

Key facts:

- The South East LEP is the largest partnership of its kind between private and public sector bodies outside London working together to develop and deliver sustainable economic growth across all parts of the LEP area.
- The LEP is home to more than 130,000 businesses supporting over 1.3 million jobs.
- The LEP area is home to 3.9m people – larger than any city region outside of London and larger than 13 European countries
- The areas covered by the LEP are the country's economic powerhouse contributing £55 billion a year to the national economy – greater than Leeds and Manchester city regions combined
- With eight ports around the Essex, Kent and East Sussex coast the LEP area is a critical gateway between Europe, London and the rest of the country. This will be further enhanced with the opening of the London Gateway port in Thurrock over the next few years. Once complete the deep-sea container port with an adjacent business and logistics park will create 12,000 direct jobs and over 20,000 indirect jobs
- Employment growth in the LEP area rose by more than a third of the national average (14.4 per cent compared to 9.5 per cent) between 1998 and 2008. In total there are 1,449,600 people employed in the LEP area making up 5.4 per cent of Great Britain's workforce
- The combined rural economies of East Sussex, Essex and Kent are the largest of any other LEP area - worth over £10 billion a year.
- There are eight major universities in the area covered by the LEP.
- Nearly a third of the population (1,136,150) in the LEP area are classified as living in rural areas by DEFRA, with eight of the 32 districts in the LEP being classed as being more than 50 per cent rural

Key challenges

- Three of the top 50 most deprived areas in England are in the LEP area - Brooklands and Grasslands (Jaywick – Essex) Cliftonville West and Margate Central (both Kent) – Index of Multiple Deprivation March 2011
- 3.1 per cent of people of working age across the LEP receive Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) compared to 2.5 per cent in the South East (June 2011)
- 6.5 per cent of 18-24 year olds in the LEP are claiming JSA compared to 4.6 per cent in the South East. 5.2 per cent of 18-24 year olds across the LEP area have been claiming JSA for six months (compared to 3.7 per cent in the South East) (June 2011)
- 3.3 per cent of people aged between 25-49 years old in the LEP area are claiming JSA compared to 2.6 per cent in the South East. (June 2011)
- The rates of 16-64 year olds with no qualifications in more than half of the districts across the LEP (18 out of 32) are either on par or below the national average of 12 per cent. These include Castle Point (Essex) 18.1 per cent and Thurrock (Essex) 17.3 per cent
- The share of dependent population (those aged 0-15 and 65 plus) to total population in four of the six top-tier authority areas in the LEP are projected to rise above the estimated England average of 38.8 per cent by 2031. These are East Sussex (46.5 per cent) Southend (41.5) Kent (41.4) and Essex (40.7).
- Two thirds of the districts across the LEP area have less 16-64 year olds who are qualified to NVQ4+ than the UK average of 29.8 per cent. The lowest levels are Castle Point (Essex) 15.6 per cent and Tendring (Essex) 14.5 per cent.
- Parts of the LEP area are overly dependent on the public sector for employment. For example nearly 40 per cent of the workforce in Canterbury is employed in the public sector – well above levels in many northern cities. Other areas with high public sector employment dependency include Hastings and Chelmsford both around 28 per cent compared to the England average of 19.5 per cent