



# South Yorkshire's Growth Plan

South Yorkshire's Vision for Business Growth and Greater Opportunity

2025–2035

SOUTH YORKSHIRE  
**SYMCA**  
MAYORAL  
COMBINED  
AUTHORITY

**OLIVER  
COPPARD**  
SOUTH YORKSHIRE'S  
MAYOR



# Contents

<b>Part 1</b>		<b>Part 2</b>		<b>How we will deliver</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Overview</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Mission Deep Dive</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>114</b>
				<b>References</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Mayor's Foreword</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Our Businesses: 2035</b>			
<b>Mayoral Economic Advisory Council Foreword</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>A strong, diverse business base</b>	<b>42</b>		
<b>Our vision for South Yorkshire</b>	<b>13</b>	– Our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth	<b>43</b>		
– Our growth story so far	14	– Our business base is more dynamic, nested in a stronger business and innovation ecosystem	<b>64</b>		
– Our approach	16	<b>Our Places: 2035</b>			
– Working with national government	19	<b>Connected, vibrant places</b>	<b>73</b>		
– Working with the private sector	19	– Our urban areas are better connected, attracting private investment	<b>74</b>		
– Our global context	20	– Our residents are proud to call our towns and cities home and people want to visit	<b>83</b>		
– Our strengths	22	<b>Our People: 2035</b>			
<b>Our Missions</b>		<b>Pathways to stay near and go far</b>	<b>90</b>		
– Our Businesses: 2035		– Our children experience a good start in life	<b>91</b>		
A strong, diverse business base	<b>25</b>	– Our residents can access more opportunities through skills training and employment support	<b>95</b>		
– Our Places: 2035		<b>Our Future: 2035</b>			
Connected, vibrant places	<b>27</b>	<b>A resilient SY</b>	<b>101</b>		
– Our People: 2035		– Our networks are more future-proofed	<b>102</b>		
Pathways to stay near and go far	<b>29</b>	– Our region's nature is more diverse	<b>106</b>		
– Our Future: 2035					
A resilient SY	<b>31</b>				
<b>Our Growth Areas</b>	<b>33</b>				



# **Part 1**

## **Overview**

# Mayor's Foreword

**I'm here to restore the pride, purpose and prosperity to South Yorkshire.**

**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 our 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, with too many of our young people having to seek opportunity elsewhere. 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, from defence to 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. We are clear on the aim of deploying those capabilities to grow South Yorkshire's economy and to give back to our communities. Our historic decision to re-open Doncaster Sheffield Airport illustrates our commitment to developing and strengthening the region's assets.

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. 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. 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. This will restore pride, purpose, and prosperity to South Yorkshire.





*“Our goal is simple: to make sure South Yorkshire plays a leading role in solving the big challenges of our time, using the talent, resilience and creativity which defines us.*

*We want those growing up here to believe, with confidence, that in South Yorkshire you can stay near and go far.”*

# Mayoral Economic Advisory Council Foreword

**We are delighted to have worked with the Mayor and South Yorkshire to advise on this Local Growth Plan Vision. 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.**

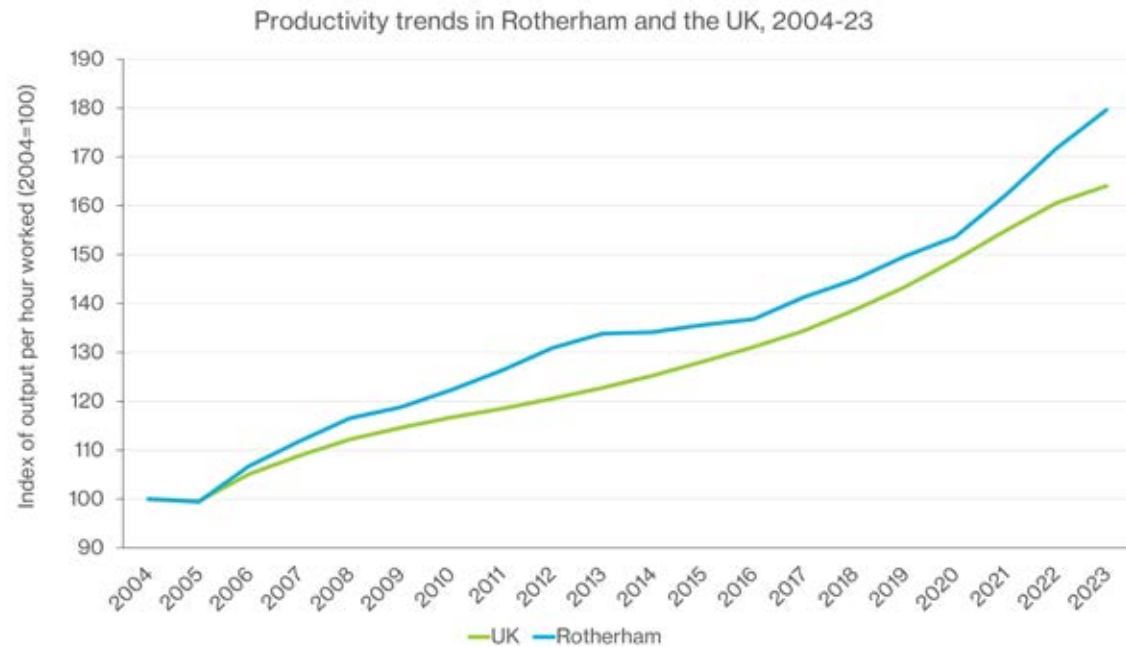
This is a credible case for investment, not a plea for subsidy. The plan outlined, with its four missions, represents a solid evidence-base to grow the South Yorkshire economy, to build resilience for the future and to ensure the benefits of growth are felt far more equally by residents.

South Yorkshire must continue to build on the momentum already underway. Recent productivity statistics highlight Rotherham as one of the fastest growing sub-regions over the last two decades (Graph 1). Sheffield as a core city is experiencing rapid growth in recent years (Graph 2), as are Barnsley and Doncaster. The region's economy has experienced the fastest growth in its Information and Communications Technology Sector of all the Northern economies over the last decade.

Venture capital is recognising 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 Optran, Icetope 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.

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





This growth is not coincidental. 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 economy, including the service sector, through its core capability of engineering practical solutions to complex problems. This is a tradeable service capability which is vital across many sectors, including the creative and cultural sector, and is highly linked to digital capabilities.

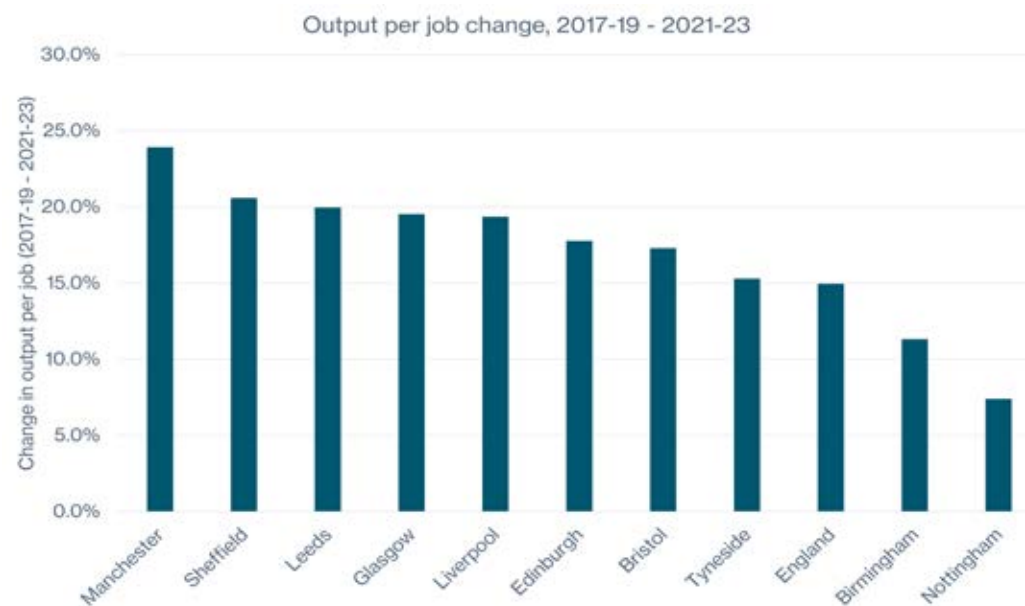
The current global context seeks co-located manufacturing and innovation capabilities. The region is unique among UK city/regions in grounding its disparate assets in a constellation of special innovation districts and corridors. The Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District is routinely recognised 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. A re-opened airport 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 productive niches in advanced manufacturing, aircraft, machinery and materials, clean energy production, defence and security, and medical device technologies for 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.**

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 main 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 University and its Advanced Manufacturing Research Centres; 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 report. 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 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 challenge of having a significant number of people out of the labour market is treated as a separate issue. These challenges need to be tackled together. 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 to work place 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



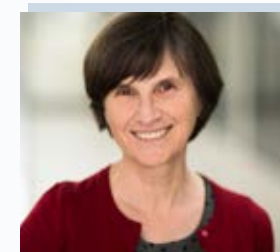
Professor Liz Mossop



Lord Jim O'Neill



Sir Martin Donnelly



Professor Margaret Stevens



Andrew Haldane



Richard Stubbs



Benjamin Wegg-Prosser

# 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 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 exposed 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.

Growth is also not our only ambition. 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 a forthcoming 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. A South Yorkshire Strategy, defining region-wide outcomes will sit above the seven key plans for the region:

- 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**

Nested underneath these core strategies will be specific action plans for missions. For example, our Local Skills Improvement Plan will align to our regional Skills Strategy.

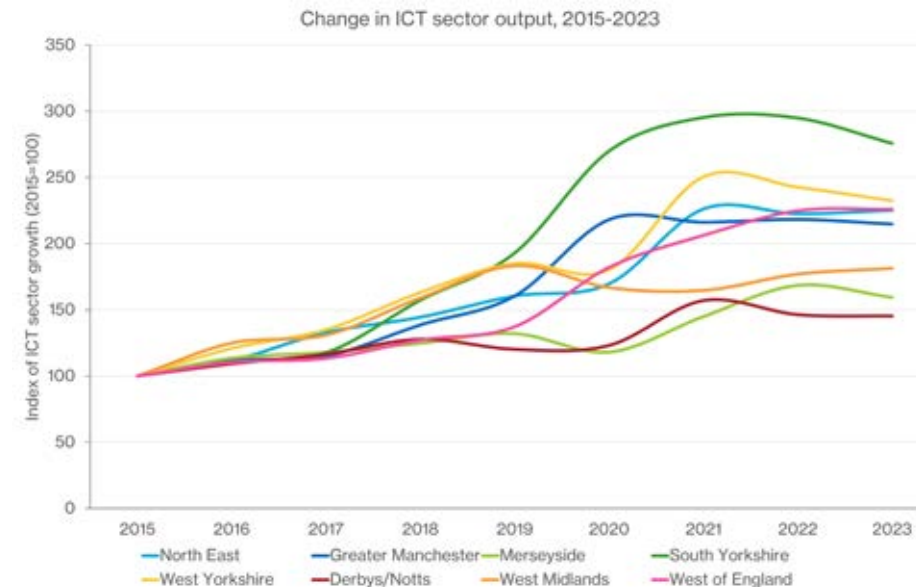


## Our growth story so far

**South Yorkshire is seeing positive progress in productivity growth. Recent data from the ONS shows that, over the last two decades, Rotherham was one of the fastest growing sub-regional economies in the UK. 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 (£36.2 compared to £44.4 in 2023). 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 South east 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

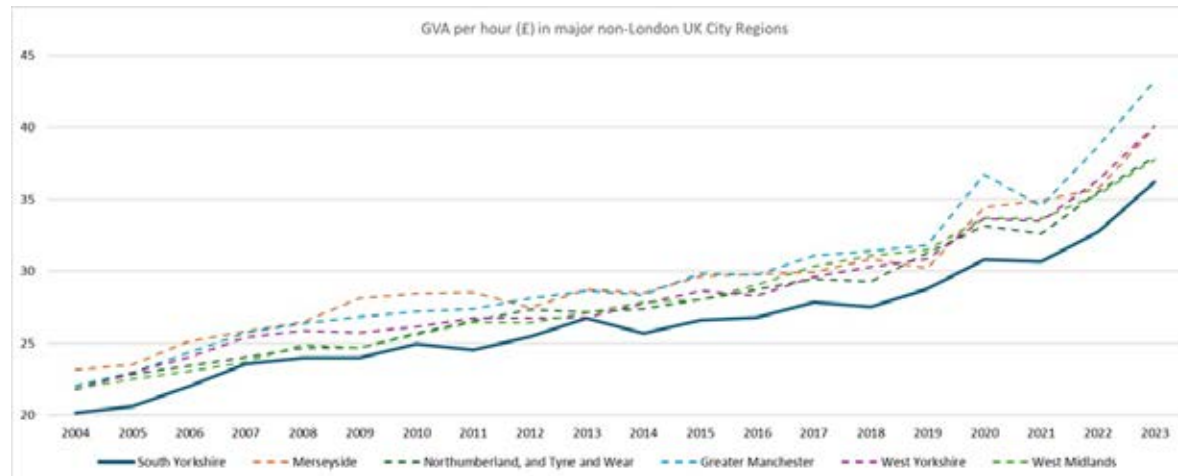
was 14.5%. Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) per head is around 24% lower in South Yorkshire than across the UK.

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.

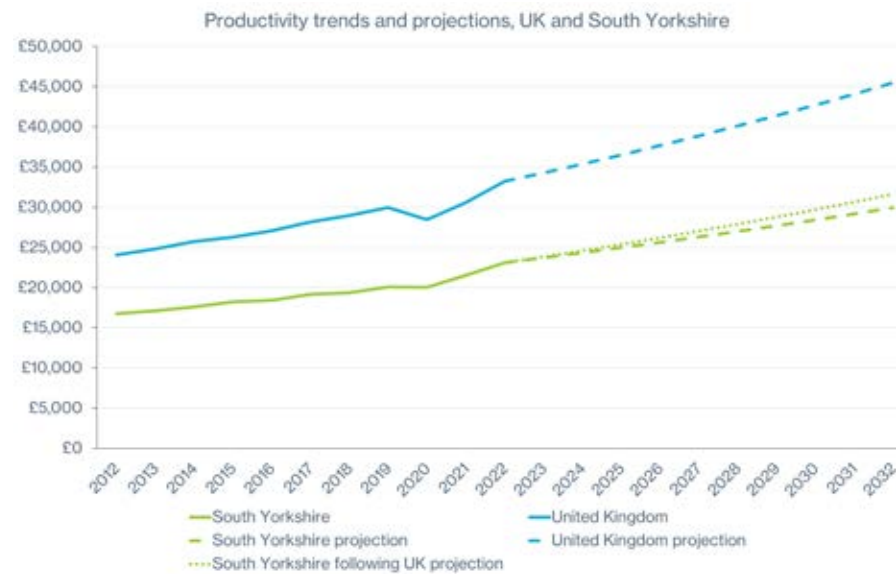
Converging with the national average by 2035 would require our economy to grow 2.5 times above current trajectories. If we matched the UK’s productivity, each worker could be adding an extra £13,657 into our local economy.



**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 business), 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 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.

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. But development of our economic strategy does not stop at the publication of this document. This document sets out a vision, missions and an objective for growth. **We will continue to engage on this Plan over Autumn 2025 as we move to develop a clear set of actions and deliverables.**

# 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade, investment and promotional support</li> <li>• Connected innovation assets</li> <li>• A pipeline of talent, co-created with business</li> <li>• Cluster leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reliable, integrated and sustainable transport system</li> <li>• A well-connected region</li> <li>• Housing growth in our urban centres</li> <li>• Commercial development and institutional investment</li> <li>• A strong core city and urban centres working together in a single economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good start for children through early years support</li> <li>• Progression for young people, through strong school, career and transition support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy systems for the future</li> <li>• Digital capacity and inclusion for the future</li> <li>• Flood resilience and water management</li> </ul>
To deliver our strategic objectives, we will focus on providing...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated business support and capability building</li> <li>• Finance ecosystem and investment readiness</li> <li>• Skills progression and pathways</li> <li>• Good business, including diverse business models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strong cultural, leisure and visitor economy offer</li> <li>• Vibrant high streets, town and city centres</li> <li>• Quality, sustainable and affordable housing</li> <li>• Safe and vibrant neighbourhoods, with strong community bonds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-quality, employment-focused basic and technical skills provision</li> <li>• Integrated employment support for those at risk of dropping out, or out of the labour market</li> <li>• Prevention services to reduce ill-health as a barrier to opportunity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautiful, green urban regeneration and development</li> <li>• Enhancing natural habitats and species</li> </ul>
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.**

**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 £9 from the private sector for every £1 of public investment. These examples demonstrate that when decisions are taken locally, with strong governance and accountability, we can deliver more effectively and, 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 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. Our role is to create the conditions in which businesses can invest confidently (Mission 1 and 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. 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 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 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.

 **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 defence to aviation.

 **Clean energy** – South Yorkshire ranks as the UK's third-largest region for employment in clean power 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. DSIT analysis gives the South Yorkshire cluster the largest share of the Clean Tech economy (6.9%), more than three times the share of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands clusters. ITM Power, the Translational Energy Research Centre with its specialism in sustainable aviation fuels, the

Fusion Technology Facility, two heat networks and a Small Modular Reactor industrial cluster all demonstrate the region's strength in clean energy production and modularisation.

 **Defence** – the recent Defence Growth Deal identified South Yorkshire as one of five leading places in the UK in the defence industrial economy. We continue to provide specialist steel for use in the defence sector through Forgemasters, BAE Systems and Special Melted Products all part of the local business base. These production assets are aligned to research strengths in air systems, autonomy and cybersecurity, and backed by world-class translational facilities working with companies such as AWE, BAE and many others.

 **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 £3.3bn in 2025, up from £325m in 2015, eight times the size in 2014.



**Life sciences** – specialism in precision manufacture with the largest cluster of medical device manufacturers in the country backed by presence of world-renowned companies such as Bbraun 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 Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre, Sustainable Aviation Fuels Innovation Centre, the Gene Therapy Innovation and Manufacturing Centre, and the Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre - which has attracted Boeing and Rolls-Royce and shifted the region's research strengths into production. Our 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 63,000 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.



**Trade Links** - South Yorkshire sits at the centre of the UK, connecting the North and Midlands and 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, turning a simple sport into the beautiful game. 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 that have national and increasingly global impact – 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 a 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, will support the development

of both home-grown and newly attracted major events and promote 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** – South Yorkshire'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. 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 leading are 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 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 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. In 2018, public R&D spend per head matched Greater Manchester, but businesses there invested

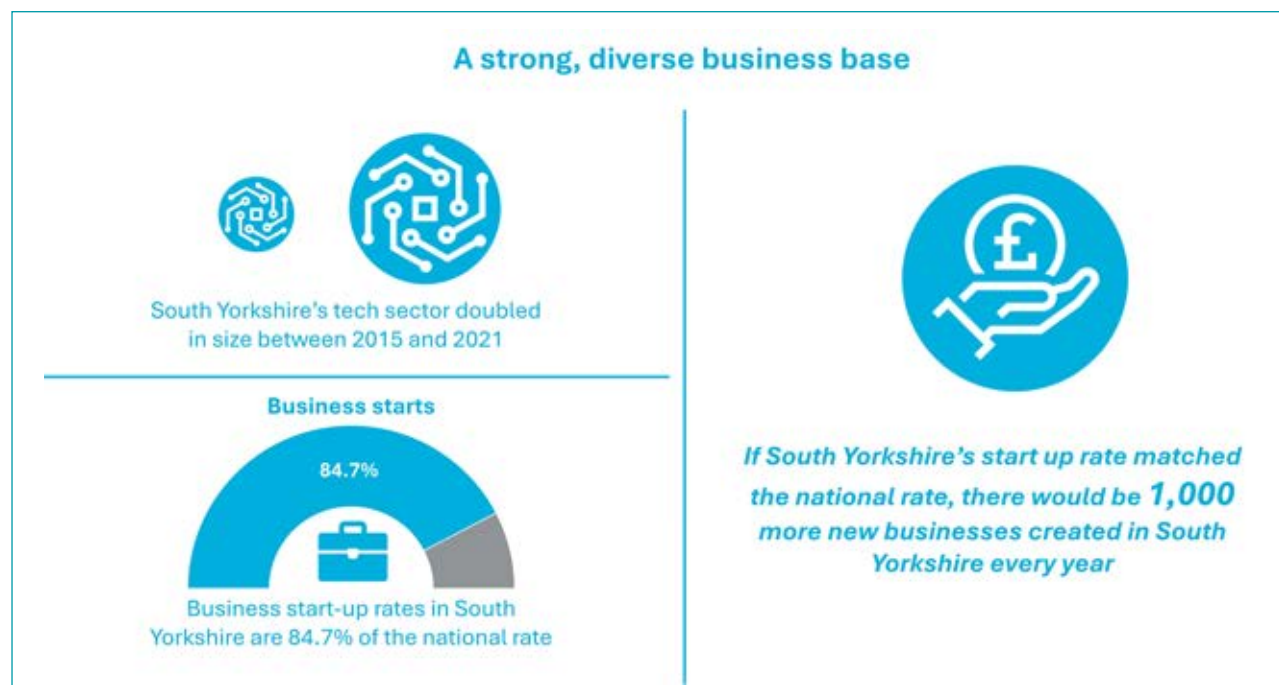


# Our Businesses: 2035 – A Strong, Diverse Business Base

over £40 more per person than in South Yorkshire. Without strong private demand and anchor buyers for innovative products, firms face weaker incentives to invest and grow.

- **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.

**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:

- Trade, investment and promotional support
- Connected innovation assets
- A pipeline of talent, co-created with business
- Cluster leadership

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

- An integrated business support and capability building
- Finance ecosystem and investment readiness
- Skills progression and pathways
- Good business, including diverse business models



# 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 drives 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.
- **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. 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 the region there is an opportunity to increase local construction skills and jobs.

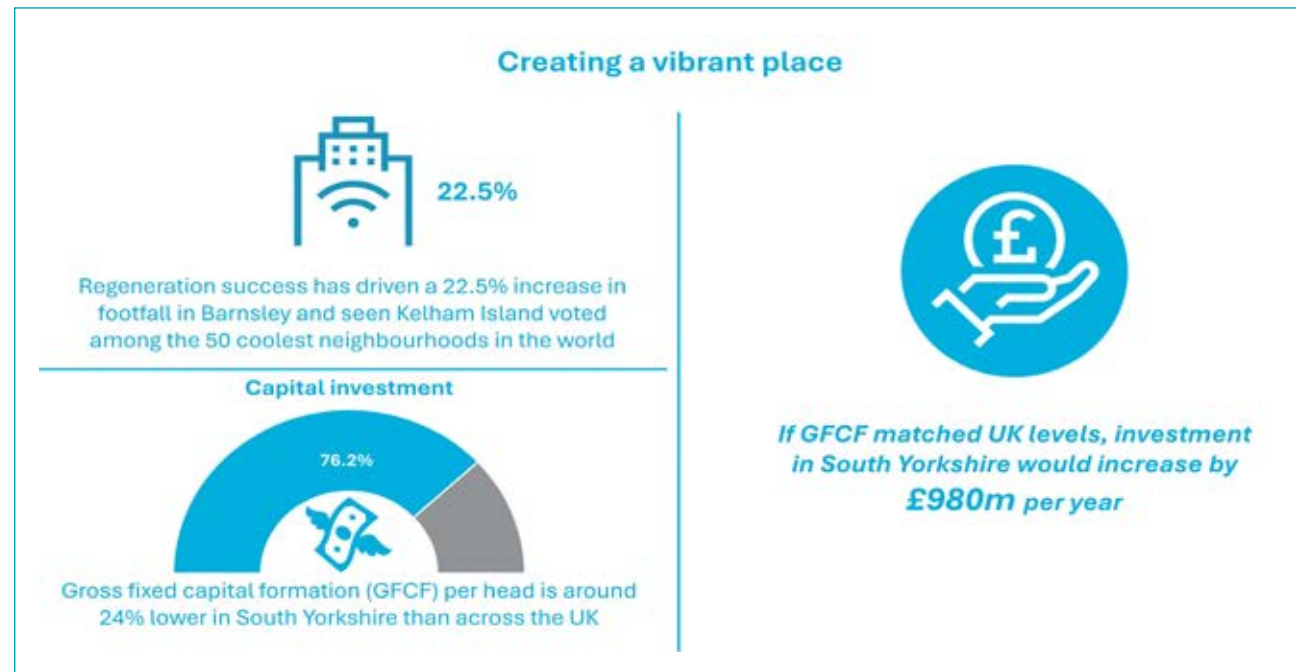
# Our Places: 2035 – Connected, Vibrant Places

- **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.

**To deliver more connected, more vibrant places, over the next ten years we will deliver against the following objectives:**

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

- A reliable, integrated and sustainable transport system
- A well-connected region



- Housing growth in our urban centres
- Commercial development and institutional investment, aligned to enterprise and place plans
- A strong core city and urban centres working together in a single economy

## 2. Our residents are proud to call home and people want to visit:

- A strong cultural, leisure and visitor economy offer
- Vibrant high streets, town and city centre
- Quality, sustainable and affordable housing
- Safe and vibrant neighbourhoods, with strong community bonds

# 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 – three percentage points above the national average. Helping more people into work will deliver significant aggregate economic gains, while improving wellbeing and reducing inequalities.

## 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.

## What the key barriers are that need to be addressed

The challenges remain stark:

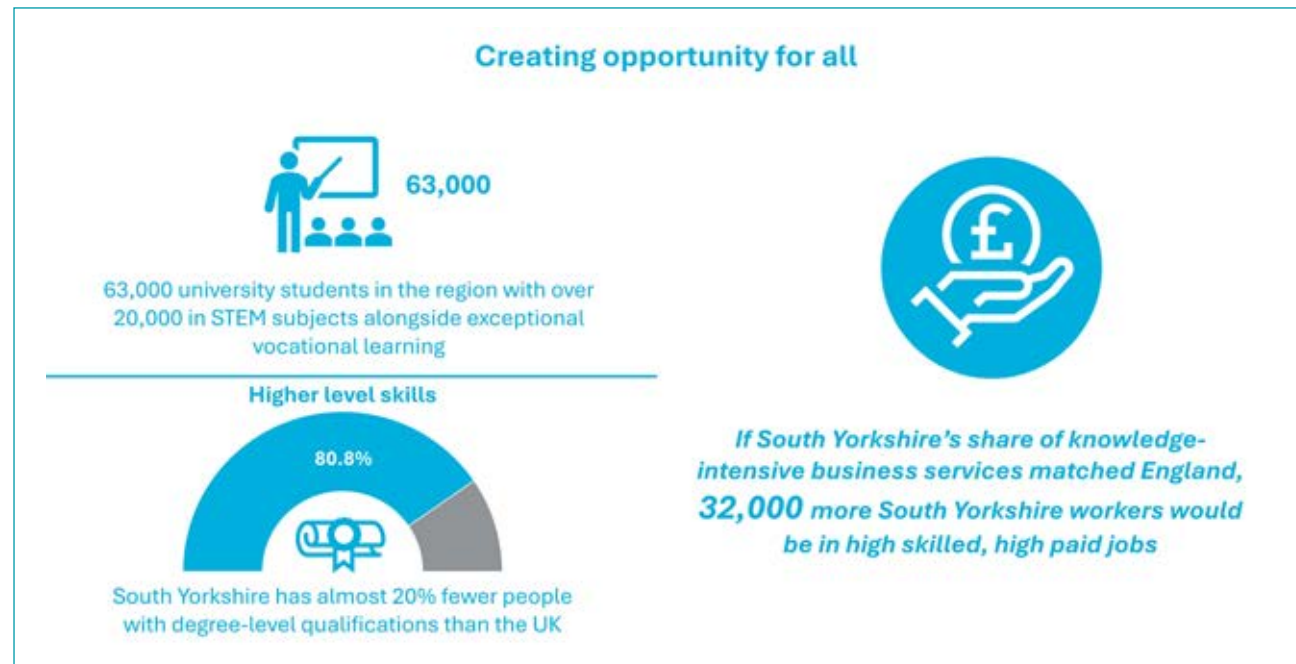
- **Healthy life expectancy and economic inactivity** – Approximately one in four residents of working age are economically inactive in South Yorkshire. One in three of those people are inactive because of ill-health. Men and women in South Yorkshire live on average two fewer years of healthy life compared 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% higher than the national average. This is equivalent to around 88,100 people and limits 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

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

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.

**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:**



## 1. Our children experience a good start in life:

- A good start for children through early years support
- Progression for young people, through strong school, career and transition support

## 2. Our residents can access to more opportunities through skills training and employment support

- 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 work

# 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 tCO<sub>2</sub>e 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 – and opportunity – 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 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.

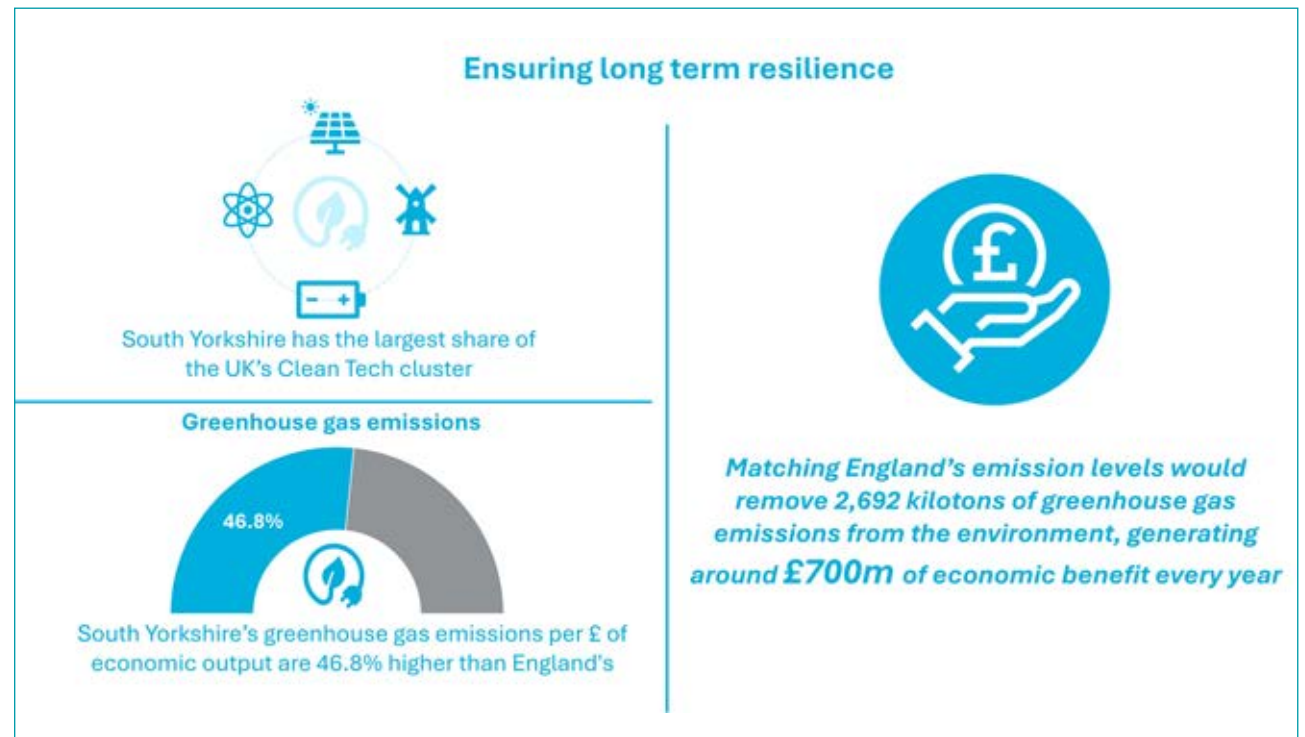
**To deliver a more resilient South Yorkshire, over the next ten years we will deliver against the following objectives:**

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

- Energy systems for the future
- Digital capacity and inclusion for the future
- Flood resilience and water management

**2. Our region's nature is more diverse:**

- Beautiful, green urban regeneration and development
- Enhancing natural habitats and species



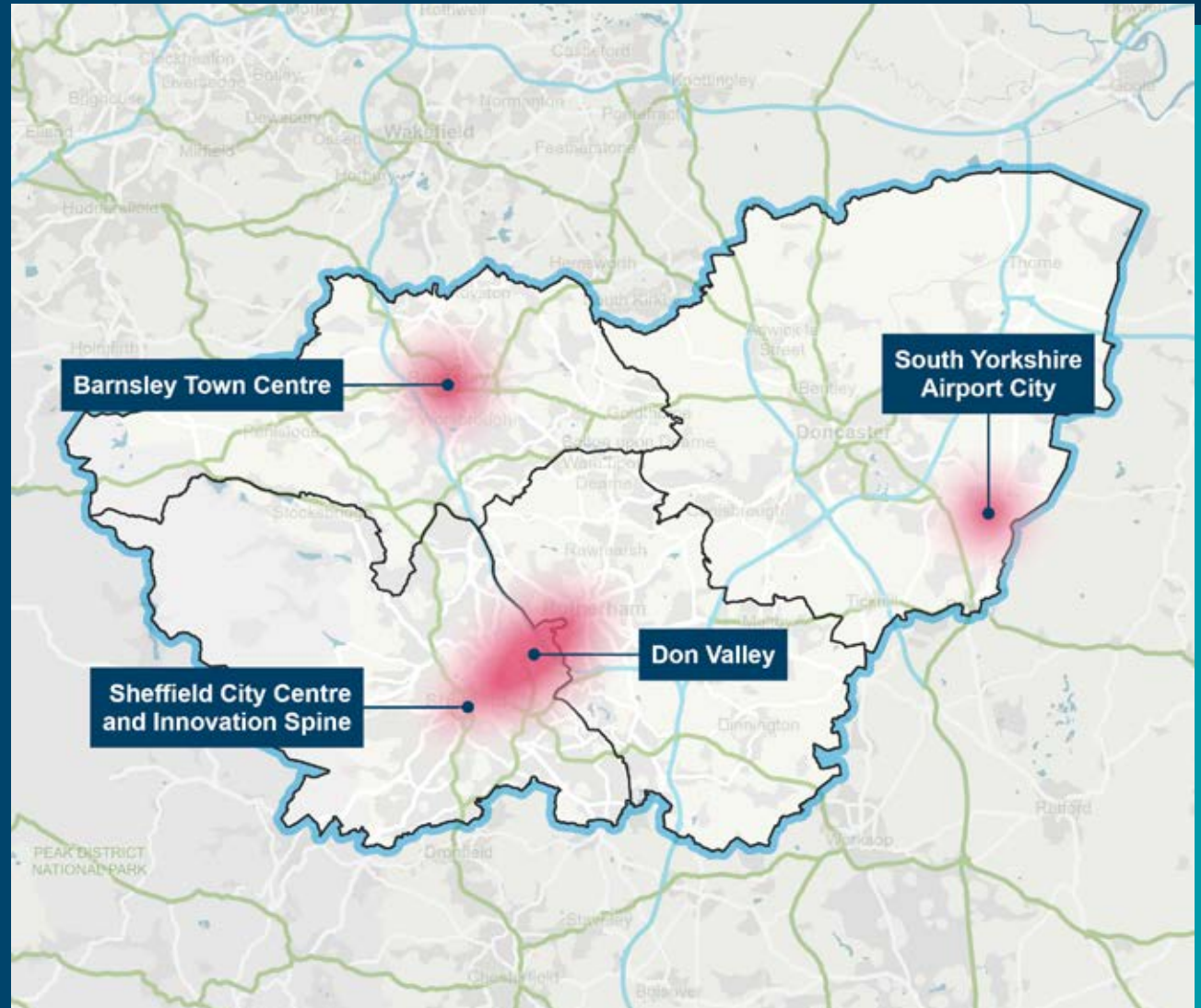


# Our Growth Areas

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

We will work with our partners to ensure Growth Areas are set-up to deliver for success.



# Don Valley

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



## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## Town Centre, Forge Island and Rotherham Gateway

Undergoing a £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.



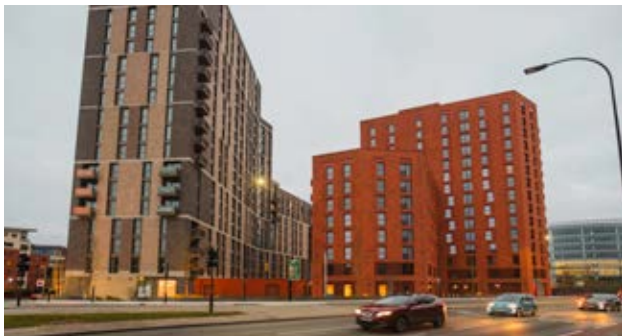
## Waverley Rail Station

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.

# Sheffield City Centre and Innovation Spine

**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 and Sheffield Hallam University through key regeneration areas including the Station Quarter, Castlegate, West Bar, and St. George's neighborhoods.**

**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 include 100,000 sq ft of Grade A office space and 368 build-to-rent apartments. Future sphaes will unlock 1 million 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. Designed to be serve as a beacon for the region with space 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).

## Sheffield City Centre 'New Neighbourhoods'

Sheffield City Council has partnered with Homes England to delivery 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 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, a platform for regional growth and the opportunity to extend the South Yorkshire advanced manufacturing cluster.**



## The Airport

This will be 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 airside 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 reopened airport - 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 delivering one of the UK's most ambitious town-centre regeneration programmes and has an ambition to be the 'UK's leading digital town', building on its leadership in public service reform. Through new digital infrastructure, cultural investment and a demonstrator Catapult model, Barnsley will show 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 Attend 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.

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.

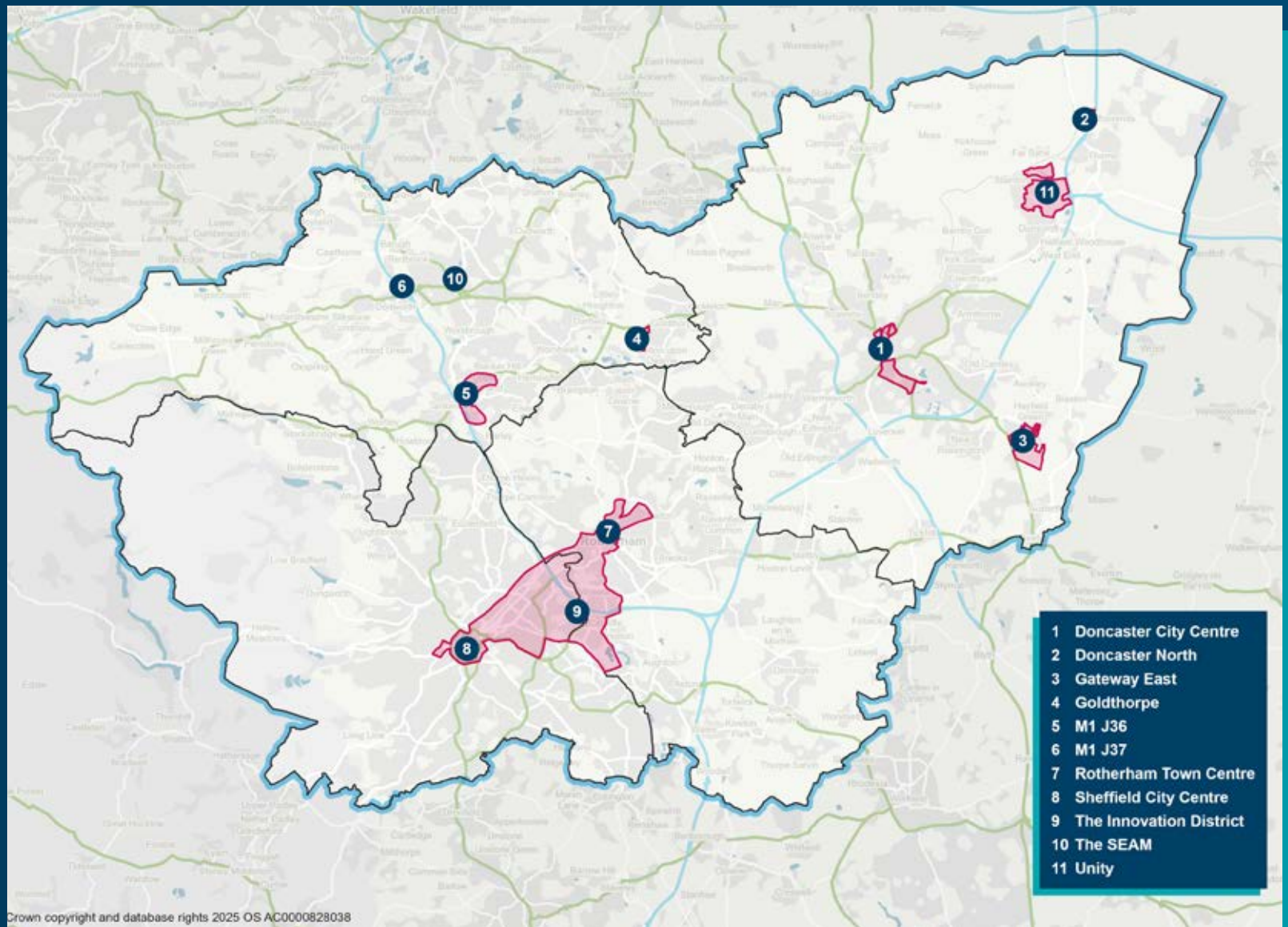




# South Yorkshire Investment Zone

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.

Our vision for the IZ is simple, to bring investment into the business base, making it the place to start, scale or relocate a business. In our first year along, every £1 of public investment returned nearly £9 of private investment.



1. **City Centre** - Doncaster launched 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 sq.ft 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.



# **Part 2**

## **Mission Deep**

### **Dive**

**Our businesses:**

**2035 – A strong, diverse business base**



# Strategic objective: 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.

## Established sectors

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**
- **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.**

This strength 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.

# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

## Advanced manufacturing

### Growth Opportunities

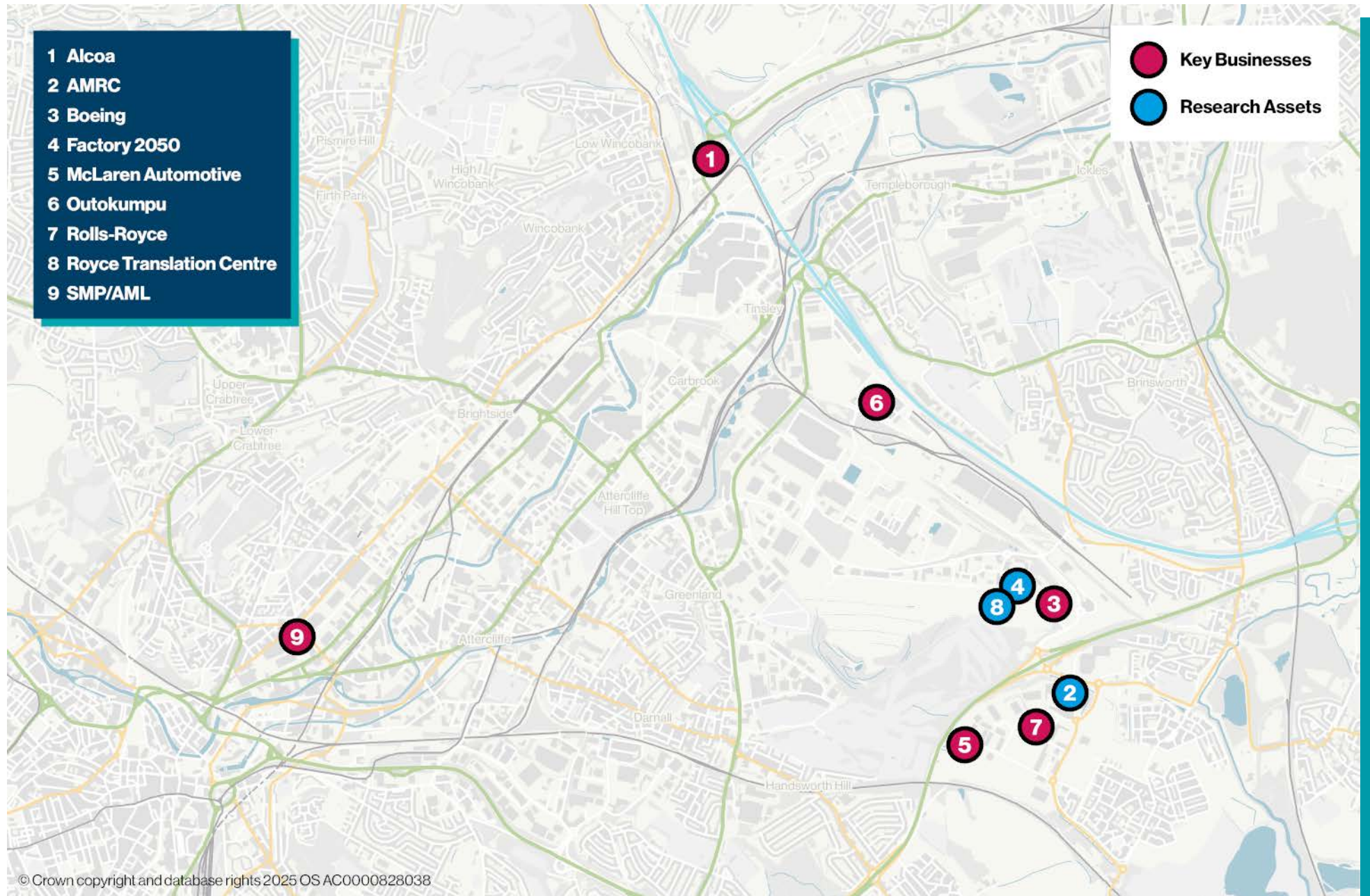
International opportunities focus on export leadership in manufacturing intelligence, precision components, and advanced manufacturing services, attracting foreign direct investment, building on the region's recent momentum. Locally, the sector offers transformative potential for foundational industries, 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

- **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.

### 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.
- **Alcoa and Outokumpu:**  
All supplying specialist steel.



# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

## Clean energy

### Core capabilities:

- **Manufacture of hydrogen production and storage equipment**
- **Nuclear technologies such as SMR development and fusion**
- **Sustainable aviation fuels**
- **Carbon capture**
- **Industrial decarbonisation solutions.**

**South Yorkshire's clean energy cluster has the largest share of the UK's CleanTech economy at 6.9% more than three times the share of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. As the UK's fourth largest Net Zero cluster, the region contributes £1.6 billion annually.**

Supported by the University of Sheffield 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<sub>2</sub>, 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.

### 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<sub>2</sub> emissions) through hydrogen and carbon reduction technologies while creating resilient regional energy systems. There is an opportunity to establish market-led hydrogen hubs with guaranteed demand through defence and heavy industry contracts, develop the Doncaster Sheffield airport area as a national clean energy testbed, and create targeted demonstration projects linking clean energy innovations to traditional industrial strengths.



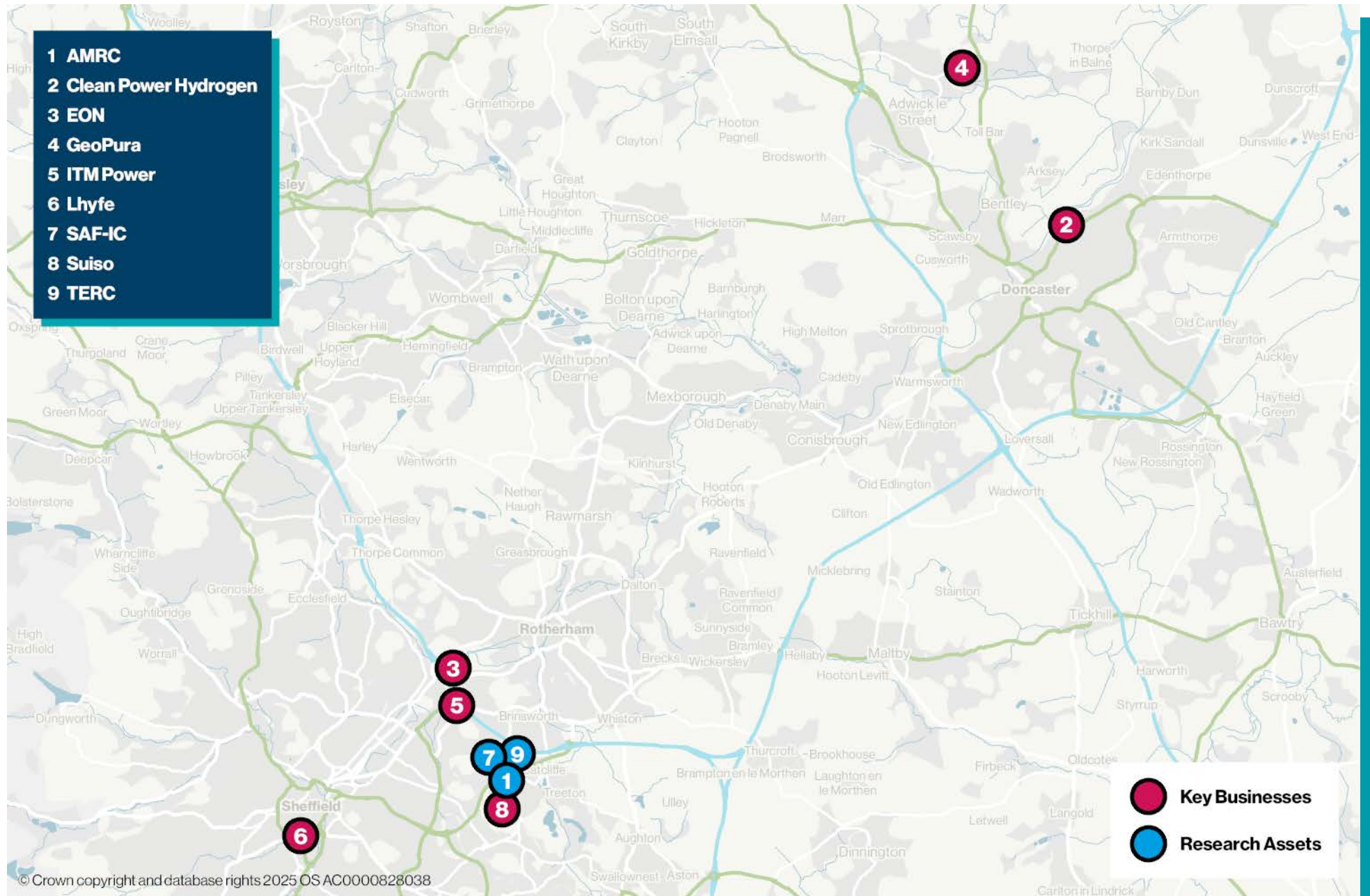
## Research assets

- **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 Energy Institute. 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. TERC and SAF-IC together form the first centre in the UK that can capture CO<sub>2</sub>, produce green hydrogen, convert it into sustainable aviation fuels, and analyse their performance all in one single location.
- **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 world'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.





# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

## Life sciences

### Core capabilities:

- **Medical technology and manufacture**
- **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 NCCHT for child health technology, AWRC for movement innovations, SITraN for translational neuroscience, and the Medical AMRC creating manufacturing healthcare collaborations. Companies range from Exciting Instruments with single-molecule detection platforms to BBraun's 63,000 global workforce.

### 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 Olympic Legacy Park ecosystem expansion, Medical AMRC research to production bridging, and digital health solutions that capitalise on regional AI capabilities.

# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

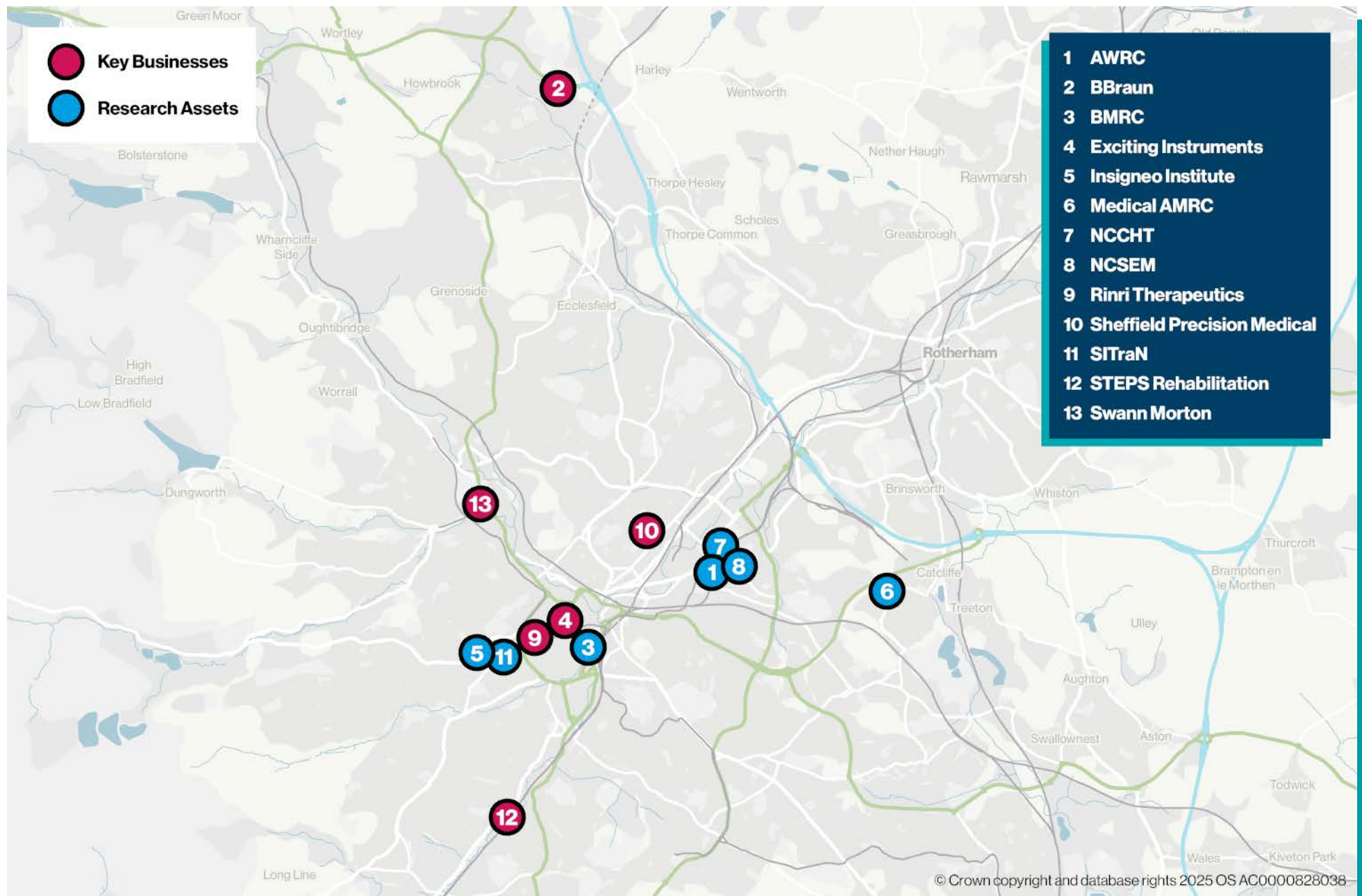
## Life sciences

### 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 Olympic Legacy Park.
- **AWRC Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre:**  
Dedicated to improving health and wellbeing through innovations that help people move. Located at our Olympic Legacy Park.
- **SITraN Sheffield Institute for Translational Neuroscience & GTIMC TIMC Gene Therapy Innovation & Manufacturing Centre:**  
Impactful 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:**  
Analysing cells and tissues to combat diseases for healthier lives & utilising advanced technologies.
- **University of Sheffield Insigneo Institute:**  
Driving innovative research at the interface of healthcare, engineering and science to transform health.

### 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.
- **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.
- **Swann Morton:** development of surgical instruments.
- **BBraun:** A Multiple medical device company with 63,000 global staff.
- **Rinri Therapeutics:** Regenerative Cell therapy revolutionising the treatment of sensorineural hearing loss.





# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

## Defence

### Core capabilities:

- **Nuclear-grade steel production**
- **Advanced materials for defence applications**
- **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 unique 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 submarine reactors and fusion energy projects; the Future Energy Factory, serving both defence and civilian clients; and the University of Sheffield's recognised excellence in defence research. The defence industrial base includes BAE Systems' £25 million advanced artillery 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.

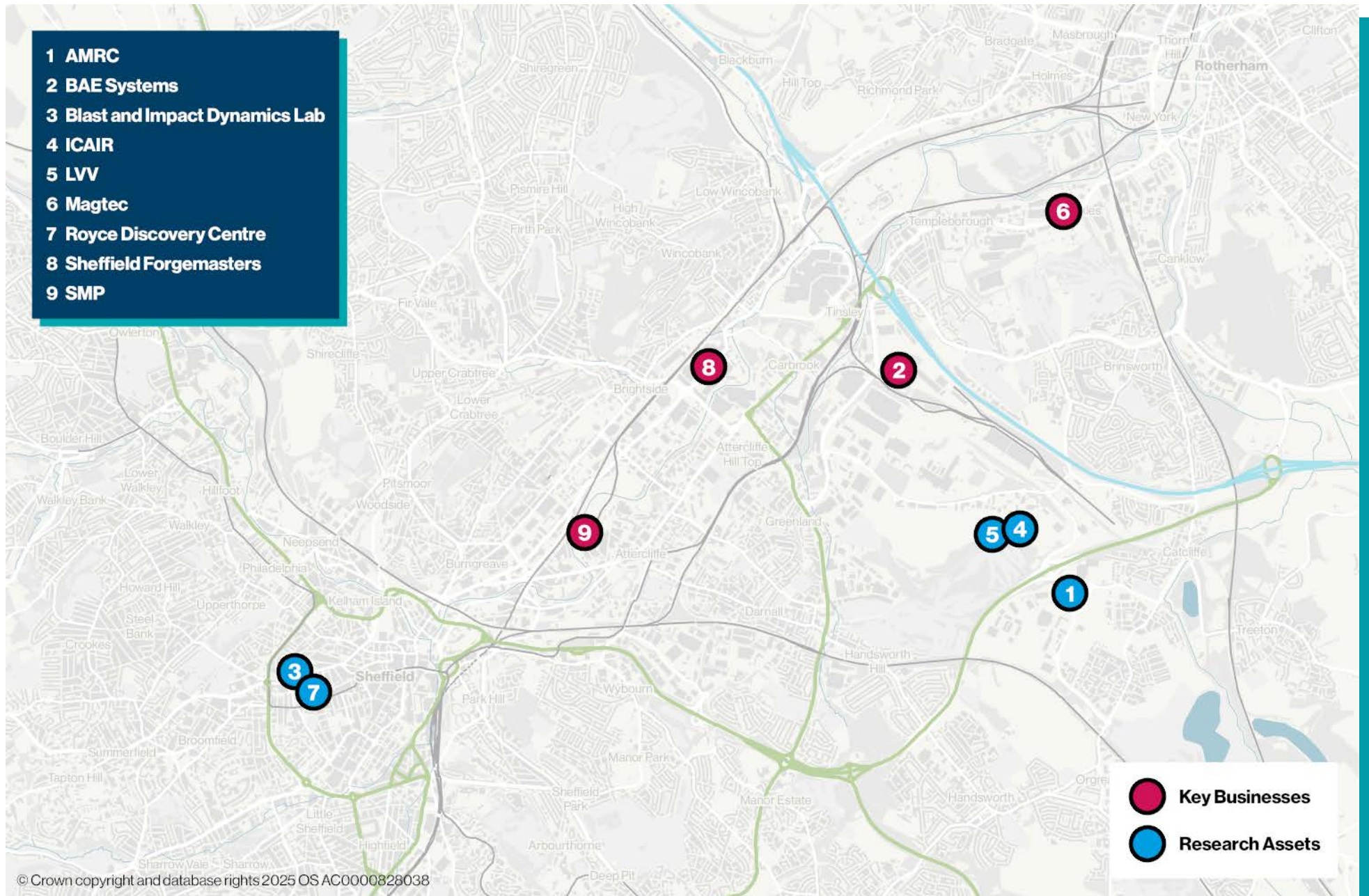


## Research assets

- **University of Sheffield 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.





# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

## 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.



# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

## 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 Doc/Fest, 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 Digital Media Centre 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 emerging initiatives like Rotherham's Children's Capital of Culture.

### 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.

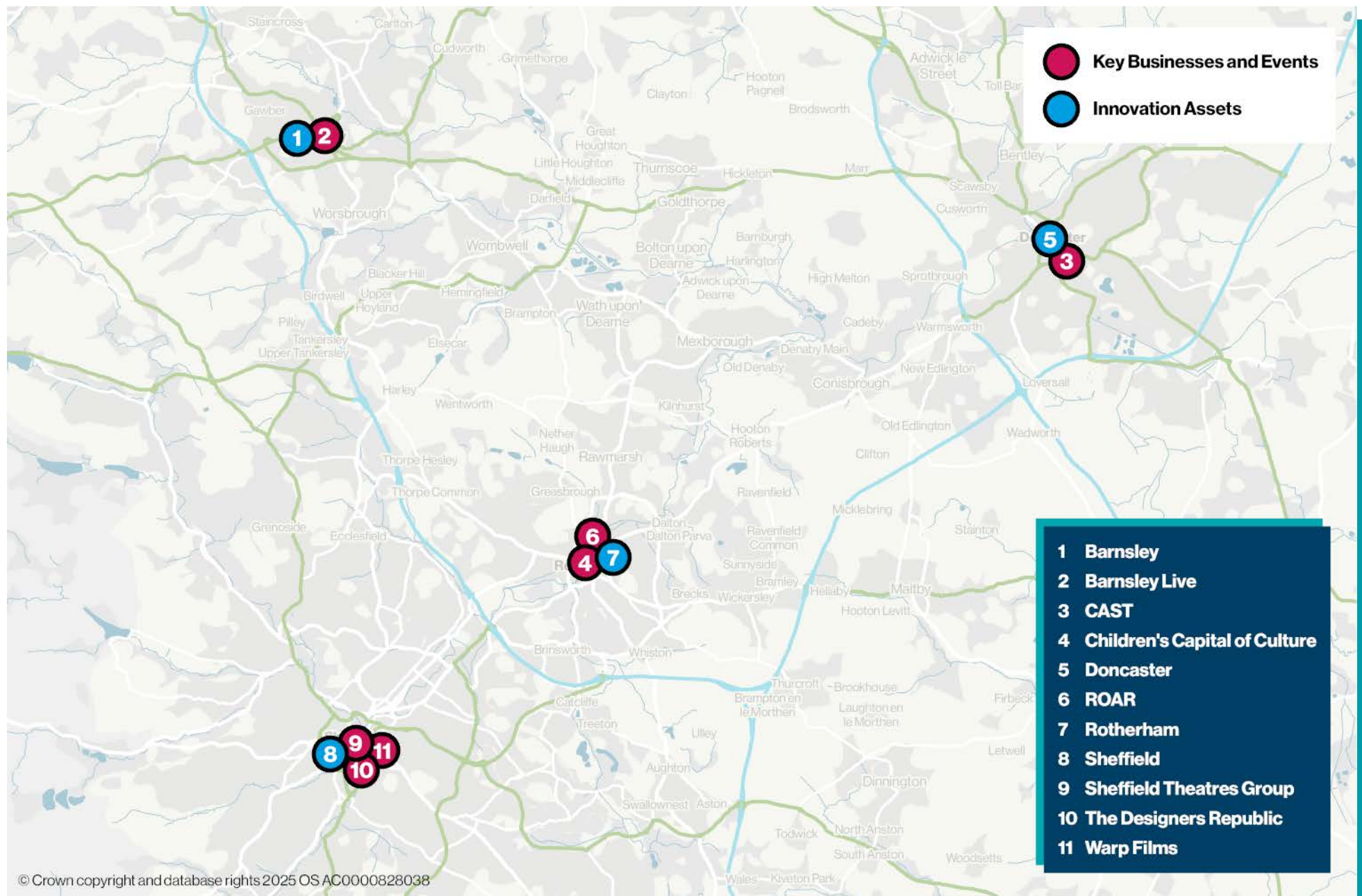
## Main Innovation Assets

- **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, Millenium 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 Digital Media Centre 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.
- **Barnsley Live:**  
Providing an impressive creative festival, plus venues such as the newly regenerated Barnsley Civic.
- **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.





# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

## Digital and tech

**South Yorkshire's digital technology sector has achieved 700% growth in the last decade with a combined startup value of £3bn in 2024, ranking in the top third globally for advanced hardware strength. Core capabilities span physical tech and deep tech, AI and data analytics, advanced hardware, digital health solutions, and manufacturing digitalisation, supported by research assets including the Centre for Machine Intelligence, Sheffield Robotics Hub, and Semiconductor Materials and Devices Centre. Innovation infrastructure encompasses Sheffield Technology Parks, Pennine Five, South Yorkshire Digital Health Hub, and SEAM.**

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, and Aegiq, complemented by success in EdTech through companies like Tutorful and Twinkle, gaming through SUMO and Pitstop Productions, and AI and data analytics through FourJaw, Automated Analytics, and TUBR.

### Growth Opportunities

The emerging digital cluster concentrates on applications that drive innovation across well-established sectors, complementing standalone technology development. This positions South Yorkshire to benefit from the intersection of digital capabilities and traditional industrial strengths. International opportunities include exporting integrated solutions that combine digital technology with manufacturing, energy, and healthcare expertise. Locally, the sector can provide the digital backbone for Industry 4.0 transformation across core industries. The strategic approach should focus on developing integrated digital-industrial solutions, creating innovation links between tech startups and traditional manufacturers, establishing professional services clusters to support advanced industries, and building digital export capabilities that leverage the region's unique digital and industrial expertise convergence.

# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

## Digital and tech

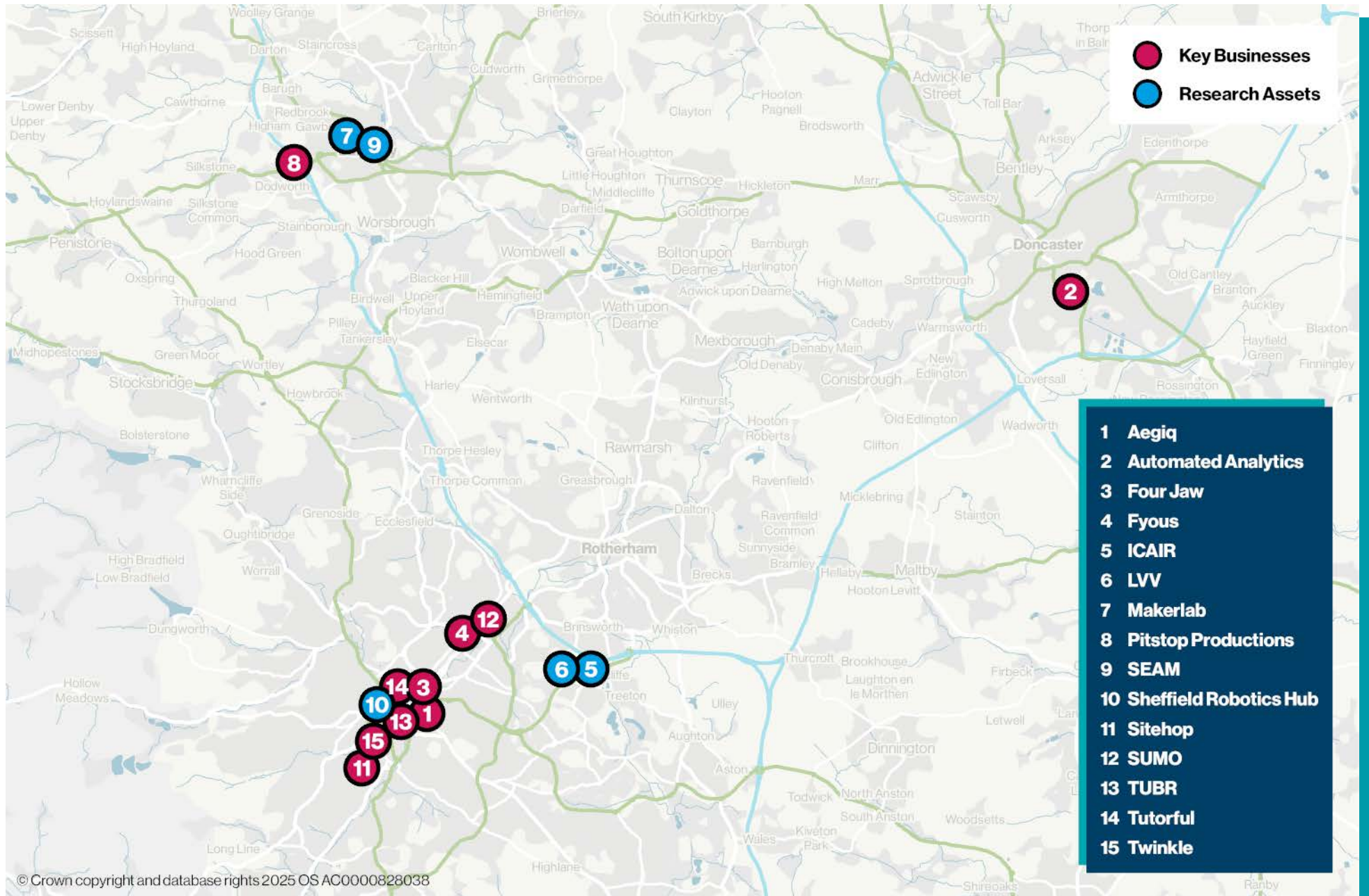
### Research and Innovation Assets

- **Centre for Machine Intelligence**
- **Sheffield Robotics Hub**
- **Integrated Civil and Infrastructure Research Centre**
- **Structural Dynamics Laboratory for Verification and Validation**
- **Semiconductor Materials and Devices Centre**
- **Barnsley SEAM and MakerLab**
- **Pennine5 and Sheffield Tech Parks**
- **South Yorkshire Digital Health Hub**

### Key Businesses and events

- **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, 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 Four jaw, Automated Analytics, TUBR.





# Strategic objective: our sectors and clusters are driving productivity growth

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.

**To deliver this strategic objective, over the next ten years we will focus on providing:**

## Trade, Investment and Promotional Support

Exporting firms are consistently more productive, more innovative and pay higher wages, while inward investment brings new knowledge, supply chain opportunities and global connections. South Yorkshire's current export levels are below the national average, and the region has not consistently secured the inward investment needed to anchor clusters of growth.

Our ambition is to attract anchor businesses and institutions into our Growth Areas, around which clusters of suppliers, innovators and skilled workers can grow – driving competitive advantage through strong local supply chains, specialist skills, world-class infrastructure and collaboration between firms.

**Our priorities will be to strengthen the region's trade and investment pipeline; establish a dedicated trade and promotion function; support angel networks to complement institutional and public investment; and provide targeted export support so more South Yorkshire firms can compete internationally.**

## Connected innovation assets

**In the most successful regions, businesses and researchers work in a deeply networked way. In South Yorkshire, we need to strengthen the networks of our digital firms, manufacturers, healthcare providers, and clean energy innovators while using public procurement in a way that prioritises innovation alongside cost. We know that successful innovation districts increasingly operate on a hyper-local scale, with large anchors tightly enmeshed with suppliers and research institutions.**

It is our ambition to better connect the region's assets, such as manufacturers and digital start-ups working together to enhance healthcare or anchor employers integrating innovation throughout their supply chains. We will bring together business, public sector, communities and research institutions (the 'quadruple helix'), including for the £30m Local Innovation Partnership Fund, because we know that strengthening these links allows South Yorkshire to innovate, support sustainable growth, and establish its reputation as a hub for innovation.



**We will seek to deepen collaboration across South Yorkshire's economy by: providing shared facilities, regional coordination mechanisms and knowledge platforms in our Growth Areas where diverse businesses can connect; delivering innovation platforms that break down sectoral barriers, such as Digital/Physical Integration Hubs, Sustainability Innovation Networks, and Health Tech Innovation Clusters; and, using public procurement where possible to reward innovation and to anchor institutions actively into supporting local supply chains.**

#### **Pipeline of Talent, co-created with Business**

**A shortage of skilled workers is a major barrier to growth. Employers in South Yorkshire frequently report difficulty recruiting for technical and professional roles, while residents with no or low qualifications risk being excluded from good jobs. Without a business-led pipeline of talent, the region cannot fulfil its economic potential.**

Our ambition is to co-create a pipeline of talent with employers, ensuring residents are equipped with the skills needed to access high-quality jobs in growth sectors. Our Skills Bank co-investment model is an innovative approach to do this, but it needs to be simplified, and the model deployed more widely.

**Our priorities will be to co-design curricula, apprenticeships and pathways with businesses; expand training pathways linked to sectors such as advanced manufacturing, health and green industries; target the 'missing middle' of technical skills; and support those with low or no qualifications to progress into secure, better-paid work.**

#### **Cluster leadership**

**South Yorkshire's strengths lie not just in individual sectors but in the clusters where firms, institutions and supply chains come together. Strong cluster leadership is essential to organise collaboration, shape skills provision, attract investment and drive competitiveness. Without it, opportunities remain fragmented, and the benefits of growth are diluted.**

Our ambition is to build globally competitive clusters that bring together anchor firms, SMEs, research institutions and government in a shared mission to raise productivity and create good jobs.

**Our priorities will be to establish clear leadership structures for each major cluster; strengthen supply chain development around anchors; promote collaboration between firms to share knowledge and adopt new technologies; and ensure our clusters have a visible national and international profile that attracts capital, talent and opportunity to South Yorkshire.**

# Strategic objective: our business base is more dynamic, nested in a strong 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.

We have learnt that building an adaptive business and innovation ecosystem means creating the institutional infrastructure that enables these connections to form, strengthen, and evolve. This includes formal support programs and informal networks, trusted relationships, and shared knowledge that make a place conducive to entrepreneurship and innovation.

**This includes recognising 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.**



## Education

**South Yorkshire has a comparative advantage in education services, with concentration of activity increasing over time. The sector contributes £3.5bn to SY economy and employs roughly 62,000 people.**



### Health

Health (including life sciences capabilities) contributes £4.1bn to the region's economy and provides 95,000 jobs.



### 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.



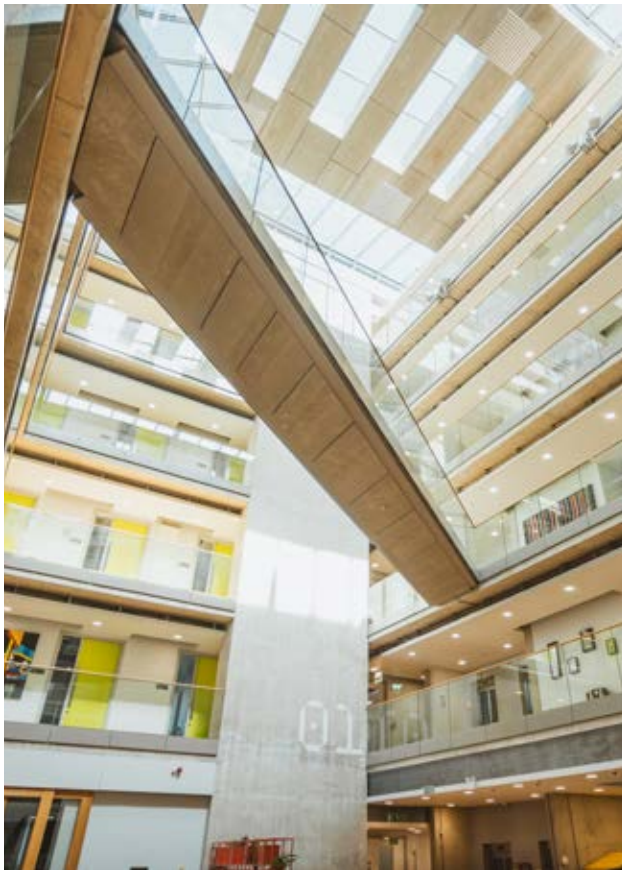
### Public Administration

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.



# Strategic objective: our business base is more dynamic, nested in a strong business and innovation ecosystem

To deliver this strategic objective, over the next ten years we will focus on providing:



## Integrated business support and capability building

**Too many businesses receive generic support that doesn't match their specific needs or growth stage. Our firms, particularly smaller ones, need stronger leadership and management capabilities, to facilitate growth.**

Our ambition is to provide business support as a tailored, developmental process that adapts to each company's specific stage, from start-up uncertainty to established market presence. Practical business support isn't one size fits all, but a strategic partnership that evolves alongside the companies it serves.

**Our priorities over the next ten years will be to offer: stage specific programmes from start-up to scale-up, sector-specialised accelerators, and active business networks for peer learning that offer relevant expertise and funding, building on our successful Launchpad model; accessible leadership development, management capability programmes for scaling businesses, and entrepreneurial culture development across traditional and high growth sectors; and, embedded talent programmes placing graduates in SMEs, executive exchanges between large and small firms, and co-designed skills pathways addressing the 'missing middle' technical skills gap.**



### Finance ecosystem and investment readiness

South Yorkshire businesses face finance gaps, especially in attracting early-stage funding and major institutional investment, with many lacking investment readiness and the region experiencing challenges in drawing and retaining patient capital essential for growth; however, by developing the finance ecosystem to deliver the right capital at the right time and preparing businesses to secure investment, there is an opportunity to unlock the full growth potential of enterprises across South Yorkshire at every stage.

Our ambition is that South Yorkshire will have a finance ecosystem where businesses can access suitable funding throughout their growth journey.

In order to do this, we will prioritise: scale-up investment support, including revenue-based financing and long-term equity funds, plus comprehensive investment readiness support; broadening finance networks, including local co-investment funds, angel networks, institutional investor attraction, and public-private blended finance mechanisms; and, business finance support, including advisory services helping businesses navigate finance options, financial literacy development, and investment proposition support.



# Strategic objective: our business base is more dynamic, nested in a strong business and innovation ecosystem



## Skills progression and pathways

South Yorkshire's employers report persistent skills shortages, with too many vacancies at technical and higher levels going unfilled. At the same time, residents often lack clear routes to progress from school into further learning and good jobs. This mismatch holds back productivity and limits the capacity of businesses to grow.

Our ambition is to align education and training with business demand, creating clear pathways that help residents move into the roles employers need. We will work with businesses to design "opportunity accelerators" – programmes that give people the skills, experience and confidence to progress quickly into higher-value jobs.

Our priorities will be to co-design curricula, apprenticeships and technical qualifications with employers; expand provision at Levels 3–5 where demand is strongest; invest in progression support to help adults upskill into growth sectors; and, ensure opportunity accelerators connect residents to vacancies in real time, strengthening both business competitiveness and individual opportunity.



### **Good business, including diverse business models**

Economic growth does not automatically benefit everyone or all sectors. Some of South Yorkshire's biggest employers - health, education, retail, logistics, and public administration - contribute £13bn and employ nearly 290,000 people but often miss out on innovation opportunities. Meanwhile, growth can sometimes widen rather than narrow inequalities. By intentionally spreading innovation benefits across all sectors and setting the ambition that growth is inclusive from the outset, we can create an economy that works for everyone while strengthening the foundations that support higher value activities.

Our ambition is that innovation and productivity improvements will benefit South Yorkshire's entire economy, not just high-tech sectors. We'll recognise foundational sectors as opportunities for innovation, supported by improved digital skills and management.

**In order to get there, we will prioritise: good business models, including support for cooperatives, employee ownership, and social enterprises, with responsible practices integrated into mainstream business support; foundational sector support, including targeted productivity and innovation support for health, education, retail, logistics, and public administration; and, inclusive integration, including user-designed support systems, regional collaboration mechanisms, and measurement frameworks tracking social and environmental impacts alongside economic outcomes. We will use procurement, where possible, to drive diversity into our business base and to create local value.**

# Strategic objective: our business base is more dynamic, nested in a strong business and innovation ecosystem

## How we are already delivering on the objective

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



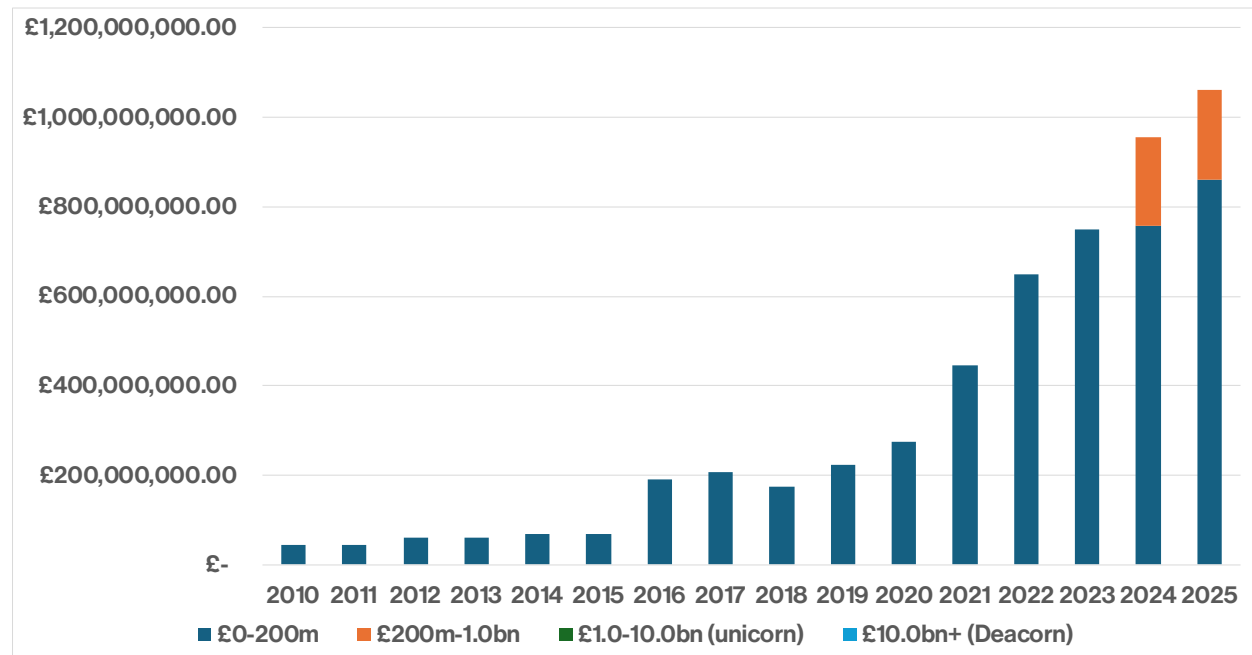
### Case study: Tech SY

**The South Yorkshire Tech Sector is building significant momentum. In 2025, tech businesses were worth £3.3 bn, up from £325m 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 5: South Yorkshire Enterprise Value by Valuation, Dealroom**



## Strategic objective: our business base is more dynamic, nested in a strong business and innovation ecosystem



### 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.



# **Our places:** **2035 – connected, vibrant places**

# Strategic objective: our urban areas are well 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.

**To deliver this strategic objective, over the next ten years we will focus on providing:**



**A reliable, integrated and sustainable transport system.**

South Yorkshire's growth depends on a transport system that connects people to jobs, education and services. Yet too many residents face unreliable public transport, congested roads, or limited active travel options – holding back opportunity and undermining our competitiveness.

Our ambition is to build a reliable, integrated and sustainable transport system which supports economic growth while reducing emissions.

**Our priorities will be to deliver a better bus system, with more reliable services and simplified fares; renew and expand the tram network to connect more people and places; invest in infrastructure that unlocks housing and commercial development; and grow active travel networks so walking and cycling become safe, attractive options across the region. By integrating these modes, we will create a transport system that is the backbone of a stronger, greener South Yorkshire.**



### A well-connected region.

**Market access is key for our businesses, for the visitor economy and for our residents to seek opportunities elsewhere. This is a function of the national rail and road networks, but also through the international access that is provided by an airport, international freight terminals, such as iPort in Doncaster, and access to the Humber Ports. South Yorkshire is well served, and will be better served, but there is more investment that is needed.**

A re-opened airport is key to providing market access to our businesses and residents. And our White Rose Plan for Rail outlines our ambition for better rail links across Yorkshire. This includes faster and more frequent trains to Leeds, which could lead to 1 million extra trips each year and add £100 million in GVA to the economy. Upgrades to the East Coast Main Line would make services more reliable and opens up new opportunities for freight and business growth.

There is the opportunity for new direct intercity train services, such as from Barnsley to London, and from a new Rotherham Mainline Station. The latter would directly support the Rotherham Gateway development, which plans to deliver 33,000 square metres of

commercial space and 3,000 new homes.

Improving connections to Manchester is also critical, particularly given the highway constraints of the A57 and A628. Strategic rail investment would facilitate 2,800 additional commuter trips, providing a viable alternative to car travel and easing pressure on the road network. By integrating rail improvements with wider transport and economic priorities, we will create a more sustainable, resilient, and growth-enabling transport system for the future.

Improving our connections to international gateways is essential. Upgrades to the strategic road network at M18 J3 are key to enabling future growth at Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA). This would directly support the reopened airport and Gateway East development to deliver 5,000 new jobs. Direct rail links to DSA and from South Yorkshire to Manchester Airport would improve sustainable travel options and make these airports more accessible and attractive.

## Strategic objective: our urban areas are well connected, attracting private investment



### Housing growth in our urban centres

Good quality, affordable housing in the right places is essential for growth. South Yorkshire's urban centres have seen significant regeneration in recent years, but despite a step change in delivery facilitated by close working with Homes England on Catalyst sites, housing supply has not always kept pace with demand and too much of the existing stock is poor quality or poorly insulated and heated. Without a stronger housing offer, we risk constraining growth, deterring investment, and leaving too many residents in unsuitable or unaffordable homes.

Our ambition is to deliver the right mix of new housing in our urban centres, creating liveable, attractive places that support regeneration, draw in talent, and meet the diverse needs of our communities.

**Our priorities will be to accelerate housing delivery in Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield town and city centres, particularly through our 'Catalyst Site' work with Homes England; ensure developments are well-connected to public transport, jobs and amenities; retrofit and regenerate existing stock to address fuel poverty**

**and contribute to Net Zero targets; and, unlock sites through infrastructure investment.**





### **Commercial development and institutional investment**

**Vibrant urban centres and growth corridors depend on high-quality commercial space that meets the needs of businesses. In South Yorkshire, demand for flexible, wet and dry-lab space, as well as Grade A office space is outstripping supply.**

Our ambition is to deliver a new wave of commercial development in line with our Place Plans, attracting institutional investment and ensuring our centres and corridors are enterprise ready.

**Our priorities will be to assemble and de-risk sites in our city and town centres and Growth Areas; bring forward high-quality, sustainable commercial space that supports innovation and business growth; create investable pipelines that align with institutional capital requirements; and ensure commercial development is closely integrated with housing, transport and cultural investment. By aligning commercial growth with enterprise and Place Plans, we will strengthen confidence, attract investment, and create centres where businesses can start, grow and stay.**

## Strategic objective: our urban areas are well connected, attracting private investment



**A strong core city and urban centres working together in a single economy.**

**South Yorkshire's success depends on both its strong towns, Barnsley and Rotherham, Doncaster City and its Core City, Sheffield. Sheffield plays a unique role in the regional economy: as the largest urban centre, it is the place capable of attracting knowledge-intensive businesses and institutions that may not locate elsewhere. A thriving Sheffield city centre, with a distinctive offer on innovation, culture and liveability, strengthens the whole region's economic base. Similarly, the space available in Barnsley and Doncaster along the transport nodes allow the inventions and innovations that take place in Rotherham and Sheffield to be spun out into job-rich, manufacturing activity.**

Our ambition is for Sheffield to be a core city that competes nationally and internationally for investment, talent and knowledge-intensive industries, while harnessing the space-rich opportunities and high-quality of life offered in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham to ensure the benefits of growth spread across South Yorkshire. This must include a region-wide culture, leisure and visitor economy offer in city and

town centres with attractive and safe public realms. This would include extending the reach and impact of festivals and cultural events like DocFest, Crossed Wires and Off the Shelf, aligning activation with major regeneration projects to drive footfall and build new audiences.

**Our priorities will be to develop Sheffield's city centre and Innovation Spine as a magnet for advanced industries, research activity and cultural vibrancy; to improve transport and digital connections so that opportunities created in Sheffield are accessible to residents and businesses across Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham; and to align investment in the core city with wider place-making in towns and communities.**

### How we are already delivering on the objective

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.

## Strategic objective: our urban areas are well connected, attracting private investment



### 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.

## Strategic objective: our urban areas are well connected, attracting private investment



### 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.

# Strategic objective: our residents are proud to call our towns and cities 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.

**To deliver this strategic objective, over the next ten years we will focus on providing:**

**A strong cultural, leisure and visitor economy offer.**

Cultural institutions and social infrastructure – from our theatres, galleries and museums to libraries, sports centres and leisure amenities – are vital to South Yorkshire's identity and vibrancy. They connect people, strengthen community bonds, and attract visitors who drive spending in our economy. Yet despite the strength of our cultural offer, **national investment has been inconsistent, and the region has often undersold itself.**

Our ambition is to make South Yorkshire's cultural and leisure assets nationally renowned, creating a distinctive offer that attracts visitors, strengthens pride of place, and supports growth in our cultural and creative sectors. This must include a region-wide extension of the reach and impact of festivals and cultural events like DocFest, Crossed Wires and Off the Shelf, aligning activation with major regeneration projects to drive footfall and build new audiences.

**Our priorities will be to invest in flagship cultural institutions while nurturing grassroots creativity across our towns and communities; promote our cultural and visitor offer more effectively to national and international audiences; support the growth of**

**the cultural and creative industries as a source of good jobs; and invest in local leisure infrastructure that provides accessible amenities and strengthens community life.**



# Strategic objective: our residents are proud to call our towns and cities home and people want to visit



## Vibrant high streets, town and city centres.

High streets and town centres are central to the life of South Yorkshire's communities. They provide not only places to shop, but hubs for services, social connection and local identity. Yet across the UK, high streets have faced declining footfall, shifting retail patterns and under-investment, leaving too many centres hollowed out. South Yorkshire has responded with innovation: Barnsley's Health on the High Street initiative is an outlier, integrating health services into the town centre and increasing footfall, while Rotherham's Forge Island development is reshaping its centre with new leisure, cultural and housing investment.

Our ambition is to deliver regeneration that revitalises high streets, strengthens local economies, and provides quality, affordable housing at the heart of our towns and cities.

**Our priorities will be to replicate and scale successful approaches like Health on the High Street; deliver mixed-use regeneration that combines retail, leisure, culture and homes; expand affordable and energy-efficient housing in central locations; and, invest in public realm and**

**infrastructure that makes our centres attractive, safe and accessible.**





### Quality, sustainable and affordable housing

**South Yorkshire's housing strategy is rooted in the need to improve existing stock and deliver new homes to support a low-carbon future and inclusive economic growth. With 80% of the buildings that will be in use by 2050 already built, retrofitting and repurposing existing homes is critical. Programmes like the Government's £13.2bn Warm Homes Plan present major opportunities for regeneration and retrofit-led growth.**

South Yorkshire is actively delivering a coordinated housing growth programme, aiming to build 2,000–2,500 new social and affordable homes annually. This is being driven by the South Yorkshire Housing Partnership, leveraging significant public and private investment, including the Government's £39bn housing fund. A pilot Enhanced Council House Building Programme has been scoped in collaboration with all four stock-holding local authorities, responding to urgent need with over 1,000 households in temporary accommodation and 40,000 on waiting lists. Delivery is overseen by the South Yorkshire Strategic Place Partnership (SYMCA and Homes England), ensuring alignment across the region.

In parallel, retrofit activity is scaling up to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. SYMCA is leading strategic planning and programme design, with a focus on large, area-based schemes that integrate mixed housing tenures. Current delivery includes retrofit demonstrators across communities and supply chains, a £2.87m project targeting the private rented sector, and a pilot Community Retrofit Hub supporting low-income households. Additional initiatives include a community energy hub to reduce heat loss and bills, and the development of a Retrofit Skills Taskforce with SY Ecofit to upskill local people and businesses—building the capacity needed to expand retrofit across the region.

# Strategic objective: our residents our proud to call our towns and cities home and people want to visit



## Safe and vibrant neighbourhoods, with strong community bonds.

People should feel safe in their communities, town centres and cities. Safety and trust are the foundations of vibrant neighbourhoods and a sense of pride in the place you live. When residents feel secure, they are more likely to use local shops, cultural venues and public spaces, strengthening both the economy and social cohesion. Anti-social behaviour and crime not only harm those directly affected but also reduce community confidence and engagement when people withdraw from public life. Research shows that places with strong social capital – where people know and support each other, and participate in local institutions – are more resilient, healthier and more prosperous.

Our ambition is to ensure that every neighbourhood in South Yorkshire is safe, welcoming and vibrant, with strong community bonds that underpin both wellbeing and economic growth

**We have set clear priorities in the South Yorkshire Police and Crime to improve trust and confidence in policing and the criminal justice system, tackle anti-social behaviour and crime through targeted**

**prevention and partnership working, and build resilient communities. Safe and resilient communities will attract further investment in economic activity and the public spaces and community infrastructure that bring people together. A key part of this is working directly with our communities to support civic participation, volunteering and local leadership that strengthen bonds. While incidents of anti-social behaviour have fallen towards the national average over the past decade, we will not be complacent – ensuring safety and cohesion remain central to building thriving neighbourhoods across South Yorkshire. We are investing in increased neighbourhood policing to ensure there is greater visibility of officers in public spaces to deter low-level crime and anti-social behaviour.**

### How we are already delivering on the objective.

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 ‘Camilla 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.



## Strategic objective: our residents our proud to call our towns and cities home and people want to visit



### 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 rentals across the region.

# **Our people: 2035 – Pathways to Stay Near and Go Far**

# Strategic objective: 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.

**To deliver this strategic objective, over the next ten years we will focus on providing:**



**A good start for children through early years support.**

**The earliest years of life are critical to a child's future wellbeing, education and employment prospects. Across South Yorkshire, the proportion of young people reaching development milestones continues to improve, with Barnsley and Doncaster performing above the national average for disadvantaged pupils meeting expected standards in reading, writing and maths. This shows that with the right support, children in our region can thrive – but outcomes remain uneven, and too many children still start school without the foundations they need to succeed.**

Our ambition is to ensure every child, regardless of background, has the best possible start in life.

**Our priorities will be to share best practice across local authorities and schools; provide targeted, hyper-localised support for families and communities, through programmes such as Safe Place to Sleep; and work with partners nationally and locally to tackle the broader drivers of disadvantage in housing, welfare and health.**

# Strategic objective: our children experience a good start in life



## **Strong progression for young people, through strong school, career and transition support.**

Strong educational outcomes and clear routes into further study, training and work are essential to building a more productive and inclusive South Yorkshire. Yet too many young people in the region still leave school without the qualifications they need, and progression into higher-level skills remains uneven. In the 2023/24 academic year South Yorkshire saw a lower proportion of pupils who obtained an English or maths by age 16 than nationally. Disadvantaged pupils continue to face persistent gaps in attainment compared to their peers, and the transition between school, college, university and employment can be fragmented.

Our ambition is for every young person in South Yorkshire to have access to high-quality, visible pathways into learning and work, whether academic, technical or vocational, so that no young person is held back by circumstance, background, or lack of awareness of opportunities.

**Our priorities will be to strengthen partnerships between education providers and employers to create clear and locally relevant progression**

pathways; expand technical and vocational routes alongside academic ones, including apprenticeships, T-Levels, higher technical qualifications and sector based training, to meet both the skills needs of our economy and young people's aspirations; and, ensure all young people have access to impartial advice, support and guidance to help them make informed choices. The South Yorkshire Careers Hub will be our main vehicle for delivering this ambition, raising the profile of technical and vocational routes alongside academic ones, improving transitions, and ensuring every young person has the knowledge and support they need to progress.

## **How we are already delivering on the objective**

**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.

## Strategic objective: our children experience a good start in life



### 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.

# Strategic objective: 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.

In South Yorkshire we are taking a leading role in inclusive workforce development. Our Health is Wealth report (2025) set out a clear ambition to improve health as the foundation for prosperity. Through initiatives such as Pathways to Work, we have brought health and employment services closer together, influencing national policy and sharing best practice. We will continue to push for innovation and improvement, ensuring services work together to remove barriers to opportunity and support more people into good work.

**To deliver this strategic objective, over the next ten years we will focus on providing:**



**Prevention services to reduce ill-health as a barrier to opportunity.**

Too few people in South Yorkshire are living long and healthy lives. Life expectancy here is below the national average, with the gap particularly stark for those in disadvantaged communities. Poor health is a leading driver of economic inactivity in our region, yet evidence shows that investing in prevention improves outcomes up to four times more than investing in treatment alone.

Our Health is Wealth report sets out the ambition to drive a shift toward 'radical prevention'—tackling ill-health at its roots by confronting the social and commercial forces that shape people's lives.

**This means we will prioritise delivering services where they're most needed and targeting support at the biggest drivers of poor health, including inadequate housing, insecure employment, and unhealthy environments. By embedding health improvement into our skills, employment, and broader regional strategies, we aim to create the conditions for more people in South Yorkshire to live longer, healthier lives and access good, meaningful work.**



# Strategic objective: our residents can access more opportunities through skills training and employment support



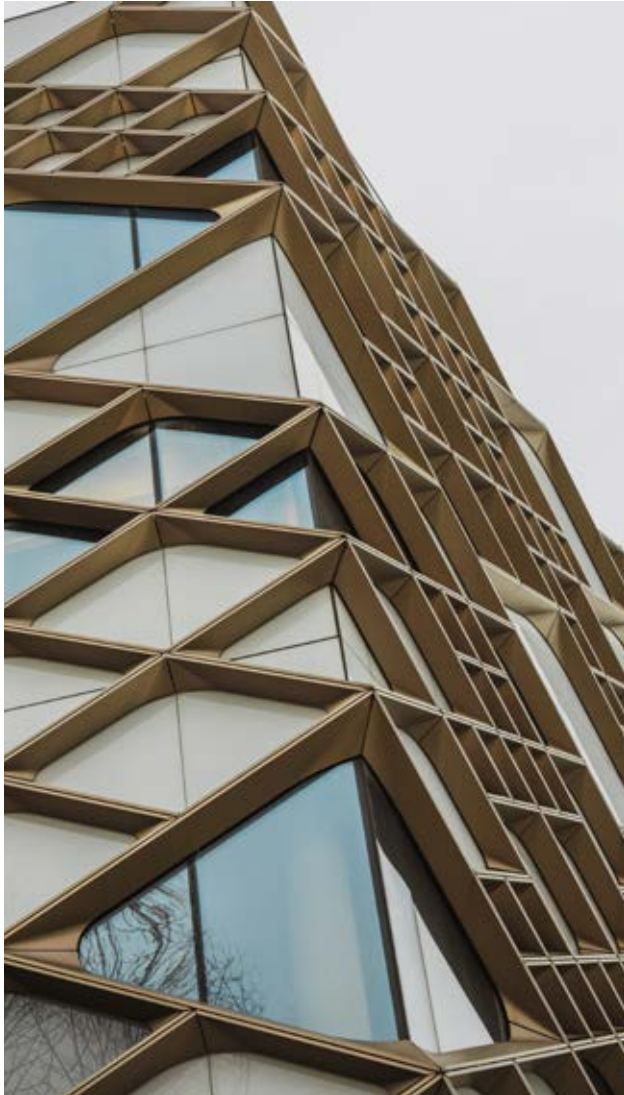
## High quality, employment-focused basic and technical skills provision.

Language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills are the foundation for learning, work and participation in society. Yet in South Yorkshire, too many residents leave school without these essentials, and too few gain them later in life. Over 150,000 working-age residents – almost 1 in five – have only a Level 1 qualification or below, and 88,100 have no qualifications at all. Whilst improving in 2023/24, attainment of Level 2 English and maths by those age 19 was still below the national average in all four authorities. These gaps limit confidence, reduce employability, and constrain progression into further learning and better work.

Our ambition is to ensure every resident has the core skills needed to succeed in life and work, building resilience for individuals and the wider economy as employment patterns shift with automation, Net Zero and demographic change.

Our priorities will be to increase attainment of English, maths, digital and other basic skills among young people and adults; refocussing provision to be more flexible, easier to access within communities that reaches those least likely to engage with the skills system; and, target investment where low attainment is most concentrated. By raising core knowledge and skills across the region, we will give more people the confidence to learn, work and progress – and strengthen the foundations of South Yorkshire's growth.





**Integrated employment support for those at risk of dropping out, or out of the labour market.**

**Too many residents in South Yorkshire remain outside the labour market or at risk of falling out of work. Almost one in four working-age adults are economically inactive, with long-term sickness accounting for more than a third of cases. For many, support is fragmented and difficult to navigate, making it harder to access the skills, health or employment help they need. This reduces incomes and confidence for individuals, while holding back South Yorkshire's prosperity.**

Our ambition is to provide seamless, integrated employment support that prevents people from leaving the labour market, helps those who have left to re-engage, and ensures everyone has a pathway into sustainable good work and training.

**Our priorities will be to build on successful innovative programmes and approaches such as Working Win/Connect to Work and Pathways to Work. We will establish and build on Skills community-based hubs that join up health, skills and employment support; provide targeted interventions for groups most at risk of economic**

**inactivity; and, ensure services are co-ordinated and easy to access at key transition points.**

**By reducing inactivity and preventing people from slipping through the gaps, we will raise participation, increase resilience, and give more South Yorkshire residents the chance to live happier and healthier lives.**

# Strategic objective: our residents can access more opportunities through skills training and employment support

## How we are already delivering on the objective

**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: 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**



### 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.

# Strategic objective: our residents can access more opportunities through skills training and employment support



## 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.



# **Our future: 2035 – A Resilient SY**

# Strategic objective: 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.

**To deliver this strategic objective, over the next ten years we will focus on providing:**



## Digital capacity and inclusion for the future

South Yorkshire is on track to meet its Digital Infrastructure Strategy target of delivering gigabit connectivity to 95% of premises by the end of 2025, with current coverage at 94.6%. While this marks a major milestone, around 28,000 premises will still lack access to gigabit services, highlighting the need for continued public and private investment to ensure full digital inclusion and prevent economic disadvantage in underserved areas.

In addition to infrastructure gaps, digital poverty remains a significant challenge, affecting approximately 20,000 people across the region. These individuals face barriers such as poor connectivity, lack of access to affordable devices, and limited digital skills. Addressing these issues is essential to ensure everyone can participate meaningfully in the digital economy and society.



### Energy systems for the future

**Affordable, secure and low-carbon energy is fundamental to South Yorkshire's economic resilience and environmental goals. Yet households and businesses remain exposed to volatile energy costs, and much of our built environment is inefficient and carbon intensive. We need to decarbonise homes, industries and transport, while creating energy systems that are more locally generated and community-owned, both to address carbon emissions but also to reduce the cost of living pressures. The push to decarbonise our network will change energy use and the shape of our distribution network. We are already seeing this through development of Regional Energy Strategic Plans by NESO. Sheffield is developing a Local Area Energy Plan, which we are seeking to roll out region-wide.**

Our ambition is to build a resilient, low-carbon energy system that cuts bills, reduces emissions, and powers new industries.

**Our priorities will be to invest in renewable and low-carbon energy generation, harnessing the region's strengths for decarbonised power and economic growth; expand the use of hydrogen and other clean technologies, building on the region's strengths in modularisation; decarbonise housing and public buildings through large-scale retrofit, including the use of heat networks; and, create local, community-based energy networks that improve security and keep wealth in the region.**

# Strategic objective: our networks are more future-proofed



## Flood resilience and water management.

**The impacts of climate change and flooding affect everyone; our homes, businesses, wellbeing, and economy. We must reduce these impacts. Our rivers and waterways provide many benefits - to health and wellbeing, climate resilience, nature, and public spaces. We will increase these benefits, placing well managed water at the heart of our thriving places**

South Yorkshire has experienced repeated flooding events that have damaged homes and disrupted businesses. Climate change means the risk of flooding and other extreme weather events will increase, threatening lives, infrastructure and growth. Without stronger resilience, the cost of recovery will continue to mount. For every person whose home is flooded, sixteen further people are impacted but for every £1 invested in flood risk management, £8 is prevented in future flood damages.

Our ambition through our Connected by Water Partnership is to ensure our people and places will be resilient and adapted to the changing climate through the integrated management of water. We will build on our catchment-wide approach to managing water, working

together with our communities, businesses and other interested parties across South Yorkshire and the wider water catchment to increase resilience to flooding and climate change, creating opportunities to do more at a greater pace.

**Our priority will be to strengthen flood resilience through a catchment-wide Integrated Flood and Water Management Plan, setting clear investment priorities for the region. We will focus on nature-based solutions that slow water flow and improve habitats, alongside capital schemes that protect homes, businesses and critical infrastructure. We will also improve preparedness through education in schools and communities, and invest in real-time warning and smart systems to target resources more effectively. Finally, we will work with partners such as Yorkshire Water and the Environment Agency to improve the quality of our rivers and lakes.**



## How we are already delivering on the objective

Across South Yorkshire, we are taking every opportunity to future-proof our networks.



### 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.

## Strategic objective: 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.**

**To deliver this strategic objective, over the next ten years we will focus on providing:**

**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.

We must recognise further development poses challenges but even greater opportunities to rethink the design of place and embed quality habitats that supports both economies and nature to thrive.



### **Beautiful and Green Urban Regeneration and Development**

**Regeneration seeks to create places that are attractive, liveable and sustainable. Investment in housing, public realm and transport provides a unique opportunity to embed natural habitats into urban landscapes. Done well, urban greening improves biodiversity, enhances quality of life, and delivers long-term environmental benefits. It also, improves the attractiveness of a place to live, work and spend leisure time, thereby, not only improving health and wellbeing of people but also creating places more attractive for investment and development. Nature and habitats are therefore a key part of successful regeneration, improving public spaces to green areas, improving air quality, encouraging healthier lifestyles, and providing natural cooling and flood reduction systems that help towns and cities adapt to a changing climate.**

Our ambition is to ensure every regeneration project in South Yorkshire contributes to more beautiful, sustainable and climate-resilient places with nature, habitats and green spaces being built into new development and regeneration schemes. The Grey to Green schemes in Sheffield City Centre is an example

of how nature and biodiversity have been embedded within urban regeneration schemes.

**Our priorities will be to integrate high-quality green and blue infrastructure into new housing and transport schemes; increase access to urban parks and natural spaces; and ensure public realm investment supports both biodiversity and community wellbeing.**

## Strategic objective: our region's nature is more diverse



### Enhancing natural habitats and species

**South Yorkshire's countryside and natural landscapes are vital assets that provide significant environmental, economic and social value. They store carbon, reduce flood risk, support biodiversity, and offer recreation opportunities that enhances health and wellbeing. Yet these spaces are under pressure from climate change, development needs and declining biodiversity. Protecting and enriching them is essential to building resilience and quality of life across the Region.**

Our ambition is to make South Yorkshire a national leader in valuing and investing in its natural habitats and species, and its informal green and rural spaces as part of a holistic approach to greening the Region.

**Our priorities will be to restore and expand habitats that capture carbon and support wildlife; promote access to the countryside through walking, cycling and wheeling infrastructure; work with farmers and landowners to deliver nature-based solutions; and, manage green spaces as economic as well as environmental assets. By doing so, we will strengthen South Yorkshire's identity as a Region where natural and rural landscapes underpin prosperity and wellbeing.**



## How we are already delivering on the objective

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



### 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

## Strategic objective: our region's nature is more diverse



### 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 Tress for Communities project which supports community groups in tree-planting across the region.



# 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.**



**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.

#### **Putting principles into practice**

##### **Case study: Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Strategy**

Our Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Strategy is being developed in collaboration with institutions across South Yorkshire, and through intentional and active engagement with our citizens.

Our work to design Active Travel projects takes a user-centred design approach to ensure that our interventions reflect and respond to people's needs; to make it safer and easier for our citizens to travel around the region and to access education, training and jobs.

# 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

# References

## Reports

- Centre for Cities, Billions lost in productivity as Northern cities' transport networks lag behind European equivalents, 2022
- Centre for Cities, Innovation hotspots, 2023
- Dan Olnier, Plan for Good Growth Sector Analysis, 2024
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, DataCity and Cambridge Econometrics, The Innovation Clusters Map, 2024
- Enrico Moretti, The New Geography of Jobs, 2012
- JP Spencer, Nation Rebalanced: How do we create a country that works for all places?, 2025
- Metro-Dynamics, Plan for Growth Economic Analysis, 2024
- Natural Capital Solutions, South Yorkshire natural capital and biodiversity mapping, 2021
- South Yorkshire Local Visitor Economic Partnership, Year in Review, 2025
- Homes England and SYMCA, South Yorkshire Strategy Place Partnership: partnership business plan, 2024
- SYMCA, Plan for Good Growth, 2024
- SYMCA, South Yorkshire Skills Strategy, 2024
- SYMCA, South Yorkshire Skills and Employment Evidence Base, 2023
- Yorkshire's Plan for Rail: rail investment to unlock prosperity in Yorkshire, 2025
- HESA, HE enrolments by HE provider, 2025
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, live tables on energy performance of buildings certificates, 2025
- ONS, Annual Population Survey, various
- ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), 2025
- ONS, GVA data release, 2025
- ONS, Health state life expectancy, 2021-2023 period
- ONS, Participation in education, training and NEET age 16 to 17 by local authority, 2025
- ONS, Probability of automation in England, 2019
- ONS, Productivity data release, 2025
- ONS, Sub-regional fuel poverty statistics, 2023

## Data sources

- Dealroom, 2025
- Department for Education, Key Stage 2 attainment 2024/25
- Department for Education, Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16 to 25 in 2023/24
- Environment Agency, State of the water environment indicator B3: supporting evidence, 2025

To learn more about South Yorkshire's Growth Plan, visit  
[southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk](https://southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk)

