

Great Western Freeport bid

- With a deep-sea Port at its heart, the Great Western Freeport is perfectly placed to become a national hub for global trade and investment.
- The West of England is recognised nationally and internationally as a region that leads and drives innovation and is home to innovative engineering excellence in areas such as aerospace and advanced engineering, nuclear, food and environmental technologies. We have several world-class universities and excellent colleges to provide the skilled workforce that these industries need.
- The Great Western Freeport would allow us to build on these strengths to drive new clean growth opportunities in manufacturing, trade and inward investment leading to significant economic growth.
- Our independent analysis shows the Great Western Freeport could create up to 50,000 jobs in the region and 90,000 nationally, bringing an economic return of almost £6 billion each year to the UK.
- A freeport would bring huge opportunities to businesses, communities and residents in the West of England, the wider south west and the UK. It would attract more businesses to locate here and help us achieve inclusive growth and levelling up across our region, targeting investment and support at areas of higher deprivation and bringing back land into use.

More details can be found in the brochure linked here <https://bit.ly/3aDR0uE>

Frequently asked questions

What are Freeports?

Designed to attract major domestic and international investment, areas given Freeport status will benefit from a wide package of tax reliefs, simplified customs procedures, a streamlined planning processes to boost redevelopment, and government support to promote regeneration and innovation.

How many jobs will be created?

We estimate that the Great Western Freeport could lead to the creation of almost 50,000 jobs in the region and up to 80,000 nationally in the long term. We have used independent regional economic modelling to show how the direct creation of jobs will lead to significant further job creation in supply chains and via increased wage spending effects locally, regionally and nationally.



What are the benefits of the Great Western Freeport?

- An increase in international investment across the Freeport region, building on our key sector strengths and innovation assets.
- Create new customs sites delivering opportunities in new global export markets.
- Build on our R&D centres of excellence promoting an increase in innovation funding in the region to help our businesses and their supply chains adapt and plan for future growth.
- Channelling our extensive Further and Higher Education offer, including Institutes of Technology, to provide new skills and training for workers in Freeport sectors.
- A reduction in deprivation in key areas and a tangible increase in average wage levels and employment outcomes.
- Regeneration of underdeveloped land, creating crucial employment space for commercial activities.
- New opportunities for residents in the region by investing in areas of higher deprivation and improving access to education, training and job opportunities.

Who is involved in the West of England region's bid?

The West of England Combined Authority submitted the regional bid on Friday 5 March. It has been developed working with the Heart of the South West LEP, and a coalition of public and private sector partners.

We have the support and backing of regional partners including large-scale businesses across our aerospace and nuclear sector, the region's universities and colleges, our innovation centres, local authorities and business networks.

We have worked with them to define the principles for a freeport and have strong support from business.



Where would the Freeport be located?

The Great Western Freeport is based around Bristol Port as the core customs site with additional tax and customs sites at Avonmouth and Severnside, Junction 21 Enterprise Area and Gravity Smart Campus. These sites have been selected given their proximity to areas of deprivation and their development potential for large scale job creation.

Jobs will be created directly in advanced manufacturing and related activity, and through supply chain and wage effects, across a broad range of sectors and skills levels from retail and wholesale, to digital and professional services.

What would be the environmental impact?

We are aiming to develop the first digitally Net Zero enabled Freeport to ensure that all sites are well-connected and unnecessary movement minimised to reduce the carbon footprint of any Freeport activity.

We are also using the Freeport to encourage significant growth in green manufacturing and technologies, for example, building on our success to develop the next generation of low carbon aircrafts, nuclear fusion, digital engineering, and supporting the manufacturing and remanufacturing from waste streams through a 'circular economy' model.

Would becoming a Freeport come with central government funding?

Government has referenced a range of additional funding opportunities that could be open to Freeport areas, for example in innovation, regeneration and skills. This is in addition to the benefits from tax and customs benefits, inward investment and trade.

What's the timeframe / what's the process / how will government make its decision?

We submitted our bid to Government on **February 5**. Successful Freeport locations will be announced in the Spring and introduced as soon as possible, following the development of a Full Business Case and further discussions with Government including HM Treasury.

What is the difference between these new Freeports and Freeports that have been in place previously?

The new Freeport model is focussed on promoting regeneration and 'levelling up'; creating centres of innovation; and national hubs for global trade and investment. It is the combination of these which is unique.



With a Freeport, we can use our strengths in innovation and creativity to secure major employment and capture new opportunities in green manufacturing which will create jobs accessible to residents in our left behind communities.

Could Freeports lead to tax evasion and result in businesses moving out of other areas?

Our approach will be about using our strengths and competitive advantages, to encourage new inward investment and jobs to the region.

A co-ordinated inward investment strategy will ensure Freeport sites are focused on jobs which are genuinely new to the region to avoid displacement.

Government requires all Freeport areas to put in place stringent checks and security to ensure that the tax and customs benefits are effectively managed in the right way.

We will develop a governance structure which also gives the Freeport the right level of oversight, scrutiny and democratic accountability.

How will you make sure local people benefit from the freeport?

A co-ordinated employment and skills plan will target those in our most deprived communities to help them access new job opportunities. Multi-agency employment and skills services will be bought together to address skills gaps and other barriers, such as transport and digital exclusion.

We will use the existing £30m investment in employment and skills and programmes such as our Adult Education services, Workforce for the Future and Institutes of Technology, including the creation of 3,200 new apprenticeship opportunities.

