



Cabinet report

Date	16 DECEMBER 2021
Title	ISLE OF WIGHT SKILLS PLAN
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, and CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND LIFELONG SKILLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The future of the Island economy is dependent on having a workforce with the relevant skills to both encourage inward investment and enable local businesses to thrive. In addition, the benefits to the Island community as a whole of having a skilled workforce goes beyond its economic value and can have a positive impact on quality of life enabling people to make a greater contribution to society.
2. The Regeneration Strategy sets out the ambition to make the Island a great place to grow up, live, work and visit and central to this is the need to ensure that there is a skilled and productive workforce available to meet the current and future skills needs of employers.
3. This means working together with employers and educators to help them to identify and address some of the key challenges that stand in the way of this ambition.
4. The Isle of Wight Skills Plan describes some of these key challenges, particularly as we emerge from the pandemic, and suggests a series of priorities and action that can be taken now and into the future, to help grow the skills base of the Island, give young people high quality career opportunities and help adults to train and upskill throughout their working lives.
5. The Skills Plan will provide the framework and focus for agencies, organisations, businesses and employers engaged across the skills agenda to ensure there is a joined-up approach to both the challenges and opportunities.
6. The paper also recommends the establishment of a Skill Board to ensure a coordinated approach to the actions of the plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Option A. To adopt the Isle of Wight Skills Plan (Appendix 1) and set up an Island Skills Board to oversee skills related activity, identify relevant resources and monitor outcomes of the action plan (Appendix 2).

BACKGROUND

7. The Isle of Wight economy generates some £2.8 billion of economic activity which accounts for about 10 per cent of the total Solent economy. Prior to the pandemic there was strong growth which outperformed the South East, Portsmouth and Southampton, Solent and the cities.
8. However, the Island has a large skills gap at the top of the skills distribution and whilst the proportion of highly skilled residents on the Island has increased in line with the national average, the gap with other areas has widened.
9. The impact of COVID has been significant and in particular has had a negative impact on 18-24 year olds unemployment and sectors such as tourism and manufacturing which employ relatively large numbers of people on the Island. However, there has been an increase in demand for jobs – including higher level skilled roles – in the health and social care sectors.
10. Government has put in place a package of support to strengthen existing employment and skills support and help people back into the labour market as soon as possible. Importantly there is a recognition that young people are particularly vulnerable due to their lack of experience in work.
11. There are already many successful programmes operating across the Island to promote skills and employability and to support vulnerable young people and adults at risk of social and economic exclusion. In particular there has been significant progress recently to better engage employers in education and careers programmes through the work of Island Futures and the Island Careers Partnership.
12. There has also been a commitment to grow apprenticeships, as well as technical skills through initiatives such as the Isle of Wight College's new Centre of Excellence for Composites, Advanced Manufacturing and Marine (CECMM). The i-aspire initiative has begun to raise the profile of higher level opportunities and support the development of targeted provision to meet identified needs.
13. The recent designation of the Isle of Wight College as a University Centre is also a welcome development in expanding the offer and encouraging the take up of higher level skills across the Island. Also the government's flagship Skills Boot camp programme, which upskills employees without the need to take a qualification, is being delivered on the Island in digital marketing, digital technician and engineering technician roles.
14. In addition, the Isle of Wight is a partner in the Skills Accelerator (Strategic Development Fund pilot) which allows the growth of higher level skills in emerging technologies, cleaner growth, and digital sectors.
15. Alongside these programmes, a more highly targeted adult and community learning offer is encouraging adults to engage in learning, creating progression into higher level opportunities and championing a culture of lifelong learning for wellbeing as well as work.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

16. The new Corporate Plan 2021-25 contains the following:

“Growing our skills base and retaining our workforce in key sectors, such as hospitality and social care will be a key challenge for the next five years as will helping those who have lost time from education to recover and achieve their personal goals. These will be key aspects of our Island skills plan”

<p>Work with businesses and training providers to develop a plan for increasing the number of apprenticeship placements and reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Island Futures we will use external funding sources to deliver a range of apprenticeship and training opportunities such as the Governments Kickstart programme. • Support for the Island Careers partnership and its efforts to link schools and business.
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CONSULTATION

17. The plan has been subject to a range of engagement and consultation activities including workshops, one to one discussions with individuals, key agencies, services and businesses, presentations to groups such as Island Careers Partnership and Economic Development Board and the Solent LEP all of which have helped frame the document and also the development of the action plan which sits alongside it.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

18. There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations of the report.

IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

19. The Implementation of the Skills Plan is intended to ensure that young people on the Island benefit from a coordinated approach by all stakeholders to the learning and skills agenda. This is so they have the greatest opportunity to access the best, most productive and most fulfilling employment to their long-term benefit and well-being as well as that of the local economy and the communities where they live.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations of the report.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

21. The council, as a public body, is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. There are not negative impacts on any of the protected group as a result of the recommendations of this paper.

OPTIONS

22. The options available are as follows:

Option A To adopt the IW Skills plan (Appendix 1) and set up an Island Skills Board to oversee skills related activity, identify relevant resources and monitor outcomes of the action plan (Appendix 2).

Option B Not to adopt the Skills plan

RISK MANAGEMENT

23. The plan is intended to provide an agreed set of objectives and actions to ensure there is a joined up approach across the agencies and organisations who deliver and manage learning and skills outcomes and that the needs of those who access those services, particularly businesses are reflected in the plan. Without a skills plan and with the range of organisations engaged and active in this area there is risk of duplication, gaps in provision or agreeing priorities which could result in a reduction in the ability to deliver some of the key activities. An agreed plan across agencies on the Island is particularly important in demonstrating to funding organisations, particularly government, that there is a clear and agreed approach.

EVALUATION

24. The Isle of Wight Skills Plan is an important component of the Island's approach to grow and sustain a higher value economy. The plan seeks to ensure we have the skills in our workforce not only to meet the challenges of our traditionally important sectors such as tourism, hospitality and care but also to provide the foundation for new opportunities in the green economy and high value businesses such as information technology and the knowledge economy in general.
25. In addition to the plan, the establishment of an IW Skills Board to oversee its delivery will enable the outcomes to be monitored and ensure it continues to reflect the Island's needs. The membership of the board and its terms of reference will be overseen by the Economic Development Board and include representation from the key stakeholders who have helped inform the plans development.

APPENDICES

26. Appendix 1 - Isle of Wight Skills Plan
27. Appendix 2 - Isle of Wight Skills Plan - Action Plan

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Isle of Wight Regeneration Strategy.

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