South Midlands Business Board

SOUTH MIDLANDS SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC COMPACT

Unlocking growth in the South Midlands Economic Area

A business-led platform for investment, infrastructure and sustainable economic growth

Proposal for government and business engagement

September 2026

Business-Led | Non-Statutory | Investment -Focused

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHY THIS MATTERS

The South Midlands Sustainable Economic Compact (SEC) is a practical economic delivery mechanism for a nationally significant functional economy that crosses multiple administrative and emerging governance boundaries. It complements deeper devolution by enabling investment, infrastructure, skills, sector growth and business engagement to operate at the scale of the real economy while governance arrangements continue to evolve. The initial focus is the South Midlands; wider functional relationships should be evidenced and developed where they add economic value. The proposal is deliberately voluntary, time-limited and outcome-led, with no statutory planning, taxation or governance powers.

WHY NOW? Growth and investment need to move while governance and devolution arrangements continue to evolve.	**WHAT IT DOES** Creates a shared economic platform for investment, infrastructure, skills, sector growth and business engagement.
WHAT GOVERNMENT GETS A coherent, scalable testbed for economic-led delivery in complex functional economies.	**WHAT IT ENABLES** Evidence-led collaboration at the appropriate economic scale without predetermining governance.

1. Executive proposition.

The South Midlands is a nationally significant economic area at the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor. It has the assets, sectors, labour markets, infrastructure corridors and investment demand to operate as one of the UK's globally attractive high-growth regions. However, its real economy is being constrained by political, administrative and, potentially, planning policy fragmentation. Uncertainty over devolution outcomes, local government reorganisation, and proposed spatial planning geographies risk splitting the functional economy into smaller, less competitive and functional parts.

The South Midlands Sustainable Economic Compact (SEC) is proposed as a practical, voluntary, business-led, leader-backed, public-private delivery compact. It is not a combined authority, statutory planning body, quango or alternative constitutional settlement. It provides a common economic platform that can be used across different administrative geographies without prejudicing any authority's position on devolution, local government reorganisation or spatial planning.

The purpose of the SEC is to help that economy operate at the scale and speed required for sustainable growth while existing governance and devolution arrangements continue to evolve.

The SEC would create the common economic platform that is currently missing: a single market-facing proposition, a shared evidence base, an infrastructure and utilities priority schedule, a business-led investment pipeline, and a formal route for government, investors and infrastructure providers to engage with the South Midlands at the scale of the real economy and global offer the region presents.

It is deliberately framed as:

A South Midlands economic offer: capable of modular delivery across different administrative geographies.

BLMK, Northamptonshire, individual local authorities, future strategic authorities, SDS geographies and wider Oxford-Cambridge collaborations can all use the same evidence and pipeline. None should become the ceiling of ambition for the whole economy.

The SEC is, therefore, a practical response to the immediate economic and policy challenge: growth and investment need certainty now while political and administrative arrangements continue to develop. It is designed to complement deeper devolution, not compete with it, by ensuring that functional economic relationships, business priorities and investment opportunities can continue to be coordinated where they cross existing or emerging boundaries.

Business needs certainty now. Infrastructure providers need coherent asks now. Local leaders need a route to support growth without surrendering local positions.

The SEC provides that route.

What is being proposed?	Why it matters?
A voluntary public-private sustainable economic compact for the South Midlands (SEC).	Creates a shared economic platform without creating a new tier of government.
A South Midlands investment and industrial global growth offer.	Protects the scale required to compete nationally and internationally. Supporting global and national sectors that sit within the wider South Midlands functional economic area.
A modular evidence and delivery platform (architecture for growth).	Allows evidence and projects to be applied to Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, associated administrative areas, individual councils, SDS areas or future devolution geographies or cross regional economic areas.
A business-led delivery mechanism.	Provides investors, strategic employers, SMEs, universities, FE and infrastructure providers one credible route into delivery.
A without-prejudice agreement.	Allows leaders to support the economy without conceding their devolution, LGR or administrative positions.

2. The Opportunity.

The SEC is proposed initially as a two-year pilot, with a clear sunset and review point and a defined set of deliverables. It should operate as an intelligent client and delivery platform, drawing on existing local authority, business, Growth Hub, Careers Hub, university, FE, infrastructure and investor capability rather than duplicating those functions or services. The pilot should be capable of extension or adaptation only where evidence demonstrates added economic value.

Question	Proposed answer
What does it mean?	A formal but voluntary compact between business, public-sector leaders and delivery partners to enhance South Midlands economic proposition and align delivery around investment, infrastructure, skills and Industrial Strategy sectors. An enabler of growth and its associated opportunities.
What does it offer?	A shared economic baseline; investment prospectus; infrastructure and utilities schedule; Statement of Common Economic Ground; sector missions; project pipeline; business engagement route; government offer.
What benefit does it provide?	Scale, certainty, pace, investor confidence, stronger evidence for SDS and Local Plans, reduced duplication, better infrastructure sequencing, stronger private-sector engagement, and a route for government to support growth without forcing boundary agreement.
How does it help leaders?	It is without prejudice. Leaders can continue alternative devolution or local government positions while backing a shared economic offer that protects jobs, investment, infrastructure and community benefit.
Why is it not a quango?	It has no statutory powers, no planning powers, no power to direct councils, no power to levy or tax, no large bureaucracy, and no permanent institutional entitlement. It is a time-limited delivery compact judged by outcomes.
What is the government ask?	Recognise the South Midlands as a functional economic compact pilot; provide seed capacity funding; engage departments and agencies; support the investment pipeline; test the model as a national solution for complex growth geographies.

Proposed SEC function: The South Midlands SEC is a compact, not a constitution; a delivery platform, not a governance layer; and an economic proposition, not a substitute for democratic local government.

3. Why now? The problem the SEC solves.

The South Midlands does not lack ambition, assets or growth potential.
The structural issue is that its functional economic geography cuts across multiple administrative boundaries, while the interaction of devolution, local government reorganisation, spatial planning and major growth investment creates a risk that economic relationships are fragmented before they can be properly evidenced and coordinated.

This becomes a fundamental economic risk to existing and future sustainable growth with implications beyond the core functional economic geography, employment clusters and connectivity between sector supply chains. It impacts on the power of proximity the SM Region retains at the epicentre of OxCam.

The existing SEC proposal identifies the key problem clearly: functional economic regions do not align with local authority boundaries.
Investment decisions operate at regional, national and global scale; political cycles and legacy boundaries slow collective action; combined authority formation can be complex and politically fragile and local government review creates uncertainty and delay. [SMBB-1]

The SMBB SDS response further defines the specific South Midlands risk: be this unintended, it is a critical risk to growth. It seeks to inform SDS geographies, ensuring these should reflect functional economic geographies and not be unduly constrained or predetermined by administrative boundaries or emerging governance arrangements. It demonstrates the risk that fragmenting the South Midlands across multiple SDS areas risks disjointed strategic decisions, infrastructure planned in isolation, unbalanced housing and employment land delivery, and cross-boundary business land needs not being addressed. [SMBB-2]. It disrupts sector infrastructures, risks constraining or discouraging investment and adding complexity from a model proposed to act as a growth enabler.

This is best understood as a coordination and market-delivery problem, not a failure of individual councils. Local democratic accountability and local priorities remain legitimate; the issue is that labour markets, infrastructure systems, business supply chains, investment decisions and sector clusters frequently operate across those boundaries. The SEC provides a voluntary mechanism to coordinate the economic response without changing statutory responsibilities.

Why now? The problem the SEC solves.

Current risk	Economic consequence	Compact response
Devolution positions diverge.	The region waits for political settlement while investment windows move on and business out.	Without-prejudice economic compact that allows leaders to disagree on governance while aligning on growth.
SDS geographies split the functional economy.	Housing, jobs, employment land, grid, water and transport are planned in disconnected ways.	Statement of Common Economic Ground and shared infrastructure schedule across geographies.
BLMK and Northamptonshire are positioned separately.	Smaller propositions risk being overshadowed by larger neighbouring strategic geographies, yet offer lower economic potential.	South Midlands regional scale offer, with alternative administrative models viable as delivery modules rather than rival ceilings.
Infrastructure asks are fragmented.	Utilities and government receive competing bids and unclear priorities.	Single prioritised investment and infrastructure pipeline, tested with business and infrastructure providers.
Business engagement is duplicated.	Major firms and investors are asked the same questions repeatedly without a clear route to delivery.	Single business engagement route and mission-based delivery groups.

The point is simple: the economy needs a scale proposition while the political environment continues to evolve. The SEC offers leaders support growth now without prejudicing their future administrative options, whilst, at the same time, enhancing national and regional opportunities.

4. The South Midlands economic offer.

The SEC should define the South Midlands as the central investable growth platform of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor: a polycentric, infrastructure-led economy with nationally significant strengths in foundation sectors of Industrial Logistics, advanced manufacturing, digital and data infrastructure, defence, aviation, automotive, space, R&D, innovation, new settlements and strategic housing growth, clean infrastructure, skills and connected labour markets.

The economic offer should also recognise the emerging Innovation Circuit - the connected relationship between Silverstone, Cranfield, Milton Keynes and Westcott, with important links into North Buckinghamshire and the wider Oxford-Cambridge innovation system. The SEC provides a practical framework for demonstrating how these assets interact across boundaries rather than treating them as separate local propositions.

The South Midlands Business Board represents the collective business voice for Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes, North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire. Its business leaders offer a diversity of sector, global to local partners and critical investors in growth.

Its role is to ensure that business priorities, opportunities and challenges are reflected in strategic decision-making, operating alongside South Midlands services including the Growth Hub, Careers Hub and Connect to Work. [SMBB-2]

The evidence case for scale is central. The SMBB SDS response identifies the current fragmentation problem and compares the scale of BLMK, Northamptonshire and the South Midlands as a whole. It notes BLMK at around 600,000 jobs, North Northamptonshire at around 250,000, West Northamptonshire at around 150,000, and a joined South Midlands supporting around 1 million jobs.

It also compares this to neighbouring strategic geographies around 1.5 million jobs and highlights Greater Manchester at around 1.498 million jobs. [SMBB-2].

It further offers a platform to draw together the full functional economic geography over the administrative constraints. This allows the SEC to unlock a wider significant economic offer that draws sector clusters, supply chains and investment opportunities from areas spanning Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

The region has the potential to become the highest growth area by GDP in the UK.

The South Midlands economic offer.

Geography / proposition	Indicative employment scale noted in SMBB evidence	Strategic implication
BLMK	Around 600,000 jobs	Important delivery geography, but too small on its own to express the full South Midlands market opportunity.
North Northamptonshire	Around 250,000 jobs	Important growth geography and logistics/manufacturing contributor, but risks marginalisation if separated from wider South Midlands proposition.
West Northamptonshire	Around 150,000 jobs	Important logistics and infrastructure geography, including strategic freight relationships, but stronger as part of the whole.
Northamptonshire combined	Around 400,000 jobs	A significant economic area but still below the scale of neighbouring strategic geographies.
South Midlands Compact Area	Around 1,000,000 jobs	Minimum scale proposition for a globally credible central Growth Corridor offer.
South Midlands plus strategic alignment with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Over 1.5 million jobs / around 3.5 million people referenced in SMBB evidence	A powerful Growth Corridor association model capable of supporting sector scale, infrastructure alignment and national growth.

The South Midlands economic offer.

The offer is not intended to erase local identity: it is intended to connect local propositions into a larger market proposition. Individual places can lead distinctive local offers while the SEC provides the scale narrative, investor route and evidence base needed for national and international engagement.

The initial priority should be to demonstrate and strengthen South Midlands alignment. Wider relationships - including links into Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Buckinghamshire and adjoining innovation and investment geographies - should be evidenced where they materially strengthen the functional economic case, rather than assumed as part of the core geography from the outset.

The South Midlands offer should, therefore, be expressed in three layers:

Layer	Role	Examples
1. South Midlands scale layer.	The primary economic and investment proposition.	One offer to government, investors and global partners; common evidence baseline; shared investment and infrastructure pipeline. Aligned SDS footprint to ensure planning as an enabler.
2. Modular delivery layer.	Practical delivery through existing administrative and project geographies.	MK, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, individual authorities, Local Plans, sector corridors, university / FE partnerships.
3. Wider corridor and global layer.	Alignment with adjacent growth geographies (Oxford and Cambridge) and international market positioning.	Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, Greater Cambridge association, Life Science, innovation and discovery, data centres, Industrial Logistics Golden Triangle, defence, inward investment, R&D, export markets etc.

5. What the SEC means - and what it does not mean.

The SEC must answer the obvious objection directly. It is not another quango. It is not a new statutory body. It is not a mechanism to take powers from councils. It is a practical, time-limited, business-led delivery compact that uses existing powers, teams and institutions more effectively.

The SEC is:	The SEC is not:
A voluntary public-private economic compact;	A combined authority, combined county authority, mayoral authority or shadow mayoralty;
A delivery platform for investment, infrastructure, skills and sector growth;	A new planning authority, local planning authority or SDS-making body;
A business-led and leader-backed mechanism for shared economic evidence and delivery;	A substitute for elected councils, statutory committees or democratic decision-making;
A single economic offer with modular delivery geographies;	A device to force one devolution outcome or pre-empt local government reorganisation;
An intelligent client that commissions, coordinates and convenes existing capacity;	A large delivery bureaucracy or permanent quango;
A route to support SDS, Local Plans and infrastructure planning with economic evidence;	A body with powers to allocate land, determine applications or impose policy on councils;
A substitute for elected councils, statutory committees or democratic decision-making.	An open-ended institution entitled to exist regardless of performance.

The SEC should be formally constituted through a Memorandum of Economic Compact. This would set out purpose, principles, scope, deliverables, governance, resource, transparency, non-duplication and sunset clauses. It would not confer statutory powers. All statutory decisions would remain with the competent public bodies.

Without-prejudice clause
Participation in the South Midlands Sustainable Economic Compact (SEC) does not prejudice the position of any authority on devolution, local government reorganisation, strategic authority membership, local plan policy or future governance arrangements. The SEC exists solely to enhance and deliver shared economic, investment, infrastructure and skills interests across the South Midlands functional economy.

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6. Policy fit: devolution, SDS, NPPF and Industrial Strategy.

The SEC is not an alternative to government policy. It is a delivery mechanism that helps current national policy work in a complex non-aligned geography.

The English Devolution White Paper makes Local Growth Plans central to the growth mission for Mayoral Strategic Authorities, including the development of long-term growth vision, shared strategic priorities with government, alignment of policy levers and investment pipelines for the private sector and investors. [GOV-1] It also states that the Office for Investment will work with Mayors to develop and market strategic investment propositions. [GOV-1]

The South Midlands problem is that the economic geography is nationally important, but the governance map is unresolved. The SEC, therefore, offers government a practical equivalent economic platform during the transition: not a substitute for future Strategic Authority arrangements, but a bridge that enables investment planning, business engagement and project development now.

Spatial Development Strategies (SDS's)
The Devolution White Paper also states that all areas, with or without a Strategic Authority, will be required to develop SDS's over strategic geographies. [GOV-1] The SDS consultation sought views on the proposed geographical areas for SDS preparation, so prospective strategic planning authorities can understand the geography for which they may be planning and prepare ahead of legislation. [GOV-4]

The SEC is designed to prevent SDS geography becoming an accidental economic boundary. It does this by providing a cross-SDS economic evidence base and a Statement of Common Economic Ground that can be used by each SDS or local planning process without forcing those processes into one statutory structure.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
The NPPF strengthens the economic case. It states that planning policies and decisions should help create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt; should set a clear economic vision and strategy; should identify strategic sites for local and inward investment; and should facilitate modern economy uses including laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics. [GOV-3] It also states that strategic policies should provide for homes, employment, infrastructure, water, energy, telecommunications, health, education and climate adaptation, and that effective strategic planning across local planning authority boundaries is vital to sustainable growth. [GOV-2]

Policy fit: devolution, SDS, NPPF and Industrial Strategy.

Modern Industrial Strategy

The Industrial Strategy provides the national growth frame. The Government describes it as a 10-year plan to significantly increase business investment in eight growth-driving sectors by making it quicker and easier for businesses to invest and providing certainty and stability for long-term investment decisions. [GOV-5] The SEC converts that national objective into a South Midlands delivery mechanism.

The South Midlands Economic Compact (SEC): turning policy requirements into outcomes.

Policy requirement	South Midlands risk	Compact solution
Devolution and Local Growth Plans	No settled single Strategic Authority able to express the whole South Midlands opportunity.	Pilot a Functional Economic Compact that provides a shared economic plan and investment pipeline while devolution evolves.
SDS strategic planning	SDS boundaries may fragment an integrated economic area.	Provide cross-boundary economic evidence, infrastructure priorities and a Statement of Common Economic Ground.
NPPF economic planning	Modern economy uses such as data centres, logistics, energy and industrial land may be planned locally without regional system view.	Create sector evidence packages and infrastructure tests for data, digital, logistics, defence, energy, water and employment land.
Industrial Strategy	High-growth sectors require scale, skills, land, innovation and investor confidence beyond single authority boundaries.	Use sector missions and business-led delivery compacts to align local assets with national sector plans.
Infrastructure delivery	Infrastructure agencies face multiple local asks without a single economic priority sequence.	Create a prioritised infrastructure and utilities schedule linked to the investment pipeline.

7. The SEC offer: Government, leaders,business and communities aligned.

The SEC is framed as an offer, not a request for permission to create another institution. It offers government a low-risk route to unlock growth, leaders a politically safe route to support economic scale, business a clearer route to scale investment and delivery, and communities better sequencing of jobs, skills and infrastructure that underpin housing growth, avoiding unintended dormitory housing risk to villages, towns and regions.

7.1 Offer to government

- A pilot model for economic-led regional delivery in complex growth geographies where devolution boundaries are unresolved.
- A single South Midlands economic proposition aligned to the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor and the Industrial Strategy.
- A pipeline of investable projects tested with business, infrastructure providers and local partners.
- A way to reduce fragmented local bidding and improve value for money through shared prioritisation.
- A practical mechanism to bring departments and agencies around common investment, infrastructure and sector missions. An efficient platform to drive growth and align future devolution expansion or adoption at economic scale.
- A scalable national model for other high-growth areas where the real economy cuts across administrative maps.

7.2 Offer to local leaders and political leads

- A without-prejudice mechanism that does not require any authority to concede a devolution, LGR or SDS position (but seek to aligned SDS at the economic scale over micro silo administrative sub regions).
- Protection of local identity and local democratic powers, while adding economic scale and value where scale is needed to drive sustainable economic growth, accessible and skilled workforces and stronger community benefit.
- Stronger economic and sector evidence to define SDS, Local Plans, infrastructure asks and Government engagement. Backed by business and showing demand and need that can move sustainably at pace.
- A route to ensure housing growth, new settlements and employment growth are aligned with infrastructure and jobs, derisking the perception or historical risk of dormitory development that constrains true growth.
- Reduced duplication in business engagement and investment propositions, enhancing opportunities.
- A stronger negotiating platform with Government, utilities and national agencies.

The SEC offer: Government, leaders,business and communities aligned.

7.3 Offer to business and investors

- One front door into the South Midlands economic proposition at a national and global scale.
- A credible scale offer that reflects labour markets, supply chains, infrastructure corridors and sector clusters.
- A clearer route to raise barriers around grid, power, water, transport, skills, planning and land supply.
- Mission-based engagement around sectors that matter to investors: data, digital, defence, advanced manufacturing, logistics, clean infrastructure, skills and innovation. Removing barriers and duplication.
- A pipeline of opportunities that can be marketed through government, the Office for Investment, business networks and sector champions.
- Greater certainty that administrative change will not fragment the investment proposition or impact negatively on investor confidence and perceptions of functional scale or capabilities to sustain growth.

7.4 Offer to communities

- More credible alignment between homes, jobs, skills, infrastructure and helping shape public services.
- A route to ensure growth is infrastructure-led and not simply housing-number-led.
- Better connection and accessibility between young people, workers and future employment opportunities through Careers Hub, FE, universities and employers.
- Greater transparency over infrastructure constraints and investment priorities. Underpins accessibility to work and skilled enhancement of workforce planning and funding.
- A sustainable growth compact that places economic opportunity, clean infrastructure and community benefit together. Enhances range of targeted development enabled investment beyond the default siloed S106/CIL approaches to date.
- Provides a platform for employees to support growth, identify future prosperity opportunities that drive sustainable environments and quality of life benefits from employment, skills development, accessibility and investment.

8. Delivery model and work programme.

The SEC should be an outcome-led platform. Its first two years should focus on a small number of tangible products that government, councils, business and investors can use.

Output	Purpose	Owner / route
1. South Midlands Economic Baseline	A single evidence base covering labour markets, productivity, sectors, skills, commuting, supply chains, housing, employment land, infrastructure and investment.	Compact secretariat with local authority, business, Growth Hub, university and ONS / Government data support.
2. Statement of Common Economic Ground	A non-statutory economic companion to planning statements of common ground, identifying cross-boundary economic issues that all partners recognise even where governance preferences differ.	SMBB-led with leaders, planning /economic officers and infrastructure partners.
3. South Midlands Investment and Infrastructure Prospectus	A market-facing document setting out investable propositions, sector opportunities, infrastructure asks and government partnership opportunities.	A market-facing document setting out investable propositions, sector opportunities, infrastructure asks and government partnership opportunities.
4. Infrastructure and Utilities Priority Schedule	A prioritised schedule for power, grid, water, transport, digital, freight, health, education, skills and climate resilience constraints.	Delivery and Investment Group with utilities, DfT, DESNZ, National Grid, water companies, Homes England and local partners.
5. Sector Evidence Packages	Detailed evidence for priority sectors including data centres, defence, clean infrastructure, logistics, advanced manufacturing, new towns, digital, skills and innovation.	Sector missions with private-sector leads and expert commissioning.
6. Project Acceleration Pipeline	A live pipeline of projects requiring coordination, government support, funding, infrastructure decisions or investor engagement.	Delivery and Investment Group, reported quarterly.
7. Business Engagement and Investor Forum	A structured route for major employers, SMEs, investors, developers, infrastructure providers, universities and FE to shape delivery.	SMBB with Growth Hub and sector partners.

The SEC should not become a debating society. Each output should have a named accountable lead, a timetable, a practical product and a delivery test. The delivery test is whether the output helps unlock investment, remove a barrier, improve evidence, align infrastructure or increase business confidence.

9. Industrial Strategy and sector missions.

The SEC should organise business engagement around missions rather than standing committees or silo administrative programmes. Missions should be time-limited, chaired or co-chaired by senior business or institutional leaders and focused on evidence, barriers, projects and government asks. This creates delivery discipline and avoids institutional drift and administrative constraint or impasse.

Mission	Why it matters	Initial deliverables
Data, digital and AI infrastructure	The NPPF explicitly identifies data centres, digital infrastructure and grid connections as modern economy requirements. The South Midlands must evidence power, water, fibre, land, sustainability and labour-market needs at scale.	Data centre and digital infrastructure evidence package; grid and water constraints map; sustainable data infrastructure principles; investor-ready opportunity statement.
Defence, security and advanced manufacturing	Defence and advanced manufacturing align directly with national Industrial Strategy priorities and regional supply-chain capabilities.	Defence and security supply-chain mapping; MOD / prime contractor engagement; skills and innovation route map; investable sites and facilities review.
Strategic logistics, freight and industrial land	The South Midlands is part of the UK's logistics Golden Triangle and contains strategic freight and distribution assets. Fragmented SDS geographies would weaken infrastructure and land-use coordination. [SMBB-2]	Freight and logistics land evidence; DIRFT and strategic corridor narrative; decarbonised freight and energy ask; last-mile and supply-chain resilience plan.
New towns, renewed towns and economic place-making	New settlements and major growth locations must be treated as economic and infrastructure propositions, not housing allocations alone.	New settlements economic baseline; 30-year infrastructure and employment alignment; town-to-sector skills pathways; community benefit proposition.
Clean infrastructure, power, water and grid resilience	Growth will not be investable unless the region can answer infrastructure, power, water, climate and resilience questions.	Regional infrastructure constraints schedule; utilities roundtable; clean growth investment asks; grid and water priority statement.
Skills, labour market and inclusive growth	Inclusive growth requires actual growth, and growth requires a workforce pipeline aligned to employer demand.	South Midlands skills compact; FE / university / employer pathways; Careers Hub integration; workforce participation and retraining plan.
Innovation, universities, FE and SME scale-up	The region must convert knowledge assets and business strengths into commercial growth and productivity uplift.	Innovation ecosystem map; R&D collaboration opportunities; SME scale-up programme; university-industry partnership prospectus.
Visitor economy, culture and foundation sectors	Foundation sectors support jobs, place attractiveness and quality of life, and should be integrated into the economic offer.	Visitor economy and culture investment narrative; skills and SME support route; links to town centres and regeneration.

10. Mitigating unintended consequences from devolution, SDS and NPPF change.

The SEC should be presented as a mitigation tool for unintended consequences arising from otherwise legitimate national reforms. The reforms are necessary, but their interaction could unintentionally fragment economic planning in the South Midlands and associated regions lacking devolution agreement.

Unintended consequence	Why it is material	Compact mitigation
Administrative devolution fragments the investment offer.	Different authorities may join or seek different arrangements, creating multiple smaller propositions to Government and investors.	A single South Midlands economic offer remains available regardless of the governance map.
SDS boundaries become de facto economic boundaries	Planning geographies may shape infrastructure, employment land and housing strategy even where they do not reflect the functional economy.	Cross-SDS economic evidence and Statement of Common Economic Ground prevent arbitrary economic fragmentation. A single SDS area should reflect the South Midlands functional economic area of Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes as defined in MKSM regional growth strategy in early 2000.
Housing growth is detached from employment and infrastructure.	New settlements and major extensions require 30-year infrastructure and economic vision under the NPPF. Development will create dormitory housing areas without 'place' as living ecosystems.	Economic place-making mission links homes, jobs, skills, utilities, transport and community infrastructure – living ecosystems shaping environments not merely physical 'new town' or 'growth' designations.
Modern economy uses are treated as local planning controversies rather than regional economic infrastructure.	Data centres, grid, logistics, laboratories and advanced manufacturing have regional supply-chain and infrastructure implications.	Sector evidence packages and infrastructure schedule put modern economy requirements into an evidence-led regional frame.
Infrastructure providers receive fragmented or conflicting signals	Utilities and transport agencies need prioritised demand, sequencing and evidence.	One infrastructure and utilities priority schedule, tied to projects and sector demand.
Local political conflict displaces economic delivery.	Defensive positioning can lead to delay, diluted bids and loss of investor confidence.	Without-prejudice SEC allows leaders to support growth while preserving local positions.

Principle
The SEC does not ask government to stop devolution, SDS or planning reform. It asks government to ensure those reforms do not accidentally weaken one of the UK's strongest functional growth economies.

11. Governance model and non-quango safeguards.

The governance model is lean, transparent and explicitly constrained. The SEC should be strong enough to convene business and government but not designed to accumulate statutory powers or duplicate local government. It is a platform that offers an economic path for devolution and complements a political or administrative devolution approach, without the constraints or risks to economic growth we currently see in areas where political or local administrative agreement remains the barrier to a strong economic growth or at a relevant scale that is sustainable for the local economy and investable.

11.1 Proposed operating structure

Level	Role	Membership / frequency
SEC Partnership	Sets the shared economic proposition, agrees annual priorities, reviews delivery, sponsors government engagement and protects the without-prejudice basis.	Business chair; public-sector co-chair; SMBB; leaders or nominated political leads; universities and FE; infrastructure; government observers. Quarterly.
Public Leaders Liaison Panel	Provides democratic interface, political advice and early-warning on local concerns without turning the SEC into a statutory decision-making body.	Participating leaders or nominated political leads. Meets ahead of key government engagements and annual review.
Delivery and Investment Group	Maintains investment pipeline, resolves delivery issues, commissions evidence, coordinates infrastructure asks and tracks barriers.	Senior officers, SMBB representatives, Growth Hub / Careers Hub, infrastructure providers, universities / FE, project sponsors. Every 6 to 8 weeks.
Sector Mission Groups	Time-limited task and finish groups for priority missions, each with clear deliverables and deadlines.	Private-sector lead with public-sector, education, infrastructure and government agency participation as relevant.
Investor and Infrastructure Forum	Tests propositions with investors, utilities, landowners, developers, strategic employers and national agencies.	Open but curated forum, convened twice yearly.
Lean Secretariat	Acts as intelligent client, data and programme office, commissioning and coordination function.	Initial 5 FTE maximum, drawing on existing capacity and specialist commissions.

Governance model and non-quango safeguards

11.2 Non-quango safeguards

Safeguard	Commitment
No statutory powers	The SEC cannot make planning, transport, taxation, regulatory or statutory funding decisions.
No transfer of council functions	Local authorities retain economic development, planning, regeneration and democratic accountability.
No planning authority role	The SEC does not prepare or adopt an SDS or Local Plan, determine applications or allocate land.
No compulsory membership or levy	Partners participate voluntarily and no compulsory levy is created.
Two-year pilot and sunset clause	Continuation after two years requires evidence of added value and formal partner review.
Lean 5 FTE secretariat cap in phase one	The SEC coordinates expertise rather than employing a large team.
No duplication of existing services	Growth Hub, Careers Hub, local economic development teams, universities and business support providers remain delivery assets.
Annual transparency report	Publish delivery outcomes, investment pipeline progress, barriers removed, funding leveraged and expenditure.
Open performance dashboard	Success measured by investment, jobs, productivity, infrastructure, skills and delivery outcomes, not meetings or papers.
Independent business voice preserved	SMBB advice remains independent and evidence-led, including where administrative consensus is difficult.

Governance model and non-quango safeguards

11.3 Decision-making

The SEC should avoid the word 'voting' wherever possible, because voting implies a quasi-statutory body and invites defensive local interpretation. Decisions should instead be categorised as follows:

Decision type	How it is handled
Compact principles and annual work programme	Seek consensus between business and public partners. Any authority may record a reservation without blocking the economic evidence or business advice.
Statutory planning, funding or policy decisions	Remain exclusively with the competent statutory body. The SEC may provide evidence or recommendations only.
Delivery modules	Opt-in by relevant partners. No authority is forced into a project or position outside its statutory powers or local mandate.
Business advice	The SMBB retains the right to publish independent business advice where market evidence requires it, including where public-sector consensus is not available.
Government and investor propositions	Framed as South Midlands economic propositions, with clear transparency on which partners support each proposition and which are participating in delivery.

12. Funding, resource and value for money

The SEC should be deliberately low cost. Its value lies in coordination, evidence, investment readiness and leverage, not in holding large budgets.

Phase	Requirement	Potential sources	Use of funds
Phase 1: Establishment pilot	GBP 500,000 to GBP 1 million over two years, consistent with the current draft proposition. [SMBB-1]	Government seed capacity funding; partner contributions; business sponsorship; UKSPF legacy or successor capacity; institutional / philanthropic support.	Lean 5 FTE secretariat; evidence commissions; investment prospectus; infrastructure schedule; mission groups; investor engagement; Government engagement.
Phase 2: Delivery leverage	Project-specific and investment-led.	Government growth funds; infrastructure funds; private investment; sector partnerships; National Wealth Fund / Office for Investment engagement where relevant.	Project acceleration, investable propositions, infrastructure business cases, skills programmes and sector delivery packages.

The SEC is not designed to be a grant-giving body. It should, instead, improve the quality, scale and prioritisation of bids and investment propositions. This improves value for money by reducing bid fragmentation, sequencing infrastructure and crowding in private investment.

The current draft Treasury case is sound and should be retained: the market failure is coordination failure across local authorities, which inhibits agglomeration benefits, infrastructure sequencing and private investment confidence; the economic additionality comes from productivity uplift, private capital crowd-in, reduced bid fragmentation and faster deployment of national programmes; and the value-for-money case is a low-cost governance intervention with high leverage and optionality. [SMBB-1].

The opportunity exists to align a single growth company vs development corporations to a regional model which further enhances a compact approach to ensure spend is targeted at delivery enables not administrative structures, that compete for private sector capacity and alignment.



The Greater Copenhagen economic and regional framework functions as an integrated cross-border metropolitan region spanning eastern Denmark and southern Sweden (Skåne and Halland), centered around a compact, transit-oriented urban model

13. Proof of concept: EU and international models.

The SEC is not a speculative model. International evidence shows that high-performing regions often create public-private economic platforms that operate across administrative boundaries, align investment around functional economic geographies and strengthen clusters without requiring one single constitutional form. The UK lags behind in enabling economic delivery at scale and pace and has, in part, allowed devolution to become a debate at the cost of true tangible economic growth at a scale that is driven by a functional economic geography or sector alignment. The SEC enables the UK to address this and provide a new, alternative, yet proven path for devolved working that places commerce and economics at its heart, for social benefit.

The proof of concept is not that the South Midlands should copy any one model. The lesson is that successful growth regions use a compact-style economic layer to align business, government, infrastructure and knowledge institutions around a shared proposition. The South Midlands can adapt, innovate and apply that approach to the English devolution and planning context, providing an alternative to the current administrative devolution impasse.

Supercharging the offer.

Position the SEC, not as an exception to devolution, but as the UK's pilot for Functional Sustainable Economic Compacts: a scalable model for growth geographies where investment and labour markets operate at a different scale from local administrative structures.

Proof of concept: EU and international models

Model	Relevant evidence	Lesson for the South Midlands Compact
Greater Copenhagen /Oresund	Greater Copenhagen describes itself as a Danish-Swedish political cooperation of 85 municipalities and four regions seeking to build one of the world's most competitive metropolitan regions. It focuses on conditions for companies to invest, innovate and attract labour; labour-market movement across borders; universities, companies and public authorities cooperating on green solutions, cities and infrastructure; and close cooperation with national governments and the EU. [INT-1]	Functional economic collaboration can sit across municipal, regional and national boundaries without abolishing them. The South Midlands can use a similar logic: shared economic brand and delivery agenda, while existing authorities retain powers. This could extend across Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and include Cambridgeshire reflecting the functional economic area.
Brainport / High Tech Campus Eindhoven	High Tech Campus Eindhoven describes itself as a collaborative ecosystem of high-tech companies, researchers and institutions, with four tech clusters, 27 years of open innovation, over 300 companies and more than 12,500 professionals. [INT-2]	Cluster-led economic development is most powerful when business, knowledge institutions and public partners build a shared platform, common facilities, network effects and sector missions. The South Midlands can develop comparable mission-based propositions for data, defence, advanced manufacturing, logistics and clean infrastructure. An international offer.
EU Smart Specialisation Community of Practice	The European Commission describes the S3 Community of Practice as a central hub for Smart Specialisation guidance, networking, support and peer learning, aimed at reaching quadruple-helix stakeholders and ensuring strategies do not remain abstract documents but engage the territory. [INT-3]	The SEC should use an evidence-led, quadruple-helix model: business, public authorities, education / research and civic / infrastructure partners identifying sectors where the South Midlands has distinctive advantage and delivery potential.
Canadian Global Innovation Clusters	Canada's Global Innovation Clusters programme brings companies of all sizes, academic institutions and non-profits together to address complex challenges no single company, sector or community can overcome alone, with significant co-investment and national membership. [INT-4]	Government-backed cluster compacts can mobilise industry, academia and investors around missions while remaining focused on outcomes, co-investment, SME scale-up and global markets.
European R&D collaboration evidence	Research on EU Framework Programme collaborations across 255 NUTS-2 regions found that geographical proximity, co-location in neighbouring regions and technological proximity are important determinants of cross-region R&D collaboration. [INT-5]	Innovation policy should not fragment neighbouring, technologically related economic areas. The South Midlands needs a cross-boundary collaboration platform that reflects sector and labour-market reality rather than only administrative lines.

14. Government ask and leader ask.

14.1 The government ask

- Recognise the South Midlands as a Functional Economic Compact pilot within the Oxford Cambridge Growth Corridor.
- Provide seed capacity funding for a two-year SEC pilot, with a lean secretariat and evidence programme.
- Nominate a senior government sponsor and establish an official level working group across MHCLG, DBT, HMT, DfT, DESNZ, DSIT, DfE, MOD, Homes England, UKRI, the Office for Investment and relevant infrastructure bodies.
- Work with the SEC to develop a South Midlands Investment and Infrastructure Prospectus and market investable propositions internationally.
- Support a Statement of Common Economic Ground that helps SDS and Local Plan preparation reflect the functional economy of the South Midlands, without predetermining governance geography.
- Use the South Midlands as a national testbed for economic-led delivery in high-growth areas where devolution, SDS or local government boundaries are unresolved.

14.2 The leader and political lead ask

- Endorse the SEC in principle as a without-prejudice economic delivery mechanism.
- Confirm that participation does not bind any authority to a devolution, or local government reorganisation outcome.
- Support development of the South Midlands economic baseline, investment proposition and infrastructure schedule.
- Nominate senior officer and political liaison points to shape the SEC without converting it into a statutory committee.
- Permit business-led sector missions to provide independent advice on investment barriers, infrastructure constraints and growth opportunities.
- Work with SMBB to present a common economic offer to Government while preserving local democratic positions.

14.3 The business ask

- Provide senior business leadership for the SEC Partnership and sector missions.
- Identify investable projects, constraints and market opportunities across the South Midlands.
- Support the evidence base with market intelligence, supply-chain insight and skills demand.
- Champion the South Midlands offer nationally and internationally.
- Help ensure the SEC remains delivery-focused and does not drift into process-led governance.

15. First-year implementation plan.

Timing	Action	Output
First 30 days	SMBB endorsement; leader engagement; agree without-prejudice principles; issue government engagement letter.	SEC mandate and engagement route.
First 60 days	Agree draft Memorandum of Economic Compact; establish lean shadow secretariat; map existing evidence and delivery capacity.	Draft terms, partner map and evidence gap assessment.
First 100 days	Produce draft South Midlands scale offer; initial sector mission briefs; initial infrastructure constraints map.	One-page economic proposition and mission programme.
Month 4 to 6	Develop Statement of Common Economic Ground; hold investor and infrastructure roundtable; commission data, defence and new towns evidence packages.	Draft Statement, sector evidence commissions and infrastructure priority schedule.
Month 6 to 9	Publish draft South Midlands Investment and Infrastructure Prospectus; agree project acceleration pipeline; test with government departments and agencies.	Market-facing prospectus and priority pipeline.
Month 9 to 12	Formal government Compact proposition; delivery dashboard; first annual review; decision on phase two delivery leverage.	Government pilot agreement and year two work programme.

16. Success measures and Treasury economic case

The SEC should be judged by outcomes, not by the number of meetings or strategies produced. The success measures should be visible, investor-relevant and capable of being reported annually to government, leaders, business and the public. This directly builds on the existing success of the regional hubs but enhances the alignment and integration needed to drive new opportunities and strengthen the economic environment sustainably.

Outcome area	Measures
Investment and growth	Private investment unlocked; government funding aligned; inward investment leads converted; number and value of investable propositions; GVA / productivity indicators.
Jobs and skills	Jobs created or safeguarded; apprenticeships and skills pathways; employer participation; workforce participation; sector skills plans delivered.
Infrastructure	Infrastructure projects accelerated; grid / water / transport / digital constraints escalated or resolved; funding secured; utilities engagement and sequencing.
Industrial Strategy delivery	Sector mission outputs; data centre / defence / logistics / clean infrastructure evidence packages; new projects aligned to high-growth sectors.
Planning and SDS support	Statement of Common Economic Ground produced; evidence used in SDS / Local Plan work; cross-boundary strategic issues identified and addressed.
Business engagement	Number and quality of firms engaged; SME participation; investor events; strategic employers represented; barriers raised and acted upon.
Partnership effectiveness	Joint bids; cross-boundary projects; duplication reduced; stakeholder confidence; annual review findings.

Success measures and Treasury economic case

Treasury economic case summary

Case component	Summary
Strategic case	The South Midlands is a nationally significant growth area whose functional economy is being constrained by fragmented governance and uncertain devolution / SDS boundaries.
Economic case	A low-cost SEC addresses coordination failure, strengthens agglomeration benefits, improves infrastructure sequencing and increases investor confidence.
Commercial case	The SEC enables clearer market engagement, sharper investable propositions and stronger private-sector participation without becoming a large spending body.
Financial case	Phase one capacity cost is modest, with potential to leverage substantially larger public and private investment through improved pipeline quality.
Management case	Lean secretariat, clear deliverables, annual dashboard, sunset clause and partner review protect against mission creep.

17. Proposed resolutions.

17.1 Proposed SMBB resolution

- Endorses in principle the creation of a South Midlands Sustainable Economic Compact as a voluntary, business-led and leader-backed delivery mechanism for protecting and advancing the South Midlands economic proposition.
- Confirms that the SEC shall not be a new statutory authority, planning body, combined authority or quango, but a lean public-private delivery platform focused on economic evidence, investment, infrastructure, skills, sector growth and government engagement.
- Confirms that the SEC shall be developed on a without-prejudice basis, allowing individual authorities to continue to pursue their own devolution, local government reorganisation and SDS positions.
- Reaffirms the SMBB view that the South Midlands requires a single scale economic and investment offer, capable of being disaggregated for different administrative geographies but not diminished by them.
- Agrees that the SEC should support delivery of the Industrial Strategy, NPPF economic planning requirements, SDS evidence, infrastructure priorities and private-sector engagement across the South Midlands functional economy.
- Requests that the additional strategy commission develop the SEC proposition, including strengthened evidence on data centres, defence, logistics, new towns, clean infrastructure, skills and the South Midlands role within the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor.
- Invites the South Midlands Authorities Board and relevant leaders to support the SEC as a practical route for maintaining economic scale and investor confidence while devolution and SDS arrangements continue to evolve.
- Authorises the Chair of the SMBB to engage government, business champions and public-sector partners on the development of the SEC as a pilot model for economic-led regional growth.

17.2 Proposed leader statement

Leaders recognise that the South Midlands economy operates across administrative boundaries and that business, investors, infrastructure providers and government requires a clear economic proposition at sufficient scale. Without prejudice to the devolution, local government reorganisation, SDS or local planning position of any authority, leaders support the development of a South Midlands Sustainable Economic Compact as a voluntary public-private mechanism to strengthen shared economic evidence, infrastructure planning, sector delivery, skills alignment and investment engagement.

Appendix A: Ministerial Offer

Issue	Briefing point
The issue	The South Midlands is a nationally significant growth geography at the heart of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, but its delivery capacity is weakened by fragmented governance, contested boundaries and the interaction of devolution, LGR and SDS processes.
The opportunity	A business-led, leader-backed Sustainable Economic Compact can unlock growth now by creating a single investment proposition, evidence base, infrastructure schedule and sector pipeline without structural reorganisation.
Why government should engage	The SEC offers a low-risk pilot for economic-led regional delivery in complex geographies. It supports Industrial Strategy, NPPF and SDS objectives while avoiding the political cost of forcing boundary settlement.
What is needed	Recognition of the pilot; seed capacity funding; departmental engagement; support for investment and infrastructure proposition; Office for Investment / DBT involvement.
What government gets	A coherent South Midlands proposition, stronger private-sector engagement, reduced fragmented bids, investable projects and a national model for other growth gap geographies.

Appendix B: Local Government Q&A

Challenge / question	Answer
Is this a back-door combined authority?	No. It has no statutory powers, no mayor, no levy, no planning powers and no role in determining local governance. It is an economic delivery compact.
Does it predetermine SDS geography?	No. It provides evidence that can support one or more SDS geographies while protecting the functional economy from accidental fragmentation.
Does it undermine local authorities?	No. Councils retain statutory powers and local accountability. The SEC adds scale where local authorities cannot act effectively alone.
Could it reduce funding for individual places?	The purpose is the opposite: to improve scale, quality and competitiveness of funding asks and attract additional private and public investment.
Who controls it?	It is business-chaired and leader-backed, with transparent terms. No single organisation controls it. Statutory decisions remain with statutory bodies.
Does it favour BLMK or Northamptonshire?	No. It positions BLMK and Northamptonshire as complementary delivery modules within one larger South Midlands offer.
What if an authority disagrees with a project?	Projects are opt-in. The SEC can provide evidence and business advice, but it cannot force statutory or financial decisions on any authority.
Why should political leads back a business-led compact?	Because business certainty, jobs, infrastructure and investment cannot wait for political boundaries to settle. The SEC lets leaders support growth without giving up local positions.
How is mission creep prevented?	Two-year pilot, five FTE cap, no statutory powers, annual review, transparent dashboard, sunset clause and clear non-duplication duty.
What happens if future devolution creates a suitable Strategic Authority?	The SEC can be absorbed, adapted or retained as the business-led economic delivery and investor engagement arm for the new arrangements.

Appendix B1: Quick stakeholder FAQ's

Challenge / question	Answer
Why is this needed if the government is pursuing deeper devolution?	The SEC complements devolution. It provides an economic coordination mechanism where functional economic relationships are broader than current or emerging governance boundaries, while future devolution arrangements continue to develop.
Does this create a larger South Midlands geography by default?	No. The current South Midlands is the starting point. Wider relationships are to be tested and evidenced, with geography following economic evidence rather than being predetermined.
Could councils lose powers?	No. The SEC has no statutory powers and does not determine planning, funding, taxation or governance decisions. Participation is voluntary and delivery modules are opt-in.
What if government funding is not available?	The pilot should be capable of beginning with a lean core funded from existing partner capacity and business support, with government seed funding sought but not treated as the sole condition for commencement. The first work programme should prioritise high-value outputs that demonstrate leverage and additionality.
Why should business lead?	Business sees investment barriers, market opportunities, skills demand and supply-chain relationships across boundaries. The SEC combines that independent economic perspective with democratic local leadership and existing public delivery capacity.

Appendix C: Risk & Mitigations

Risk	Likelihood / impact	Mitigation
Disagreement between business evidence and local political preferences.	High / Medium	Allow reservations but protect independent business advice. The SEC should reveal and manage economic trade-offs, not hide them.
Local authority resistance caused by fear of loss of control.	Medium / High	Use without-prejudice clause, no statutory powers, explicit local sovereignty, leader liaison panel, opt-in delivery modules and clear distinction between evidence and statutory decisions.
SEC perceived as another quango	Medium / High	Two-year pilot, five FTE cap, sunset clause, no levy, no statutory powers, public dashboard and outcome-based review.
Business frustration if SEC becomes process-heavy.	Medium / High	Mission-based work programme, investor forum, delivery dashboard, named project leads and independent SMBB business advice.
Government sees it as duplicating devolution.	Low / High	Position as bridge and pilot, not alternative; align to Local Growth Plans, Industrial Strategy, SDS and NPPF objectives.
Mission creep into planning policy detail.	Low / High	Formal terms state the SEC cannot make planning policy, allocate land or determine applications; evidence only.
SDS geographies progress before SEC evidence is ready.	Medium / Medium	Produce rapid 100-day Statement of Common Economic Ground and initial economic baseline.
Infrastructure partners face unclear priorities.	Medium / Medium	Develop infrastructure and utilities priority schedule and hold early infrastructure roundtable.
Funding not secured.	Medium / Medium	Start with shadow SEC using existing resources; seek modest government seed funding and business sponsorship; prioritise high-value evidence work.

Appendix D: Reference register

REF	Source
SMBB-1	South Midlands Sustainable Economic Compact: A proposition for Board endorsement and Government partnership. Current draft proposal, pages 1-11. Uploaded document reviewed for this revised proposal.
SMBB-2	South Midlands Business Board. Areas for producing spatial development strategies - consultation response, pages 1-8. Uploaded document reviewed for this revised proposal.
GOV-1	UK Government. English Devolution White Paper: Power and partnership: Foundations for growth. Published 16 December 2024. GOV.UK.
GOV-2	UK Government. National Planning Policy Framework, Chapter 3: Plan-making. GOV.UK.
GOV-3	UK Government. National Planning Policy Framework, Chapter 6: Building a strong, competitive economy. GOV.UK.
GOV-4	UK Government. Areas for producing spatial development strategies. Consultation published 12 February 2026. GOV.UK.
GOV-5	UK Government. Industrial Strategy. Published 23 June 2025; updated 9 June 2026. GOV.UK.
INT-1	Greater Copenhagen. Official website, homepage text describing Danish-Swedish political cooperation of 85 municipalities and four regions and focus on companies, labour market, universities, green solutions and infrastructure. Accessed June 2026.
INT-2	High Tech Campus Eindhoven. Official About Us page describing four tech clusters, open innovation, 300+ companies and 12,500+ professionals. Accessed June 2026.
INT-3	European Commission DG REGIO. Smart Specialisation Community of Practice page. Accessed June 2026.
INT-4	Government of Canada. Global Innovation Clusters page. Accessed June 2026.
INT-5	Scherngell, T. and Barber, M. J. Spatial Interaction Modelling of Cross-Region R&D Collaborations: Empirical Evidence from the 5th EU Framework Programme. arXiv:1004.3425.

Document status - Proposal

The document is a proposal to national, regional and local government and administrative partners to address current administrative and political impasse to agree devolution proposals that directly support functional economic areas at scale or align to Devolution criteria in terms of scale, economic opportunity and social benefit. It should be reviewed by SMBB, legal / governance advisers and relevant public-sector partners before formal submission. It is drafted to champion and protect the independent business view expressed to date that the South Midlands requires economic scale, while ensuring that local authorities retain statutory roles and political positions, BUT brings forward a sustainable economic offer to overcome the current failure to secure Devolution at a scale that enhances the economic opportunity, reflects the regional growth potential and critical need to secure long term national funding into key areas such as workforce development, sector growth infrastructure investment, new inward investment and sustainable support to our existing economy at all scales.

South Midlands Business Board

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