

To:
Councillor Bella Sankey, Chair of the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority Board
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CC:
Mark Rogers, Chief Executive of the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority Board
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From:
Citizens of Sussex & Brighton and climate, nature and sustainability-focused organisations, networks and the responsible business community (full details provided at the end).

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Date: 24th August 2026

Dear Bella,

Subject: Open Letter: A prosperous Sussex is a resilient Sussex, input to the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority Prosperity Strategy

We are engaged citizens of Sussex from local businesses and business networks, academia, and civil society, spanning energy, transport, manufacturing, hospitality, nature protection, community development and place-making.

We want to engage constructively with the SBSA's Prosperity Strategy process. We welcome much of the ambition in the Preliminary Strategic Framework, particularly its focus on improving outcomes for residents rather than just GVA, and its 30-year vision.

But our profound concern is that despite acknowledging Sussex's exceptional natural capital, the emerging understanding of prosperity doesn't yet recognise nature as essential to secure, resilient prosperity. We believe this can't be retrofitted later, it needs to be addressed now, at the foundation of the strategy.

Our collective position is that nature is at the heart of the understanding of prosperity and so needs to be considered across all aspects of the Prosperity Strategy: embedded in outcomes, considered in constraints and risks and vitally, as an enabler of prosperity.

If we get this right, the opportunities are huge. Not only massively avoided costs for every single business and every single household in Sussex, but a burgeoning economy built on smart, circular resource use, locally-generated clean energy, abundant local food, and amazing nature-rich landscapes that inspire culture, draw visitors and attract the best talent to Sussex. We already have so many businesses and communities working in these ways, and assets including a National Park, two National Landscapes, a UNESCO biosphere and much more: the

Prosperity Strategy is an opportunity to turbocharge what they do, through investment in green skills and thoughtful infrastructure.

We have come together to co-create a vision of prosperity based on these ideas for discussion and inclusion in the framework. We ask that an additional assumption, based on this vision, is included at this early stage of the process of designing the strategy. We ask that our proposal is considered by the SBSA Board and by the Prosperity Strategy Steering group.

Call to Action:

Prosperity and environmental sustainability for Sussex are not mutually exclusive goals. Sustainable development; climate resilience and adaptation; and protection of nature are the fundamental means by which Sussex can grow, thrive and prosper.

Definition of Prosperity:

The Preliminary Strategy Framework did not define prosperity; we would like to propose this definition is adopted:

“Prosperity in Sussex is when people, place, the economy and nature are resilient and thrive together, now and in the future.

We offer the following as preliminary suggestions for the foundations and conditions for realising prosperity. They are grounded in evidence and experience of our group but require a process of further development to finalise:

- 1. Ecological Foundations:** True prosperity depends on thriving, biodiverse ecosystems that meet our fundamental human needs.
- 2. Living Within Means:** Economic growth operates within natural constraints and meets our environmental commitments.
- 3. Intergenerational Resilience:** Prosperity secures safety and resilience against extreme events today while protecting future generations.
- 4. Social Equity & Wellbeing:** Prosperity delivers safety, health, fairness, and equal access to essential resources and opportunities for all.
- 5. Circular & Local Economy:** Economic activity is increasingly regenerative and ethical by design, prioritising local business & supply chains, skilled jobs, and meaningful work.
- 6. Ethical Impact Investment:** Investment is socially and environmentally responsible, safeguarding public access to and appropriate public control of essential assets & utilities in perpetuity.
- 7. Inclusive & Accountable Governance:** Decision-makers integrate these principles across all decisions, ensure meaningful participation especially for young people, nature and other typically underrepresented groups and measure and report on progress.

An additional working assumption:

The strategic framework identifies 5 assumptions to test. It says: *“These are interim positions that will continue to be tested in response to evidence and engagement. The draft strategy will*

develop these – or other – key assumptions into firmer policy positions which in turn will be tested through the consultation process. “

Taking the phrase “or other” as an invitation, we would like to propose that the SBSA adopts an additional assumption based on our vision of prosperity. Our understanding is that the assumptions are about what *drives, constrains, or enables* prosperity.

Consequently, we propose the following assumption/s for inclusion and would be happy to discuss refining so it aligns with the SBSA criteria.

- **Integrating environmental and social outcomes into growth decisions is what will make prosperity resilient.** (driver/enabler focused)

Alternatively:

- **Operating beyond Sussex's natural and environmental capacity will undermine prosperity in the short and long-term.** (risk/constraint-focused)

Future engagement:

As engaged professionals, we offer our support and participation in further work to develop the final strategy and request that relevant members of the wider group (those signing this letter) are invited to contribute to these activities to help shape the final Prosperity Strategy outputs. We would be delighted to meet with you to take forward any actions.

Let's not lose this opportunity. Let's acknowledge the physical reality that without strong natural systems, we'll all be poorer. Let's build our strategy for prosperity on the foundations of thriving Sussex nature.

Sincerely,
Catherine Fisher, Victoria Ramsden, Cathy Shutt, Paul Steedman

Supported by:
Please see attachment detailing signatures of those supporting this open letter.