

STROUD DISTRICT

The Stroud District, with a population of over 111,000, covers an area of approximately 175 square miles in the south of Gloucestershire. The District's northern boundary is about 3 miles from the centre of Gloucester and 6 miles from central Cheltenham, while the southern boundary is about 15 miles from central Bristol.

With economic activity rates well above the regional and national level, a well qualified resident population and higher proportions of residents employed in senior roles than county, regional and national averages, Stroud District provides a perfect business location.

In terms of employment the largest sectors generally mirror those across the country including Distribution, Finance and Business services and the Public sector. The main contrast comes with the higher numbers employed in the manufacturing sector, reflecting the industrial heritage of the District and the number of high tech advanced engineering firms based here. Indeed many of these companies are increasing productivity and taking on new staff and apprentices as they recover strongly from the recession. To support the skills needs of this important growth sector, Stroud College has launched a range of engineering courses and is leading on exciting plans to develop a new build engineering training centre for the County.

Business structure statistics show that there are more enterprises and local units in the District than other areas in the County, highlighting the entrepreneurial and creative culture evident in the District and the attractiveness of the area for starting up new business.

Sites and premises in the District range from ultra modern, high tech engineering facilities to restored historic mills and from major industrial sites covering many hectares to former agricultural buildings providing office space for micro businesses in rural areas.

Much of the District's success is built on its thriving market towns, Stroud, Cam and Dursley, Stonehouse, Wotton-under-Edge, Berkeley and Nailsworth that act as service centres for their hinterlands. Three of the towns, Stroud, Nailsworth and Dursley will be undergoing significant change as public realm strategies/design frameworks are in various stages of development and implementation. The strategies will help formulate a shared vision for the central areas of the towns, guiding and shaping their enhancement, attracting investment and development.

The principal commercial/industrial area in the District is located near the town of Stonehouse, just off junction 13 of the M5. Stroudwater Business Park is home to a number of high tech businesses including, Schlumberger, Astra Tech (UK) part of the AstraZeneca group, Delphi Diesel Systems and Renishaw, as well as major sites for Dairy Crest and UNITE Modular Solutions. Renishaw are one of the District's major success stories with around 1000 staff in the District across a number of sites including their Head Quarters near Wotton-under-Edge. Stroudwater and neighbouring sites also

play host to a wide range of smaller businesses, all attracted due to the well established infrastructure, excellent communications and skilled workforce.

Further extensions are planned to the north of the Stroudwater estate, where over 15 hectares of land have been allocated for employment use. Part of the site, acquired by the Ashville Group, has seen the completion of a new 5000sqm facility, providing further space for Schlumberger.

Robert Hitchins waterside business park development 'Stonehouse Park', on the south side of the A419, has proved very successful, reflecting the attractiveness of the area as a strategic business location and the requirements of the office based sector. The development provides a range of flexible business units for sale or let, with buildings designed to suit requirements, up to 180,000 sq.ft. Much of the Districts office space is located on the out of town business parks but a major office development is planned in Cainscross on the outskirts of Stroud Town centre. Ecotricity, the largest alternative electricity supplier in Europe, plan to replace the existing empty block with a landmark, sustainable office building capable of accommodating up to 300 employees. The recent merger of the Stroud and Swindon Building Society with the Coventry will also see the prestigious Stroud and Swindon Headquarters building, in Stroud town centre, overlooking the canal restoration, come to the market providing an excellent opportunity to attract inward investment into the District.

At the other end of the scale, organisations including the Social Enterprise Centre have developed much needed workshop and office space for micro and small businesses in Stroud town centre. Provision of commercial space for the micro and small business sectors together with follow on space for expansion is seen as a growth area for development in the District, particularly as opportunities arise in the plethora of historic mill buildings and associated industrial areas along the canal corridor. These locations will prove desirable to a range of size of business due to their attractive settings, from start up lifestyle businesses to companies looking for larger HQ functions.



A large amount of commercial development has also taken place in the north of the District near Hardwicke. St Modwen purchased two large former MOD sites that have been transformed into a 32 acre business park, Quedgeley West, where Prestoplan took 94,000 sq.ft and the 24 acre Quedgeley Trading Estate East, identified for distribution and warehouse use. Together with Ashtenne's Quadrant Distribution Centre, the area is a fast growing commercial centre close to junction 12 of the M5. A further 5.75 hectares is also allocated for employment use as part of the neighbouring Hunts Grove mixed use development to help ensure the sustainability of the planned residential growth.

A significant regeneration project is also continuing in Dursley. The Littlecombe development on the former Lister Petter factory site was a joint venture between St Modwen and the South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWERDA). With the imminent demise of the RDA, Stroud District Council has agreed to take on the future ownership of the site with St Modwen. The 92 acre site is the scene of an exciting mixed use development which will create a sustainable urban community, delivering 600 new homes, community facilities, retail and commercial opportunities, with accommodation for at least 1000 jobs. Some of these will be located within refurbished offices formally used by Lister Petter. In addition, Littlecombe Business Park is a new development of 16 units aimed at the small and medium size business market, suitable for industrial, warehouse and office use. Bloor Homes are completing the first phase of housebuilding on site and a new community hospital is nearing completion. In the town centre Sainsburys have recently opened their long awaited superstore. Nearby Cam has also recently seen outline planning approval for the 35000sqm Millfields business park development.

Other major employment land allocations include those at Sharpness Docks. Organisations with interests in the area including, British Waterways, Sharpness Dock Limited and Howard Tenens Limited have come together to share their future aspirations for the area. The Dock itself can handle ships up to 6000 tonnes and is experienced in handling a diverse range of cargoes using modern quay-transfer equipment, with extensive open and covered storage including grain silos. Howard Tenens, one of the largest privately owned third-party logistics management groups in the UK, has one of its major depots adjacent to the Docks, while British Waterways have extensive land holdings in the area. Together with the District Council, the group are considering how to best promote the area for further inward investment and the potential for the further development of the area as a distribution hub, offering multi modal freight opportunities, including the reinstatement of rail links.

The site of the world's first commercial nuclear power station is at nearby Berkeley. The power station is currently being decommissioned, releasing potential on part of the 27 hectare site for alternative uses. The Berkeley Site Stakeholder Group is helping determine the options for potential future use.

A number of sites and premises range along the Stroud valleys. Once the home of the cloth industry these locations have now given way to an assortment of businesses, extending from picture framers and artists studios to car repair and engineering

companies. Milliken, however, based at Cam and Stroud employing around 200 people, are still dealing in cloth as one of the worlds main producers of cloth for tennis balls and cloth for snooker and pool tables.

Away from strictly commercial build the major current development in the Stroud District is the restoration of the Cotswolds Canals. Led by Stroud District Council, over £20m of investment will be brought into the District through the restoration. Channel clearance, lock rebuilding and bridge construction are all well underway. A key focus for development will be at Brimscombe Port where an important regeneration opportunity will include residential and commercial development. Benefits of canal restoration between Stonehouse and Brimscombe are expected to include the creation of over 13,500 sq.m of new work space and the creation of 600 new jobs. The boost to the tourism and leisure industry will be particularly significant with an extra 215,000 visitors expected in the area each year.



Together with an exceptional industrial heritage the District has a reputation as home to a large artistic and creative community. This is reflected in the large number of renowned festivals and arts and craft organisations based here but also in terms of premises occupied by the likes of Pangolin Editions, one of Britain's leading sculpture foundries, in Chalford, Snowbusiness (who have produced the majority of snow special effects on film in the last 20 years) at Ebley and Damien Hirst's current 9000 sqm development of studio space in Stroud.

GVA Grimley on behalf of Stroud District Council completed a Retail and Leisure Study for the District, providing an in depth analysis of the retail position and opportunities in the Districts town centres. The study will feed into the production of the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Core Strategy of the LDF is also under development and the Council has completed a consultation period on a number of

'Alternative Strategies' to deliver the growth and development required within the District. These strategies suggested a need for the District to increase and diversify its employment base, ensuring that proposed sites and developments provide choice for employers, accommodate the envisaged growth of indigenous businesses and offer opportunities to start up businesses and those companies wishing to relocate to the Stroud District.