Coventry & Warwickshire Business Intelligence

August 2025

Executive Summary	Latest Economic & Labour Market Trends	Latest CW Growth Hub Insights	Spotlight - Finding Opportunities During Uncertainties	Recommendations

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All previous editions of the Coventry & Warwickshire Smart Region report can be accessed from our Publications page:

https://cwgrowthhub.co.uk/resource-hub/?_post_categories=smart-region-reports

For more details about CW Growth Hub, see our latest YouTube update:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtKd6Xib5SQ

1. Executive Summary

Welcome to the August 2025 edition of the Coventry & Warwickshire Smart Region report. Analysis in this month's report is based on intelligence from CW Growth Hub's contacts with local businesses, alongside survey data, information, and other intelligence provided by Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council.

CW Growth Hub Update

"This autumn will be a pivotal moment for the UK economy as the government plans to deliver its budget. The business community will be looking towards the Chancellor to give the right economic confidence, particularly given the unprecedented series of disruptions over recent years, including the Covid-19 pandemic, labour shortages, supply chain disruptions, the energy crisis and new Employment Rights Bill, which have all impacted business confidence. The budget is the primary tool for the chancellor to outline the government's plans for taxation and spending, which will either encourage or deter investment, fund new technologies and create growth opportunities. With little fiscal headroom, largely down to an increase on interest paid on rising government borrowing, it will be a fine balancing act to foster an environment where businesses feel secure and empowered to expand.

After a period of sluggish growth, the government will be looking for tangible signs of a strengthening economy from sustained capital GDP growth, easing inflation and falling interest rates. There have already been some policy announcements intended to boost economic confidence. Consolidation of the pension markets to drive greater investment into the UK economy, establishing a National Wealth Fund to attract private investment and importantly for our region, empowering metro mayors to create regional growth plans tailored to the specific identity of different geographies.

The West Midlands will receive an integrated settlement from next spring, giving the mayor more tools and autonomy to shape the future destiny of our economy. Unveiled during the summer, the West Midlands Growth Plan is a comprehensive decade long strategy, aimed at transforming the region's economy. It identifies the key areas and sectors where the West Midlands has a competitive edge and significant potential for growth. The plan also includes dedicated resources to support businesses and entrepreneurs to help them grow and scale, a policy that we welcome and have long advocated for.

This long-term plan is exactly the sort of measure and optimism that business leaders require, but for regional growth plans to succeed, the Chancellor's budget must provide the stable, national conditions needed and address the ongoing macro-economic risks such as high debt levels, inflation, and sluggish growth."

Craig Humphrey, Chief Executive, CW Growth Hub Group

2. Latest Economic & Labour Market Trends

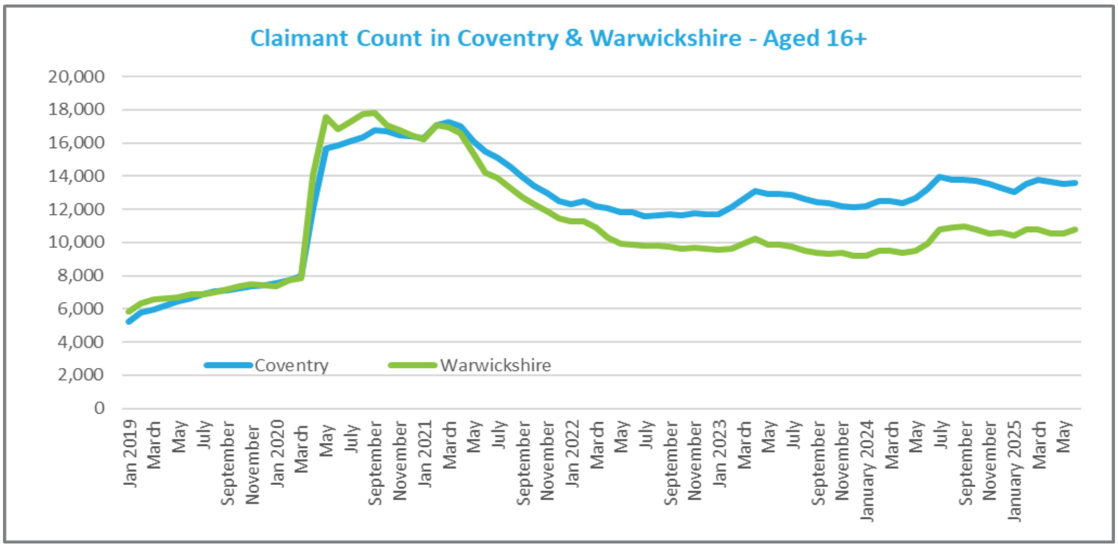
2.1 Labour Market Trends

- **In June 2025, the claimant count in Coventry & Warwickshire rose by 650, to 24,725 people.**

Area	March 2020	June 2024		April 2025	May 2025	June 2025
Coventry	8,000	13,230		13,620	13,555	13,935
North Warwickshire	845	1,030		1,085	1,095	1,100
Nuneaton & Bedworth	2,830	3,225		3,460	3,460	3,575
Rugby	1,535	2,000		2,065	2,070	2,120
Stratford-on-Avon	1,050	1,635		1,645	1,650	1,685
Warwick	1,570	2,020		2,300	2,245	2,310
Warwickshire	7,830	9,915		10,550	10,520	10,790
Coventry & Warwickshire	**15,830**	**23,145**		**24,170**	**24,075**	**24,725**

Source: *Office for National Statistics*

- **Over the past twelve months there has been an increase in the claimant count across Coventry & Warwickshire**, rising from a total of 23,145 this time last year.



Source: *Office for National Statistics*

- **The claimant counts in both Coventry and in Warwickshire have proven difficult to shift downwards over the past three years. After a period of being relatively flat during 2022/2023 and up to mid-2024 there was a step-up which has flattened off again since then.**
- We will continue monitoring these to assess current economic challenges and uncertainties are feeding through to the local labour market, such as the implementation of the new National Insurance and Minimum Wage rates in April, ongoing turbulence in international trading, and specific sector-based challenges, such as those facing Automotive and Hospitality.
- The UK claimant count for June 2025 also increased on the month, and on the year, to 1.743 million.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) also reported in July 2025 that nationally:

Payrolled Employees

The estimate of payrolled employees in the UK for June 2025 decreased by 41,000(0.1%) on the month and decreased by 178,000(0.6%) on the year, to 30.3 million.

Employment Rate

The UK employment rate for March to May 2025 was estimated at 75.2%, above the estimate of a year ago, and an increase over the latest quarter.

Unemployment Rate

The UK unemployment rate for March to May 2025 was estimated at 4.7%. The unemployment rate is above estimates of a year ago, and increased in the latest quarter.

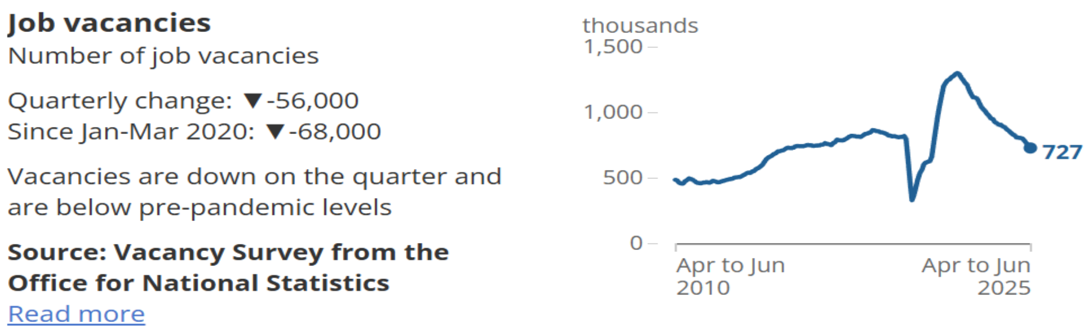
Economic Inactivity

Economic inactivity amongst working-aged people decreased in the latest quarter, to 21.0%, and remains below the estimate of a year ago.

Earnings Growth

- Annual total earnings growth (including bonuses) in Great Britain was 5.0% in March to May 2025.
- Annual employee's average regular earnings growth (excluding bonuses) was 5.0% in March to May 2025.

- **In April to June 2025, the estimated number of vacancies in the UK economy fell by 56,000 on the quarter to 727,000.** Vacancies fell on the quarter for the 36th consecutive period.



***Source**: Office for National Statistics*

- **The annual growth in real terms for total pay** (adjusted for inflation using Consumer Prices Index, including owner occupier's housing costs (CPIH)), **was 1.0% in March to May 2025, and regular pay growth was 1.1%.**
- **There were 37,000 working days lost due to labour disputes in the UK in May 2025**. This compares with 51,000 working days lost in May 2024.

2.2 Economic Trends

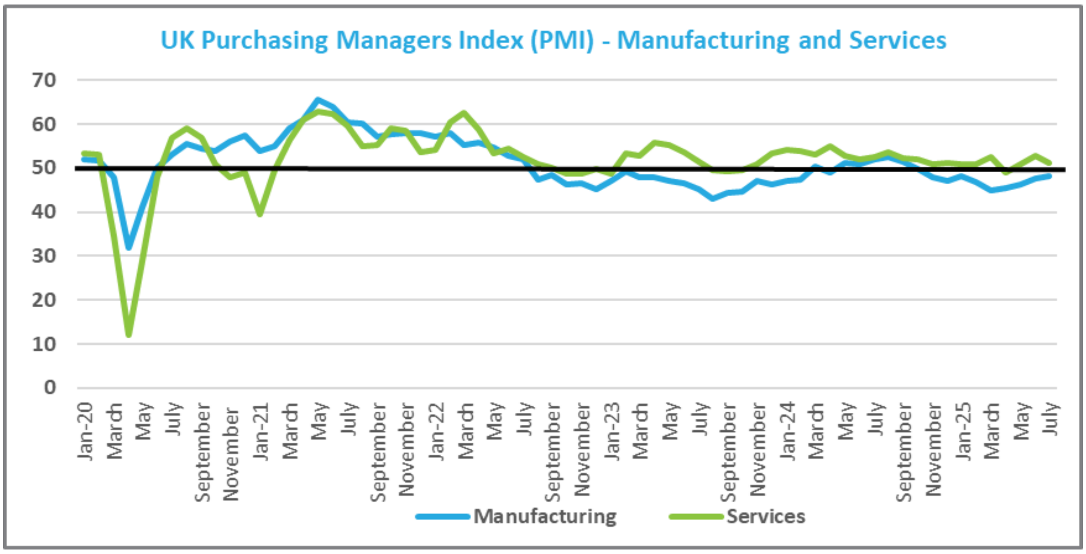
The Economic Development Service at Coventry City Council have compiled the 'Business and Economy Briefing' highlights this month:

Economic Growth

- According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) **GDP in the UK fell by 0.1% in May, following a fall of 0.3% in April.** Production fell by 0.9% and the Construction sector shrank by 0.6% in May.
- The British Chambers of Commerce stated **that UK growth remains fragile and lacks sustained positive drive.**
- **The Bank of England** met in June and decided to **maintain the interest rates at 4.25%.** In its latest Summary of Business Conditions report, the Bank highlighted declining demand across key sectors, including retail, manufacturing, construction, and business services. **It further predicts that a recovery in demand is unlikely before 2026.**
- **The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has warned the Government that after a series of major global economic shocks, UK public finances are in a 'vulnerable position'.**
- In the latest Fiscal Risks and Sustainability report released on 1st July, **the OBR highlights how the UK was severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the energy crisis in particular, and how these will continue to have impacts on the economy** for some time to come.

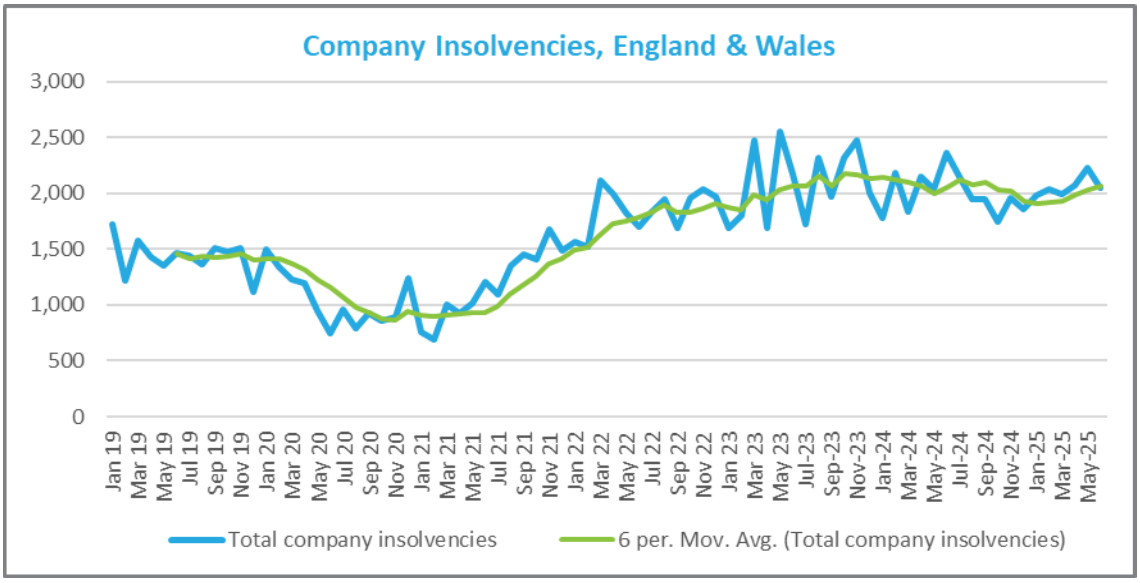
Business Confidence

- **Positively, the UK Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) for Manufacturing increased to 48.2 in July 2025, from 47.7 points in June** (a figure above 50 represents growth, and contraction below 50).



***Source**: Trading Economics*

- **However, despite the improvement UK manufacturing continues to face significant pressures, particularly in export markets where US tariffs have contributed to delayed spending decisions. The sector also reports a decline in new orders, an uptick in job losses, and ongoing increases in both input and output prices.**
- **Meanwhile, the Services PMI fell to 51.2 in July 2025, from June's 52.8.** Service providers report fragile domestic economic conditions and heightened geopolitical uncertainty as key factors impacting sales pipelines.
- According to the latest Regional Growth Tracker from NatWest, **economic activity in the West Midlands grew marginally for the second successive month.** The Business Activity Index for the region rose from **50.4 in May, to 50.9 in June**.
- The regional growth tracker also showed that confidence in the region dropped **but remains the strongest of all UK regions, with the Future Activity Index dropping from 75.2 in May to 70.7 in June.**
- **Across the economy, there were 2,043 company insolvencies in June 2025 in England & Wales,** a 16% decrease on the June 2024 number. The overall trend in company insolvencies has been flat over the past two years.



***Source**: UK Insolvency Service*

Business Challenges

- **The number of businesses in the West Midlands affected by US tariffs has increased this month,** according to the latest Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) from the ONS. The survey reports that 6.9% of local firms faced additional costs due to the tariffs, an increase from 5.9% previously.
- **The number of businesses in the West Midlands integrating AI into their operations is on the rise.** According to latest data, 14.0% of regional firms report using Large Language Models for text generation, up from 6.6% this time last year.

Additionally, 13.6% are using machine learning for data processing, an increase from 9.5%, while 12.0% are employing AI for visual content creation, up from 5.9% over the same period.

- Also according to ONS's Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), **one in ten businesses in the West Midlands (9.9%) have been impacted by flooding in the past twelve months.**
- **Among businesses in the West Midlands that have not taken action to mitigate the effects of climate change, 11.5% cite excessive costs as the main reason.**
- **Many firms in the region have taken steps to reduce their carbon emissions.** Almost half of West Midlands businesses (46.7%) have switched to LED lighting, while 40.5% have adjusted heating or cooling systems. Other measures adopted by regional firms include installing electric vehicle charging points (31.4%), electrifying vehicle fleets (31.2%), and introducing cycle-to-work schemes (25.5%).

International Trade

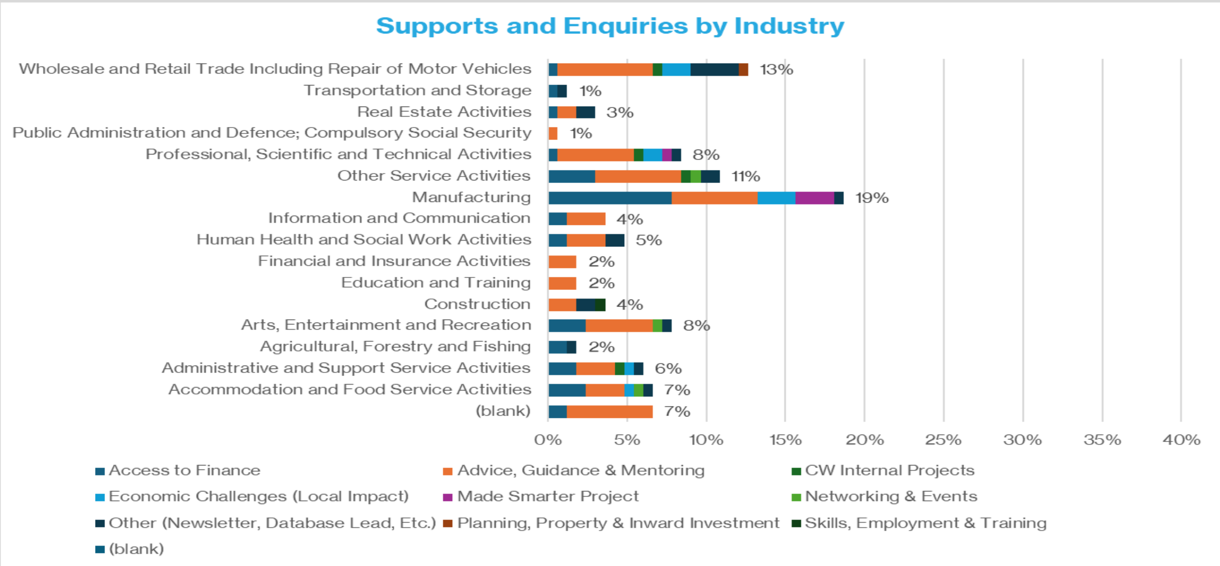
- The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) results for 2024/25 have been published with **Coventry & Warwickshire once again performing strongly, relative to national trends, with 43 FDI projects secured** (a 2.3% reduction on the previous year's figure, compared to an 11.6% reduction nationally), which **created 2,784 new jobs.**
- **In international trade, both exports and imports of services showed steady growth of 0.5% during May 2025**, whilst **goods exports rose by 3.1% and imports rose by 2.2%**, as the initially suggested impacts of the proposed US tariffs started to subside.
- **On 7th July, the US announced an extension to the pause on the most stringent tariffs to 1st August** (higher tariff rates on a wide range of countries were due to take effect on 9th July).
- **To further boost international trade, UK Government has published its new Trade Strategy**. The Strategy highlights the importance of Trade Agreements and supporting businesses in accessing priority markets, including the EU, US, India, China, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership region. **It also details additional business support measures that Government will introduce over the coming years to facilitate more exporting.**

3. Latest CW Growth Hub Insights

3.1 CW Growth Hub – Support & Enquiries

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, CW Growth Hub has held 11,141 engagements with local businesses, including substantive discussions covering a wide range of issues impacting on potential current and future growth.

This month's business insights are taken from intelligence gathered in **July 2025.** The chart shows the supports and enquiries made by sector.



NB: Figures have been rounded.

Advice & Guidance, Access to Finance, and Other support were the most popular reasons for support/enquiries over the past month, although there was also a spread across other enquiry types. These include guidance provided around the **Economic Challenges, Made Smarter Project, and CW Internal Projects.**

The main sectors supported by CW Growth Hub were Manufacturing (19%), followed by **Wholesale and Retail Trade Including Repair of Motor Vehicles (13%), Other Service Activities (11%), Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities (8%), and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (8%).**

The size profile of businesses supported over the past month consisted of **46% Micro businesses (2-9 employees), 31% Sole Traders, 17% Small businesses (10-49 employees), 5% Medium sized businesses (50-249 employees), and 1% Large businesses (250+ employees),** with 157 out of 168 businesses stating their size.

There was an **increase in Small businesses, a decrease in Micro businesses and Sole Traders and no change in Large and Medium businesses** approaching CW Growth Hub compared to the previous month. Around 39% of respondents came from businesses that have started trading since 2020, with 143 of 168 businesses stating their incorporation date.

3.2 CW Growth Hub – Current Themes

CW Growth Hub Account Managers reported this month:

Local Business Intelligence

- **Businesses across Coventry & Warwickshire continue to face new, and ongoing, challenges related to rising costs**. Other concerns include low confidence about the future, late payments, and the impact of international uncertainties, including tariffs.
- Automotive businesses in Coventry & Warwickshire are facing a range of challenges on the back of announced US tariffs. Evidence of these impacts is becoming clear, with **Jaguar Land Rover reporting an 11.9% drop in UK vehicle production and cutting 500 jobs,** and **Aston Martin reporting a 25% decline in turnover and £140m in losses** over the last six months. In addition, **London EV Company (LEVC) has also reduced output, affecting 180 workers** at its Coventry site, citing "increasingly difficult Automotive conditions".
- **Despite the overall decline in confidence in Automotive, some businesses elsewhere in Manufacturing remain cautiously optimistic** and are focussing on growth opportunities, with positive developments in attracting new investment.
- **The West Midlands focus on future mobility, green technologies, and partnership working,** as set out in the new West Midlands Growth Plan (see Section 4), highlights the long-term vision for growth and stability for the region's priority sectors.

Business Needs and Concerns

- **Start-up and Early-stage Business Support –** CW Growth Hub consistently provides mentoring, start-up guides, and programme referrals to relevant partner services to help businesses at early or growth stage seeking help with:
  - Business planning and legal structures.
  - Marketing and brand positioning.
  - Financial planning and start-up funding
  - Training and skills development.
- **Funding Constraints & Access to Finance –** A major recurring issue reported to Account Managers and Navigators is limited access to funding:
  - Many businesses are self-funded and struggling with cash flow.
  - There is frustration over slow or overly complex grant processes, particularly around de-carbonisation and Innovate UK grants.
  - Rising costs – including business rates, materials and wages, are all compressing margins.

CW Growth Hub frequently signpost and make referrals to British Business Bank, Coventry & Warwickshire Re-Investment Trust, Local Authority provided training grants, and alternative support available.

- **Skills shortages and Workforce issues –** CW Growth Hub facilitate links to Coventry City Council's Employer Hub, Warwickshire County Council's Skills Hub, Apprenticeship schemes, and other support for workforce planning. Workforce challenges are a widespread theme with:
    - Businesses unable to recruit skilled staff or retain Apprentices.
    - Founders working excessive hours to fill gaps.
    - Concerns raised regarding ROI in Apprentice training, staff reliability, and work ethic.

- **Supply Chain Disruption and Cost Inflation –** Many SMEs continue to face:
    - Delays in materials and equipment, particularly post-EU Exit, for deliveries from China and the EU.
    - Volatile and/or rising raw material and shipping costs.
    - Strategic challenges managing inventory and lead times.

- **Digital Marketing and Online Visibility Gaps –** CW Growth Hub has facilitated referrals to appropriate support programmes that offer direct marketing advice. Local businesses have highlighted the lack the capacity or expertise for digital growth including:
    - Weak websites, outdated branding, and lack of SEO or social media strategy.
    - Poor ROI from external agencies.
    - Difficulty keeping up with AI, SEO, and algorithm shifts.

- **Regulatory, EU exit, and other Economic Pressures –** Ongoing impacts of EU exit continues to create friction, particularly for exporters (customs, tariffs, paperwork).

- **Sustainability and decarbonisation –** While some businesses are engaging with decarbonisation strategies and available support, others are struggling to manage reporting obligations and balance Environmental, Social, and Governance demands with day-to-day operations.

- **Digital Transformation and Innovation –** Innovation, driven by competition and scaling needs, continues to gain momentum. However, effective implementation remains a challenge. Some SMEs are digitising ERP and CRM systems, introducing Quoting/Configurator tools, automation, and smart tracking (e.g. machine counters).

- **Networking Collaboration & Mentoring –** CW Growth Hub Advisors frequently suggest more effective networking and collaboration to overcome barriers, share ideas, and discuss challenges to drive growth.

Economic Shocks or Opportunities

Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) – Economic uncertainty, low demand, structural changes, and trade protectionism have contributed to a first half decline of -11.9% in British car and commercial vehicle production. *To access SMMTs latest market report click **here** .*

4. Spotlight: Economic Opportunity in Uncertain Times

This month's Spotlight reflects on how the unprecedented series of disruptions for businesses in recent years, including the Covid-19 pandemic, labour shortages, supply chain disruption, and energy crisis, have all impacted on the local, regional, and national economies.

Section 4.2 highlights how, despite the current 'mixed bag' of economic and labour market indicators for the performance of the economy, the launch of a range of plans offer some opportunity to build a more resilient, adaptive and competitive local economy through the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, West Midlands Growth Plan, and the recently launched SME Business Plan.

4.1 A Decade of Uncertainty for Business

Throughout the past decade business has witnessed an unprecedented period of disruption and uncertainty for the UK economy. Businesses have had to adapt quickly and repeatedly in the face of profound shocks – from Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic to labour shortages, supply chain disruptions, energy price volatility, and soaring inflation.

Brexit

The West Midlands experienced the brunt of the challenges arising as a result of Brexit, due in part to the region's dependence on trading in European markets and supply chains, at the same time as testing the resilience of the regional economy. As the heartland of the UK's advanced manufacturing and automotive industries, the region felt the full weight of trade frictions and component supply issues, especially in Coventry & Warwickshire, home to leading automotive R&D hubs and global manufacturers such as Jaguar Land Rover. Post-Brexit rules created added complexities for both importers and exporters and disrupted established supply chains with European partners.

Covid-19 pandemic

Just as local businesses began adjusting, the Covid-19 pandemic forced a near-total shutdown of many sectors – in our region most notably automotive, hospitality, cultural tourism, and retail. The economic fallout hit urban centres such as Coventry and Birmingham hard, with significant falls in productivity, output, and footfall. The Government's furlough schemes and business support grants softened the initial blow, but recovery since the reopening of the economy has been uneven, especially for High Streets, customer facing businesses, and SMEs in certain other sectors.

Labour shortages

Labour shortages emerged as a major concern, affecting sectors such as logistics, construction, care, hospitality, and seasonal agriculture – many of which are significant for the local economy. A combination of reduced EU migration and changing workforce expectations has tightened recruitment, pushing up wages and impacting future growth plans.

Supply chain disruption

Supply chain disruptions, especially around 2021-23, affected everything from microchips to building materials, with ripple effects in key West Midlands sectors such as engineering, construction, and low-carbon technologies. One-off events such as the temporary blocking of the Suez Canal by the grounding of huge container vessel Ever Given in 2021 further added to these global supply chain challenges. Businesses across Coventry & Warwickshire reported increased costs, delays, and greater risk exposure, and these continue to be reported on a routine basis to the Growth Hub's Account Managers and Navigators.

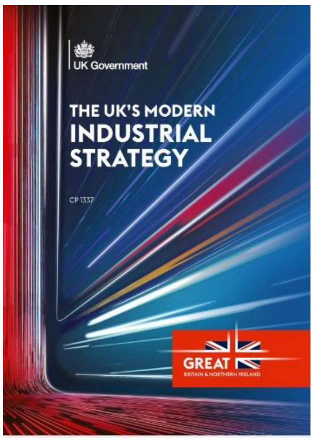
Cost of Living/Cost of Doing Business

The energy crisis and high inflation of recent years have compounded challenges in both the cost of doing business and the cost of living. Manufacturing, which remains a strength in Coventry & Warwickshire accounting for over 15% of local GVA, has faced soaring input, energy, and other production costs. At the same time, households have experiencing reduced disposable income, impacting consumer-facing sectors such as retail, tourism and leisure. Although inflation has fallen over the past two years, current upward pressures, and new challenges such as the increase in employer national insurance contributions, are providing on-going uncertainty for business.

4.2 Economic Opportunities Looking Ahead

Whilst many of the long-term impacts of these challenges remain, looking ahead some of the asks from business are being put into place through plans to help deliver stability and growth via the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, the West Midlands Growth Plan, and the UK Government's Small Business Plan. These should play a vital role in helping businesses navigate ongoing economic uncertainties and support long-term resilience and growth.

UK's Modern Industrial Strategy



Published in June 2025, the Modern Industrial Strategy outlines a 10-year plan for the UK economy to provide greater certainty and stability and encouraging investment in eight high-growth sectors (the 'IS-8'): **advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries, creative industries, defence, digital & technologies, financial services, life sciences, and professional & business services**.

To access the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, click **here**.

The strategy outlines a series of targeted interventions across four key areas:

- **Making it easier to do business**, with a stable policy environment to support long-term investment.
- **Backing city-regions and clusters** across the UK where the IS-8 sectors are based.
- **Delivering Sector Plans** to transform the UK's most promising industries over the next decade.
- **Building a long-term partnership** between business and a stronger, capable and agile state – ensuring deeper alignment with business needs and greater business expertise.

A notable policy within the Strategy is a **plan to reduce electricity costs** for energy-intensive industries starting in 2027 – to help businesses secure a more competitive edge. The strategy also emphasises reinforced support for **Industrial Strategy Zones** (formerly known as Investment Zones and Freeports), including **£160 million in funding** over the next ten years to stimulate growth in key sectors.

While many funding initiatives were confirmed in the recent Spending Review, two additional major funding commitments were announced in the Strategy:

- A **£600 million Strategic Sites Accelerator** (from 2026/27), designed to unlock investable sites across the UK, particularly in Industrial Strategy Zones and new **AI Growth Zones**.
- A **£150 million Creative Places Growth Fund**, devolved over three years to six Mayoral Strategic Authorities – including the West Midlands – to support creative businesses with finance, mentoring, skills, and investor networking opportunities.

UK's Modern Industrial Strategy – the West Midlands

In the West Midlands specifically, the outlines various measures to support the region's key sectors:

- **Professional & Business Services Hub** to connect local businesses with investors.
- **£30m from the Local Innovation Partnerships Fund** for targeted research investment.
- **£100m expansion** of the British Business Bank's investment funds for local firms.
- **HS2 rail services between London and Birmingham.**
- **£2.4bn Transport for City Regions** funding to enhance public transport connectivity.
- **Unlocking large-scale commercial sites** along the HS2 route for regeneration.

West Midlands Growth Plan

The West Midlands Growth Plan was launched in July 2025. The plan sets out a framework for transforming the West Midlands economy over the next 10 years with a vision:

"Growth in the West Midlands will be created by productive and ambitious businesses, unleashed by human-centred innovation and its diverse and skilled people, and rooted in thriving places at the heart of the national economy. Its benefits will be felt by residents in all parts of the region, who will see their living standards rise."

To access the West Midlands Growth Plan, click **here**.

By 2035, the key aspirations set out in the Growth Plan include:

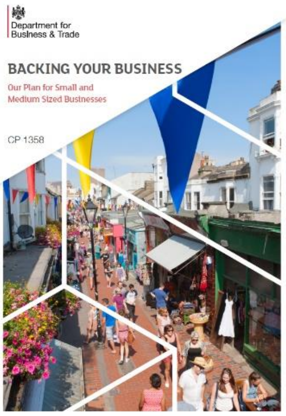
- **Raising Productivity**, with each worker in the region generating an additional £8,600 in value.
- **Increasing employment**, with 93,000 more people in work and a 5% rise in the region's economic activity rate.
- **Driving economic growth**, with the regional economy growing by 2% per year, making it £17.4 billion larger than its current value.
- **Expanding housing and digital infrastructure**, by building 12,200 new homes annually and ensuring 99% of premises have access to gigabit accessibility.
- **Achieving sustainability,** with the region on track to be carbon neutral by 2041.

The plan proposes a set of three-year actions, to help achieve the targeted outcomes over the next decade:

- **Empowering the people of the West Midlands to get on in life,** principally through strengthening the region's integrated employment & skills ecosystem and tackling barriers to participating in employment and skills.
- **Enabling the businesses of the West Midlands to become more productive and provide good jobs,** by strengthening the region's high growth clusters and innovation ecosystem, business productivity, and the everyday economy.
- **Making the places of the West Midlands to become more prosperous and resilient.** Key actions include developing a regional capital investment pipeline, refreshing the transport capital programme, progressing bus franchising, and publishing a Spatial Development Strategy.
- **Telling the West Midlands' story and strengthening its partnerships.** Key actions include developing a more coherent and inclusive West Midlands Growth narrative and toolkit; hosting an Annual WM Growth Summit; enhancing the WM Growth Company and more closely integrating the region's key economic development

agencies; focusing on devolved budgets and powers; maintaining the role of Mayoral Taskforces; developing regional partnerships; and evolving the WMCA Resident's Assembly.

SME Business Plan



In late July, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) published its Small Business Plan which sets out the Government's long-term strategy for supporting SMEs.

It looks to tackle barriers to growth – chiefly **late payments, regulatory complexity, limited access to finance and skills shortages**. The plan prioritises the growth and productivity potential, while also aiming to improve the overall operating environment for starting and running a business.

To access the SME Plan, click **here**.

Key actions include:

- **Fixing the Fundamentals**
  - Tackling late payments
  - Reducing regulatory burdens for businesses by 25%
  - Modernising tax and customs systems
  - Accelerating planning delivery
  - Supporting the transition to net zero and help reduce energy costs.
- **Unlocking Access to Finance**
  - Expanding Start-Up Loans
  - Strengthening the British Business Bank's Growth Guarantee Scheme
  - Increasing the ENABLE programme's capacity, from £3bn to £5bn
  - Help boost the availability of early-stage equity finance
  - Working with private lenders.
- **Backing the Everyday Economy**
  - Creating a consistent pro-growth national approach to licensing and establishing hospitality and night-time economy zones
  - Launching High Streets and Growth Incubators
  - Providing community funding for up to 350 places to support local-led regeneration
  - Reforming business rates
  - Banning Upward-Only Rent Reviews
  - Expanding High Street Rental Auctions and introducing a Community 'Right to Buy'

- Growing the co-operatives and mutuals sector
- Improving safety with 13,000 more police officers.

➢ **Future-proofing Business Skills**
- Boost greater adoption of the latest technologies amongst small businesses, guided by their needs and expanding the *Made Smarter* Adoption programme
- Strengthen leadership and mentoring
- Inspire young entrepreneurs through enterprise education in schools, colleges, and universities
- Improve access to skills and apprenticeships.

➢ **Opening Opportunities**
- Launch of a new Business Growth Service
- Support for under-represented entrepreneurs
- Expand UK Export Finance by £20bn to a total of £80bn
- Open government contracts to more SMEs
- Support more firms to innovate by leveraging their Intellectual Property and managing security risks.

In early August, the new Business Growth Service launched, offering a single online platform where businesses can access support needed to help start-up, scale-up, sustain growth, export, invest, and recruit talent. In England, the new service is partnering with the network of 41 Growth Hubs, **including in Coventry & Warwickshire through CW Growth Hub.** See www.business.gov.uk

Conclusions

Despite the economic uncertainty of recent years created by a series of events and emerging trends, Coventry & Warwickshire's economy has shown a high degree of ongoing resilience. However, the current economic climate is proving challenging for many businesses across different parts of the economy, including for example, the Hospitality and the Automotive sectors.

The building blocks for greater stability are being put in place though developments such as the Modern Industrial Strategy, SME Business Plan, and West Midlands Growth Plan. The emerging priorities from these need to start quickly feeding through so that businesses on the ground inn Coventry & Warwickshire can benefit positively from them for their longer-term success.

5. Recommendations

August's Golden Recommendation:

More sub-national investment is needed to build long-term sustainable growth opportunities for Coventry & Warwickshire through national strategic economic priorities emerging from the Industrial Strategy, Trade Strategy, and Small Business Strategy, as well as WMCA's Growth Plan and Coventry & Warwickshire's Economic Strategy. These need to include resource and capacity linked to:

- Building sustainable local supply chains
- Developing green skills and green innovation opportunities
- Internationalisation and intensive support for exporters.

Recommendations are derived from analysis of macro-economic and business-level data and intelligence collated from Coventry & Warwickshire partners and stakeholders:

5.a - Building on the launch of the UK Government's Small Business Plan and WMCA's West Midlands Growth Plan, **there are a range of key issues for the region to integrate into the local business support offer and the Business Growth Service** to successfully help local firms tackle current economic challenges and realise future opportunities.

5.b Following the publication of the UK Trade Strategy, which stresses the importance of providing a clear and concise support service to those businesses seeking to trade internationally and also proposes additional new forms of support, it is vital that local partners work with DBT to maximise the number of Coventry & Warwickshire firms that are aware of the future export support offers that will be available to help them identify new market opportunities**.**

5.c – If we are going to boost economic growth for the longer term, then we need to better connect the supply of labour with the demand for it. Nationally, we know from businesses that there is demand and yet we have almost a million young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), an 11-year high. **There needs to be better preparation for young people entering the labour market in Coventry & Warwickshire, leveraging technology, promoting STEM education and regional collaborations. Businesses must also play their part in giving insightful experiences of the workplace to better prepare and inspire young people to work for them.**