



Economic
and Social
Research Council



CENTRE FOR
BRITAIN AND EUROPE
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

CHARTING SURREY'S RESCUE, RECOVERY AND GROWTH IN THE AGE OF COVID-19 AND BREXIT

Principal Investigator:

Professor Amelia Hadfield, University of Surrey

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OVERVIEW

Professor Amelia Hadfield's IAA project, 'Charting Surrey's Rescue, Recovery and Growth in the Age of Covid-19 and Brexit', was the first of its kind to bring together Surrey County Council, the newly created Future Economy Surrey Commission, the Department of Politics at Surrey, and the Centre for Britain and Europe (within Politics), as well as key links with Royal Holloway.

The project was co-funded between the ESRC IAA and Surrey County Council. Pre-COVID-19 / Brexit analysis suggested Surrey's prosperous composition as steady but unevenly spread and impermanent. A detailed analysis was required to chart both Surrey's post-COVID-19 response, and ongoing Brexit preparations, in terms of its general sectors, as well as its specialist areas. These 'cluster' areas include Knowledge and Research, Aviation, Business and Employment, and Health Sciences, and they contribute to Surrey's high-value economy and global leader potential.

The project presented an in-depth three-month analysis of the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit on Surrey's clusters, and overall economy. These high-value, high-worth clusters of excellence demonstrated mixed resilience and an uneven spread of economic growth, with impending drags on economic output. The key recommendations from this project were part of a 226 page report that has been made publicly available, and has formed the centrepiece of future action taken by Surrey County Council in addressing this economic mismatch.

The report was submitted initially to the Future Economy Surrey Commission, chaired by former Chancellor of the Exchequer Lord Philip Hammond. The policy recommendations were then considered by the Surrey Growth Board and presented to the public at a launch event, which formed part of the University of Surrey's ESRC Festival of Social Science in November 2020.



IMPACTS TO DATE

The report made four main recommendations for Surrey's recovery which emerged as common areas for concern, from all stakeholders involved:



1: Improve key digital infrastructures in the county

Addressing the deepening economic disparity between East and West Surrey's economies and sectoral performance to avoid widening inequalities and to increase the County's overall GVA per capita growth rates.

Recommendation: Transport and communications infrastructures need to be improved dramatically to unlock cluster potential. While there are excellent transport links for London commuters, greater attention needs to be paid to connecting (and de-congesting) east and west Surrey. Failure to address infrastructure pressures, particularly intra-county connections, need particular attention.



2: Governance

Public authorities at all levels need to work more effectively with a host of key stakeholders, including LEPs, to design "local-growth, local-jobs" programmes, tailored to the different local economic realities, but promoting the same key message that "Surrey's in Business". Strategic task forces focusing on growth, skills, and sustainability could arguably support and direct county-wide recovery and growth.

Recommendation: Innovate the High Street: With the requirements of high streets shifting radically in a post-Covid age, a more imaginative approach is needed to manage the space that would benefit shifts in business, healthcare, the knowledge economy and aviation. Offering multi-purpose, collaborative business spaces, hubs for inclusive career support, NHS related areas, as well as much-needed skills/ training areas, all supported by high-quality communications infrastructure would help transform unused or surplus retail/office space.

IMPACTS TO DATE



3: Surrey Specialisms

Building the County's claim to be England's Silicon Valley by consolidating existing high-tech hubs, connected by 'business corridors', while kick-starting rescue packages for those aviation-related industries whose current challenges will negatively affect Surrey's overall GVA.

Recommendation: Embracing the modern workplace: Covid has brought about both threats and opportunities to contemporary working patterns, including new forms of flexibility and challenges to traditional modes (e.g. commuting in/out of the county). Both need to be seriously considered when mapping Surrey's future economic growth.



4: Healthy and Inclusive Surrey

Launching packages to promote an uplift in Surrey's demography; retaining high-skilled students, attracting highly-qualified younger workers and their families by providing enhanced and sustainable infrastructure, accessible housing and an attractive lifestyle.

Recommendation: Demographic challenges: Surrey faces a serious challenge in attracting and retaining highly-skilled young people for both the knowledge economy and business. Failure to make Surrey attractive, both commercially and residentially, risks ongoing shrinkage of growth, both in terms of demography and the overall economy.

FURTHER IMPACT

- The project has developed deep and sustained partnerships between the University of Surrey and a wide range of local and regional cross-sectoral stakeholders, including Surrey County Council, who commissioned the work as part of the objectives of its newly formed Surrey Future Economy Commission.
- Surrey County Council have continued to work closely with the University of Surrey, providing a mutually beneficial exchange between academia and local government that we hope will prove pivotal in the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. This has included working closely together on a new project, 'Growing Surrey', which seeks to build an economic growth strategy that will inform work being carried out by the Economic Development team at Surrey County Council and the Surrey Growth Board. This has been made possible due to the University being awarded funding from the Strategic Priority Fund to continue the project in enacting the policy recommendations from the report and research next areas of critical significance, such as sustainability.
- A close relationship has been built with the Surrey Employment and Skills Board with them joining as a junior partner in the 'Growing Surrey' project, providing expertise in the short-term employment contraction arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and developing a longer-term skill strategy for the county.
- We have built a strong and on-going relationship with Enterprise M3 and Coast to Capital; local enterprise partnerships that cover Surrey. Both LEPs "endorsed" the findings from the report and in turn committed to strengthen cooperation across the stakeholders in Surrey and adopt the growth governance that we recommended.
- The report has made significant impact at both regional and national level, being extensively circulated among key business interests in the county including the Institute for Directors and Chambers of Commerce. We have given parliamentary evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee and Science and Technology Committee's Inquiry into Coronavirus and the lesson learned, as well as the Treasury Committee's Inquiry into the Economic Impact of Coronavirus.
- Overall, 'Charting Surrey's rescue, recovery and growth in the age of Covid-19 and Brexit' has provided a strong foundation in bridging the gap between academia and local governance at a time of critical importance. As the nation begins to recover economically from the severity of the Covid-19 pandemic, the University of Surrey has been at the forefront of the revival and future growth of the county.

KEY OUTPUTS

- [ESRC IAA Project Web Page](#)
- [Downloadable Project Report](#)
- [Downloadable Executive Summary](#)
- [Watch the Report Launch Video](#)



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