

CENTRAL SOUTH QUARTERLY NEWS ROUND-UP

ATKINSRÉALIS:
DEVOLUTION WHAT'S
HAPPENING?

BUSINESS FIRST:
CENTRAL SOUTH
FOOD & DRINK TRADE EXPO

IN MY VIEW:
SIMON GILL

SPRING IN THE CENTRAL SOUTH



**PAVING THE WAY FOR
SUCCESS**

**ACTION GROUP CHAIRS TALK
STRATEGY IN 2026**

PAGE 9

A word or two from the Editor



Welcome to the latest edition of our quarterly news round-up.

Our year has got off to a great start with major events in our calendar including the Central South Food and Drink Trade EXPO and a major reception at the House of Commons with our Growing Together Alliance partners.

We asked our Action Group chairs to talk about their hopes for what 2026 might bring and share the strategic path they are formulating.

In this edition you will also see we are unveiling the first of a regular run of features regarding devolution and local government reorganization. Thanks so much to Megan Carter, Regional Director at AtkinsRéalis for helping us to navigate the current landscape.

Hot from Arup's move from Winchester to Southampton, Simon Gill, Southampton Office Leader, shares his thoughts on the power of partnership and the 'ripple effect' in our regular In My View Column.

(BTW if you have a subject you would like to talk about in this publication, please contact kate@businesssouth.org).

And finally, we hope you like our front cover image of acclaimed British artist Emma Richardson. Her exhibition is the first to take place as Southampton City Art Gallery re-opens following a major refurbishment. Find out more [here](#).

Kate Pearce

KATE PEARCE

HEAD OF STRATEGY

BUSINESS SOUTH INVESTMENT NEWS

MIPIM 2026

From 9-13 March 2026, Business South will be attending **MIPIM** - the world's leading real estate event.

1 in 3 attendees at the conference are investors, and we'll be showcasing the Central South for the full five days.

Why invest in the CENTRAL SOUTH?

The Central South UK offers a compelling mix of strategic locations, connected infrastructure, sectoral strength, investment opportunities and quality of life.

For many businesses looking for growth, access to markets, talent and innovation, the Central South is a strong proposition.

Discover the opportunities for regeneration and development in our regional investment guide **PROSPER**.

£80m by 2025* (GVA forecast to increase to)

2.7 million overall population

OVER 20% of all FTSE 100 companies & over 100,000 SMEs are based out of the region

6 Universities **83,000** students

3 International airports
3 International shipping ports

3.9% of England and Wales output in 2021

495,000 jobs

The Central South has a higher proportion of economically active people compared to England & Wales

2 National Parks

Real estate contributes the highest total Gross Value Added in the Central South

Key sectors include...

- Real estate and construction
- Wholesale trade - focusing on maritime import/exports and logistics
- Life sciences - with key research and innovation hubs in Salisbury, Bournemouth, Southampton and Basingstoke.
- Public administration
- Manufacturing - with a focus on advanced manufacturing for aerospace and defence
- Financial services - with Bournemouth leading global players including JP Morgan
- Space South Central - the Central South region has a global reputation for research and innovation excellence
- Solent Freeport - 7 tax sites covering a combined 430 hectares of prime development land

Education across the region

- University of Southampton - each year 9,000 students graduate from this Russell Group university
- University of Portsmouth - graduate employment rates are among the UK's best
- Southampton Solent University - 64% of students were in full-time work following their studies
- University of Winchester - Top 10 university for graduates going into employment or further studies

© 2024 MIPIM, © 2024 UK GOVERNMENT



Download **PROSPER** on the Business South website > [HERE](#)

Central South at UKREiiF

19 - 21 MAY, LEEDS

UKREiiF connects people, places and businesses to accelerate and unlock sustainable, inclusive and transformational investment

We will be showcasing the region through this dynamic new **Central South video**. Thank you to the Woodcut Media team.

The Central South will have an exhibition stand in the Royal Armouries Hall and a partner session on the Public Sector stage on the opening day, Tuesday 19th May 2026.



Please register for UKREiiF 2026 [HERE](#)

LOOKING FORWARD

A LANDMARK YEAR AHEAD FOR THE CENTRAL SOUTH



2026 has begun with energy, collaboration and a clear focus on long-term prosperity for the Central South.

The year opened in Westminster with our first House of Commons Reception, delivered in partnership with the Growing Together Alliance. The event brought business leaders and regional partners together to champion a shared ambition: connecting people, places and capital to drive sustainable growth.

This will be a theme for 2026 as we continue to drive collaboration across the region as well as nationally and internationally, with our public and private sector partners.

In just a few days, the Business South team will travel to MIPIM in Cannes, where we will showcase the region's most exciting development opportunities.

Our spotlight will fall on the coastal cities of Portsmouth and Southampton, the Hampshire towns of Basingstoke and Winchester, and extending west into Dorset with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP).

Throughout the week, we will host a full programme of activity alongside 20 public and private sector partners. On Wednesday 11th March we will host our popular Central South Investors Lunch and on Thursday morning I'm delighted that the Central South Breakfast is in partnership with Edgingtons Architects.

The enthusiasm and commitment of all our partners is invaluable, and we are grateful to everyone for your continued support.

Our investment calendar continues in May with UKREiIF, where we will once again promote the Central South to a national and international audience of investors and developers. Building on the success of last year's event, we look forward to strengthening our profile and forging new connections.

THE ENTHUSIASM AND COMMITMENT OF ALL OUR PARTNERS IS INVALUABLE, AND WE ARE GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

Later in the year, our flagship Business South Annual Conference returns on Thursday 5 November. Planning is already underway, and we look forward to sharing more as the agenda develops. Organisations interested in partnering with us are warmly invited to get in touch with me to leigh@businesssouth.org.

We are also excited to host our Novice Networking events in the inspiring surroundings of Marwell Zoo. These sessions offer junior colleagues a welcoming environment to build confidence, expand their networks and form the relationships that will support the next generation of regional growth.

Finally, this year marks a major milestone: **20 years of Business South**. We will celebrate this anniversary with a special event in July, and with more than 80 Business Champions already registered, it promises to be a memorable evening. Please register [HERE](#).

Thank you to all our partners, champions and supporters. Together, we are shaping an ambitious and prosperous future for the Central South.

Leigh-Sara Timberlake
Business South Group CEO

GROWING TOGETHER

ALLIANCE

BUSINESS UPDATE AT HOUSE OF COMMONS RECEPTION

- Connected people
- Connected places
- Connected capital
- Connected leaders
- Connected cultures



Thank you to all Business South champions, who attended the reception which was supported by Deloitte.

We are proud to be part of the alliance with Advanced Oxford, BusinessLDN, Business West, Cambridge Ahead, The Northern Powerhouse Partnership, and North West Business Leadership Team.

Business leaders, local authority chiefs, Mayors and MPs gathered for a reception at the House of Commons in January to hear the latest updates from the Growing Together Alliance.

A key area of focus for the Growing Together Alliance has been championing more effective place based economic strategies to boost regional productivity, delivered through a greater level of engagement between Central Government and regional bodies to develop policies for good growth.

Dame Chi Onwurah MP, Chair of the Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee welcomed guests to the reception and set the scene.

Dame Chi Onwurah MP delivered the keynote and Henri Murison led the panel discussion with Richard Bray Harriet Fear MBE and Rob Bridge.



WHAT IS DEVOLUTION AND WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

**MEGAN CARTER, REGIONAL DIRECTOR AT ATKINSRÉALIS
TALKS DEVOLUTION, LGR AND WHAT'S NEXT FOR
HAMPSHIRE & THE SOLENT REGION**

WHAT IS DEVOLUTION?

Devolution is about driving growth in a way that reflects the unique needs of our region. It represents a fundamental shift in the relationship between local areas and Westminster. Power, and eventually funding, will move out of central government and into regional hands. This should enable local decisions to be taken which are tailored to social and geographical circumstances.

WHAT IS A MAYOR?

To enable devolution, each region will have an elected Mayor, serving a 4 year term, who acts as a true Champion of Place: advocating for regional priorities in central government, unlocking development, enabling access to investment and shaping long-term regeneration across wider strategic geographies.

WHAT IS LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION?

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is about changing the structures of local government. This involves going from smaller authorities to larger authorities, encouraging collaboration and streamlining services. This process has been completed in places like Dorset and Wiltshire. Some places, such as Hampshire and the Solent are going through devolution, and Local government reorganisation, at the same time.

SO WHAT IS HAPPENING CURRENTLY IN HAMPSHIRE & THE SOLENT?

First and foremost we are awaiting confirmation of our new unitary authority boundaries which should be confirmed in March 2026. The next major milestone is the creation of the Foundational Strategic Authority for Hampshire and the Solent in Spring 2026. Today, the region has 15 councils made up of county, boroughs, districts and unitary authorities. We are likely to see that number reduce to 5 unitary authorities. Elections for these authorities will take place in May 2027.



Megan Carter, Regional Director at AtkinsRéalis



House of Commons, Westminster

WHEN WILL WE HAVE A MAYOR?

WHEN WILL WE HAVE A MAYOR?

Hampshire and the Solent was identified as a Devolution priority area. However, the Mayoral election will not take place until May 2028, following the decision that priority areas must complete LGR first to ensure that incoming Mayors inherit structures fit for purpose. Candidates have already come forward, and it's worth residents and businesses beginning to understand their platforms.

DO WE HAVE THE NEW AUTHORITIES AND THE OLD AUTHORITIES AT THE SAME TIME?

Between now and April 2028, the existing and new authorities will operate in parallel during a transition period. When the Mayor is elected in May 2028, the Foundational Strategic Authority will become a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

WHEN WILL THE REGION BE ABLE TO ACCESS FUNDING?

After 18 months, the Mayor can look to agree an integrated settlement with central government, which will allow us access to significant funding opportunities.



WHAT CAN THE FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIC AUTHORITY DO BEFORE THE MAYOR ARRIVES?

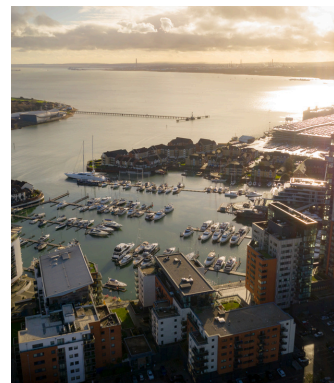
The Foundational Strategic Authority will be looking to establish the foundations of regional growth. For example the authority could look to complete their Spatial Development Plan, which will identify development potential for the region prior to the Mayor's arrival.

WHAT CAN BUSINESSES DO WHILST ALL OF THIS CHANGE IS HAPPENING IN THE SECTOR?

I advise that businesses take the time to understand the changing landscape of local government and how their region may be affected. It is important to remember that we, as local businesses, can be the constant through this immense period of change.

WILL AUTHORITIES BE ABLE TO DELIVER ABOVE AND BEYOND STATUTORY SERVICES DURING THIS PERIOD?

I think we have to be realistic about what authorities will be able to deliver considering the immense amount of change that they are facing. Authorities deliver a lot more than their statutory obligations every day, however larger strategic development sites I think may be slower to manifest due to this changing landscape.



Action Group Roundup

Maritime Transport Action Group

The Maritime & Transport Action Group held its first meeting of 2026. Members heard from 2 Start Ltd, who presented their logistics training opportunities. Katie Bruce and Kate Johnston also provided an MTCP update following the success of the Careers Day in November 2025 and announced its return on 19th November 2026 at the Ocean Cruise Terminal.

Next meeting: 28th April, 10:30–11:30 on Teams.

People South

People South is hosting an expert panel to discuss the Employment Rights Act on 17th March. Discussions will include what people need to know and to prepare for changes.

Next meeting: 17th March 10:00 – 11:00 noon on Teams.

Housing Group

The next Housing Group meeting will focus on building quality, the importance of placemaking and next-generation heat technology. Later in the year, the group will be focusing on skills and later living.

Next meeting: 1st April 10:00 to 11:00 on Teams.

Leisure & Wellbeing

The first scoping meeting was held with Group Chair Chris Rees, to discuss the priorities and agenda for the new Leisure and Wellbeing Action Group. If you would like to join the group, please get in touch with Joe@businesssouth.org.

Next meeting: 23 April in person, venue TBC



Energy & Utilities

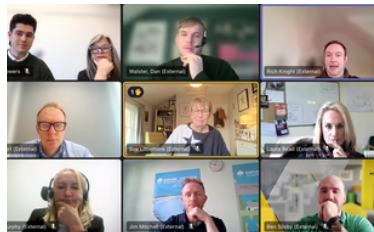
The group's Co-Chairs, Sam Clough and Shaun Stevens, have each been leading the development of strategy papers on Energy and on Water.

Next meeting: 31 March, 10:00–11:00 on Teams.

Sustainable South

Sustainable South held the very first Action Group meeting of 2026 and kicked off to a strong start. Chairs Dan Walster (AtkinsRéalis) and Rich Knight (Ridge) marked the completion of its first KPI, a Net Zero Beginner's Guide for SMEs and subcontractors, and the advancement to the next focus area: Natural Health.

Next meeting : 15th April 2026 10:00 to 11:00 on Teams.



ACTION GROUP CHAIRS

**WE CATCH UP WITH OUR ACTION GROUPS CHAIRS
TO TALK STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN 2026**



Maritime & Transport Action Group

MTAG Priorities for 2026: Paving the Way for Central South's Maritime and Transport Success.

Since its inception in 2019, the Maritime Transport Action Group (MTAG) has been instrumental in shaping a prosperous future for Central South's maritime and transport sectors. As 2026 approaches, MTAG remains focused on three strategic priorities: developing industry skills, amplifying the sector's voice, and advancing integrated transport and electrification.

**FRAN COLLINS
CEO RED FUNNEL
MARITIME & TRANSPORT
ACTION GROUP**

Building Skills and Awareness

A skilled, future-ready workforce is essential, and MTAG continues to promote maritime and transport careers through the Maritime Transport Careers Programme (MTCP), working with educators, training providers, and communities to raise awareness and address skills gaps. The initiative supports lifelong learning and ensures a strong talent pipeline for the region.

Championing Sector Advocacy

MTAG serves as a unified voice for the sector, engaging with local and national government to shape policy and strategy. As the region transitions through Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and towards a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), MTAG plays a key role in translating government ambitions into practical, locally relevant solutions.

Driving Integrated Transport and Electrification

MTAG continues to advocate for seamless, sustainable transport systems. By promoting electrification and integration across maritime, air, rail, and road, MTAG supports infrastructure projects that align environmental goals with economic growth.

A Vision for Success

MTAG's 2026 priorities reflect a clear commitment to economic development through skills, advocacy, and innovation. The path ahead is ambitious, and MTAG is charting the course.



**GARY WHITTLE
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
MEACHERS GLOBAL
LOGISTICS
MARITIME & TRANSPORT
ACTION GROUP**

To join one of the Business South Action Groups, please email kate@businesssouth.org

ACTION GROUP CHAIRS

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Regenerate South Action Group

Regenerate South: Driving Growth in 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, Business South's Regenerate South group will continue to guide regional action using the Priorities for Good Growth Paper and its Four Cs: Commission, Champion, Create, Convene. Originally developed for the new mayor, we will continue to use this framework to tackle the region's key challenges - from infrastructure, housing, and skills shortages to strengthening a coherent Central South identity.


A central focus will be the Central South Office for Investment, prioritising challenging and stalled sites and unlocking long-term opportunities with patient capital investors like Aviva. Drawing on regional expertise and best practice from Derby and the West Midlands, the office will coordinate with local authorities and maintain a regional inventory of high-impact sites.

Regenerate South will also focus on stalled and strategic sites, distinguishing short-term deliverables from transformational projects, and leveraging expertise from developers, planners, engineers, and architects to overcome barriers.


Growth zones will be linked to energy and transport strategies, with an integrated approach across rail, ferry, and airport operators to boost regional connectivity.

We will refresh the Central South brand, using Prosper and Talking Central South to promote success stories and investment cases, while supporting strategic skills and workforce planning aligned with economic needs, building on programmes like the Maritime Transport Careers initiative.

Key 2026 events will provide forums for collaboration and celebration, positioning the Central South as a dynamic, investable, and future-ready region. These events include MIPIM (9-13 March), Central South at UKREiIF (19-21 May), the Central South Property Lunch (3 June), and the Regenerate Central South Conference (24 June).



**GAVIN HALL
HEAD OF OFFICE
SAVILLS
REGENERATE SOUTH
ACTION GROUP**



**OLIVER SOWTON
PARTNER
BLAKE MORGAN
REGENERATE SOUTH
ACTION GROUP**

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ACTION GROUP CHAIRS

WE CATCH UP WITH OUR ACTION GROUPS CHAIRS TO TALK STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN 2026



Housing Action Group

Housing Work Group - Our focus for 2026

As we move firmly into 2026, there's certainly plenty to consider given the continuing changes in our regulatory and policy environment while the challenges around housing in our region remain pressing. Building on efforts last year, we'll be focusing our attention on several specific topics over the coming months.

Given our region's demographic trends, it's vital we're able to meet the housing needs of older people in future. As a result, we'll be looking to explore this area further, exploring the challenges and opportunities as well as considering the need for potential reforms.

When considering specific groups, we received a thought-provoking presentation from health sector colleagues last year on the implications of the current housing market for key workers. Some of the statistics shared were troubling and as a result, the group acknowledged the need for change and future targeted policy initiatives. For this reason, we'll be continuing our support for key worker housing through 2026.

In our 'call for housing change' report, we highlighted the need for improved sector skills regionally, ensuring we've a workforce fit for the future. This recommendation was one for us to tackle collectively, so in the coming months we'll be considering our workforce pipeline while looking to strengthen relationships with our educational institutions.

Given the Government's devolution agenda, we'll also be considering the changes in our local government landscape. In particular, we'll see the launch of the new Hampshire & Solent Combined Authority in coming months - we'll be looking to understand what this new structure means for housing and development, the likely opportunities it presents while building links with its team.

More broadly, we'll continue to advocate for greater housing market stability and steps that help stimulate greater delivery. On a final note, it's vital the Housing Working Group has a broad representation of organisations involved, so we're keen to see increased SME involvement. If you're one of those reading this and you're interested, we'd welcome hearing from you.

Download the 'Call for Housing Change' paper on the Business South website > [HERE](#)

ACTION GROUP CHAIRS

WE CATCH UP WITH OUR ACTION GROUPS CHAIRS TO TALK STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN 2026



Energy & Utilities Action Group

The Energy & Utilities South Action Group: Driving Regional Collaboration and Growth in 2026

The Action Group brings together key stakeholders from the energy and water sectors to tackle local infrastructure issues and support regional development.

For 2026, the Group's priorities centre on three key areas: fostering collaboration, highlighting regional strengths, and advocating for change at both regional and national levels. Central to this agenda are two white papers, which will set out the region's priorities and specific asks for the incoming mayor and government.

The Energy White Paper will set out the region's energy needs, challenges, and opportunities, with a focus on driving growth in housing, ports, and innovation hubs. It will highlight the South's potential in renewables—including solar, wind, and tidal—and advocate for increased investment in renewables, battery storage, and faster planning approvals. The paper will showcase successful collaborative projects and recommend strategic upgrades to support growth, net zero ambitions, and the region's future.

The Water White Paper will address the regulatory and investment landscape for the region's water sector. It will reflect on recent regulatory reviews, including the CMA appeals and the Cunliffe Report, which are shaping future governance and priorities. The paper will focus on barriers such as regulatory uncertainty and infrastructure constraints and propose solutions to improve water provision and support sustainable growth. It will also highlight innovation opportunities and the importance of proactive planning and localised collaboration to drive change.

Both papers are being developed through consultation with local authorities, network operators, and industry experts. They will ensure that any regional asks around energy and water, which are blocking growth are surfaced and raised at both regional and national government levels - providing a unified voice for the South as it seeks to drive meaningful change in 2026 and beyond.

To join one of the Business South Action Groups, please email kate@businesssouth.org

ACTION GROUP CHAIRS

WE CATCH UP WITH OUR ACTION GROUPS CHAIRS
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Sustainable South

As Sustainable South enters 2026, it stands at a pivotal moment to accelerate its impact across the region after its first year. It is my hope that the group can set a powerful example of how regional sustainability efforts can uplift communities while tackling climate change through the 5 key goals which the group has set as its mantra: **net zero, natural health, promoting world class environments, quality in design and build, and being a centre for green skills**

RICH KNIGHT
SUSTAINABILITY
SENIOR ASSOCIATE
RIDGE & PARTNERS LLP

One of Business South's key strategies is partnering with community-based organisations to co-create solutions tailored to local needs. Whether it's emissions scoping, restoring wetlands, or improving public transport, these initiatives need to be driven by the people who know their communities best.



By promoting and championing what is unique to the region, Sustainable South is seeking to help residents and businesses build on careers in sustainability as this not only boosts local economies but also fosters pride and ownership in the sustainability journey.

Education plays a vital role too. Through workshops, youth programmes, and leadership training, Sustainable South could be nurturing the next generation of climate champions. These efforts ensure that sustainability isn't just a policy—it's a shared value.

As the region faces growing environmental challenges, Sustainable South's community-first approach offers a hopeful, practical path forward.

DAN WALSTER
ASSISTANT BUILDING
SURVEYOR
ATKINSRÉALIS

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ACTION GROUP CHAIRS

WE CATCH UP WITH OUR ACTION GROUPS CHAIRS TO TALK STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN 2026



People South Action Group

Business South People Action Group

Guided by the Business South principles of Prosperity, Growth, and Innovation, the People Action Board is committed to shaping a resilient, future-ready regional action plan.

Across the Central South region, we face distinct challenges:

- Talent retention
- Housing affordability
- Transport connectivity
- Digital infrastructure
- Persistent skills gaps that limit business growth

Through innovation, collaboration, conscious investment, and shared ambition, we can turn these challenges into opportunities. When education providers and people professionals work in true partnership, we can redefine how these issues are addressed—strengthening talent pathways, attracting investment, and creating conditions for businesses to thrive.

The People Action Board will deliver targeted outcomes through three strategic priorities:

1. Talent Retention Strategy
2. Enabling skilled individuals to build sustainable careers within the region.
3. AI Innovation and Adoption
4. Supporting businesses and educators in harnessing technology, boosting productivity, and sharing best practices.
5. Sector-Focused Skills Collaboration
6. Aligning economic priorities and industry needs with training provision—developing excellence across sectors, with a strong emphasis on green skills and roles.

Together, we will create an environment where people and businesses prosper—driving growth and innovation across the Central South.

CHARMAIN BROWNING
PEOPLE DIRECTOR
DP WORLD



HEIDI ROPER
DIRECTOR
VIEW HR

To join one of the Business South Action Groups, please email kate@businesssouth.org

CHAMPION NEWS

NEW PARTNERSHIP FORMED TO DEVELOP SITE OF SOUTHAMPTON'S FORMER

TOYS 'R' US



£16M INVESTMENT

Aviva Capital Partners, Southampton City Council and the University of Southampton have formed a joint venture company > [Read more](#)

BACK THE BID! PORTSMOUTH 2029 UK CITY OF CULTURE BID

Portsmouth has announced that we will be bidding for the prestigious UK City of Culture 2029 title to showcase the city's creativity, heritage and ambition on a national stage. > [Read more](#)

SOUTHAMPTON BUSINESSES URGE GOVERNMENT ACTION ON CRITICAL HGV TESTING SHORTAGES

The Maritime and Transport Action Group (MTAG), co-chaired by Gary Whittle, Operations Director at Meachers Global Logistics, has issued a formal letter to local MPs on behalf of Southampton's business community. > [Read more](#)



THE BRITISH SCIENCE FESTIVAL IS HEADING TO SOUTHAMPTON IN 2026

The British Science Association and the University of Southampton are pleased to announce > [Read more](#)

The British Science Festival is heading to Southampton in 2026



We're backing the bid

Portsmouth 2029
UK City of Culture bid

#wearePompey2029
@portsmouthcreates



CHAMPION NEWS



FAREHAM UNVEILS BOLD £125M VISION TO TRANSFORM TOWN CENTRE

Fareham is set for a major transformation as Fareham Borough Council moves forward with the next stage of design for its ambitious £125 million Town Centre Masterplan >

[Read more](#)

HSDC FOSTERS LOCAL MUSIC TALENT THROUGH INDUSTRY WEEK

HSDC's South Downs Campus has once again demonstrated its commitment to nurturing ambition and delivering industry-level learning through its highly successful Music Industry Week > [Read more](#)



CENTRAL SOUTH FOOD AND DRINK SHOWCASED TSHOWCASED TO SOME OF THE UK'S MOST INFLUENTIAL BUYERS

> [Read more](#)



MDL MARINAS CONTINUES MAJOR INVESTMENT ACROSS ITS UK MARINA NETWORK

MDL Marinas has confirmed a further £6.35 million of investment during the 2025/26 berthing season, reinforcing its long-term commitment to improving facilities, infrastructure and services across its UK marina network. > [Read more](#)



PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL ANNOUNCE THE RELAUNCH OF PORTSMOUTH MARKETS

Portsmouth City Council has announced the relaunch of Portsmouth Markets, designed to celebrate the city's creativity, culture and community. > [Read more](#)



CHAMPION NEWS

PORTSMOUTH PORT'S £400M CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

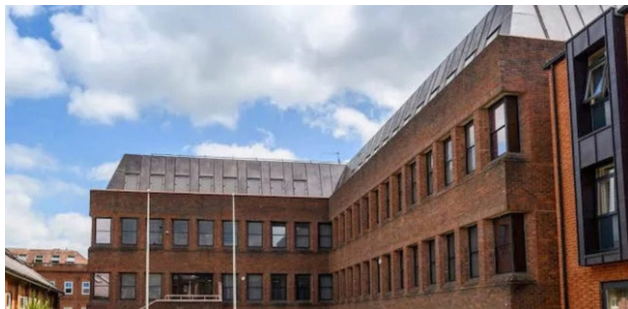


Using data from 2024, the economic impact of Portsmouth International Port was revealed to be worth > [Read more](#)

TRETHOWANS INVESTS IN LARGER WINCHESTER PREMISES

Supporting significant growth

The larger office at Wykeham Court, Winchester, marks a major milestone in the firm's continued expansion > [Read more](#)



SAVILLS: PRESSURES BUILD FOR THE DEVELOPMENT LAND MARKET

The UK's development land market experienced a slow end to 2025 >

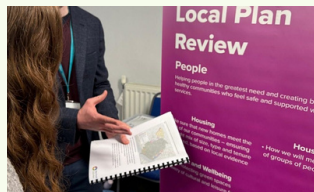
[Read more](#)



savills

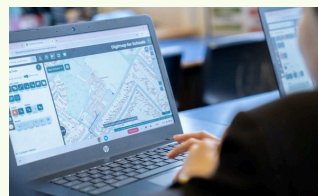
NEW FOREST RESIDENTS INVITED TO HELP SHAPE FUTURE PLANNING DECISIONS THROUGH LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

New Forest District Council (NFDC) is inviting residents to have their say as the next stage of their Local Plan review gets underway > [Read more](#)



NEW SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOLS TO INSPIRE BUDDING GEOGRAPHERS

Ordnance Survey (OS) will reach out to 1,800 primary and secondary schools serving some of the most deprived areas of Great Britain > [Read more](#)



SHARE YOUR NEWS

Send your news stories to natalie@businesssouth.org, and we will include as many as possible in our newsletters and on social media.

IN MY VIEW

RIPPLE EFFECT – A NEW PHASE OF GROWTH FOR THE **CENTRAL SOUTH**



SIMON GILL,
OFFICE LEADER,
ARUP SOUTHAMPTON
SOUTH COAST MARKET
LEADER
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Looking at the year ahead, like many other people, I feel both energised and prepared for what 2026 will throw at me (note to self: expect the unexpected but remain focused on the long-term goals).

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

This year Arup moves to our new location in central Southampton, following 40 years in Winchester. As the leader of this new office, I feel excitement for what this brings, strengthening our ability to work with clients and partners, to deliver sustainable, resilient and inclusive growth across the region.

In a similar vein, the potential for future growth in the South Coast region, if well navigated, is significant - as outlined in my previous piece last year. The four main areas where progress is most likely to happen were:

- **Strategic Infrastructure and Connectivity**
- **Collaborative Governance and Partnerships**
- **Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience**
- **Socio-economic Growth and Skills Development**

All these components call for cohesive planning and integration – and a degree of political force. However, I see another, 'fifth' element that arguably could make all the difference.

THE FIFTH ELEMENT / THE RIPPLE EFFECT

That additional factor I see as a definitive sense of identity and ownership that sustains that belief. Found in the most high-performing teams, partnerships and collaborations, the fifth element is that intangible energy and feeling of possibility you gain from having worked with likeminded experts and leaders. This ripple effect, fuelled by confidence and resilience, all leads back to the 'big picture' goals of community benefits, careers started, skills deployed, civic pride and recognition of the area's (and its people's) untapped innovation.

IN MY VIEW

RIPPLE EFFECT – A NEW PHASE OF GROWTH FOR THE **CENTRAL SOUTH**



PROGRESS IN ACTION

To develop this, I believe we need a unifying set of ideas and human stories that can easily be articulated and are based on hard evidence. Combined with the potential gains to investors, proven examples from other areas of the UK and efficient use of existing infrastructure, this provides both a vision and an engine of thought that positions the South Coast as somewhere where progress isn't just planned – it's already happening.



Reflecting on the above, I have challenged several of my colleagues in our new Southampton office to share their thoughts on Shaping the Opportunity within the South Coast. For the next several weeks we will be publishing these insights, starting with this one as a sort of pre-face.

This series of articles pool both our experience living and working in the Central South, with our expertise in sustainable development across the globe.



With that in mind, I invite you to join our Arup team as we explore how we as a community can shape the opportunity of the South Coast, starting with @Katie Kerrs article "[Thinking bigger and bolder through strategic planning on the South Coast](#)".

Follow this [link](#) to read more about how Arup is working to shape the South Coast.

CENTRAL SOUTH FOOD & DRINK TRADE EXPO

BUYERS FROM THE CRUISE INDUSTRY, HOSPITALITY AND BEYOND MET FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCERS FROM ACROSS THE REGION AT THE CENTRAL SOUTH FOOD AND DRINK TRADE EXPO.

BUYERS FLOCK TO THE CENTRAL SOUTH FOOD AND DRINK TRADE EXPO

The event, which is organised by Business South in association with partners including Hampshire Fare, Carnival UK, Comax, Cavendish Ships Stores, Polymedia PR and marketing, and Hilton Southampton Utilita Bowl, attracted 400 people through the door to the produce showcase event.

Buyers including major names such as Carnival UK, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, Marwell Zoo and Dike & Son Ltd attended the event alongside 70 producers of everything from cheese and gelato to chocolate and spicy sauces.



The day got underway with a welcome from Business South CEO Leigh-Sara Timberlake. She said: "Over the years we've had brilliant stories of how producers have had their companies transformed as a result of meeting buyers who came to this show.

"Mike Smales' Lyburn cheese is on the cruise ships departing from Southampton as a direct result of talking to the cruise buyers here – and orders from pubs and restaurants across the region are regularly secured at this event.

Nick Wenman, Chair of Wine GB, explained English wine was now established as a premium product, with 10m bottles of wine produced every year. He encouraged hotels and restaurants to sell English wine by the glass to support the homegrown wine industry.



Kate Nicholls, OBE, Chair of UKHospitality joined the conference via video link and stressed a collaborative approach that encompassed the farm to fork initiative, with local food and drink producers and the hospitality sector, was the way forward.

In Hampshire and the South-East, the hospitality sector accounts for 1 in 7 jobs and nationally generates £146 billion. Kate shared she was talking to the government about the scale of the sector and the potential for growth – a predicted 10 per cent growth could bring substantial receipts for the Exchequer.



The day came to a close with the presentation of the Central South Food & Drink Trade EXPO awards.



Taste of the Region Award sponsored by Hampshire Fare CIC and the winner was Bon & Rose.
Inspiration Award sponsored by Polymedia and the winner was Zaman Condiments and Sauces
Passion Behind the Product Award sponsored by Paris Smith LLP and the winner was Two&One olive oil.
Brand & Packaging Award sponsored by Cavendish Ships Stores Ltd and the winner was New Forest Shortbread Ltd. Stand Out Stand Award sponsored by Comax UK and the was Moon Roast Coffee.

The 2027 Food & Drink Trade EXPO will be on Tuesday, 9th February. Exhibitors register > [HERE](#). Buyers register > [HERE](#).



A round table discussion with leading hoteliers and hospitality providers was held during the day so Kate Nicholls could hear first hand from businesses across the region. The session was chaired by Natasha Dochniak, Hampshire Fare's Commercial Manager.

Watch the Central South Food & Drink Trade EXPO video [HERE](#)



INVESTMENT - ON THE AGENDA



The Central South International Investment Programme begins in March at MIPIM 2026, when Business South will be supported by twenty business partners as part of the Central South contingent.



ATTENDING MIPIM HAS BECOME A MAJOR DATE IN THE BUSINESS SOUTH CALENDAR. IT IS THE PLACE WHERE SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT DEALS ARE DONE AND BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS ARE CEMENTED



PROGRAMME

10th March 2026 TUESDAY

09:30 – 10:30 Meet the Central South partners over breakfast

11:30 – 12:00 In Discussion Session: Port Cities and Benefits of our Freeport with Savills and Southampton City Council

15:00 – 15:30 In Discussion Session: Reviving Place - How Repurposing is Reshaping Our Cities hosted by Atkins Réalis

16:00 – 18:30 Connect with our Central South Partners over sundowner drinks and light bites.

11th March 2026 WEDNESDAY

09:30 – 10:30 Meet the Central South partners over breakfast

11:30 – 12:00 In Discussion Session: Place making in the Central South with RIBA, Blake Morgan and Welborne

12:30 – 15:00 Central South VIP Lunch for Investors, Occupiers and Developers (Invitation Only) hosted at L'Alba

16:00 – 18:30 Connect with our Central South Partners over sundowner drinks and light bites

12th March 2026 THURSDAY

08:00 – 10:00 Central South VIP Fringe Breakfast at the Green Bagle Café

09:30 – 10:30 Meet the Central South partners over breakfast

11:30 – 12:00 In Discussion Session: Future Proofing Investment in the Central South hosted by AtkinsRéalis

15:00 – 15:30 In Discussion Session: Inspiring Innovation Through Challenging Convention: Central South MIPIM Challengers in Conversation with Atkins Réalis, Southampton City Council and Savills

16:00 – 18:30 Connect with our Central South Partners over sundowner drinks and light bites

INVESTMENT - ON THE AGENDA

The Central South has two MIPIM Challengers in 2026! Congratulations to Georgia Turner of AtkinsRealis and Jakiat Jitu of Southampton City Council - we're looking forward to hearing your discussions.



We're proud that Fiona Gray, Director of Place at Welbore UK is joining the Urban Reinvention & Resilience panel — a must-attend session for anyone interested in the future of cities, placemaking and investment.

- 📍 Wednesday 11 March
- 📍 UK Hub Stage, MIPIM, Cannes

Visit **Stand R7.D26**

Central South
A region of **OPPORTUNITY**

MIPIM Challenger

Georgia Turner
Assistant Project Manager
AtkinsRealis



Central South at MIPIM
9-13 March 2026
Palais des Festivals, Cannes



Visit **Stand R7.D26**

Central South
A region of **OPPORTUNITY**

MIPIM Challenger

Jakiat Jitu
Major Projects Support Officer
City Development Team
Southampton City Council



Central South at MIPIM
9-13 March 2026
Palais des Festivals, Cannes




Join us in Leeds. From 19 - 21 May the Central South will be spotlighting the key development sites and regeneration projects across the region to investors and developers at UKREiIF.

Partner registration is available [HERE](#).



UK REiIF 2026

THE UK'S REAL ESTATE, INVESTMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE FORUM



19 - 21 MAY 2026

UKREiIF, ROYAL ARMOURIES AND LEEDS DOCK, THE BOULEVARD, LEEDS, LS10 1PZ






CHAMPION DIRECTORS DINNER

THE BUSINESS SOUTH 2026 EVENT CALENDAR STARTED WITH A MEMORABLE CHAMPION DIRECTORS' DINNER AT THE STYLISH NEW PLACE HOTEL

We started 2026 with an exclusive evening for our Champion Directors at the stunning New Place Hotel in Hampshire.

Set within picturesque grounds, this beautiful Grade I listed manor house offered the perfect backdrop for an evening of meaningful conversation, new connections, and shared ambition with our champions.



 28 January 2026
 New Place Hotel, Hampshire
 6pm – 9pm

Guests enjoyed fine dining, exceptional company, and the opportunity to reconnect.

A wonderful start to 2026 and promoting the Central South.



Directors were welcomed by Group CEO Leigh-Sara Timberlake and The Glow Studio's strategy division, Frankly Consultants, sponsored the evening.



A CELEBRATION TO REMEMBER

LET'S TAKE A LOOK BACK AT FEW OF THE MOMENTS THAT HAVE MADE A MARK IN THE BUSINESS SOUTH 20 YEAR CALENDAR



2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



2014 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



2016 START NETWORKING



“

2026 MARKS 20 YEARS OF BUSINESS SOUTH MAKING VALUED BUSINESS CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE CENTRAL SOUTH REGION – AND WE ARE GOING TO CELEBRATE THIS IMPORTANT MILESTONE WITH A PARTY!

JOIN BUSINESS SOUTH AS WE CELEBRATE AT HARBOUR HOTEL, SOUTHAMPTON

17 28 JANUARY 2026
6 6PM – 11PM

2017 REGENERATE SOUTH



MOVING ON UP



WINCHESTER VICE-CHANCELLOR SARAH GREER TO RETIRE AT THE END OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Winchester, Professor Sarah Greer CBE has announced her retirement, after working for almost 30 years in Higher Education.

[Read more](#)



TRETHOWANS WELCOMES ALICE BALCOMBE AS PARTNER IN THE FAMILY TEAM

Trethowans is delighted to announce the appointment of Alice Balcombe as a Partner in its highly regarded Family team, based in Winchester.

Alice brings extensive expertise in all aspects of family law, with a particular focus on the financial elements of divorce.

[Read more](#)



TOP APPRENTICES CELEBRATED AT UNIVERSITY AWARDS EVENT

The University of Winchester celebrated the achievements of students taking apprenticeship degrees at a special awards ceremony.

Seven apprentices from the Faculties of Health and Wellbeing and Business and Digital Technologies were honoured at the event.

[Read more](#)



TRETHOWANS ADDS TWO PARTNERS TO EXPAND EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Trethowans is delighted to welcome Charlotte Farrell and Tabytha Cunningham to further strengthen the employment team and offer clients the benefit of immigration advice.

Charlotte and Tabytha are highly experienced employment and immigration specialists who have worked together since 2017.

[Read more](#)



SIX NEW TRAINEES JOIN HWB AS ACCOUNTANCY FIRM EXPANDS TEAM

HWB Chartered Accountants has appointed six new starters as the firm strives to grow its own talent to counter skills shortages.

[Read more](#)

CELEBRATE THE REGION & JOIN US

BUSINESS SOUTH 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Central South – Shaping Tomorrow Together - [Register online HERE.](#)

Annual Conference 2026

SAVE THE DATE AND JOIN US

THURSDAY 5TH NOVEMBER 2026
09:30-15:30
HILTON SOUTHAMPTON - UTILITA BOWL

Business South

REGENERATE CENTRAL SOUTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Central South – Accelerating Regional Growth

The conference is a fantastic opportunity for potential investors, developers, agents and consultants to debate the ambitions for the Central South region.

[Register online HERE.](#)

POPULAR AUTUMN EDITION

The Central South UK quarterly magazine has been viewed more than **7,700+** times since the Autumn edition.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN NUMBERS

In the last quarter Business South visibility has grown...

FOLLOW REGIONAL NEWS

We would like to continue to grow, please follow our social media channels on LinkedIn, Instagram, You Tube and Twitter

CENTRAL SOUTH QUARTERLY NEWS ROUND-UP

ORDNANCE SURVEY: MAPPING THE FUTURE	BUSINESS FIRST: DIRECTORS OF THE FUTURE	IN MY VIEW: PAUL HARDING
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AUTUMN IN THE CENTRAL SOUTH

A WORLD CLASS ENVIRONMENT AND WORLD CLASS ECONOMY

THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK MARKS ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

PAGE 18

- 18, 500 + plus followers on social media pages
- 7,500 LinkedIn followers
- 73,500 + impressions in last quarter
- 8% Average post engagement rate
- 170 posts on social media

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- [Instagram.com/businesssouth](https://www.instagram.com/businesssouth)
- www.youtube.com/BizSouth
- www.businesssouth.org

• BSMH Business Centre, Millbrook Road West, Southampton • info@businesssouth.org

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

EVENT CALENDAR

9-13 March 2026

Central South at MIPIIM 2026

11 March 2026

Central South Investors Lunch at MIPIIM 2026

12 March 2026

Breakfast in Cannes with the Central South Partners

15 April 2026

Novice Networking

19 - 21 May 2026

Central South at UKREiiF

20 May 2026

Central South UK VIP Breakfast at UKREiiF

3 June 2026

Central South Property Lunch

24 June 2026

Regenerate Central South Annual Conference

8 July 2026

Directors of the Future Dinner

16 July 2026

Business South 20th Anniversary Party

5 August 2026

Novice Networking

5 November 2026

Business South 2026 Annual Conference

