



Annual Report 2025–2026

Supporting Dorset's businesses
to start, grow and thrive

Overview

2025–2026 has been a landmark year for Business Growth Dorset (BGD).

Following the transition from Dorset LEP, BGD has been successfully established within Dorset Council as the Growth Hub delivering business support across Dorset, aligning local expertise with national programmes under the UK Government’s Business Growth Service.

Our mission is simple:

Make it easier for businesses to access the right support, at the right time, to unlock growth and productivity.



Delivering for Dorset Businesses

A single, accessible support system

These initiatives have delivered specialist, expert-led support to businesses with the greatest potential to grow.

BGD provides a free, impartial and inclusive service for businesses of all sizes, sectors and stages.

We offer:

- One-to-one support and diagnostics
- Digital, phone and in-person support
- Access to national programmes
- Referrals to specialist providers

Supporting growth where it matters most

We have prioritised support for:

- Scale-ups and high-growth businesses
- Key Dorset sectors (including advanced manufacturing, clean energy, digital, defence and creative industries)
- High street businesses
- Social enterprises, co-operatives and mutuals

Through targeted programmes such as:

- Scale-Up Growth
- Scale-Up Finance
- Scale-Up Smart Tech
- Sustain Alternative Business Models
- Sustain High Streets

Working in partnership with local specialist delivery partners:

- Dorset Chamber
- Evolve
- SWMAS

Our Impact

Business support at scale

BGD supported hundreds of businesses across Dorset through a tiered approach:

Support Type	Businesses Supported
Light-touch (information & signposting)	363
Medium intensity (diagnostics, brokerage & growth support)	267
High intensity (intensive growth support)	76

Driving economic value

Businesses supported by BGD represent a major contribution to the Dorset economy:

Over
£2.1bn
combined **turnover** supported

Over
19,000
jobs across supported businesses

Working in Partnership

Stronger together

A major milestone this year was the launch of the:

Dorset Business Support Provider Network

This brings together:

- Local authorities (Dorset Council & BCP Council)
- Universities and education providers
- National agencies
- Business support organisations

The result:

- Better coordination
- Reduced duplication
- Clearer pathways for businesses

Regional collaboration

BGD played an active role in the **South West Peninsula Growth Hub Cluster**, collaborating with neighbouring Growth Hubs to:

- Share best practice
- Deliver joint programmes
- Align with national initiatives (e.g. Made Smarter, Innovate UK programmes)

Listening to Businesses

Customer satisfaction

Feedback from businesses has been overwhelmingly positive:

92%
satisfied or very satisfied

64%
rated the service **5/5**

What businesses are saying

"I have benefited hugely from the support... it has made a big difference."

"You have gone to so much effort - we need to share what you are doing."

"Delighted to have been recognised as a high potential business."



What We've Learned

This year has strengthened our understanding of what works best

What works well

- Personalised **one-to-one support**
- Specialist programmes delivered by expert partners
- Strong partnerships and collaboration
- A hybrid model combining digital and in-person delivery

Challenges

- Lower engagement with webinars
- Time constraints for business leaders
- Complexity of the support landscape
- Ongoing brand awareness challenges

Our response

- Increase face-to-face delivery
- Expand Business Navigator capacity
- Simplify customer journeys
- Strengthen brand visibility

Inclusive Growth

BGD is committed to ensuring business support is accessible to all

43%

of supported users
identified as **female**

**Broad age
representation
across all groups**

**Active engagement
with diverse
community networks**

We work with partners across the voluntary, community and education sectors to reach underrepresented groups and ensure inclusive access to support.

[Read our BGD case studies here >](#)



Looking Ahead: 2026–2029

We are building on this year's success with ambitious plans

Expanding our team

- Growth from **2 to 3.5 FTE**
- Additional Business Navigator roles

Enhancing our offer

- More one-to-one tailored support
- Dedicated telephone access
- New Start-Up Accelerator programme

Strengthening our ecosystem

- Continued development of the Dorset Business Support Network
- Greater integration with national Business Growth Service

Our focus remains on delivering high-impact, accessible and responsive support that drives real business growth across Dorset.



Promoting Dorset as a Place to Invest

Invest in Dorset



Alongside direct business support, Business Growth Dorset plays a key role in promoting Dorset as a leading destination for investment, innovation and growth.

The Invest in Dorset platform (www.investindorset.com) acts as a central hub to:

- Showcase Dorset's key sectors and opportunities
- Promote inward investment opportunities
- Highlight success stories and strategic assets
- Connect investors with local support and expertise

Through this platform, we are positioning Dorset as a competitive, connected and future-focused location for business growth, aligned with national and international investment priorities.



The screenshot displays the Invest in Dorset website. At the top is a navigation bar with links: Why Dorset, Key Sectors, Business Support, Investment Opportunities, Dorset Ambassadors, and Contact Us. Below the navigation bar is a large video player with the title "Invest in Dorset - the place for investment and growth". The video shows three people in a library setting. Below the video player is a paragraph of text describing Dorset's mission and economic strengths. Underneath the text is a section titled "Key Sectors" featuring six tiles: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy Industries, Defence, Creative & Digital Technologies, Financial Services, and Marine. Below the key sectors is a section titled "Key Facts" with three columns of statistics: £21.7bn Dorset GVA, 54,000+ Number of active businesses, and 300+ Number of foreign owned businesses. At the bottom of the page are logos for BCP, Dorset Council, and the UK Government.

Invest in Dorset - the place for investment and growth

Invest in Dorset's mission is to bring businesses and stakeholders together to drive investment and growth in this attractive county. Dorset's economy is flourishing, fuelled by innovation and projected growth and provides excellent business support and a great quality of life. With a total GVA value of over £21 billion Dorset is an outstanding area of the UK for business. Strengthened by the Great South West UK's Natural Powerhouse region comprising of Dorset, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, the area boasts an economy of over £80 billion and three million people.

Key Sectors

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Clean Energy Industries
- Defence
- Creative & Digital Technologies
- Financial Services
- Marine

Key Facts

£21.7bn	54,000+	300+
Dorset GVA	Number of active businesses	Number of foreign owned businesses

BCP Dorset Council Funded by UK Government

Dorset Ambassador Network

A cornerstone of our place promotion activity is the **Dorset Ambassador Network**

This network brings together influential leaders from:

- Business and industry
- Education and skills providers
- Public sector organisations
- Key growth sectors across Dorset

Its purpose is clear:

Champion Dorset as a great place to live, work, invest and do business



Driving engagement through ambassador events

In 2025–2026, the network continued to grow in both influence and diversity, with a programme of high-quality engagement events bringing leaders together to share insight, strengthen connections and promote opportunities.

Key events included:



These events:

- Strengthened relationships across the business ecosystem
- Enabled knowledge sharing and collaboration
- Enhanced visibility of Dorset’s opportunities
- Generated valuable insight to inform future strategy

Impact and added value

Through the Dorset Ambassador Network, Business Growth Dorset has:

- Created a stronger, more connected leadership voice for Dorset
- Supported investment promotion and place marketing activity
- Built advocacy across priority sectors
- Improved alignment between business, skills and economic development

The network also acts as an important feedback mechanism, ensuring that business insight directly informs economic strategy and delivery.



Looking ahead

We will continue to develop the Dorset Ambassador Network as a key strategic asset by:

- Expanding membership across emerging sectors
- Increasing visibility nationally and internationally
- Strengthening links with inward investment activity
- Delivering a forward programme of high-impact events

Together, the Invest in Dorset platform and Ambassador Network are helping to tell Dorset's story more effectively and attract the investment needed to drive long-term economic growth.

Final Word

Business Growth Dorset has successfully transitioned into a modern, collaborative and high-performing Growth Hub.

By combining local knowledge, national programmes and strong partnerships, we are helping Dorset businesses to:

Grow faster

Become more productive

Access new opportunities





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