



# Lancashire County Council Economic Strategy

2023 – 2025





**Our Economic Strategy will provide the stimulus for constructive dialogue and the development of shared priorities for action, in conjunction with public and private sector leaders.**



# Foreword



**Cllr Aidy Riggott**

Cabinet Member for  
Economic Development  
and Growth

The County Council remains committed to delivering economic growth and prosperity as one of our four headline priorities.

The next three years offer a unique opportunity for step-change. Building on our core economic strengths, we now have an opportunity to capitalise on new industries and new businesses locations across the county, to secure high value jobs and new catalysts for further investment.

In support of the business community itself, the council will accelerate its efforts to bring forward strategic sites, support business growth and deliver the skills to realise these ambitions. Aligned responsibilities for transport planning, highways and digital infrastructure will also be harnessed to achieve these goals.

Working through an established pipeline of projects and delivery programmes, we will continue to listen to business and improve the focus and value we deliver for Lancashire, conscious that economic growth and the creation of new, quality opportunities will contribute to our wider ambitions for health, regeneration and providing high quality places where people want to live.

The ambition set in this document is matched by our commitment to measure and evidence the difference we make. We look forward to sharing this progress as we move forward.



**Cllr Jayne Rear**

Cabinet Member for  
Education and Skills

As the birthplace of the industrial revolution, Lancashire people are hard-working and are known for their ability to innovate, to create and to embrace new technologies.

We recognise the importance of education and the opportunity for adults to reskill and upskill throughout their lives to enhance their ability to secure good jobs in line with the needs of the local economy. Employment and skills forecasts indicate an increasing demand for higher level skills, with a growing need for digital, tech, cyber and low carbon sectors.

By working collaboratively with employers as well as education and skills providers across Lancashire we can realise the full potential of Lancashire's businesses and assets and enable our people to maximise the opportunities on offer in our local labour market.





# Executive summary

**It's the knowledge, skills and courage of individual entrepreneurs, businesses and their workforce which drives economic growth in economies like Lancashire. There is also an important role for national and local government to create an environment with the right conditions for business to thrive.**

This Economic Strategy presents a simple, high-level view of how Lancashire County Council will discharge this responsibility over the next three years and how priorities will change to support and address those activities which add most value in terms of creating the conditions for growth and economic success across the county. This is intended to complement work with local government partners and other key stakeholders in the development of the sub-regional strategy 'Lancashire 2050'.

Whilst not a statutory responsibility, the council has identified 'supporting economic growth' as one of its four key priorities. The staff resource, budgets and business parks which the council has to deploy in this policy area, mean that it is amongst the best placed local actors to lead in this space and enable economic growth. Additional, aligned functions including planning, environment and transport also strengthen this focus on Economic Prosperity.

Despite current growth conditions, the medium-term projection for the Lancashire economy remains exciting. Lancashire has a significant, multi-billion pound development and infrastructure pipeline together with a mix of high-performing, well-established businesses, with long and settled roots in the Lancashire economy. A new wave of low carbon and security-based investments is supplementing Lancashire's economy, typified by the UK government's decision to locate the new National Cyber Force headquarters in Samlesbury.



Looking at the main priorities or changes in approach envisaged over the period to 2025, the following three core priorities and activities are set out in this Economic Strategy:-

### Strategic development and connectivity

- A multi-£billion strategic development and infrastructure pipeline of active projects to leverage further investment, supporting job creation, regeneration and connecting people and business to the opportunities
- Champion multi-district regeneration programmes and investment opportunities
- Secure and build on a comprehensive roll out of digital gigabit connectivity to support business and communities across Lancashire



### Business support

- Re-think business support, focused on areas of highest impact and delivered in partnership with district councils, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Lancashire County Council
- Bring services together to focus on providing coherent innovation support for small and medium sized companies
- Refresh and promote updated propositions which set out the strengths and opportunities within the county's key sectors



### Skills and talent

- To maximise the alignment of careers programmes, education and skills curriculum delivery with the needs of business
- To better understand and tackle barriers to employment and increase the proportion of economically active people in Lancashire
- To drive an inclusive and diverse workforce, that is agile and skilled to meet changing demands in digital, tech, cyber and low carbon roles



**These priorities will inform the action planning for services and progress will be monitored through a broader range of departmental and corporate key performance indicators.**



# The Lancashire economy

## Where are we now?

**1. Lancashire was instrumental in setting the blueprint for how modern economies could deliver growth and prosperity.**

2. Parts of the Lancashire economy are world-class, matching competitor regions for productivity, innovation and their quality of employment with GVA growth still expected in 12 of the 15 manufacturing sub-sectors in Lancashire.
3. The post-pandemic recovery is presenting different areas with different challenges, but structurally, Lancashire's economy has, mostly kept pace with or exceeded the national employment rate, and the ambition is for that to continue.
4. Over 50,000 businesses call Lancashire their home and business formation rates remain high.
5. With our local government partners and key stakeholders, we have an established pipeline of major development and infrastructure with the potential to secure over £20bn of investment over the next decade.
6. UK trade and investment statistics showed that Lancashire outperformed the Liverpool City Region in 2021-22 in terms of the area's ability to attract and grow foreign owned companies. Traditional export strengths are reflected in a more progressive balance of trade as a percentage of its total international trade, with a deficit of just 5% of trade, compared to 17% nationally.

But...

7. The historic structure of Lancashire's economy has too many sectors, which are gradually losing jobs.
8. Economic shocks can hit harder and take longer to bounce-back from than in neighbouring economies.

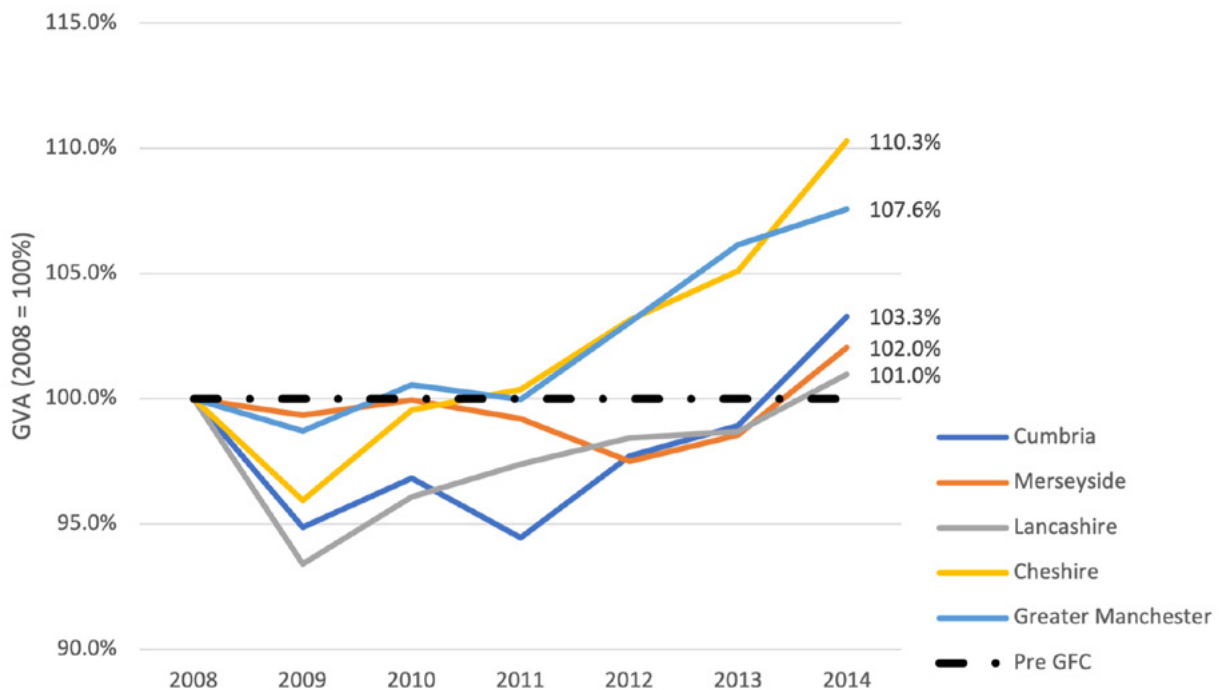


...we have an established pipeline of major development and infrastructure with the potential to secure over

# £20bn

of investment during the next decade

Recovery from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis - North West





# The Lancashire economy

## Where are we now?

9. There are clear and profound disparities in skill levels, economic productivity measures and resident prosperity across the county which, in turn impact more widely on people's life chances.

**2019 data (latest) on Gross Disposable Household Income shows considerable variation across Lancashire, with around £10,000 difference between the households in Lancashire with the lowest disposable household income (Burnley (£15,409) and the highest Ribble Valley (£24,493). The national average is £21,433 – and only Ribble Valley and Fylde are above that (£24,493, and £21,603 respectively).**

10. Lancashire faces challenges to increase economic activity and this needs to be addressed to prevent perceived shallow talent pools which could reduce inward investment and cause businesses to relocate elsewhere.

**Lancashire's economic inactivity rate now stands at 24.4%, above the national average of 21.5%, and 4.1 percentage points above where it was pre-pandemic. This equates to more than 175,000 economically inactive Lancashire residents (an increase of 30,000).**





2019 data (latest) on Gross Disposable Household Income national average is

**£21,433**

### Short term challenges/longer term trajectory

This economic strategy is being produced in a time of continued uncertainty in the national and world economy. Evidence illustrates that economic shocks can impact more deeply and take longer to bounce-back from in Lancashire. Deeply impacted sectors such as the visitor economy are now approaching 80% of their pre-pandemic scale, but inflationary pressures on discretionary spending could still delay a return to trend growth rates for much of the three-year term. In framing the priorities for this strategy, we need to think both about continued support for business and individuals through this period, but also to secure the longer-term elevated growth trajectory offered by the strength of established businesses and the arrival of new investments which will catalyse growth.





# Links to other strategies

Within the context of the council's corporate priorities, this economic strategy comes on the heels of similar documents on health and education. This strategy is principally focused on the corporate priority of 'Supporting Economic Growth' together with a number of Cabinet responsibilities, including:-

- **Economic Development and Growth**
- **Levelling Up and Regional Affairs**
- **Strategic Investment, Major Projects and Infrastructure**
- **Economic Partnerships**
- **Place-Making and Regeneration**
- **Business Support and Collaboration**
- **Tourism and the Visitor Economy**
- **Lifetime Skills and Apprenticeships**

It is intended to be the first of three documents covering the economy, environment and transport, which are all closely linked. This economic strategy also dovetails with the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework, which was refreshed in 2021.

**This diagram illustrates how corporate themes and priorities overlap between the three core strategies.**



The council has also made a commitment to the promotion of 'Health in all Policies' and we aim to show how a strong economy, creating good jobs can drive health and other priority outcomes for Lancashire and the organisation.

Whilst the document focuses solely on the council's own activity in respect of economic development it will contribute to the wider perspective and wider partnership view set out within the emerging sub-regional vision and strategy, 'Lancashire 2050' by supporting delivery of the eight core priorities.

## Economy and transport overlap

Growing technologies for ultra low emission vehicles  
Transport links to key employment, housing and learning sites.  
Maximising the economic impact of enhanced national (north/south) and northern connectivity (west/east)  
Place-making and regeneration  
Infrastructure delivery

## Economy and environment overlap

Developing skills in low carbon technologies  
Support and advice to decarbonise businesses  
Low carbon industries as a driver of local economic growth

### Economic Strategy

Strategic development and connectivity  
Business support and innovation  
Skills development and talent retention  
Wider partnerships, wider impacts

### Highways and Transport Strategy

Highways asset management  
Network management and safety  
Public transport and active travel  
Strategic partnerships

### Environment and Climate Strategy

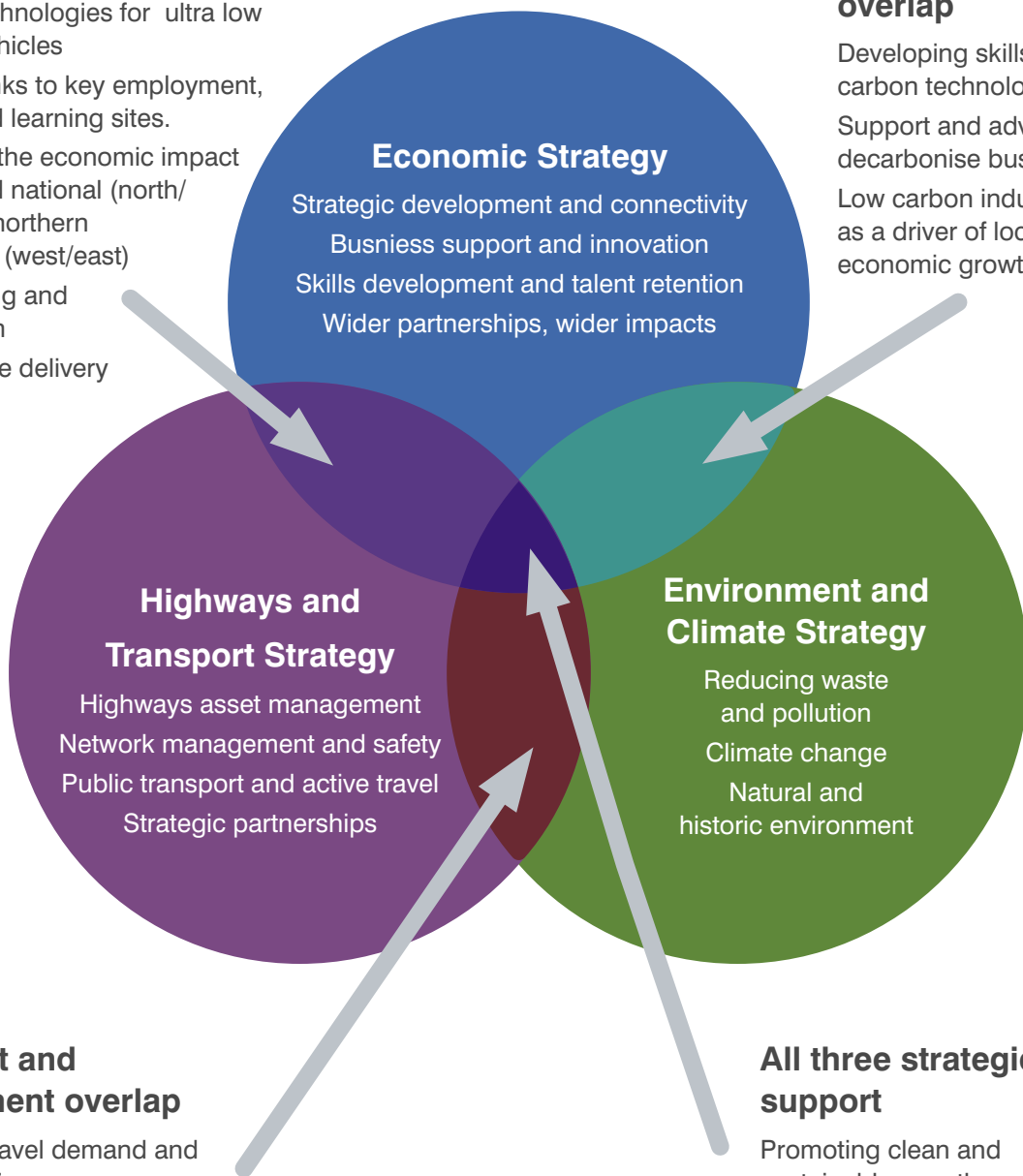
Reducing waste and pollution  
Climate change  
Natural and historic environment

## Transport and environment overlap

Managing travel demand and traffic emissions  
Ultra low emission vehicles/electric vehicles infrastructure  
Promoting and enabling sustainable travel, cycling & walking

## All three strategies support

Promoting clean and sustainable growth  
Connecting communities with economic opportunity  
Transition to net zero  
Climate resilience & adaptation  
Health & Wellbeing





# Strategic Development and Connectivity

## Our 2025 Vision

**Lancashire will have the infrastructure and employment sites required to support a low-carbon, modern and forward-looking economy that works for all.**

We will maintain and enhance an infrastructure and range of employment sites to:

- allow enterprise to flourish and employees to engage in the economy wherever they live in the county; and
- realise the growth potential in our existing and emerging key sectors, and to attract increased investment.

## How we will get there (Priority Projects)

We will take advantage of the emerging Lancashire 2050 Strategic Framework to develop enhanced levels of joint working with partners across key themes such as transport and infrastructure, housing and economic prosperity. This joint work will include the development of a Lancashire Infrastructure Plan to better integrate infrastructure and economic development opportunities including the development of growth corridors and clusters.

The council will continue to support a range of major development projects across the county including major transport and digital infrastructure, local town and city regeneration plans, four enterprise zones and the National Cyber Force headquarters, a total programme estimated to be in the region of £20bn. The county council will take the lead on strategic development projects along with the majority of Lancashire's transport pipeline, including:

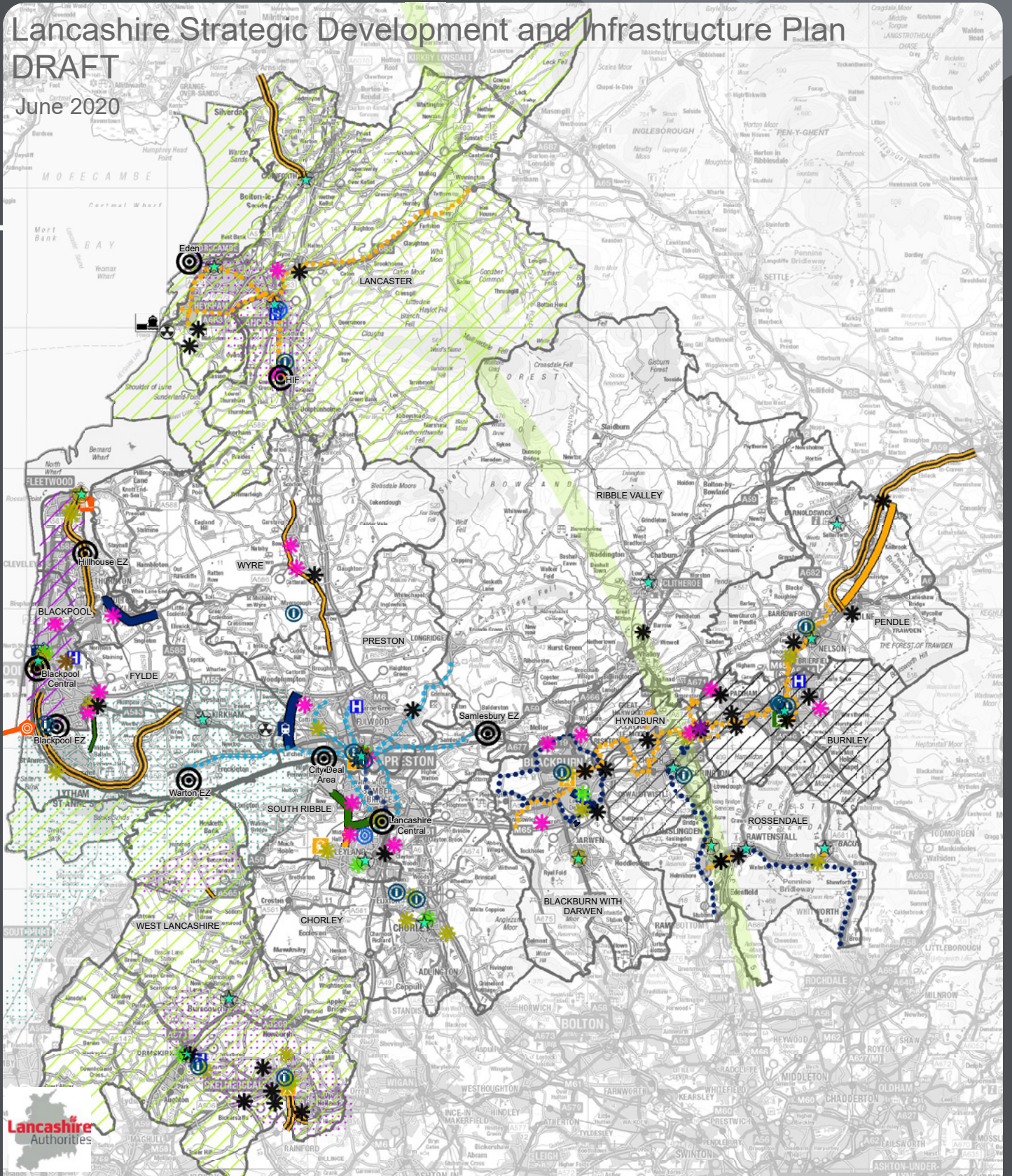
- Samlesbury Enterprise Zone
- Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal
- Lancashire Central strategic employment site at Cuerden
- Transforming Cities Fund delivering transport infrastructure in Preston city centre



# Lancashire Strategic Development and Infrastructure Plan

DRAFT

June 2020



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Laurence Ashworth

Rail Line Schemes	Major Road Schemes	Sustainable & Public Transport	Economic Development	Development Sites	Key Locations
In Development	In Delivery	TCF Corridor	Major Project	Employment	Heysham Port
In Delivery	Business Case	LCWIP Area	Town Centre Scheme	Housing	Nuclear Site
Business Case	In Development	Regional Park	Innovation Centre	Leisure	Major Hospital
In Development	<b>Other Road Schemes</b>	Route In Delivery	Business Park	Mixed Use	United Utilities Works
	In Delivery	Route In Development	Potential Barrage	Retail	<b>Digital/FTTP Broadband Coverage</b>
	Business Case	Tram Extension In Delivery		Community Facility	North Atlantic High Speed Data Cable
	In Development			Rail Freight Terminal	<1% coverage (District)
					>10% coverage (District)
					Full Fibre Network



# Strategic Development and Connectivity

## Our 2025 Vision

- Elite cricket facility in partnership with Lancashire County Cricket Club at Farington
- Preston (HS2) Station Gateway Regeneration
- Eden Project North
- South Lancaster Growth Catalyst unlocking delivery of 9000+ homes
- Lancashire Economic Recovery and Growth programme
- Lancashire Levelling Up Investment Fund
- Business parks
- Urban development and inward investment funds
- Preston Western Distributor, A582 and M55 Link Road
- Strategic rail and public transport projects
- Active travel, cycling and walking projects
- Bridge and other infrastructure projects
- Project Gigabit

## Lancashire County Council's role

To continue to take a lead role on major strategic development and infrastructure.

To lead delivery of the pipeline of active projects identified above.

To continue to champion ambitious multi-district regeneration programmes and investment opportunities. This role includes maximising opportunities within the Lancashire 2050 framework to establish more integrated policies and activities.

To continue to champion Lancashire projects at local, regional and national levels taking advantage of relevant opportunities for infrastructure development such as the Government's emerging Investment Zone agenda.

Through the development of Lancashire 2050, and joint working with authorities across Lancashire, we will seek an ambitious County Deal for devolved multi-year growth, development and infrastructure funding.





*Artist's impression of planned Lancashire County Cricket Club at Farington*





# Supporting local business

## Our 2025 Vision

**Existing premium employers and industries including advanced engineering, manufacturing, and energy, are being augmented with a new and unprecedented wave of investment driven by cyber, digital, and low carbon capabilities. These new industries build on strong and cohesive themes around security, such as military capabilities, data security or, more latterly, energy security.**

Over the next three years, the programmes and investment to sustain traditional strengths and embed new “Apex” businesses will move forward with the council playing a key role in realising the full potential of these developments.

## What the data says

Business births in Lancashire remain buoyant and were above the national average in 2020. Business death rates have been consistently above the national average since 2016, and start-up survival from one through to five years are above the national average, with 90.3% of Lancashire 2019 start-ups surviving one year or more.

The success of scaling firms is mixed across Lancashire, with seven of the 12 local authority districts (within the Lancashire County Council footprint) having a higher incidence of high growth firms than the national average. For the county council area overall, in 2020 4.2% of businesses were classed as “High Growth”, compared to 4.3% in the United Kingdom.

Encouragingly, the districts in Lancashire with the highest incidence of “High Growth” firms are in East Lancashire, in those districts where productivity has been highlighted as being poor. Burnley (4.5%), Hyndburn (6.0%), and Rossendale (5.6%) all have high growth firm rates in excess of the national average – something to be celebrated, and something which needs to continue to close productivity gaps.





## How we will get there (Priority Projects)

### **Make the county the most supportive place to establish, grow and scale high quality businesses.**

Boost, Lancashire's Business Growth Hub and our Business Finance Support propositions have developed a strong brand and a reputation for quality support over the last ten years. In the next three years we aim to sustain that reputation and quality service as the model moves from former European funding to closer working with district councils through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This offers an opportunity to explore new modes of delivery from pre-start, scaling and rural businesses, free of the European legislation which had previously prescribed how this delivery took place.

Through the development of Lancashire 2050, and joint working with authorities across Lancashire, we will seek an ambitious County Deal for devolved multi-year growth, and investment powers and funding.

### **Bring together Lancashire's world class businesses and innovation assets to close the productivity gap with the region.**

Supporting the ability of Lancashire's businesses to innovate is central to driving productivity, growth and the competitiveness of the local economy. Over the next three years the council will refocus its innovation support services, bringing together existing resources to match businesses with the innovation facilities and assets which have been built in recent years and to make this broad spread of investment work as a coherent whole. This would also include the way in which we use real estate owned by the council, such as its business parks, to develop an accelerator model for sectors such as Digital and Technology.

### **Retain, grow and proudly promote our world class sectors, both established and emerging.**

The existing and emerging sectoral strengths of Lancashire need to improve their reach in terms of national policy as measured by Government ascribing sector strengths to Lancashire. Building on the Northwest Cyber Corridor and the County Council funded Aerospace Watchtower pilot, we will seek to refresh, promote and lobby for Lancashire's strengths and contribution to UK plc to be properly recognised.





# Talent

## Employment and Skills

**As the birthplace of the industrial revolution, Lancashire people are known for their ability to innovate, to create and to embrace new technologies. A skilled talent base is a critical ingredient of any flourishing economy – to enable business growth and to attract inward investment.**

### **Our 2025 vision**

Lancashire will have seen significant growth in employment requiring digital, tech, cyber and low carbon skills matched by an increased number of Lancashire's residents active and skilled in the workforce.

A balanced approach will be taken to build Lancashire's talent pipeline – by 'growing our own', by reskilling and upskilling our people and by attracting and retaining new talent to the County. An inclusive approach is critical, to boost the diversity of our workforce, and to maximise Lancashire people's ability to secure well paid, good jobs to improve economic prosperity for all.



## What the data says

**There are now 175,000 economically inactive residents in Lancashire, and this is a challenge. It is also an opportunity, with some 30,000 inactive residents who state that they would like a job. These 30,000 who would like a job and 27,000 unemployed residents in Lancashire combine to create a cohort of almost 60,000 residents who could help to alleviate the recruitment challenges that businesses are facing.**

The labour market remains buoyant despite economic challenges, and has seen more than 65,000 vacancies posted in Lancashire so far this year (10,000 more than the same period in 2021). Widening the talent pool for businesses to recruit to is crucial to alleviate recruitment challenges, but as important is the health and well-being benefits that secure well paid employment can bring to residents.

# 65,000

**vacancies posted in Lancashire so far this year**



Widening this talent pool is especially important for Lancashire, with an ageing population and a smaller percentage of Lancashire's population being of working age than the national average (60.7% of Lancashire residents are aged 16-64, compared to 62.4% in Great Britain).

Lancashire also produces over 17,000 graduates a year, which places them in the top third of sub-regions nationally. However, graduate retention is below average in Lancashire (24.4% of graduates from Lancashire Higher Education Institutions are still living and working in Lancashire three years later, compared to 30.3% of graduates nationally staying to work where they studied). This places Lancashire around the national median.

That Lancashire has a lower proportion of residents with higher level (4+) qualifications than the national average is well understood. Apprenticeships offer a powerful route to improving this position, with a movement over the last 5 years towards Apprenticeship Starts at higher levels. Since the pandemic Level 4+ Starts have grown by 19%, relative to an overall drop in Apprenticeship Starts of 23% in Lancashire. These higher-level Apprenticeship Starts now account for 28% of all Apprenticeship Starts, compared to 18% pre-pandemic.



# Talent

## Employment and Skills



There is also a need to diversify the skillsets of Lancashire residents so that our economy is more digitally ready. The Lancashire LEP's digital strategy states that digital employment could more than double to over 50,000 by 2035, with advances coming from the National Cyber Force, the clustering of digital and cyber businesses in Lancashire, as well as movements towards a more digital economy. In addition to this, forecasting from the Local Government Association shows Lancashire to be the area of the UK with the highest number of Energy and Low Carbon jobs per head of the population, with more than 60,000 Low Carbon jobs by 2050.

## How we will get there (Priority Projects)

The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub published the refreshed Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework in 2021. This strategy is aligned to the four core priorities, building on the partnerships with business and educational providers that the Hub oversees, including the Adult Skills Forum, Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership and Lancashire Careers Hub.

### Future workforce:

We will work with education and business to establish a talent pipeline and future workforce that meets the current and future demands of the labour market.

The Careers Hub reached full coverage in September 2021, supporting every secondary school, including special schools and alternative providers, and college across the county to develop an excellent careers programme working collaboratively with business. Over the next three years, schools and colleges will continue to make progress against the careers excellence framework – the Gatsby Benchmarks, with an increase in inspirational encounters and experiences with Lancashire employers.

Through the embedding of technical education, we will also see a balance of destinations, with more young people opting for T-Levels, apprenticeships and vocational provision – to ensure that we are building the technical skills base that our employers require. In line with future forecasts, there will be particular focus on digital, tech, cyber and low carbon skills and opportunities, ensuring that local labour market intelligence underpins careers programmes thereby enabling young people to make informed choices about their future.





# Talent

## Employment and Skills

### **Inclusive workforce:**

We will work with providers and partners to support unemployed and economically inactive residents into sustainable employment, to 'level up' areas of Lancashire and accelerate inclusive growth, and to ensure alignment of programmes with areas of economic need. We will seek to expand the range of Skills Bootcamps available to Lancashire residents, building on the innovative work undertaken in Lancashire to-date, as well as deliver a successful Multiply programme to boost the numeracy skills and thus employability of low skilled adults.

A study will be conducted into increasing the proportion of economically active residents, with a view to influencing and shaping provision to reverse recent trends – working in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, Public Health and local authorities to shape mainstream and UK Shared Prosperity Fund provision.

### **Skilled and productive workforce:**

We will work with businesses to understand their skills needs by understanding labour market intelligence through the development of a Data Observatory and by working in partnership with the Chambers of Commerce to build on the Local Skills Improvement Plan trailblazer. This will shape and influence the curriculum offer of post 16 providers to young people and to adults seeking to reskill and upskill.

We will continue to drive the Apprenticeship Action Plan, including the Lancashire Levy Transfer Network, working in partnership with the Lancashire Work Based Learning Forum and apprenticeship providers, to grow apprenticeships at every level and across our priority sectors. Over the next year, 100 Lancashire County Council Apprenticeship Grants will be issued to small to medium manufacturing enterprises recruiting a young apprentice for the first time.

Through the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership, we will continue to work with business to reskill and upskill the county's workforce to adopt new technologies, and will encourage our digital and tech businesses to sign up to the Tech Talent Charter to drive greater diversity in our digital workforce.

We will increase the number of Lancashire businesses signed up to the Lancashire Skills Pledge – which recognises those businesses that are committed to inspiring, recruiting and developing the people of Lancashire and provides a 'front door' for businesses to engage with skills and employment providers.



## **Sustain and market the quality of life and cultural offer which makes Lancashire such a great place to live, work and learn:**

With a strong pipeline of business sites, new investors and increased “replacement demand” in sectors with ageing workforces, a key constraint on the county’s ability to realise growth will be a battle for skills. In addition to the focus on growing our own, we need Lancashire to be seen as a destination of choice for those leaving further and higher education and for young families leaving city regions for a different work-life balance, boosting graduate retention. Building and highlighting the quality-of-life offer touches a range of County Council and District responsibilities from culture, to transport, to marketing, to place based measures to bolster the night-time economy. Through the development of Lancashire 2050, and joint working with authorities across Lancashire, we will seek an ambitious County Deal for devolved skills and employment funding to enable an integrated skills and employment system, which is driven by local labour market priorities.





# Working as one - Wider impacts / Wider outcomes

## Integrated programmes

The three core priorities set out in this strategy can all act independently of one another but work best when working in combination, including with other strategies, to deliver and maximise the impact of economic opportunities within Lancashire. Projects such as the work to support the establishment of the National Cyber Force bring the services together with other partners to offer property, skills and business supply chain solutions which will maximise the impact of the core investments for Lancashire residents, businesses and communities.

The strategy is committed to increasing the wider value from commissioning, with resource providing expertise across major development programmes, and council contracts to maximise opportunities through employment, skills or decarbonisation commitments which add to the wider objectives of the organisation and taking advantage of pro-active businesses to achieve local priorities.



## Delivering wider council priorities

### Health

“Good work” is increasingly viewed as one of the key determinants of good health providing not only a salary to pay for healthy accommodation and food but also providing the structure, contact and potential for self-actualisation that in-turn lead to positive mental health and an active role within communities where people live.

Economic Development teams continue to work with health colleagues and their partners using contact with the business community to promote good employment practice, resilience and help through healthy workplace initiatives.





## **Ambition**

The Careers Hub, part of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub is central to one of the most comprehensive careers programmes across the country, matching business leaders with all secondary schools and colleges across the county to drive the development of inspirational plans that include encounters and experiences with employers that provide a real understanding of the world of work for Lancashire's young people.

## **Sustainability**

Especially given the recent increase in fuel costs, Boost actively signposts local businesses to the energy consumption audits and improvement plans delivered by our partners as well as helping to develop businesses working in the low carbon products and technologies sector.

## **Measuring progress and performance**

At present the council's Corporate Performance Framework and the Departmental Dashboard of the Growth, Environment and Transport Department are focused on key performance indicators dealing mostly with job and business creation in Boost Programmes, the Investments made through Rosebud and the number of young people not in education, employment and training and educational attainment.

A refreshed framework of indicators, driven by this strategy will be developed and launched in Q4 2022/23.

## **Governance**

The milestones and performance indicators related to the priorities set out in this project will be led by the Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate, served by a variety of bespoke leadership, management, partnership and governance arrangements relevant to the three core priorities and reporting within the relevant portfolio and scrutiny responsibilities, particularly the Cabinet Members for Economic Development and Growth, Education and Skills.





**Lancashire**  
County  
Council



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