

HVA INPUT ON RECOVERY PLAN

General Comments on Document

1. It would have been preferable for a wider participation in the design of the initial recovery strategy. The key question is “Does this way forward present a holistic response for recovery post Covid19 or offer the basis for it”. Our view is that in its current form the answer is not yet:
 - It is a very conventional business support approach to a complex economic and social crisis
 - It appears to simply repeat current or existing programmes or approaches without significant regard to the economic and social scale of the crisis that is faced. It omits the potential to put economic recovery at the heart of wider recovery
 - It omits substantially questions of equality or social justice even though these are intimately connected to the inclusive economic growth which will be critical post Covid19
 - It claims to be an interim term document but in fact many of the actions will take longer than the likely term of the Covid19 crisis (for instance restructuring tourism)
 - The document pays insufficient attention to place or the different economic conditions and structures that exist. Neither does it give scope for local leadership and creativity excepting in questions of detail
 - Priority is made of an East Sussex approach but most of the proposed priorities are not distinctive to place or circumstances. Such a plan could apply (except for the lack of major transport or climate change proposals) to the whole South East
 - It makes no reference to coastal issues. Neither does it consider how both the impact of recession and the shape of the recovery will impact coastal and other disadvantaged communities
 - Misses the potential contribution of the Third Sector and of individual boroughs/districts or LSPs. It assumes a very central East Sussex/TESS approach to all these matters and is confident in those assertions without reference to more local initiatives. This could be interpreted as adopting a process and control as key issues rather than content at the first stage
2. A recovery document should try and inspire energy and commitment around a developing vision. Big picture thinking about climate, transport and the future use of redundant premises could, amongst other actions, inspire support for a recovery programme.
3. The recovery document should consider how we compete with the claims of the North of England and London BME communities for investment. What is our message about both hope and need.

4. It could be strengthened by considering the continuing needs of those who will be vulnerable to Covid19 until the vaccine is available and the effect that uncertainty will have on the economy and the opportunities for short term employment and training this might provide.
5. Is all economic growth good? If climate change remains humankind's number one challenge are there some areas of growth (Gatwick/air travel) that should be foregone. These considerations would determine what capital projects might be regional/local priorities. It is doubtful post Covid19 consensus will be a return to the old carbon economy.

Inward Investment

6. The document identifies in the most general terms long standing ambitions to attract cultural, creative and manufacturing business as would most areas of the UK. Will our advantages be more or less now?
 - Places nearer London and Brighton may find it easier to attract investment. Will the plan incentivise or promote those places less well linked? At present Hastings has the lowest level of people employed in these sectors (East Sussex in Figures)
 - The investors decide to invest in a county? Is Thanet the same as Sevenoaks? East Sussex is not well linked internally in terms of communication. Is this really a priority and if so why, what will the benefits be?
 - It is not clear if commitment to major transport schemes like HS1 to Hastings/Bexhill/Eastbourne remains. We do not believe this should be eroded. Tourism and manufacturing are both linked to transport/communication
 - Are there real opportunities now for inward investment and/or adjustments to current programmes to reflect new market conditions
 - This needs strong links to public realm and infrastructure development to lay the base for future investment
 - Could we move beyond our current messages in promoting ourselves? Could we re-examine the Channel 4 bid for example to see if we can develop more focused promotion programmes. Simply to say that we are a lovely place to live and work is retailing an old story
 - If London's growth falls so will its costs – what's our response to that?

Visitor Economy

7. This presents a significant issue of control. The unplanned and unstructured opening of our attractions is a potential significant health risk. As well as the appalling human cost of local "flare" will re-damage tourism and all other sectors of the economy.
8. The "staycation" has been a long standing ambition. Everyone in the UK will say the same
 - How's long do we think overseas travel will be substantially down. Possibly not after a vaccine which might be (say) two years away. Would this be sufficient to

support extra investment or will this sector increase anyway is an issue worth considering

- The level of investment required in bed spaces is very high in both the boutique and mass sectors. It is likely this will need subsidy or encouragement in some places
 - Critical to maintain a general high profile image of seaside towns in particular. We could lose ground we have partly regained.
9. The Sussex brand might be a good idea, particularly for Brighton and the area in the middle of Sussex. The coast is about 100 miles long so the issue is critical how will this benefit and not detract from the very east of the county. The local tourism economy is closely tied in with Kent rather than West Sussex.
 10. As well as a NOW, SOON, LATER approach the policy would be strengthened by considering how the value of different initiatives might be considered.
 11. Linked to (8) above the plan doesn't examine the issue of different rates of return for investment. Both costs and return will differ from sector to sector, community to community, place to place. Those places with lower rates of return may have furthest to travel.
 12. On a drafting issue re council staff not directly involved in being at risk through dealing with the public, it might be better for them not to be described as frontline. NHS staff, transport workers and shop staff are in places of genuine risk as are care workers etc. Need to be careful with language!
 13. A cliff edge identified for HE and FE is not really addressed.

Digital Connectivity

14. This section needs strengthening to assert why improvement to broadband is a priority here rather than elsewhere. It appears our position might be quite good by comparison
 - What would we be able to create and is this different from elsewhere?
 - Is our need or potential greater than elsewhere?
 - What about local proposals for town-wide Wi-Fi systems?
 - Possible new activities that might be stimulated – including new learning centres for students etc.
 - What are the likely costs of improved Wi-Fi as against the economic benefits?
15. This is of course a widely shared ambition, it's not clear how this has changed in the context of Covid19. This section needs to show how we would capitalise on connectivity.
16. Needs a sense of urgency about short term measures.
17. Suggest partnership work to persuade language schools to reopen in 2021/22 in partnership with coastal partners.

Low Carbon/Energy

18. There is reiteration of current thinking and schemes and doesn't appear to have much scale in terms of employment. Covid19 identification of short term problems

with confidence in public transport but this should return if there is a vaccine (say 2 years)

19. Are there more major actions to encourage cycling/walking than are currently “on the books”.
20. The document should restate ambitions for major rail improvements especially HS1. This will be seen as critical again once faith in public transport has been restored.
21. For built up areas electric car charging will be a significant challenge without substantial on street charging. There are safety issues with this but for rapid change this is essential.
22. There is no commitment to big energy production or saving schemes like a substantial retrofit and electrical heating pilot with the private sector. Likewise no commitment to generation. The county should expect to delivery major schemes if there is to be any real impact on the economy.

Helping Business Adapt

23. At present this chapter identifies that leaving aside the short term government support schemes the level of local business support provided is much too low.
24. No mention of social businesses.
25. Do businesses in “low value” areas all need to recover? In a micro business economy should we not be advising on the areas with new or significant potential? It’s likely the end of furloughing will see a substantial call.
26. This ambition should be connected to social and employment targets with possible community programme type schemes to support businesses and provide public realm action.
27. What scale of business support organisation would be adequate?
28. Should we ask business about the wider local imagining and activity which might help some of them sell themselves and their product?

Skills Infrastructure

Employment/Workforce Restructure

29. No analysis from starting point so whilst it is true that Gatwick will take a big hit so will Hastings and the coast.
30. Need sense of priority or of trying to work out where new jobs might come from.
31. No short term “soak up the unemployed” via employment schemes just more pay out universal credit and see what happens. This is not quite the same as the target section and reflects the down beat tone of the recovery document generally.

Local Supplier Procurement

32. Nothing to disagree with but needs more joining up i.e. standard and assertive advice to public bodies about maximising local procurement:
 - Define local?
 - What are the State Aid issue?

Place making

33. This section could be strengthened by reference to some of the unique places and communities within East Sussex. Everywhere will be claiming its uniqueness, we need to be clearer about what ours is:
- Strong cross linking to transport issues and road closures in Town Centres is required. Affirmation of major transport improvements like HS1 or the A21
 - The recovery plan needs to consider how revival can be encouraged and sustained in areas of low value. Otherwise there will simply growth in the west of the county (excluding Newhaven) and recession in much of the east.
 - Needs very positive language about swinging planning in favour of growth including imaginative low carbon schemes and supporting the use of historic buildings where current planning often imposes prohibitive costs
 - The potential role of the Third Sector needs developing and drawing out
 - If there is to be a county wide approach there needs to be commitment to “levelling out” the differences of value that exists

Action Plan and Gaps

Digital Connectivity

34. Needs to identify what are new areas of work and what are continuing.
35. Needs to identify the change in scale of investment/resource required (not the detail).
36. Needs to be backed up with one assessment of impact and what competitive advantage it will bring.
37. Needs to identify new business that might be stimulated and linked firmly to a view of office space requirements and skills training.
38. Digital exclusion should be divided:
- Areas/communication excluded
 - Individuals excluded
39. Suggest big immediate project like free Wi-Fi to major social housing estates straight away.
40. Suggest action around digital and learning for schools and colleges. This might include non-school learning centres.

Inward Investment

41. Each district/borough to identify its offer to business as a “brilliant location”.
42. Borough should lead on building repurposing and connect to Town Deal.
43. Action plan to assess the different “barriers to access” in different places in drawing up initiatives. Hastings or Hastings and Rother needs its own plan.
44. Borough should make creative strategy a key strategy and work with its local partners to influence it.

Leisure and Hospitality

45. Is a post Covid19 promotion campaign Sussex wide? Action plan should at this stage include the local promotion by groups such as 1066 Country.
46. Needs specific proposals to work up scheme to encourage investment in bid spaces.

47. Needs specific proposals for each area to bring forward action plan from now till September 2021.
48. Hastings level needs review of security of key assets and if aid is possible/needed/desirable. Theatre/gallery etc.
49. Practical forum is a good idea. But work on shared open air eating and entertainment spaces needed now. Borough and partners should actively support.

Low Carbon

50. Target on charging should include on street – where else can it come in built up areas?
51. Actions should restate commitment to HS1 and rail investment.
52. Needs commitment to support major scheme(s) development
 - Retrofitting
 - Area heat schemes
 - Generation

Without these there is no scale?

Businesses Adapt

53. Needs action too specifically support social businesses.
54. Needs link to place shaping about creating the environment for shopper/investor confidence.
55. Borough council link this back to hospitality for a specific Hastings action plan to create space for socialising/culture outside.
56. Needs thought about sectors.
57. New forms of small business space for post Covid19 period.
58. Action on social businesses stimulating confidence/skills – at the moment Observer/Rock House etc., is more significant than in the past.

Skills/Infrastructure

59. All local partners should commit to target 9 in the action plan section dealing with skills. Set up a local working group to make this happen here.

Procurement

60. Single set of advice to be obtained on behalf of all East Sussex partners. This should attempt to maximise local procurement by all of the most aggressive legal basis.
61. Definition of local required.

Place Shaping

62. HBC can claim that it is leading on its plan and Town Deal. It should offer to model place shaping processes perhaps in partnership with Newhaven and offer support to the wider partnership.

63. Action 5 - needs "allow" to be changed to "actively encourage". A strong positive statement is required.
64. Local partners should strongly support Action 8 and work together on a local plan.
65. Action 10 - this currently detaches home building from wider economic and social issues. So add:-

"home building should meet needs identified locally and ensure the provision of affordable rented provision preferably via social landlords and to accommodate the homeless".

66. New 11 –

"Partners will monitor the impact of Covid19 and the recession on the private rented sector on residents and the local economy".

67. New 12 –

"Develop scheme at scale for retrofitting and energy efficiency through the coastal group as part of a package to ensure a good quality rented sector. Such work to sit alongside both enforcement and other support to the sector".