MAKE THE CONNECTION
The South East Midlands: Innovation, Connectivity, Opportunity
A thriving location for innovation, creativity and world-leading technologies

Our rapidly growing £52bn economy located between Oxford, Cambridge, London and Birmingham make us one of the most exciting economic growth opportunities in the country. Business has benefited from the area’s rich heritage in engineering, motorsport and manufacturing expertise, which has transformed our area to become a test-bed for new technologies with the potential to rapidly scale.

Today, entrepreneurs come here to build businesses based on technological innovation that will change the way we live and work. They enjoy the advantages of a connected location, tap into a highly skilled and entrepreneurial community and have a quality of life found rarely elsewhere.

This is where progressive companies come to collaborate, to innovate and to succeed.

Welcome to the South East Midlands.
Leaning in aerospace and automotive testing, advanced manufacturing, engineering and design, robotics and software development and electronics, the area's businesses and universities are among the most successful in the country at working together to commercialise knowledge and test new technologies in these fields.

The engineering heritage of Silverstone has been instrumental in attracting innovative companies to the area. Silverstone now has over 4,000 companies with advanced engineering, electronics and software skills within a one-hour drive-time radius. Our area's businesses, with their expertise and specialist capabilities now lead the UK's Future of Mobility and Clean Growth solutions—developing new technologies and technical testing in autonomy, energy efficiency and data capture. Supporting this, the area also hosts major transport innovators, such as the Silverstone Technology Cluster, the Connected Places Catapult in Milton Keynes, Millbrook Proving Ground's vehicle and battery and 5G connectivity testing facilities in Central Bedfordshire, the Gatesby Aerodynamic Research Facility in Daventry and Cranfield University's purpose-built experimental facility for the rapid development of 'on and off highway', ground and airborne autonomous systems, named 'MUEAVI'.

Cranfield University is home to the Aerospace Integration Research Centre (AIRC) and is developing the £67m Digital Aviation Research and Technology Centre (DARTeC), which will spearhead the UK's research into digital aviation technology. It is innovating in aircraft electrification by connecting the university's expertise in the aviation ecosystem with specialist capabilities in clean growth and environmental management. The University boasts the largest logistics and supply chain research centre in Europe and is developing a regional Hub of Excellence to increase productivity and competitiveness through better use data and technologies, such as drones, autonomous vehicles and robots, for 'last-mile-delivery' solutions. Bedfordshire has a cluster of leading aerospace organisations including the Aircraft Research Association and Bluebear systems. The National Space Propulsion Test Facilities at Westcott Venture Park in Aylesbury Vale allow the simulation of high-altitude testing of thrusters and is a key component of the UK's space technology ambitions.

Building on the pioneering work at Bletchley Park during World War II, the area continues to be at the forefront of developments in artificial intelligence and big data, with particular strengths in application and data analysis. The Open University and Milton Keynes have played a key role in using big data to pioneer the ‘Smart City’ movement and continue to lead in trialling connected and autonomous vehicles- self driving cars, delivery robots and pods.

With enhanced connectivity among South East Midlands’ clusters of expertise with complementary specialist clusters in neighbouring areas of Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire and in the Midlands, there are exciting opportunities for business here to create the technologies to go even further, faster and smarter.

This is the area where clever ideas and new technologies coalesce into smart business solutions.

BUSINESSES IN THE SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS ARE AT THE CUTTING-EDGE OF INNOVATION, DRIVING RESEARCH AND FURTHERING EXPERTISE IN CRITICAL SECTORS THAT WILL CHANGE OUR FUTURE.
This map includes a selection of businesses and assets leading
innovation in Future of Mobility and Clean Growth.
World-class clusters involving the UK’s leading high technology businesses operate and connect across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

**The South East Midlands area is central to this.**

Our prime location naturally places us at the heart of where key innovators and markets come together. Linking business clusters to specialist institutions, the South East Midlands is where ideas and innovation are tested, enhanced, commercialised and spun into global high growth ventures.

The South East Midlands acts as an international gateway to all of the strengths of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. We have London Luton Airport with direct routes to over 100 destinations, rail links to Gatwick airport and St Pancras International rail services, as well as easy access to London Heathrow, London Stansted and Birmingham International airports, supported by strong North-South road and rail transport routes throughout the area.

Looking to the future, new infrastructure backed by the UK Government is unlocking further growth potential by enhancing East-West connectivity. Current major investment is underway to develop the East-West Rail and a new Expressway. This will greatly enhance travel links with our global city neighbours, Cambridge and Oxford, and further connect our area’s towns and rural areas. Alongside regional and local transport infrastructure and technology upgrades to combat congestion, investments are being made to improve energy and digital infrastructure to boost business performance and efficiency and support growth.

Our area’s connectivity is shaping business opportunity.

Bringing innovation, solutions and people together, we are creating the connected places of the future. With enhanced connectivity across the most innovative, fastest growing areas in the UK, the business opportunity is immense.

**FiveAI** has brought together experts in artificial intelligence, engineering and mobility to create fully autonomous and shared transport for Europe’s cities. It locates its business close to the fields of expertise they need. With six offices in the UK, including London, Oxford and Cambridge, all of their vehicle testing is done in this area, at Millbrook Proving Ground in Central Bedfordshire.

**Intertek** provides advanced technical expertise and electric propulsion testing to global original equipment manufacturers. The business has doubled in capacity every two years since 2015 and that is expected to continue as it leads the industry through offering the most comprehensive independent electric vehicle (EV) and hybrid powertrain testing capability in the UK.
Business Environment
Growth by design

ECONOMIC GROWTH IS NO ACCIDENT. OUR ALREADY SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM IS IMPROVING FURTHER THROUGH THOUGHTFUL, STRATEGIC DESIGN.

The South East Midlands is growing fast, outstripped only by London. People are attracted to our area by good quality, knowledge-based jobs, career opportunities and a high-quality of life without the associated cost of living in large cities.

Employment growth here out-performs national averages. Businesses choose our region to tap into a skilled workforce and an entrepreneurial spirit that runs right through our communities.

Our schools, colleges and universities strengthen and adapt their offer in line with local business needs. For example, the University of Bedfordshire has invested in a STEM facility, and has expertise in robotic technology, AI and data management. The University of Northampton’s Institute of Logistics, Supply and Transport is working with business to forecast future logistics capacity and support autonomous vehicle readiness.

Our area has ambition. We are building new homes, business units and creating vibrant places where people want to live and work. We have a wealth of cultural, creative and natural assets and a strong track record of designing new green and urban spaces that enhance our natural environment. In fact, our plans are to lead the UK’s clean-growth agenda by strengthening our area’s credentials as a testbed for pioneering green technologies, zero-carbon construction methods and cohesive urban design. The area already has extensive electric vehicle (EV) uptake and EV infrastructure, with the average growth rate of new EV registrations 4.5% above UK average. Milton Keynes has the highest number of EV charging points outside London.

Planned infrastructure investment, designed to maximise the Oxford-Cambridge Arc’s growth potential, will provide businesses here with further advantage. Carbon reduction targets are to be designed into new projects and initiatives exist to make current business infrastructure more energy efficient.

Specialist support for businesses to start-up, scale-up and succeed can be reached through SEMLEP’s Growth Hub. A network of inward investment and business development professionals in our local authorities work jointly with SEMLEP, government departments and other agencies to support companies looking to set up or expand in the area.

Employer-led education and training is fundamental to the South East Midlands. We encourage all local businesses to work with us to develop a talent pipeline of energetic, interested and skilled people to be the business leaders and employees of the future.

SECURING FUTURE SUCCESS: NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION OF INNOVATORS

With £28m UK government investment, a consortium led by Milton Keynes College, including Microsoft UK, is creating a new Institute of Technology at Bletchley. It will focus exclusively on developing the competencies and skills for both current and future technical and digital roles. This investment complements plans to build a new university in Milton Keynes with a curriculum designed and delivered by industry partners in STEM fields including artificial intelligence, digital design and robotics.

Over 83,000 businesses

1.9m

Home to 1.9 million people

5.5%

annual GVA growth (2012-2017)

3rd

highest start-up rate of all LEP areas

6%

of national housing completions, compared to 3.4% of national population

49.5%

of students studying in local higher education find employment in the area (10 % points higher than neighbouring areas)

Above national average of productivity per worker. Milton Keynes third highest productivity in UK

Making the Connection

THE SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS: INNOVATION CONNECTIVITY OPPORTUNITY

3D printing

Business Lake Milton and business park

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure: Milton Keynes

Business

Environment

Growth by design

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Opportunity
Connecting today’s successes to shape the future

SEMLEP is working with local partners and HM Government to deliver a Local Industrial Strategy that will build on this success, by investing in local skills, infrastructure and R&D, and capitalising on new connections across the whole Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

We want to continue to be at the forefront of testing and commercialising new technologies, and thinking innovatively about how people live, work and move around.

We want to grow further, faster and sustainably, and we want you to be a part of this.

The South East Midlands: where extraordinary is ordinary.

Make the connection
To find out more about the South East Midlands, please contact:

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