

NEWS RELEASE

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS

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SOUTH EAST COUNCILS' FOUR BREXIT ESSENTIALS

South East England Councils (SEEC) members are calling for Ministers' help in four key areas to keep the economy healthy and keep local government services running after Brexit.

SEEC members are asking for:

- More regular updates from Ministers to help reduce uncertainty surrounding local authorities' planning for Brexit. For example, more detail on Government's port and freight strategies would help South East councils align their plans with Government.
- Help to address skills gaps where South East businesses and public services rely heavily on EU workers who may choose not to stay after Brexit. For example, greater powers to direct funds for training into sectors such as care, transport and hospitality.
- Help with managing traffic congestion and enforcing no-go areas for freight if a no-deal Brexit leads to large queues of lorries waiting to leave Dover or the Channel Tunnel.
- Clarity as soon as possible on Ministers' plans for replacing EU grants with a UK Shared Prosperity Fund so that South East councils can continue to deliver much-needed infrastructure and other local projects.

SEEC Chairman Cllr Roy Perry said: "The South East's impressive economic returns are vital for UK plc, so we need to make sure that short term congestion around ports such as Dover and Portsmouth does not disrupt supply chains or hinder councils in delivering local services.

"Many councils are already working well with partners and addressing possible scenarios practically rather than trying to make political capital out of Brexit. But it will be a challenge to manage any disruption – for example around South East ports – without having full information and powers to put our plans into practice.

"Extra funding from Government is welcome but local authorities could do more to help deliver a coordinated approach across the South East if Ministers agreed to share their vision more widely and decentralise powers and funding decisions so we can respond to local priorities."

Looking further ahead, SEEC members believe councils can also play an important role in targeting funds for training to help fill any gaps in the South East economy caused by loss of EU workers or plans to restrict entry for non-EU workers earning less than £30,000 a year. Evidence from Oxford University shows sectors in the South East with high levels of lower paid non-UK staff include hospitality (24% non-UK), health and social work (22% non-UK), and transport and storage (21% non-UK).

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Contacts for further information

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2. About SEEC

South East England Councils (SEEC) was established in 2009. It is a membership organisation representing all tiers of local authority. The SEEC area covers Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East and West Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Oxfordshire and Surrey.

SEEC's objectives are:

- To strive for a fair funding deal for the South East
- To promote the South East's position as a leading global economy
- To act as single democratic voice for South East interests
- To monitor the pulse of the South East.

For more information visit www.secouncils.gov.uk

3. The South East economy

The South East has a proven track record as the most profitable economy in the UK, making the highest net contribution to the funds that Government uses for public spending UK-wide.

Latest figures show that from 2000-2016, the South East contributed £154bn more to Treasury than the area received in Government funding. This is £28bn more than London's net contribution in the same period. East of England was the only other area to make a net contribution (£47bn). All other areas received more in public spending than they contributed to the Treasury.

4. Overseas workers in the South East economy

Analysis of ONS data by the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford shows the incidence of non-UK workers in South East economic sectors including:

	<u>Non-UK born workers</u>
Hospitality	24% (49,000 people)
Health & social work	22% (121,000 people)
Transport & storage	21% (47,000 people)
Admin and support	21% (16,000 people)
Information & communication	21% (55,000 people)
Retail	15% (85,000 people)
Construction	14% (50,000 people).

5. SEEC Brexit workshop

SEEC members held a workshop to consider Brexit practicalities and hear from expert speakers. A full report of the meeting is [available on the SEEC website](#).