

South West Business Council

# CIC

# ANNUAL

# REPORT

2022



# Introduction

## Paul Coles, CEO of South West Business Council



### Welcome to the South West Business Council 2022 Annual CIC Report.

This report details the innovative and exciting activities undertaken by the SWBC in the last year, to fulfil its main objectives; delivering community benefits, positive social impact, and stakeholder consultations.

Unfortunately the 2021/2022 year was significantly impacted by Covid and, like many other organisations, we had to adapt our way of working.

On a more positive note and after much planning, the last year saw us make the move to Community Interest Company status. Alongside that, we further delivered diversity into our board. See more at [bit.ly/SWBCPeople](https://bit.ly/SWBCPeople)

As a CIC, we are determined to play a bigger role in furthering the prosperity of our amazing region and its environment, by helping to create the very best economic circumstances for people and businesses to thrive.

With over 20 plus years experience of supporting our members, the South West Business Council remains committed to supporting regional businesses, from a diverse range of sectors, to help them navigate their challenges and achieve their ambitions.

To find out more about our membership, please visit: [www.southwestbusinesscouncil.co.uk/membership](https://www.southwestbusinesscouncil.co.uk/membership)

Thank you for taking time to read our report.

Kind wishes,

Paul Coles, CEO, South West Business Council



***We are determined to play a bigger role in furthering the prosperity of our amazing region and its environment.***



# Our Year in Focus



SWBC March conference



BAME Gala Awards



Annual dinner



Tech South West Awards



Natural Capital workshop led by HRH the Prince of Wales



*The College is a long-standing member of the South West Business Council who we have always considered as one of the most effective networks of businesses."*

Laurence Frewin,  
Principal & CEO,  
South Devon College

 South Devon College

## Acting as the Economic Partnership for the South West of England



*The chance to regularly engage with our MPs and the wider political process is key."*

Dave Underwood,  
Former Deputy Director  
HPC, Met Office

 Met Office

Promoting clean energy growth in the region is a real priority for us, and we have initiated and engaged in several meetings in relation to Hydrogen production, as an alternative source of energy. For example, our partnership with the Hydrogen South West initiative has been particularly productive over the last year, and we continue to work closely with them to ensure region-wide collaboration. We have also been heavily involved with the Celtic Sea Floating offshore wind initiative, specifically in terms of facilitating collaborations around new materials and growing the UK supply chain opportunities.

Similarly, we are committed to working with our members and partner businesses to support their journeys to Net Zero and play an active role in promoting environmentally-friendly initiatives across the region. One example of this is the work we have done with the North Devon Biosphere; helping them achieve their ambitions and supporting programmes, specifically on Natural Capital Marketplace, Natural Capital Fund and Smart Biosphere programmes.



# Training, Learning and Skills Development

SWBC has built strong partnerships with Further and Higher Education establishments across the South West, and the vast majority of them are now members of ours. Addressing the skills gap in the South West is a key goal of ours, and it has been wonderful to strengthen our relationships with local universities, colleges and schools, to better understand how we can support their activities and promote talent in the region.



For example, our Policy Advisory Board is currently evaluating an opportunity to mirror the private/public sector funded Civil Engineering College, recently launched in Gloucestershire, further down in the South West. We also recently worked with students from the University of Gloucestershire on their “Impact Week”, setting them the challenge of attracting more businesses to join the South West Cyber Resilience Centre. It was great to be able to provide opportunities to young people in their learning and skills development, which was also mirrored in our project with Archaeology students from Somerset. Through our contacts, we were able to give these students a chance to gain practical hands-on experience for their degree by arranging a visit for them to a real archaeology site.

Regarding our activities in Devon, earlier in the year we met with the Principal of Exeter College to explore opportunities to work more closely together, a partnership which led to holding our SWBC quarterly conference in Spring 2022 at their new Future Skills Centre. We are also working with the Devon and Cornwall Police Commissioners team on a programme to reduce re-offending by providing meaningful work experience.



***The University of Exeter is committed to working closely with our local and regional partners – to help drive growth, to create opportunities for our students and to play our full part in our growing innovation ecosystem.”***

Chris Evans, Interim Director of Innovation, Impact and Business, University of Exeter



## Development of Commercial Opportunities for the Clean Growth Agenda

Our region has a rich and long-standing history of tourism, and we are passionate about promoting this sector, which is so key to our regional economy. This year, we were engaged by a significant tourism business in North Devon to help them diversify and grow their business, which will lead to significant ecotourism opportunities. This was followed up with another piece of work to enhance Cyber awareness in the tourism sector and create connections between the sector and the Money and Pensions Service, to address financial matters in the tourism industry.

As previously mentioned, we continue to support the North Devon Biosphere with its Natural Capital Marketplace and Smart Biosphere ambitions. This year, we focussed on engaging with other regions to see if they wish to participate with these initiatives, which has the potential to make the South West a leader in Natural Capital. We were pleased to be able to promote the work of the North Devon Biosphere at a Natural Capital workshop, led by HRH the Prince of Wales in North Devon.





# Promotion and Support of Trade Mission Opportunities

We recently had the pleasure of celebrating Chris Marrow, a member of our Policy Advisory Board, on his investiture by Queen Diambi of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Chris has been made a Knight of the Order of the Leopard of the Bakwa Luntu of Kasai, and is the first European to be granted the accolade in recognition of his service to Africa and the African people. We are delighted for Chris, and proud to have him on our Board.

One of the key benefits to our members and partners is our extensive reach into government, both regionally and nationally. This year, we engaged with contacts in the House of Lords, to highlight the opportunities that exist for the South West which could be promoted to external investors by Lord Grimstone and the Department for International Trade. We are in regular dialogue with relevant authorities and government departments, and we look forward to strengthening these relationships over the next year.



***We were delighted to assist with the organisation and hosting of the fascinating SWBC conference on international trade last year, which revealed the potential for global trade that exists among businesses in the South West.***

Craig Carey-Clinch, Managing Director, Rowan Public Affairs



# Support of Inward Investment Opportunities

It is our utmost priority, particularly as a CIC, that our work promotes the prosperity of our amazing region and enables people and businesses to thrive. As part of this, we are passionate about supporting opportunities for investment in the region. A specific example of this has been our work with other agencies to grow the supply chain opportunities that exist around Floating Offshore Wind. We have also promoted inward investment into clean energy sectors through our work with the Hydrogen South West initiative, to create opportunities around Hydrogen production, especially where it might be created from the use of renewables.





## Organising Conferences and Networking Events

Organising business events and conferences has always been a key aspect of the South West Business Council's work to create opportunities and connections across the region.

Continuing our work to support the climate change and environmental agenda, we recently held an open knowledge transfer call with the National Composite Centre to discuss the opportunities around concrete de-carbonisation. Other collaborative events included a youth-focussed conference, which we developed in partnership with the British Youth Parliament, to cover topics such as Mental Health, Improving the Environment and Transforming Education. We also sponsored the Grand BAME Awards in Plymouth, as part of an initiative by the Diversity Business Incubator (DBI).

We ran a successful quarterly conference in March at Exeter College's Future Skills Centre with a fantastic turn-out of attendees and speakers who explored topics on Finance and Innovation. Following the cancellation of our Annual Dinner last year, we were delighted to reschedule the event for this Summer, which took place at Dartington Hall and was incredibly well-attended, with Lord David Triesman, Group Director of Salamanca Group, as our guest speaker.



***As part of the SWBC board, I am proud to work in collaboration with the South West Business Council, who champion our mission and help us make a difference to the BAME community."***

Jabo Butera, Managing Director, DBI



***Our membership with the South West Business Council has felt more like a partnership thanks to their ongoing support."***

Barry Wilson, Managing Director, E & JW Glendinning Ltd



## Stakeholder Engagement

**Our key activities here include:**

In terms of central government departments, we are in regular dialogue with DCMS, DWP, DEFRA, Environment Agency, and the Cabinet Office.

We regularly partner with Tech South West and the South West Cyber Resilience Centre.

We frequently engage with Local Enterprise Partnerships to share insight and key activities.

We work closely with the National Composites Centre to explore opportunities to engage with businesses in the lower South West peninsula.

We play an active role in South West Peninsula Re-Offending Partnership.

We have a regular update session with the South West Regional Agent for the Bank of England.

# Operations Team



JO HATT  
Membership Coordinator

Jo has over 25 years' experience of high-level business admin and support roles, working within the financial, medical and accountancy sectors under various titles, i.e. Senior Executive Assistant, Medical Secretary and Senior Business Administrator.



PAUL COLES  
Chief Executive Officer

Paul is a strategic leader and thinker, who over the last few years has built a portfolio career covering the commercial world; public and third sectors. He has a passion for innovation and for digital which he brings to bear when seeking to advance the South-West economy.



LEAH WATTS  
Marketing and PR Manager

Leah Watts is an Account Manager at award winning PR & Marketing agency Astley Media. She is responsible for day to day digital marketing and PR activity across the South West Business Council account and plays a key role in the development and implementation of creative and strategic campaigns.



ANDREW SEARLE  
Head of Operations

Andrew works with Jo to support our growing network of members, principally responsible for managing key accounts. In addition, Andrew works for SWBC on a part-time, self-employed basis helping them to keep administrative and compliance costs to a minimum whilst offering a friendly efficient service to our customers and suppliers.



EMMA ANDERSON  
Marketing & PR Executive

Emma Anderson is an Account Executive at award-winning PR & Marketing agency, Astley Media. She is responsible for supporting and developing day-to-day digital marketing and PR assets for the South West Business Council and provides assistance to the Marketing and PR Manager in delivering regular creative and strategic campaigns.



***We value our membership in several ways – the influence and connections that SWBC has within the wide geographic coverage of the region with both business and local government is key to joining the strategic dots together which in turn helps to influence central Government at a time of high competition for funding.***

Andrew Ardley, Regional Development Manager, South Western Railway



To find out more about becoming a member of the South West Business Council, please visit: [www.southwestbusinesscouncil.co.uk/membership](http://www.southwestbusinesscouncil.co.uk/membership)



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