

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION MAYORAL MANIFESTO

**A Manifesto Delivering
Sustainable Growth**



Foreword

In May, voters across England will elect 10 metro mayors, the most to date. By May 3 approximately 26 million people, or 44 per cent of the English population will be presided over by a mayor. And in May, another three mayors will be elected for the first time, in the North East¹, York and North Yorkshire, and the East Midlands. This combined group of Metro Mayors (the M12) will then collectively represent more than 50 per cent of England's GDP.

With a strong personal mandate, mayors provide a powerful and influential voice, bringing a strategic regional view to crucial policy decisions on areas such as transport, housing, education, strategic planning and infrastructure. All of which are crucial to business. Across England, we see mayors continue to play a vital role in ensuring a region is an attractive place for inward investment and to do business, both domestically and internationally.

The CBI has been a long-standing supporter of devolution and of directly elected mayors, we have seen how they can be strong advocates for their region with the convening power to make things happen. They act as ambassadors for their regions both nationally and internationally, and importantly, provide the governance and accountability Whitehall needs in order to devolve powers and funding.

Regional priorities for devolution

Liverpool City Region (LCR) has a dynamic, vibrant, and competitive economy, leading the way in the digital and creative sectors, health and life sciences and green industry. Even set against the backdrop of tough economic conditions with the recovery from COVID-19, high-interest rates, a tight labour market and rising costs, the city region demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) has played a vital role in developing and safeguarding the region's future prosperity, working closely with businesses, its constituent local authorities, and the government to ensure Liverpool City Region is a place where firms, individuals and communities can thrive.

Despite notable achievements in economic growth and the creation of 67,620 jobs between 2010 and 2022², challenges persist. This is particularly the case in areas such as productivity, which continues to decrease by an average of 0.8% annually. While this can be explained by external factors such as those explored above, it demonstrates that a newly elected mayor cannot take economic growth for granted. They must relentlessly promote and pursue an ambitious, long-term regional economic vision that recognises existing

¹ The North East Mayoral Combined Authority will replace the non-mayoral North East Combined Authority and the North of Tyne Combined Authority, whose incumbent mayor is Jamie Driscoll

² [Liverpool | Centre for Cities](#)

strategic assets and clusters, inspires inward investment and tourism, and differentiates Liverpool City Region's narrative in a competitive domestic and global market.

The Mayoral election in May will be a pivotal moment for the Liverpool City Region. Pursuing a Tier 4 devolution deal could grant expanded powers and a single funding settlement to realise the LCR Plan For Prosperity³, building a fairer, stronger, cleaner and more prosperous city region. The CBI has identified five key priorities for the newly elected mayor-

- Drive regional investment.
- Future proof the regional labour market to drive inclusive growth.
- Regional climate commitments to help the UK deliver net zero.
- Drive high-growth technology and innovation.
- Delivery resilient public services.

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³ [Plan for Prosperity | Liverpool City Region Combined Authority \(liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk\)](https://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/plan-for-prosperity)

Drive regional investment

Liverpool City Region is renowned both nationally and internationally for its high-growth potential and distinct socio-economic environment. As home to the UK's second Investment Zone, which could unlock £320 million in private sector investment and deliver over 4,000 jobs in the next five years⁴, the region's economy is primed for growth.

But to realise Liverpool's true potential, the mayor should strategically champion the region's sectoral prowess and competitive advantages. This will be vital if the city region is to attract inward investment and foster substantial business expansion, as outlined in the Harrington review⁵. Delivering on the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) and co-creating LCR's investment framework with businesses and shareholders will provide clear strategic direction. It will give businesses the confidence to co-invest in long-term, strategically important regional assets, including centres of excellence, education institutions, and trade hubs such as the Port of Liverpool.

This will provide the foundation for the region to crowd significant private-sector investment alongside public-sector financing such as the SIF⁶.

- A new mayor must collaborate with the 12 English regional mayors to amplify their collective voice and attract investment into the UK.
- LCRCA must unlock the full potential of the Liverpool Freeport by enhancing connectivity with the broader Northern Powerhouse and leveraging the region's existing strengths in Life Sciences, including pharmaceuticals, infection control, and material chemicals.
- Prioritise boosting exports with a fully integrated export strategy highlighting trade benefits and providing targeted business support. This includes aiding existing exporters in navigating EU trade relationships and diversifying into new global markets, as the UK forms fresh trading agreements.

Future proof the regional labour market to drive inclusive growth

Over the years, Liverpool City Region has made great strides to resolve many longstanding barriers in its skill provision and regional labour market. The persistent brand recognition that LCR and its academic institutions enjoy alongside the city region's reputation as a great place to live and work has, in part, driven growth in Liverpool's student population. As of

⁴ [Second Investment Zone for the North to unlock multi-million pound investments - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/second-investment-zone-for-the-north-to-unlock-multi-million-pound-investments)

⁵ [231123 Harrington-Review-Report-FINAL-2_HH_Global.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶ [Strategic investment Fund | Liverpool City Region Combined Authority \(liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk\)](https://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/strategic-investment-fund)

2022, this stood at roughly 70,000 students, making Liverpool one of the UK's most-loved student cities⁷.

However, the COVID-19 Pandemic has had a detrimental impact on LCR's people and communities, further exacerbating many of the longstanding barriers that prevent the regional economic growth needed for the city to reach its true potential. LCR continues to struggle with intraregional economic inequality and is home to some of the UK's most deprived communities in terms of health and disability, qualification attainment, and wage disparities. With an employment rate of 69.8% in 2023, down on the previous year, the city region continues to underperform compared to the rest of the North West⁸. Furthermore, despite being home to some of the world's leading academic institutions, LCR struggles to retain high-level graduates, partly due to a lack of high-skilled, high-paid employment opportunities.

The upcoming May elections present an opportunity for the mayor to collaborate with the UK government and Further Education and Higher Education providers to bring structural changes to the region's skill provision. This involves removing barriers to work, addressing immediate shortages, and targeting skills required for future demand. While a regionally tailored approach is vital for Liverpool City Region's economic resilience and inclusive growth, the CBI stresses the need to avoid a fragmented, postcode-based skill provision.

As such, the CBI supports Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and is keen to collaborate with LCRCA and FE/HE institutions to implement a comprehensive skills plan. Balancing national and regional priorities can effectively bridge skill gaps across the entire region, and by utilising anchor institutions such as our world-class colleges and universities, we can attract and retain a new generation of highly skilled, highly paid workers.

- The mayor must collaborate with businesses, further education colleagues, higher education, and training providers to effectively use funding from devolved adult skills budgets.
- The CBI supports the Local Skills Improvement Plans process and urges the mayor to integrate the Liverpool City Region LSIP findings into practice, using the devolved educational powers and funding available.
- Improve awareness and understanding of reskilling opportunities for LCR residents and businesses. This includes supporting career information, delivering a simplified business offer, using convening power to drive collaboration between businesses and education providers, and establishing mechanisms for engaging with businesses to ensure they have influence over local training design and delivery.

⁷ [7 Reasons Why Liverpool is the UK's Best Student City | Top Universities](#)

⁸ [Liverpool's employment, unemployment and economic inactivity - ONS](#)

Regional climate commitments to help the UK deliver net zero

Few missions hold a greater moral obligation for both industry and society than the transition to a low-carbon economy. Indeed, this lies at the epicentre of the UK's long-term sustainable growth and how we can revitalise those regions left behind in the wake of deindustrialisation. Liverpool City Region is home to some of the UK's most significant net zero assets. With the world's second-largest concentration of offshore wind farms- 270 turbines and set to expand further- the region's ecological and geographical characteristics offer many opportunities to lead the way in the Green Industrial Revolution⁹. LCRCA has already demonstrated its ambition in this endeavour, harnessing the huge tidal range of the river Mersey and its potential to help transition to green energy. Estimates suggest this could power upwards of 1 million homes and boost the UK's energy security. Furthermore, the region boasts the UK's leading industrial decarbonisation cluster- HyNet North West- with an ambition to invest in hydrogen-fuelled technology and cut carbon emissions across a wide range of sectors and industries.

With a commitment to reach net zero carbon by 2040 and 22,000 people already employed by 1,400 low-carbon businesses, the Liverpool City Region is heading in the right direction⁹. But to realise the true potential of the region's unique assets and economic strengths, the mayor must follow these recommendations:

- Support HyNet North West to develop and encourage local industries' uptake of Hydrogen and CCUS technologies.
- Continue to champion low-carbon approaches to production by working with the industrial clusters to demonstrate the benefits and opportunities of the circular economy.
- Developing an integrated, low-carbon public transport system by continued collaboration with transport providers to deliver integrated and sustainable travel options.
- Work hand in glove with the national government to decarbonise heat and improve the energy efficiency of homes and buildings.
- Promote the opportunities of LCR and the North in the race to net zero, building on existing strengths in renewable and offshore energy generation and low-carbon innovations. The mayor should attend COP29 in partnership with other mayors and local authorities, as well as businesses and higher and further education. This should be closely aligned with the work underway across world-class universities and colleges and within the business community, including initiatives such as Net Zero North West.

⁹ [Green Infrastructure & Initiatives | Liverpool City Region \(investliverpoolcityregion.com\)](https://investliverpoolcityregion.com)

Drive high-growth technology and innovation

Today, Liverpool is among the most significant regional economies in the UK, boasting a wide variety of innovation-intensive centres of excellence, including its world-renowned Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. For decades, Liverpool has been at the forefront of innovative practice, with world leading academics and research institutions.

With Liverpool playing host to an Investment Zone and Freeport, alongside its distinct brand, the city region has experienced substantial levels of investment, which has contributed to its ongoing regeneration and economic growth¹⁰. LCRCA seeks to build upon this, committing to invest 5% of the region's GVA into R&D by 2030- nearly double the government's target for 2027¹¹. If reached, this target is estimated to generate £41.7bn in gross economic benefits, a 10% increase in productivity, and create 44,000 new jobs.

This will be a central component in tackling some of the city's longstanding economic challenges, including its productivity, measured by output per hour of work, which is 13% below the UK average.

- Develop a long-term strategy in partnership with LCR's component local authorities, universities and colleges, industry, and national government to drive both public and private investment in innovation. This should build upon existing local strengths, including the Knowledge Quarter, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, and the Manufacturing Technology Centre. It should also seek to strengthen business-led innovation and deployment and encourage knowledge exchange between industry and academia.
- Establish a pro-active plan that addresses the barriers to commercialising R&D and provide support for startups and scale-ups in this space, helping SME's break through the growth ceiling. This scheme must consider the needs of different businesses, include a strategy to champion SME and scale up businesses, and establish/create robust peer networks to support mentoring.
- Building a strong cultural sector to catalyse growth and innovation in the creative and visitor economies, contributing to economic regeneration and job creation.

Deliver resilient public services and fit for purpose infrastructure

Confidence in our public services is integral to building a thriving regional economy and a central component in delivering sustainable, socially responsible growth.

¹⁰ [Why is Liverpool attractive to investors in 2023? - North Property Group](#)

¹¹ [Innovation | Liverpool City Region Combined Authority \(liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

The mayor can drive progress and prosperity by striking a balance between public and private delivery and fostering collaboration. The region must enable businesses to invest, innovate, and share risk in public service provision to succeed. Unlocking capital investment in infrastructure, AI, education, and health requires ambitious, credible, long-term frameworks.

To ensure the success of cities like Liverpool, we must have the right infrastructure in place for highly skilled labour to reach the city centre and encourage knowledge-intensive businesses to locate here. At present, LCRCA has gone to great lengths to invest in transport across the city region, with £500 million made available for a new publicly owned battery-powered train fleet, investment into zero-emission hydrogen buses and continued progress in the delivery of a host of active travel infrastructure. Moreover, with the cancellation of HS2, there is an opportunity for the new mayor to utilise Network North funding to improve regional services and invest the £12bn earmarked for enhanced connectivity between the city and Greater Manchester¹².

A newly elected mayor must seize upon this opportunity, in collaboration with the private sector, to deliver for the people of Liverpool City Region.

- Expand the LCR Hydrogen Economy Programme to deliver the low-carbon transition for heavy goods vehicles.
- The mayor should empower the combined authority to develop a strategic framework to identify opportunities and support pan-regional infrastructure delivery – both physical and digital. This will ensure that local plans for employment land uses are equally as important as those for new housing.
- Champion the role of social value in procurement, leading the way with how the combined authority procures goods and services, supporting businesses to engage with their social value potential and go beyond the balance sheet to drive meaningful change. This includes working closely with businesses and stakeholders to build upon the current success of the Fair Employment Charter to ensure businesses of all sizes can easily demonstrate their commitment to good employment.
- Continue to progress in areas such as smart ticketing to ensure a London-style transport system and ease of travelling for commuters.

¹² [PM redirects HS2 funding to revolutionise transport across the North and Midlands - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-redirects-hs2-funding-to-revolutionise-transport-across-the-north-and-midlands)

Conclusion

On 2 May, the people of Liverpool City Region will head to the polls to elect the next Mayor of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA).

The **CBI** and its members are committed to collaborating with the next Mayor to ensure that the Liverpool City Region continues to thrive as a region where people live, work, and conduct business. Despite numerous challenges such as the rising cost of living, inflation, and geopolitical instability, both the region and the nation face, the decisions made by the next Mayor will significantly impact employees, employers, and the entire region.

The CBI contends that when politicians, public, and private sectors collaborate, the Liverpool City Region can fully unlock its potential. Businesses are poised to contribute by partnering with the new Mayor to advance the priorities outlined in this manifesto.

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To share your views on this topic or ask us a question, contact:

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