

## Connecting West Sussex:

The business opportunity of a better  
A27 at Arundel

Business owners from across West Sussex gathered at Arun Civic Centre this spring at 'Connecting West Sussex', an event joint-hosted by Highways England, the Arun Business Partnership and the Coastal West Sussex Partnership. Topics for discussion were the region's connectivity challenges, its economic aspirations and how best to tackle its most pressing issues.

As the only major east-west route south of the M25, the A27 is critical for bringing business, investment and talent to the area; but the current A27 bottleneck at Arundel forms a huge obstacle to this for many local businesses.

Henry Powell, Chair of the Coastal West Sussex Partnership – a business-led group that aims to make a positive impact on the economy of the West Sussex coast – opened the event by explaining the region's unique situation:

“Coastal West Sussex is one of the most prosperous and beautiful areas in South East England. It's home to many significant businesses across a broad range of sectors, but the connectivity in the region is poor and restricted by the delays caused by the near constant level of congestion on the A27.”



**Henry Powell**, Chair of the Coastal West Sussex Partnership

Employment features high on the lists of barriers to business success in the region according to the businesses we spoke to. “Our recruitment pool is reduced by road travel times in the area,” one attendee told us; another added that “potential employees are being put off by the unreliable journey times.”

Henry Powell highlighted the negative impact that congestion along the A27 has on local education, with schools finding it “increasingly difficult to attract teachers, who immediately write off the area as a potential place to work after experiencing the appalling traffic situation.”

Productivity is also a concern. Simon Wallace, Managing Director of Gusto Wines, said:

“Our main challenge at the moment is productivity. There are times of the day where we simply cannot get enough done because of the restrictions to the current A27,” while another attendee reported that his business was “bleeding money” to pay his staff premium rates to come into work earlier to deliver the morning jobs.

Henry Powell summarised the discussion. “[The A27 is] damaging the reputation of the area” and from the perspective of local communities, connectivity poses a serious barrier to job opportunities and career progression. Speaking on behalf of his own business, Henry added, “Clients are reluctant to visit the area past 3pm each day as they know the A27 will be jammed.”

This affects inward investment too. “Companies won’t invest if they know there is a potential for loss due to the poor road system in our area,” an attendee told us, explaining the perception that the region is difficult to reach. It is a worry for tourism as well; and not only for visitors to the region, according to one tourism professional, who said that constant traffic means local people are inclined to visit places outside of the area, rather than brave the queues on the A27.

But it’s not all doom and gloom. Business owners attending ‘Connecting West Sussex’ all agreed that the region’s employment, productivity, investment and tourism levels would drastically increase if significant improvements are made to the A27.

Jason Hones, Highways England’s Programme Lead for the South East said: “Improvements to the A27 at Arundel will support economic growth, thereby increasing productivity for local businesses. The improvements will connect communities, easing journeys to work, schools, hospitals and the shops. And, it will deliver a safe road that can deal with today’s congestion and provide sufficient capacity to deal with tomorrow’s growth.”

Highways England is currently holding a public consultation on the A27 Arundel Bypass scheme proposals. The consultation is open until the 24th October and there are lots of ways to have your say.

## Connecting West Sussex Workshop



Please share any views, ideas or local knowledge you may have during this period. Make sure to have your say through the **consultation page**, where you can also view and download all consultation materials. More information can also be found on the **scheme website**.

Find out more about the A27 Arundel Bypass improvement scheme at: <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a27-arundel-improvement>