



Great South West Partnership

Governance and Assurance Framework

March 2023

Great South West Partnership

Governance and Assurance Framework

Purpose

The Great South West Partnership (GSW Partnership) is a pan-regional partnership for Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall & Isles of Scilly and has been established with the aim of supporting growth and productivity across multiple functional economic areas by convening and collaborating with partners. It is a voluntary partnership comprising of Business Leaders, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Local Authorities and Universities all located within the south west area.

The GSW Partnership is focused on delivering a larger and more productive economy, unlocking the potential of the region's green and blue economies and driving investment into the region. A key feature of success will be the increased economic prosperity and sustainability of the region's businesses and communities in towns, cities, and rural and coastal areas.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has agreed to sponsor the GSW Partnership through the provision of capacity funding up to the value of £1,500,000 over a three-year period (until 31 March 2025).

Strategic Priorities

The GSW Partnership's overarching objective is to support growth and productivity. The GSW Partnership will add value to the region's economy, by:

- Providing pan-regional leadership;
- Convening stakeholders;
- Commissioning Economic Intelligence; and
- Promoting, advocating and lobbying for the Transformational Economic Opportunities (TEOs) in the GSW arising from its specific and world-class strengths and qualities

Performance

The GSW Partnership's performance measures will be regularly reviewed through reporting to the Partnership Board. The GSW Partnership Board is required to report progress on activity including successful delivery of agreed milestones as set out in the DLUHC Grant Determination Letter along with approval of its annual internal business planning.

Governance

Governance Principles

The GSW Partnership is governed to ensure that it:

- identifies and appropriately takes into account the views of other stakeholders;
- makes effective use of the resources available to it and accounts appropriately for that use as set out in the GSW Partnership Accountable Body Agreement;
- is accountable for its performance, through clear decision-making by the Board and regular monitoring of progress, and the submission of quarterly monitoring reports;
- it adheres to the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Partnership Board

The GSW Partnership Board will be established to ensure overall responsibility for the governance of the GSW Partnership and delivery of its purpose. The Partnership Board will be responsible for:

- a) setting the overarching vision and strategies for economic growth in the GSW area;
- b) determining the operating structure and governance arrangements of the GSW Partnership, including making appropriate appointments to the Partnership Board and establishing advisory programme boards as follows:
 - Trade and Investment
 - Marine
 - High-Value Manufacturing eg defence
 - Tourism
 - Energy
 - Food, Farming and Fishing
 - Enablers – eg transport and other infrastructure, people including social mobility
 - Innovation

The Partnership Board will keep the advisory programme boards under review to ensure they continue to meet the overall priorities of the GSW Partnership
- c) working in partnership across public and private sectors, ensuring the GSW Partnership is business-led and that the business voice influences the economic strategies and priorities for the region
- d) championing the Great South West region as the place to invest and do business
- e) facilitating an entrepreneurial environment in which businesses can start up, prosper and grow.

The Partnership Board will meet at least quarterly and will be governed by its terms of reference (attached at Appendix 1). All Board minutes and agenda items which involve decisions or recommendations regarding the use of public money will be made available [on the Great South West website].

Membership

Membership of the Partnership Board shall be as follows:

- Independent Chair (1)
- Local Enterprise Partnerships (3)
- Upper-tier Local Authorities (8)
- Universities - Bournemouth, Exeter, Plymouth and Falmouth Universities (4)
- Business Representatives from the GSW region representing the priorities, geography and diversity of the region's business base (5):

Relevant Government officials and the Chair of the GSW APPG will be invited to attend the meetings but have no vote.

The Chair of the Partnership Board will be from the business community and shall be appointed via a transparent and open recruitment process.

Accountability

An Independent Chair will chair the Partnership Board. It will be based on collaborative working and conducted in the spirit of partnership working. All decisions will be made in accordance with the following principles:

- a) Due consultation will be carried out where appropriate (including taking relevant professional advice from officers);
- b) There will be a presumption in favour of open and transparent decision-making;
- c) There will be a clarity of aims and desired outcomes;
- d) All decisions will be taken as the financially accountable members of the GSW Partnership and not on behalf of specific areas;
- e) Members of the Board are required to declare any interests, gifts or hospitality, which they have or receive which could influence any decisions they may make as board members.

Board Remuneration

The role of Chair will receive an annual remuneration of £12,000 and all expenses incurred in attending meeting or other relevant Partnership activities will also be reimbursed.

Whilst other roles on the GSW Partnership Board are unremunerated, travel expenses to and from Board meetings and other agreed meetings on behalf of the GSW Partnership can be claimed at the prevalent Cornwall Council rate.

Code of Conduct

All Board Members will be required to comply with the GSW Partnership Code of Conduct (attached at Appendix 2).

Conflicts of Interest

- a) The Board shall ensure that all conflicts of interest are fully disclosed.
- b) The Secretariat shall maintain a Register of Members' Interests. This shall include all company directorships, trusteeships, elected offices, remunerated posts and other relevant interests. The Register of Members' Interests shall be made available publicly on the Great South West website and to any interested party at any time. Members shall supply information to the Secretariat for inclusion in the register, or a nil return, on joining the Board, in response to any request for an update and on becoming aware of any new interest. The Secretariat will circulate a request for information about interests annually.
- c) Should a member's interests change, s/he shall inform the Secretariat at the earliest opportunity.
- d) Should an issue be discussed by the Board which presents a conflict of interest to a member, the member shall declare the conflict of interest, regardless of whether s/he has previously declared the interest in the Register of Members' Interests. Such declarations shall be minuted.
- e) Members shall not vote or participate in discussions on any issues on which they have registered an interest.

By accepting appointment as a Partnership Board Member, an individual indicates their acceptance of the above requirements and their agreement to notify any interests.

The GSW Partnership shall conduct its proceedings to ensure that all conflicts and potential conflicts of interest are disclosed, and that appropriate action is taken in response to such disclosures. This includes acting in the interest of the area as a whole and not according to sectoral or geographic interests of their member organisations.

Officer Group

The Partnership Board will be supported by an officer group, chaired by the Executive Lead which will deliver the operational management of the GSW Partnership work programme, within the constraints set by the annual business plan agreed upon by the Partnership Board.

The Officer Group will comprise:

- Executive Lead (1)
- LEPs (3)
- LA representation (4) plus Accountable Body

- University representation (2)
- Government officials (2)

Scheme of Delegation

Delegation of actions and decisions may only be made in accordance with the following Scheme of Delegation:

The GSW Partnership Board agrees an annual budget. The GSW Executive Lead is responsible for the deployment of funds for agreed activities.

Use of unallocated headroom or any deviation from the budget as agreed, will require further Board approval, with the exception of:

- Any decision £5,000 and under will be made by the GSW Executive Lead, in consultation with the Accountable Body.

Due to the GSW Executive function residing outside of Cornwall Council financial systems, a further approval process will be delegated to Cornwall Council officers, following the existing Accountable Body scheme of delegations under its entity 16 arrangements (which is a distinct subsection of Cornwall Council's finance system which holds the accounts and transactions for which it is undertaking the accountable body function). This will require a Cornwall Council authorised signature for all GSW contracts and grant agreements.

Diversity Statement

The GSW Partnership is committed to meeting its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. In devising policy and taking decisions, the Partnership will take due regard of the Equality Duty to:

- a) eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- b) advance equality of opportunity;
- c) foster good relations.

The GSW Partnership recognises its role to advance equality, and in particular acknowledges the protected characteristics. The Partnership will meet its obligations by working to understand how its policies and decisions affect people differentiated by age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It will actively take steps to reduce any discrimination of people or communities with these characteristics, by using all reasonable endeavours to:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
- c) Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Carbon Reduction

The GSW Partnership members shall have a joint approach to carbon reduction and shall ensure due consideration is given to the impacts on the environment and sustainability in the delivery of the Partnership.

Accountable Body Role and Financial Management

Cornwall Council will act as the Accountable Body for the GSW Partnership responsible for the proper administration and financial probity of any funds received by the GSW Partnership and for overseeing any compliance requirements and maintaining the Governance and Assurance Framework.

As Accountable Body, Cornwall Council will be responsible pursuant to an Accountable Body Agreement (attached at Appendix 3) for:

- holding funds and making payments in accordance with the decisions of the GSW Partnership;
- ensuring that funding is approved and allocated in a manner that is lawful, transparent and proportionate;
- ensuring that the decisions and activities of the GSW Partnership conform to legal requirements with regard to equality and diversity and all other relevant legislation and guidance;
- ensuring that the funds are being used appropriately and are allocated in accordance with decisions made by the GSW Partnership together with adherence to relevant policy, guidance and legislation for the intended purpose.

Cornwall Council will ensure that funds are accounted for in such a way that they are separately identifiable, with individual cost centres. Cornwall Council will prepare quarterly financial statements for the GSW Partnership in relation to the overall fund, costs of projects/initiatives and profiling of spend and monthly budget monitoring statements for the GSW Executive Lead.

Managing Contracts

All contracts awarded by Cornwall Council on behalf of the GSW Partnership will follow Cornwall Council's Contract Standing Orders which include the Council's Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules. Where projects/initiatives are delivered by other members of the Partnership business cases will set out the procurement strategy, compliance with relevant rules and regulations and assurance around value for money. The award of funding on behalf of the GSW Partnership will be managed through a grant funding agreement prepared by Cornwall Council and entered into between Cornwall Council, on behalf of the Great SW Partnership, and the grant recipient.

All contracts and grant funding agreements awarded by Cornwall Council will be managed by Cornwall Council on behalf of the GSW Partnership and progress shall be reported to the Partnership Board including any performance issues, risks and relevant mitigation. The GSW

Executive Lead will nominate an Executive Officer for operational, day-to-day coordination of contracts and grant funding agreements.

Audit

All funding received from HM Government will be held and managed by Cornwall Council on behalf of the GSW Partnership. The funds will be subject to financial management arrangements and subject to internal Audit in compliance with the mandatory Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. This will provide independent and objective assurance regarding the effectiveness of Cornwall Council's risk management, control and governance processes.

Secretariat

The Heart of the South-West LEP shall provide the secretariat function for the GSW Partnership. This arrangement will be reviewed post appointment of a permanent Chair. Secretariat support shall include the provision of professional advice and administrative support. Any staff time provided in delivering this function will be recoverable from the GSW Partnership funds.

Complaints

The GSW Partnership is committed to creating an environment with the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. If there is a complaint relating to the GSW Partnership, the Partnership will adopt Cornwall Council's complaints procedure which is well established and publically available ([feedback-and-complaints](#)). This will also set out procedures for confidential reporting for third parties and members of the public.

If an individual wants to make a confidential complaint or raise a concern, it will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made to protect the person's identity if they wish to remain anonymous. The GSW Partnership supported by the Accountable Body will investigate all complaints or allegations.

Handling of Data

The GSW Partnership shall ensure it acts at all times in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and shall adhere to [Cornwall Council's Data Protection and Privacy Policies] when handling personal information on behalf of the Partnership. Each member shall assist the others as necessary to enable each member to comply with their data protection obligations.

Freedom of Information

It is acknowledged that members of the GSW Partnership are subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The GSW Partnership shall provide all necessary assistance and cooperation as reasonably requested by members to enable compliance with the obligations under the Act.

**Appendix 1 –
Partnership Board Terms of Reference**



Great South West – Constitution

1. The name of the organisation shall be the Great South West (GSW) Partnership – the UK's Natural Powerhouse.
2. The GSW Partnership shall work through a governance model and be subject to the GSW Assurance Framework.
3. The GSW is a pan-regional partnership (PRP) for the counties of Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall & Isles of Scilly.

The GSW Partnership is focused on delivering a larger and more productive economy, unlocking the potential of the region's green and blue economies and driving investment into the region. A key feature of success will be the increased economic prosperity and sustainability of the region's businesses and communities in towns, cities, and rural and coastal areas.

The partnership comprises Business Leaders, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Local Authorities and Universities all located within the GSW area.

The GSW Partnership will add value to the region's economy, by:

- Providing **pan-regional leadership**;
- **Convening** stakeholders;
- Commissioning **Economic Intelligence**; and
- Promoting, **advocating and lobbying for the transformational economic opportunities** (TEOs) in the GSW arising from its specific and world-class strengths and qualities.

In practice this means the GSW Partnership will:

- **Convene** - the relevant and appropriate stakeholders in the GSW to:
 - Promote collaboration and develop added-value networks
 - Identify the scale of the TEO
 - Identify the barriers to exploiting the TEO
 - Identify solutions to the barriers and the scale of investment required to deliver the TEO
 - Identify the target investors including (Private investors, Businesses and Government) for each TEO
- **Commission Economic Intelligence** –
 - Provide evidence-based leadership for emerging TEOs
 - Quantify the scale of a TEO in economic terms (including; financial, employment, social and environmental) for both the GSW area and the UK

- Provide the economic intelligence to support both the deliverability and investability of each TEO
- **Promote, Advocate and Lobby** – for the TEOs in the GSW to:
 - Attract investment to deliver and exploit the TEOs and Government High Potential Opportunities (HPOs) from UK and Foreign Investors through:
 - Active marketing
 - Attendance at appropriate (inward investor and trade) events (eg REIF, MIPIM)
 - An internalization plan and delivery of trade missions
 - Develop strong, evidence-informed advocacy by circulating and socializing economic intelligence outputs to all relevant stakeholders
 - Help to secure the necessary funding for the region from Government to unblock barriers e.g.
 - Infrastructure funding (digital, transport, road/rail network, energy grid)
 - Societal funding (housing, skills/training)

The key stakeholders for GSW are:

- Private sector business
 - MPs for the Region
 - Business Representative Organisations in the GSW region
 - Local Authorities in the GSW region
 - Universities and Further Education establishments in the GSW region
 - Neighbouring PRPs and other regional PRPs with aligned sector focus
 - Central Government (e.g. No 10, Treasury, BEIS, DIT, DfT, DfE, DHLUC)
 - Government Agencies (e.g Environment Agency, National Highways, Met Office, UK Hydrographic Office)
 - Potential domestic and foreign investors (e.g. BBB, UKRI, Innovate UK)
 - Voluntary/Third sector organisations
4. The Great South West Partnership Board is established as an independent voluntary partnership, without formal legal status. It conducts its activities in the interests of the region it serves and secures its long-term objectives without giving undue favour to any organisation or member.
 5. The Board shall be chaired by an independent Business representative. Initially, this will be Karl Tucker, Yeo Valley. The Partnership Board will consider the process for a future appointment.
 6. HM Government will consider the appointment of a GSW Ministerial Champion to support the Partnership.

7. Cornwall Council will act as an Accountable Body overseeing any compliance requirements and maintaining the Assurance Framework delivered through an Accountable Body agreement.
8. HotSW LEP will provide the secretariat function with the Chief Executive as the Executive Lead to the GSW Partnership Board.
9. The Partnership Board Membership (20/21) is as follows:
 - Independent Chair (1)
 - Local Enterprise Partnerships (3) – should LEPs be folded into Combined Authorities through devolution these places will be superseded by a business representative from the appropriate business Board for Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset
 - Upper-tier Local Authorities (8)
 - Universities - Bournemouth, Exeter, Plymouth and Falmouth Universities (4)
 - Business Representatives from the GSW region representing the priorities, geography and diversity of the region's business base (5):

In addition, relevant Government officials and the Chair of the GSW APPG will be invited to attend the meetings but have no vote
10. The Partnership Board will meet at least quarterly. A calendar of future meetings will be set for a year at a time.
11. The Partnership Board ensures overall responsibility for the good governance of the Partnership and delivery of its purpose and sets the overall vision. It is responsible for:
 - a) setting the overarching vision and strategies for economic growth in the GSW area
 - b) determining the operating structure and governance arrangements of the GSW Partnership, including making appropriate appointments to the Partnership Board and establishing advisory programme boards as follows:
 - Trade and Investment
 - Marine
 - High-Value Manufacturing eg defence
 - Tourism
 - Energy
 - Food, Farming and Fishing
 - Enablers – eg transport and other infrastructure, people incl social mobility
 - Innovation

- c) working in partnership across public and private sectors, ensuring the GSW Partnership is business-led and that the business voice influences the economic strategies and priorities for the region
 - d) championing the Great South West region as the place to invest and do business
 - e) facilitating an entrepreneurial environment in which businesses can start up, prosper and grow.
12. The Partnership Board will be supported by an officer group, chaired by the Executive lead which will deliver the operational management of the GSW Partnership work programme, within the constraints set by the annual business plan agreed upon by the Partnership Board. The Officer Group will comprise:
- Executive Lead(1)
 - 3 LEPs (3)
 - LA representation (4) plus Accountable Body
 - University representation (2)
 - Government officials (2)
- Specifically, the Officer group will be responsible for:
- a) supporting the workstreams and working groups to develop evidence-based plans and proposals to put forward to the Partnership Board for agreement, including a specific responsibility to ensure the wider engagement of businesses and other stakeholders in this process
 - b) developing proposals for the Great South West operating model to put forward to the Partnership Board for agreement
 - c) working with partners to ensure that they are held accountable for the delivery of specific projects along with the overarching economic strategies
 - d) agreeing on strategic targets for all programmes, against which performance will be monitored
 - e) drafting and implementing an effective communications plan for all GSW activities and programmes
 - f) reporting to the Partnership Board regarding the delivery of the key workstreams
 - g) identifying opportunities, and making arrangements, to influence the Government and wider policy in pursuit of the GSW priorities
 - h) day-to-day oversight of the operational management arrangements put in place by the Partnership Board.
 - i) own and manage a risk register and associated mitigation plan.
13. The Chair of the Partnership shall be appointed by the Partnership Board for terms of up to two years and a maximum of three terms. The Partnership Board may vote to remove the Chair by a 2/3 majority of the voting members.

14. Duties of the Chairs of the Partnership Board will be to:
 - a) Provide leadership in the delivery of the vision, purpose and key milestones set out in the business case and in line with the Assurance Framework
 - b) Chair meetings of the Partnership Board and ensure their smooth and effective operation
 - c) Have responsibility for taking a casting vote in the event of a tie in any vote undertaken at Board meetings
 - d) Build cohesion within the GSW Partnership, ensuring that all partners work together for the best outcomes for the region
 - e) Represent the GSW Partnership at high-profile events, engaging in national and local discussions and public relations opportunities as required
 - f) Undertake lobbying activity and pursue opportunities to influence Government and wider policy.
 - g) Holding the Executive lead and officer group to account.

15. The Partnership Board will ensure that there is an Accountable Body agreement in place with (Cornwall Council) which manage all financial matters on behalf of the GSW Partnership. For responsibilities of the Accountable Body, please refer to the Accountable Body Agreement.

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

1. Representation and attendance

- a) Partnership Board members may send an appropriate senior level deputy in any instance when their own attendance is not possible.
- b) Partnership Board Members (or approved deputies) are expected to attend not less than 75% of meetings over a twelve month period. If this attendance rate is not achieved by any member, the Committee is entitled to review their membership. A 75% majority is required to rescind the membership of any individual.

2. Decisions

- a) There should be a quorum of 10 members.
- b) If there are not sufficient members to satisfy the quorum, then no decisions can be taken.
- c) Only full members (or deputies) may take part in any vote. Observers or guests at the meeting may participate in discussion if invited to do so by the Chair but are not entitled to vote. Substitution arrangements are only permitted with agreement from the Chair of the respective Board.
- d) In the event that a consensus cannot be achieved on a matter requiring a decision, that decision shall be taken by vote and carried if it is supported by over 50% of those members present. Each Board member shall have one vote and the Chair shall have a casting vote if required.
- e) Any decision must be a majority decision at a meeting, although unanimity is ideal.
- f) The Chair may decide to seek agreement to a proposal via the Electronic Procedure. Decisions will be made on the same basis as that outlined above.

3. Meetings and papers

- a) Meetings shall be held quarterly with a minimum therefore of four meetings per annum. A calendar of future meetings will be set for a year at a time although the minimum notice required for a meeting is two weeks to ensure that all members are afforded the opportunity to attend.
- b) The agenda and papers for meetings shall be approved by the Chairs and issued at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting by the Secretariat.
- c) Meeting minutes shall be approved in draft form by the Chairs and disseminated to members no later than 10 working days following the meeting. Minutes shall remain in draft until approval by the Partnership Board at the next meeting.
- d) Minutes shall be made publicly available via the Great South West website, except for minutes which are not suitable for release into the public domain, for example due to them containing personal information about individuals or commercially sensitive data. Any minutes which are not released into the public domain will be stored confidentially by the Secretariat.
- e) The Officer Group shall meet every eight weeks. Programme Groups and Boards shall meet as and when required, subject to individual needs.
- f) The Secretariat will maintain a central electronic store of all paperwork pertaining to the Partnership including, but not limited to agendas; minutes; terms of reference; register of interests; and record of decisions taken outside of meetings.

- g) The Partnership shall be subject to the Great South West Register and Conflicts of Interest Policy.

4. Conflicts of interest

- a) The Board shall ensure that all conflicts of interest are fully disclosed.
- b) The Secretariat shall maintain a Register of Members' Interests. This shall include all company directorships, trusteeships, elected offices, remunerated posts and other relevant interests. The Register of Members' Interests shall be made available publicly on the Great South West website and to any interested party at any time. Members shall supply information to the Secretariat for inclusion in the register, or a nil return, on joining the Board, in response to any request for an update and on becoming aware of any new interest. The Secretariat will circulate a request for information about interests annually.
- c) Should a member's interests change, s/he shall inform the Secretariat at the earliest opportunity.
- d) Should an issue be discussed by the Board which presents a conflict of interest to a member, the member shall declare the conflict of interest, regardless of whether s/he has previously declared the interest in the Register of Members' Interests. Such declarations shall be minuted.
- e) Members shall not vote or participate in discussions on any issues on which they have registered an interest.

5. Press and Media

- a) Board Members are not permitted to discuss commercially confidential information about Great South West activities, nor speak to the media as representatives of the GSW without prior approval from the Chair.
- b) In the event that members are approached by the press or media for comment on any matters relating to the Great South West, the matter must be referred immediately to the Chair.

6. Review of this Document

- a) The Constitution will be reviewed every 2 years.

**Appendix 2 –
Code of Conduct**



Code of Conduct for Great South West Partnership Board Members

Date: March 2023

All Members of the Great South West Partnership Board sign up to a Code of Conduct on commencing their role with the Board.

Partnership Board Member Code of Conduct

You are a Member of the Great South West Partnership Board and hence you shall have regard to the following 7 principles of Public Life – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership in your conduct at all times.

Accordingly, when acting in your capacity as a Board Member of the Great South West Partnership Board:

1. Selflessness

You should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

You must avoid placing yourself under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence you in your work. You should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family, or your friends. You must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

You must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

You are accountable to the public for your decisions and actions and must submit yourself to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

You should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

You should be truthful.

7. Leadership

You should exhibit these principles in your own behaviour. You should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

**Appendix 3 –
Accountable Body Agreement**