DRAFT Greater Manchester Local Growth Plan

Government has asked Mayoral Strategic Authorities to create Local Growth Plans that set out the strategic framework for delivering growth in their areas over the next ten years and aligned with the national Growth Mission and National Industrial Strategy. Once the English Devolution Bill is passed, these Plans will become part of the statutory functions of MSAs.

Greater Manchester (GM) already has a mature planning and strategy landscape related to growth, as set out in *Figure X*. This document is subsequently part of a suite of plans and strategies that set out the actions and steps needed to deliver growth in Greater Manchester, and the role of this iteration of Greater Manchester's Local Growth Plan is to bring together and signpost the key commitments relating to growth across this existing strategy and planning landscape. It integrates and builds upon existing plans across GM (a 'plan of plans'), highlighting fundamental areas of system focus to achieve the city-region's growth and prevention ambitions over the next ten years.

The overarching plan for the long-term transformation of the city-region is the Greater Manchester Strategy and its Delivery Plan, which outlines the workstreams and priority actions to be taken across the GM system to achieve our vision for a thriving city region with a growing economy and where everyone can live a good life. The Delivery Plan prioritises evidence-based priority actions within our workstreams, including proposals and joint working with Government for future flexibility in funding and scope.

The success of the GMS relies on the effective delivery of the full breadth of GM plans and strategies, and the overall success of the GMS continues to require the effective and impactful delivery of these. This Local Growth Plan represents one of the supporting plans under the GMS, as well as the other plans that sit alongside it including our Investment Approach, Sector Development Plans, the GM Transport Strategy 2050 and Delivery Plan, Get GM Working Plan and Local Skills Improvement Plan, as well as the delivery of the Integrated Pipeline and management of our Integrated Settlement.

This plan will be updated periodically as our living breathing pipeline comes forwards and investments are made in key developments and industries in the city region, and to when there are significant changes in local or national policy and funding or legislation that impact on this plan or it's deliverability.

It is accompanied by a set of Sector Development Plans for five of our 'frontier' or growth sectors. These are also living plans that will be annually updated and include a set of more detailed actions – including forthcoming workforce development planning - developed in consultation with key stakeholders, on what is needed to grow and evolve those areas of our economy that are driving innovation and competitive advantage. Development Plans for additional sectors may also be coordinated as our pipeline, focus and resources continue to evolve.

Government is committed to supporting GM's vision to tackle the productivity gap between GM and London and unlock GM's full growth potential. The work with Government on the development and delivery of the National Industrial Strategy and the UK Government-GMCA 2025 Spending Review Task and Finish group set the key priority areas for joint working over the coming Spending Review period:

- Increasing GM's capacity to shape local investment, including in housing and regeneration
- Developing the next stage of the Bee Network
- Strengthening GMCA's role in local skills provision
- Greater Manchester as a prevention demonstrator
- Deepening business support and innovation – particularly related to the National Industrial Strategy growth sectors.

Greater Manchester's Economy

The turnaround in Greater Manchester's economic fortunes over the last thirty years is a national success story. Recent data shows that our city-region's growth is beginning to outstrip the UK average and growth in the country's other main metropolitan areas, including London. After the decline of traditional industries during the 1970s and '80s, the first phase of Greater Manchester's economic recovery saw it broadly share in the fifteen years of national growth in output and productivity that preceded the global financial crisis. The Manchester Independent Economic Review in 2008 recognised the growth potential, assets and positive changes that were starting to be evidenced. Post-crisis, the city region was able to sustain very modest growth, but shared in the UK's sluggish overall growth and flatlining productivity (as evidenced in the audit of productivity that was part of the GM Independent Prosperity Review). Over the last decade, however, the evidence points to Greater Manchester having passed a take-off point after which the sources of its renewed growth have both expanded and intensified. New data released in the summer has confirmed that the city-region has become the UK's fastest growing economy with increases in productivity and growth now outpacing the national average.

There is no one single factor behind this transformation, with economic growth being affected by many things that come together in a place and time. But a number of inter-connected factors can be identified that are likely to be drivers in the changes we are seeing.

Sustained collaboration and adaptation – Greater Manchester's family of organisations, including the private sector, can demonstrate a longstanding, shared commitment to economic growth through institutional capacity built up over a period stretching back to the late 1980s. Central to this has been an approach that builds out from historic strengths, but supports repurposing aligned with changing economic circumstances and opportunities. This approach has supported improvements in the performance of key clusters and organisations in particular sectors, but just as importantly it has improved the underpinning business environment, perceptions of investor communities, and the experiences and life chances of residents too.

Increasing access to and activity in our urban areas – a significant proportion of the population and economic growth experienced has taken place in a central growth cluster covering Manchester's city centre and neighbouring parts of Salford and Trafford. Strong employment growth here – which has been in high-value economic activities – has generated benefits across the city-region for those who work in it and use its facilities and services.. Further growth is both expected and needed in this core area, but it is also clear that complementary growth, some of which connects to central growth cluster strengths, is also in train, not least in five other designated Growth Locations, and can be built upon. Sustained national and local investment in an expanding public transport network, in particular of the country's largest light rail system, has markedly improved connectivity between residential areas and the clusters of employment growth, as well as making those areas respectively more attractive to live in and more likely to generate growth, as has the global connectivity provided by Manchester Airport.

Changes in our sector mix and productivity – a large proportion of jobs growth in GM has been in business and professional services, financial services and digital sectors, which have created new well-paid careers in the city-region, have boosted our international connections and trade, and directly impact on the productivity of other local industries.

Resolution Foundation, A Tale of Two Cities – Part Two: "*To drive durable, region-wide progress, the priority must be job creation in high-productivity, high-value sectors … Knowledge-intensive firms in IT, finance, insurance, and advanced business services are critical, because they deliver better pay and productivity, and fuel innovation and growth in connected networks… Greater Manchester must turbo-charge its growth by promoting and creating more of these roles across the region*."

Improvements in skills levels – data from the Census shows that there have been some relatively rapid change in the qualification levels of GM's residents over the last 20 years, with the number of residents with a Level 4+ qualification increasing by c.15 percentage points, and the number of graduates from and students at GM's higher education institutions continuing to increase more rapidly than the nation overall. GM is retaining a larger proportion of graduates in the city-region, which is supporting the growth of our digital, business and professional services and financial services sectors, amongst others.

Continued development of our innovation capabilities – GM's innovation ecosystem has progressed significantly with substantial new assets and a structured, coherent and strategically aligned set of shared priorities. A new generation of physical assets, like SISTER, Salford's Energy House 2.0 and the emerging Atom Valley programme, demonstrate GM's growing ability to align infrastructure with policy goals. Particular growth in STEM graduates also provides a strong talent pipeline to support science and innovation led growth.

Our attractiveness as a place to work, do business and invest – the number of active businesses in GM has increased by 15% since 2016, with 14,500 business births in 2023 alone. Greater Manchester's rising global profile has created a booming visitor economy and healthy exports in services. We also attract more foreign direct investment deals than any region outside the capital and attracted over £1.8 billion in venture capital between 2018 and 2023, with Manchester tech firms alone raising £532 million in 2022—a 50% increase from 2021. FTSE 100 and global companies have established bases here alongside homegrown unicorns Matillion and Castore – worth more than $1billion each.

However, it would be wrong to look at this progress and these changes and conclude that GM's growth trajectory is secure and that this is 'job done'. GM may have grown faster than many other large cities in recent years, but it has started from a place that was further back than other areas. The city-region is no longer falling behind but it has a long way still to travel to be as productive as London's economy, which is 36% more productive – a much larger gap than between France's second city, Lyon, and Paris, which is 20 per cent.

There is further to go on levels of innovation, investment and productivity growth across our industries. E.g. looking across all industries Business Expenditure on Research and Development in GM was £985 million in 2023 equivalent to 1.0% of GVA, compared to 2.0% for the UK. There is still a significant gap in innovation funding spend in GM compared to the South East. For example, in 2023–24, UKRI invested £183 per person in the Greater South East (including London), compared to £106 per person outside it, including Greater Manchester.

Transport infrastructure faces significant challenges and nearly four in ten of our highly skilled workers cannot reach the city centre within 45 minutes. Links to neighbouring cities are slow and unreliable; the M6 is congested, and the West Coast Mainline will reach capacity by the mid-2030s, and the transformation of Northern east-west connectivity remain largely unrealised. Manchester's productivity gap due to public transport access is estimated at £8.9billion per year – the largest gap of any UK city (Birmingham's is £3.6billion), and congestion is estimated to cost Greater Manchester businesses £1.6bn per year.

The housing market currently presents a number of challenges in ensuring that housing is available and affordable enough to create the conditions for optimal growth. Housing affordability for both home ownership and private rents is a challenge across the city region.

Meeting the evolving skills required to sustain our trajectory of economic growth – ensuring that local people are not excluded from high quality jobs and that business has the talent it needs to succeed. GM's current **Local Skills Improvement Plan** articulates GM employers' skills needs - both occupationally specific and the cross-cutting and essential skills needed across the economy. The current plan focusses on addressing digital skills gaps at all levels from basic functional skills to specialist cyber roles; improving leadership and management to residents are prepared for managerial roles, impacting efficiency and morale; better defined and accelerated net zero and low carbon training, soft skills such as attitude, time management, and presentation and essential work skills, including literacy, numeracy, and practical application of core subjects.

Addressing ill health to enable more people to work and be productive in-work would reduce up to 30% of the productivity gap between the North and the UK average. In GM, c.256,000 residents have a long-term health condition and are out of work and not looking for work, with 38% of working age people having a long-term health condition. These links between work and health are highly complex, and as well as being a constraint on growth, create a central challenge to personal wellbeing. They also affect communities differentially – with disabled people, women, young and older working-age residents and residents from racially minoritised backgrounds being more likely to be economically inactive. Despite GM's relatively strong economic growth since 2015, GM residents still have an average household income available for spending or saving that is £3,700 lower than the UK average, limiting their spending power and life choices. The ability to fully participate in work is one of the factors driving this.

The Greater Manchester Strategy

The Greater Manchester Strategy sets the course for the next ten years and is structured around two interconnected things: growing our economy and making sure that everyone can live well. Our strategy is evidence-based, informed by data and deep knowledge of our communities and underpinned by a proven track record. With the right backing and investment from the Government, we can deliver for all parts of the city-region.

The Greater Manchester Strategy recognises that Greater Manchester will only be successful if every area of the city region and all its people are successful – for example the health of our residents directly impacts on each person's capacity to work, to be effective while in work and to have the physical and psychological resilience needed to do things like lead a business or create a new venture. The strategy therefore sets out a blueprint to unlock a new form of economic growth where no one is left behind, that creates the conditions for people and businesses to flourish.

The Greater Manchester Strategy has seven workstreams, and they all contribute towards driving growth.

Healthy homes for all: A healthy, safe place to call home is the cornerstone of a healthy, happy life. With support from the Government, our Housing First approach and unit will turn the tide on the housing crisis by increasing housing supply, driving up housing standards and support to access and keep a healthy home. One of the reasons that many of our residents don't yet fully benefit from Greater Manchester's economic success is the current shortage of decent, affordable housing.

Safe and strong communities: Peaceful streets, safe public transport and cohesive communities will allow us to feel confident going about our daily lives and help us to achieve our potential as people and places. We will drive trust and confidence in our police and fire services, multi-agency work with partners, and evolve how we respond to changing risks and new opportunities. This confidence is essential for residents to pursue education and work opportunities, for businesses to be entrepreneurial and innovative and for attracting investment.

A transport system for a global city region: In the next decade, our Bee Network will make it even easier to get around, connecting every community with a low-fare, high-use public transport system covering bike, bus, tram, and train. We will have the first fully integrated seamless transport system outside London, A clean, green, safe and affordable Bee Network, and improved regional connectivity. Our city region has the largest productivity gap due to public transport access of any UK city and the congestion costs affecting Greater Manchester businesses are holding back their capacity to invest in people and innovation.

A clear line of sight to high quality jobs: By removing barriers to good employment, we can reduce poverty, improve health and grow our economy by helping employers to close the skills gaps that are holding back our economy. We will deliver a world-leading technical education system and access to good jobs, with support to upskill and reskill. This will ensure our businesses have the skills and talent needed to grow and innovate as well as giving our residents the best opportunities to benefit from the good jobs being created in our growth driving sectors.

Everyday support in every neighbourhood: We believe in a names not numbers approach. We'll help everyone live well by improving access to support, control, connections and resources, and providing more focussed support for those who need it. The Greater Manchester Live Well model will be central to achieving this. Too many people in our city region experience poor health and die younger than in other parts of the country. Nearly half a million people in Greater Manchester are out of work and 137,000 are long-term sick. These inequalities form barriers to good work, wages and wellbeing which residents cannot overcome alone, which increase demand for public services and that also affect the productivity of our businesses and economy.

A great place to do business: Our strategy will kickstart a new decade of growth for Greater Manchester, delivering homes and employment sites on a scale and at a pace not seen this century, increasing productivity and innovation and ensuring our city region remains a great place to invest and do business. We have a single Integrated Pipeline for growth, and a new funding approach, becoming an innovation leader and focussing on our sector strengths, expanding and upskilling out workforce, establishing Greater Manchester as a leading centre for security and artificial intelligence, and nurturing our cultural and nighttime economies.

Digitally connected places and people: As we enter a new industrial revolution, shaped by advances in artificial intelligence, it's essential that everyone in our city region can thrive in the digital age. We will drive actions that end digital exclusion and build connected communities, as well as digitally enabled public services. This will accelerate current growth as well as setting us up to drive growth in the long-term through new business models, new technology and new ideas.

A greener, more equal future: Our seven workstreams are designed to close the gaps in health, wealth and opportunity that are holding us back as people and as places. The way we deliver each workstream will help to reduce spatial, demographic, and socio-economic inequalities. This will include a focus on reducing carbon emissions in every workstream – because climate change has the biggest impact on deprived and marginalised communities and is a matter of intergenerational justice, with future generations facing the consequences of decisions we make today. We will factor the needs of children and young people into all our decisions, considering how policies will affect them not only now but in years to come. By taking action to improve our environment, we can create a city region with abundant, attractive, nature-rich green spaces in both our urban and rural areas, a place where all citizens live and work in energy efficient, climate-resilient homes, buildings and infrastructure, with an integrated, accessible, active and public transport system – all powered by low carbon energy.

Investment Approach and Integrated Pipeline

We've used our devolved powers to create a single integrated pipeline for growth that will lock in growth for the next decade by pioneering a new way of delivering regeneration, building on a scale and at a pace not seen before in this century. Working with Government and the private sector, we can use this new regeneration model, with the right national support, to build tens of thousands of new homes in the next five years as well as millions of sqft of employment floorspace, creating new employment sites, innovation districts and infrastructure. Until now, we've had separate pipelines for delivering transport, housing, innovation, and low-carbon energy infrastructure. Now we can sequence development in a way that extracts maximum value per pound.

The integrated pipeline and Investment Approach will turbocharge growth by unlocking land and attracting £10 billion in investment over the next decade, paving the way for the private sector to create new homes (that meet our standards on carbon and energy coats), jobs and industrial and commercial spaces. It will deliver game-changing innovation districts, manufacturing sites and hubs for entrepreneurship, creating tens of thousands of new jobs and millions of square feet in research and development assets and industrial and commercial space. It will build on decades of successful public-private partnership to create nationally significant and globally connected economic clusters, supported by transport links and digital infrastructure, the facilities for our businesses to grow, as they use the world-class research and development from our universities to invent new products and services, access new markets and create jobs. It will also provide new neighbourhoods, with thousands of new homes, built around major employment sites and transport hubs so our residents can easily access the opportunities they present.

As set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy, the pipeline will target investment at six growth locations - nationally significant sites with land earmarked and shovel-ready. The locations are:

- The Western Gateway.
- The North East Growth Corridor .
- Airport and Southern Growth Corridor
- Central Growth Cluster
- Eastern Growth Cluster
- Wigan and Bolton Growth Corridor.

Each Growth Location has priority sites and opportunities linked to our growth sectors and aligned to the National Industrial Strategy. The Greater Manchester Investment Approach sets out how local funding will enable investment in these locations to come forwards, national funding and support will also be fundamental to delivering our pipeline.

Our public sector will act as an enabler, attracting billions of pounds of investment, unlocking land and paving the way for the private sector to deliver. By sequencing development, our integrated pipeline will ensure supporting infrastructure and public services are lined up to create thriving, safe, well-connected communities – from green spaces for wellbeing and climate resilience to great transport links via the Bee Network and energy-efficient technology to help us meet our Net Zero goals. Through our nationally-leading Business Growth Hub, we'll make sure our businesses can embrace the new spaces and the Integrated Pipeline and growth locations will create, enabling them to match operations and site, to cluster with other inspiring businesses and innovators and ensuring they have the links to the right infrastructure and connectivity.

The new **Greater Manchester Spatial Development Strategy** is a statutory strategic development plan for the city region that sets the out strategic policies in relation to the development and use of land across Greater Manchester.

The new **GM Transport Strategy 2050 and Delivery Plan** sets out for consultation the interventions being delivered, planned and explored that will enable new development to come forward in a way that ensures sustainable and equitable access and, specially, that all people accessing new jobs and homes have transport options – other than to drive – when making their daily journeys. It sets out bold and exciting future transport policies and investment priorities to sustain, grow and transform the Bee Network and our wider transport network to 2050. Getting the right intra and inter-city transport investment is fundamental to achieving our aspirations for the economy including delivering on the full pipeline of inter-city rail connectivity projects across the Northern Growth Corridor. This includes the Liverpool-Manchester Railway with onward connectivity to Yorkshire (via a through station at Manchester Piccadilly) and beyond as a component of wider Northern Powerhouse Rail and ensuring there is the necessary investment in north-south connectivity, with the West Coast Mainline and M6 - critical economic arteries - close to capacity and likely to act as an impediment to future growth.

The city-region has a significant pipeline of low carbon investments that GMCA has worked with partners to identify, including renewables and storage, heat networks, skills and supply chain, and community energy. GM has a strong pipeline of projects through the Net-Zero Accelerator (current identified investment requirement for over £7bn excluding generation and storage). Low carbon heat networks alone could attract up to £5Bn investment, and GMCA are working to build the domestic retrofit market to grow the supply chain and attract new finance products.

GMCA has a strong track record of investing in order to deliver new homes and drive regeneration and growth. However, viability challenges exist across the region causing the strategic sites, that are needed to unlock our growth potential, to stall. In order to address this and deliver on our ambitions our approach to investment needs to change, to focus our investment resources into those schemes that are the highest priority. This requires a system change whereby we determine what needs to be funded through the prioritised pipeline first, and then determine the make-up of the funding second. This means we need to move away from pots of funding that have different criteria (some of which are restrictive) and pool the investment resources we have in order to make the money go further. To support this change in approach we have pulled together an investment pot with an initial capacity of £1bn, which includes £150m of proposed borrowing, that can invest flexibly into the pipeline. Our new ***Greater Manchester Investment Approach*** is designed to address these challenges and sets out the detail of our revised approach.

Growth-Driving Sectors

We are already a leader in the sectors that are driving growth and competitiveness in the UK and globally. We are home to the most life sciences businesses outside of London, with Health Innovation Manchester fostering partnerships between industry, academia, the NHS and private social care providers to advance research and development and improve patient care. We have one of the largest clinical academic campuses in Europe, home to institutions such as the Manchester Biomedical Research Centre and the Institute for Health Technology and Innovation. We also have internationally recognised strengths in advanced manufacturing and materials with leading 'lab-to-market' facilities related to graphene, which was discovered at the University of Manchester. As the second largest low carbon economy in the UK, we're ready to scale up a sector which is growing at three times the rate of the wider economy and deliver more well-paid, sustainable jobs for our residents. From manufacturing and building technologies to technical services and consultancy, Greater Manchester's 'green economy' is ready to realise the economic benefits of the transition to Net Zero. Our rich cultural heritage coupled with our growing strengths in modern media production place us at the forefront of the UK's Creative Industries sector, with national assets including MediaCityUK (BBC, Granada Studios and Dock10), SODA and Factory International. Greater Manchester is fast emerging as a world-leading digital city region with the research and innovation expertise and ever-growing business base capable of propelling the UK's digital future. Greater Manchester boasts a £5bn tech eco-system and is the UK's largest AI cluster by employees, with strengths in key subsectors including AI, cyber security, Fintech, immersive tech, e-commerce, and creative tech, all supported by robust digital infrastructure and connectivity. AI adoption presents significant opportunity for Greater Manchester's other innovation-intensive frontier sectors, where AI applications in low carbon technologies, health tech, and advanced manufacturing can leverage existing industry and research strengths to achieve substantial improvements in output, innovation and overall productivity.

We'll keep attracting and growing world-leading businesses by zoning in on these and our other thriving sectors, creating more high paid and good jobs in the city-region for our residents, and across our Growth Locations.

Government has recognised that Greater Manchester has strengths in all 8 of the sectors in the **National Industrial Strategy** – in life sciences, digital and tech, creative industries, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, business and professional services, financial services and security and defence. Since the 2019 **Greater Manchester Independent Prosperity Review** and the **Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy** we have been deepening our understanding of our industrial frontiers and how we can support the evolution of those sectors that drive competitive advantage and innovation-led growth. This includes how to build the vital talent pipeline that will help these sectors thrive and grow, including through the education provided by our leading Universities, and via the Greater Manchester Baccalaureate ('MBacc') gateways, which identify the technical education and skills pathways to provide a clear line of sight from education into our economy.

For the past 18 months GMCA has been coordinating a set of **Sector Development Plans** for the five sectors in our Local Industrial Strategy. These plans are living documents and will be regularly updated. We will also coordinate plans for other sectors in partnership with businesses and other key stakeholders, as required, in the coming years.

In addition, we recognise that these sectors and our overall economic success is supported by other industries – logistics, engineering and construction, and the foundational and visitor economies. There are actions to support these industries underway in the city-region through programmes established under our **Local Industrial Strategy** such as our **Foundational Economy Innovation Fund** and the **GM Visitor Economy Strategy** and they will continue to be supported under the overarching delivery framework of the Greater Manchester Strategy.

Key to the success of our cities, town centres, and the city-region as a whole, is the development of our cultural and leisure scene. Over the next decade we'll work to make sure that all our residents have opportunities to take part in our rich cultural offer. We will look after our heritage and ensure that creativity is at the heart of our vibrant and distinctive town and city centres and develop opportunities for Greater Manchester's creative people and businesses to share our stories and products with the world. We'll also invest in our nighttime economy, which employs 358,000 people in sectors like hospitality, entertainment, healthcare, and logistics, with initiatives to create a safe and welcoming environment and improvements to nighttime public transport. Our visitor economy will continue to provide inspiration and a sense of belonging for residents, visitors, and businesses, whilst fuelling sustainable economic growth for all. Our ambition is that, by 2030, it will contribute £15bn to the Greater Manchester economy.

Driving Growth Through Innovation

Our approach to driving forwards our frontier sectors will be complemented by ensuring GM has a strong underpinning research and development ecosystem through a triple helix model creating new technology and future focussed jobs meeting business need with targeted funding to drive innovation and increase productivity in growth sectors and the foundational economy.

For over 200 years Greater Manchester has been the driving force behind new global frontiers in the field of innovation; social and cultural, as well as scientific and technological. Our region played a pivotal role in the first three industrial revolutions, making pioneering breakthroughs and building new industries to harness the power of steam and water, electricity, and information technology. We have a strong innovation ecosystem, with leading research and development institutions and many 'growth-driving' frontier sectors, such as health innovation, advanced materials, biotechnology, and digital. We're home to leading universities and research institutions. The University of Manchester, a global Top 50 university known as the birthplace of the revolutionary 2D material graphene and the modern computer, and ranked first in the UK for the quality of its research. Our universities are vital regional economic and innovation assets, employing thousands of people and creating ideas that kickstart the industries of the future and improve the lives of residents. They've made us a magnet for global talent, with a student population of more than 125,000. They provide employers with a steady pipeline of highly skilled staff and have fostered a vibrant start-up scene, helping businesses to spin out and scale up and attracting inward investment to our city region. The University of Salford is in the top five in England for social mobility, with 93% of students going into employment, and Manchester Metropolitan University is the leading provider of degree apprenticeships in the UK.

Alongside our universities, GM's ten further education colleges play a vital role in the innovation ecosystem and, as recognised in the Government's 2025 Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, will be front and centre in delivering both the UK's growth mission and GM's growth and productivity ambitions. GMColleges – the collaborative partnership that brings together the ten FE anchor institutions – are not only a core part of the skills pipeline as the biggest provider of 16-18 education and training in the city-region, they are also fundamental to the talent pipeline that feeds our universities and our businesses and deliver many of the key advanced and higher technical skills and qualifications that are essential to the commercialisation of some of the innovation/R&D assets within our universities. As the engine room of technical education pathways in GM, the connections between FE and industry are being strengthened to support growth – ranging from embedding industry knowledge exchange in FE workforce CPD to rolling out Technical Excellence College (TEC) status for institutions that demonstrate best practice in key sectors; the first wave of TEC roll-out saw Wigan and Leigh College established as the Construction TEC for the North West region, supporting a key enabling workforce and playing a direct role in supporting GM's economic growth and infrastructure as part of the integrated investment pipeline.

In the next decade, through **Innovation Greater Manchester** Greater Manchester's universities, businesses and public sector will continue to work together to increase business and public sector investment in R&D and its commericalisation, and develop more connected clusters of innovation. Through our groundbreaking **Local Innovation Plan** Greater Manchester has set out its aims to be a leader of the fourth industrial revolution, known globally for the strength of its innovation ecosystem, harnessing the power of business, universities, and local government to drive productivity and create good quality jobs across all parts of our city-region. The priorities in the Greater Manchester Innovation Plan are:

- Bringing forward new innovation assets and programmes to bridge gaps in commercialisation for our priority industries and clusters. We will capitalise on market opportunities through our nationally significant and distinctive assets, ensuring that high quality technology is available across all stages of a business's innovation journey.
- Coordinating national and local investment decisions to maximise their impact, increasing cross-sector investment in innovation so that by 2030 every £1 of extra public investment made in research and development in Greater Manchester will generate an additional £2.40 of investment by businesses in research and development.
- Building a connected innovation ecosystem and a cohesive system of support with simpler access points that respond to the barriers our businesses face when adopting innovation.
- Driving national and regional growth through productive collaborations across the North and UK by bringing together complementary innovation ecosystems to create an accessible and easily navigable network across the country.
- Promote Greater Manchester as a globally significant Science and Innovation Superpower on a par with the UK Golden Triangle, Silicon Valley, Boston-MIT and Tel-Aviv.

These priorities have been supported through the pioneering Innovation Accelerator Pilot in the city-region, and the evolution of this approach via the new funding £50m Local Innovation Partnership Fund. This programme will be co-designed between UKRI and with the city-region, aiming for maximum flexibility to develop targeted and bespoke investments in our innovation support offer that strengthens translational R&D and commercialisation.

Through our Integrated Pipeline we will be able to support the innovation process spatially, from lab to market. We will create the kind of spaces that other innovation clusters lack – from innovation districts like the Oxford Road Corridor and Crescent Salford to larger sites like Atom Valley, the North West's largest development site focused on high-value manufacturing and research and development, and the Health Innovation Campus in the Wigan and Bolton Growth Corridor. We will also link our innovation spaces to other regions, building on the examples of the Manchester-Cambridge Partnership and the Ruhr Innovation Bridge to create globally connected innovation communities and assets.

Supporting Businesses and Near-Term Growth

Alongside investment that will drive the conditions for growth over the next 5-10 years and beyond, we need to continue to focus on driving near-term inclusive growth – through a renewed focus on business support, business investment, skills and employment support. We will create the right business environment and deliver the right support to entrepreneurs and businesses to start, innovate, scale-up and access new global markets, making Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to do business.

Our fundamental principle is that business support should be easy to access and effective, and we are starting from a strong place to deliver on this ambition. Greater Manchester has one of the most mature and well-established business support systems in the UK. Through the GM Business Growth Hub the city-region has a clear single coordination point for business support in GM that links national and locally funded programmes, integrating support into a focussed offer that will help to maintain our current growth trajectory, and to create and safeguard good jobs and inclusive growth - 90,000 businesses and entrepreneurs have accessed the hub's support so far. and the.The hub's services are focussed on: access to finance to boost business investment and scaling up, driving-up sales and profitability, creating the best workforce; support to innovate and enabling businesses to become more sustainable – making them more resilient to shocks. This offer is linked to our growth sectors but is free to access to all businesses in the city-region.

The offer to our businesses is also underpinned by the support offered by our Universities and Colleges, Local Authority business support - including the support provided via GM Libraries for start-ups and entrepreneurs – and support to access private and institutional investors. National assets like catapults are also actively working with businesses and Universities in the city-region and businesses are linked to the national Business Growth Service as well. Our businesses are also supported by representative organisations including the Chamber of Commerce, ProManchester, Confederation of British Industry, Institute of Directors, Federation of Small Businesses, Make UK and NWBLT, with specialist support also available to the social economy through organisations like Coops UK and 10GM.

GM has a growing investor community – the largest in the North. The city-region attracted over £1.8 billion in venture capital between 2018 and 2023, with Manchester tech firms alone raising £532 million in 2022—a 50% increase from 2021. GM has a wide range of investment funds driving business growth including **GM Advance**, the **Life Sciences Fund** and the work driven by **GC Angels** to address the imbalance in the early-stage equity market across the North. We will continue to grow our local investor community and capacity, and ensure our entrepreneurs and businesses are investor-ready. Essential to delivering our growth aspirations and Integrated Pipeline is getting the links between our local business support and investment infrastructure and the national institutions and funding bodies right like British Business Bank, National Wealth Fund, Office for Investment, InnovateUK, and GB Energy, as well as with the new National Business Growth Service. The Strategic Partnership Agreement between GMCA and National Wealth Fund - designed to accelerate the development, funding and delivery of local projects by increasing NWF investment in the region and crowding-in private sector investment – is one example of the more integrated and innovative ways of working possible.

Our approach to business support will align with the investment pipeline and the new commercial premises and innovation districts. Helping our existing businesses and incoming investors to locate in the right sites for their operations, their people, their innovation potential and to access new markets. We can offer the kind of spaces that other innovation clusters lack – from innovation districts like the Oxford Road Corridor and Crescent Salford to larger sites like Atom Valley, the North West's largest development site focused on high-value manufacturing and research and development, and the Health Innovation Campus in the Wigan and Bolton Growth Corridor. Business support will help ensure existing businesses and start-ups have the room to grow, innovate and export, and facilitate incoming investment in sites, property, people and technology.

Our approach to business support will also support our vision for all residents to have a line of sight to high quality jobs by supporting business leaders to develop their workforces and design fulfilling, skilled and productive roles, and through a transformed technical education system via our Further Education colleges and the MBacc, that is giving young people a clear line of sight to high quality jobs in sectors that are growing in Greater Manchester, as well as increased access to essential life and work skills, growing their sense of hope and optimism for the future. This will also be dependent on the continued success of our Universities, which have made the city-region a magnet for global talent, with a significant student population and an increasing number of STEM graduates.

International Trade and Investment

Our region already successfully engages the world. Greater Manchester is the key diplomatic hub in the North. As one of Europe's top visitor economies we are globally connected through Manchester Airport, which offers flights to 196 destinations via 49 airlines. It is the only airport outside London with two full-length runways and has recently completed a £1.3bn transformation, providing world-class facilities. We have consistently been the leading destination for inward investment into the UK outside of London. Greater Manchester has a long and proud history of welcoming and supporting people from different communities to make Greater Manchester their home. Over 30% of Greater Manchester's population comes from diverse communities and today more than 200 languages are spoken across the conurbation making us one of the most linguistically cosmopolitan city-regions in Western Europe.

Through MIDAS as GMs inward investment agency and Marketing Manchester leading on visitor economy and place promotion, we will continue to bring new investment into the city-region from around the world, safeguarding and generating new employment opportunities for GM residents, and increasing productivity, innovation and growth. We will continue to deliver trade missions and business showcases that increase international profile of our industries, helping local companies successfully engage in new markets. Our focus will also be to attract new firms and investment into GM across our growth and internationally stand-out sectors, adding in new innovations and using international investment to stimulate new innovation clusters and development, as well as and linking GM's economy to international expertise and capacity.

Linked to this, innovation will be a key driver of how we connect to other regions and the world. The groundbreaking partnership led by the Universities of Manchester and Cambridge to build closer relationships between these two innovation ecosystems, accelerate growth in start-ups and scale ups, drive private sector investment into research and development, and attract new foreign direct investment to the UK has the potential to transform both places. The Innovation Bridge between the city region and the Ruhr region in Germany, which is being supported by The British Consulate General in Düsseldorf and Greater Manchester is another example. We will continue to build partnerships like these across the UK and around the world.

The **Greater Manchester International Strategy** has provided the framework for strengthening and focussing our city-region's strategic relationships with similar city-regions and places with links to our industries and communities. It has been delivered through a programme of inbound and outbound engagement that has been delivered in partnership across GMCA and Local Authorities, our Universities, businesses, arts and cultural organisations and globally-influential stakeholders like our Football Clubs and airport. Our approach to delivering that strategy is being refreshed and the city-region's renewed approach will be published in spring 2026.

This will be continue to be complemented by the continued development of our visitor economy and our ability to attract events with global audiences and create opportunities that showcase local culture and talent. The ambition in our Visitor Economy Strategy is that by 2030 our visitor economy will be proudly recognised for its rich contribution to social and cultural life across Greater Manchester and its positive impact on our city region's diverse communities. It will continue to provide inspiration and a sense of belonging for residents, visitors, and businesses, whilst fuelling sustainable economic growth for all.

How Our Residents will Contribute to and Benefit from Growth

At the core of levering the benefits of growth to all of our residents is enabling people to access good work, and in turn we know that good work supports good health and good lives. Core to our plans for growth must be tackling the increasing number of people in the city-region who are unable to work due to their health or disability, is full integration of health, skills, work, transport and active travel, and the wider social support system to support people to move closer towards, move into, and remain within work.

In the past ten years, Greater Manchester's Working Well pilot has helped around 27,500 people into new jobs and 76,500 more have had access to training and support that will help them get ready to work, and GM has a strong history of partnership working across key stakeholders, underpinned by formal governance approaches and supported by coterminous boundaries across local government and health. Building on this success, we have used our devolved powers and funding to take the next step and developed Live Well – a radical new approach, routing employment support funding through local community and voluntary groups, the NHS, skills training, Jobcentre Plus and social prescribing services to help them live healthier lives and support them back into work. We aim to have a local Live Well service in every neighbourhood, giving people bespoke support that grows confidence and sets them on the path to employment.

Greater Manchester has also been named the national 'Prevention Demonstrator' for the UK in the **10 Year Health Plan for England**. The Prevention Demonstrator will enable us to systematise prevention and will see us work closely with central Government departments to provide the blueprint for a joined-up approach to preventing social harms and costs, wrapping public services around people in their community, linking up Government and addressing of one of the biggest public policy issues of our time. By leveraging GM's public sector digital and data assets and capabilities, the Prevention Demonstrator will enable Live Well and the reform of public services at a place level with an initial focus on preventing ill health, reducing economic inactivity and demand pressures on Local Authorities and related public services.

The **Get Greater Manchester Working Plan** sets out how we can use our unique system conditions in GM to drive change and supports our case for deeper devolution in GM, building on work of the prevention demonstrator, Live Well and Working Well before it. The plan highlights the crucial role of employers and how the system can support them to drive inclusive economic growth. The plan consolidates activities around employer engagement, skills for work and growth, and support for residents to sustain and progress in work. It also reflects opportunities in our growth sectors and growth locations to drive productivity. The core aim of the plan is to narrow the gap between the Greater Manchester employment rate and the national rate and move closer to achieving an 80% employment rate, via four main themes designed with and for communities and employers: Prevention, Live Well and working differently with our residents; Growth and the important role of employers; Health and the interdependencies of good health and good work: System conditions including devolution, commissioning and governance.

Alongside this, our **Local Skills Improvement Plan** will continue to support the transformation of provision for post-16 technical education by putting employers at the heart of the skills system, and ensuring there is an active partnership between business and education and training providers. These relationships enable us to reflect and react to market changes, respond to new challenges and provide the skills required by employers in a fast-changing labour market. We will ensure residents can benefits from jobs growth in our growth sectors. For example, we already have the largest number of life sciences jobs outside London, manufacturing jobs have increased here whilst falling elsewhere, and GM's low carbon sector is predicted to grow 109% over the next 5 years which will translate to tens of thousands of new jobs in the city-region.

Greater Manchester's five universities play a central role in delivering our shared ambitions with the **Civic Universities Agreement** setting out how they can collaborate with GMCA as major contributors and anchor institutions within the city region. The CUA was refreshed in 2025 with priorities that reflect the new Greater Manchester Strategy with four areas of focus including Opportunity & Prosperity; Health & Wellbeing; Culture; and Environment. The Civic University Board which oversees the Agreement is developing an Action Plan that will set out how these priorities will be implemented with a series of specific targets, deliverables and performance management measures.

As well as enabling residents to access work, we are also taking action to ensure that our workplaces and the types of jobs available to residents are healthy and that we are raising employment standards across the city region. Workforce development is part of our core business support offer, but central to achieving this is the **Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter** - working with employers to foster inclusive workplaces where leaders listen to staff feedback and promote a healthy work environment and work-life balance with fair wages, job security and opportunities for professional growth.

Greater Manchester has set itself the goal of becoming the first city-region to pay all employees a **real living wage**. Low pay disproportionate affects women and people from racially minoritised communities but good pay benefits businesses too - 93% of accredited businesses reported they had benefited from becoming Living Wage employers, finding it easier to attract and retain staff with more motivated employees.

Delivering on the Vision

The Greater Manchester Strategy sets out our vision for a thriving city region with a growing economy where everyone can live a good life.

The success of the Strategy relies on the effective delivery of the full breadth of Greater Manchester's plans. The Local Growth Plan brings together the priority interventions that will support delivery and signposts to the more detailed strategies which underpin these actions. The Delivery Plan for the Greater Manchester Strategy will provide the means to track our progress.

We will kickstart a new decade of growth in collaboration with business, residents and government to deliver homes and employment sites on a scale and at a pace not seen this century, increasing productivity and innovation and ensuring our city region remains a great place to invest and do business. We will unlock a new form of economic growth through our Integrated Pipeline and the development of a new approach to investment with a focus on innovation and our sector strengths while expanding and upskilling out workforce.

This Local Growth Plan is a living document that will be updated to reflect new investments, key industrial developments and funding opportunities as well as reflecting the dynamic policy and economic landscape.

By working closely with both local and national partners, we can set the course for the next ten years of growth and make sure that everyone in Greater Manchester can live well and no one is left behind.