



# Sub-Regional Covid-19 Business Intelligence

May 2021

## Contents

1. Executive Summary .....	2
2. Latest Economic Trends.....	4
3. Latest CWLEP Growth Hub Insights.....	6
3.1 CWLEP Growth Hub - Trends.....	6
3.2 CWLEP Growth Hub - Enquiries & Support .....	7
3.3 CWLEP Growth Hub - Themes .....	7
4. Spotlight: Green and Sustainable Future.....	9
4.1 Context.....	9
4.2 Future Prospects Plan - UK .....	10
4.3 West Midlands Green Economy & Recovery Plan .....	11
4.4 Upcoming Projects – WMCA.....	11
4.5 Green Economic Plan – Local Plans and Strategies .....	12
5. Recommendations .....	14
5.1 Short Term .....	14
5.2 Medium Term .....	16
5.3 Long Term.....	18
6. Covid-19 Timeline - Announcements, Restrictions & Lockdowns.....	0

# 1. Executive Summary

Welcome to the May edition of the Coventry & Warwickshire Smart Region report. This month our spotlight theme is the green, sustainable future agenda. We highlight some of the effects that Covid-19 could have on the UK Government's 'Ten-point Plan for Recovery', and the WM2041 Plan agreed by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Whilst the full economic impact of the pandemic may not be fully understood for some time, (if ever), as usual we present what we know right now, through a range of the latest economic data, statistics, and business intelligence. We still lack a complete year's data for all indicators, but we are gathering a good overall picture of the economic impact of the pandemic so far.

The recommendations and findings in this month's report are based on intelligence gathered from CWLEP Growth Hub's contacts with local businesses, alongside survey data and information provided by CWLEP, Coventry City Council, and Warwickshire County Council.

Other sources include the Office for National Statistics, West Midlands Combined Authority, and organisations such as the Climate Change Committee, and other research bodies working in labour market analysis.

## Key Headlines

- In April 2021, **the claimant count in Coventry & Warwickshire totalled 33,815 people**. Twelve months ago, in April 2020, the claimant count stood at 26,170 having massively increased from 15,830 the previous month.

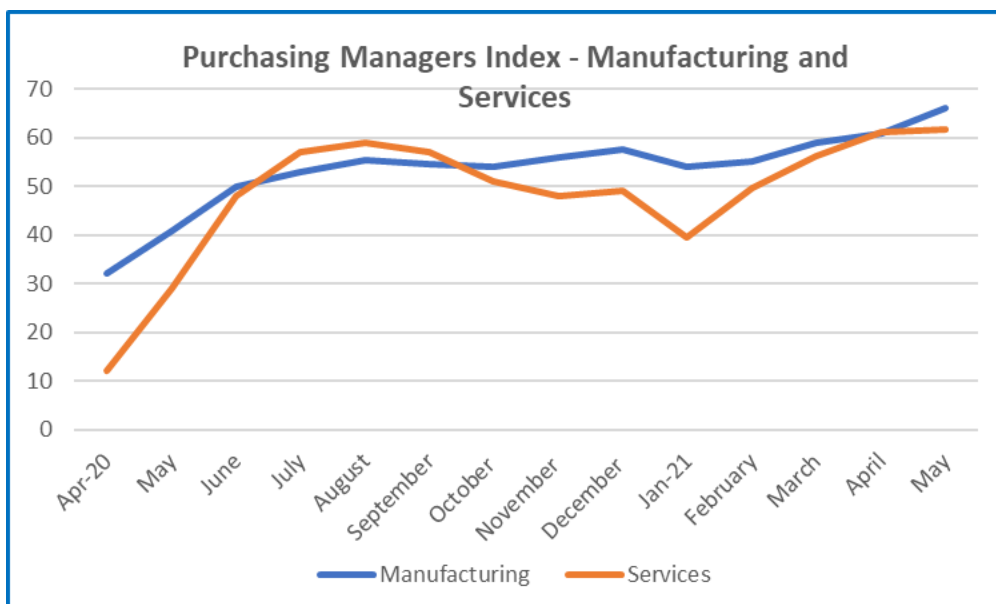
Area	March 2020	April 2020	February 2021	March 2021	April 2021
Coventry	8,000	12,090	17,100	17,245	17,120
North Warwickshire	845	1,785	2,045	2,020	1,980
Nuneaton & Bedworth	2,830	4,610	5,100	5,105	5,025
Rugby	1,535	2,740	3,165	3,120	3,090
Stratford-on-Avon	1,050	2,235	3,050	3,050	2,990
Warwick	1,570	2,710	3,700	3,680	3,615
Warwickshire	7,830	14,080	17,060	16,975	16,695
<b>CWLEP</b>	<b>15,830</b>	<b>26,170</b>	<b>34,160</b>	<b>34,220</b>	<b>33,815</b>

Source: Office for National Statistics

- Nationally, the claimant count stood at **2,647,555 in April 2021, up from 2,113,560 twelve months ago**.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) also reported that:

- The number of workers on payrolls **rose by 97,000 between March and April but was still 772,000 lower** than before the pandemic struck.
- UK job vacancies are at their highest level since the start of the pandemic as the easing of lockdown measures has led employers to start recruiting. During February to April **there were 657,000 vacancies, up round 48,400 on the previous quarter.**
- However, **despite the rise in job vacancies over the past 12 months, the level remains almost 128,000 below its pre-pandemic level** in the January to March quarter of 2020.
- However, although there are some promising signs of recovery, the **overall picture with the labour market is still unclear - and the continuation of the furlough scheme is continuing to supply important support** for many workers of all ages.
- **Finally, business confidence is improving.** The **Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) for manufacturing jumped to 66.1 in May**, from 60.9 in April (a figure above 50 represents growth). Likewise, **for services the PMI increased, albeit more slowly, from 61.0 in April to 61.8 in May.**



Source: The Markit/CIPS UK Services PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index)

- The **increasing costs of parts and raw materials** are starting to emerge through survey results, impacting on margins and with implications for passing cost increases on to customers. We will monitor this over the coming months.

## 2. Latest Economic Trends

### 2.1 Economic and Business Trends

Since lockdown restrictions eased further on 17<sup>th</sup> May, there has been more optimism in many sections of the business community for the prospect of an accelerated economic recovery from the pandemic. The Government is continuing to urge caution, as the spread of Covid-19 variants across the country cause concern.

GDP for the UK rose by 2.1% in March, due in part to the easing of lockdown restrictions coupled with the increased vaccine rollout. Overall, the economy shrank by 1.5% in the first quarter of 2021, which was smaller than the 1.7% contraction economists had predicted, although remains 5.9% down on pre-pandemic levels. Economic growth in March was seen across all sectors with Construction performing particularly well, growing by 5.8%.

Business optimism continues to grow as the country recovers from the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Bank of England this month revised its growth forecast for 2021 to 7.25%, up from its previous prediction of 5% back in February. It put this down to the success of the vaccine rollout and the estimated £50bn spending boost from household savings made over the last year.

At the local level, CW Chamber's latest Quarterly Survey concludes that Coventry & Warwickshire's recovery could be quicker than expected. The overall economic outlook for CW increased rapidly to 53.0 points in Q1 2021 from 42.6 in Q4 2020, the third consecutive quarterly increase. Service sector confidence saw a rapid increase to 80.8 (Q1 2021) from 67.9 (Q4 2020), whilst it remained steady for manufacturing (71.1, up from 71.0). Many local manufacturers expect turnovers and profitability to increase in the next 12 months, which is crucial as 71% of manufacturers were still operating below full capacity in Q1.

The Q1 data does highlight points of caution. Scores in the confidence index for labour force employment fell for both services (down from 52.8 to 45.4) and manufacturing (down from 54.8 to 43.4). A majority of respondents suggested that the size of their workforces would either remain constant or decrease in the coming three months, suggesting risks of further job losses in the local economy during Q2 and Q3 2021.

Optimism was further enhanced this month as a further milestone was reached on the roadmap to ending Covid-19 restrictions. Since 17<sup>th</sup> May indoor hospitality has been allowed, as have overnight stays in hotels and B&Bs. Indoor entertainment venues, such as museums and cinemas, are able to open again. The latest lifting of restrictions will help many businesses hit hardest by the pandemic, namely the leisure and hospitality sectors, but whilst some international travel has been permitted, there

remain significant restrictions that will limit the ability of the aviation and aerospace sectors to recover, as well as parts of the tourism sector more dependent on international tourists. The most recent reopening of further sectors of the economy is of particular importance to businesses in Coventry who will be looking to reap rewards from Coventry's year as City of Culture, which officially began on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

## 2.2 Jobs and Unemployment

Nationally, unemployment averaged 4.8% over the three months to March, down from 4.9% the previous month. This is the third consecutive monthly fall, and the Bank of England now forecasts unemployment will peak at 5.5% later in 2021.

The latest ONS figures show an increase in the number of hires in March nationally (an increase of 16% from February) as firms looked forward to the reopening of the economy. Another promising indicator is that workforce furlough leave has fallen from 17% in March to 13% in April.

There were 17,800 employments furloughed in Coventry at the end of March 2021 and 34,400 in Warwickshire, 12% of all eligible employments (slightly below the national average of 13%). Concerns remain over the extent to which furlough, which ends at the end of September, could still be masking the true state of the labour market, although the Bank of England is optimistic that many of those workers currently furloughed will return to their posts as the economy fully reopens.

## 2.3 Changing Trading Conditions with the EU

The implications of the UK's exit from the EU and the UK EU Trade & Co-operation Agreement are being felt in many areas of the economy. There are fears that the exodus of EU nationals from the UK is having a knock-on effect with the jobs market, with some sectors, particularly hospitality, concerned about the ability to recruit staff as businesses reopen. Recruiters for Security, Construction and Digital posts are also reporting challenges in finding labour with the right skills, whilst the building industry is also experiencing a shortage of supplies and increased costs with some European exporters looking at alternatives to the UK market due to trade barriers.

In the West Midlands, international trade is recovering slowly, with 33% of the region's exporters reporting that their business is still exporting but less than normal, and 26% of importers importing less than normal. Around half of businesses are reporting exporting and importing levels being the same as usual.

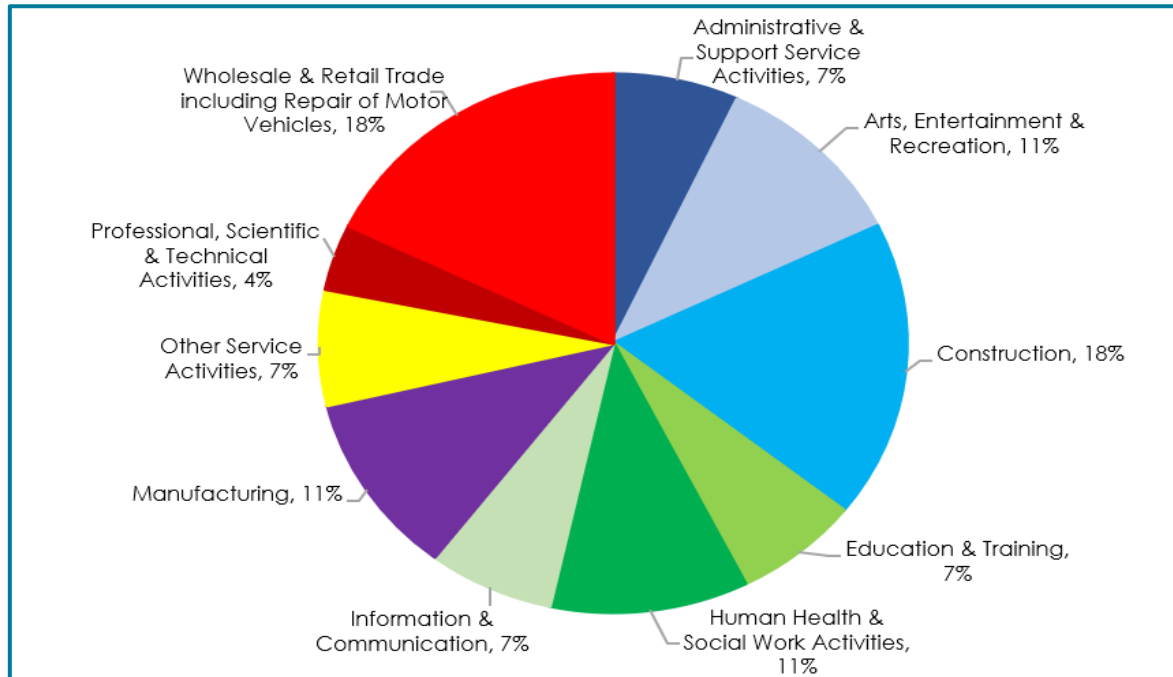
According to the West Midlands Chambers, 20% of businesses reported an increase in international sales, compared with 17% the previous quarter. However, at a time when UK firms were getting to grips with the new EU trading arrangements, the percentage of businesses expecting their international output to increase over the next three months fell from 19% in the previous quarter's survey to 17%.

### 3. Latest CWLEP Growth Hub Insights

#### 3.1 CWLEP Growth Hub - Trends

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the **CWLEP Growth Hub has supported 4,153 businesses and has had substantive discussions with 1,621 businesses specifically related to Covid-19 impact and EU Exit.**

This month's business insights are taken from intelligence gathered in **April 2021.**



The top sectors supported by CWLEP Growth Hub in April were **Wholesale & Retail Trade including Repair of Motor Vehicles (18%); Construction (18%); Manufacturing (11%); Human Health & Social Work Activities (11%); and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (11%).**

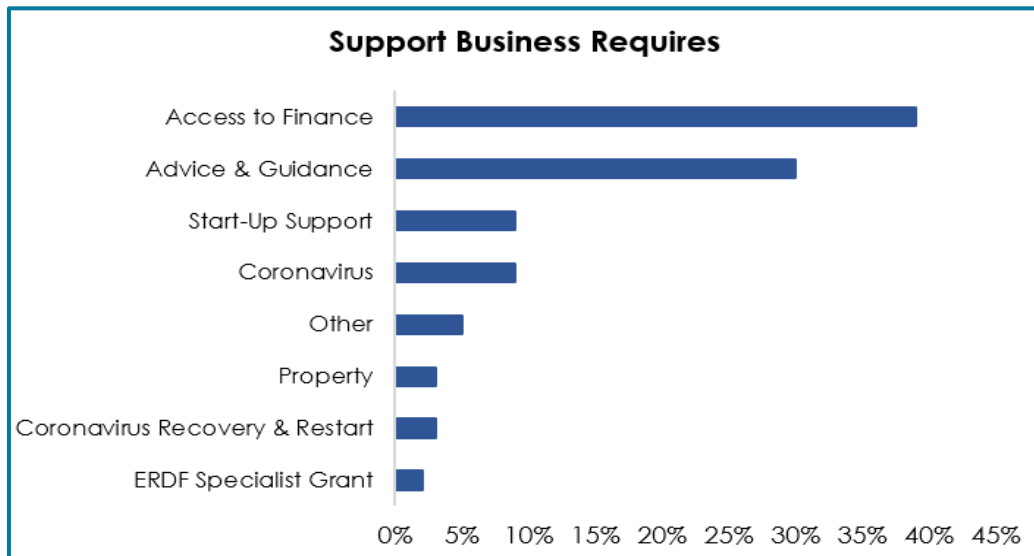
The volume of businesses seeking help from the **Wholesale & Retail Trade and Manufacturing sectors** reflects the high levels from these sectors that local business support systems have traditionally helped. Meanwhile, other sectors, such as **Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities** have been less represented this month.

The size profile of the businesses supported over the past month consisted of **50% sole traders; 32% micro businesses (2-9 employees); 14% small businesses (10-49 employees); and 4% large sized businesses (250+ employees).**

There was an **increase in Sole traders and large companies** and a **decrease in Micro and Small enterprises** approaching CWLEP Growth Hub compared to last month,

with almost 10% of respondents from businesses that started trading in either 2020 or so far in 2021.

### 3.2 CWLEP Growth Hub - Enquiries & Support



**Access to Finance** was the most popular reason for support over the past month. As clients have many different and complex business needs and wants, there are a spread of other enquiries too. There was a high proportion of businesses that ticked **Advice & Guidance** as their main support need, which could have led to help around **Marketing support, Business rates, and Tax & legal issues**.

Finally, it is worth noting that whilst advice and guidance is always a key requirement from businesses seeking support from the CWLEP Growth Hub, **there remains a proportion of businesses seeking advice about ERDF Grants and Coronavirus Recovery & Restart support**.

### 3.3 CWLEP Growth Hub - Themes

**Grants** – C&W Growth Hub advisors continue to deal with multiple ongoing grant applications that involve the purchase of capital, green and digital projects. A new construction business looking to adapt existing knowledge with the recycling of construction waste, converting it into building blocks, seeking grant funding from the Coventry City Council Green Business fund. Another business looking for financial support with the purchase of hydraulic lifts to expand their motor vehicle garage.

**COVID Grants** – Multiple calls from Warwickshire based companies now being supported by C&W Growth Hub for Round 2 of their Adapt & Diversify grant scheme which launched on 17<sup>th</sup> May and was closed the same day. Over 200 applications were received demonstrating a clear need for ongoing COVID financial support.



**B2B Referrals** – C&W Growth Hub approached more frequently for introductions to local business referrals to overcome barriers to growth. IT Capability Consultancy being sought to strengthen growth strategies. Assistance with BIM modelling also an area of interest. Innovators connected with local manufacturer to develop a prototype new product. Two more local businesses introduced to assist in the development of a scale VR car. Manufacturing support provided by local academia.

**General Referrals** – Chamber start up referrals for new businesses that include high end household goods that are built to last and a company looking to offer an online quality control system. Start Up finance interest referred to CWRT. Other partner referrals include Focus Digital for digital enhancements and website development, Skills, Digital Boost and Networking.

**Proof of Concept** – Assistance for a new food app that focusses on food waste by using what you have at home without buying more. This business also being referred to the Business Ready mentoring programme. Further POC assistance required by an ambitious company looking to develop an electric tractor along with linking with the academic community for support with materials and battery tech. Events companies looking for help to develop virtual events offers.

**Innovation** – Work with a small regional fitness company, looking to develop a new weightlifting product, continues to progress with new meetings with WMG for links to academia and introductions to a local manufacturer to develop prototype products.

**Inward Investment & Planning** – C&W Growth Hub planning experts dealing with steady requests for support finding new premises, particularly around expansion. Two decent successes with Inward Investment opportunities that have made and confirmed their decision to invest in the region. Six other such opportunities ongoing. Planning advice sought for a business looking to utilise unused land. Proposals include the conversion of existing work units and the building of cabins for private rental.

**Other:**

- UXPLORE – three more enquiries for the new 5G project. Broad range of clients looking for support and are being lined up for workshops and mentoring.
- Independent Consultants – a marked increase in the number of independent consultants turning to The Growth Hub in support of their clients.
- EU Exit Impact – companies continue to report problems with obtaining materials, stunting growth as clients are willing to place orders.
- Local hospital seeking links to schools in an effort to introduce students to medical careers and deal with a potential future shortage of skills such as radiographers.

## 4. Spotlight: Green and Sustainable Future

### 4.1 Context

With the growing awareness of the negative impacts, and the threats to our daily lives, posed by changes to our climate there are accelerating policies and priorities to support green industries and the creation of new green jobs. The international Paris Agreement in 2015 raised the profile of the challenges we face globally, and the UK hosting of the United Nations 26<sup>th</sup> Climate Change Conference (COP26) in September 2021 will undoubtedly raise the profile of the changes to our climate further. The greening of the economy will not only encourage investors to engage with green industries and to create new jobs but will also be a critical driver for establishing our post Covid-19 economy.

The Climate Change Committee ['Sixth Carbon Budget – the UK's route to Net Zero'](#) report (December 2020) set out how the UK could further reduce its carbon emissions by 2035 ahead of the 2050 target. Since then, the Government has announced that by 2035 the UK will reduce emissions by 78% compared to 1990 levels. Furthermore, the budget proposals put forward highlight the many benefits and opportunities, such as low-carbon investment, to support and secure competitive positions in growing global markets for low-carbon goods and services.

The following targets set by the Sixth Carbon Budget that need to be achieved are:

- Major investment programmes led by government including by private companies and individuals. This programme will be worth around £50 billion per year by 2030.
- Markets and supply chains of low-carbon need to scale-up to ensure that all new purchases and investments are zero-carbon by around 2030.
- When investing in a low-carbon programme, it needs to be resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- Policy must be delivery focused, fair and built around the needs of people and businesses in the UK. For instance, further reductions of emissions are needed from other sectors such as agriculture. Each of these sectors raises different policy challenges, therefore policies need to have clarity.
- People play a vital role in delivering emission reductions as their decision-making processes will support the transition to Net Zero. The transition is only perceived as fair when people, communities and places are well supported, as they may succeed. Therefore, vulnerable people need to be protected from the costs of transition.
- Consumption and territorial emissions (arising from shipping, and international aviation) needs to be reduced and this issue will be addressed through its inclusion into the plan of achieving Net Zero Emissions.

## 4.2 Future Prospects Plan - UK

In November 2020 Government set out its '[ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution](#)', in particular looking for the development and adoption of clean energy and innovative technologies. The plan is to create highly skilled green jobs, and stimulate over three times as much private sector investment in the green economy by 2030. The ten points, which are built around the UK's strengths, are:

**Offshore Wind:** Producing enough wind energy to power every home, quadrupling how much we produce to 40GW by 2030, while also supporting up to 60,000 jobs.

**Low Carbon Hydrogen:** Aiming to generate 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030 for industry, transport, power, and homes, and seeking to develop the first town heated entirely by green hydrogen by the end of the decade. Up to £500M, including for trialling homes using hydrogen for heating and cooking, starting with a Hydrogen Neighbourhood in 2023, moving to a Hydrogen Village by 2025, with an aim for a Hydrogen Town before the end of the decade. Of this funding, £240M will go into new low carbon hydrogen production facilities.

**Nuclear:** Advancing nuclear as a clean energy source, across large scale nuclear and developing the next generation of small and advanced reactors, which could support 10,000 jobs. £525M to support large and smaller-scale nuclear plants including researching to develop new advanced modular reactors.

**Electric Vehicles:** Backing our world-leading car manufacturing bases including in the West Midlands to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles and transforming national infrastructure to better support electric vehicles. Furthermore, the UK will end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030.

**Public Transport, Cycling & Walking:** Making cycling and walking more attractive ways to travel and investing in zero-emission public transport.

**Jet Zero & Greener Maritime:** Supporting difficult-to-decarbonise industries to become greener through research projects for zero-emission planes and ships.

**Homes & Public Buildings:** Making our homes, schools, and hospitals greener, warmer and more energy efficient, whilst creating 50,000 jobs by 2030, and a target to install 600,000 heat pumps every year by 2028.

**Carbon Capture:** Becoming a world-leader in technology to capture and store harmful emissions away from the atmosphere, with a target to remove 10MT of carbon dioxide by 2030, equivalent to all emissions of the industrial Humber today.

**Nature:** Protecting and restoring our natural environment, planting 30,000 hectares of trees every year, whilst creating and keeping thousands of jobs.

### 4.3 West Midlands Green Economy & Recovery Plan

In the West Midlands, the Combined Authority (WMCA) has committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2041, approving budgets of more than £900m to support post Covid-19 economic recovery, promoting clean and green technologies and jobs, as well as protecting and enhancing the region's environment. The funding also supports job training schemes, infrastructure improvements, and local green re-development and regeneration.

WMCA has set out the five main actions to be addressed:

- Make the journey to 2041 without leaving anyone behind.
- Boost our resilience to 'locked in' climate breakdown.
- Reconcile our past with our future.
- Build more places, and more connectivity within places.
- Save energy and resources without affecting shared prosperity.

### 4.4 Upcoming Projects – WMCA

Upcoming projects in the West Midlands promote and aim to enhance and sustain clean growth in the region's post Covid-19 economy. It has been estimated that more than 90,000 jobs will be created in the West Midlands over the next two decades, mostly in green industries and related technologies. These projects, including ones to benefit Coventry & Warwickshire, are:

#### Transport

- **VLR (Very Light Rail)** - an environmentally friendly battery-driven transport system (light rail system) that will be available across the West Midlands area, linking small towns to larger cities. The benefits of this are improving air quality and reducing emissions. This project successfully secured £16.42 million of funding from:
  - West Midlands Combined Authority Devolution Deal (£12.2 million)
  - Coventry & Warwickshire LEP Local Growth Fund (£2.46 million)
  - Getting Building Fund (£1.8 million)
- **UKBIC (UK Battery Industrialisation Centre)** - battery product development facilities based in Coventry. The aim is to develop battery technology and support the infrastructure transition to electric charging, for a cleaner environment.
- By 2025, the majority of local areas in the West Midlands aim to upgrade their **buses to zero-emission vehicles**, including **new hydrogen-powered sprint buses. Coventry is to become an all-electric bus city first.**

- Since the government will end the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles from 2030, car manufacturers are switching to the EV battery for electric vehicles. WMCA plans to push government for the development of a new **EV battery Gigafactory in Coventry**, creating up to 4,000 new jobs and attracting some £2 billion of investment.
- To reduce emissions and unnecessary travel, **WMCA are supporting the development of infrastructure for digital connectivity and low carbon emissions**. It has been estimated that around £1.1 billion will be spent on a green public transport network with zero carbon emissions, new rail stations, cycling infrastructure, and Metro extensions.

### Building

- WMCA aims to build new **energy efficient homes** which will introduce zero carbon standards for new builds house, and construct retrofitting to existing homes to cut carbon emissions.

### Other measures

- To promote **green jobs**, the Adult Education Budget will support employees whose work was affected by the pandemic, to build upon their skills, helping them to get back into work securely and quickly, as well as working in growing sectors such as digital, construction, and emerging green industries. It has been estimated that £142 million will be used for **re-skilling**.
- A **tree-planting programme will be launched** including an aspiration for one tree planted for every resident, and the setting up of a national park.
- WMCA vowed to cut out all single-use plastics by 2020 and encourage other organisation to take the same approach.

## 4.5 Green Economic Plan – Local Plans and Strategies

### CWLEP Strategic Reset Framework

Local priorities for Coventry & Warwickshire's 'Green Sustainable Future' include:

- Encouraging a green recovery across all our local economy, and embracing new and innovative low carbon technologies.
- Support the Electrification Taskforce to drive forward the region's lead on the country's electrification revolution and ensure future energy supply and distribution needs.
- Explore regional development of network of CLEAN (Clean energy and zero emission transport) Hubs, with Midlands Energy Hub and Midlands Connect.
- Encourage and support consistency and coordination across local authority policy frameworks.
- Sustainable Public Transport Infrastructure.

### Green Business Programme - CWLEP & CCC

To support the WM2041 action plan set out by the WMCA, the Green Business Programme (funded by ERDF) is one example encouraging SMEs to receive information about energy efficiency opportunities, improving their business' resources and energy efficiency. It has been estimated around 4,200 metric tonnes in greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced. This programme is a stepping-stone for local authorities and the WMCA to achieve their ambitious targets based on the WM2041 plan.

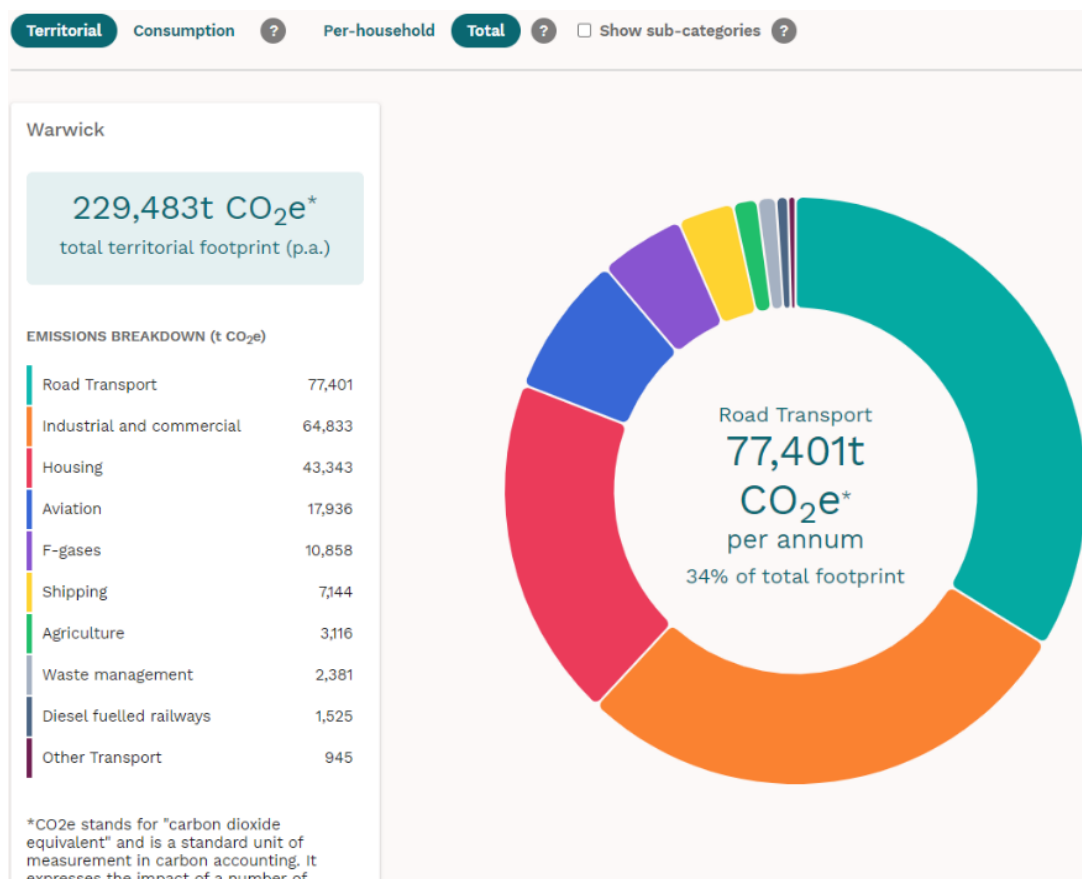
Businesses can also access further funding or attend programmes related to the green sector here: [sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk/news/](https://sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk/news/).

### Parish Carbon Impact Tool

The Parish Carbon Calculator (also known as the Impact tool) supplies data on the carbon emissions of local towns and cities. It can give councils a clearer idea of local area community carbon footprints. Additionally, it suggests and highlights solutions around sectors that will need to further reduce their emissions.

The visualisation below gives an example to show the breakdown of the main areas of carbon emissions (territorial emissions) in Warwick area (parish town).

[impact-tool.org.uk/](https://impact-tool.org.uk/)



## 5. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been derived from analysis of macro-economic and business-level data and intelligence collated from Coventry & Warwickshire stakeholders.

### 5.1 Short Term

#### 5.1.a

Clarification is needed for businesses due to open at the final stage of the Government's Roadmap (no earlier than the 21st of June). Some ambiguities highlighted with the re-opening measures to date.

In addition, there is a need to continue **developing contingencies should any of the next steps in the roadmap be delayed due to insufficient progress with reducing Covid-19 cases and hospitalisations, the roll-out of vaccinations, and controlling the emergence of new variants.**

#### 5.1.b

Further support is necessary for businesses in relation to EU trading arrangements. Based on feedback from Coventry & Warwickshire businesses through surveys and account management, **it is clear they continue to need specific support and clarity around future trading with the EU.**

Businesses should be encouraged to engage with local organisations, such as CW Growth Hub, CW Chamber of Commerce, and DIT to access support around EU trading, including a range of upcoming clinics focusing on import, movement of people and VAT (See local events at: [cwgrowthhub.co.uk/events](http://cwgrowthhub.co.uk/events)).

#### 5.1.c

Following the lockdown restrictions, 2021 is likely to see increasing unemployment later in the summer - with further rounds of redundancies expected as the employment support schemes ends.

**Partners in the region can support enhanced promotion of the Employment Solutions portal, supported by CWLEP and other local partners, to promote current and future job opportunities to both local jobseekers and employers.**

Visit [cwemploymentsolutions.co.uk/](http://cwemploymentsolutions.co.uk/)

#### 5.1.d

A focus on **training and reskilling for younger workers in particular will be needed short-term**, to help reduce unemployment levels post-pandemic.

**Reskilling workers in low carbon and digital sectors** is a key recommendation, given the shift towards increasing numbers of green jobs in a more sustainable economy.

#### 5.1.e

We have a clear opportunity during the late spring and throughout the summer 2021 to restart the visitor economy, especially with the recent commencement of the City of Culture programme. **A clear strategy on how to navigate the potential barriers, such as the current international travel restrictions, will ensure that the move towards our local economic recovery is not unnecessarily stifled.**

A locally focused consumer confidence campaign could help to boost tourism in the CW economy, during the next phase of the pandemic.

#### 5.1.f

There is an urgent need to **tackle the gap in funding for those ineligible for government financial support**, such as those recently self-employed.

#### 5.1.g

As highlighted in the CWLEP's Strategic Reset Framework Implementation Plan (Pillar 3), there is a need to support the **Electrification Taskforce** to drive forward the region's lead on the country's electrification revolution and ensure future energy supply and distribution needs.

**Additional charging points infrastructure for electric vehicles** are a priority for Coventry & Warwickshire, to encourage potential consumers to make the switch.

In addition to personal electric vehicles, we should also encourage **continuation of the introduction of all electric fleets of public transport** in the area.

#### 5.1.h

**Further investment in cycling and pedestrian routes in our towns and cities** is recommended, including the use of segregated cycle lanes. Post-lockdown, this could increase footfall in our town and city centres, including as office workers return. This would become an important step not only for the low-carbon initiative, but also for the recovery of the local economy.

#### 5.1.i

**Businesses should be encouraged to take advantage of the existing business support in place, such as the** Coventry & Warwickshire Green Business Network when looking to improve the sustainability of their business, to take inspiration and influence from peers who have undertaken similar transformations. Businesses can utilise experience of others in the **reduction of businesses' water and energy consumption**, plus **making supply chains greener**.

The national **Peer Networks initiative** is also operating in Coventry & Warwickshire, **with one cohort specifically targeted at those businesses in the Environmental and Sustainability sector**. Learning and developing with peers is highly likely to increase the rate of change within the business community, increasing good practice, and encouraging innovation and the sharing of ideas.



## 5.2 Medium Term

Added initiatives that would help the local economy and the labour market in the medium term include:

### 5.2.a

Following the declaration of a Climate Emergency from all local councils in Coventry & Warwickshire in 2019, a **clear strategy to tackle this is required, with targets and milestones** set.

### 5.2.b

**Rollout of broadband** - inconsistencies are still present across Coventry & Warwickshire. **Investment in skills** to improve computing and digital skills within the CW labour market will be critical to help employees and consumers, as well as businesses, adapt to modern technologies to expand trading relationships and establish new ones.

The rollout of 5G would also help reduce emissions and unnecessary travel, combining the need for investment in both the digital and green agendas.

### 5.2.c

Continue to level-up on **vaccine rollout and facilities for increased regular workplace and community-based testing**, to sustain safe working environments for businesses in the region. Also, continue to make available Mobile Testing Units (MTUs), when local outbreaks occur. This will particularly help reduce potential disruption to local businesses.

### 5.2.d

**Work alongside banks/lenders and other financial and business support institutions to explore ways to relieve the volume of debt** in all sectors. This will ensure diversification, investment, and growth are not held back for longer than necessary.

### 5.2.e

**Greater clarity is needed on the future funding for business support infrastructure** following the end of the transition period with the EU.

In addition, firmer commitment to business support funding, not only for Growth Hubs but the wider local support landscape, would also allow for more effective planning for the long-term business support infrastructure in the region.

### 5.2.f

Clarity is needed on the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund and its potential impact on Coventry & Warwickshire**. Local partners and stakeholders should ensure that Coventry & Warwickshire benefits from the fund to the best it can, as the details become known.

### 5.2.g

**Develop innovative ways of utilising empty retail and larger commercial property space particularly in town centres**, as there is a shift in the availability of premises due to the restrictions and challenges that the sector has faced.

For the future, it should also be encouraged that **renewable energy and digital infrastructure are at the forefront of planning policy and decisions**.

### 5.2.h

A focus on 'Good Jobs and Levelling-Up Opportunities', as detailed in CWLEP's Strategic Reset Framework Pillars, **will help promote job quality and security along with improved employment rights, in turn strengthening our local economy**.

### 5.2.i

Significant **investment in the Very Light Rail and tram networks in the West Midlands on a wider scale will add to the region's ability to compete** with other major cities and regions across the country and globally.

## 5.3 Long Term

Businesses and the economy would benefit if both central government and local stakeholders consider and support these long-term recommendations:

### 5.3.a

**Conduct market research to explore the best ways to further address the issues** businesses are facing following Covid-19 and post EU Transition period.

### 5.3.b

**Drive and support initiatives to upskill the workforce**, to promote diversification and boost the labour market in many sectors as the reset of the local economy occurs, including the **promotion of 'good work' opportunities and sustainable growth to reduce economic inequalities**.

A focus on training and reskilling for all age groups will be needed long-term, to help reduce unemployment levels post-pandemic.

### 5.3.c

**Create and implement a clear and compelling presence for 'Coventry & Warwickshire' to showcase the offer from our local area, to be used to attract future inward investment to the sub-region and deliver against our Strategic Reset Strategy.**

Building a strong and consistent branding and messaging style will help to strengthen the investment proposition for Coventry & Warwickshire.

### 5.3.d

**Recognise and plan for a range of opportunities which will help to address market need for employment space**, ensuring that there is a good supply of space available throughout Coventry & Warwickshire. This will help the recovery from Covid-19 and allow business start-up, expansions, and inward investment.

### 5.3.e

**Helping businesses to manage waste in an environmentally conscious manner is a key long-term recommendation**; for example, considering how to reuse construction waste would help to create a strong sustainable construction sector locally.

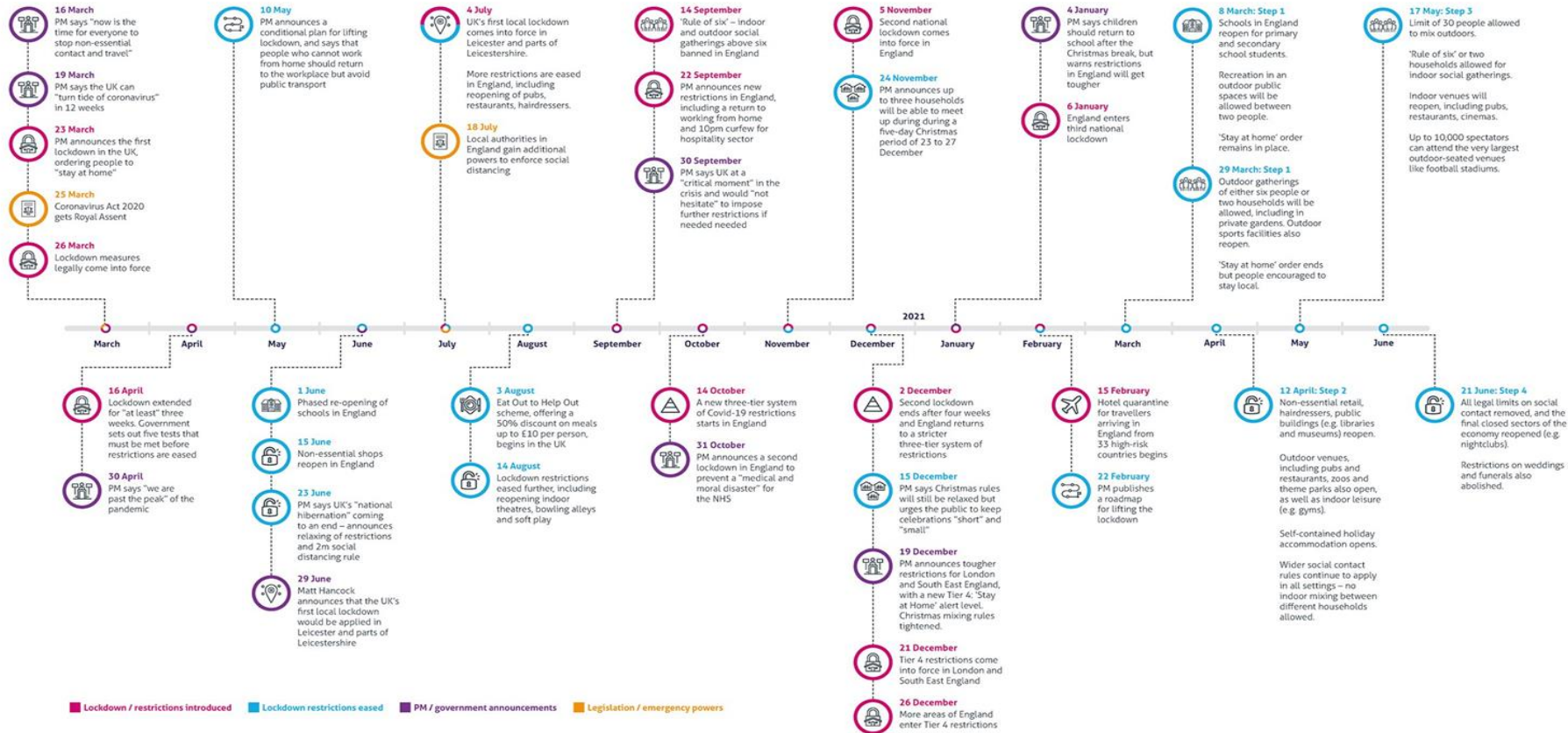
### 5.3.f

**Greater investment into VLR and other forms of sustainable transport**, as well as green supply chains, is a long-term recommendation to achieve a real step-change in Coventry & Warwickshire's transport infrastructure and use.

# 6. Covid-19 Timeline - Announcements, Restrictions & Lockdowns

## Timeline of UK government coronavirus lockdowns, March 2020 to June 2021

IfG



Source: Institute for Government analysis.

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Source: *Lifting lockdown in 2021: the next phase of the coronavirus strategy - Institute for Government - February 2021*