



**SOUTH EAST
DIAMONDS**
for investment and growth

Skills for Employability

Workshop – A

Led by Step Ahead Research and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)



South East Diamonds for Investment and Growth

Skills and Employability Strategy and Action Plan

Bruce Nairne

Director

Step Ahead Research

bruce.nairne@stepaheadresearch.co.uk

07525 951085

Steve Matthews

Associate Director

Step Ahead Research

steve.matthews@stepaheadresearch.co.uk

01795 438899

This Workshop

- Overview of the project and initial findings
- Key employment and skills issues to be addressed in the Diamonds – your views (plenary)
- Priorities & actions – critique and improve (smaller groups)
- Conclusions, and implications for the Strategy (all & feed back to main meeting)

The Project

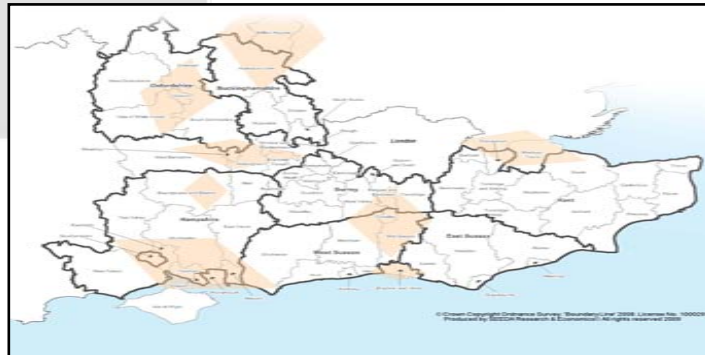


The Approach:

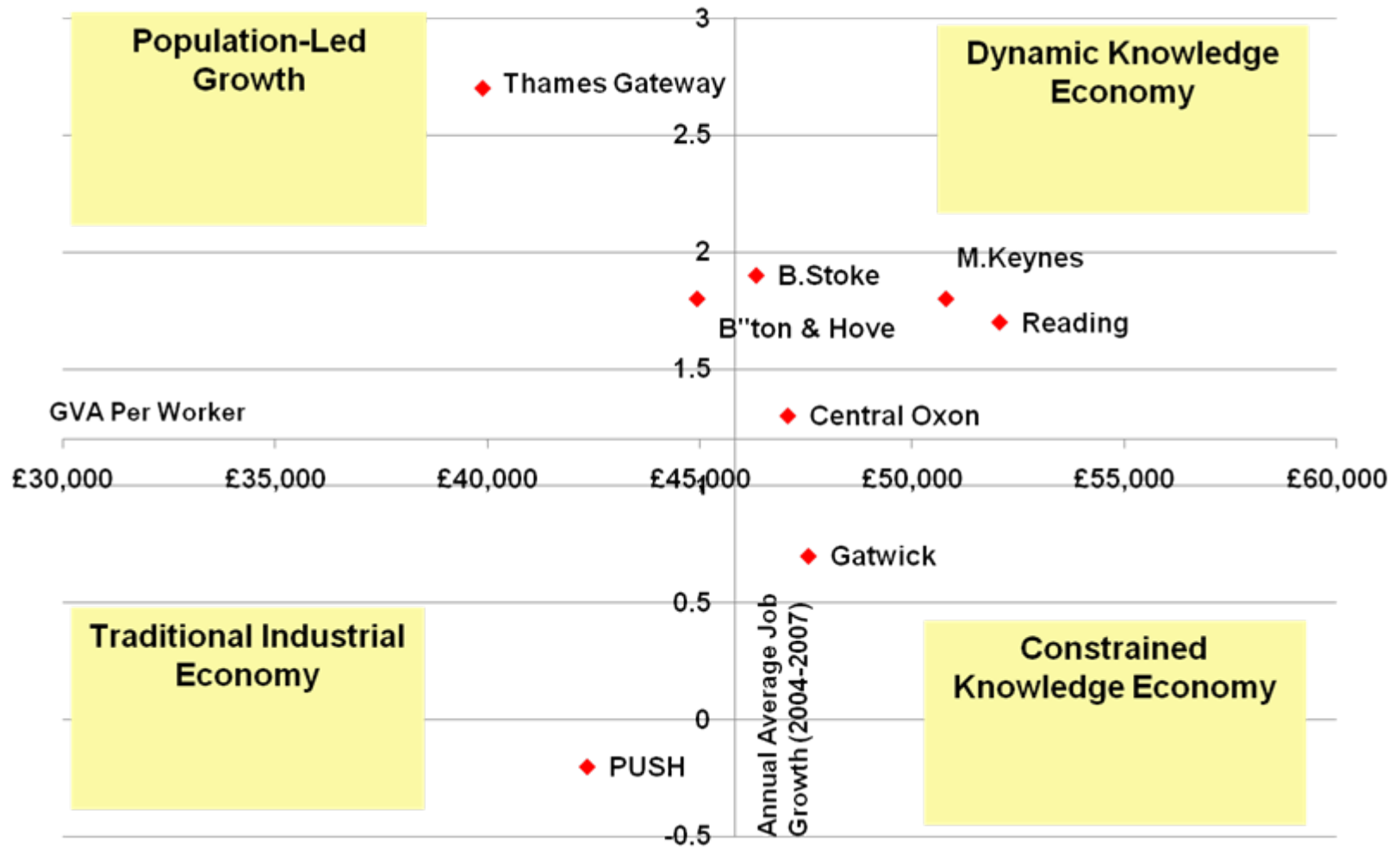
- Data analysis and desk research (South East England Development Agency)
- E-consultation and depth interviews
- Initial findings for review (today)
- Consultation draft of Strategy in early December
- Final Strategy January
- Oversight by Steering Group of SEDFIG, local authorities, SEEDA and Learning & Skills Council

The Brief

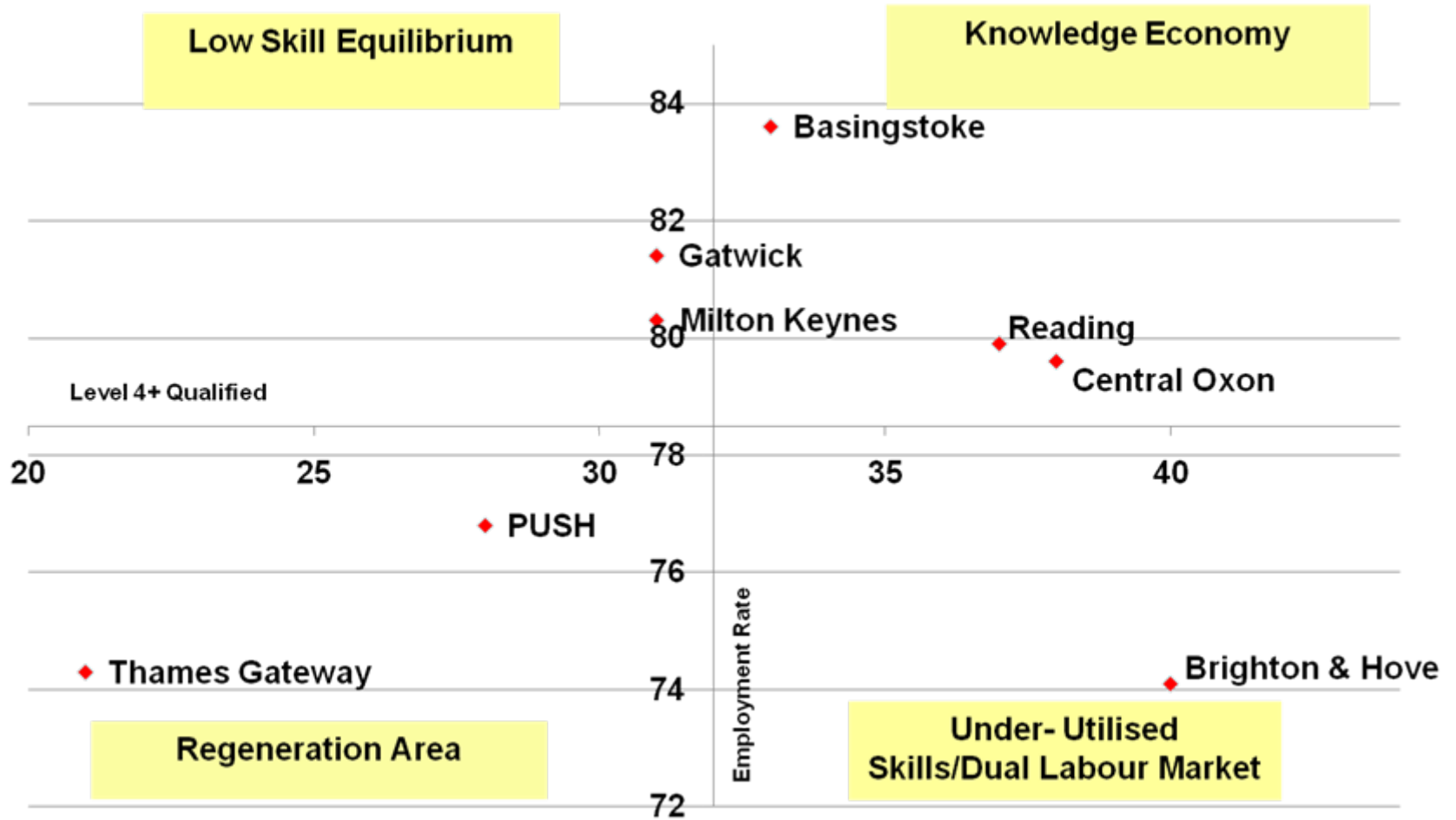
- Identify common employment & skills messages & issues
- Develop collective actions for the Diamonds, as growth drivers & catalysts for the region



Different Diamond Cuts?



Different Diamond Cuts?



The Issues

Issue 1: Increasing global competition - need to strengthen growth sectors and clusters of the future in the Diamonds through education & skills.

Issue 2: Diamonds are about growth sectors & clusters, and inward investment, but *also* about *everyone* accessing a range of local work opportunities.

Issue 3: “Local First” – the primary aim of a regional strategy is to support *local* Diamond plans. Regional action only when appropriate.

Issue 4: The landscape is too complicated – ensure that any new initiatives complement existing structures and make it easier for employers to engage.

Issue 5: Need to agree & develop clear priority sectors & clusters in each Diamond , and support growth through education & skills – regionally & locally, as appropriate.

Issue 6: Need to tackle low skills and low aspirations, where this is an issue.

The Issues (continued)

Issue 7: All Diamonds need more people with Work Readiness, STEM (science, technology, engineering & maths) and Leadership & Management skills.

Issue 8: More Apprenticeships and vocational skills are needed, but demand from individuals and employers (SMEs) is a problem.

Issue 9: Closer education – business links are needed to improve people's understanding of work and to make the offer more relevant to Diamond employer needs.

Issue 10: More graduates are needed to feed the Diamonds' knowledge economy, suggesting a need for improved graduate attraction and retention.

Issue 11: Existing good practice on employment & skills needs to be shared across Diamonds.



Your views on the issues?

Priorities

(for Discussion)

Priority	Rationale
1. Support the development of growth sectors and clusters in the Diamonds in light of increasing international competition.	<p>The Diamonds will drive the growth of the region, and growth sectors and clusters need to be supported at local level by the education and skills system.</p>
2. Support local initiatives to address low skills and worklessness.	<p>Growth could be held back by local labour shortages, and many local people could be “left behind”.</p> <p>More local employment will reduce congestion in the South East’s main growth areas.</p>
3. Develop further work readiness, STEM and leadership & management skills.	<p>These are the <i>common</i> requirements across all Diamonds, and are critical to enabling growth in all sectors and improved access to employment by Diamond residents.</p>
4. Stimulate increased take up of Apprenticeships and vocational skills.	<p>There are significant skills shortages at intermediate level, which apply to growths sectors and the wider economy.</p> <p>Employer and individual demand is a problem.</p>

Priorities (for Discussion)

Priority	Rationale
<p>5. Strengthen education – business links.</p>	<p>Despite many local services and initiatives, employers continue to complain about the work readiness of school leavers, college and graduates.</p> <p>Those in education lack an appreciation of the work and career opportunities available in their locality.</p>
<p>6. Improve the availability of higher level skills through increased progression to HE and better attraction and retention of graduates.</p>	<p>Skills at Level 4+ are key to success of the Diamonds knowledge economy and key sectors & clusters, and will be increasingly so in future.</p> <p>A particular challenge is for less attractive areas (in terms of perceived quality of life and opportunities) to attract and retain graduates.</p>
<p>7. Simplify the system to make it easier for employers to engage.</p>	<p>Employers are confused by a plethora of services and initiatives, and a number of ways to engage with the education and skills system.</p>

Your Views on the Priorities and Actions

1. Are these the right priorities?
If not, what's missing
2. What actions are required to address the priorities?
3. What is best done regionally, and what is best done locally?
4. Who should we be working with and lobbying?

Smaller groups

Introduction by your chair

Discuss & feed back to this session

Feedback to the conference