South Yorkshire's Growth Plan

South Yorkshire's Plan for Business Growth and Greater Opportunity

2025–2035

SOUTH YORKSHIRE SYMCA MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY

OLIVER COPPARD SOUTH YORKSHIRE'S MAYOR

Contents

Mayor's Foreword

In South Yorkshire, growth has long been defined by industrial excellence and global influence. From coal and steel to precision engineering, this region has powered national progress and exported its expertise around the world.

Strong industries and resilient communities have always gone hand in hand here. Our contribution to the first and second industrial revolutions was built on practical ingenuity – designing practical solutions to complex challenges through engineering, manufacturing and materials science.

The structural shifts of the late 20th century tested that resilience. Their effects are still visible in the geography of our economy and in the day-to-day realities for many of our residents. But the capabilities that once made this region great were not lost — only suppressed.

Today, those same strengths are being reimagined for a new era. As we look ahead to the fourth industrial revolution, South Yorkshire stands ready to contribute to the UK's most critical priorities – from clean energy and sustainable production to life sciences, digital technology, defence, and culture.

We are clear on the technological capabilities and assets we have and how they can support key UK sector growth and the National Industrial Strategy as well as South Yorkshire's economy. Our historic decision to re-open Doncaster Sheffield Airport illustrates our commitment to developing and strengthening these assets.

We are clear on our core capability, which is precision engineering of practical solutions to complex problems, a tradeable service capability which is vital across many sectors and highly linked to our digital capabilities.

Our bold ambition and clear plan is to ensure that once again South Yorkshire will be central to the UK's industrial economy. We have the assets to provide the goods and services where the UK needs a sovereign capability. We have the means to ensure our country remains resilient within a rapidly shifting global economy. And we have a workforce that takes pride in hard work and in building strong and resilient communities.

Crucially, we are equally committed to ensuring that this growth creates opportunity which is open to all residents. Prosperity must be shared, not concentrated — rooted in a renewed social contract where everyone has the opportunity not only to contribute but to benefit.

We know all too well the risks of unequal growth: social fragmentation, diminished trust, and communities left behind.

Our growth will ensure our economy has the right foundations and opportunity for people to be better off – not growth at any cost, but the right sort of growth that respects people and the planet and delivers far more fair outcomes. For each generation to build on what came before: to build on our immense pride in South Yorkshire. We want everyone growing up not just to believe, but to know with confidence, that in South Yorkshire, you can stay near and go far.

To do this we will not only build on our core capabilities but address our fundamental constraints. We now understand those constraints all too well. We must support people to lead healthier lives, we need higher skills levels in the workforce, an affordable and aspirational housing offer, our transport system needs to connect residents to opportunity, and the community, physical and natural infrastructure on which the economy depends needs investment.

We have an historic opportunity to get this right. South Yorkshire is ready to play its part in a generational shift in power, resources and delivery capability away from the centre: enough to give South Yorkshire the tools to shape its own future, not simply respond to decisions made elsewhere.

We know South Yorkshire is currently not contributing to the UK as it should be, and we need to create the eco-system and critical mass to change this and attract commercial investment. Along with taking greater responsibility for key drivers of economic growth, this will restore pride, purpose, and prosperity to South Yorkshire.

Mayoral Economic Advisory Council Foreword

We are delighted to have worked with the Mayor and South Yorkshire to advise on this Local Growth Plan. The growth challenge is clear: to deliver significant headline growth, the region must expand both the business base and the number of people active in the labour market.

This is a credible case for investment, not a plea for subsidy. The plan outlined, with its four missions, represents a solid evidence-base to grow the South Yorkshire economy, to build resilience for the future and to ensure the benefits of growth are felt far more equally by residents.

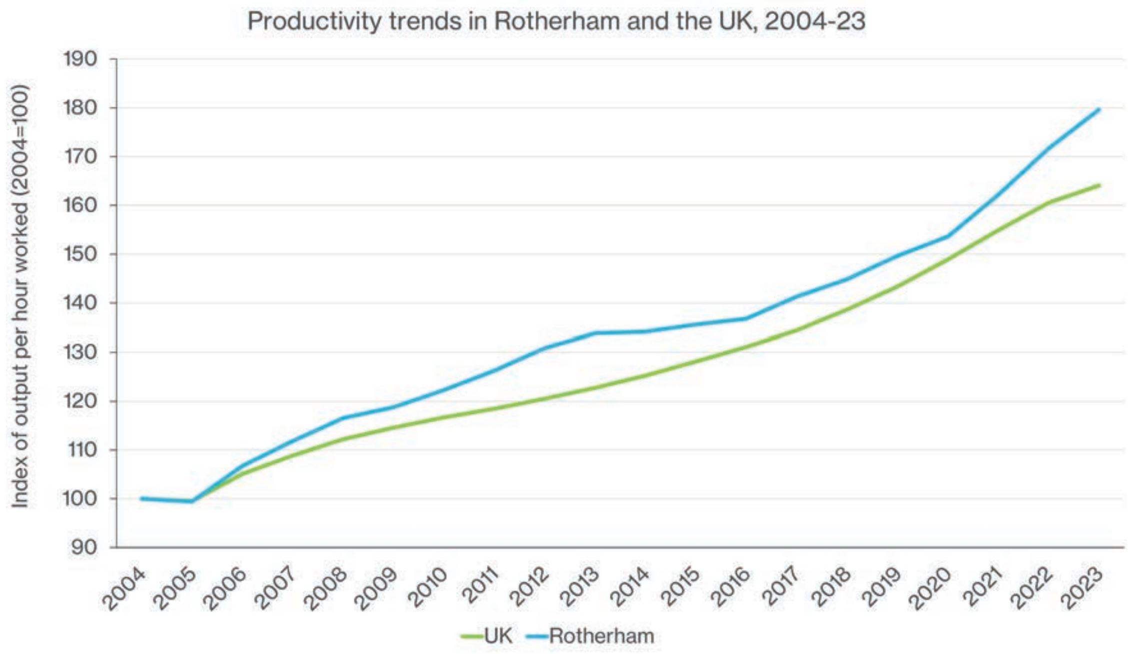
South Yorkshire must continue to build on the momentum already underway. Recent productivity statistics highlight strong growth across each of our local authority areas, especially Rotherham, and Sheffield as a core city.

Venture capital is recognizing the special role of South Yorkshire firms. Northern Gritstone, a firm focused on the commercialisation of science and technology primarily with links to universities, has invested in startups like Opteran, Iceotope and Crucible Therapeutics. Investment Firms, such as Yorkshire AI Labs and Venture:Community, are focusing on the power of AI to transform traditional sectors. Tech start-ups in the region are now valued at £3.3bn, up from just £325m in 2015.

This growth is not co-incidental. Despite South Yorkshire having been through a very tough time, particularly with the decline of the Coal and Steel Industries over many decades, disruptive global forces (as set out in 'our global context' below) are now revaluing the region's assets.

In that context South Yorkshire is becoming a key node in the new industrial and sovereign capability economy, including the service sector, through its core capability

Graph 1 Sub-Regional Productivity Growth, Rotherham vs UK (2003-23)

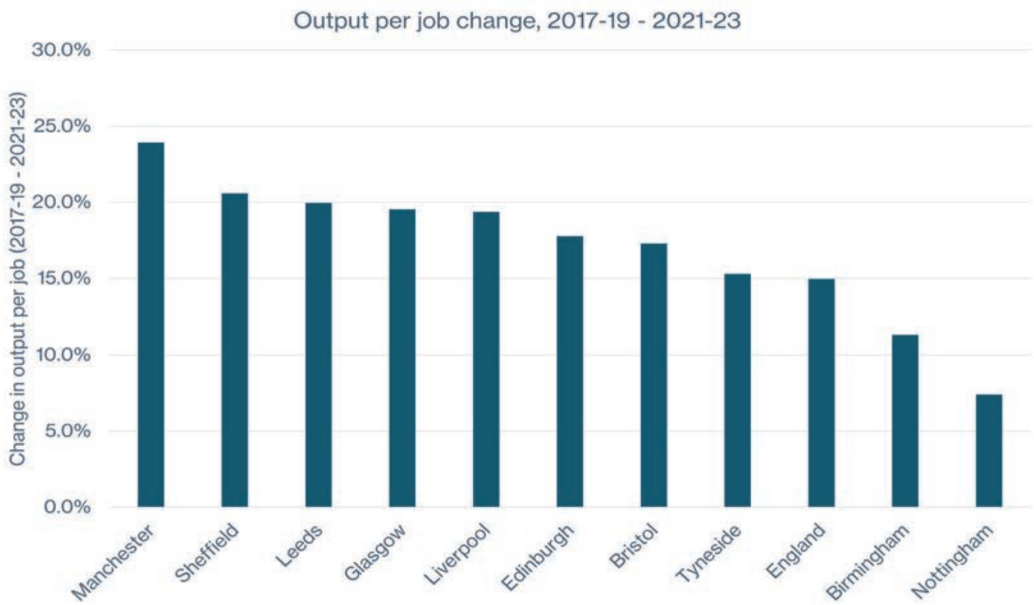


of engineering practical solutions to complex problems, a tradeable service capability which is vital across many sectors, including the creative and cultural sector, and is highly linked to digital capabilities.

The current global context seeks co-located manufacturing and innovation capabilities. The region is unique among UK city/regions in grounding its disparate assets in a constellation of special innovation districts and corridors. The Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District is routinely recognised as one of the world's preeminent advanced manufacturing campuses. The Innovation Spine is emerging with key institutional assets in the core of Sheffield, including the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield Technology Parks and Pennine Five. Barnsley and Doncaster offer space for manufacturing expansion with an offer of land and grid capacity, while leading on public service reform. The airport's reopening strengthens market access and demonstrates the commitment from public authorities that underpins investor confidence.

We therefore believe South Yorkshire is now poised to lead the way in new technologies, sustainable industries and innovative sectors. And that the region can achieve growth, which is not just about statistics, but about improving lives – creating high-quality jobs, ensuring fair wages, reducing inequalities and building a sustainable future for generations to come.

Graph 2 Productivity per job in Core Cities



Mayoral Economic Advisory Council Foreword

But to continue the market momentum underway and achieve the vision of South Yorkshire set out we think there are seven issues worth highlighting from the Local Growth Plan Vision which will need real focus:

1. **Driving private sector investment.**

   Private sector investment will be vital in two ways. Firstly, to create the vibrant business eco-system that is referred to in Mission 1 below. This will require a focus on private sector R&D investment and the availability of early-stage, venture and angel finance. Secondly, to drive regeneration and the development of future commercial space and housing, tackling 'viability gaps' to development through innovative financial mechanisms are needed.

2. **Focus on real sector strengths.**

   Every place can claim broad links to the eight sectors in the National Industrial Strategy, but success depends on identifying genuine, nationally significant niches. A comprehensive data-driven analysis reveals niches in advanced manufacturing, clean energy production, defence and security, and preventative health. Industries such as entertainment and gaming show a fertile innovation landscape, with significant opportunities to translate this into jobs. This can support inward investment in South Yorkshire's traded sector with the creation of high-paid jobs to drive productivity.

3. **Bulk up research strengths.**

   Sub-sectors – such as clean energy, industrial machinery, sustainable mobility and aircraft technologies – stand out in South Yorkshire's innovation landscape. The region benefits from a strong ecosystem anchored by the University of Sheffield, a top UK performer in public-led R&I and Sheffield Hallam University, with its leading role in workforce-skills provision enabling adoption. These strengths create two opportunities: first, to consolidate South Yorkshire's leadership in applied research and technology development in fields such as clean hydrogen, advanced materials and industrial manufacturing, where innovative firms collaborate closely with both the region's universities; and second, to strengthen the translation of local research into productive capabilities and high-quality jobs, particularly in defence technologies, energy and creative industries fields where the region is pushing the technological frontier but where there is untapped potential to strengthen the local supply chain or employment base.

4. **Improving connectivity.**

We have been struck by some of the statistics in this Local Growth Plan. That only 1% of the region's population can reach the Advanced Manufacturing Park within 30 minutes on public transport is deeply concerning, and rail connectivity is in urgent need of improvement. There is no doubt that improving transport connectivity, particularly East to West and North as part of the Northern Agglomeration of Core Cities, is a vital component of ensuring South Yorkshire grows sustainably – it will not only help create vibrant places and effective density but also ensure that far more people locally can access the opportunities on offer.

5. **Developing urban density.**

It is very clear that, for South Yorkshire to punch at its weight, it needs to increase its effective urban density. This is partly about improved connectivity, as above, but also about creating a vibrant core, with a strong cultural and creative offer and a critical mass of activity which is attractive to private investment and innovation. It will also require a far higher level of housing in the urban core, which we know is planned.

6. **Linking skills requirements and opportunity for all.**

South Yorkshire is already a hub for talent in high-growth sectors. According to recent analysis, the region ranks in the top three among UK MCAs and Greater London for producing talent in advanced manufacturing, clean energy and defence. However too often we see companies struggling to fill the higher level vacancies that they have, and the fact that we have a significant number of people out of the labour market, as separate issues. We believe that these issues need to be seen as one issue. By working with companies to upskill their existing workforce into these higher-level vacancies, and by then working to backfill the lower-level vacancies created with those currently not in work, everyone can benefit. This approach will be enabled by coherent, pro-active engagement by HE, FE and skills providers. Companies end up with a loyal, local workforce. Individuals are upskilled. And more people are brought into the labour market. This 'skills escalator' has long been talked about but never been implemented as a holistic business productivity, labour market and economic inactivity measure.

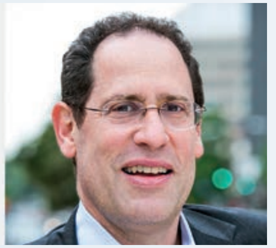
7. **Health of the workforce.**

Health is wealth. Tackling the health of the population of South Yorkshire, both those in work and those currently not in the labour market, is a key measure to grow the economy, drive productivity, get more people into/staying in work. Preventative health, active travel and workplace initiatives will ensure the benefits of growth are felt across a far wider range of the population.

To deliver this Local Growth Plan, and ensure its success, will require all local partners and Government to get behind this collective South Yorkshire plan for two reasons. Firstly, to ensure investment in the assets that South Yorkshire has which are critical to driving UK key sector growth. And secondly, to ensure that South Yorkshire's overall economic performance, as a key region, is contributing in the way it needs to if the UK as a whole is to be successful. This will require South Yorkshire to have the right powers devolved to it and to organise for success in partnership with Government.

We commend this strategy to local partners, investors and Government alike.

Dame Kate Barker



Bruce Katz

Professor Koen Lamberts

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Lord Jim O'Neill

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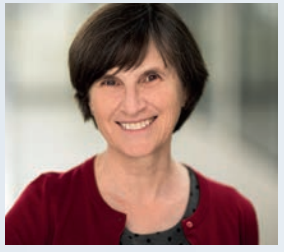


Professor Margaret Stevens

Andrew Haldane

Richard Stubbs

Our vision for South Yorkshire

We are seeking to build a bigger and better South Yorkshire economy by 2035. That means an economy that is larger and more productive, but also one that has made real progress on decarbonisation and climate adaptation, and in reducing inequality.

Growth matters because a young person in South Yorkshire today has a right to expect a better future than their parents. It matters because higher wages and incomes ease the pressures on the cost of living and distribute opportunity more equally. And it matters because growth is felt in everyday life – in more and better jobs, in good homes that are safe and affordable to heat, in vibrant communities, and in the chance to enjoy a meal out or a holiday.

Growth can create a greener and more resilient South Yorkshire, with stronger neighbourhoods and better health, education and career prospects; a South Yorkshire that is less prone to structural changes in the economy, and one that benefits from the wealth of services nature provides.

But growth on its own is not enough. South Yorkshire has some of the highest levels of deprivation and lowest levels of healthy life expectancy in the country, and too many people are locked out of opportunity. Reducing these inequalities is central to our vision: not only because it is the right thing to do, but because inclusive economies are more productive, more resilient, and better able to sustain long-term prosperity.

This Plan is the region's ten-year economic strategy to deliver growth and expand opportunity. It sits within a broader strategic framework to restore pride, purpose and prosperity to South Yorkshire.

Through the South Yorkshire Strategy, we are working collectively across South Yorkshire to be clear on the kind of region we want to create for our residents and businesses. The Strategy encompasses three ambitions:

1. **Every resident can stay near and go far.** The outcome areas for this ambition are skills and opportunity, and enterprise and good work.
2. **South Yorkshire is the healthiest region in the country**. The outcome areas for this ambition are health, communities, and housing.
3. **Every community is connected and proud of its place**. The outcome areas for this ambition are connections, place, and sustainability.

The Strategy has been built bottom up, informed by existing Local Authority area plans and community insight, as well as existing thematic strategies including:

1. **An economic strategy (the 'Local Growth Plan')**
2. **A skills and employment strategy**
3. **A health strategy**
4. **A police and crime strategy**
5. **A transport strategy**
6. **A spatial development strategy**
7. **An environment strategy**

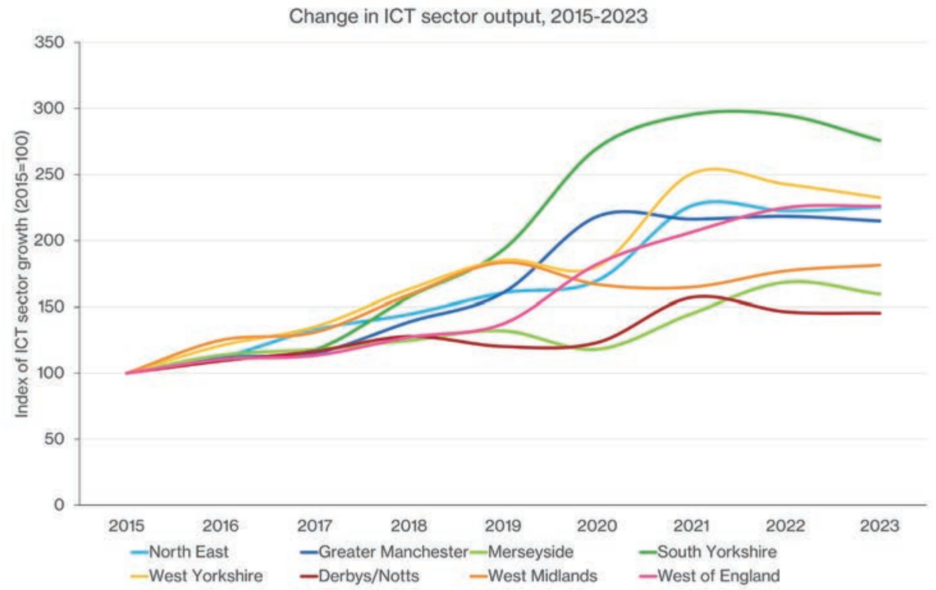
In its focus on growth and overall economic performance, the Local Growth Plan has a cross-cutting role within the South Yorkshire Strategy – we recognise that a bigger and better economy is an important foundation stone for achieving each of the Strategy's ambitions. But we recognise too that sustainable and inclusive growth depends on action across all of the Strategy's outcome areas. So this document indicates in the relevant sections how the Local Growth Plan's key actions will help to deliver against the South Yorkshire Strategy's specific outcome areas.

Our growth story so far

South Yorkshire is seeing positive progress in productivity growth. Recent data from the ONS shows strong growth across each of our local authority areas, especially Rotherham. There has also been a fall in the number of jobs earning below the living wage – Rotherham's share of jobs in 2022 earning below real living wage was less than half of 2018 – suggesting this productivity growth can and is translating into higher paid work, though it still needs to be spread more widely. Doncaster has also seen productivity growth driven by both an increase in hours worked and in GVA. And, of the UK's core cities, Sheffield has had one of the highest growth rates in the last decade.

This has been driven by growth in traditional regional sectors. The advanced manufacturing sector and finance/insurance sectors have experienced productivity growth above the national average since 2015, while health and logistics have experienced strong employment growth over the same period. The stand out sector is Information and Communications Technology, however, where South Yorkshire has experienced some of the fastest growth in the country – driven by sub-sector strengths in DeepTech, EdTech and gaming.

Graph 3
Combined Authority
ICT Sector Growth



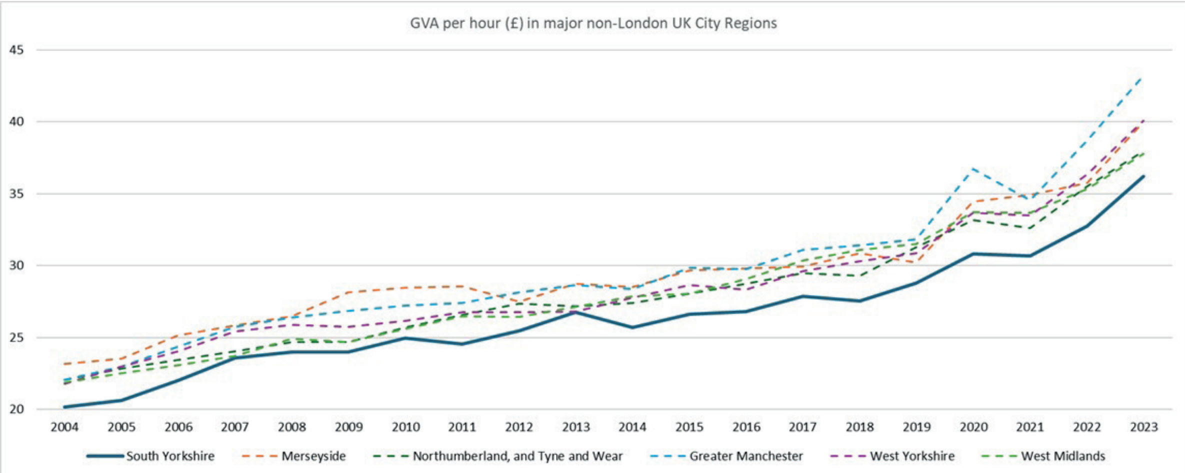
While this momentum is positive, South Yorkshire still remains below the national average in GVA per hour worked (in 2023, £33.80 compared to £41.90). It is a core challenge for the UK economy to move second tier-city region productivity levels closer to the national average – something that would increase national GDP and living standards.

This is not an easy tide to turn. For over four decades the UK's economic strategy has been to support growth of the Southeast and rely on incomplete methods of redistribution to spread the benefit elsewhere. The average gap in growth spend per head between 2008-2024 on the Greater South East and the rest of England was 14.5%.

In a radically changing global climate, this narrow approach to growth is too precarious. London's stagnating productivity growth is a warning that we cannot rely on what has come before to generate opportunity for the future.

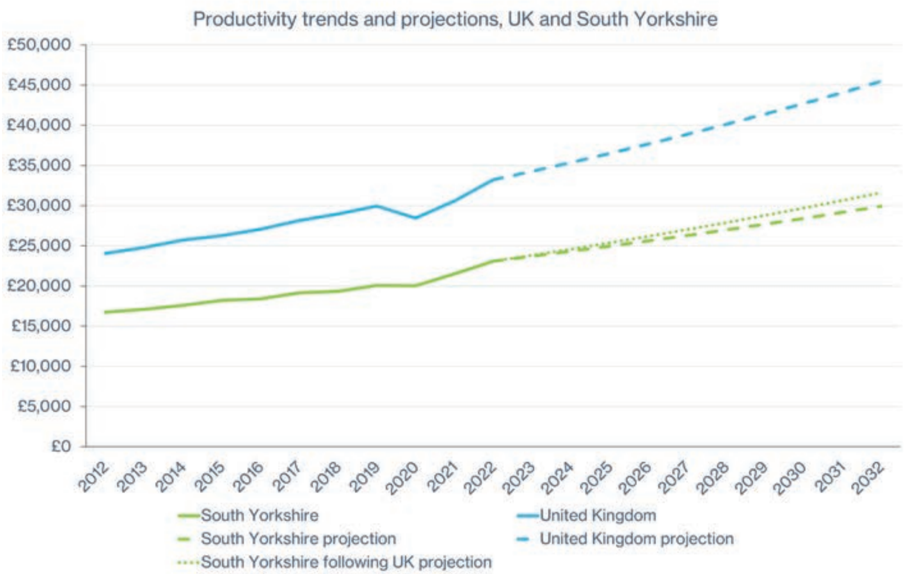
Converging with the national average by 2035 would require our economy to grow 2.5 times above current trajectories. If we matched the UK's productivity, each worker could be adding an extra £13,657 into our local economy.

Graph 4 GVA per hour (£) in major non-London UK City Regions



Graph 5

South Yorkshire and UK growth projections, GVA per head (£)



Our approach

The core challenge for South Yorkshire to achieve headline growth is the need to grow the business base and the labour market. We have fewer large, medium and small businesses than comparator regions (though a higher number of micro businesses), and too few that are scaling quickly. Without more firms investing, innovating and growing here, our residents will continue to have fewer opportunities and lower incomes than elsewhere.

We recognise that growth requires focus. That is the lesson from Rotherham, one of the few places in the UK to have delivered industrial strategy successfully around the Advanced Manufacturing Park. This Plan prioritises investment to grow business demand. We will not invest in everything, everywhere, all at once.

To prepare this Plan, we mapped the enablers of growth, decarbonisation and inclusion. We assessed where South Yorkshire underperforms compared to similar economies. Working with New Localism Associates, we developed a clear economic diagnostic of our industrial strategy growth sectors and the projects required to drive them forward.

Our Plan is organised around four Missions and eight Strategic Objectives:

1. **Our Businesses**

   2035 - a strong, diverse business base

   a. Our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

   b. Our business base is more dynamic, nested in a stronger business and innovation ecosystem

2. **Our Places**

   2035 - connected, vibrant places

   a. Our urban areas are better connected, attracting private investment

   b. Our residents are proud to call our towns and cities home and people want to visit

3. **Our People**

   2035 - pathways to stay near and go far

   a. Our children experience a good start in life

   b. Our residents can access more opportunities through skills training and employment support

4. **Our Future**

   2035 - a resilient SY

   a. Our networks are more future-proofed

   b. Our region's nature is more diverse

To achieve growth, we must deliver change across these missions. Action and success in one area will often be linked to and interdependent on another. We have designed a plan we can deliver today, but underpinning all our commitments here is an ambition to take on new powers and resources so that we have the tools we need to go further. We will work to understand the implications and opportunities of fiscal devolution, including place-based tax assignment.

We have also identified **four Growth Areas** which are a spatial representation of the missions above. They are where we will target development of our sectors and clusters – bringing in enabling infrastructure and services aligned to missions above - to create diverse clusters that drive growth. The Growth Areas represent nationally significant economic assets which will help to rebalance the UK economy.

These four Areas form the **backbone of our project pipeline** and are where we will seek to partner with investors to deliver the right mix of investment, innovation support, community/physical/natural infrastructure, ingenuity and skills, and incentives to drive good growth. They are:

1. **Sheffield City Centre and Innovation Spine**
2. **Don Valley**
3. **Barnsley Town Centre**
4. **South Yorkshire Airport City**

This Plan builds on the strategies of our local authorities, is informed by advice from the Mayoral Economic Advisory Council and Business Advisory Board, and has been shaped through extensive engagement with businesses, institutions and communities across South Yorkshire.

South Yorkshire's Growth Plan Summary

Vision	**SY 2035: A bigger, better economy** South Yorkshire's Vision for Business Growth and Greater Opportunity			
Missions	**Our businesses: 2035 – a strong, diverse business base**	**Our places: 2035 – connected, vibrant places**	**Our people: 2035 – pathways to stay near and go far**	**Our future: 2035 – a resilient SY**
Strategic Objectives	Our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth	Our urban areas are better connected, attracting private investment	Our children experience a good start in life	Our networks are more future-proofed
This plan will have worked if...	Our business base is more dynamic, nested in a stronger business and innovation ecosystem	Our residents are proud to call our towns and cities home and people want to visit	Our residents can access more opportunities through skills training and employment support	Our region's nature is more diverse
10 year programme priorities	• Trade, investment and promotional support • Connected innovation assets • A pipeline of talent, co-created with business • Cluster leadership	• A reliable, integrated and sustainable transport system • A well-connected region • Housing growth in our urban centres • Commercial development and institutional investment • A strong core city and urban centres working together in a single economy	• A good start for children through early years support • Progression for young people, through strong school, career and transition support	• Energy systems for the future • Digital capacity and inclusion for the future • Flood resilience and water management
To deliver our strategic objectives, we will focus on providing...	• Integrated business support and capability building • Finance ecosystem and investment readiness • Skills progression and pathways • Good business, including diverse business models	• A strong cultural, leisure and visitor economy offer • Vibrant high streets, town and city centres • Quality, sustainable and affordable housing • Safe and vibrant neighbourhoods, with strong community bonds	• High-quality, employment-focused basic and technical skills provision • Integrated employment support for those at risk of dropping out, or out of the labour market • Prevention services to reduce ill-health as a barrier to opportunity	• Beautiful, green urban regeneration and development • Enhancing natural habitats and species
Growth Areas	**Sheffield City Centre and Innovation Spine**	**Don Valley**	**South Yorkshire Airport City**	**Barnsley Town Centre**

Working with national government

We also recognise that growth requires good governance. Devolution provides a major opportunity to do things differently. It allows us to invest between departmental siloes – across skills, health, transport, housing and business support – to deliver greater value for money, respond to the complex needs of our local economy and residents, and act across the breadth of services that people and businesses rely on.

We are seeking a new relationship with government, where South Yorkshire has the agency, flexibility and authority to pursue the things our communities care about most, within a shared national mission for growth, prevention, opportunity and rebalancing.

The Integrated Settlement is a significant step in the right direction, but could go further. We need fewer disconnected strategies, more shared delivery plans; fewer fragmented funding pots, more outcome-led investment. A more enduring shift would also mean mayoral authorities become properly resourced and capable institutions with stable core staffing budgets, clear accountability and the capacity to engage with national government as equals.

Over the last decade, we have shown what is possible. Control of the Adult Education Budget has enabled us to reshape provision in line with business demand. Our Pathways to Work programme has influenced national policy on employment and health, saving the Exchequer between £2 and £4 for each pound invested, while transforming the lives of those receiving support. The South Yorkshire Investment Zone has leveraged every £1 of public investment with £9 from the private sector. These examples demonstrate that when decisions are taken locally, with strong governance and accountability, we can deliver more effectively. Going forward, we will need to deepen this collaborative model.

The Mayoral Combined Authority will provide strategic leadership and ensure coherence across missions, but success depends on partnership: with local authorities who shape places, with anchor institutions such as universities and the NHS who bring research and innovation power, and with the voluntary and community sector who connect directly with residents. This means building shared delivery platforms, transparent data systems, and joint accountability for outcomes.

However, for this Plan to succeed, national government must treat South Yorkshire as a trusted partner and work as an enabler by:

- Providing the long-term funding certainty, particularly for capacity, that allows us to plan and align departmental activity around our agreed priorities, giving us the flexibility to innovate.
- A more devolved settlement – with greater control over skills, transport, housing and health budgets – would allow us to deliver integrated solutions that Whitehall silos cannot.

As part of developing our Local Growth Plan, we also agreed the following shared priorities with government. These priorities respond to core constraints to growth outlined in this document and are where the MCA has judged it needs to strengthen partnership working with government to deliver on growth ambitions:

1. **Skills, employment and health**
2. **Transport**
3. **Placemaking, investment and communities**

Working with the private sector

The private sector, too, is a cornerstone of South Yorkshire's success. Public investment can unlock sites, de-risk projects and build enabling infrastructure, but it is private capital, entrepreneurship and innovation that will ultimately drive growth (Mission 1). Our role is to create the conditions in which businesses can invest confidently (Mission 2): a skilled workforce, strong clusters around anchor firms, effective transport and digital networks, and vibrant places that attract and retain talent. We will work with investors to assemble a clear pipeline of opportunities, align commercial development with Place Plans, and create mechanisms – from angel networks to institutional capital partnerships – that bring in private finance at scale.

Our global context

South Yorkshire's growth story is being shaped by profound structural changes in the global economy. Five changes, and our response to them, will define the region we become in 2035.

1. **Rising Geopolitical Tensions and Supply Chain Fragility**

   The change: Globalisation is being reshaped by geopolitical tensions, energy insecurity, and disrupted supply chains. Countries are reshoring production and re-prioritising industrial security, particularly in clean energy, strategic manufacturing and defence.

   Implications for South Yorkshire: With anchor institutions in aerospace, advanced manufacturing, clean energy and defence, South Yorkshire is well-placed to benefit from reshoring trends. Shorter, more resilient supply chains can cluster around our major firms and research centres, generating demand for SMEs and creating local opportunities. But this requires investment in logistics, energy infrastructure, and innovation ecosystems to connect foundational and applied research with scaled production.

2. **The Climate Crisis**

   The change: Climate change is reshaping economies worldwide. Climate change demands investment into decarbonisation of energy, industry, transport, and housing, while adaptation to extreme weather is unavoidable.

   Implications for South Yorkshire: Our per-capita emissions have been falling but achieving emissions reductions requires accelerating retrofit, mode shift in transport, and industrial decarbonisation. This challenge carries major opportunities, requiring investment and industrial transformation on an enormous scale in the electrification of vehicles, the design, operations and locations of our buildings and the source and transmission of our energy. The region has strengths in green hydrogen, advanced manufacturing for low-carbon technologies, housing retrofit materials and trades, and nature-based solutions for flood prevention. At the same time, resilience of our transport and energy infrastructure is critical to protect communities and maintain competitiveness.

3. **Technology Acceleration**

   The change: Rapid advances in automation, artificial intelligence, data, and digital technologies are transforming work and production. Global competition is intensifying around advanced manufacturing, health innovation, and digital infrastructure; it is not the invention of artificial intelligence that will drive broad based growth, but the deployment, which in turn depends on domain expertise in sectors.

   Implications for South Yorkshire: Around 13% of jobs in Doncaster, 9% in Barnsley, and 8% in Rotherham are at high risk of automation, higher than the national average . In manufacturing alone, 60% of tasks could be at risk of automation, and clerical automation is a systemic risk to a number of jobs. The risk of disruption is significant—but so is the opportunity. South Yorkshire's assets in world-class applied research, its manufacturing heritage, and the strong skills platform all mean that it is well placed to synthesise and deploy the technologies, which will determine regional competitiveness.

These include, but are not limited to, artificial intelligence and autonomy, robotics, quantum computing, additive manufacturing, advanced materials, digital engineering, sensors, small modular reactors, communications – all of which are now of use in any one sector.

4. Geography of Discontent and Cost-of-Living Pressures

The change: Rising inequality and persistent regional divides are driving discontent across many advanced economies. The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated vulnerabilities, hitting disadvantaged households hardest.

Implications for South Yorkshire: Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham sit in the most vulnerable tenth of local authorities nationally; Sheffield in the most vulnerable fifth. Disposable incomes are among the lowest in the UK. These pressures deepen long-standing challenges around poverty, health inequalities, and productivity. Our growth strategy must therefore be inclusive, creating good jobs, improving household resilience, and addressing the structural drivers of low incomes through skills, innovation and stronger local enterprise. The re-industrialisation stated above has the potential to rebalance growth in the UK.

5. Demographic Change and the Changing Nature of Work

The change: Ageing populations across advanced economies are reducing labour supply while increasing demand for care and health services. At the same time, demand for higher-skilled jobs is growing, with fewer opportunities for low-skilled work.

Implications for South Yorkshire: The share of working-age residents in South Yorkshire will fall, while jobs requiring only Level 2 or below qualifications are expected to decline from 215,000 today to 155,000 by 2035. Without action, many residents risk being locked out of the labour market. Our Skills Strategy sets out a shift towards high-level technical and professional skills, lifelong learning, and better progression routes. Harnessing the talents of all residents is essential to ensure resilience and productivity in a changing economy.

Our strengths

South Yorkshire's economy is being revalued in a changing global context. Successful regional economies connect companies, universities, skills providers, talent pools, supplier networks and start-up ecosystems with the infrastructure and space they need to thrive. This is what reindustrialisation looks like in practice, and South Yorkshire's ability to do this — through its unique constellation of innovation districts, its mix of innovation and production assets, and its space for expansion — is making it a key node in the UK's modern industrial economy.

£40bn economy. Population of 1.4 million people situated at the centre of England on key transport and logistics arteries to the North and South.

Expertise in core services and industry – we are clear on our capabilities and assets in South Yorkshire, particularly those key to UK plc growth and security. In South Yorkshire we are home to a world-leading engineering faculty and the world's first Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District. Our industrial history is built around providing practical solutions to complex problems. This isn't about manufacturing production from the last century, this now applies to high-value services, and cuts across not only to clean energy, life science, and defence sectors, but also underpins successes in the deep tech and digital, and creative and culture sectors, too.

Our capabilities aligned to high-precision engineering apply to several of the UK's growth sectors:

Advanced Manufacturing – high precision, no-room for error advanced materials, with metals and composites feeding into the aerospace, nuclear and defence supply chains, through companies such as Boeing, McLaren and Rolls Royce. The University of Sheffield's COMPASS project has propelled us to the forefront of global composites research, supplying cutting-edge materials for everything from aviation to defence. South Yorkshire has the largest workforce across MCAs in basic metals and the second largest in fabricated metal products, accounting for 14% of UK jobs in basic iron, steel, and ferro-alloys, and in tool manufacturing, and 12% in machinery for metallurgy.

Clean energy – South Yorkshire ranks as the UK's third-largest region for employment in clean energy and hydrogen (behind only York & North Yorkshire and Greater London), reflecting its growing role in the net-zero transition, despite having a smaller population than other areas. ITM Power, the University of Sheffield's 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.

Defence – the recent Defence Growth Deal identified South Yorkshire as one of five leading places in the UK in the defence industrial economy. We provide specialist steel for use in the defence sector through Sheffield Forgemasters, BAE Systems and Special Melted Products. These production assets are aligned to research strengths in advanced materials, air systems, AI and autonomy, and cybersecurity, and backed by world-class translational facilities working with companies such as AWE, BAE and many others. These strengths are supported by the University of Sheffield's membership of the Defence Universities Alliance.

Creative and cultural industries and digital and tech – this is a fast growing and dynamic set of interrelated sectors. The region has strengths in screen content production, music and sound production, videogames, software and live events. We are home to companies such as Warp Films, and EdTech, Gaming, BioTech, AI, and data companies like Tutorful and Sumo driving innovation. The tech sector is thriving, with a combined value of start-ups in the sector at £3.1bn in 2025, up from £326.

Life sciences – specialism in precision manufacturing with the largest cluster of medical device manufacturers in the country backed by presence of world-renowned companies such as B. Braun and Canon Medical. These production strengths are aligned to research specialisms in preventative health, genomics, imaging and child health.

Leaders in applied research - South Yorkshire has a global reputation for applied research to industry - through the University of Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre, Sustainable Aviation Fuels Innovation Centre, and the Gene Therapy Innovation and Manufacturing Centre, which has attracted Boeing and Rolls-Royce and shifted the region's research strengths into production. The Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre and other health assets around Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park have positioned us as the UK's leading hub for preventative health, attracting major players such as Canon Medical and Google

Deep pools of talent – produced by two outstanding universities, with around 60,000 students, of which over 30,000 are studying STEM, excellent further education provision from our Colleges, our Institute of Technology, University Technical Colleges, and independent providers. The University of Sheffield AMRC Training Centre is a leader in apprenticeship provision up to degree level, and Sheffield Hallam University is one of the largest UK providers of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, fuelling the talent pools of the future.

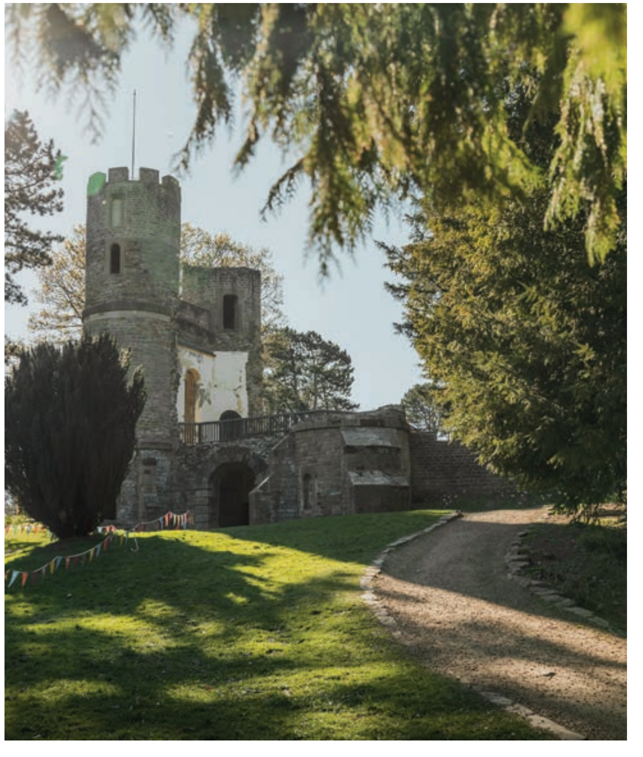
Trade Links - South Yorkshire sits at the centre of the UK, connecting the North and Midlands, positioning us as a hub for logistics, manufacturing and innovation. Our geography, infrastructure and energy capacity give us a natural role in national and international supply chains. We are deepening international links that give our businesses access to new markets, attract investment, and connect our research and innovation into global networks:

- **United States –** partnerships with Hampton Roads, Pittsburgh and St Louis link us to regions with shared industrial histories and current strengths in advanced manufacturing, clean energy and health innovation.
- **China –** a growing relationship with Chengdu opens up opportunities in advanced manufacturing and digital technology, connecting South Yorkshire firms to one of the world's fastest-growing markets.
- **Europe –** strong ties with Italy and Germany, built on both family and business connections, are helping us build collaborations in advanced manufacturing, clean energy and cultural industries.

Cultural impact and assets of national significance – nowhere has South Yorkshire been more innovative than in its creative and cultural output. We are the birthplace of the game of football. We are home to World Snooker Championships with viewership growing globally. We have pushed the boundaries of music genres, are home to the St Leger, the Children's Media Festival and Crossed Wires Festivals – and in the Rotherham led Children's Capital of Culture a major opportunity to grow youth led cultural programming. Sheffield DocFest, a flagship festival, saw attendance surge from 25,000 in 2022 to 41,000 in 2024, with over 30% of audiences coming from outside South Yorkshire.

A growing visitor economy – the region is going from strength to strength evidenced by year-on-year growth in our visitor economy. The visitor economy generated £3.7bn of economic impact in 2024 up 31% from 2022. The region has an established Local Visitor Economy Partnership and a Destination Management Plan that will support the development of a host of major visitor economy assets in the region, and will support the development of both home-grown and newly attracted major events, while promoting the region to domestic and international markets through our partnership with Visit England.

Room to grow – sitting at the heart of England, on rail and road arteries to the Southeast and the North, South Yorkshire has the space to grow. Our industrial heritage has afforded us the grid capacity and land to support new and growing services and industry for example the huge expansion at Unity J5 M18 one of the largest regeneration and infrastructure projects of its kind in the UK.



Quality of life – Nature, hills and valleys are as accessible as music and bars in town and city centres. One third of Sheffield is National Park, three quarters of South Yorkshire is green. Our waterways – once the arteries of our industry – are now home to thriving natural ecosystems and regeneration alongside.

A place communities are proud to call home – SouthYorkshire's cultural, social and economic history is one of community resistance and resilience. A culture of doing things for people and by people can be found in both public and private organisations across the region. These values continually drive businesses and public services to find new and better ways to support people in the region and beyond.

Our Missions

Our Businesses: 2035 – A Strong, Diverse Business Base

Why this mission matters

A thriving business base is the engine of South Yorkshire's prosperity and is central to tackling the core challenge of business demand in South Yorkshire.

Targeted sector development is a proven driver of high-value growth, stimulating the creation of high-wage jobs and encouraging greater investment into the region and the UK economy. The traded sector matters because it brings new wealth into the region – exporting goods and services, attracting inward investment and creating multiplier effects across local supply chains.

Our region is pioneering the reindustrialisation of the UK economy. We know South Yorkshire supports over 200,000 jobs closely aligned with the UK's high-growth sectors, with life sciences, upstream manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing among the largest employers.

Traded sector growth is critical but not the only foundation of growth. South Yorkshire's foundational economy is large and essential: logistics contributes £1.6bn annually, health provides 95,000 jobs, education generates £3.5bn and employs 62,000 people, retail employs 56,000, and public administration contributes £1.9bn. These foundational sectors are intertwined with our growth sectors, providing skills, infrastructure and demand that underpin their success.

To unlock prosperity, South Yorkshire needs to improve business dynamism in all areas of the economy, with more businesses starting, scaling and achieving their growth potential; more businesses exporting and attracting investment from abroad; and existing businesses doing more to adopt new technologies and business models that will drive productivity. That requires a business support environment that is neither generic, nor programmatic, but one that provides the right support to businesses at the right time.

Why South Yorkshire is starting from a position of strength

South Yorkshire is being revalued as an economy that combines production and innovation activity, through world-class research institutions, globally significant manufacturers, emerging technology clusters, and a platform of engineering excellence across sectors. More importantly, the region's size, its institutional strength, its space and grid capacity, and its close relationships between universities, businesses, and public institutions are enabling agile, coordinated action at pace.

Our established clusters in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, life sciences, and defence offer powerful innovation platforms where collaboration, supplier networks, and talent can enhance regional competitiveness. Emerging strengths in digital technologies, creative industries, and health innovation highlight the region's ability to grow the region's service economy at speed, including through reform to public services.

The appeal of our quality of life, from green spaces to supportive communities, has been the reason countless enterprises start, scale, and relocate here

What the key barriers are that need to be addressed

Despite these strengths, South Yorkshire faces barriers to business growth:

- **Business dynamism –** South Yorkshire needs more and stronger business starts - entry, growth and survival rates are weaker than similar regions, limiting job creation, innovation and the overall size of the business base.
- **Demand-side weakness –** The traded sector is smaller than peers, with export rates below the UK average and lower levels of private R&D investment. Without strong private demand and anchor buyers for innovative products, firms face weaker incentives to invest and grow.

Our Businesses: 2035 – A Strong, Diverse Business Base

- **Innovation adoption lag –** World-class research assets generate cutting-edge knowledge, but diffusion into the broader economy is slow and uneven. Many SMEs lack the absorptive capacity, skills and finance to adopt and adapt new technologies and business models.
- **Ecosystem fragmentation –** Business support, finance, skills provision and innovation services are still too programmatic and delivered in isolation. This creates navigation challenges for firms, prevents coordination, and weakens the emergence of integrated value propositions that could drive growth.

Objectives, outcomes and actions

To strengthen and diversify our business base, over the next ten years we will deliver against the following objectives:

1. **Our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth:**

   Traded sector growth and strong clusters are central to raising regional productivity and wages. South Yorkshire's economy does not, however, work in neat sectoral silos. Our competitive advantage lies at the intersections: where advanced manufacturing meets clean energy, where digital capabilities enhance health and life sciences, and where materials science underpins defence and aerospace.

   Our established clusters already demonstrate exceptional concentrations of businesses, innovation assets and expertise, attracting world-leading companies and generating significant economic impact. The next stage of growth requires embedding these capabilities more deeply into the regional economy: increasing inward investment, market access and exports; translating research into commercial applications; strengthening supply chains around anchor institutions and supporting start-ups and scale-ups; and, providing the right skills at the right time for companies that want to invest. By driving productivity in key clusters, we will generate benefits that filter through to the wider South Yorkshire economy.

Our 10-year aspiration:

Strong sectoral growth and private investment, supported by a unified trade and investment proposition, connected innovation assets accelerating technology adoption, workforce development aligned to sector and employer needs, and clear cluster leadership coordinating firms, supply chains and institutions.

Our Businesses: 2035 – A Strong, Diverse Business Base

2. **Our business base is more dynamic, nested in a stronger business and innovation ecosystem:**

   Across all sectors, a thriving business base is key to prosperity. Traditional approaches to business support have treated firms in isolation, offering programmatic interventions, missing the reality that innovation happens through network relationships. Firms innovate faster when they can access complementary capabilities, share risks through partnerships, and learn from adjacent industries.

   The region's task is to build and develop the institutional infrastructure that enables these connections. This includes formal support programmes and informal networks, trusted relationships, and shared knowledge that make a place conducive to entrepreneurship and innovation.

Our 10-year aspiration:

A strong pipeline of high-growth businesses supported through a clear and impactful South Yorkshire offer, including integrated business support and capability building, a robust finance ecosystem and investment readiness, skills progression and pathways, and the promotion of good businesses, including diverse business models.

How we will measure success:

1. **More businesses starting, scaling and innovating**
2. **An increase in the number of well-paid, high-skill jobs in high-growth businesses and sectors**
3. **Higher levels of private investment that enables businesses to grow**
4. **Increased uptake of new technology, processes and business models**
5. **More businesses with great management practices**

Our Businesses: 2035 – A Strong, Diverse Business Base

In the next year we will:

Sectors and clusters

- Build the region's trade and investment through establishing a trade and investment agency, with a clear regional pitch and place brand.
- Grow our key sectors through sector plans that tell the story, map the assets and workforce needs, and positions the sector for investment.
- Build a pipeline of investment into innovative, fast-growing firms in priority sectors.

Business and innovation ecosystem

- Deliver an integrated business support function through a business support review, offering high quality, impactful support to businesses at each stage of their growth journey.
- Attract investment through deeper relationships with public and private financial institutions.
- Develop an integrated Skills Platform for employers to find talent, apprentices and funding support through Skills Bank.
- Leverage employment support programmes such as Pathways to Work to encourage employers to support workforce retention and development.
- Develop an MCA Ethical Procurement Strategy, focused on how procurement can strengthen regional supply chains and support circular economy.

Our Businesses: 2035 – A Strong, Diverse Business Base

In the next five years we will:

Sectors and clusters

- Ensure our existing innovation assets, such as the AMRC and AWRC, maximise local economic impact, and develop a pipeline of new innovation assets, such as the National Centre for Digital Technology and the National Clean Energy Modularisation Centre, to drive local growth.
- Strengthen regional supply chains for growth sectors.
- Build a regional insight hub to hold data on new and growing businesses in growth sectors to support cluster leadership.
- Develop a pipeline of skills capital investment projects to strengthen training institutions, such as the AMRC Training Centre.

Business and innovation ecosystem

- Develop a plan to drive growth and resilience in the foundational sectors of the South Yorkshire economy.
- Expand employer-facing skills development programmes as part of our ‘Skills Roadmap’ to ensure clear routes-to-work for residents.
- Develop a leadership and management training offer for SMEs and innovative sectors.

Our Places: 2035 – Connected, Vibrant Places

Why this mission matters

Great places are at the heart of economic growth and are core to attracting the private investment that addresses the core challenge of business dynamism. People and businesses want to live, work, visit and invest where they can access reliable transport, high-quality housing, vibrant cultural life and thriving town and city centres. Places with greater 'effective density' – with more people and businesses connected by fast, reliable transport – are more productive, innovative and attractive to investment.

In South Yorkshire, our economic ambitions cannot be achieved without strengthening the fabric of our places through regeneration: creating neighbourhoods that are attractive, affordable and well-used, and centres that are hubs of culture, commerce and community. Such places create a sense of pride and belonging that encourages people to stay and build their lives here.

Why South Yorkshire is starting from a position of strength

South Yorkshire has a strong identity, with residents proud to call it their home. Sheffield is a core city with a growing knowledge economy, a renowned cultural and creative sector, and neighbourhoods that are offering a high quality of life. The region is redefining the art of regeneration and building communities that draw people in, through Health on the High Street and the Glassworks in Barnsley, Forge Island in Rotherham and Doncaster Waterfront.

Our region's connectivity is improving through investment in buses, tram renewal, active travel and our soon to be re-opened airport, while our location at the heart of the UK positions us as a logistics hub. We also have outstanding natural assets – from the Peak District to the Dearne Valley – that make South Yorkshire an attractive and liveable region. Our Destination Management Plan (2024-2029) sets out our assets across heritage, arts and culture, sport and more that we can build on to drive tourism but also to increase the profile of the region to prospective enterprises and talent.

What the key barriers are that need to be addressed

Yet too many of our places still fall short of their potential:

- **Transport connectivity and density –** Poor transport capacity limits the effective density of our region, including our core city, holding back economic and housing growth. Centre for Cities estimate a £2.3bn productivity gap in Sheffield compared to other European cities due to weaker public transport accessibility. Increasing connectivity between regions, such as through Northern Powerhouse Rail, will also benefit South Yorkshire's economy.
- **Transport coverage, reliability and market access –** Network gaps and inconsistent reliability on buses constrain residents' access to jobs, training and services, particularly in less well-connected towns and neighbourhoods. Greater public control is part of the answer, and we are taking this forward through our bus and tram networks. Limited strategic connectivity is also a barrier: South Yorkshire is currently one of the largest regions in Europe without an operational airport, reducing access to global markets and investment opportunities.
- **Housing growth and quality –** Housing growth has not kept pace with demand, while the existing stock is older and less energy efficient than in peer regions. 15% of households are in fuel poverty and 8.6% of houses in 2023 were classed as EPC E or worse. This creates higher retrofit requirements, but also a significant opportunity for green jobs and skills. To realise the housing growth required for

Our Places: 2035 – Connected, Vibrant Places

the region there is an opportunity to increase local construction skills and jobs. We see housing as a central part of wider regeneration efforts, and with a greater share of national funding we can raise our ambitions. Our local authorities are all stock-owning, so we are also well-placed to support increased investment in social housing.

- **Centres and high streets –** Changing retail and leisure patterns have hollowed out many high streets. While regeneration projects such as Barnsley's Health on the High Street and Rotherham's Forge Island are showing what can be achieved, further progress is needed.

- **Public safety and perceptions of place –** Safety concerns and weak perceptions of our centres and neighbourhoods hold back confidence, deterring investment and footfall.

- **Cultural and visitor economy –** South Yorkshire has strong cultural institutions and visitor assets, but the sector remains underdeveloped compared to peer regions and is not yet fully leveraged to attract visitors, talent and investment

Our Places: 2035 – Connected, Vibrant Places

Objectives, outcomes and actions

To deliver more connected, more vibrant places, over the next ten years we will deliver against the following objectives, aligned with the South Yorkshire Strategy's communities, housing, connections, and place outcome areas:

1. **Our urban areas are better connected, attracting private investment:**

   Currently, South Yorkshire lacks the comparative agglomeration gains and knowledge clusters that would make the region an even greater magnet to talent and investment. Our Core City in particular struggles to compete with its peers in fostering innovation clusters and in bringing workers in during the morning rush hour. Successive studies show if core cities underperform, this creates a ceiling on the performance of surrounding areas and the national economy. To deliver a step change, we must use our infrastructure assets – transport, housing, commercial development and planning, energy and digital infrastructure, as well as high street and health services – to increase density in our urban areas.

Our 10-year aspiration:

- **A reliable, integrated and sustainable transport system that better connects residents to opportunity within the region and beyond.**
- **A strong core city and urban centres supported by housing growth and greater commercial development and institutional investment.**

Our Places: 2035 – Connected, Vibrant Places

2. **Our residents are proud to call South Yorkshire home and people want to visit:**

   Lack of effective density is one of the big challenges to improving the region's productivity and creating the enterprises and jobs which will raise household income. However, we must develop places that support high-quality of life across our region. To not do so would continue to limit the pulling power of our region in attracting and retaining business, investment and talent. So, whilst on the one hand we push to improve effective density, with the other we must address foundational challenges in creating successful places across our region that attract business and talent.

Our 10-year aspiration:

- **A strong cultural, leisure and visitor economy offer.**
- **Safe, vibrant and cohesive communities in which people have pride to look after themselves, each other and their local environment.**
- **Residents have access to good quality, warm, sustainable and affordable homes in vibrant neighbourhoods.**

How we will measure success:

1. **Higher levels of private investment in place**
2. **Increase in our region's effective density**
3. **Improved transport connections across regions and within South Yorkshire**
4. **Housing quality, density and affordability**
5. **Fast, reliable digital infrastructure**
6. **More people choosing to move and stay in the area**
7. **A larger, more vibrant culture and visitor economy**
8. **Strong, more connected communities**

Our Places: 2035 – Connected, Vibrant Places

In the next year we will:

Investment in urban areas and connections

- Publish the Local Transport Plan - including an investment plan, covering our main funding settlements (CRSTS and TCR).
- Develop South Yorkshire Airport City by investing in the development pipeline.
- Continue investment in the supertram network and mobilising a franchising bus network in preparation for going live in September 2027.
- Grow Rotherham Town Centre through a new mainline station and complementary land use strategy.
- Develop a phased, investment pipeline for the Housing Growth Fund.
- Expand South Yorkshire's catalytic investment offer - through JESSICA, IZ, and the new Revolving Growth Fund and the City Densification Fund - to improve site viability and develop a pipeline of sites for catalytic investment.
- Begin development of Spatial Development Strategy.

Vibrant places

- Invest in our creative and cultural infrastructure and our visitor economy through:

  - Launching a £500,000 Creative and Cultural Industries Fund that supports the capacity and capability of creative and cultural industries to become more commercially sustainable, build talent pathways and support stronger networks, collaboration partnerships and advocacy.

  - Expand the Local Visitor Economy Partnership to build a more coherent approach to the regions visitor economy sector.

  - Develop the South Yorkshire brand and narrative work in tandem with culture, creative and visitor economy work.

- Improve community safety to support business investment, vibrant public spaces for visitors, retail, hospitality and our night-time economy by delivering our Police and Crime Plan.
- Develop a pipeline of social infrastructure schemes to continue supporting capital investment in our communities, neighbourhoods and high streets.
- Regenerate our priority neighbourhoods, town and city centres through pipeline development.
- Prevent rough sleeping and temporary accommodation use through delivering the South Yorkshire Homelessness Framework.
- Reduce digital coldspots through a regional digital infrastructure pipeline, using insights form Streetwave.
- Support employers to adapt and develop workforce resilience through pilots as part of Barnsley Tech Town.

Our Places: 2035 – Connected, Vibrant Places

In the next five years we will:

Investment in urban areas and connections

- Build the case for inter-regional rail by working in partnership across the North to realise ambition for Northern Powerhouse Rail.
- Publish a SYMCA Housing Strategy to inform delivery of a housing growth agenda, including tenure and type.
- Expand on our partnership model with Homes England to bring forward housing growth, alongside infrastructure development, to increase the effective density of our urban centres.
- Adopt the South Yorkshire Spatial Development Strategy by Spring of 2029.

Vibrant places

- Build a pipeline of cultural, heritage and visitor economy assets and identify opportunities to access funding for major asset development and renewal.
- Align investment in communities and neighbourhoods with wider and complementary priorities, such as investment in skills, nature recovery and regeneration.
- Reduce energy bills and improve housing conditions by expanding retrofit schemes.
- Deliver Local Authority Place Plans.
- Develop our healthy homes agenda into how housing improvements can improve health outcomes.

Our People: 2035 – Pathways to Stay Near and Go Far

Why this mission matters

A larger labour market means a larger economy – with higher incomes and greater opportunities to be shared amongst residents.

Good growth depends on ensuring residents have the health, skills and opportunities to contribute and thrive. When people can access secure, well-paid work, their health improves, families prosper and communities flourish. Creating greater opportunity, by ensuring all residents – regardless of age, background or circumstance – can "stay near and go far" is central to our vision of a bigger, better economy.

Approximately one in four working-age residents in South Yorkshire are economically inactive – 3.0 percentage points above the national average. Helping more people into work will deliver significant aggregate economic gains, while improving wellbeing and reducing inequalities.

South Yorkshire also has a higher rate of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) than the UK overall - a gap that has persisted and worsened over time. Sheffield has driven this trend to some extent, with NEET rates associated with entrenched disadvantage in the North and East of the city. And we know that once young people become NEET, the status is sticky, with continuation rates higher than exits at every age.

Why South Yorkshire is starting from a position of strength

Our people are resilient, taking pride in hard work, creativity and community. South Yorkshire has a diverse population, a growing student base drawn from outstanding universities, and employers committed to working with us to co-design skills and employment pathways. There is a rich history in vocational and technical education, through our University Technical Colleges, our Institute of Technology, the AMRC Training Centre, and FE Colleges with a strong presence in mid-level, technical skill provision.

We are leading the way on employment support for the economically inactive through Pathways to Work, defining the personalised, comprehensive approach that is needed from public services in modern society. Devolution has given us control of the Adult Skills Fund, which we are already reforming to better align provision with employer demand. We also have innovative health and skills programmes, and a track record of partnership between councils, colleges, universities, the NHS and voluntary sector to support residents, through nationally significant programmes such as Pathways to Work.

We are also committed to tackling the NEETs problem. Pathways to Work offers an exemplary model, and the programme's engagement with young people is increasing as a result of 'trailblazer' funding. We are working with South Yorkshire's schools to improve careers advice through the Careers Hub, and exercising national leadership in data on NEETs so that we can improve delivery models. All of South Yorkshire's local authorities are prioritising this problem through a range of interventions – it is hugely encouraging that Rotherham has seen its 16-17 NEET rate fall significantly below the national average in recent years.

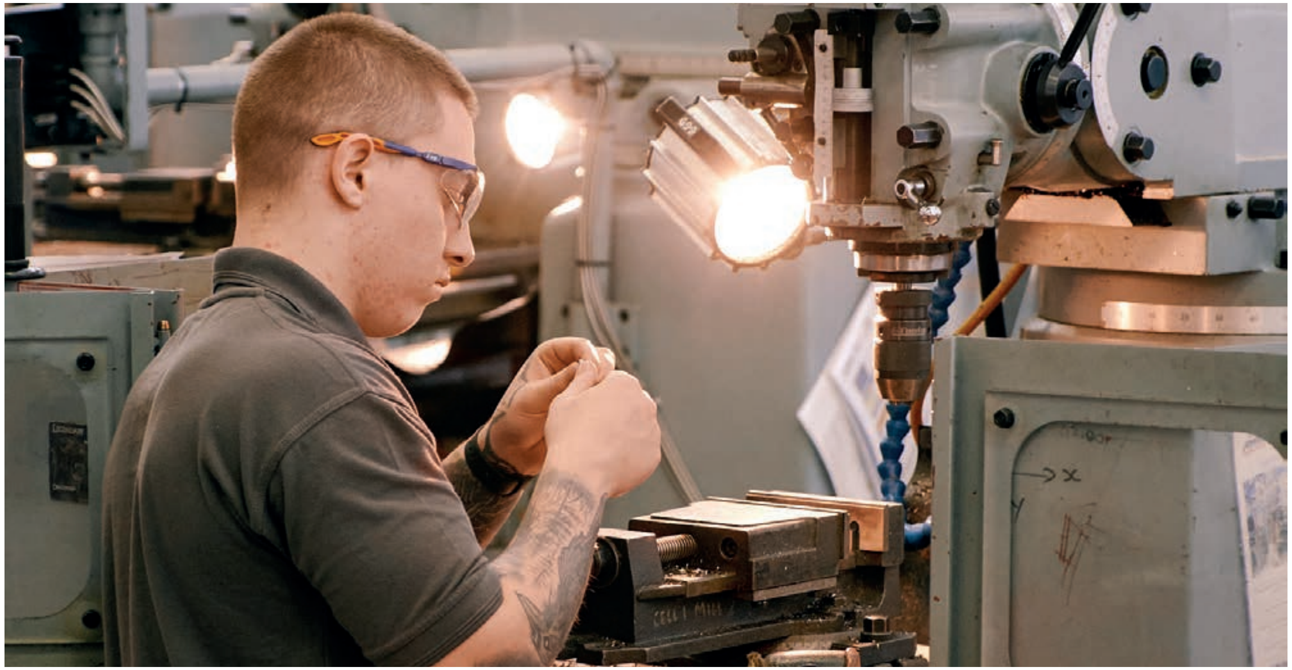
Further devolution, enabling greater local influence over the education, skills and youth transition system, would allow us to be more ambitious. The opportunity is not simply to improve support once young people are already NEET, for example, but to give South Yorkshire the freedoms, flexibilities and funding control to build a stronger model of prevention and early intervention.

Our People: 2035 – Pathways to Stay Near and Go Far

What the key barriers are that need to be addressed

The challenges remain stark.

- **Healthy life expectancy and economic inactivity** – One in three economically inactive people in South Yorkshire are inactive due to ill-health. Men and women in South Yorkshire live on average two fewer years of healthy life compared to counterparts across the Pennines in Greater Manchester. In Barnsley and Doncaster, men now outlive women in healthy years, highlighting inequalities within the region.
- **Low qualifications** – In 2024, 10.2% of South Yorkshire working-age residents had no formal qualifications, 3.6 percentage points higher than the national average. This is equivalent to around 88,100 people, limiting access to good jobs and progression opportunities. This gap holds back both individuals and the region's competitiveness.
- **Structural barriers to opportunity** – The employment rate among ethnic minorities in South Yorkshire is 7.5 percentage points lower than the national average. Combined with higher inactivity rates for people with long-term health conditions and SEND learners, this points to systemic barriers that prevent too many residents from realising their potential.
- **Young people at risk** – In the 2024/2025 academic year South Yorkshire saw higher-than-average NEET levels among 16–17-year-olds (5.0% vs 3.4% nationally), alongside rising school absenteeism and mental health challenges. Without intervention, we risk a lost generation of talent unable to access education, training or work.
- **Skills mismatch** – The region underperforms in the 'missing middle' of technical skills at Levels 3–5, where employer demand is strongest. At the same time, jobs requiring low or no qualifications are forecast to decline, leaving residents with outdated skills more exposed to economic change.



Our People: 2035 – Pathways to Stay Near and Go Far

Objectives, outcomes and actions

To deliver more and better pathways for our residents to stay near and go far, over the next ten years we will deliver against the following objectives, aligned with the South Yorkshire Strategy's skills and opportunity and health outcome areas:

1. **Our children experience a good start in life:** Investing in children and young people, ensuring they have the support systems and skills to thrive, is a necessary condition of a thriving and resilient economy. Unfortunately, worrying trends such as a rise in the proportion of young people not in employment, education and training – particularly in Sheffield and Rotherham – and national trends in increasing school absence suggest current support is insufficient.

Our 10-year aspiration:

- **A good start for our children through early years support and progression for young people through schools, career and transition support.**

2. **Our residents can access more opportunities through skills training and employment support:**

   The adoption of new technologies, an ageing population and the climate crisis are reshaping skills needs and the future of work. For South Yorkshire to succeed, we need to grow the number of enterprises and diversify our industrial base, while ensuring local people can access these opportunities. That requires an inclusive workforce strategy which removes barriers to good work. This means improving health outcomes, providing holistic employment support to help people move into and progress in work, enabling reskilling and upskilling throughout life, and raising overall skills attainment so more people can build sustainable careers.

Our 10-year aspiration:

- **Residents can access more opportunities through high-quality, employment-focused skills provision, alongside integrated employment support for those out of the labour market, or at the risk of dropping out.**
- **There are improved prevention services, leading to increases in healthy life expectancy and reduced health inequalities.**

How we will measure success:

1 **Improved early childhood development**

2 **More residents with the skills, qualifications and capabilities needed to access good jobs and progress in work**

3 **Improved physical and mental health outcomes across the population**

4 **Increased participation in the labour market**

Our People: 2035 – Pathways to Stay Near and Go Far

In the next year we will:

Children and young people

- Improve early years outcomes for children and families, building on Beds for Babies and Every Child a Reader.
- Develop a preventative health approach through the Health Commissioner, which grows the labour market and reduces healthy life inequalities.
- Develop a cross-organisational plan to support young people to transition into education, employment or training at 16.

Skills and employment support

- Deliver a skills 'roadmap' to align Adult Skills Fund to Skills Strategy Mission 2 and 3.
- Continue to bring together employment support under 'Pathways to Work', and leverage support programmes to encourage employers to support workforce retention and development.
- Deliver a Voluntary and Community Sector Fund to support health and wellbeing in the community.

In the next five years we will:

Children and young people

- Develop a regional insight hub and commission pioneering research to further understand outcomes for early years and young people.
- Define a healthy life inequality approach that meets new statutory duties.

Skills and employment support

- Develop a pipeline of capital investment schemes to improve capacity to deliver employer-focused training.
- Expand employer-facing skills development programmes as part of our 'Skills Roadmap' to ensure clear routes-to-work for residents.
- Pilot better alignment of job centre and National Careers services regionally to enable greater personalisation and localisation of employment support.
- Expand on the Shared Investment Fund and strengthen regional partnerships across health providers and commissioners, to co-commission and deliver services focused on prevention.

Our Future: 2035 – A Resilient South Yorkshire

Why this mission matters

Resilience is the foundation of long-term prosperity. Missions 1-3 will help ensure we develop resilience in our business base, in our places and in our people. This Mission focuses on the resilience of our physical and natural infrastructure.

In a world facing climate change, technological disruption and geopolitical uncertainty, regions that can adapt and withstand shocks will be those that succeed. For South Yorkshire, resilience means decarbonising our economy, protecting our communities from climate risks, delivering secure and sufficient energy, and ensuring our digital and transport networks are fit for the future. It means stewarding and safeguarding our natural environment. Without resilience, growth cannot be sustained.

Why South Yorkshire is starting from a position of strength

South Yorkshire has already taken important steps towards resilience. Per capita carbon emissions are falling across all four local authorities. We are home to the industrial innovation capabilities that can manufacture decarbonised power – from hydrogen, small and large nuclear, fusion technology and sustainable aviation fuels – and we have strong natural assets, from our green spaces to the Peak District National Park.

We are leading the way with a catchment-wide approach to water management, and in the use of heat networks to provide steady, decarbonised heat to networks and businesses. A 2021 report which mapped the region's natural capital and biodiversity found that overall, the region is a net emitter of carbon at 105,300 tCO2e per year at a cost of £8 million annually. This sits against a natural ecosystem whose natural capital provides £550 million in benefits per annum, with an asset value (present value) of £18 billion over 50 years

What the key barriers are that need to be addressed

The challenges, however, remain significant:

- **Decarbonisation gap and living standards –** To date, most of South Yorkshire's emissions reductions have come from national policy and grid decarbonisation. Further local action is required across transport, housing retrofit and industrial processes. The region's older housing stock and carbon-intensive industries mean the challenge is greater here than in many other regions, but with it comes an opportunity to develop a leading position in new industries and in materially improving the fabric of homes.
- **Flood and climate risk –** South Yorkshire's infrastructure remains vulnerable to extreme weather, with flooding already a major risk to homes, businesses and transport networks. In 2024, nearly 14,000 households were classed as at risk of flooding. Without stronger resilience, climate impacts will continue to damage communities, deter investment and increase costs.
- **Digital connectivity and inclusion –** While While improving, digital infrastructure still lags behind in parts of the region, leaving communities and firms without reliable access to full-fibre or 5G. Alongside gaps in infrastructure, digital exclusion persists, with too many residents lacking the skills or access to benefit from the digital economy.
- **Biodiversity loss and underinvestment in natural capital –** South Yorkshire has significant natural assets, from the Peak District to its river catchments, but habitats are in poorer condition than in many peer regions. Declines in biodiversity, combined with underinvestment in green infrastructure, undermine both environmental sustainability and residents' quality of life.

Our Future: 2035 – A Resilient South Yorkshire

- **Nature recovery** – We must go beyond protection to actively restore nature. Only 14% of England's rivers are in good ecological status. South Yorkshire's catchments are no exception. Investment in large-scale habitat restoration and nature-based solutions is needed to sequester carbon, reduce flood risk, and enhance access to green space.

Objectives, outcomes and actions

To deliver a more resilient South Yorkshire, over the next ten years we will deliver against the following objectives, aligned with the South Yorkshire Strategy's sustainability outcome area:

1. **Our networks are more future-proofed:**

   We need to be proactive in ensuring our infrastructure is climate resilient and adaptable. Failing to do so will not only generate further cost to residents in the future but will impact the ability for businesses to grow and the vibrancy of our place. Missions 1 – 3 build resilience in our business base, places and people; this mission is about our infrastructure and natural world. Future-proofing our networks and places must therefore go hand in hand with our objectives around supporting development of our Growth Sectors and delivering our Growth Areas.

Our 10-year aspiration:

- **An energy system fit for the future providing businesses and residents with power that is affordable, secure, and decarbonised, including systems that are more locally generated and community owned.**

2. Our region's nature is more diverse:

Flourishing natural habitats woven through our urban and rural communities are an important draw to pulling in business, talent and tourists into the region and making this a place people want to live and bring up families. They are also important for creating the natural eco-systems we all rely on in our daily lives. Sustaining our natural world – from our rivers to our moorland and our urban green spaces - is fundamental to the functioning of any society in and of itself. We have seen in other places how poorly performing ecosystem services – such as low air quality and polluted waterways – can prevent residents from living long and prosperous lives, having a knock-on impact on workforce participation, talent retention and business development. Action here will link closely to ambitions to drive greater effective urban density, improve foundations of place and future-proof our networks and places.

Our 10-year aspiration:

- **We will have increased the region's natural capital and future-proofed our places by ensuring fewer homes and businesses at risk of flooding, encouraging beautiful, green urban development, and enabling greater natural diversity through enhanced and expanded clean air and natural habitats.**

How we will measure success:

1. **Reduced greenhouse gas emissions**
2. **Expanded and modernised energy grid capacity**
3. **Lower, more predictable energy costs for households and businesses**
4. **Communities, infrastructure and the natural environment better able to withstand climate impacts**
5. **Increased biodiversity and healthier natural ecosystems**

In the next year we will:

Future-proofed networks

- Develop a regional energy pipeline built on insight as to how and where electricity demand in South Yorkshire is going to change over coming decades.
- Continue to respond to the South Yorkshire Citizens' Assembly on Climate.

Natural ecosystems

- Develop water resilience by expanding the Connected by Water project pipeline.
- Improve the region's natural capital by developing a pipeline of projects through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

In the next five years we will:

Future-proofed networks

- Bring private investment in to pipelines through a South Yorkshire Green Investment Fund.

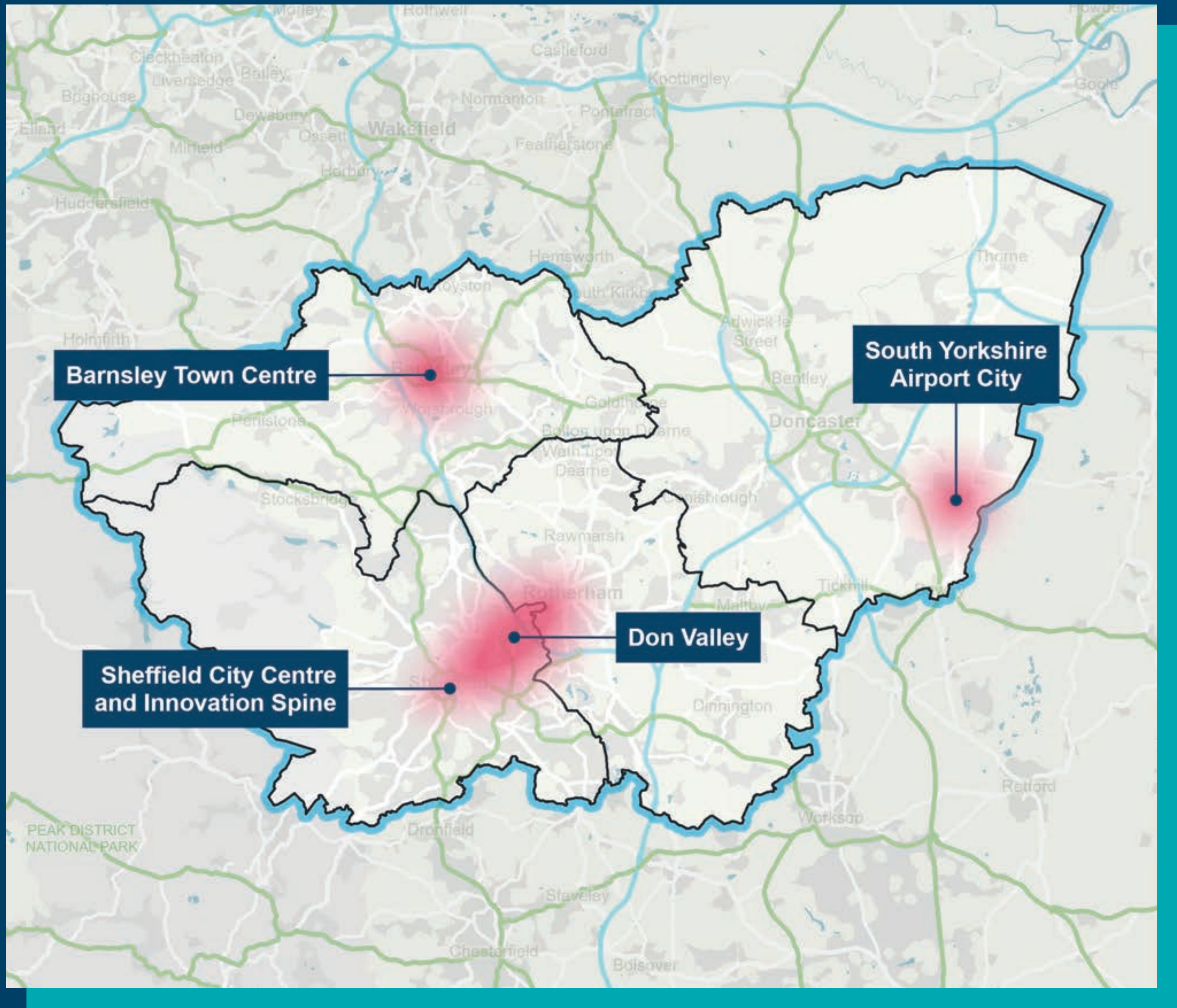
Natural ecosystems

- Deliver our nature recovery project pipeline through a range of investment and finance models to bring forward.
- Develop nature recovery and improvement projects that are integrated into our housing, regeneration and transport schemes.

Our Growth Areas

Our preceding Plan for Good Growth (2024) introduced our four Growth Areas. These are the spatial representation of our four missions above and are at the heart of our regional investment pipeline.

Over the next decade, the MCA will coordinate and prioritise investment towards these Areas to create secure, high-paid jobs, which bring income and further investment into the region.



Don Valley

Stretching from Rotherham town centre through to Sheffield, this is a globally significant innovation district combining four adjacent innovation campuses, home to 30 cutting-edge R&D facilities, and to recognised industry leaders including Boeing, Rolls Royce, McLaren Automotive, NIKKEN and Canon Medical.

The internationally recognised translational research facilities set the region apart, supporting over 1,200 businesses with more than 3,500 employees. The area also includes a major new urban business district at Rotherham with plans for new housing, mixed-use development and cultural investment.

Advanced Manufacturing Park (AMP)

A magnet for investment and social mobility, AMP is home to the AMRC and trains over 1,360 apprentices annually. It generated £260m in funding and created 600 high-productivity jobs in 2022 alone. The new tram-train stop at Magna strengthens regional connectivity, while active travel upgrades along Sheffield Road make walking and cycling more appealing.

Templeborough Business Zone

A key industrial corridor with global firms and SMEs. Investments include a new tram-train stop, active travel upgrades, and a £50m low-carbon heating network, alongside new business and leisure space.

Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park

A pioneering hub for sport, health, and wellbeing innovation. It hosts Canon Medical, the Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre, and Google's Digital Health Hub, driving population health improvements through wearable tech, as well as the National Centre for Child Health Technology..

Town Centre, Forge Island and Rotherham Gateway

Undergoinga £120m transformation with new homes, public spaces, and leisure. Plans include a new Gateway Station and Innovation Campus to boost connectivity and create high-value jobs. The development of the Bassingthorpe Farm strategic housing site will provide an additional 2000 homes to the north of Gateway.

Waverley Rail Station

A strategic transport upgrade serving the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District and rapidly growing Waverley New Community. It will unlock housing, employment land, and commercial space, supporting sustainable growth across Handsworth and Treeton.

Runway Park

A 100-acre innovation site led by the University of Sheffield, bridging academic research with business innovation. It will offer flexible spaces for co-working, manufacturing, and leisure, supporting start-ups and established firms alike.

Sheffield City Centre and Innovation Spine

Sheffield city centre is being transformed, driven by the Heart of the City programme, creating 1.5 million square feet of space through new sustainable, repurposed and retained buildings, and enabling mixed use facilities in keeping with the surrounding city. New homes are central to the development of Sheffield city centre, with 5 new neighbourhoods being created.

Business growth and innovation are essential to this ambition too. We are developing a city-centre innovation ecosystem that positions Sheffield at the forefront of the fourth industrial revolution. Central to this vision is the Sheffield Innovation Spine—a long-term, collaborative initiative connecting the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and Sheffield Technology Park through key regeneration areas including the Station Quarter, Castlegate, West Bar, and St. George's neighbourhoods.

Sheffield's collaborative and creative spirit, rooted in its rich history of makers and innovators, is the driving force behind the Spine. Known as The Outdoor City, Sheffield offers a unique blend of urban energy and natural beauty—from its thriving independent scene and world-class street art to its proximity to the Peak District National Park—delivering an unparalleled quality of life.

Innovation Spine

A collaborative corridor linking the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University through regeneration zones like Station Quarter, Castlegate, and West Bar. It supports knowledge-led start-ups and scale-ups with world-class research centres and vibrant public spaces.

West Bar

A £300m mixed-use development connecting Kelham Island to the city centre. Phase one includes Grade A offices and 368 build-to-rent apartments, with future phases unlocking 1M sq ft of regeneration.

Castlegate

A creative and digital hub blending heritage and innovation. The Castle site will become a public park, revealing historic remains and reopening the River Sheaf, with space for outdoor events and community engagement.

Station Quarter

A dynamic gateway for high-growth firms, offering prime real estate and connectivity. It's designed to be iconic and welcoming, with spaces for collaboration and enterprise.

University of Sheffield/St George's

A life sciences and deep tech cluster anchored by the university and Royal Hallamshire Hospital. It supports IP-rich companies and cutting-edge research in physical sciences.

Heart of the City

Sheffield City Council's £470m flagship development includes Elshaw House (zero carbon ready) and Cambridge Street Collective (Europe's largest purpose-built food hall). Related developments included the Cole Store, an iconic building that will be transformed to house leisure and retail facilities as well as new workspaces.

Sheffield City Centre 'New Neighbourhoods'

Sheffield City Council has partnered with Homes England to deliver nearly 6,000 homes across Moorfoot, Furnace Hill, Attercliffe, and more, creating sustainable communities as part of Sheffield's Housing Growth Plan.

South Yorkshire Airport City

Doncaster is at the heart of the UK's transport and logistics system – with multimodal connections and a strong industrial base in advanced engineering, rail and clean mobility. The ambition is to reestablish Doncaster Sheffield Airport as the anchor for a clean, connected aviation cluster—supporting advanced flight technologies, Sustainable Aviation Fuel development, lightweight materials and a Centre of Excellence for maintenance, renewals and overhaul (MRO). Located at Gateway East, with immediate access to motorway and rail links and a safeguarded corridor for future passenger/freight rail, South Yorkshire Airport City is a nationally significant proposition and the opportunity to extend the South Yorkshire advanced manufacturing cluster.

The Airport

A national hub for clean, connected aviation, supporting 2,000+ jobs. It will host passenger services, cargo handling, and provide access to a Jet Zero innovation cluster, developed on the platform of AMRC capabilities.

Airside Advanced Aviation Zone (DSA04)

A 43ha runway-adjacent site for aviation-critical activity. It will co-locate robotics, automation, and clean flight technologies, aiming to be the UK's leading MRO and air mobility hub.

Gateway East Innovation Quarter (EMP05)

A production zone for SAF, SMR, defence systems, and advanced manufacturing. It expands the South Yorkshire advanced manufacturing cluster and - along with the airport reopening - could generate 5,000 new jobs. Critical to achieving our ambitions at South Yorkshire Airport City will be to target infrastructure investment to strategically unlock the site and ensuring our skills and talent pipelines match jobs growth.

Barnsley Town Centre

Barnsley is the UK's first 'Tech Town', building on its leadership in public service reform. Through new digital infrastructure, cultural investment and a planned National Centre for Digital Technologies, Barnsley is showing how a post-industrial town can be transformed into a place of innovation, inclusion and opportunity.

The Glassworks

A £220m development featuring entertainment, dining, and the Library @ Lightbox. It includes the UK's first NHS Community Diagnostic Centre in a town centre, boosting footfall and local spend.

Health on the High Street

Relocating outpatient services to the Alhambra Centre, making healthcare more accessible. This builds on the success of the Community Diagnostic Centre which has brought a 24% reduction in Do Not Attends and a 22% increase in mammogram attendance. The scheme is expected to attract an additional 150,000 footfall per annum, generating at least £1.5m in additional visitor spending.

The Seam Digital Campus

A tech hub supporting 50+ businesses and 300 jobs. It will host the National Centre for Digital Technologies, fostering innovation, skills development, and university-business collaboration.

Eldon Street Heritage Action Zone

A £4m project restoring historic buildings and public realm. It engaged artists, schools, and communities, including a residency by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage.

Youth & Community Investments

Initiatives like the National Academy of Vocal Excellence (NAVE) and the Youth Activity Park embed cultural and recreational opportunities for young people, supporting inclusive growth.

Our Neighbourhoods

Our Growth Areas concentrate investment where it can generate the greatest economic return. But growth is experienced in neighbourhoods — and if residents are to feel wealthier, healthier, happier and safer as a result of this Plan, its benefits must reach every community.

Through this Plan and the South Yorkshire Strategy, we will seek to focus all public spending in a place around the community, rather than programmed by institutions. Through this we know better outcomes can be delivered. Devolution allows us to apply that whole-place logic at scale, aligning the levers we hold — skills, transport, housing, business support — behind the priorities of individual neighbourhoods.

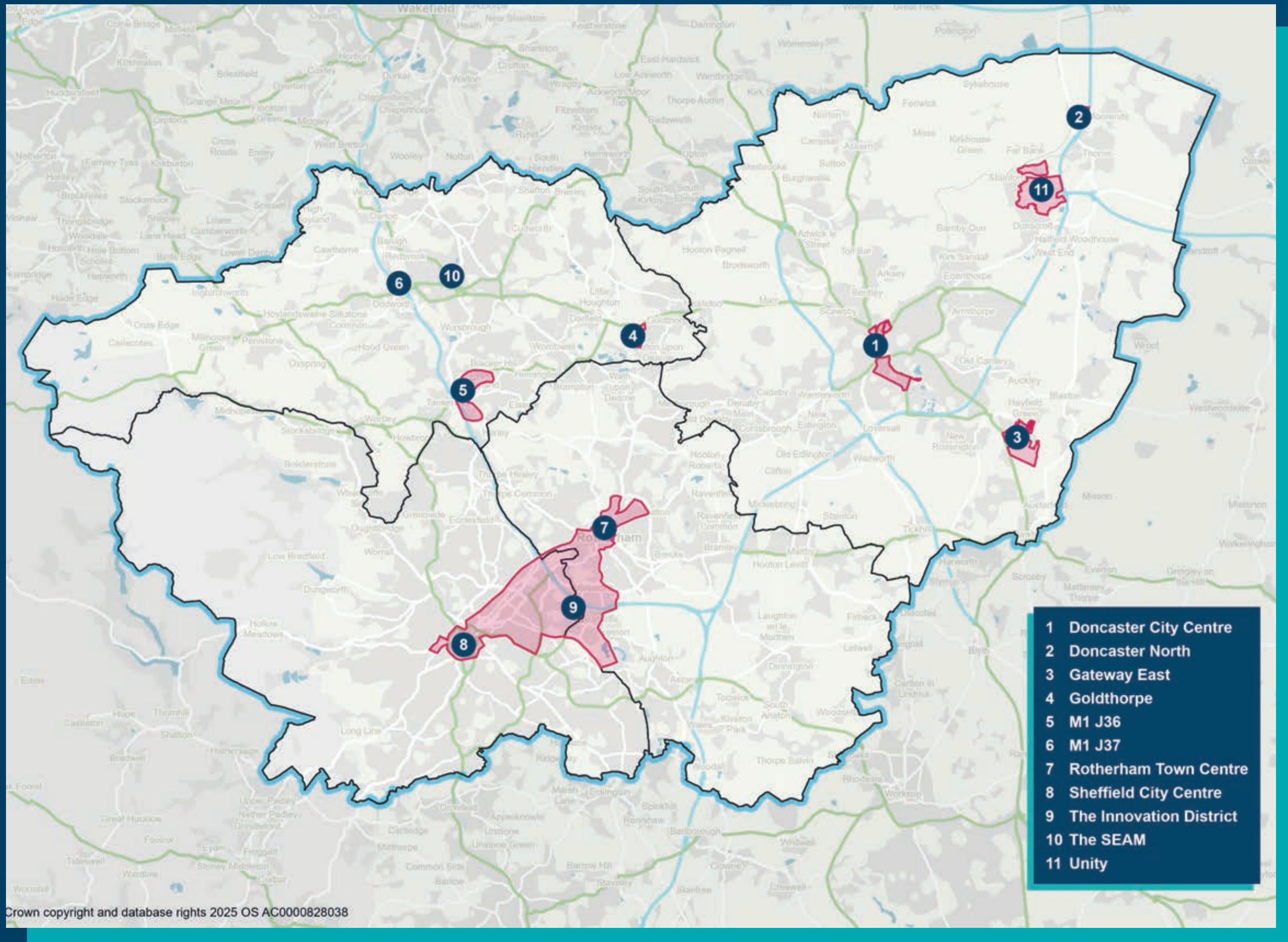
We are already working this way. For example, successive phases of Barnsley's Principal Towns programme have combined the regeneration of high streets and vacant premises with community-led improvements to public spaces across six towns home to 134,000 people, with a fourth phase extending the approach to 2031. Empowering all of Barnsley's communities to thrive is a core mission of Barnsley's Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy.

Growing neighbourhoods is also a mission of Sheffield's Growth Plan, which commits every neighbourhood to offer a good choice of homes and the chance to play an active role in the economy — with capacity for 36,000 new homes by 2039, including five new city-centre neighbourhoods.

And through national government's Pride in Place programme, eight South Yorkshire neighbourhoods will receive around £160m over the next decade, with priorities set by residents through community-led Neighbourhood Boards. This will be complemented by local authorities' own programmes, such as Barnsley's 2040 plan for Goldthorpe, Thurnscoe and Bolton upon Dearne. We will align our devolved programmes behind these plans, so that national, regional and local investment pulls in the same direction. Strong neighbourhoods are not a by-product of growth; they are one of its foundations.

South Yorkshire Investment Zone

We are home to the UK's first Investment Zone (IZ). Our IZ is a critical vehicle to delivering the ambition set out for our Growth Areas and beyond. The IZ has a flexible and extensive support package available to investors, developers, partners, and businesses. The lead sector is Advanced Manufacturing, utilising the innovation assets in the IZ to solve society's biggest challenges. The vision for the IZ is simple: to bring investment into the business base, making it the place to start, scale or relocate a business. It addresses viability gaps, unlocks private investment, and drives innovation-led growth to create high-skilled jobs, more prosperous places, and improved living standards. In our first year alone, every £1 of public investment unlocked nearly £9 of private investment.



1. **City Centre -** Doncaster llaunched a new 25-year city centre strategy in March 2025. Informed by the people of Doncaster through 'The Big City Conversation', the heart of the strategy is a strong, achievable ambition to develop the city centre into a vibrant, attractive, safe, useful place for all, with a strong economy providing services and experiences. This includes:

    i. **Gateway One Tech Hub,** in front of the station

    ii. **Doncaster Market,** including the Grade II* Listed Corn Exchange and the Grade II Listed Wool Market. The Wool Market has been successfully transformed into a new leisure facility incorporating international eateries, events and live music, and an entertainment zone, proving hugely popular since its re-opening in 2019, and the Corn Market will be shaped into an events and pop-up space to drive vibrancy.

    iii. **Waterfront -** one of the largest urban centre brownfield development sites in the UK. The council has undertaken significant work to enable future development, land acquisition and assembly has already been completed, and site remediation work is underway

2. **Doncaster North -** 180 acre (74-hectares) industrial development adjacent to junction 6 of the M18. Outline planning permission was granted in January 2022 for up to 3.5 million square feet of manufacturing and warehousing. The scheme includes a single unit of 1.15 million sq. ft. The scale of the site provides the opportunity for it to act as a cluster to bring together businesses and their supply chains, aiding agglomeration. The site is strategically located and well connected with good access to the East Coast ports and the UK motorway and rail networks. It is 31 minutes and 27 miles from the Advanced Manufacturing Park at Sheffield/Rotherham.

3. **Gateway East** – see above

4. **Goldthorpe** – 73 hectares of employment land

5. **M1 J36** – 69 hectares of employment land, with opportunities for manufacturing and logistics.

6. **M1 J37** – a further 70 hectares of employment land

7. **Rotherham Town Centre** – see Don Valley Growth Area

8. **Sheffield City Centre** – see above

9. **The Innovation District** - see Don Valley Growth Area

10. **The SEAM** – see Barnsley Town Centre Growth Area

11. **Unity** – an area of 250 hectares (618 acres) - one of the largest regeneration and infrastructure projects of its kind in the UK, delivering a mixed-use development. Unity will provide over 3,000 new homes, a new town centre, offline marina, school and transport hub. There are over 85 hectares (210 acres) dedicated to a variety of new commercial uses. Unity is situated in a strategic location on the eastern section of the M18/M180 motorway corridor.

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How we will deliver

Developing strong institutions that anchor a place and are trusted by local communities, businesses and investors is necessary for growth.

Strong institutions are organisations or bodies that work effectively and efficiently together in partnership to deliver essential services for all citizens. For our institutions in South Yorkshire to be strong, they need:

- To have the capacity and capability to implement sound policies that address the needs of the region.
- Institutions need to collaborate and work together in partnership, drawing on the wide range of evidence held across the system.
- Our institutions must be accountable and transparent to ensure decisions are consistent and fair, and to help build trust in decision-makers.
- Diverse voices must be heard and engaged in decision-making across the system so that our institutions are representing the needs of citizens and are promoting inclusion and equality.
- Our institutions must be financially sustainable, and resilient to change so that they can adapt to changing circumstances and continue to be delivery focused for the region into the future.

If the future of these institutions is threatened or undermined, we cannot achieve what we want at the speed and scale we want it. We want to work with national government on how we can ensure institutional resilience. Such as:

- Ensuring the future sustainability of our voluntary and community sector and public service providers who are at the vanguard of supporting people of South Yorkshire.
- Ensuring Local and Regional Government is on sound financial footing and has the space and capacity to deliver what a place needs to thrive, not just survive.
- Ensuring our Higher Education and Further Education Institutions and providers have the financial resilience to retain and build on their role as core anchor institutions.
- Ensuring our Health Institutions have the governance and financial security needed to deliver an integrated health service that prioritises place and prevention.
- Providing our enterprises with the security and conditions to innovate, invest, grow and provide good jobs.

These institutions must then work effectively together – building trust between them and with the people of South Yorkshire - to deliver the vision set out in the Plan and provide the region with collaborative and consistent civic leadership, with clear planning and co-ordinated action against long-term goals effective.

Role of the Combined Authority

For our part, the Combined Authority will work openly and collaboratively with our partners across the system to deliver the priorities in this Plan.

The way we work is guided by the following principles. These have framed the development of our Local Growth Plan and the policy and programme delivery that will follow from its priorities will also be guided by them:

1. We actively recognise a stronger sense of community and connections between people as a real and tangible asset. Our work should strengthen and reinforce the bonds between people across our communities.
2. People who are all too often let out and left behind are our priority in the decisions we make and the things we do. We think about them first.
3. We recognise that climate breakdown is both a real and existential threat, and a huge opportunity to transport South Yorkshire for the better. Our decisions should reflect that reality.
4. Wherever possible, we will make decisions that impact people with the people who will be most impacted. If people don't engage in that process, that's our fault not theirs.
5. People in South Yorkshire genuinely feel wealthier, healthier, happier and safer as a result of the actions we take. If not, we don't do it.
6. Evidence-led, user-oriented design should be the least people can expect from our services. Our people feel that innovation is worth the risk and beauty is a goal worth striving for.

In our Corporate Plan, the Combined Authority set out the above six principles and committed to focusing on two principles to begin with:

- Thinking first about those who are all too often left out and left behind
- Making decisions with those who are most impacted.

Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our Growth Plan

Alongside developing the delivery plan for the South Yorkshire Growth Plan, we also conducted an equality impact assessment (EqIA) to understand the Plan's potential impact on those with protected characteristics, as well as socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

Our EDI action plan sets out how we will continue to improve our understanding of the impacts of interventions on different communities and how we can ensure that our Growth Plan positively impacts all residents:

- Improve regional quantitative and qualitative data collection to improve understanding of the impacts of Growth Plan interventions on different communities.
- Commit to a regular review of the Growth Plan's EqIA.
- Work with partners to engage residents directly to develop our understanding of the impact of the Growth Plan.
- Ensure community insights are built into how interventions are designed, evaluated and iterated.

ANNEX 1:

South Yorkshire’s sector strengths

Established sectors

Established

- Advanced manufacturing
- Clean energy
- Life sciences
- Defence

Emerging

- Creative industries
- Digital and tech
- Preventative health

Foundational

- Logistics and transport
- Health
- Education
- Retail
- Public administration
- Food and drink production

South Yorkshire has sectors of national significance in the following sectors.

Advanced manufacturing

Core capabilities:
Advanced materials, precision engineering, digital manufacturing, AI-powered production optimisation, machining and assembly systems, composites, and additive and metals manufacturing.

South Yorkshire's advanced manufacturing sector contributes £3.4bn in GVA and accounts for 12.5% of the regional economy, defying national trends with ongoing sector growth. Ranking second in the UK for advanced manufacturing innovation cluster size, the region has gained global recognition through its core capabilities.

The region has world-class R&D strengths in AI and digital manufacturing. The advanced manufacturing sector is supported by the internationally renowned University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC), which collaborates with over 120 companies, and translation facilities, including Factory 2050, the UK's first fully reconfigurable digital factory. The Royce Translational Centre also contributes to this foundation. Key anchor companies such as Boeing's first European production facility, McLaren Automotive, and significant Rolls-Royce operations establish a solid base for future expansion.

Growth Opportunities

International opportunities focus on export leadership in manufacturing intelligence, precision components, and advanced manufacturing services, attracting foreign direct investment, building on the region's recent momentum. Locally, the sector offers transformative potential for foundational industries, particularly addressing the large proportion of manufacturing firms that remain innovation inactive. This approach could transform AMRC into the "MIT of the North", create integrated prototype to production pathways, and connect anchor Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) with regional supply chains, creating greater supply chain integration and security.

Research assets at the University of Sheffield

- **Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC):**
  A globally recognised network of innovation centres specialising in machining, integrated manufacturing, composites, design and prototyping, castings, additive manufacturing, and manufacturing intelligence.

- **Factory 2050:**
  The UK's first fully reconfigurable digital factory, dedicated to collaborative research in advanced manufacturing and assembly technologies.

- **Royce Translational Centre:**
  Specialises in advanced materials research and the translation of new materials technologies into industry.

- **Manufacture using Advanced Powder Processes - EPSRC Future Manufacturing Hub:**
  Developing powder-based manufacturing processes that are lower in energy, cost and waste.

Key Businesses

- **Boeing:**
  Established its first European production facility in South Yorkshire.

- **McLaren Automotive:**
  The prestigious automotive manufacturer has established a significant presence at the Advanced Manufacturing Park.

- **Rolls-Royce:**
  This iconic British engineering firm maintains substantial operations in South Yorkshire.

- **SMP/AML:**
  Part of the Walsin group, specialising in the forging and machining of metals.

- **Castings Technology:**
  Leading specialist in titanium and steel castings.

- **Alcoa, Outokumpu and Marcegaglia:**
  All supplying specialist steel.

- **AESSEAL:**
  A world-leading supplier of mechanical seals and equipment, encompassing Factory of the Future in Rotherham to drive innovation in sustainable manufacturing.

Clean energy

Core capabilities:
Manufacture of hydrogen production and storage equipment, nuclear technologies such as SMR development and fusion, sustainable aviation fuels, carbon capture, and industrial decarbonisation solutions.

The region's clean energy cluster is supported by the University of Sheffield's expertise and facilities which includes the Energy Institute with over 300 global researchers, the national pilot-scale Translational Energy Research Centre (TERC), and the unique Sustainable Aviation Fuels Innovation Centre (SAF-IC). Collectively, TERC and SAF-IC form the UK's first integrated facility capable of capturing CO_2, producing green hydrogen, converting it into sustainable aviation fuels, and analysing performance in a single location. South Yorkshire is home to one of only two SAF Clearing Houses in the world.

Green hydrogen is crucial to decarbonising sectors that are difficult to electrify directly. ITM Power – a world-leading producer of electrolysers – is at the heart of South Yorkshire's clean energy prowess. But the combination of electrolyser manufacturing, production facilities, industrial users and applied research matters means South Yorkshire is developing a broader hydrogen value chain spanning production technologies, storage and pressure systems, specialist components, industrial applications and transport.

Growth Opportunities

International opportunities include exporting hydrogen systems and industrial decarbonisation solutions to markets experiencing net-zero transitions, leading global sustainable aviation fuel development, and leveraging nuclear capabilities for global SMR and fusion markets. Locally, the sector can transform foundational industries (responsible for 10% of UK CO_2 emissions) through hydrogen and carbon reduction technologies while creating resilient regional energy systems.

Research assets

- **The University of Sheffield Energy Institute:** Over 300 global researchers, addressing major energy challenges through expertise in renewable energy, carbon capture, and sustainable systems.
- **Translational Energy Research Centre (TERC):** TERC is a national pilot-scale testing facility at the University of Sheffield. It offers global companies and start-ups access to advanced testing and collaboration with experts in low-carbon energy research.
- **Sustainable Aviation Fuels Innovation Centre (SAF-IC):** The facility will support sustainable aviation fuel producers in the UK and make South Yorkshire a key R&D hub.
- **UK SAF Clearing House:** provides support for the development, testing, qualification and production of sustainable aviation fuels.
- **Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC):** The Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) at the University of Sheffield supports the clean energy sector through advanced manufacturing in three areas:
  - **Nuclear:** Collaborating with companies like Rolls-Royce to enhance technologies.
  - **Hydrogen:** Developing clean energy hydrogen technologies.
  - **Offshore Wind:** Helping manufacturers scale up production of competitive technologies.

Key Businesses

- **ITM Power:** Operates the Europe's largest electrolyser manufacturing site in Sheffield, making it a global leader in green hydrogen technology.
- **Suiso:** Active in the region's Hydrogen manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Clean Power Hydrogen:** Specialises in membrane-free electrolyser technology.
- **EON:** Operates the Blackburn Meadows renewable energy plant and district heating network in Sheffield, and partners with Yorkshire Water on sustainable energy projects.
- **GeoPura, Lhyfe:** commercial hydrogen producers in Doncaster and Sheffield.

Life sciences

Core capabilities:
Medical technology and manufacture, advanced therapies and gene therapy, preventative health

South Yorkshire's life sciences sector contributes £3.3 billion GVA (12.3% of regional output) and ranks 4th among UK Core Cities for MedTech innovation cluster size. The sector's strength lies in translational research partnerships, anchored by world-first facilities including the National Centre for Child Health Technology (NCCHT), Sheffield Hallam University's Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre's (AWRC) for innovation in human movement , SITraN for translational neuroscience, and the Insigneo Institute driving innovative research at the interface of healthcare, engineering and science to transform health. Companies range from Exciting Instruments with single-molecule detection platforms to B. Braun's 63,000 global workforce.

There is also a fast-growing community in South Yorkshire around advanced therapies, specifically cell and gene therapy. The cluster has depth across the value chain, spanning clinical-stage biotechs, national manufacturing infrastructure, platform technology companies and globally recognised academic research. Rinri Therapeutics and Unicorn Biotechnologies are key players, and the Gene Therapy Innovation and Manufacturing Centre a key manufacturing asset, giving South Yorkshire an important advantage in translating gene therapy research into commercial production.

Growth Opportunities

The sector faces challenges in scaling startup companies and connecting research excellence to commercial applications, particularly in an ageing population requiring preventative health solutions. Opportunities include leveraging precision manufacturing for global medical device markets, developing digitally driven health solutions, and serving as NHS innovation testbeds. The strategic focus involves Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park ecosystem expansion, Medical AMRC research to production bridging, and digital health solutions that capitalise on regional AI capabilities.

Life sciences

Research assets

- **NCCHT – National Centre for Child Health Technology:**
  Global first developing the world's most advanced and integrated healthcare system for children and young people. Located at our Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park.
- **AWRC Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre:**
  Dedicated to improving health and wellbeing through innovations that help people move. Located at our Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park.
- **SITraN Sheffield Institute for Translational Neuroscience & GTIMC TIMC Gene Therapy Innovation & Manufacturing Centre:**
  World-leading centres researching motor neuron disease, other common neurodegenerative disorders, stroke and neuroinflammatory conditions.
- **Medical AMRC Advanced Manufacturing Centre:**
  Latest advances in technology to make sustainable medical products and smart hospitals of the future, reducing healthcare costs and improving patient outcomes.
- **NCSEM National Centre for Sport & Exercise Medicine:**
  Focused on the design, implementation and evaluation of whole-system approaches to the promotion of physical activity.
- **BMRC Biomolecular Research Centre:**
  Research centre at Sheffield Hallam University analysing cells and tissues to combat diseases for healthier lives & utilising advanced technologies.
- **NIHR Biomedical Research Centre:** research partnership between the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Teaching Hospitals, focused on research on neuroscience, cardiovascular disease, infection and immunity, and imaging & engineering.
- **Insigneo Institute:** Driving innovative research at the interface of healthcare, engineering and science to transform health.
- **NHS Blood and Transplant Cellular and Molecular Therapy Centre, Barnsley:** One of four national laboratories equipped and licensed research, develop and manufacture GMP-grade cellular and molecular therapies for the NHS.

Key Businesses

- **Exciting Instruments:** Exciting Instruments has created a single-molecule detection platform that aids in drug development and diagnostics. They have recently secured £4 million in seed funding to advance their technology and partnerships.
- **Unicorn Biotechnologies:** innovative Sheffield start-up specialising in automating cell culture through AI.
- **STEPS Rehabilitation:** This specialist neurological and trauma rehabilitation centre provides residential and day programmes for conditions such as stroke, spinal cord injuries, and acquired brain injuries.
- **Sheffield Precision Medical:** Sheffield Precision Medical is a leader in orthopaedic contract manufacturing, delivering high-precision surgical instruments and implants through CNC machining and additive manufacturing.g.
- **Swann Morton:** a global leader in surgical instruments, based in Sheffield for over a century.
- **BBraun:** A Multiple medical device company with 63,000 global staff.
- **Rinri Therapeutics:** Regenerative Cell therapy revolutionising the treatment of sensorineural hearing loss.

Defence

Core capabilities:
Nuclear-grade steel production, advanced materials for defence applications, air systems (including manufacturing), energetics research, autonomous systems development, communications and networks, cyber and dual-use technology innovation.

South Yorkshire has emerged as a critical UK defence research hub with Ministry of Defence (MOD) ownership of key assets and strategic importance reinforced by significant government investment.

These strengths are supported by MOD-owned Sheffield Forgemasters, which produces ultra-clean nuclear-grade steel for submarines, and is undergoing a £1.3 billion reinvestment programme to support defence programmes and leverage its capabilities on civil nuclear opportunities. The strengths are also supported by the Future Energy Factory, serving both defence and civilian clients; and the University of Sheffield's recognised excellence in defence research and membership of the Defence Universities Alliance. The defence industrial base includes BAE Systems' £25 million facility, Rotherham-based Magtec developing hybrid-electric systems for military vehicles, and SMP manufacturing premium speciality metals.

Growth Opportunities

International opportunities focus on attracting defence companies from NATO allies seeking UK partnerships, commercialising defence innovations for civilian aerospace and automotive markets, and integrating regional SMEs into global defence supply chains. Locally, the sector offers significant potential for civilian spin-offs transferring defence technologies to autonomous systems, cybersecurity, and advanced materials while applying defence materials science across clean energy, manufacturing, and aerospace sectors. This approach will support the development of secure innovation environments, enabling civilian commercialisation of dual-use technologies, establishing a defence research consortium leveraging MOD relationships, and connecting regional manufacturing capabilities with defence procurement needs.

Research assets

- **AMRC**
- **Blast and Impact Dynamics Lab**
- **Henry Royce Centre DSTL-funded Defence Materials Centre of Excellence (DMEx) Centre**
- **Laboratory for Validation and Verification (LVV)**
- **The Integrated Civil and Infrastructure Research Centre (ICAIR)**

Key Businesses

- **Magtec:** A Rotherham-based SME funded by the Defence Technology Exploitation Programme (DTEP) to develop hybrid-electric drive systems for military vehicles, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing battlefield emissions
- **Sheffield Forgemasters:** Now under MOD ownership, it produces ultra-clean nuclear-grade steel for submarine reactors and fusion energy projects, leveraging the Nuclear AMRC's research.
- **SMP:** Manufacturer of premium, speciality steels and nickel-based Super Alloys used in critical applications for the Aerospace, Oil & Gas and Civil Nuclear industries
- **BAE Systems:** The UK's largest defence contractor, BAE Systems, is opening a new £25 million artillery development and manufacturing facility in Sheffield, set to create 50 new jobs and further strengthen the region's role in defence manufacturing.
- **Thales:** A major, international company designing and manufacturing aerospace and defence systems, with key electronics and computing operations in South Yorkshire.
- **William Cook Cast Products:** Sheffield-based company specialising in designing and manufacturing cast components in specialist alloys and superalloys – a pioneer in 3D printing and key member of the AMRC.
- **Boeing:** One of the world's leading aerospace companies, and a key partner in the AMRC.
- **Danieli:** A major, international company with a base in South Yorkshire, supplying production process equipment essential to defence capabilities.

Emerging sectors

South Yorkshire also possesses emerging clusters that, while not currently leading the UK, demonstrate strong trend growth and unique capabilities that position them for significant future impact on the regional economy.

These clusters have strong linkages with our established capabilities, provide products and services driving innovation across industries, and potentially become established clusters over the next decade, providing high-paid jobs and driving investment. Developing these emerging clusters will provide greater complexity and resilience to our economy through the attraction of anchor institutions, the expansion of research and innovation assets, and support for start-ups and scale-ups.

Creative industries

South Yorkshire's creative industries generate up to £2bn in GVA, spanning over 4,000 companies and employing more than 31,000 people across various sub-sectors. The region exhibits clustering in Architecture, Crafts, Design, and Publishing, predominantly centred on Sheffield. The sector has experienced sustained growth over the last decade, with a much higher proportion of creative content businesses than identified in national figures, positioning South Yorkshire well to exploit growing demand for both high-end television and short-form content.

Key assets include Sheffield's thriving music scene anchored by Tramlines festival attracting 40,000 people over three days and generating £5.45 million for the local economy, the Showroom Cinema, Sheffield DocFest, and numerous music venues, theatres, and galleries. Innovation assets span from Sheffield's cultural infrastructure to Doncaster's growing digital and design sectors, Barnsley's Seam Digital Campus hub for tech startups, and Rotherham's expertise in connecting young people to creative and cultural programming.

The creative ecosystem includes established companies like Warp Films' independent production company, the Designers Republic's globally recognised graphic design studio, Sheffield Theatres Group's diverse productions, and programmes like Rotherham's Children's Capital of Culture, the first in the UK.

Growth Opportunities

International opportunities include leveraging the combination of content and digital capability to serve global markets for television and digital content. At the same time, locally, the sector can provide cross-sector innovation supporting advanced manufacturing, digital health, and clean energy through design and creative services. The region will focus on building the creative-digital convergence, establishing creative enterprise hubs connected to university research, developing creative export capabilities, and pathways for creative graduates into the regional economy.

Main innovation assets

- **Sheffield: Thriving music scene, independent film production, and digital media companies. Key assets include the Showroom Cinema, Sheffield Doc/Fest, and numerous music venues, theatres, and galleries (Graves Gallery, Millennium Gallery, Site Gallery). Sheffield's partnership with ACE is supporting the Sheffield Culture Consortium, the Cultural Education Partnership and South Yorkshire Music Hub.**
- **Doncaster: Growing number of creative businesses, particularly in the digital and design sectors. The Doncaster Creative and Cultural Network supports local artists and entrepreneurs.**
- **Barnsley: The Seam Digital Campus is a hub for tech startups and creative enterprises.**
- **Rotherham: Strong community arts programs and cultural festivals. The Rotherham Civic Theatre and Arts Centre is a key venue for performances and exhibitions.**

Key businesses and events:

- Warp Films: Independent film and television production company known for its innovative and critically acclaimed work.
- The Designers Republic: Graphic design studio with a global reputation for cutting-edge design work.
- Sheffield Theatres Group: Includes the Crucible, Playhouse, Lyceum, and Montgomery theatres, known for their diverse and high-quality productions.
- CAST: Charitable organisation offering top tier performing arts and supporting international, local and regional artists.
- Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance (ROAR): is an organisation that supports artists and creative practitioners through exhibitions, workshops, and community projects.
- Children's Capital of Culture (Rotherham): Platform for young people to engage in creative activities, boosting local pride and nurturing creative skills.

Digital and tech

Core capabilities:
Physical tech and deep tech (including quantum), AI and data analytics, advanced hardware, digital health solutions, and manufacturing digitalisation.

The combined value of start-ups in South Yorkshire's digital technology sector was £3.1bn in 2025, up from £326m in 2015, and the sector ranks in the top third globally for advanced hardware strength. Sheffield was named the top 'rising star' in the UK in Dealroom's 2026 tech industry index, and the University of Sheffield is now fourth in the UK (behind only Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial College London), for spinouts since 2022.

The sector receives a higher share of funding in physical tech and deep tech compared to the UK overall, with key startups including Sitehop, Fyous, Phlux Technology and Aegiq, complemented by success in ed tech through companies like Tutorful and Twinkl, gaming through SUMO and Pitstop Productions, and AI and data analytics through FourJaw, Automated Analytics, and TUBR. South Yorkshire also has an emerging specialism in quantum computing, led by Aegiq and encompassing growing startup and spinout activity as well as important research assets. Arm, world-leading semiconductor and software design company, has a base in Sheffield.

Growth Opportunities

The emerging digital cluster concentrates on applications that drive innovation across well-established sectors, complementing standalone technology development. International opportunities include exporting integrated solutions that combine digital technology with manufacturing, energy, and healthcare expertise. We are seeing an increasing number of AI and digital startups with a manufacturing focus – advanced robotics, machine performance, energy use, etc. – boosting innovation in our advanced manufacturing sector.

Digital and tech

Research and Innovation Assets

- **Centre for Machine Intelligence**
- **Integrated Civil and Infrastructure Research Centre**
- **Laboratory for Verification and Validation**
- **Semiconductor Materials and Devices Centre**
- **Barnsley SEAM and MakerLab**
- **Pennine Five and Sheffield Technology Parks**
- **Sheffield Quantum Centre**
- **National Epitaxy Facility and Centre for Heterogeneous Integration of MicroElectronic and Semiconductor Systems Innovation and Knowledge Centre (CHIMES-IKC)**

Key Businesses

- **Physical tech and Deep tech:**
  Receiving a higher share of funding in South Yorkshire than in the UK overall, with key startups in these sectors including: Sitehop, Fyous, Phlux Technology and Aegiq.
- **Ed-tech:**
  Leading to the success of companies like Tutorful and Twinkle.
- **Gaming:**
  Key industry players such as SUMO and Pitstop Productions.
- **AI and Data analytics:**
  including FourJaw, Automated Analytics, TUBR.

Preventative health

Core capabilities:
Well-being and physical activity, digital health solutions, workplace health

South Yorkshire's established strength in life sciences innovation, underpinned by strengths in digital and tech, and the significant regional role of health as a foundational sector, all enable an emerging strength in the preventative health sector.

The Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park in the Don Valley corridor is home to sport, health, and wellbeing innovation, positioning South Yorkshire as the UK's leading hub for preventative health. The Park has attracted major players such as Canon Medical, bringing world-leading screening, detection and diagnosis services to South Yorkshire. Rolling out reforms in the way health services are delivered, learning from Barnsley's Health on the High Street programme will also make preventative healthcare more accessible.

The Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park is home to two of Sheffield Hallam University's innovation assets: the Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre (AWRC) and Advanced Food Innovation Centre (AFIC). The AWRC specialises in innovations in human movement that enable increases in physical activity across communities and workplaces. The AFIC delivers impactful solutions with industry to enable sustainable and healthier food systems. The Park hosts the South Yorkshire Digital Health Hub – a partnership with Google - driving population health improvements through wearable tech.

Growth opportunities

Population ageing is increasing demand for health services, while at the same time driving health-related economic activity among older, working-age cohort. This lies behind the NHS's embrace of preventative healthcare. South Yorkshire's Health is Wealth strategy has put prevention at the heart of workforce development, aligning local government, health services and education providers. This is embodied in the region's Pathways to Work programme, which brings together health, employment and skills services to support people into work.

There are challenges to sector growth – but South Yorkshire is well-placed to overcome them. There are several barriers to a business wanting to invest in preventative workplace health, including the absence of agreed standards, a comparable outcome evidence gap, and the lack of a trusted way to scale prevention investment across its workforce. With funding from the Local Innovation Partnership Fund, and in partnership with industry, South Yorkshire's universities and local authorities, SYMCA will help to build the UK's first prevention economy cluster. The creation of a verified prevention standard will mean providers gain a credible way to evidence what their products and services deliver, as well as access to NHS procurement channels. This work will turn prevention into an investable category that commercial capital can underwrite, fuelling future business growth in the sector as well as productivity improvements across the workforce and addressing health inequalities.

Research and innovation assets:

- **AWRC Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre:** dedicated to improving health and wellbeing through innovations that help people move. Located at our Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park.
- **NCSEM National Centre for Sport & Exercise Medicine:** the NCSEM hub in Sheffield is focused on the design, implementation and evaluation of whole-system approaches to the promotion of physical activity.
- **South Yorkshire Digital Health Hub:** A joint initiative of the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University, using data from daily life as well as health services to design earlier and more effective treatments.
- **AFIC Advanced Food Innovation Centre:** supporting food manufacturers to reformulate products and collaborating with the University of Sheffield's Institute for Sustainable Food on building local supply chains with a focus on improved nutrition and community wellbeing.

Key businesses

- **Canon Medical.** Anchors the Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park, bringing world-leading screening, detection and diagnosis expertise.
- **Google.** Key partner in the Digital Health Hub, leading innovation in digital tech that can transform preventative services.
- **Westfield Health.** Leading health insurance and occupational health provider, headquartered in Sheffield. Westfield Health is the key partner for SYMCA in delivering the prevention economy cluster.

Although we do not have a comparative advantage in professional and business services or financial services, it is activity from the industries outlined above that will power UK-based activity within these sectors. Given our industrial heritage, there has therefore always been a consistent presence of professional business services within South Yorkshire. The region is home to 15,000 jobs (2.6% of total jobs) within financial and insurance activities. We are home to anchor institutions such as the British Business Bank. As part of supporting the development of the Growth Sectors above, we would hope to see an increase in activity within these industries.

Foundational sectors

The Local Growth Plan also recognises the importance of our foundational economy, which can cover sectors such as:

- **Logistics and transport –** with South Yorkshire sitting at the heart of England and providing high-quality industrial space, it is no surprise we have a strong logistics presence with warehousing and transport and land transport providing £1.6bn to the regional economy.
- **Health –** health (including life sciences capabilities) contributes £4.1bn to the region's economy and provides 95,000 jobs.
- **Education –** South Yorkshire has a comparative advantage in education services, with concentration of activity increasing over time. The sector contributes £3.5bn to the South Yorkshire economy and employs roughly 62,000 people.
- **Retail –** a vital part of our foundational economy and a sector relatively concentrated in South Yorkshire, compared to other regions. This sector benefits strongly from growth in other areas and is a hub of employment providing 56,000 jobs.
- **Public administration –** key in driving demand for services outlined above and providing good work for residents. We have the largest concentration of civil servants outside of London with the Sheffield Policy Campus being a leading example of collaboration between government and broader public institutions to design and deliver core services. The sector makes up £1.9bn of the regional economy.
- **Food and drink production –** South Yorkshire's food and drink sector employs around 9,000 people across 170 businesses, generating £434 million in GVA.

Many foundational sectors are essential to provide the physical and social infrastructure that enables the economy as a whole to function. They are also a key source of employment, supporting demand in our region – and they are often end-users of innovation and therefore key customers of businesses in high-growth sectors. This is why foundational sectors will be central to South Yorkshire's renewed business support system.

But the foundational economy is about more than achieving economic growth. Supporting foundational sectors to thrive means life in our region will be more liveable, with essential services available and some of the causes of higher living costs challenged. Foundational sectors are key to widening opportunities for South Yorkshire residents – we will work with employers to ensure more high-quality employment, with pathways, are created. A strong foundational economy is central to ensuring our economic model is inclusive and resilient.

ANNEX 2:

How we are already delivering – case studies

Case studies

A strong, diverse business base

Across the region, we are taking opportunities available to develop a strong enterprise ecosystem.

Case study: South Yorkshire Innovation Programme

The South Yorkshire Innovation Programme (SYIP) is designed to help organisations from across the region to innovate and grow. This programme is led by Sheffield Hallam University, alongside the University of Sheffield and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, SYIP is backed by £3 million funding from the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA). It is co-designed and developed in partnership with each of the region's four Local Authorities to drive economic growth across South Yorkshire.

It offers high quality innovation support, tailored to an organisation's unique needs. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Academic consultancy**
- **Technical project**
- **Academic-led innovation audits**
- **Discovery days**
- **Student projects and placements**
- **Access to University equipment and facilities**
- **Events and technical workshops**

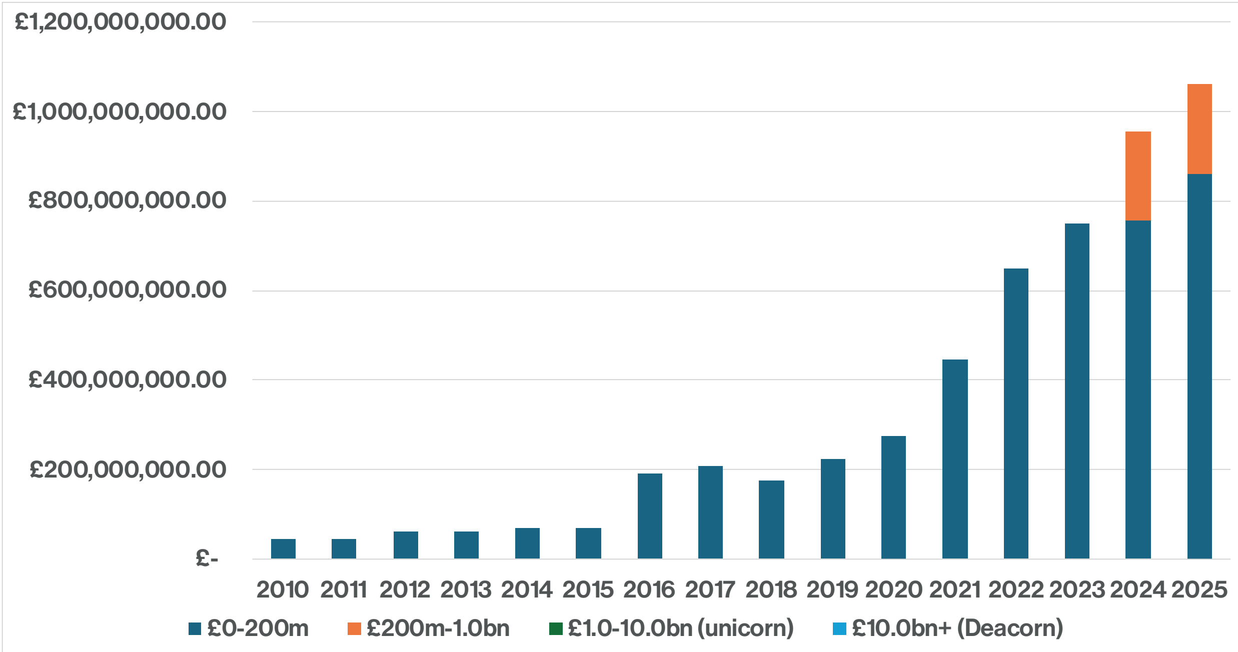
Case study: Tech SY

The South Yorkshire Tech Sector is building significant momentum. In 2025, tech businesses were worth £3.1 bn, up from £326m in 2015.

TECH SY is a collaboration to grow the sector even further. We're growing the collaborative community, providing access to support tech businesses to start and scale. This in part explains the significant growth we've seen (see Chart opposite).

This programme will expand to advise on the SY ecosystem.

Graph 6 South Yorkshire Enterprise Value by Valuation, Dealroom



Case study: South Yorkshire Incubator and Accelerator Network (SIAN)

SIAN is a region-wide network of incubators, accelerator programmes, investors and local authorities seeking to work closely to make South Yorkshire an accessible, thriving economy.

The purpose of SIAN is to increase collaboration and engagement between business support programmes in South Yorkshire.

Our members have committed to a single principle: that wherever someone accesses support there is No Wrong Door. This means members will make sure entrepreneurs and businesses are connected to the most appropriate people, programmes and investment opportunities, even if that is outside of the members' own projects.

Connected, vibrant places

Across the region, we are taking opportunities available to improve effective density of our urban centres.

Case study: Supertram

For more than three decades, Sheffield's tram network has been at the heart of the city's growth, influencing patterns of housing, investment, and access to opportunity.

It has also acted as a catalyst for housing market renewal along its corridors and driven regeneration in Attercliffe, demonstrating the powerful role of integrated transport in shaping sustainable growth. Building on this foundation, the pioneering Tram Train extension to Rotherham in 2018 expanded the network's reach across the wider sub-region.

In May 2024 Supertram came back under public control for the first time in 27 years ensuring we build a transport system that puts people first and connects our communities.

Case study: White Rose Agreement

In March 2025, Mayors of South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and York and North Yorkshire signed the White Rose Agreement, committing them to collaborate on key issues for their combined population of 4.7 million.

One of these key areas is improving rail connectivity by continuing to advocate for Northern Powerhouse Rail and for the upgrading of the East Coast Mainline.

The Yorkshire Plan for Rail – supported by Lord Blunkett - sets out the rail investment required to unlock prosperity in Yorkshire. With the right level of investment there is the potential to add £20 billion to regional GVA over a 10-year period to the White Rose region, comprising West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, York and North Yorkshire. Targeted rail investment also has the potential to generate 83,000 jobs and support the delivery of 210,000 homes.

Case study: South Yorkshire Bus Franchising

A reliable and integrated bus network is a proven driver of economic growth.

The current privatised bus system is not delivering on the needs of South Yorkshire's economy. In March 2025, the MCA approved the implementation of a South Yorkshire Bus Franchising scheme, bringing buses back under public control.

The transition will be supported by £350 million in capital investment from the Transport for City Region allocation. This funding will stabilise the network, prevent service gaps, and allow a full redesign to better meet user needs.

Bus franchising offers South Yorkshire the opportunity to create a transport system that works for people, for the economy, and for the region's places. By integrating buses with the wider network, it will unlock jobs, attract investment, improve access to skills, and reduce social exclusion, laying the foundations for a vibrant, inclusive, and economically resilient future.

Case study: Sheffield Housing Growth

Sheffield must deliver over 38,000 new homes by 2039, including 16,000 in the City Centre to support South Yorkshire's Investment Zone status and connect people to jobs.

Designated a Priority Place by Homes England and MHCLG, the Sheffield Together partnership formed in 2021 and made up of five key organisations, including SYMCA, Homes England, South Yorkshire Housing Partnership, Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Property Association.

Governed by the Sheffield Housing Growth Board and working together to drive housing delivery, the partnership is ramping up to 1,000 affordable home starts per year, supported by site acquisition, performance management tools, and streamlined delivery protocols.

Connected, vibrant places

Across the region, we are taking opportunities available to investing in the foundations of place.

Case study: Wentworth Woodhouse

In 2022, National Lottery invested £4m in the grade II listed 'Camellia House' at Wentworth Woodhouse, Rotherham. The House will host evening events and serve as a weekly space for local community groups to explore local tea traditions. The venue will also host a range of art workshops, natural play, sensory and wellbeing experiences and exhibitions, with many focussing on the theme of tea.

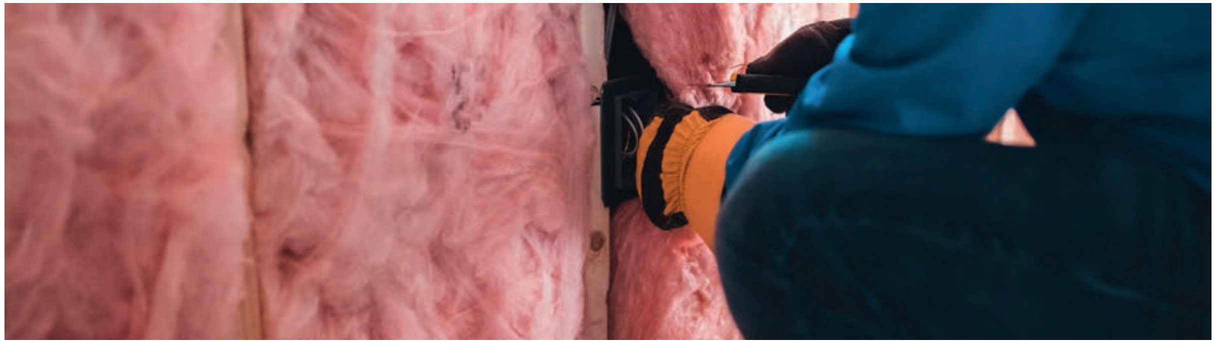
This is one example of how Wentworth Woodhouse is cementing its position as a leading visitor attraction and catalyst for boosting South Yorkshire's economy. From March 2017 to March 2021 Wentworth Woodhouse has added £13.5m to the South Yorkshire economy, attracted 71,000 visitors and spent 95% of £7.9m of funding used to improve buildings with local companies.

Case study: Future South Yorkshire Housing Pipeline

In 2024 SYMCA and Homes England signed the South Yorkshire's Strategic Place Partnership (SPP) with three key objectives to work collaboratively with partners to: develop a robust housing pipeline in readiness of future investment opportunities, increase the supply of affordable, energy-efficient homes, and support a place-based regeneration to drive inclusive growth.

The South Yorkshire Housing Pipeline was jointly commissioned by SYMCA and Homes England in July 2023. It builds on the success of the Sheffield Together Housing Growth Board and identified 184 prioritised sites with capacity for 31,807 homes. District breakdowns include Barnsley (8,864 units), Doncaster (6,246), Rotherham (1,965), and Sheffield (14,732). High-level delivery plans have been developed to highlight where there is a potential need for public sector investment to accelerate housing delivery, including future housing growth funding from SYMCA's Integrated Settlement from April 2026.

The Pipeline also identified Catalyst Sites in priority growth areas with significant regeneration potential. These include Hoyland in Barnsley, Unity in Doncaster, Bassingthorpe in Rotherham, and Moorfoot and Furnace Hill/Neepsend in Sheffield. Homes England committed £67m in 2024 to support Sheffield's Furnace Hill/Neepsend site and is working with SYMCA to identify future co-investment opportunities.



Case study: the Let Zero Project

The private rented sector in South Yorkshire lags behind other housing tenures in carrying out energy efficiency work, also known as retrofit. This could frustrate our drive to reduce carbon emissions, but it also creates higher levels of fuel poverty, with wider impacts on tenant health and prosperity.

This project, funded by Innovate UK, and led by SYMCA with eleven other partners including Sheffield's two universities, examined the barriers to retrofit, devising a number of solutions, including:

- Developing a One Stop Shop service to engage and educate landlords and tenants, alongside an app to plan out various retrofit options, estimate costs and benefits across property portfolios
- Improving the design, manufacture and installation of insulation materials and low carbon heating, thereby reducing cost and disruption, with a privately rented 'show home' to demonstrate these innovations
- Engaging with the construction supply chain and green skills providers, mapping out the opportunities arising from the retrofit of 75,000 sub-standard privately rented homes across the region.

Pathways to stay near and go far

Across the region, we are taking opportunities available to ensure a good start in life.

Case study: Barnsley Council's – Great Childhoods Ambition

Barnsley Council's Great Childhoods Ambition is a boroughwide initiative launched in 2025 designed to ensure that every child and young person, regardless of background, has access to the opportunities that define a fulfilling and aspirational childhood. The ambition is rooted in the voices of children and young people themselves, who identified five key areas as essential to their development: Belong, Explore, Dream, Grow, and Connect.

"Belong" strand focuses on helping children feel safe, valued, and part of their local community. This includes efforts to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions, recognising that a sense of belonging is foundational to wellbeing and educational success.

"Explore" encourages children to try new things and discover interests through cultural, sporting, and experiential learning opportunities. This not only broadens horizons but also nurtures curiosity and confidence.

"Dream" is about inspiring ambition by connecting children with role models and career pathways, showing them that great achievements are within reach. "Grow" supports everyday learning and skill development, helping children find joy and purpose in

their growth journey. Finally, "Connect" ensures that children can engage with people and places across Barnsley, fostering social mobility and access to wider opportunities.

Together, these priorities guide investment and programming across the borough, aligning existing services with new initiatives to create a cohesive and impactful framework. The programme has already supported the roll-out free bus travel for all under-18s in Barnsley, school uniform vouchers of £50-£100 for every pupil in the borough and support packs for all Year 11 students.

Barnsley's Great Childhoods Ambition stands as a model of how local authorities can co-create meaningful change with their communities, placing children's voices and needs at the heart of strategic development.

Case study: Family Hubs & Sheffield Test, Learn and Grow Pilot

Family Hubs are a vital part of our ambition to remove barriers early and give every child the best start in life. Based in the communities that need them most, they join up health, education and community services so families can access support in one place. By improving school readiness, health outcomes and parental confidence, they help build the strong foundations our future workforce and economy depend on. In supporting access to good quality, early years education, Family Hubs also create economic opportunities for parents where childcare was previously a barrier to work.

In Sheffield, the Council partnered with Government through the Test, Learn, Grow pilot to explore how small, practical changes in service design could strengthen parental engagement and boost early literacy. The pilot showed how collaboration between local partners, national government and the voluntary sector can increase take-up of support at critical stages of development — ensuring more children build the literacy and learning skills that underpin long-term opportunity and economic growth.

Across South Yorkshire, we are taking every opportunity to remove barriers to good work and ensure people can access the employment and skills support they need. Through programmes such as Connect to Work, Trailblazer and WorkWell, we are helping residents with health conditions to find and sustain employment, and through our Pathways to Work we are shaping local integrating of health, employment and skills services. Our Health is Wealth strategy has put prevention at the heart of workforce development, aligning local government, health services and education providers behind a shared ambition to improve health outcomes as the foundation for prosperity.

Case study: South Yorkshire Skills Strategy

Our Skills Strategy sets out how we will equip people with the tools they need to thrive and how we will build the resilient, productive workforce our economy requires.

Objective

To support residents to live resilient and productive lives.

Three Missions

1. **Move those far from the labour market into work or ready for work –** tackling economic inactivity and supporting those with complex barriers.
2. **Raise attainment of core knowledge and skills –** ensuring more people achieve English, maths, digital and other foundational skills.
3. **Increase the supply of a high-skilled workforce** – addressing the 'missing middle' of technical skills and growing the pipeline of higher-level qualifications to meet employer demand.

Commitments

We will be bold in our commissioning decisions at place- ensuring that our devolved ASF, along with other funding streams are aligned to deliver on the ambition of the region.

We will embody the ethos of Pathways to Work as we will continue to Integrate employment and health services within communities.

We will double the number of businesses accessing and co-funding workforce development via Skills Bank by 2029 and will evolve how we can coinvest with businesses to upskill our workforce.

We will create visible pathways into learning and work, whether academic, technical or vocational.

Case study: Pathways to Work

Pathways to Work is a pioneering approach to tackling economic inactivity. It is a comprehensive support system designed in South Yorkshire for the people of South Yorkshire.

South Yorkshire's Pathways to Work approach responds to persistently high levels of economic inactivity driven by complex barriers to employment, including poor health, low skills, and structural inequalities. Building on the foundations laid by the Barnsley Pathways to Work Commission, which shaped national thinking, South Yorkshire has scaled this vision, leveraging new and existing funding streams to deliver ambitious system redesign and tailored support.

The framework is structured around four strategic pathways: Prevent and Protect, Engage and Empower, Secure and Sustain, and Thrive and Elevate, each addressing different stages of labour market engagement.

Employer engagement is a key enabler, with growing efforts to promote inclusive recruitment, workforce development, and job quality.

Underpinned by integrated delivery, data-driven decision-making, and strong local collaboration, the approach positions South Yorkshire as a national front-runner, informing policy and pioneering new models for tackling economic inactivity. It helps individuals find or stay in work and overcome employment barriers, while also assisting businesses in recruiting, retaining, and nurturing their employees.

The scheme aims to get 10,000 South Yorkshire residents back into work over the next four years.

Case study: South Yorkshire Health Partners

The MCA is a key strategic partner in developing the South Yorkshire Health Partners (SYHP), which will be a transformative regional initiative that will unite South Yorkshire's universities, NHS trusts, local authorities, and innovation partners to tackle health inequalities and drive inclusive economic growth.

The Mayor and the MCA is providing leadership, investment, and coordination to ensure the SYHP aligns with regional priorities and ensure it will support our efforts the narrow the gap in R&D funding that the region receives. By supporting the SYHP, SYMCA will unlock new capacity to shape the region's health and life sciences strategy, attract national and commercial funding, and support workforce development. SYMCA's involvement ensures the partnership is rooted in place-based transformation, delivering tangible outcomes for residents while positioning South Yorkshire as a national leader in health innovation.

Case study: Walking, wheeling and cycling

A major priority for our new Walking, Wheeling and Cycling strategy is to help grow our regional economy sustainably and inclusively by: connecting our disadvantaged neighbourhoods to opportunities to work and learn; helping people be more active to give them better health so they can return to work; enabling people to choose to walk, wheel or cycle for short journeys, to reduce carbon emissions and congestion.

We know that nationally over 20% of people don't apply for a job, or take it if they are offered it, because they can't get there. And that over 300,000 households in South Yorkshire have no access to a car. So, the strategy has a key focus on developing Routes to Opportunities so that people will be able to get easily to jobs and opportunities by safe ways to walk or wheel to bus, tram and train, or feel confident to cycle there.

"I live in Sheffield but work in Rotherham. I use the super tram every day to get to work, then walk from the station. Rotherham from my experience is very easy to walk around." **Sheffield Resident**

Across the region, we are taking opportunities available to develop environmental resilience

Case study: Connected by Water

Flooding across South Yorkshire in November 2019 provided the catalyst for the creation of the Connected by Water alliance and Action Plan, for working with communities and businesses to reduce flood risk, build flood resilience and reduce the impact of the climate emergency. The partnership includes the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, City of Doncaster Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Sheffield City Council, Yorkshire Water, and the Environment Agency.

The partnership is driving the development of an Integrated Water Management Plan; a collaborative effort to identify and implement water management solutions. The Plan (due 2026) will drive greater collaboration across the region to ensure water is managed sustainably and promotes recognising the value of effective flood and water management for economic growth. The work themes include water quality and water supply and demand (linking to our strategic objective around sustaining our natural world), in addition to flood resilience.

Example projects include protecting businesses and key infrastructure with new flood defences, enhancing public realm and wider economic benefits through sustainable drainage such as Grey to Green in Sheffield. Grey to Green's innovative drainage system reconnects this part of the city with them, flowing rainwater back to rivers in a way that mimics nature – cleanly, slowly, sustainably. It's transformed a tarmacked area into a green public space that encourages cycling and walking and 24,000 bathtubs' worth of water is prevented from entering Sheffield's sewage treatment works each year by the sustainable drainage built into these planting beds.

Case study: Sheffield Lakeland Partnership

The Sheffield Lakeland Partnership has developed a vision for a wilder, more natural and resilient landscape which has multiple environmental, social, and economic benefits. Through emphasising the critical importance of working with local land managers, the Partnership galvanises support, and provides knowledge sharing and access to funding opportunities.

Actions include promoting nature-friendly farming practices and using nature-based solutions to regulate water such as tree planting, creating new ponds, blocking ditches, and installing leaky dams.

The natural capital benefits include:

- **Nature recovery** – a greater abundance in wildlife through habitat management and connectivity, prioritising species facing local extinction, and reducing risk of habitat loss through wildfire
- **Carbon storage** – holding more water in the landscape, which stores carbon by reducing peatland erosion and drying moorlands
- **Health and wellbeing** – a more natural and resilient landscape with cleaner air and visitor access
- **Flood risk management** – a wetter landscape which 'slows the flow' of water downstream towards centres of population

Case study: A tree for everyone

We are on a mission to plant 1.4 million trees across the region to enrich our environment and communities.

As part of this project South Yorkshire has developed a grant fund provides those wanting to help deliver this ambition the resources and support to improve our natural habitats. This grant scheme sits alongside the Free Trees for Communities project which supports community groups in tree-planting across the region.

Acknowledgements

We want to thank the following organisations and forums for dedicating their time and feedback in shaping this Growth Plan.

Barnsley Inclusive Economy Board
Doncaster Horizon Policy Group
Cornerstone Employer Group
ONS Local
NPH Ethnic Minority Business and Policy Forum
Rotherham Inclusive Economy Board
Rotherham Business Growth Board
Representatives from Sheffield City Council Committees
Sheffield Hallam University Executive Board
South Yorkshire Skills Advisory Board
South Yorkshire Business Advisory Board
South Yorkshire Mayoral Economic Advisory Council
South Yorkshire Energy Board
South Yorkshire Sustainability Centre
South Yorkshire Low Carbon Officers Group
South Yorkshire Social Economy Forum
South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum
South Yorkshire VCSE summit
South Yorkshire Culture and Creative Leads
Steer Group
The Productivity Institute
University of Sheffield Executive Board
What Works Growth

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