

# South Yorkshire's Plan for Good Growth

Consultation  
Document

Contents

Foreword.....3  
Summary..... 4–7  
Our Growth Story..... 8–15  
Prosperity, through our Growth Areas.....16–25  
Delivering Growth for Good..... 26–33  
One Region, Focused on Delivery ..... 34–35

Foreword

South Yorkshire – the communities of Barnsley, Rotherham, Doncaster and Sheffield – is a place in which the bonds of community were forged in the creation of our industries, and our shared prosperity was once the bedrock of our common purpose.

We made the steel that built the modern world and were the beating heart of the coal-mining industries that gave power to our industrial strength. Those industries provided not just prosperity and progress, but a platform on which everyone could stand together. But as our industries declined, and our communities fractured, so our region was left behind.

Today, we are building a new future: a future that takes the power of our common story to propel our communities forward together.

Indeed, we are in a position of strength because of what has come before. We are at the centre of the national road, rail and energy networks as a legacy of our role in the first and second Industrial Revolutions. We sit within the orbit of some of the densest and richest markets in the world as a legacy of the third Industrial Revolution.

Our genuinely world-leading assets will make South Yorkshire a centre of the fourth Industrial Revolution: we have world class universities, working with businesses at the cutting edge of innovation and change; we are home to the world’s first advanced manufacturing district and now the UK’s first Investment Zone; we have beautiful landscapes and natural assets that both protect and sustain our communities; our cultural and heritage assets that are globally recognised; we have dedicated and inspirational public servants; we have young people with ambition, not just for their own future but the future of our whole region; and, leaders across our communities working tirelessly to make life better for everyone.

And these assets are now being viewed in a new light. The world is rapidly changing: a technology revolution is underway, transforming the nature of work and its location; supply chains are re-orienting, as global tensions rise and automation shifts the geography of production; the climate,



our environment and our ecology are in crisis, demanding that we act. All of our assets put us in a position where we are ready to be leaders once again, sharing our ideas, innovations and talents with the world.

We are an exceptional investment proposition by transport hubs in Sheffield city centre, along infrastructure arteries between Sheffield and Rotherham, in Barnsley town centre, and at Gateway East, which are ready to be developed.

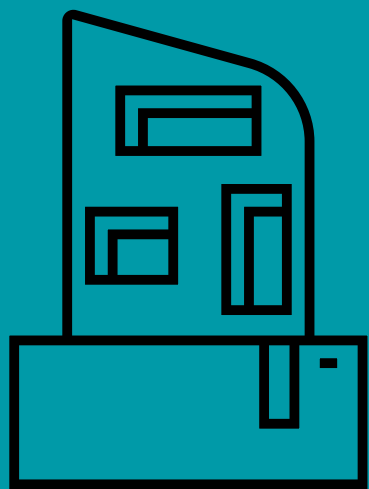
To restore the pride, purpose and prosperity of South Yorkshire, we are now building a new growth model that delivers growth for good. It will deliver a resilient South Yorkshire by increasing regional income, investment and secure, high-paid jobs focused in our four Growth Areas. And it will connect and strengthen our communities by transforming the underpinning economic and social infrastructure. But it will do so within the parameters set by our climate commitments.

We will take the hard decisions required to make opportunity a reality, because our communities, the 1.4 million people who call South Yorkshire their home, deserve to live where the only limit on your talents is the strength of your ambition. A child or young person in South Yorkshire today has every right to expect their future to be brighter than that of their parents; to grow up in a community that not only respects but matches that ambition. That is why we have written this document, and why we are prepared to do whatever is necessary to create growth for good in South Yorkshire; so everyone who lives here has the opportunity to stay near and go far.

We have the plan. Now we need to act.

Oliver Coppard  
South Yorkshire’s Mayor

# Our Plan for Good Growth



.....  
Sheffield  
City Centre  
& Innovation Spine  
Value: c. £600m  
Jobs: c. 4,300



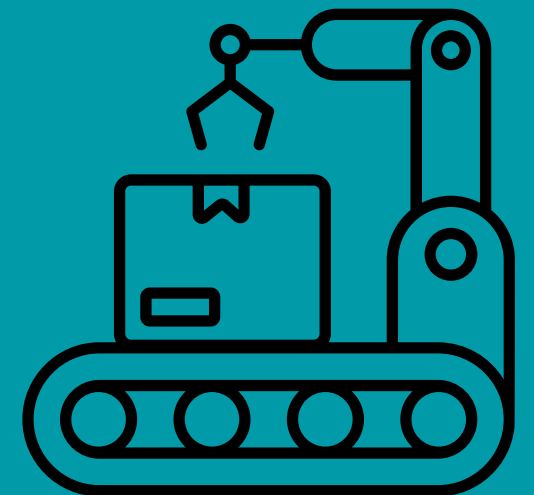
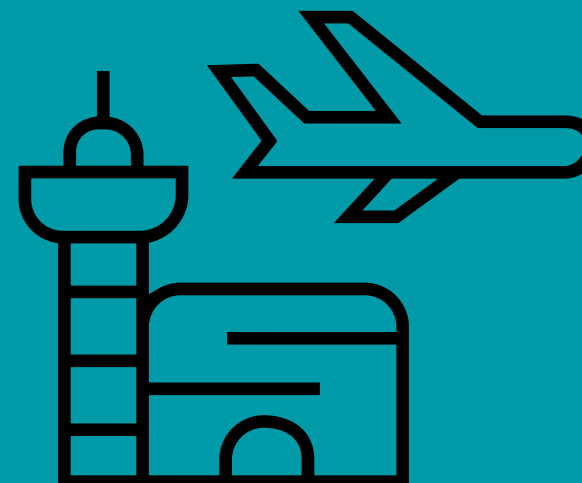
.....  
Barnsley  
Town Centre  
Value: £150-£300m  
Jobs: c. 850

We want to use our strengths to rebuild the pride, purpose and prosperity of South Yorkshire.

Our Growth Areas will attract income and investment into the region which will increase the number of secure, high-paying jobs.

We will connect and strengthen our communities by improving our economic and social infrastructure.

.....  
SY Airport City  
Value: £500m-£1bn+  
Jobs: c. 4,000



.....  
Advanced Manufacturing  
Innovation District  
Value: c. £800m  
Jobs: c. 4,000

## South Yorkshire's Strengths

For too long, South Yorkshire has hidden its strengths under a bushel. This Plan confidently breaks that tradition. This Plan begins by recognising the region's strengths. We proudly boast:

- Available land, local plans in place and a facilitatory environment
- A high quality of life



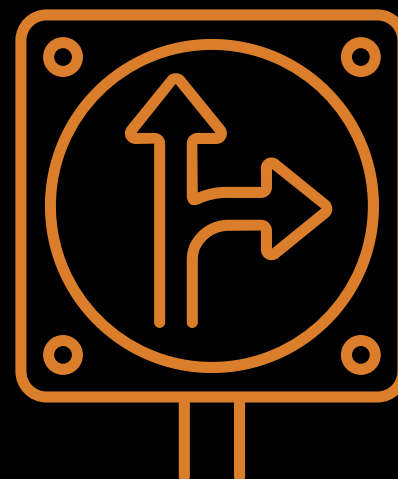
- Deep pools of highly skilled young people, eager to stay
- A supply of skills at all levels, with outstanding universities, FE colleges and independent providers



- Cutting-edge research and world class translational research facilities



- Strong sectoral strengths in tech, health and advanced manufacturing



- A unique geographical setting as a gateway North to South and South to North

## Regional Links

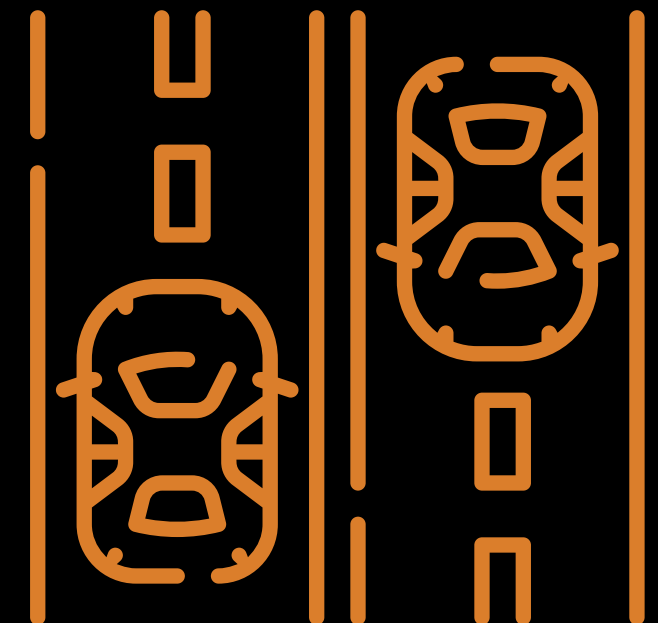
South Yorkshire is at the crossroads of key economic corridors:

- The research 'northern golden triangle' of Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester universities.



- The clean energy corridor from Sheffield, through Rotherham and Doncaster out to the Humber energy cluster.
- The Northern Powerhouse, a network of corridors from Liverpool to Hull and north to Newcastle.

- The M1/A1 corridor north to West Yorkshire and south to Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, Cranfield, Cambridge and London.



- Rail lines into the heart of London with easy access to the growing life science cluster at King's Cross.



# Our Growth Story

The world is rapidly changing: a technology revolution is underway, transforming the nature of work and its location; supply chains are re-orienting, as global tensions rise and automation shifts the geography of production; the climate, our environment and our ecology are in crisis, demanding that we act. All of our assets put us in a position where we are ready to be leaders once again, sharing our ideas, innovations and talents with the world.



# Our Growth Story

**Both the UK economy and the global economy are entering a new industrial era. Slowing rates of productivity growth, the pandemic and the energy crisis have put government budgets under increased pressure, creating an ever greater imperative for growth. The transition to net zero brings with it largescale investment needs, with opportunities to seize as well as challenges to overcome. The revolution in technology underway will change the nature of work, the skills it requires and where it will take place.**

The economy is continuing to restructure, with exports shifting towards services, and the population is ageing. Persistent within-and between-region inequality exists; addressing this is important not only to improve living standards for people across the UK, but also to improve the UK's aggregate productivity performance.<sup>1</sup> Increasing international instability is driving up domestic defence, energy, research, and industrial spending, while encouraging re-orientation of global supply chains as key industries are 'reshored' or 'friend-shored'.

In this context, industrial regions that are effectively able to co-locate global companies, with applied R&D, supply chains, specialised talent pools and the right mix of advanced infrastructure are being seen in a new light.<sup>2</sup> **South Yorkshire, with its unique assets, innovation capabilities and its recent success in delivering industrial strategy** is the right place at the right time to benefit from these trends. This is already apparent with **strong growth in the tech, health, and advanced manufacturing and materials sectors.**

The region is **home to one of the largest CleanTech clusters in the country**, with unique capabilities in the decarbonisation of industry, heat and fuels, alongside leading the way in thinking progressively to meet climate targets with the use of heat networks, nature-based solutions and building flood resilience through a catchment-wide approach. The same is true on **preventative health where, working alongside Google and Canon, we are using data to improve population health and reduce healthy**

life inequalities before they reach the acute stage. Unique assets in the defence and power sector are leading to rapid supply chain growth.

The technological and growth frontiers of tomorrow's economy are within reach in South Yorkshire. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity where we are looking for partners to join us in devoting our resources, investment and land to deliver growth.

**Growth matters because a young person in South Yorkshire today has a right to expect a better future than that of their parents;** because increases in wages and incomes eases the pressures on the cost of living and can distribute opportunity more equally. Growth can create a greener South Yorkshire, with high quality homes affordable to heat, safe and vibrant communities, and education and career prospects to attract and retain talent.

**This Plan sets out how South Yorkshire will deliver growth and jobs in the industries of the future,** where we know the market will grow and where we already have comparative strengths. Over the course of a decade, delivering this Plan will increase wages and the spread of secure, high-paid jobs, thereby closing the gap between regional and national levels of productivity. It will develop the economic and social infrastructure to build a better, not just a bigger, economy – a good economy – so that businesses can invest and opportunities are accessible to all.



Photographs by VOX, property of Sheffield City Council

## It has three dimensions

**First, prosperity.** This Plan recognises that growth will not happen everywhere, all at once. Growth requires focus. This Plan sets out four places, our 'Growth Areas', where the region will target its land, resources, and investment to create a pipeline of projects that will deliver region-wide economic gains. The guiding policy on this dimension will be growing secure, high-paid jobs, which bring income and investment into the region.<sup>3</sup> We will place these sensible economic bets in industries where South Yorkshire has strengths and where we know the market will grow.

**Second, connection.** The infrastructure we build is our common inheritance - the platform on which everyone can stand. We will invest in our economic infrastructure so that all can access the opportunities created through our shared endeavour. The publication of this Plan begins a process of engagement about our priorities for housing, transport, energy, the environment, culture, and digital infrastructure.

**Third, community.** We recognise the importance of creating vibrant communities that are both proud of their past and confident in accessing the opportunities of the future. This Plan recognises the very real connection between the strength of our communities and the strength of our economy. It begins a vital part of a conversation with our communities about how we should provide training and skills provision that meets the ambitions of people and businesses, challenge the health inequalities that plague our region, invest in the early years, make our communities feel safer, and support different forms of ownership and investment.

Our analysis suggests that closing the gap with national average productivity level (outside of London) would add 17.8% or £5.9bn to the SY economy, equivalent to each resident being £4,300 more productive.

<sup>3</sup> This Plan takes an expanded definition to 'tradable jobs'. It includes those jobs traditionally in the 'tradeable sectors', that is jobs which create exports in sectors such as manufacturing, information and communications and arts and entertainment, but it also includes those jobs creating goods and services which are purchased outside the region, not just internationally. These are the jobs that create a net gain for the regional economy and lift local wages.



<sup>1</sup> Resolution Foundation, *The Economy 2030 Inquiry*, 2023

<sup>2</sup> B. Katz, *How Cities Can Thrive in a New Industrial Era*, 2024



# South Yorkshire's Growth Context

The structural changes to the economy and their policy responses are already having significant impacts locally and will continue to shape the context for South Yorkshire's growth story.

- Cost of Living: the cost-of-living vulnerability index places **Barnsley, Doncaster, and Rotherham into the most vulnerable tenth of local authorities, and Sheffield into the most vulnerable fifth.**<sup>4</sup> Only around a fifth of places in the UK have a lower disposable income per person.<sup>5</sup>
- Climate change: while per capita emissions have been falling in each of our four authorities, **achieving Net Zero emissions will require further cross-sectoral action both to reduce emissions and to limit the impacts of a changing climate.**<sup>6</sup>
- Mitigation: achieving Net Zero emissions will require significant action to decarbonise our built environment, industries, homes, transport systems and energy networks. To date the majority of SY's emissions reduction has stemmed from national policies and grid decarbonisation. To achieve Net Zero by 2040, further action at a local and regional level will be needed, particularly in mode shift and retrofit. With this challenge comes industrial opportunity for South Yorkshire through green hydrogen, advanced manufacturing, housing retrofit materials and trades, and nature-based solutions for carbon sequestration and flood avoidance, where the region holds significant assets.
- Adaptation: the impacts of a changing climate will be felt even if we meet our Net Zero ambitions. A climate resilient South Yorkshire needs a climate resilient economy. Its transport networks for the distribution of goods, services and people must be capable of withstanding more extreme weather. While this will incur increased costs, opportunities will arise in shortening supply chains to increase resilience through the clustering of small and medium businesses around large anchors. Similarly, resilient, local energy networks based on renewables and waste heat can also reduce exposure to volatile global markets and create community wealth.

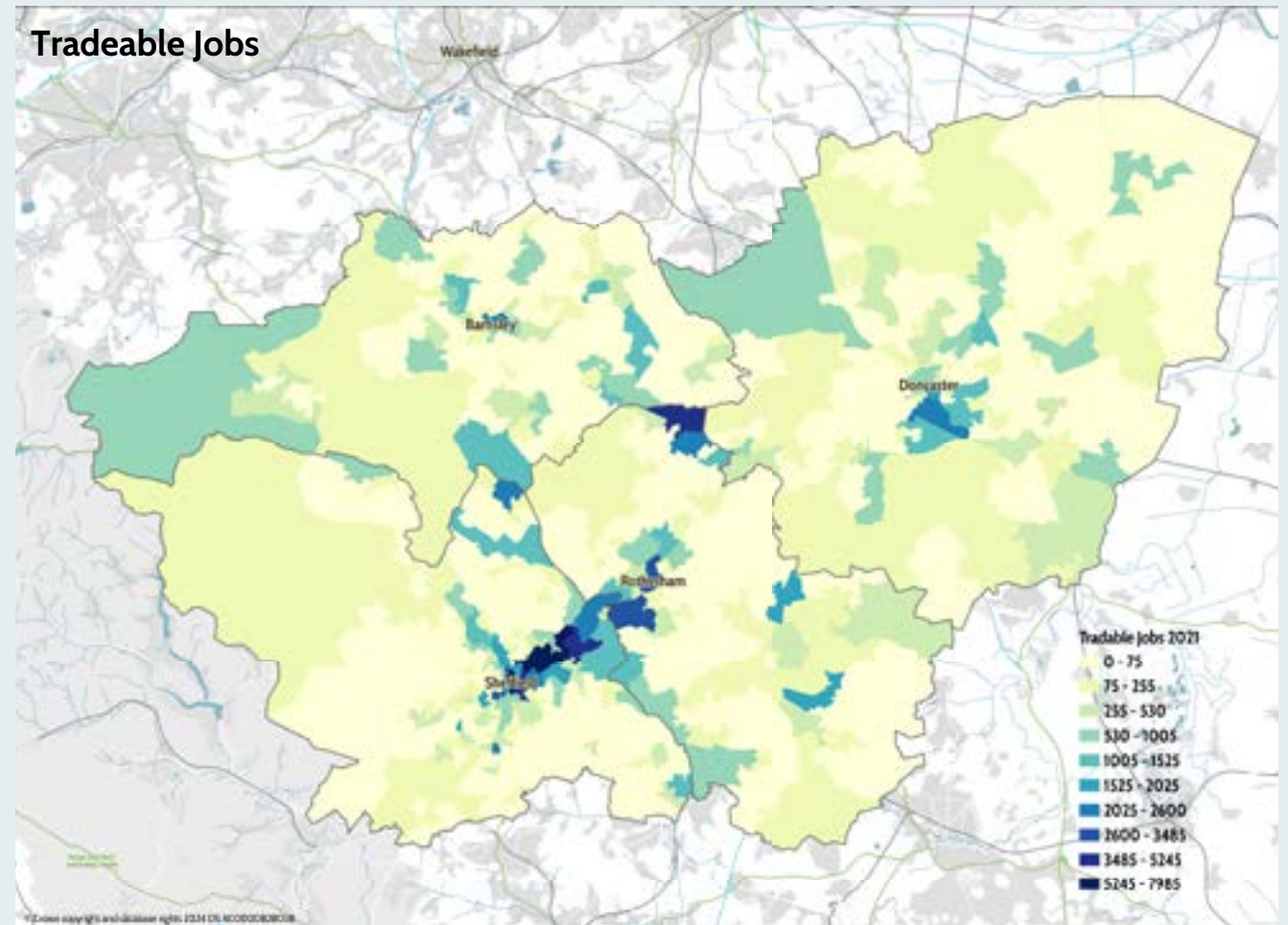
- Demographic change: the proportion of the South Yorkshire working age population will continue to fall as the population ages. Demand for high-skilled employment is forecast to grow coupled by a fall in demand for low skilled labour. **Currently there are 215,000 jobs at low-medium skill levels (Level 2 or below); this is expected to fall to 155,000 by 2035.**<sup>7</sup> We need to ensure those with no or low qualifications do not miss out on accessing the labour market and are resilient to future changes. Our Skills Strategy sets out how we will shift our skills base to be more resilient and productive.
- Technology revolution: automation, artificial intelligence and the use of data will transform personal and our professional our lives. **13% of jobs in Doncaster are at high risk of automation, as are 9.3% in Barnsley and 7.6% in Rotherham. The national average is 7%.**<sup>8</sup> The automation potential in manufacturing is estimated at 60%.<sup>9</sup> It is vital that investment in businesses and jobs future-proofs the region to take advantage of structural change. We have been on the wrong side of economic shifts before, and we will not be left behind again. Our offer to businesses is based on providing the right support to businesses in sectors and areas, such as health and wellbeing, we are confident will grow.

## Spatial development

South Yorkshire is blessed by its natural geography, with its easy access to nature. But it is also **blessed by its economic geography, at the heart of the country its road, rail and energy networks.** The evidence base collected for this Plan has demonstrated a predictable pattern of economic development and stable footprint for investment. Sheffield, bounded by the Peaks on one side, will grow towards Rotherham. Barnsley and Doncaster, with their ready access to the arteries of the road network, are growing alongside. This pattern of spatial development is reflected in recent tradeable jobs growth.

South Yorkshire's four local authorities, with unique histories and identities, form one region with complementary economic assets. Rotherham and Sheffield are now connected by a single Innovation District, the world's first Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District. The skills, research assets and ecosystem have drawn in Boeing, Rolls Royce, McLaren and many other fast growing companies besides. Barnsley and Doncaster, with their availability of large allocated sites, are perfect for these companies and their supply chains to develop and scale up; their central position on the road network is driving significant growth in logistics and adjacent sectors.

## Tradeable Jobs



## Measuring success

As set out in the Strategic Economic Plan, the vision is to create a stronger, fairer and greener South Yorkshire.<sup>10</sup> This Plan for Growth sets out how the Mayoral Combined Authority and the four constituent local authorities will deliver this vision together. The supporting evidence base gives a detailed account of the South Yorkshire economy. **We will know this Plan is working when we see:**

1. **Increases in wages and disposable income across the distribution;**<sup>11</sup>
2. **Reducing income and spatial disparities across the region;**
3. **Growth in high-paid jobs and business investment;**
4. **Increase in social innovation, with an increase in the diffusion and adoption of knowledge and intellectual property (IP);**
5. **Progress towards the net zero carbon target by 2040, including biodiversity net gain, environmental and ecological recovery and greater use of nature-based solutions.**

SYMCA's monitoring and evaluation framework (2022) outlines the metrics we will use to monitor stronger, fairer and greener growth. These metrics will be refreshed as part of the Regional Economies programme.

<sup>4</sup> Centre for Progressive Policy, *the Levelling Up Outlook #5*, 2022

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics, *People, Population and Community*, 2022

<sup>6</sup> Metro Dynamics, *South Yorkshire Plan for Growth: Economic Analysis*, 2024, p. 38

<sup>7</sup> Department for Education, *Labour market and skills projections: 2020 to 2035*, 2023

<sup>8</sup> KADA Research, *South Yorkshire Skills and Employment Evidence Base*, 2023, p. i

<sup>9</sup> Analysis provided by Metro Dynamics

<sup>10</sup> South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, *Our Strategic Economic Plan 2021-2041*, 2021

<sup>11</sup> South Yorkshire has seen household incomes decline relative to the national average. Other comparator regions have also seen decline, but the gap between South Yorkshire and these places is widening. This needs addressing.



# South Yorkshire's Sectoral Strengths

South Yorkshire's tech sector has seen stand-out growth in recent years, even compared to its rapid growth across the UK. It has remained resilient, growing through COVID whilst elsewhere growth in the sector slowed. Between 2015 and 2021, ICT added around an extra £680 million to the region's economy, more than doubling its size.<sup>12</sup> Specialisms in EdTech, Gaming, BioTech and AI, data and analytics have produced Tutorful, Sumo, Unicorn Biotechnologies and Fourjaw. Both the digital and the renewable sectors grew at a compound annual growth rate of 7% between 2016 and 2021.<sup>13</sup>

The region is also a leader in the **Green Economy**, sitting at the source of a clean energy corridor, running from Sheffield all the way to the Humber Clean Energy Cluster. DSIT analysis gives South Yorkshire the largest share of the Clean Tech economy (6.9%), more than three times the share of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands.<sup>14</sup> ITM Power, the **Translational Energy Research Centre** with its specialism in sustainable aviation fuels, the **Fusion Technology Facility**, two heat networks and a Small Modular Reactor industrial cluster all demonstrate the region's strength in clean energy production and modularisation. Our Connected by Water **catchment-wide approach to water management** demonstrates our pathfinder status on delivering resilience through nature-based solutions.



There are over 1,800 businesses in the **health sector** in South Yorkshire, which has nearly 90,000 employees, making it greater as a proportion of workers than that in Greater Cambridge, West Yorkshire, London, and Oxfordshire. In 2019, it represented £3.26 billion (11.7%) of GVA – considerably higher than the national share (7.7%).<sup>15</sup> **Healthtech** businesses are thriving: there is one of the UK's largest clusters of orthopaedic and medical device companies, including B Braun, Swann Morton, Orchid Orthopedics, and JRI Orthopaedics. Our Mayor is the Chair of the Integrated Care Partnership – the only Mayor to have taken that responsibility – leading to the region's focus on **preventative health**, attracting **Google** and **Canon Medical** to beside the **Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre**.

**Advanced manufacturing and engineering** continue to be a South Yorkshire growth success story. Manufacturing is South Yorkshire's largest sector, at 12.5% of the economy.<sup>16</sup> It grew by **£500 million** between 2015 and 2021 (a 15% increase) and continues to attract investment from cutting edge firms such as Boeing, Rolls Royce, and Hitachi Rail, as well as driving local scale-up growth.<sup>17</sup>

South Yorkshire has over 30,000 people working in the **creative industries**, contributing close to £2 billion in GVA.<sup>18</sup> There is significant opportunity for South Yorkshire to expand its contribution to a growing industry: the value of film and high-end TV production increased has increased by a third since 2019, and South Yorkshire is uniquely placed with assets such as the **Children's Media Festival**, **Sheffield DocFest**, **Screen Yorkshire** and **Sheffield-based Warp Films**.



Photographs by VOX, property of Sheffield City Council

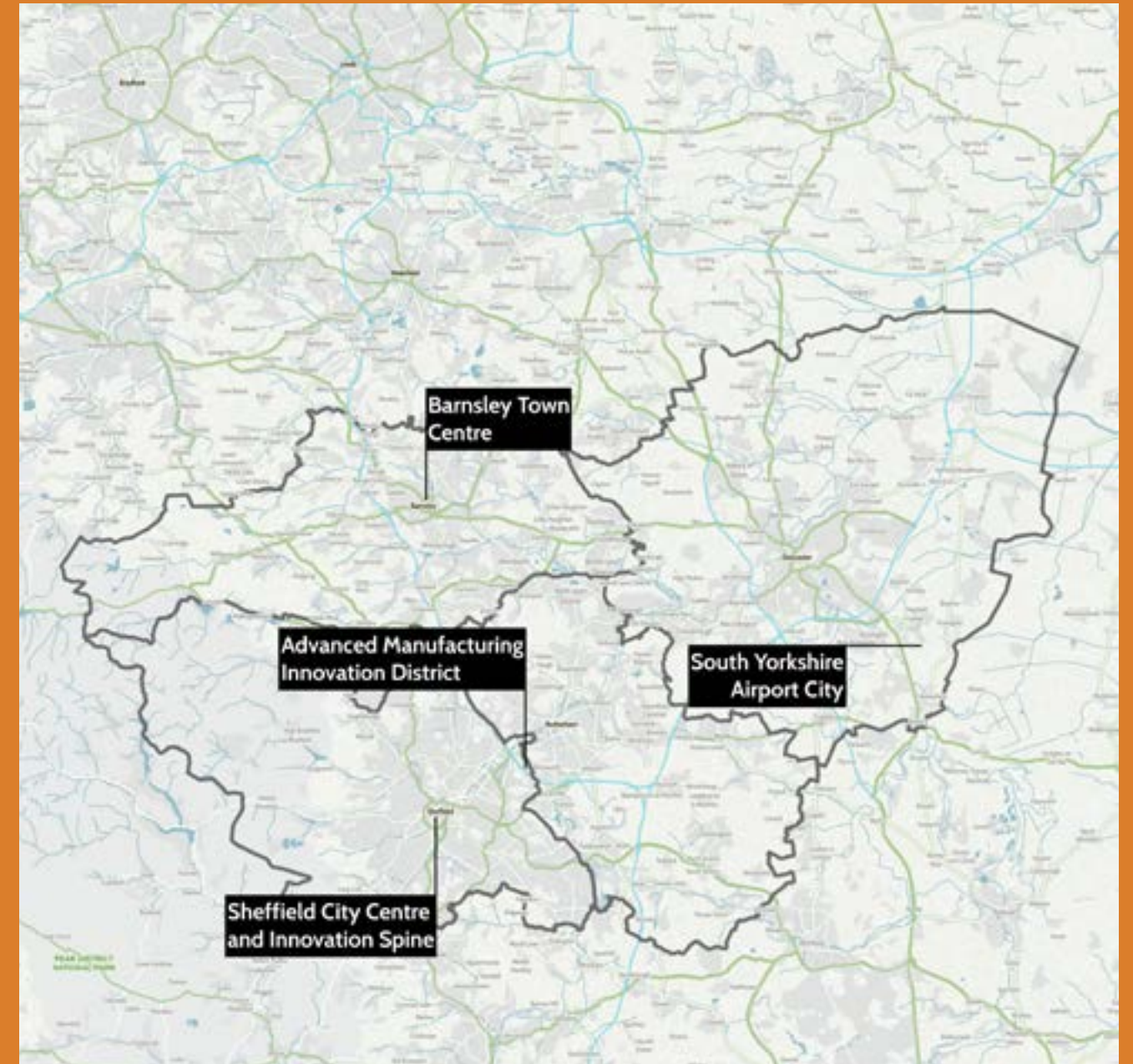
<sup>12</sup> Office for National Statistics, "Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry", chained volume measures. 2023.  
<sup>13</sup> Metro Dynamics, *South Yorkshire Plan for Growth, Economic Analysis*, 2024.  
<sup>14</sup> Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, datacity and Cambridge Econometrics, *The Innovation Clusters Map*, 2024.  
<sup>15</sup> Office for National Statistics, *Regional gross value added by industry*, 2023.  
<sup>16</sup> Ibid  
<sup>17</sup> Office for National Statistics, "Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry", chained volume measures. 2023.  
<sup>18</sup> Internal analysis using Beahurst data



Photographs by VOX, property of Sheffield City Council



# Prosperity, through our Growth Areas





**Growth requires focus. This is the experience of delivering industrial strategy and town regeneration successfully for two decades in the world's first Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District and in Barnsley town centre. In both cases, a clear, long-term plan, alongside the provision of the different ingredients of growth has delivered place-based transformation.**

This is the principle of South Yorkshire's 'Growth Areas', four geographically defined places where we will partner with investors to deliver the right mix of investment, innovation support, infrastructure, ingenuity and skills, and incentives to drive jobs growth and investment. See below for how we will work with businesses and investors.

Over the next decade, the MCA will coordinate and prioritise investment towards these Areas to create secure, high-paid jobs, which bring income and investment into the region. These jobs will lift wages and provide knock-on employment opportunities in the local economy.

Each Growth Area is a sensible economic bet, chosen in line with robust economic criteria. These are:

- **Each Area has unique assets and comparative economic advantages** compared with other regions;
- **Each Area has a geographic concentration of assets**, with space for further development;
- **Each Area has a justified expectation of growth**, including employment growth; and,
- **Each Area has sectoral strengths that are in line with societal challenges**, such as decarbonisation or healthy life expectancy, and will drive employment that benefits the lives of residents.

This approach deviates from traditional plans and strategies: it will not entail a narrow focus on sector development. South Yorkshire has clear sectoral strengths and is demonstrating an increasing concentration in nationally growing industries, indicating positive signs of future growth.

However, it is increasingly true that South Yorkshire's strengths lie at the intersection between sectors or in growing sectors that are hard to measure, such as the data services offered to manufacturing businesses or in preventative health. These do not fall neatly into sectoral classifications. Nor are resilient and successful clusters generally agglomerations of single sectors. This Plan will focus therefore on rapid growth in jobs and investment in geographic areas, based around assets, comparative advantage and justified expectations of growth.



## Sheffield City Centre and Innovation Spine

**Value: c. £600m**  
**Jobs: c. 4,300**

**Our ambition is to build a bigger and more resilient, inclusive innovation-based economy in Sheffield City Centre by locating skilled people, universities, and innovation infrastructure in proximity.**

We will devote our land, investment and resources in the 'Sheffield Innovation Spine' to create a tight knit modern knowledge neighbourhood of small incubator spaces, research centres and aspirational houses and apartments. This will connect the University of Sheffield with Sheffield Hallam, drawing in regenerated Kelham Island and the train station.

The project builds on the momentum created by the two 'Heart of the City' projects and the extensive work underway on housing, green infrastructure, and transport. The initiative will combine a mixed-use and aspirational development offer with ecosystem interventions, including increasing investment into new to equity, start-up and early-stage companies; supporting programmes to increase commercial IP; and investing in student-driven start-ups and spinouts.

The Zone has benefited from significant investment from Northern Gritstone, and IP-rich research from our universities and innovation assets, driving a pipeline of commercial ventures across a multitude of sectors including deep tech, digital, creative, health and manu-services. Strengthening of the underpinning innovation infrastructure, as well as providing a housing, leisure and retail mix will ensure our emerging pipeline of commercial ventures becomes a critical mass of innovation-driven start-ups and scale-ups.



The Spine complements Sheffield's draft Local Plan priorities to locate growth where it will enable homes to be built within reach of main employment, increase density in Central sub-Area, support distinctive and thriving District Centres and concentrate employment near to existing tram stops with access across the region for SY employees.

There will be one opportunity to build out this central part of the city and we will only work with the right partners to deliver this city-centre innovation model.





## SY Airport City

**Value: £500m-£1bn+**  
**Jobs: 3-4,500**

Doncaster is currently a transport and mobility cluster, with strengths across various sectors including rail, advanced materials, and engineering. Underpinned by leading environmental practices, the SY Airport City initiative presents an opportunity to repeat and renew the lessons from the successful industrial strategy in the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District into the growing sector of aviation.

Adoption of low-carbon technologies and practices to decarbonise the transportation sector is necessary to respond to the climate crisis but also create significant economic opportunity. Through exploring and developing creative solutions to the climate challenge, there is an opportunity to develop an ecosystem around Jet Zero, advanced flight technologies (e.g. BVLOS drones), material light-weighting, clean aviation fuel and logistics and smart transportation solutions.

The SY Airport City initiative will be anchored by Doncaster's ambition to be a leading airport. The identified site incorporates both the Airport and the adjacent sites often referred to as Gateway East. The land opportunities and connectivity from road, rail, air and ports provide unrivalled significant scale-up production opportunities that enable quick movement of both people and goods.

This is all dependent on a functioning airport being in place.

## Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District

**Value: c. £400m**  
**Jobs: c. 2,000**

**The world's first Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District supports a collaborative ecosystem dedicated to driving innovation, fostering action-focused partnerships, and connecting South Yorkshire people to the opportunities and benefits of the region's innovation strengths. By bringing together industry leaders, SMEs, start-ups, academic institutions, and public/private solution providers, the Innovation District is creating a dynamic supportive environment where ideas flourish and businesses thrive.**

This Area includes **Rotherham Town Centre**, with significant investment underway in the leisure and cultural economy, improved transport infrastructure and game-changing proposals such as Rotherham Mainline Station anchoring a new business district in development. The town centre presents attractive prospects for investment in creating a new urban living offer connected to economic opportunity.

Over £350 million has been invested in the development of these world-class translational innovation facilities including, the **Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC)**, the **Nuclear Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (nAMRC)**, the **Sustainable Aviation Fuels Innovation Centre (SAF-IC)** and the **Gene Therapy Innovation and Manufacturing Centre (GTIMC)**. These assets have attracted international companies such as **Boeing**, **Rolls-Royce** and **McLaren** and led to South Yorkshire scale up champions such as **Gripple** and **AESSEAL**.

Health assets clustered around the Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park and the English Institute of Sport, including the **Advanced Wellbeing Health Centre**, the **Child Health Technology Centre**, and **Sheffield Hallam University's Advanced Food Innovation Centre (AFIC)** will position the Area to become home to the UK's primary preventative health and wellbeing hub. These have attracted **Canon Medical**, **BT** and **Google**.

The **Digital Health Hub** is a national demonstrator of how digital technology and wearables can help to increase healthy life expectancy. The **Medical Diagnostic Centre** is bringing healthcare services closer to the community. It provides imaging for professional sports clubs, and will be an AI incubation hub for R&D, focusing on health screening and disease prevention.

The **SY Sustainable Energy Hub**, underpinned by expertise available at The Energy Innovation Centre, offers partners from industry access to national pilot-scale laboratories and infrastructure in renewable energy, sustainable aviation fuels, hydrogen, zero-carbon fuels and bioenergy. The University of Sheffield Translational Energy Research Centre (TERC) is focussed on removing and reducing carbon-emitting energy processes and replacing them with sustainable alternatives. This expertise will be critical in supporting the innovation required to decarbonise South Yorkshire's industrial clusters and has already contributed to the first trans-Atlantic flight with sustainable aviation fuel.

A **nascent Hydrogen cluster**, with private sector-led proposals including the development of a hydrogen production demonstrator at Magna in Templeborough, will allow South Yorkshire to help de-risk the adoption and advancement of hydrogen solutions with applications across multiple industries. Analysis suggests that in 2030 the UK hydrogen economy could be worth £900m and support over 9,000 jobs. British supply chain exports could drive around a quarter of these jobs.

The region is also a leader in the development of **Small Modular Reactors**. The combination of Sheffield Forgemasters, the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre including its nuclear Catapult, and all the supporting supply chain businesses, is at the forefront of new and advanced nuclear reactor technologies. Alongside SMRs, the region is leading in the transition from the theory and science of fusion energy to solving the advanced engineering challenges in, for example, magnetics, materials, and robotics necessary to bring a fusion power station on to the grid in 2040's. The technologies being developed for fusion have far wider application across a range of industries.





# Barnsley Town Centre

**Barnsley will build on its successful regeneration of the town centre and deliver the next wave of renewal. It will invest in a unique model of community regeneration that brings together cutting-edge digital technology, the visitor economy and public service reform.**

This includes a potential new Catapult which will become a demonstrator for how digital infrastructure and technology can transform town life. It will connect public, private, and academic institutions with investment to understand how digital provision can increase productivity, inclusion, and wellbeing. For example, it will explore how public services costs can be reduced through the application of data and technology, and how economic activity and productivity can be increased.

This builds on the Health on the High Street initiative which is a £70m scheme between Barnsley Council, Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and other health and wellbeing partners. It aims to bring cutting edge diagnostics into the heart of the community. The Community Diagnostics Centre is currently supporting 55,000 visits a year, allowing residents access to world-leading healthcare on their doorstep.

Investment in **the Seam** will provide a space, in the heart of the town, dedicated to technological development. The next stages of this project will unlock the potential of the site to private sector investors. The Seam will establish a demonstrator and testbed style approach to technology adoption and deployment for industry.

Alongside the Seam, the Digital Media Centre is built on significant work to grow the tech ecosystem of Barnsley and South Yorkshire focused on engaging industry partners and delivering effective business support programmes including incubation, acceleration and access to investment. The DMC is currently home to over 50 businesses supporting over 300 jobs in the tech sector.

**Value: £150-£300m;  
Jobs: c. 850**



# Our offer to businesses in the Growth Areas

**We understand the importance of supporting businesses to drive economic growth, creating employment opportunities, and securing greater prosperity for our communities. With the right policies, public investment equivalent to 1% of South Yorkshire's GDP could crowd in 3% or around one billion pounds of private investment.<sup>19</sup>**

This includes a commitment to offering a comprehensive suite of support services developed to meet the diverse needs of each business across our South Yorkshire Growth Areas. Our account management approach will be tailored to each individual business. This support will empower businesses of all sizes and sectors to grow, thrive, and contribute to the prosperity of our region.

**Our support offer includes:**

- **Personalised account management:** We are committed to providing a dedicated point of contact, speeding up response times, creating tailored solutions and building an ongoing relationship that drives collaboration and shared understanding of needs. In South Yorkshire, businesses will know their individual account managers and how to access our package of benefits that contribute to better outcomes and enhanced collaboration with the public sector.
- **Access to sectoral expertise:** We know that to be truly value-adding, specialised knowledge of target industries will support a better understanding of the intricacies of the sector and provide more effective guidance and support to businesses within it.

- **Market Access and Export support:** We will provide assistance to help businesses access new markets, both domestically and internationally. This support can include trade missions, export promotion programs, and market research services. We will support our business to identify opportunities and expand their customer base.
- **Location and property:** We will support businesses in identifying the right commercial property and office spaces with the right infrastructure to support business relocation ambitions. We will foster strong relationships with property agents to ensure competitive proposals.
- **Recruitment Support:** We know that securing the right people is critical to unlocking growth; we will offer support to help you navigate the local employment market and provide incentives to support the development of employees.
- **Networking and Collaboration:** We will introduce and support businesses to build strong networks and partnerships within and beyond their specific sectors, facilitating collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the exchange of best practices among businesses.

<sup>19</sup>Internal analysis based on multiplier from "Boosting growth and productivity in the United Kingdom through investments in the sustainable economy" (LSE, Grantham Foundation, CEP, Productivity Institute).



Over the next year, the MCA will work with regional partners on development plans for each Growth Area.

Beyond individual support we will commit to stimulating the wider investment environment in the following ways:

#### Co-ordinate investment capital

We will commit to expanding the flow of investment capital to these Growth Areas, through the coordination of public sector funding and an active foreign and national private sector investment programme. We are already pioneering new ways to access investment capital: in February we announced a strategic partnership with the South Yorkshire Pension Authority, supporting projects with the right investment, in October we announced one with Aviva Capital Partners Limited. We are also channelling Investment Zone funding towards programmes that will support businesses to scale-up, improve cross-sector collaboration, increase their commercial IP, and diversify and develop their supply chain. This funding will help develop viable projects for our investment partners.

#### Develop the innovation ecosystem

We will commit to improving the accessibility and delivery of innovation support. We are already working with bodies such as UKRI and Innovate UK to develop more place-based Research and Development investment. Through our Investment Zone, we have committed to delivering programmes which will improve knowledge transfer links between education institutions, their students, and businesses.

#### Deliver infrastructure and connectivity

We will commit to working with our Growth Areas to identify opportunities to grow and improve connectivity of sites. Already via our Investment Zone we are channelling funding towards capital infrastructure and feasibility. Areas will have access to funding to improve infrastructure, support grow-on space and secure investment where viability gaps persist, or further funding will unlock greater business reach.

Where necessary, we will draw on our devolved powers around land assembly and development. We will also work to identify how other regional plans, such as in transport, can support business development.

#### Provide ingenuity and skills

We have committed to deploying our **Adult Education Budget** to develop a skills pipeline that will support business growth. Our regional Skills Strategy sets out the actions the MCA will take to ensure businesses have the talent needed to grow. Our Investment Zone has also committed funding towards skills support. The IZ will co-invest in skills development via programmes such as **Skills Bank**

and our **Apprenticeship Hub**; it will develop graduate placements, student spin-outs and curricula to support entrepreneurship; and, importantly, support for those furthest from the labour market to get back into work.

Detail of our wider investment in the economic and social infrastructure of the region can be found below.

#### How do the Growth Areas relate to the Investment Zone?

Each Growth Area is in the Investment Zone and will benefit from that programme of interventions. The guiding policy of jobs growth in the traded sector through attracting investment applies as the guiding policy of our Investment Zone, too.

#### South Yorkshire Investment Zone

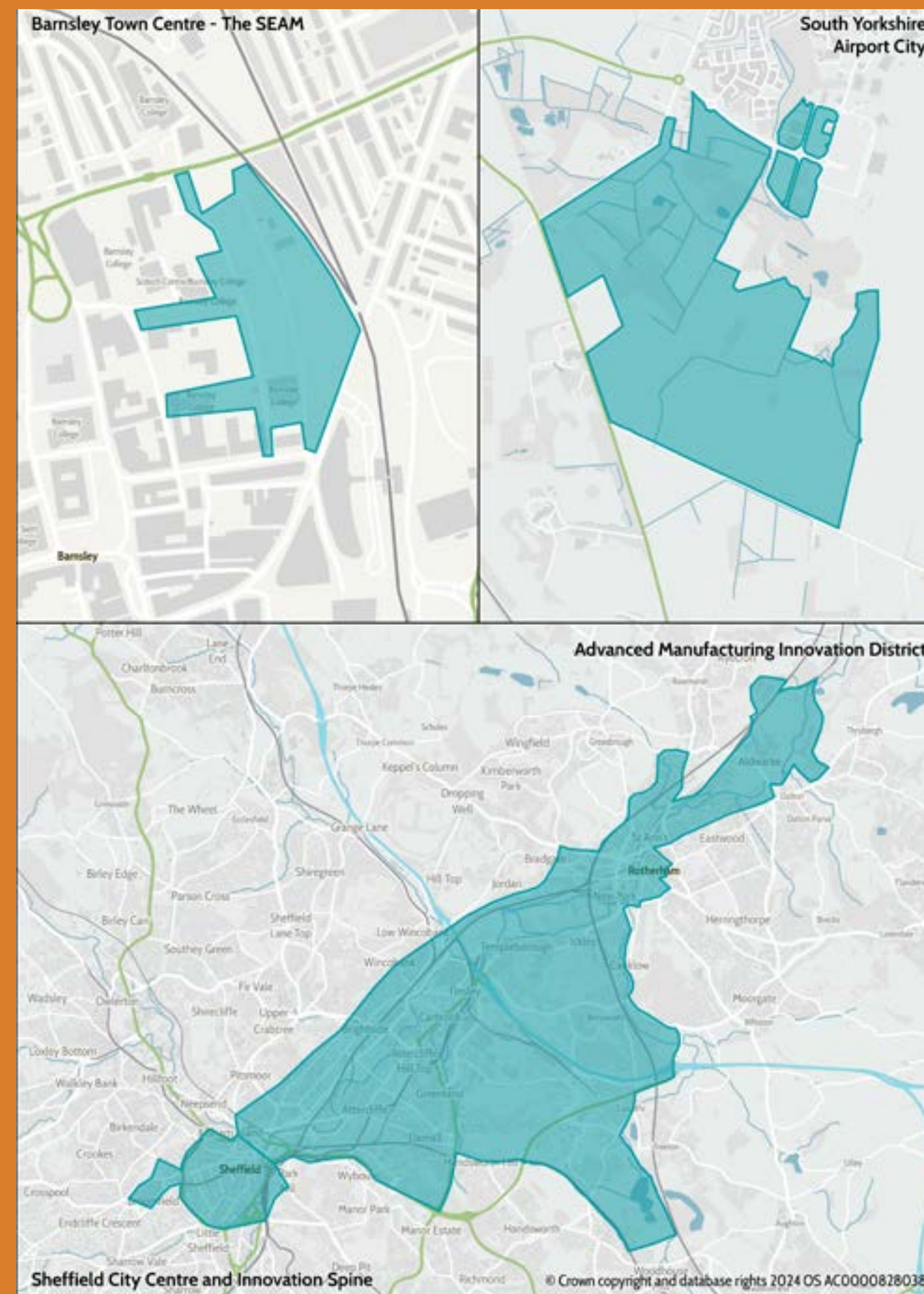
In July, South Yorkshire was announced as the **first Investment Zone in the UK**. Through our programme of interventions, we are making it **the best place to start, scale-up or relocate a business**.

The South Yorkshire Investment Zone is home to world-class companies and universities and has powerful strengths in high-precision engineering and design, materials, manufacturing, healthcare, digital and creative technologies, future mobility, and clean energy. The Investment Zone is going to be key to bringing funding and focus to magnify the impact of these assets and spread the benefits across the region. Its spatial core includes the Innovation Spine running from Sheffield City Centre, connecting the East End Corridor and AMID, through to Rotherham Town Centre.

**We believe this will lead to £1.2bn of investment and 8,000 new jobs over the next decade.** This will be delivered through a series of intervention packages to increase business investment, including a skills programme, an infrastructure and capital programme and a business support ecosystem programme.

Using £160m of funding over the next ten years, we will overcome viability gaps and accelerate development of strategically important sites in and between Sheffield and Rotherham and catalyse investment into Opportunity Sites in Doncaster and Barnsley. This will be delivered through blended packages of support to undertake land remediation, small scale infrastructure improvements and co-investment in productivity, equipment, and resource efficiency measures. This will also support the expansion of incubation and wet lab space and support investors seeking time-limited specialist resources. Our ambition is to be mission-driven, using South Yorkshire's sectoral strengths to help solve society's biggest challenges such as producing clean, green heat, power and flight; tackling ill-health; and, harnessing robotics, AI and frontier technology to create more good jobs and fulfilling careers in South Yorkshire.

The four Growth Areas are all in the Investment Zone geography and will benefit from IZ support.



# Delivering Growth for Good



Growth Areas will sit alongside a wider offer for residents. The region will work to improve the key economic and social infrastructure of daily life for our communities. Action in these areas will help residents to lead happier, healthier, and wealthier lives, with green, aspirational housing which is affordable to heat, secure and high-paid jobs, vibrant culture, excellent education and prospects. Our analysis suggests that closing the gap with the national average productivity level (outside of London) would add 17.8% or £5.6 billion to the SY economy, equivalent to each resident being £4,300 more productive.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> SYMCA internal analysis



# Connection, through strong economic infrastructure

## Housing

Housing is central to a growing economy. **South Yorkshire has a strong track record of housing delivery, though still with outstanding need of 5,000 new homes each year.** The Housing Vision for South Yorkshire is to ensure that everyone has access to good quality, warm homes that are affordable and meet needs, whilst helping achieve ambitions for a net zero economy and develop sustainable, attractive places to live, work and invest. Our Vision therefore balances an emphasis on affordable and aspirational housing growth.

**Key projects underway with opportunities for expansion are:**

**Retrofit:** An ongoing development programme is underway to identify ways to unlock retrofit at-scale for the region, delivering the multiple benefits of quality, alongside reductions in fuel poverty and carbon emissions. This includes a £2.4m 'Let Zero' programme funded by Innovate UK that is developing innovative retrofit approaches targeting the private rented sector, which has many of the worst quality homes in the region.

**Brownfield Housing Fund:** Delivery of the £53m MCA Brownfield Housing Fund, building over 3,300 new homes as part of wider regeneration of our cities and towns, such as Attercliffe, Canon Brewery, Park Hill, Waverley, Rotherham Town Centre, and Riverside, Goldthorpe, and Adwick.

**Strategic Place Partnership:** An innovative new Partnership between the MCA and Homes England to leverage significant Government and private sector investment to deliver ambitious housing growth and regeneration of places across South Yorkshire.

## Transport

Transport is a necessary condition for local economic growth – both the evidence and the all too frequent stories of personal transport disruption attest to this. We estimate that, increasing the effective size of metropolitan South Yorkshire to that of comparable Western European and US peers would **increase the number of commuters by 4% would be worth about £1bn per year to South Yorkshire.**<sup>21</sup> Our Local Transport Plan will set out our priorities to unlock this growth.

**Our current projects include:**

**Bus:** We are assessing the case for bringing buses back into public control to provide a fully integrated, multi-modal public transport system.

**Supertram:** In March 2024 we are bringing the tram system in-house. Leading with considerable investment in renewing the existing system this new ownership will give us the opportunity to investigate increased integration with our rail and bus systems.

**Rail:** We are working with Government on Restore Your Railways schemes in both Barrow Hill and Don Valley and have new station schemes in development for both Waverley and Rotherham Mainline. The increased connectivity provided by this investment will make a considerable contribution to our growth ambitions.



## Energy

**Cheap, available, and secure energy is one of the most important elements of an effective industrial strategy.** There are a range of projects underway to decarbonise energy networks, while providing opportunities to businesses and residents as part of the green transition. These include:

**Electricity Grid Capacity:** Working with National Grid and Northern Powergrid to support the creation of additional electricity capacity in the region to cater for future needs. The region benefits from its industrial history, with significant capacity for connections to the high voltage network.

**Hydrogen:** Working with Cadent to explore the opportunities of their East Coast Hydrogen Project proposals to deliver hydrogen at scale to South Yorkshire, to enable businesses to move from methane gas to using hydrogen for heating and manufacturing processes.

**Electric Vehicle Charge Points:** Building on the success of the existing South Yorkshire EVCP programme, we will develop a larger programme that will deliver several thousand more EVCPs across the region to support the move away from the use of fossil fuel vehicles. Complementing this is the MCAs ZEBRA programme delivering 27 new electric buses that will particularly help improve air quality in our cities and towns.

**Small Modular Reactors:** Building on the unique assets, including Sheffield Forgemasters and the University of Sheffield's AMRC and NAMRC, we will turn South Yorkshire into the leading industrial cluster at the nuclear frontier.

## Environment

Our **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** will set out how we will improve South Yorkshire's environment to ensure it is the best place to live and work. We are leading the way in delivering different and better programmes to support our ecosystem. Our **Free Trees for Communities** scheme, aiming to plant 1.4 million trees across the region, is an important case study, not just in environment protection and renewal, but community engagement. It brings together people and institutions in three pilot regions to develop a shared vision of economic change, with action plans for delivery and new benchmarks for progress. Our focal point for this work is our tree planting programme, which will be a test bed for working with the public, civil society, and private sectors to ensure that they are using their resources to solve the challenges that matter most to people, while developing agencies in communities.

Our ambitious £400m **Connected by Water Plan** is also continuing to invest in flood defence and climate resilience measures to protect our businesses, critical infrastructure, and the lives and homes of our residents.

We have just concluded our **Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change** the first of its kind at a Combined Authority level and a genuine experiment in participatory and deliberative democracy. The Assembly identified 24 recommendations spread across themes of transport, work, economy, food, health, investment, and the natural world. These ideas, created by the people of South Yorkshire, will be incorporated into the strategies, plans and projects of the Mayoral Combined Authority. They will take us further towards delivering against SYMCA's commitment for a Net Zero Economy by 2040.

As a success metric, the environment is a cross-cutting priority.



<sup>21</sup> Internal SYMCA analysis, 2023



## Culture and digital

**South Yorkshire is a creative powerhouse, with its combination of artists, actors, TV, and musicians famous around the world.** Our two cities and both our towns have turned the post-pandemic corner with significant investments in cultural and creative assets – and there is a strong pipeline of investment projects underway that the MCA will support.

These projects will support greater capacity building, advocacy and engagement, capital infrastructure investment and the development of programmes that improve the availability of creative and cultural opportunities alongside efforts to increase participation rates of our communities in cultural and creative activities. This investment will help unlock greater investment of national bodies such as Arts Council England in the region.

**Project Gigabit:** The £44m programme, funded by Government, will be important in delivering gigabit-capable broadband services to an additional 30,000 businesses and homes across South Yorkshire. This will be complemented by further local initiatives, which together will help to achieve the Region's ambition to seek towards full gigabit coverage across South Yorkshire.

## Investment and trade

Greater levels of investment and trade are necessary conditions for national and for local growth. In 2020, **South Yorkshire invested £3,755 per capita into fixed capital**, this figure has increased by £1,350 since 2014, overtaking West Yorkshire, but still lagging both Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region. If Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) per capita in South Yorkshire were the same as in Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire would see an additional £800m invested in capital in 2020.<sup>22</sup> Levels of public investment in R&D were not matched by private investment present elsewhere, with a ratio of 1:1 compared to 1:2 nationally. Similarly, equity deals for SY businesses were smaller on average and fewer, and the distance travelled to investors was higher than comparators.<sup>23</sup> Recent research has demonstrated higher interest rates and yield spreads in South Yorkshire and other cities.<sup>24</sup>

To kick start investment and trade, we will launch an **access to finance review**, target international investors through the establishment of **trade corridors with near neighbours in our largest markets**, and drive **improvements in export activity**. We have worked with the South Yorkshire Pension Authority to create a **Place Investment Fund that deploys pension fund resource into local markets**, leading the way on a national challenge.<sup>25</sup>



Photographs by VOX, property of Sheffield City Council

<sup>22</sup> Metro Dynamics, p. 28  
<sup>23</sup> 40% of businesses in South Yorkshire had to travel for over two hours to visit investors, compared with just 18% in London.  
<sup>24</sup> P. McCann, *Capital Shocks and UK Regional Divergence*, 2023  
<sup>25</sup> HM Treasury, *Mansion House Reforms*

# Community, through strong social infrastructure

**We want to create vibrant communities across South Yorkshire. This means investing in people and places, not just to generate growth but to make our economy and built environment fairer, greener, and safer. Local Authorities' plans will ensure South Yorkshire is one of the best places to live, work and visit. Around these commitments we will drive improvements across our social infrastructure.**

## Skills

A high-skilled economy is a productive and high-wage economy. Whilst this Plan sets out how we will increase demand for secure, high-paid jobs, our forthcoming Skills Strategy will set out how we will increase our skills supply. We estimate that if 10% of the population in South Yorkshire with Level 3 earned wages equivalent to those at Level 4 or above on average in South Yorkshire, total earnings could increase by close to £200 million.<sup>26</sup>

Our flagship programmes for the skills strategy include: a **Young Person's Taskforce to address, amongst other things, the rising challenge of persistent absentees and young NEETs**; a **Community Skills Hub**, which will be a pathfinder in bringing together skills, health and employment support to tackle economic inactivity; **expanding and simplifying Skills Bank**, our nation exemplar training co-investment fund that encourages businesses to invest in skills; and, an expanded Technical Offer to address the 'missing middle' in the labour market.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> SYMCA internal analysis based on Census 2021 "qualifications vs economic activity" and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.  
<sup>27</sup> Institute of Fiscal Studies, *The Missing Middle of Higher Technical Learners*, 2022







## Health and Social Care

The South Yorkshire Mayor is the only mayor that chairs an Integrated Care Partnership. This provides a unique opportunity to bring health and wealth together. Our Integrated Care Strategy sets out our shared vision to tackle the region's health inequalities and improve health outcomes for all residents. To do this we will focus on: **early years development**; strengthening and accelerating our focus on prevention and early identification; working to **increase economic participation**; and, collaborating to support **our workforce across health**. We have already invested in the **National Centre for Child Health Technology**, supported development of the **South Yorkshire Digital Health Hub** and been a partner in the Green Social Prescribing initiative. **If South Yorkshire's inactivity rates due to ill health were reduced to the English and Welsh average earnings in the region could increase by close to £300 million a year.** Our programmes to deliver this vision include:

**Working Win:** This nationally renowned programme brings together our objectives on skills and health by supporting those with long-term health conditions to access work.

**Health Equity Advisory Panel:** A healthy economy needs a healthy population. The Mayor has assembled a panel of experts to produce recommendations on what is needed to make South Yorkshire the healthiest region in the country. The output of this will inform further programmes of work.

**Housing:** Bad housing is a serious issue for South Yorkshire with 10.4% of all rental properties identified as having a category 1 hazard.<sup>28</sup> In too many cases poor quality housing is leading to poor health outcomes and health inequalities. SYMCA is working with key housing and health partners, including the ICB and the South Yorkshire Housing Partnership to identify a Housing and Health Forward Plan for South Yorkshire.

**Homelessness Prevention:** Homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation, including for families is rising in the region. A stable, safe home is essential for children, young people, and adults to thrive in terms of physical and mental health but also in terms of improving their life chances. The **South Yorkshire Homelessness Task Group**, formed in 2023 and chaired by the South Yorkshire Mayor brings all key stakeholders together to identify measures that could be implemented collectively to tackle homelessness more effectively and deliver greater outcomes through partnership working.

## Community safety

We want to make South Yorkshire the best live to live and work. Ensuring people and businesses feel safe is vital to delivering that aim. In December 2023 the government launched a consultation into transferring Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions to the South Yorkshire Mayor. **Bringing PCC functions into the MCA will allow us to effectively align resources and priorities for community safety across the region.**

### Early years

Despite being fundamental to supporting people to live healthy, prosperous lives, early years has often been shifted on the whims of Whitehall. We have an opportunity within the MCA to change this story and focus early years on the places and people of South Yorkshire. We can do more to bring partners and funding together to tackle early years challenges at the regional level.

**Beds for babies:** Designed in collaboration with multi-disciplinary stakeholders across the region, this innovative programme is focused on tackling the challenge of bed poverty for under 5s in South Yorkshire. South Yorkshire sees some of the starkest health inequalities in the UK, with 1 in 9 newborns in Sheffield alone requiring a safe place to sleep last year. The initial pilots of this scheme will test a new way of working across systems and services, to deliver beds, cots, and bedding for those most in need.

## Better Business

To deliver growth for good, we will encourage employers to provide good, secure work and benefits through interventions such as a Better Business Charter. We will also promote different forms of ownership such as Employee Ownership and Worker Co-Operatives through the SY Ownership Hub.

This campaign also aligns with missions set out in our regional Skills Strategy to increase skills attainment and supply of a high skilled workforce, by encouraging employers to do more to invest and upskill their workforce.

The social enterprise sector will continue to drive social innovation in South Yorkshire. Through the unique combination of profit and purpose, they empower communities, foster collaboration, and encourage the development of novel ideas, strategies, and initiatives that demonstrate the role of sustainable business models in delivering societal impact.

The Green Estate (winner of the Kings Award for Sustainable Development) is a powerful demonstration of the role of Social Enterprise in improving the well-being of individuals and communities and the surrounding urban landscape. Since forming in 2003, they have converted 42ha of derelict land into sustainable landscapes. The growth of consumer demand for socially responsible products and services, coupled with the increasing availability of Impact Investment ensures that the social enterprise sector will continue to grow in importance and significance, demonstrating its role in delivering a more equitable place.

<sup>28</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, *English Housing Survey Local Authority Stock Condition Modelling*, 2023



## One region, focused on delivery

This Plan sets out our priorities to grow secure, high-paying jobs for the region. This complements the economic strategies of our four partners, which together with the Mayor, make up our MCA. Detail on their respective vision and missions can be found below.

### Barnsley

The Barnsley 2030 strategy sets out a long-term vision for everyone to have a good life. This means everything from a quality place to call home, to good physical and mental wellbeing and a sense of self-worth through diverse and secure employment opportunities. It's also about having access to the best possible local facilities in a community that values our people and our place. More detail on how the Barnsley 2030 partnership are taking forward this vision can be found at: [Barnsley 2030 Strategy](#).



### Doncaster

Doncaster's mission is to develop thriving people, places, and planet. This means having an economy that improves the living standards for all, leaving no one behind. It means aspiring to a more resilient, productive economy across all areas and it means having a greener, regenerative economy that restores and enhances our planet. More detail on how the City are taking forward this vision can be found at: [Doncaster Delivering Together - Team Doncaster](#).



### Rotherham

Rotherham's vision for 2025 is to be a place where people want to live, work, study, invest or visit. Rotherham wants to develop a competitive, sustainable economy that builds on their strengths in advanced manufacturing, culture and innovation. They want local people to live healthy, fulfilling lives in a place where local assets are used to their full potential. More detail on how Rotherham are taking forward this vision can be found at: [Strategies, Plans and Policies](#).



### Sheffield

Sheffield is the 4th largest city in England and the region's core city. Sheffield's vision is that, by 2035, the city will be economically stronger, fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable. It will be playing a nationally significant economic role at the heart of its region, with thriving neighbourhoods and communities, and have a distinct urban and rural identity. More detail on how the City is taking forward this vision can be found at: [Growth Framework](#).



