns about flooding, drought, water stress and short-termism.



¹² In discussions around clean energy, multiple statements (16 total) reflected frustration with a lack of ambition, risk aversion within the public, political and financial spheres, and slow funding models. Statements include: "We are not ambitious enough. We are risk averse about change"; "Private finance [is] risk averse but [a] rapid follower"; "[We're] risk averse to new technologies [so] don't reap the rewards"; "Funding is a blocker"; "Planning, policy, government takes such a long time, but development companies don't wait around. [They] go to faster progressing countries first"; "Rigidity in law at local level without context leads to large scale blockers."



The governance gap

The strongest alignment between the feedback from the SWIP community's workshops and roundtables and national policy is on governance. Participants' concerns about fragmented responsibilities, and the absence of a coordinating regional function are directly addressed by two developments.

First, the creation of two national bodies:

- The National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA), with a mandate to take a spatial, cross-sector approach to infrastructure planning.
- The Network Energy Systems Operator (NESO), who are developing a Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP). This will also take a whole energy system view to planning decarbonisation and associated energy infrastructure investment in this South West. This will ensure place-based priorities, data and other considerations are included in planning for the energy we need. This includes establishing a South West RESP Strategic Board and working groups to oversee its production.

Second, the Infrastructure Strategy's commitment to place-based business cases, which require government to assess how projects interact rather than treating them in isolation.

The Industrial Strategy's emphasis on regional partnerships, sector councils and devolved growth funding aligns with calls for more meaningful devolution and coordinated leadership across the South West's complex local authority landscape.

Appraisal, funding and skills

Concerns about short funding cycles, cost barriers and the failure to consider whole-life value are addressed by 10-year funding settlements, a rolling national infrastructure pipeline, and The Green Book's removal of rigid benefit-cost ratio thresholds. Participants' call for NbS to be taken seriously in appraisal is reinforced by the Infrastructure Strategy's explicit inclusion of NbS in flood investment and The Green Book's strengthened environmental valuation guidance.

Skills shortages are another major point of alignment. The Industrial Strategy commits to reforming skills provision, expanding engineering and clean energy apprenticeships, and giving employers more flexibility through the Growth and Skills Levy. National infrastructure investment is explicitly linked to job creation and domestic supply chains. **The challenge for the South West is having the institutional capacity to capture these opportunities.**

Clean energy, nature and communities

The South West has significant industrial and economic growth areas including clean energy (battery manufacturing, offshore and onshore wind, solar, hydrogen), defence, aviation, and the creative industries.

Spatial energy infrastructure planning needs local, place-based input to ensure the region has the energy infrastructure it needs for the future. NESO's work as part of its transitional Regional Energy Spatial Plan¹³ (RESP) highlights many unique strengths and challenges the South West faces from an infrastructure perspective. It has:



The highest concentration of ports and harbours in the UK.



Substantial hosting capabilities for additional battery storage and onshore wind.



Ambitious housing targets, involving careful consideration of infrastructure.



Leading example of decarbonised heat, demonstrating an evolution from gas heating to heat networks for urban areas¹⁴, and a wider heat pump roll-out.



The highest solar power across Great Britain (with 5,356 MW projected by 2031).



Many older buildings, for which energy efficiency retrofit measures are planned.



Hinkley Point C, which will be the region's largest electrical generator.



A booming tourism economy, which is driving plans to electrify transport, even to remote coastal communities.



Significant offshore wind potential in the Celtic Sea and tidal power potential in the English Channel.



A growing hydrogen sector with projects under development.

Like the rest of the UK, the South West will need to reconcile net zero ambitions, efficient investment, consumer affordability and security of supply (among many other considerations). This will require collaborative planning, robust investment decisions and flexibility – ensuring that local needs are carefully integrated across all aspects of energy planning.



¹³ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/1e546da8f2a043adb4990c34522fe2c3?item=11>

¹⁴ For example, Bristol is likely to be one of the first areas in Britain to pilot heat network zoning, and forecasts significant growth of its heat networks. <https://www.bristolcityleap.co.uk/heat-networks/>

Remaining gaps and tensions

Major transport investments remain concentrated in the Midlands and the North, reinforcing perceptions that the South West is structurally disadvantaged. The emphasis on private finance sits uneasily with calls for community ownership and shared benefits.

There is also tension between the demand for speed and the rigour required for good appraisal, particularly where local capacity is limited. This consideration is particularly important in the context of ageing infrastructure which is failing more quickly than we can repair or replace it. While all national policy documents and strategy papers stress outcomes and accountability, the data and monitoring systems needed to track long-term impacts – especially in rural and coastal areas – remain underdeveloped.

What can the South West do?

There is now a genuine opportunity for the South West that did not exist before June 2025. For the first time, there is national policy architecture that explicitly endorses place-based investment, NbS, long-term funding certainty, distributional analysis, clean energy as a growth sector, and integrated social and economic infrastructure planning – all things that the SWIP community has called for. The South West's regional actors need to position themselves to make the most of this architecture. With the dissolution of pan-regional organisations, this is particularly important. In practical terms, this means:

- **Building regional governance capacity** that NISTA's place-based business case methodology requires – a coordinating function that can assemble evidence, govern, and advocate for the South West.
- **Using The Green Book's full toolkit** – including the social cost of carbon, ecosystem service values, the WELLBY (subjective wellbeing metric), and distributional weighting. This allows us to make a stronger case for NbS, rural transport, and coastal community investment in terms that align with the national appraisal system
- **Aligning with Industrial Strategy growth sectors** – Celtic Sea and Severn tidal range opportunities – to access the national sector investment that the Industrial Strategy commits to.
- **Engaging with spatial planning work** to ensure the South West's geography – its peninsula structure, coastal communities, rural transport, deprivation, and water stress – is captured in the national infrastructure needs and the South West RESP.
- **Building the evaluation and data infrastructure** needed to demonstrate that South West investments deliver the outcomes that national metrics will value: productivity growth, net zero progress, biodiversity improvement, and reduced deprivation.
- **Working with and supporting regional actors**, including the NESO's South West RESP Strategic Board and statutory regional authorities.



SWIP's Action Plan 2030

This Action Plan sets out how, between now and 2030, SWIP will help to lay the groundwork for a resilient future that ensures our regional infrastructure serves us well into the 22nd century. Building on our exploratory engagement themes, research into public attitudes, policy review and analysis of regional gaps and tensions, the SWIP Steering Group has identified four priority action areas. These priorities are shaped by the strategic opportunities for the South West, with a focus on where SWIP itself can deliver the greatest impact through existing partnerships and its active community.

1. Developing the South West's knowledge and skills base

Transformation will not be achieved through business as usual practices. SWIP will facilitate collaborative learning by utilising existing, and shaping new, working groups to curate regionally focused playbooks. We will collaborate with these working groups to build sectoral understanding, develop actionable insight and deliver cross-sector training.

The playbooks would initially follow three key themes:

- **Regional connectivity and transport planning:** Focusing on long-term planning, driving economic growth, resilience and sustainability. We will seek partnerships with transport-focused bodies like the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) to help shape industry discussions and share sectoral learnings across the SWIP community.
- **Energy infrastructure delivery:** Covering both generation and distribution, SWIP will input both regionally via NESO's South West RESP¹⁵; and in local initiatives led by industry and local authorities (such as Local Area Energy Plans).
- **Leveraging natural assets and NbS,** including the development and dissemination of Nature South West's green infrastructure map.

Further themes will be identified as they emerge over time.

Delivery stages

- **Establishing working groups:** Utilising existing and shaping new working groups, comprising sectoral experts on each theme to pool experience and understanding.
- **Collating, curating and promoting playbooks:** Drawing on insights and documents from the working groups, these accessible, visually clear playbooks will set out fundamental learnings, relevant policy, practical 'how-to's on a range of relevant topics within each theme, and case studies that bring these learnings to life.
- **Dissemination:** Working with the SWIP community to understand needs, we will arrange a series of webinars, classroom-based training and other events on each theme, to upskill and cascade knowledge to the whole SWIP community.

2. Establishing a regional coordinating function for infrastructure

A central conclusion of this work is the absence of a clearly defined regional system coordination function for infrastructure in the South West. SWIP recognises that addressing this gap is critical to improving the coherence, effectiveness and impact of planning and delivery across sectors.

The requirement for Spatial Development Strategies is a positive development; however, with several likely to operate across the South West, strong regional coordination will be essential to avoid fragmentation, align priorities and interdependencies, and support effective engagement with national systems.

SWIP brings together infrastructure planners, delivery organisations and other key South West infrastructure stakeholders and is well placed to help **strengthen regional coordination.**

Building on this convening power, SWIP will seek to work in partnership with NISTA, alongside NESO, central government and statutory regional authorities, to explore how existing capabilities could be leveraged and build a strong case for how this could be implemented over time.

This includes identifying how the region can be best connected to national frameworks - ensuring regional perspectives, data and priorities are effectively integrated into national planning, appraisal and funding processes.

3. Supporting ongoing public engagement with infrastructure

A core finding of our research into public attitudes to infrastructure and the net zero agenda was that public understanding of infrastructure, its need and benefits, is shallow. Against an increasingly fragmented and fragile political backdrop, this reduces engagement, prevents informed decision-making, stymies political buy-in and ultimately prevents long-term investment in our region.

These findings dovetail with SWIP community feedback, which highlighted that project-level communications are piecemeal and inconsistent, focusing on specific proposals as opposed to wider regional storytelling that connects regional policy with everyday benefits. Narrow feedback bases, low confidence amongst project teams and short-term or negatively biased decision-making were all cited as consequences of this. To help projects build a societal license to operate, SWIP will

work with communications and engagement experts from across the region to deliver:

- **A practical engagement toolkit:** Drawing on engagement expertise from across the region, SWIP's 'engagement toolkit' will set out practical ways to engage audiences, including engagement tactics, messaging considerations, content ideas and case studies demonstrating best practice.
- **Regional storytelling campaign:** SWIP will work with the infrastructure community to launch a regional campaign aimed at building public awareness and understanding, driving engagement and generating buy-in.

4. Scaling collaboration around NbS and resilience

A regional approach to NbS delivery enables scalable solutions that overcome geographical borders. With SWIP's support, Nature South West will help unlock investable, costed programmes that integrate NbS with conventional infrastructure to deliver resilience, environmental recovery and economic value.

Nature South West will use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify critical infrastructure assets most exposed to flood risk, mapping these against opportunities for effective NbS interventions which could generate buy-in, attract investment and scale delivery.



Miranda Housden,
co-founder, SWIP
and regional director,
ICE South West

Your opportunity to act

"Thank you to the SWIP community for being the driving force of this Action Plan. By sharing your experiences, challenges, and ideas, you have helped to create the building blocks to move us closer to our shared ambition for integrated regional infrastructure that puts people and the nature at the centre.

"But this is just the beginning. Delivering these actions will require the continued energy, expertise, and commitment of our community. This plan will only be truly effective if it is brought to life by you, through cross-sector partnerships, shared learning, and a collective determination to do things differently.

"I encourage every member of the SWIP community to take an active role in this next phase: to contribute, to collaborate, and to champion the changes we want to see. Together, we have a unique opportunity to shape infrastructure that delivers lasting value for our region into the 22nd century."

¹⁵ As part of developing the South West Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP), NESO is establishing a Strategic Board and working groups - to bring together actors shaping energy infrastructure and ensure the RESP has SW inputs and insights at its heart. The Strategic Board proposals include representation from the 5 South West Energy Networks plus up to 6 seats for Local Authorities (LAs) (two of these would go to our existing Strategic (Combined) Authorities), together with 4 other local actors who shape the SW energy system. The Board would oversee and ultimately approve the SW RESP. Four thematic working groups would bring together key stakeholders in shaping the RESP and providing their insights to the Board. These would cover:

- Local Government Working Group (LGWG): Open to all Strategic, county, district, metropolitan and unitary councils
- Consumer and Commercial Demand Working Group: Covering residential and commercial demand including flexibility, heat networks, fuel poverty and community energy considerations.
- Generation Working Group: Covering generation connecting directly to the distribution network, as well as storage, community and distributed energy.
- Industrial Decarbonisation and Transport Working Group: Covering decarbonisation of industry and transport, including clusters and dispersed sites.

¹⁶ <https://www.ice.org.uk/get-involved/industry-networks/infrastructure-client-group>

Best practice in action

We are already seeing many examples of how the principles in this Action Plan are playing out in real projects across the region. Follow the QR code to find out more about these projects in our case studies document.



The South West Infrastructure Partnership is a cross-sector infrastructure community established in 2017 by the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) South West to create lasting value for the region by breaking down silos, sparking collaborative conversations and bringing people together to create an informed, coordinated regional voice on infrastructure.