

ANNUAL REVIEW

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority 2025-26



**LIVERPOOL
CITY REGION**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

METROMAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

#DevolutionDelivers

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Mayor's Foreword

This past year has marked a major step forward for the Liverpool City Region.

We have continued to turn the promise of devolution into real progress for the 1.6 million people who live and work here - taking greater control over the decisions that shape our economy, our communities and our future.

Throughout the year, we have focused on the priorities that matter most to residents: improving public transport, investing in skills and education, supporting businesses to grow, tackling inequality, and creating the homes and opportunities our communities need to thrive.

This annual review highlights the scale of that work and the impact it is already having across our region. From securing £1.6 billion to transform our transport network, to launching a new £2 billion Investment Fund to drive innovation and job creation, **we are building the foundations for long-term inclusive growth.**

We have also entered a **new phase of devolution**, with the introduction of our first **Integrated Settlement** - worth £1.5 billion over multiple years - giving us greater flexibility and **certainty to plan for the future and deliver investment where it can make the biggest difference.** Alongside this, we secured £700 million to support new social and affordable housing, launched plans for a Mayoral Development Corporation to accelerate regeneration,

and continued our biggest-ever investment in adult skills and employment support - helping residents gain the qualifications, confidence and opportunities they need to succeed.

This report is about the people behind the progress: communities shaping local decisions, businesses investing in our future, young people developing new skills, and partners working together to deliver meaningful change.

Whether it is building cleaner and more accessible transport, supporting innovation and emerging industries, tackling homelessness and inequality, or strengthening our response to climate change, our ambition remains clear - to create a fairer, stronger and more prosperous region.

There is still much more to do, but this past year has shown what is possible when decisions are made closer to the people they affect. Devolution is giving our region the tools, confidence and momentum to shape our own future. Together, we are building a Liverpool City Region that is the best place to grow up, grow a family and grow a business.



Steve Rotheram

Steve Rotheram

Mayor of the Liverpool City Region

Chief Executive's Foreword

This annual review provides an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the progress we have made across the Liverpool City Region over the past year, continuing to deliver on the Corporate Plan and our shared ambition for the 1.6 million people who live and work here.

I continue to be inspired by the passion, creativity and commitment of colleagues across the Combined Authority, by the strength of the relationships with the six local authorities that constitute it, and our working partnerships with businesses, institutions and communities. It is through these relationships that we are able to turn ambition into action and deliver meaningful change.

Over the past year, I have had the privilege of seeing first-hand the impact of this work. From conversations with our equality panels and young people helping to shape our future priorities, to collaboration with businesses, academics and partners driving innovation and growth, **it is clear that our greatest strength lies in working together.**

I have also been proud to see the continued progress we are making in **improving connectivity** - through **transport, digital infrastructure** and **inclusion**, and new ways of **bringing people and opportunities closer together.**

While this report highlights many of the achievements we have delivered together, it also reflects our ongoing commitment to deliver for the people we serve and to face challenges together.

There is much more to do, with new powers and funding arrangements to help us do it, but I am proud of what we have achieved and confident in what we can continue to deliver together - **creating a fairer, stronger and more vibrant City Region where no one is left behind.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine Fairclough".

Katherine Fairclough

Chief Executive,
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

Cabinet Members' Foreword

As Cabinet Members of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Leaders of our six constituent local authorities, we are pleased to reflect on and celebrate the progress we have made together over the past year.

Working collectively through the Combined Authority, we continue to deliver on the priorities set out in our Corporate Plan - using our **devolved powers** and funding to **support our economy, create opportunities for our residents** and **invest in the long-term future of our city region**.

This year's review highlights the impact of that approach in action. Across the Liverpool City Region, we have made continued progress in areas that matter most to our residents - from **growing our economy** and **supporting innovation**, to **improving skills, transport**, and **our local places**. These achievements reflect the shared ambition and commitment of partners across our region.

The strength of our collaboration remains central to this progress. By working together, we are able to deliver more effectively and ensure that our work responds to the needs and aspirations of our residents.

While we recognise that challenges remain, we are committed to working together to address them, building on the strong foundations we have in place. Together, we will continue to work to make our region the best place to grow up, grow a family, and grow a business - where no-one is left behind.



Cllr Mike Wharton

Leader, Halton Council



Cllr Graham Morgan

Leader, Knowsley Council



Cllr Liam Robinson

Leader, Liverpool City Council



Cllr Marion Atkinson

Leader, Sefton Council



Cllr George Woodward

Leader, St Helens Council



Cllr Paula Basnett

Leader, Wirral Council

Integrated Settlement and Devolution Powers

It was a momentous year for the Combined Authority as national policy brought significant progress towards greater devolution.

In what has been widely described as the greatest change to local government in 50 years, a new law was passed in May giving more power to local areas.

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act gives Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities greater control over funding, a clearer route to seek new powers and stronger frameworks to improve transparency, accountability and community involvement.

For Liverpool City Region Combined Authority that means greater control over its finances with a new £1.5bn Integrated Settlement introduced on April 1, combining multiple Government funding streams into a single multi-year budget.

The move also gives local leaders more control over planning and investment across transport, housing, skills, regeneration, net zero and inclusive growth.

The Act also introduces a new 'right to request', making it simpler for combined authorities to seek additional devolved powers such as introducing an overnight visitor levy.

Alongside new powers, the Act sets clearer expectations for how the Combined Authority, local councils and public sector partners work together to deliver across the City Region.

And it strengthens transparency, accountability and community involvement, with the aim of supporting stronger leadership - bringing decisions closer to local people and making public investment more effective.



Aerial shot of the Liver Birds above the city of Liverpool

1,000,000

journeys using
Tap & Go

395,000

journeys through
Sandhills station
to Everton's
Hill Dickinson
Stadium.

145,000

bus journeys to
the Hill Dickinson
Stadium

£1.6bn

from government
to deliver public
transport
revolution

£2bn

new LCR
Investment Fund
launched to
drive growth

10-year

Liverpool City
Region Growth
Plan to grow
economy by
£10bn

£10m

LCR Seed
Fund launched

**The Year
in Numbers**

£1.5bn

Integrated
Settlement

2,521

roles created
from £17m
of unused
Apprenticeship
Levy

£79m

invested in
Adult Skills

36,000

learners
supported by
Adult Skills Fund

£26m

new Mersey
Ferry built

£700m

funding for Social
and Affordable
Homes Programme

350,000+

journeys using
the care
leavers pass

ECONOMY

With a new 10-year plan to accelerate economic growth, a £2bn Investment Fund, and major projects underway to drive innovation, the last 12 months were defined by increasing momentum and strong planning, building the foundations to deliver further success.

It was a year in which the City Region also looked outward, making global connections and signing landmark deals, while delivering a compelling message that 'now is the time to invest'.

Liverpool City Region Growth Plan

October saw the launch of the Liverpool City Region Growth Plan at the Materials Innovation Factory in Liverpool.

Many months in the making following extensive consultation with local authorities, businesses, universities, the voluntary and community sector, unions and Government, the **Growth Plan** provides a 'bold and ambitious' 10-year blueprint to create tens of thousands of jobs and add £10bn to the Liverpool City Region economy.



Liverpool City Region Growth Plan 2025-2035 document

It is built on innovation and collaboration and will serve as a roadmap to increasing wages, driving investment, raising living standards and providing better services for the Region's 1.6 million residents.

Increasing productivity is at the heart of the plan, which, if raised to the national average, would alone add £6bn to the City Region's £43.3bn-a-year economy.

This will be achieved by building on the Region's world leading innovation while accelerating growth of its most productive sectors including advanced manufacturing, health and life sciences, digital and technology and creative industries supported by maritime, professional and business services and the visitor economy.

The plan highlights the importance of improving skills, public transport, housing, health and infrastructure for raising productivity.

Providing a skilled workforce and better services and infrastructure will help attract and retain high performing businesses that can pay higher wages and generate more tax revenues to fund public services and investment.

With plans for the world's largest tidal power scheme, the City Region will also embrace clean energy opportunities and emerging green technologies.

The Growth Plan's priorities are now reflected in a new **LCR Investment Strategy**, approved in April, which will guide decision-making for a new £2bn **LCR Investment Fund**, launched at in March at MIPIM.

LCR Investment Fund

Created by the Combined Authority in collaboration with government and public and private sector partners, the £2bn LCR Investment Fund is the largest ever of its type for the City Region and is designed to accelerate economic growth and create thousands of high-quality jobs.



A view of Liverpool Waters

It brings together new and existing public funding into a single investment pot that will help unlock stalled sites, drive regeneration and attract billions of pounds more in private and institutional investment.

Following its launch at MIPIM, it was immediately bolstered by £95m from the Government's City Investment Fund which will help support the first tranche of projects, identified following a competitive call that attracted interest from more than £1bn of investable schemes.

The first investments are set to unlock over 520,000 square feet of high-quality office space in Liverpool city centre along with lab and light industrial space, supporting more than 2,800 jobs.

The total value of the projects is over £200m and include two developments in Liverpool's Central Business District and a hi-tech lab and office development in Knowledge Quarter Liverpool, addressing an urgent need for high-quality office and lab space to support research and innovation.

LCR Investment Strategy

Launched at UKREiF in May 2026, the LCR Investment Strategy will guide how the LCR Investment Fund is deployed, targeting investments that deliver long-term growth, job creation and raise living standards

It places a greater emphasis on strategic investments, shifting from a grant system to focus on how investments will work together to deliver the Liverpool City Region Growth Plan.

The strategy will prioritise investments that raise productivity and remove barriers holding back growth – delivering lasting impact and attracting billions of pounds of further investment.

LCR Innovation Zone Programme

Liverpool City Region has led the way in combining its Life Sciences Innovation Zone and Freeport under a single LCR Innovation Zone Programme, aligning with the Government's Modern Industrial Strategy.

The City Region is one of only three places in the UK to have Innovation Zone and Freeport status, with both offering fiscal incentives to expanding and relocating businesses across six designated tax sites, including Sci-Tech Daresbury, a national science and innovation campus.

The Innovation Zone is accelerating the global reach of one of Europe's largest life sciences clusters and is expected to generate £800m of Government and private investment and create 8,000 jobs over 10 years.

It was a strong year for Innovation Zone-backed projects including:

- **iiCON Phase 3 robotic labs.** Located at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and supported by the Infection Innovation Consortium (iiCON), the new AI-powered, robotic labs are set to open within weeks with the promise of accelerating development of new treatments for deadly diseases. **Backed by £10m of Innovation Zone funding**, the High Containment Level 3 labs will be capable of handling a range of pathogens during development and validation of new treatments that could save lives worldwide.
- **Project Violet Phase 2.** In November 2025, the Combined Authority approved up to **£7.5m of Innovation Zone funding** to support construction of new high-grade offices and innovation space at Sci-Tech Daresbury. The 23,000 sq ft building is one of two set to be constructed as part of Project Violet Phase 2 – which builds on the success of Phase 1, completed in 2022 and which is now fully occupied. Innovation Zone funding had already been granted for the other 60,000 sq ft laboratory-enabled building. Together, the state-of-the-art buildings will support around 250 jobs, with construction expected to start later this year.
- **Paediatric Open Innovation Zone (POIZ).** With **£4.2m of Innovation Zone funding approved in March 2025**, Alder Hey's POIZ project officially launched in March 2026 as part of a two-day celebration marking 10 years of the hospital's Innovation Hub transforming healthcare for young people. POIZ's ambition is to support the testing and scaling of new technologies ranging from artificial intelligence applications to advanced digital health tools that can transform care for children.



Aerial image of Alder Hey Children's Hospital

Innovation Zone-backed training and business support programmes continued during the year, and the University of Liverpool's **Civic Health Tech Innovation Zone (CHI-Zone)** harnessed Innovation Zone funding for the **Citizen First LCR** scheme. The incubator programme is backing local 'hidden entrepreneurs' who have lived experience of health and care challenges. Hospital robots, AI-guided sleep support and accessible mobile hair salons are among several eye-catching projects being developed.



Professor Iain Buchan, Mayor Steve Rotheram, Professor Tim Jones, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool, and National Institute for Health and Care Research CEO Professor Lucy Chappell, centre, with senior University of Liverpool representatives at the launch of CHI Labs

LCR Freeport

Hi-tech sails designed to bring wind power back into commercial shipping and a new carbon capture and storage process were among nine projects to receive £1.5m from two new Liverpool City Region Freeport funds, announced in December.

Each worth £750,000, the LCR Freeport Innovation Challenge Fund and LCR Freeport Skills Infrastructure Grant were designed to deliver the Freeport's objectives for growth, decarbonisation and inclusive employment.

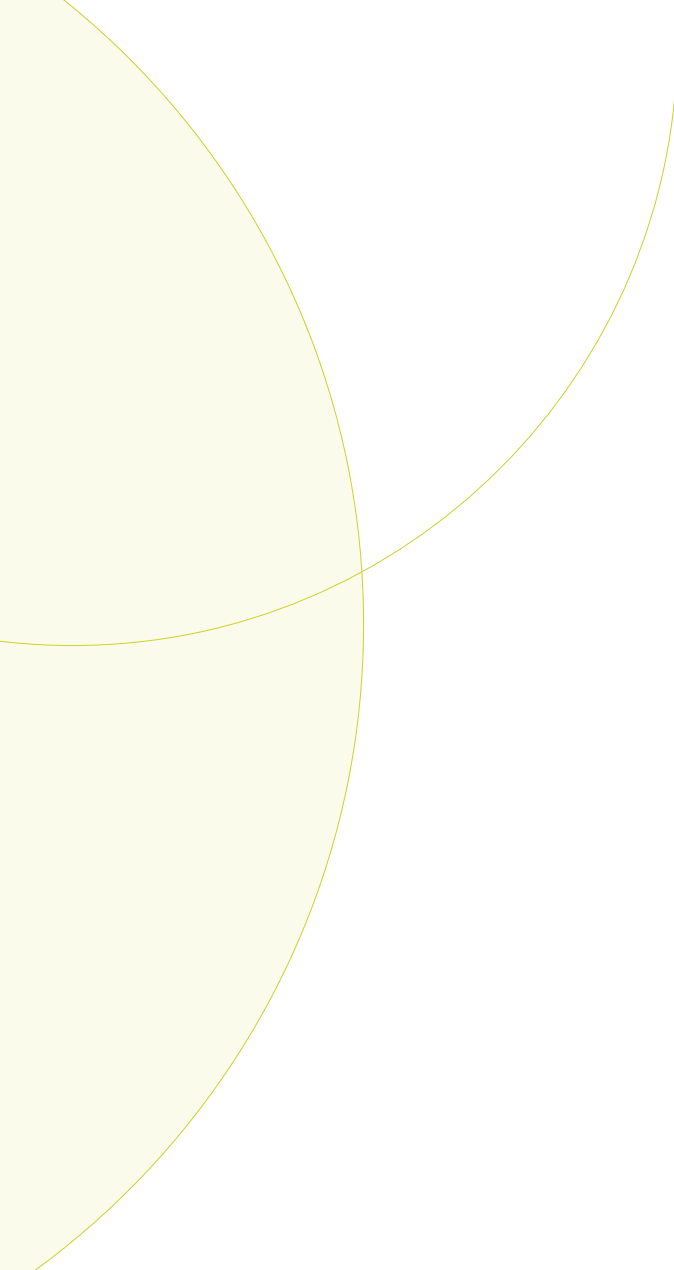
The LCR Freeport Skills Infrastructure Grant was designed to support further education and help independent training providers to enhance the delivery linked to the Freeport's priority sectors, including logistics, advanced manufacturing, maritime and green energy, opening access to new high-value jobs.

The LCR Freeport Innovation Challenge Fund focused on accelerating research, development and deployment of innovative technologies related to freight and maritime decarbonisation, as well as the digitalisation of trade and logistics. The Fund was delivered in partnership with Mersey Maritime, the industry body in the Liverpool City Region, to ensure its alignment with the priorities of the local maritime industry.

All the projects are nearing fruition and look set to deliver on their expected outcomes.



GT Technologies' AirWing in action on the Vectris Progress cargo ship



Innovation Investment Fortnight

The City Region's innovation agenda continued to develop with Liverpool narrowly missing out on becoming the UK's first European Capital of Innovation at a special ceremony in Turin.

Forty cities and regions bid for the prestigious title with the third-placed 'Liverpool Innovates for Everyone' (LIFE) pitch highlighting the excellence of the City Region's innovation.

Last year's Innovation Investment Fortnight showcased the breadth, depth and quality of innovation in the Liverpool City Region and has been followed up with a second **Innovation Investment Fortnight** in June.

More than £2bn of investment opportunities have been showcased at this year's two-week festival, which features more than 20 events covering innovation ranging from life sciences to maritime, games development, AI and sports science.

The fortnight also included the fifth annual LCR Innovation Investment Summit at The Spine, a Dragon's Den style pitching event, an LCR Innovation Zone Showcase and the UK Innovation Districts Group Annual Summit.

Global Liverpool City Region international programme

Liverpool City Region's history is global. It's home to one of the world's most famous ports – which still handles 45% of UK trade with the US – and its innovators and entrepreneurs have been changing the world for more than 300 years.

World famous for its history and culture and with world-leading innovation in infection control, materials chemistry and AI solutions, Liverpool City Region is reclaiming its place on the global stage as a confident, cosmopolitan and inclusive place where world leaders meet, where world class events take place, and where people want to do business.

Over the last year the City Region has built on the success of trade missions to China, South Korea and the US, which led to last year's massive investment by Kyndryl - set to bring up to 1,000 jobs to the City Region. Other overseas companies have followed suit including BPGBio, LogChain and Aivion as the City Region pursues its target of increasing Foreign Direct Investment by 25% by 2030.



A Computer Generated Image showing how the proposed North Docks regeneration could look

In March, national headlines were secured at MIPIM through a series of Combined Authority and partner announcements including the **launch of the £2bn LCR Investment Fund** and the unveiling of eye-catching images of Beetham Davos' proposed £1bn Kings development on Liverpool's waterfront. Further details were also released about the City Region's **emerging Mayoral Development Corporation** that's set to supercharge regeneration in the North Docks and parts of Liverpool city centre. Such was the success at MIPIM, Place North declared Liverpool City Region 'won the week as far as announcements go'.

MIPIM momentum was followed up by the City Region's largest ever public and private sector delegation attending UKREiF in May, with details revealed about the first tranche of developments set to receive support from the LCR Investment Fund.

In early May, a **Mayoral-led delegation headed to Hamburg** as Liverpool City Region became the first ever non-country partner for its internationally renowned maritime festival, the Hafengeburtstag.



The Liverpool City Region life sciences delegation visiting Hamburg's Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine on May 7, 2026

But the visit to the innovative German port city was much more than ceremonial with Mayor Rotherham signing a landmark AI agreement with the Artificial Intelligence Center Hamburg (ARIC) to develop a trans-European AI supercluster.

A **Joint Declaration of Intent was also signed with Hamburg's First Mayor Dr. Peter Tschentscher**, reaffirming plans for deeper academic, cultural and economic cooperation in sectors ranging from logistics and maritime transformation to digitalisation and climate adaptation, as well as exploring benefits to tourism and trade.

Innovation, trade and cultural agreements have been signed with Ireland, Busan, Ho Chi Minh City and the Isle of Man in recent years as the City Region strengthens its global links to drive economic growth, investment and innovation – particularly in key strengths such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences, digital, maritime, and low carbon technologies.

Business and Innovation Support

In June 2025, the Combined Authority launched a new **£10m Seed Fund** designed to accelerate the growth of innovative early-stage businesses across the Liverpool City Region.

The **LCR Seed Fund** is supporting innovative scale-up businesses with high-growth potential, offering a vital alternative to traditional grant and debt financing.

Open to businesses across all sectors, the fund particularly encourages applications from companies operating in the region's key growth areas: advanced manufacturing, digital and creative industries, and health and life sciences.

Launched in 2021 and supported by a £10.5m investment from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Liverpool City Region's innovation commercialisation vehicle **LYVA Labs** enjoyed a busy year.

In August, it announced a £2.5m investment milestone, having backed 26 startups in the region since 2022, with a further £4.5m ready to be deployed following the expansion of its fund to £7m. The support provided has helped entrepreneurs across the region to secure a further £30m.

And in April 2026, LYVA Labs officially launched the fourth edition of its Incubator, supporting seven Liverpool City Region early-stage startups and innovative founders through a dedicated 6-month programme.

LYVA Labs provides funding, incubation, and consultancy to companies at all stages, accelerating and supporting innovation-led growth with a focus on organisations working in health, life sciences, and deep tech.

Earlier this year, **Baltic Ventures** invited ambitious early-stage tech founders from across the UK to join its annual five-month accelerator programme.

Now in its third year, Baltic Ventures is looking to invest in and support a new cohort of up to 12 digital tech startups who can demonstrate early signs of commercial validation and traction and are ready to commit and scale.

Launched in 2023, Baltic Ventures secured £4.1m backing from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to deliver impactful accelerator programmes over five years with the aim of levelling the playing field for regional tech startups and drive venture capital and angel investment into the City Region.

Each of the successful companies will receive a £30,000 investment via the Baltic Ventures Angel Syndicate alongside a powerful mix of hands-on coaching, fundraising support and access to global tech events including Slush in Helsinki.



Watch: [Baltic Ventures Accelerator programme video](#)

PEOPLE

Liverpool City Region's economy is powered by the diverse, innovative, creative and hard-working people who live and work here.

The Combined Authority is committed to ensuring everyone has the best chance in life to seize opportunities, find good quality jobs and to prosper.

From training tens of thousands of adults to apprenticeships, employment support, helping young people thrive and tackling homelessness, the Combined Authority worked tirelessly over the last year to deliver a fairer City Region with no-one left behind.



Friends enjoy a stroll in front of 'The Dream', St Helens

Ensuring the Best Start in Life

Providing Liverpool City Region residents with the right skills and access to opportunities unlocks potential within communities and enables people to thrive.

Fundamental to achieving this is enabling more young people to have the best start in life, including access to high-quality childcare and early years provision.

In December, a new partnership was launched with the **Fair Education Alliance** (FEA), to design a series of initiatives to tackle inequality in early years education and help improve the education and job prospects of children from low-income backgrounds, who are currently 10 months behind their peers by the end of primary school.

Early Years Employment Officers have already helped 312 people find jobs, securing £1m of Apprenticeship Levy to fund 150 new apprenticeships.

The award-winning Cradle to Career programme expanded into Speke in September, increasing the number of children it supports across the City Region to 17,000, almost halfway to the target of 36,000 by 2030. Six years after launching in North Birkenhead, the community-led programme continues to improve literacy levels and reduce the burden on social services in some of the City Region's most deprived communities.

Work is now underway with schools, service providers and community partners to create a 'sustainable local backbone'. Other regions are beginning to follow, with the West Midlands Combined Authority launching the initiative in November.

The City Region's **free travel initiative** for care leavers got off to a flying start with more than 350,000 journeys made since its launch. Launched by the Mayor in March 2025, the **Care Leavers MetroCard** offers around 1,500 residents aged between 18 and 21 years old unrestricted travel on buses, trains and ferries.



Fair Education Summit at London's Science Museum



Bekie Mariel, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region Steve Rotheram and Tyler Priestley, pictured at Liverpool Central Station for the launch of the Care Leavers travel pass in March

A City Region of Learning

Through new devolved powers and a multi-year Integrated Settlement, the Combined Authority is investing at least £233m into adult skills and employment support over the next three years.

This long-term funding gives greater flexibility to tackle inactivity and low productivity by equipping the workforce with the skills and resilience necessary to unlock the City Region's global economic potential.

Almost 36,000 learners were supported through the Combined Authority's devolved Adult Skills Fund in the 2024/25 academic year – with 73% living in disadvantaged areas. Diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of the programme with 29% of adult learners from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities while people with difficulties, disabilities, or health problems, made up 25% of the total. The pioneering Test and Learn initiative dedicated around £2.7m to trial innovative schemes with 2,590 learners, a 65% annual rise in the number of students.

Plans were unveiled to invest £79m in Adult Skills in 2025/26 - including £13m for Connect to Work, £4.7m for Skills Bootcamps and £2.3m targeted at filling skills gaps in the construction industry. In June 2025, the Mayor joined the **Construction Skills Mission Board**, representing metro mayors across England, which aims to recruit an additional 100,000 construction workers annually. In December, the Combined Authority became the first mayoral authority to sign a first-of-its-kind **partnership with the Construction Industry Training Board**, an initiative aimed at tackling an estimated shortfall of 9,000 construction workers across the City Region in the next five years.



Mayor Steve Rotheram signs CITB partnership



Watch: The Mayor signs landmark deal to tackle construction skills shortage

Over the past three years, more than 2,500 City Region people have secured jobs or promotion thanks to Skills Bootcamps, including a successful two-week recruitment course, which has fast-tracked 117 participants into local and national government jobs in a year.



Watch: The life-changing fast-track course into government jobs



Skills Bootcamp Civil Service

In June 2025, the first cohort completed a new skills programme to train the life sciences workforce of the future. Twenty four sixth-form students from Carmel College in St Helens celebrated the end of the first **LCR Ignite** programme, funded through the Innovation Zone. The teenagers were embedded for four months at award-winning St Helens firm Inovus Medical, which designs and builds simulators that train surgeons across the world. The programme is to be extended to six more sites across the City Region with a hub in each local authority area providing career opportunities and practical experience.



Left to right: Dr Elliot Street, CEO of Inovus Medical, Katherine Fairclough, Chief Executive, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Cllr Anthony Burns, Leader, St Helens Council, Jordan Van Flute, Chief Technical Officer, Inovus Medical

Apprenticeships

In 2023, Mayor Steve Rotheram called on big businesses to help fund apprenticeships at smaller firms in the Liverpool City Region, in a move that would not cost them a penny extra.

Three years on, the Combined Authority's scheme to utilise unused Apprenticeship Levy to deliver training opportunities goes from strength to strength and the number of big local employers contributing continues to grow. Large employers are required by law to pay 0.5% of their wage bill to the Apprenticeship Levy which is collected by government to fund apprenticeships. Levy payers that do not spend their allocation on in-house apprenticeships can gift up to 50% to other organisations - otherwise, the money is lost to the area.

So far, £17m in unused Apprenticeship Levy has been used to create 2,521 roles, with the 31 Levy paying partners including Liverpool FC, Airbus, Amazon, Matalan, B&Q and QVC. Amazon is the largest contributor, while the BBC now spends more Levy in Liverpool City Region than anywhere else in the UK.

The Combined Authority continues to push for devolution of the Apprenticeship Levy and the power to reintroduce Foundation Apprenticeships.



Apprenticeship Levy event at the Athenaeum



Watch: The BBC, Bauer Media and Premier League back the levy

LCR Careers Hub and Equalex

The LCR Careers Hub has supported 147 secondary schools and colleges, alongside primary schools, employers and training providers - improving careers education and helping young people take their best next step.

This included extending a national pilot scheme to guarantee 10 days' worth of modern work experience for every child. The Equalex programme targets Advanced Manufacturing, Digital and Creative, and Health and Life Sciences, replacing the traditional two-week block with multiple experiences throughout secondary education.

The Combined Authority's skills brokerage service continued to support regional employers to access funding and government incentive schemes to help up-skill or re-skill employees, working with 1,036 employers to create 769 apprenticeships.

The Gamechangers initiative continued to develop the next generation of video game creators, bringing together the highly competitive industry to collaborate on training and address skills gaps. As part of this, the City of Liverpool College launched a new, free, gaming course in September – Principles of Management and Leadership Level 3 Diploma – designed specifically to support new team leaders.

Employment Support

The City Region's £5m Youth Guarantee Trailblazer is helping local young people who are not in employment, education or training to find jobs, training or apprenticeships.

The groundbreaking £45m programme was launched by the government in the City Region, where a raft of extra measures are now in place to target 2,000 people aged 18 to 21 facing the biggest barriers to work, such as poor mental health, neurodiversity, care experience and insecure housing. Working with VOLA, a consortium of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector, more than 50 organisations have been commissioned to deliver personalised support worth £1m, with a further £3.6m invested by the six local authorities.



Young people at Everton's new stadium



Watch: [Young people tell of the course that leads to jobs at Everton's new stadium](#)

A partnership with national youth employability charity Movement to Work has been created to provide high-quality opportunities for people aged 16 to 30. **YouthPath LCR** launched in October 2025 at the Raise Up Youth Summit in Liverpool, which brought together 300 young people and hundreds of employers to explore how social mobility can drive inclusive growth.



Cllr Atkinson at the YouthPath launch

The award-winning LCR Be More online careers portal and mobile app has continued to grow as a key digital gateway for residents, learners and employers. Over the last year, Be More has supported AI skills training registrations, launched a new 10-part video user guide, strengthened accessibility and language support, and introduced new interactive learner journey content.

The platform has also been improved with a Course Finder tool, updated industry categorisation to help residents find job information in all six local authority areas, new animated Career Guides, a refreshed

Apprentice Travel Card section, Digital Skills Wallet development and updated Connect to Work content, making LCR BeMore the one-stop hub for employment, skills and careers support.

Anti-Racism Strategy

In March this year, the Liverpool City Region's new Anti-Racism Strategy was approved by the Combined Authority - with a clear vision to dismantle systemic racism, strengthen trust, and celebrate the contribution of members of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

Created with more than 200 local organisations and over 500 individuals, including community groups, public sector, grassroots activists, educators, businesses, and residents from every borough, the strategy marks a significant step in the City Region's commitment to become a fairer, more inclusive, and more equitable place for everyone.

The strategy sets a shared vision to tackle systemic racism across services, education, work, and community life, while building trust and transparency between institutions and communities.

It centres lived experience in decision-making, supports organisations to take practical, measurable action for inclusion, and celebrates the cultural, social, and economic contributions of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities across the region.

The Liverpool City Region Leadership Forum, which brings together more than 50 City Region leaders from across the public, private, and voluntary, community and faith sectors, will act as the custodian of the Anti-Racism Strategy, which will formally launch in June 2026.

Homelessness

Through the Integrated Settlement and homelessness, rough sleeping and domestic abuse grant, the Combined Authority has secured £18.6m government funding to continue and expand its work tackling homelessness until 2029.

The funding supports the pioneering Housing First programme and a range of targeted interventions, including specialist outreach teams, support services, and pathways for prison leavers – all delivered in partnership with the region's six local authorities and frontline organisations.

Housing First has provided more than 300 people facing the most complex barriers with a permanent home and the tailored support they need to address issues such as mental health, trauma, and addiction. The regional Accommodation for Ex-Offenders initiative has helped more than 300 people move forward into private sector rented tenancies, and over 430 rough sleepers have been assisted through street-based interventions by a dedicated City Region outreach team.

Plans to create a cross-sector homelessness task force are also moving forward with the Centre for Homelessness Impact. Extensive engagement with local authorities, voluntary, charity and faith sector partners, health services, criminal justice organisations, and people with lived experience has led to the development of a work programme to ensure a co-ordinated approach to tackle the root causes of homelessness.

The task force will launch summer 2026.



Watch: [Ligia Teixeira talks about the consultation going into the new task force](#)



A presentation underway at the homelessness consultation session



(L-R) Sir Michael Marmot, Cllr Louise Gittins and Mayor Steve Rotheram at the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) Conference.

Marmot City Region

In April last year, Liverpool was awarded Marmot City status, a national recognition of the city's commitment to reducing health inequalities and improving wellbeing.

In October 2025, Mayor Rotheram set out his ambition for the Combined Authority to become a Marmot City Region, hardwiring health equity into local policy, infrastructure, and socioeconomic development.

A formal strategy proposal will be presented to the Combined Authority this summer for approval.



Watch: [How Liverpool City Region is tackling health and inequality](#)

Armed Forces Covenant Partnership

In September 2025, the Mayor paid tribute to our Armed Forces as he launched a new scheme to provide better support to veterans in the Liverpool City Region.

The City Region joined Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire in delivering the **Northern Pathfinder of the VALOUR programme**, which is a network offering veterans easier access to care and support and with regional networks connecting veterans with housing, employment and health services.

Backed by £50m of funding, VALOUR is part of the Government's commitment to people who have served, better connecting local and national services to ensure veterans are supported and ensuring veterans' support is truly data driven.

To support the delivery of VALOUR, the Mayor launched the **LCR Armed Forces Covenant** Partnership to bring together third sector and other organisations to develop and test the City Region's services for veterans.

In July last year, the **Ministry of Defence awarded the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority a Gold Award** for its exceptional support to the Armed Forces community.

The award is the highest badge of honour for employers who support the Armed Forces Community and uphold the Armed Forces Covenant - championing veterans, Reservists, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and military families in the workplace.



Mayor Steve Rotheram speaking at the launch of VALOUR in Liverpool that will streamline access to care and support for veterans and better connect them with housing, employment and health services support

LCR Food network

In November, plans for an **LCR Food Network** were announced.

In response to a major report calling for action to shift the dial on food poverty in the City Region – which has half of England's ten most deprived 'food deserts' – a detailed survey into the food system was commissioned, leading to the creation of a first-of-its-kind interactive digital map of local food production and supply. In March, the Mayor attended the launch of the Food System Roadmap with the charity Feeding Liverpool.



Paul Flannery from Queen of Greens

PLACE

The Liverpool City Region is a place of culture, where we celebrate diversity and inclusion. It's at the very heart of what makes our City Region unique.

We are taking a coordinated, strategic, place-based approach to tackling the challenges that impact our residents' quality of life, working in partnerships to increase access to quality housing, tackle homelessness, and address climate change.



A family walking on the beach, Wirral

Housing Strategy

In April this year, the Combined Authority approved an ambitious new Housing Strategy, providing a blueprint for how Liverpool City Region will ensure local people have the homes they need.

Increased devolution for the City Region, including longer-term funding and flexibilities introduced by the new Integrated Settlement with Government, and increased Mayoral development powers, have made the new approach possible.

The strategy introduces a single overarching vision that puts housing at the heart of the Combined Authority's work to make the Liverpool City Region the best place to grow up, grow a family and grow a business, where no-one is left behind.

The new strategy marks three strategic shifts in the Combined Authority's approach.

It will move from being a funder of projects to a longer-term investor, developing a more transparent pipeline of developments, giving investors' confidence in what will happen where, and when.

There will be a move away from individual sites to shaping whole places, focusing on a smaller set of regeneration areas where coordinated action can deliver the greatest impact. And the Combined Authority will become a regional leader rather than a convenor, coordinating national bodies, utilities, Homes England, and local partners around a single shared pipeline.

The new strategy also sets out how, through the new £700m Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP), the City Region will increase the supply of social and affordable homes to improve security, choice and affordability across the City Region.



Watch: Mayor talks about £700m housing investment

Place Based Business Cases and the Mayoral Development Corporation

Liverpool City Region's approach to place-based regeneration is built on the idea that successful growth comes from looking at the whole picture – and not one jigsaw piece.

That means looking at how improvements to transport, housing, skills, commercial development, and public realm would benefit the distinct needs and strengths of individual places.

As seen in the new investment and housing strategies, rather than viewing projects in isolation, the Combined Authority is making the case for integrated investment that captures wider social and economic value, including job creation, connectivity, town centre vitality, and long-term resilience. This is reflected in its support for new place-based business cases.

Liverpool Central Station is a prime example, with the Combined Authority looking not just at how to increase capacity at the station but using the station as the catalyst for the wider regeneration of the surrounding area – which covers 84 acres of the city centre.

Its selection as a pilot for the Government's reformed Green Book approach, which Mayor Rotheram persuaded the Treasury to undertake, means it will be assessed by the Government for financial support on the benefits of the scheme across multiple outcomes, rather than relying narrowly on traditional transport appraisal.



Computer Generated Image of Liverpool Central Station



Computer Generated Image of Liverpool Central Station Gateway

The City Region is also using strategic planning to align development over the longer term, through its Spatial Development Strategy and Growth Plan, identifying where infrastructure, housing and employment land can best unlock opportunity.

A key example is the proposed Mayoral Development Corporation for Liverpool's North Docks, designed to bring together brownfield land, waterfront assets, new homes, commercial space, cultural destinations, and improved connectivity within a single delivery framework.

The model reflects a broader emphasis on regeneration as both physical renewal and inclusive growth: creating attractive places for investment while ensuring communities benefit through better access to jobs, services and affordable housing.

Across the City Region, this means building on existing assets - from major stations and ports to innovation districts and town centres - and using devolved powers to coordinate delivery more effectively with local authorities, Homes England, and private investors.



Liverpool Waters



Computer Generated Image of Pumpfields

Overall, Liverpool City Region's place-based approach is pragmatic and intervention led: it focuses on unlocking stalled sites, strengthening confidence in priority locations, and ensuring regeneration supports a fairer, greener and more productive economy for residents and businesses alike.



Read: [Mayor Steve Rotheram responds to Government's Comprehensive Spending Review](#)



Read: [Next steps confirmed for Liverpool's Mayoral Development Corporation](#)



Read: [Spatial Development Strategy](#)

Warm Homes

In March 2026, Mayor Steve Rotheram and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority announced an investment of £31.8m into a new grant scheme to help residents save money on bills and make homes more energy efficient.

Local residents were encouraged to apply to the Warm Homes Local Grant programme with up to £15,000 available to homeowners and private landlords towards energy-efficient measures such as solar panels, heat pumps, and wall and loft insulations.

The plan makes provision for around 2,000 properties to receive energy efficiency improvements aimed at supporting progress towards EPC B and C, with work carried out by Birkenhead-based LMF Energy, and Fairway Energy, in Kirkby.

The scheme is the latest step in the Combined Authority's ambitious plan to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2035 – at least a decade before the national target.

The Combined Authority has already invested £105m in retrofitting energy efficient measures to 10,000 homes, with another £80m secured to retrofit a further 10,000 properties, working with local authorities and housing associations.

The programme has helped some of the region's most disadvantaged households to save hundreds of pounds a month on their energy bills.

And work began in February on a £40m programme to cut emissions by more than half at 35 public buildings, with energy-saving measures set to be installed at historic buildings, town halls, leisure centres and libraries.



Steve Reed, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Liverpool City Council Leader Liam Robinson and Mayor Steve Rotheram looking south across Liverpool's North Docks from Everton's Hill Dickinson Stadium



Engineer installing solar panels on a roof

Solar Together

In October last year, the Combined Authority launched the fourth round of Solar Together, enabling more homes across the Liverpool City Region to be fitted with energy-saving solar panels, battery storage and electric vehicle (EV) charging points thanks to the successful money-saving, group-buying scheme.

So far 1,053 households have benefitted from the first three rounds of the Solar Together scheme, which saw 10,376 solar panels fitted and 752-tonne reduction in carbon emissions in their first year of use.

Installation of a 14-panel solar array was more than a third cheaper than the typical market price during the third round of the Solar Together programme in the City Region.



Watch: [A happy customer, with Solar Together](#)

Brownfield Land

A derelict former police station, church, school and pub were amongst five sites to receive brownfield land funding in December last year.

In total, the five projects were granted £2.8m from the Brownfield Land Fund to create 113 new homes on previously developed sites.

The latest developments build on the City Region's successful delivery of the £60m Brownfield Land Fund (BLF), that is creating more than 4,500 new homes on derelict sites. The five new developments included in the project pipeline are:

- Sentinel Way, Aintree (Sefton): a 54-unit scheme developed by Your Housing Group and granted £1.35m
- Prescot Police Station (Knowsley): 13-shared ownership units consisting of seven flats in the former police station alongside the construction of two bungalows and four houses on the site of the former car park. Prima Group was awarded £325,000 for the project
- Mather Avenue (Liverpool): an 11-unit scheme to be constructed on derelict land, formerly the site of St Bernadette's Church, demolished in 2018. The Regenda Group was awarded a grant of £275,000 to deliver specialist units providing accommodation for adults with additional needs
- St Monica's Church, Stewart Avenue, Bootle (Sefton): a 10-unit scheme on a cleared site adjacent to the St Monica's Church Parish Centre in Bootle. Crosby Housing was awarded £200,000 to deliver a 100% social rent development
- Stork Inn, Billinge, St Helens: a 26-unit 100% affordable scheme, converting the old pub and building new properties on the adjacent brownfield site. Torus 62 Ltd was awarded £650,000 for the project.

The Liverpool City Region initially received £59.5m in Government funding to support the creation of new homes on previously developed brownfield sites. The target of enabling construction of 3,970 new homes has been smashed with 4,521 homes built.

These projects are funded from an interim £13.9m one-year BLF Extension programme for the City Region, before the National Housing Development programme is launched later in 2026.



Watch: [Mungo Park Way MMC homes](#)

Mersey Tidal Power

Development work continued on ambitious plans to build the world's largest tidal range power plant on the River Mersey.

In November 2025, Mayor Steve Rotheram extended a 'successful and productive' collaboration with the Korean operators of Sihwa Lake Tidal Power Station, which is currently the world's largest.



Mersey Tidal barrage

The Memorandum of Agreement with K-Water was first signed in 2022 and is helping shape Combined Authority plans to harness the immense tidal power of the Mersey.

Generating up to a gigawatt of clean, predictable electricity, with low production costs, Mersey Tidal Power would create thousands of jobs while supporting UK energy security and the road to net zero.

In January this year, as new studies revealed how the project on the River Mersey would protect communities and wildlife habitats from flooding, the Combined Authority announced a major

evolution of the project – transforming it from a clean energy scheme into a dual-purpose infrastructure project that will offer flood protection.

The move followed detailed analysis of updated Environment Agency flood maps showing how the proposed project would not only provide enough clean energy to power hundreds of thousands of homes for 120 years but would also protect homes and businesses from rising sea levels.

This development followed detailed studies which show the Mersey estuary faces significant risk from sea level rise. A tidal barrage could play a critical role in mitigating these risks, safeguarding homes, businesses, and vital infrastructure across the region.



Read: [New study highlights Mersey Tidal Power's potential to protect communities from flooding](#)

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

In March 2026, Mayor Steve Rotheram officially launched the Liverpool City Region's first Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

The strategy sets out a plan to reverse decades of wildlife decline and improve access to green spaces - putting greener, healthier neighbourhoods at the heart of communities.

Shaped by environmental organisations, local authorities, businesses, community groups, and residents, the LNRS sets out 36 priorities for recovery around vulnerable local habitats and species.

From wetlands to grasslands, woodlands to farmland and urban areas, it maps out for the first time the key areas and local wildlife most in need of help.

The strategy highlights where investment will have the greatest benefit for nature and people, and provides advice and resources to help shape potential projects, with a comprehensive Nature Resources Hub set to launch soon.

Representatives from the Forestry Commission, Natural England, and the Environment Agency joined local council officers, environmental groups, utilities, housing associations, community groups, and the public for the launch event at the Museum of Liverpool.



Watch: [LNRS consultation success video](#)

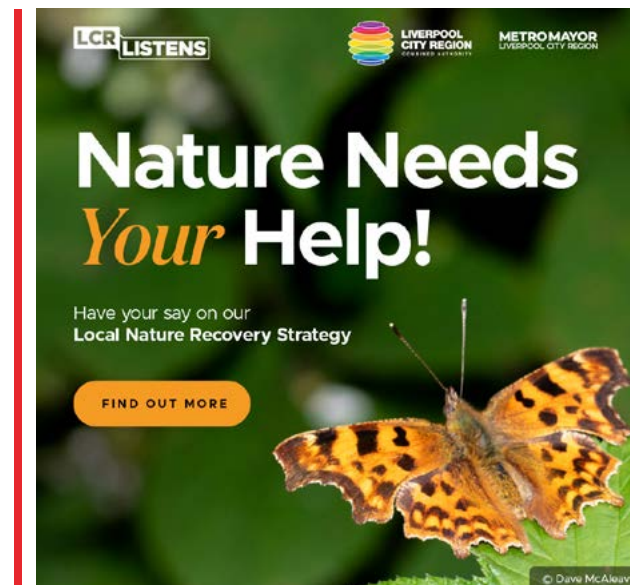
Environment Fund

With funding from the Mayor's Community Environment Fund, innovative pupils from Kings Leadership Academy Hawthornes in Bootle scooped a national prize for an invention to help tackle climate change.

The team won over judges in the Young Green Briton Challenge with their 'Bouncepadz' idea, which uses kinetic energy to convert footsteps into electricity in high traffic areas.

The young people beat off strong competition from 45 other schools from across the country to receive their award from broadcaster and naturalist Chris Packham CBE at a special event in London.

Young Green Briton Challenge was one of 18 schemes which successfully applied for a share of this year's £350,000 Community Environment Fund (CEF).



LNRS campaign visuals



Chris Packham CBE (left) and Mete Coban MBE (right) with the Bouncepadz team from Kings Leadership Academy Hawthornes

Major Events

From Eurovision to The Open Golf Championship and the Grand National, Liverpool City Region has a global reputation for delivering major events brilliantly.

The Local Government Association conference was held at ACC Liverpool in July 2025 and in September more than 20,000 people arrived in the City for the Labour Party Conference, which will return to the rebranded Liverpool Experience Campus for the fifth year running in 2026 – presenting another opportunity to showcase the City Region.

In January, it was announced **Stage 2 of the 2027 Tour de France would finish on Liverpool's Strand**, passing through Knowsley and St Helens on the way. And Cunard has announced its 'Four Queens' - Queen Mary 2, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Anne and Queen Victoria – will assemble for the first time ever in Liverpool, the cruise line's spiritual home, in May 2028. The spectacle on the Mersey takes place just weeks before Everton's Hill Dickinson Stadium starts hosting UEFA Euro 2028 matches.



The Beatles statue, with all four members wearing yellow scarves in celebration of the Tour de France coming to Liverpool



Cunard's Queen Anne towers over the Mersey Ferry



Inside Hill Dickinson Stadium

Opened last year, Everton's acclaimed new 52,769-capacity stadium has already hosted a Rugby League Ashes match between England and Australia and in July it will serve as a Northern Hemisphere base for Fiji's Rugby Union team as they take on England. The Combined Authority had invested £15m to assist with infrastructure and heritage work, including preserving historic features, restoring derelict land, and providing public access to the docks.

In July, the eyes of the golfing world will be on Royal Birkdale as it hosts The Open Championship for the 11th time.

But the City Region is not resting on its laurels and in January a new strategy was agreed to attract, develop and grow more major cultural, sports and business events in the Liverpool City Region. The sector generates an estimated £900m a year for the City Region, creating jobs, raising the region's profile and fostering civic pride and wellbeing. The global market for attracting major events is becoming increasingly competitive leading to development of a more unified, proactive approach.



The Dream, St Helens



Children running on New Brighton Beach



Children having fun onboard the Mersey Ferry



Knowsley Hall



Norton Priory, Halton



Antony Gormley's Another Place at Crosby Beach

Overnight Visitor levy

More than 57 million people visit the Liverpool City Region every year attracted by its world-famous culture, sport, nightlife, heritage, events and universities, supporting over 55,000 jobs and adding £6.25bn to the economy.

But growing the City Region's visitor economy and keeping it globally competitive requires investment in infrastructure, destination marketing, securing major events and creating new, must-see attractions.

In June 2025, a coalition of Mayors from across England – led by Mayor Steve Rotherham – urged government to grant devolved powers to explore and implement an overnight visitor levy in their regions, arguing the move would unlock vital funding for tourism and cultural infrastructure, empower growth, and reduce dependence on central government funding.

A similar charge already exists in major cities across the world.

The call coincided with a new ‘right to request’ in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill in which Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities can seek new powers, funding and partnerships.

In November, the Government announced plans to introduce an Overnight Accommodation Levy, triggering a national consultation to help shape the new charge with results expected in June 2026. Plans to introduce the levy were confirmed in the King’s Speech in May.

A modest overnight accommodation levy would raise tens of millions of pounds locally to support major cultural and sporting events, enhance visitor and community infrastructure, boost international marketing and competitiveness, and develop skills and support business growth.

While the exact form of the local levy is yet to be decided, they are typically applied to overnight accommodation stays and collected through hotels and accommodation providers.

An extensive local consultation with businesses, communities and stakeholders will take place later this year to further refine the local levy, with learnings taken from an existing scheme currently operated in Liverpool city centre by the City’s Accommodation BID, which runs until December 2027.

Culture and Creativity Awards

Normally taking place in March, the Liverpool City Region Culture and Creativity Awards have been revamped for 2026 and moved to June, taking place in Liverpool for the first time.

Four new categories have been introduced, including Excellence in Film and TV and Live Event of the Year, to reflect the massive impact of these sectors on culture in the City Region.

TV presenter and Olympic hockey gold medallist Sam Quek MBE, from Wirral, returns to the stage as host after previously presenting the Awards in St Helens in 2024.

With a record 4,500 people voting earlier this year in the People’s Choice category for Outstanding Contribution to Culture, there’s still a lot to come as we prepare to reveal the winners from the 55 finalists across 17 categories from more than 500 nominations



Mayor Steve Rotheram with Karen Gallagher and Billy Hui at the LCR Culture and Creativity Awards

LCR Production Fund

The Film and TV industry's transformational impact on the Liverpool City Region was revealed in a five-year Impact Report, published by the Liverpool Film Office in February.

The report highlighted that the Liverpool City Region is now the UK's most filmed area outside London with more than 1,600 productions filming here since 2019, adding a total of £150m to the local economy and creating more than 5,000 jobs.

The Combined Authority's £2.8m LCR Production Fund played a pivotal role in driving growth, not only increasing the number, range and scale of feature films and scripted television made in the City Region, but boosting the economy by more than £24.5m.

Amongst the most recent productions the fund has supported are 'This City is Ours,' 'Saviour' - due out later this year - and its first feature film 'A Town in Nova Scotia' set to be released in the Autumn.



Mayor Rotheram with the Film report

The LCR Production Fund has led to 19 awards - including 4 Baftas and 2 Emmys - created 800 full time equivalent jobs and 56 trainee roles helping support people into their dream careers.



Watch: [The Mayor visits the set of This City Is Ours](#)

TRANSPORT

Work to deliver a modern, accessible and fully integrated public transport system in the Liverpool City Region progressed at pace over the last year with major investment in new infrastructure, services such as ticketing, and further strides towards delivering greater local control of services.



Wheelchair user onboard the train

City Region Transport Investment

Momentum was underpinned by a historic £1.6bn Transport for City Regions (TCR) funding package from central government - the largest in the region's history, which will enable the Combined Authority to accelerate delivery of its vision for a transport system built to serve the needs of the region and its residents.

New railway stations, rapid transit links and smart ticketing across the entire network are among improvements to be delivered with the new funding, which will better connect communities, including major new housing developments, while boosting productivity, driving economic growth and unlocking regeneration.



Watch: Putting the public in public transport: £1.6bn will transform transport across Liverpool City Region

Bus

Progress towards bringing bus services back under public control reached a significant milestone in January 2026 when Mayor Steve Rotheram announced the selection of the first bus operators to run franchised services.

Stagecoach was selected to operate the network in St Helens, while Go-Ahead was appointed to manage services across the Wirral, marking the first time in more than 40 years that the region has had the power to set its own fares, timetables, and routes.



L-R: Nigel Featham, Managing Director, Go North West & Go North East; Rob Jones, Managing Director of Stagecoach Manchester & Merseyside; Mayor Steve Rotheram

Publicly run bus services will first launch in St Helens and the Wirral this Autumn. The system will then be expanded in phases across Knowsley, Sefton and Liverpool by the end of 2027.

February 2026 saw the delivery of the first of more than 100 brand-new, publicly owned all-electric double-decker buses. The zero-emission vehicles feature enhanced accessibility with level-boarding ramps, increased space for buggies and wheelchairs, USB charging points at every seat, and a range of 275 miles on a single charge.

Integral to the Combined Authority's decarbonisation strategy, the introduction of these vehicles supports the ambition of achieving a net zero City Region by 2035.

Mayor Rotheram and the Combined Authority also maintained focus on making bus travel as affordable as possible by pledging to maintain the £2 adult single fare until at least June 2026, well beyond the end of the national scheme in January 2025.

Determined to explore new ways to make the region's bus network operate at peak efficiency, the Combined Authority expanded its **KUDATA project - an AI-driven collaboration with University of Liverpool and South Korean experts**. Using real-time data and virtual mapping, planners are able to simulate passenger flows and test route changes digitally to identify network gaps and improve access for underserved communities.

Complementing the network improvements is ongoing work to deliver a **state-of-the-art Transport Interchange for St Helens town centre**.



VIP guests with Councillor Anthony Burns, Leader of St Helens Borough Council in March 2026, help secure the final bolt on the new bus station steel framework

The new facility, backed by a £32m investment from the Combined Authority, will better link bus and rail services with new walking and cycling routes. Its design focuses on passenger comfort and safety, featuring an enclosed concourse, enhanced real-time travel information and improved accessibility.

As the first area in the region to benefit from the return of publicly run bus services, the new interchange is a vital component of the town's wider regeneration.



Watch: [We're Taking Back Control: Bus Franchising Begins in the Liverpool City Region](#)



Watch: [Mayor Steve Rotheram and St Helens leader talk about the town centre and bus station regeneration in 2025](#)



Mayor Steve Rotheram plugging in an all-electric bus for charging



More than 100 all-electric, zero emission buses have already been secured for the region

Rail

Progress on the local rail network has been equally ambitious, with the City Region's aspirations expanding beyond its borders through a renewed focus on the Liverpool-Manchester Railway.

Driven by a unified effort from the Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester, the proposed railway is part of the Northern Arc strategic blueprint for a pan-regional innovation and investment zone to drive economic transformation across the North.

Both regions have engaged closely with central government through the Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board to make the case for a 'bottom-up', place-based approach to the Northern Arc, with the high-speed link being a national necessity capable of turbocharging £150bn of new growth.

The plans include the creation of a brand-new 'City Region Gateway' station as well as a major redevelopment of Liverpool Central, the busiest underground station outside of London, as well as the surrounding public realm.

In early 2026, the government confirmed significant funding for a new high-speed route between Liverpool and Manchester via Warrington and Manchester Airport as part of the proposed Northern Powerhouse Rail project. The development is set to drastically reduce journey times and increase rail capacity. Up to £45bn has been committed to delivering Northern Powerhouse Rail which forms part of a wider Northern Growth Strategy.

Within the region, Mayor Rotheram's commitment to delivering a 'Merseyrail for All' took another important step forward, with funding from the region's £1.6bn TCR settlement committed to the development



Liverpool City Region Mayor Steve Rotheram and Secretary of State for Transport Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP came together at Liverpool Lime Street station today to sign a new agreement strengthening their commitment to deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR)

of plans for brand-new rail stations at Carr Mill in St Helens, Woodchurch in Wirral and Daresbury in Halton. Rail network accessibility continued to improve with further station upgrade works, including new lifts at Aigburth and Rock Ferry, and both Port Sunlight and Walton stations were advanced into the delivery phase of the national Access for All programme in January 2026.

These upgrades – along with the level boarding technology fitted on each train in the new £500m fleet – ensure the Merseyrail network remains one of the most accessible and inclusive in the country, providing barrier-free travel for those with mobility needs or those taking journeys with young children.

With the opening of Everton's 52,769-capacity Hill Dickinson Stadium, Sandhills Station - its main rail gateway - received major capacity and accessibility upgrades, including enhanced signage, a safe queueing area and a new pedestrian footbridge.



Watch: Mayors Steve Rotheram and Andy Burnham take Liverpool to Manchester Railway campaign to Parliament

Ferries

The world-famous Mersey Ferries continued to benefit from major investment designed to secure their future for the next generation. Throughout late 2025 and early 2026, construction of the first new ferry in over 60 years reached its final stages at Birkenhead shipyard Cammell Laird.

Named the Royal Daffodil, the £26m vessel is set to enter service later in 2026. The ferry has been designed with a focus on versatility, featuring a flexible main deck that can be reconfigured to host events,



Mayor Steve Rotheram and David McGinley, CEO of APCL Group, standing beside the completed steel structure of the new Mersey Ferry, the Royal Daffodil

boosting its appeal as a visitor attraction as well as an important cross-river transport link.

The interior of the new vessel boasts modern climate control, LED lighting and panoramic viewing windows, while retaining the traditional red, black and white exterior colour scheme that has been a staple of the river for over a century.

Investment in a new vessel has been complemented by wider regeneration of the Birkenhead waterfront, where Woodside saw the successful installation of a new modern, more resilient floating landing stage and linkspan bridge in late 2025.

The project is transforming the terminal into a welcoming new space that will eventually be integrated with the new Battle of the Atlantic Museum and the wider Woodside regeneration and Wirral Waters development.

Ahead of the Royal Daffodil's introduction, the Royal Iris of the Mersey was retired from service at the end of March.



Interior of the new Mersey Ferry, the Royal Daffodil

To ensure a fitting send-off, a weekend of activities was organised for the vessel that served on the Mersey for 66 years, carried more than 17 million passengers and featured in the Liver Birds' opening credits and the 1964 film Ferry 'Cross the Mersey. This included a maritime salute and widespread national media coverage.



Watch: New Mersey Ferry takes to the water for the first time in historic moment



Mayor Steve Rotheram hailed a new era of convenience for Merseyrail passengers with a game-changing Tap & Go system across the network



Mayor Steve Rotheram with care leavers

Ticketing

Paying for journeys across the region became easier and more affordable over the last 12 months as an initial roll-out of 'Tap and Go' ticketing on the Metro smart card in August 2025 was followed in February 2026 by the introduction of contactless payments across the Merseyrail network.

This new leap forward allows passengers to use bank cards, smartphones and watches to travel without the need for a physical ticket or pre-loaded smartcard. Behind the scenes a new digital system automatically calculates the best value daily and weekly caps - so passengers always pay the lowest fares.

In January, the Combined Authority's 2025/2026 budget confirmed an eighth consecutive price freeze for MyTicket, the unlimited day pass for under-19s. The decision ensures the City Region continues to offer some of the most competitively priced youth bus travel in the UK.

And Liverpool City Region's transformational free travel for care leavers scheme is providing essential support, helping care leavers aged 18-21 navigate their new lives with greater confidence and freedom.

The free travel pass removes a significant barrier to vital opportunities, giving young care leavers the freedom to get about on their own terms – without having to worry about the cost.



Watch: Liverpool City Region Mayor Steve Rotheram launches Tap & Go: Smarter, simpler travel for Merseyrail



A view from the turf at Hill Dickinson Stadium

Major Events

Transport services across the Liverpool City Region continued to play a vital role in supporting major events throughout the year, ensuring people could travel safely, reliably and efficiently.

This included supporting fans getting to and from Everton's new Hill Dickinson Stadium and the Grand National at Aintree, where careful planning and coordination helped keep the region moving - with dedicated matchday ferry services, new dedicated shuttle buses and a stepped-up timetable on the Merseyrail network.

The scale of the operation is borne out by the number of passengers, with 395,000 journeys through Sandhills station and 145,000 bus journeys over four routes. Many more fans chose to walk between the stadium and bus and rail stations in the city centre.

In Southport, to support May 2026's Big Top Festival of circus performers – part of the town's Elegantly Eccentric calendar of events – special reduced return rail fares of £2 for adults and £1 for children were also offered.

From sporting fixtures to large-scale cultural events, this commitment enhanced the visitor experience, supported the local economy and reinforced the City Region's reputation as a welcoming and accessible destination.



Watch: Getting to the Grand National: How Liverpool City Region Keeps Aintree Moving



Big Top Festival, Southport

Rapid Transit

To improve connectivity between communities and support the continued strong growth of the visitor economy and major events in the City Region, work to deliver a new rapid transit network utilising state-of-the-art articulated vehicles has been accelerated.

The vehicles will offer increased capacity over the existing bus fleet, with multiple sets of doors to speed up boarding and alighting and can be rolled out more quickly and at a lower cost than a tram system. The plan is for a system featuring these new vehicles to provide a fast and efficient link to both football stadiums as well as Liverpool John Lennon Airport, with services up-and-running in time for UEFA Euro 2028.



Watch: Mayor Steve Rotheram unveils possible new Rapid Transit Vehicle for Liverpool City Region

Active Travel

Investment in high-quality active travel infrastructure reached new heights this year. Tens of millions of pounds are set to be invested in schemes to support walking, wheeling and cycling while millions more will be committed to improving pedestrian access to town centres across the region.

Enabling works have begun on the Birkenhead Central Gateway project in Wirral, while phase one of the Maritime Corridor project in Sefton was completed. Both schemes are set to create safe, high-quality links to support new residential developments.



A woman using a new cycle lane

Further substantial schemes such as the Runcorn to Daresbury corridor in Halton and Higher Road in Knowsley were also delivered, all as part of a planned 600km network of walking, wheeling and cycling routes across the region.

Investment continues to be committed to community-led projects, such as bike libraries and cycle safety training to help ensure active travel is a viable and attractive option for residents of all ages and abilities, regardless of their background or previous experience with cycling. The real-world benefits of these efforts are highlighted by new figures showing the positive impact on local health services. New independent research from the Walk Wheel Cycle trust, published in March 2026, showed active travel saves the NHS more than £53m a year, equivalent to over one million GP appointments.

This year also saw the announcement that Liverpool, Knowsley and St Helens will welcome the finish of stage two of the men's Tour De France in 2027, providing not only an opportunity for the City Region's visitor economy but also the chance to create a lasting legacy, encouraging more people to walk, wheel and cycle long after the peloton has passed.

Tunnels

Ongoing work to maintain and modernise the Mersey Tunnels continued with further investment in the vital cross-river infrastructure remaining a top priority for the Combined Authority.

Ongoing work in the Queensway and Kingsway tunnels ensured these critical links remain safe and efficient for the 80,000 journeys made through them every day. The work involves complex engineering tasks, such as replacing road deck access covers and upgrading fire safety systems, much of which is undertaken during nighttime closures to minimise disruption to road users.

Visitors can now also enjoy a closer view of the **recently reinstated Queensway Tunnel Monument**, with the new public space at Old Haymarket creating a welcoming setting for people to meet, spend time and appreciate an important piece of the City Region's history.



Watch: [Liverpool's historic Queensway Tunnel obelisk](#)

Highways

A **major LED traffic signals project** has delivered more than 1,200 tonnes in carbon savings for the Liverpool City Region.

The Combined Authority, together with the local authorities, successfully completed a major programme to retrofit and upgrade traffic signals across the City Region's roads, delivering CO2 reductions, energy savings, reduced maintenance and road safety benefits while future-proofing critical transport infrastructure.

The programme – a key part of the Liverpool City Region's Pathway to Net Zero – directly supports the Mayor's commitment to making the City Region carbon neutral by 2035.



Mayor Steve Rotheram at the Queensway Tunnel monument and plaza



Cars approaching the Kingsway Tunnel toll barriers

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

With its expanding LCR Connect full-fibre digital network, Liverpool City Region is already one of the UK's most digitally connected areas as it harnesses new technology to drive economic growth, foster innovation, and enhance quality of life for its residents in a rapidly evolving world.

Through its second international AI Summit, the pioneering use of Artificial Intelligence in primary schools and the appointment of the UK's first regional Chief AI Officer, the City Region is rapidly becoming a global leader in 'AI for Good'.



LCR Connect

LCR Connect, the £30m joint venture that built Liverpool City Region's full-fibre network, reached a major milestone in December 2025 with its 1,000th connection.

Launched to tackle poor connectivity and power inclusive growth, LCR Connect now provides gigabit-capable services to organisations of every size – from local SMEs to some of the region's most high-profile institutions and national brands.

Customers include Everton's new Hill Dickinson Stadium, Sci-Tech Daresbury, the Cavern Club, Pret A Manger, National Museums Liverpool, the M&S Bank Arena, Baltic Creative and DoubleTree by Hilton.

The milestone reflects both the scale and impact of the 350km business-first fibre network, which is 50% owned by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. And, unlike national operators, profits from LCR Connect will be reinvested into the local economy.

Investment in the network has been instrumental in accelerating fibre deployment across the City Region, as part of a drive to make it the most digitally connected in the country. By providing wholesale access to multiple service providers, LCR Connect has enabled choice, competition, and greater coverage for businesses and public services.

More than 32,000 local businesses and organisations now have access to the LCR Connect network, which as well as offering immediate cost savings, can deliver productivity improvements through better connectivity – giving access to new business processes, faster and more reliable data transfer and agile cloud-based services.

Businesses interested in benefitting from LCR Connect can find out more [here](#).



Watch: LCR Connect 1,000 connections – Mayor at Hill Dickinson



Mayor Steve Rotheram with presenter Jo Coburn at the Liverpool City Region AI Summit

Liverpool City Region AI Summit

In October 2025, more than 800 people attended the City Region's second annual AI Summit hosted by broadcaster Jo Coburn.

Held over four stages at ACC Liverpool, the 2025 Summit returned bigger and better and saw Mayor Steve Rotheram deliver an inspiring vision of how 'AI would work for the people' to deliver better healthcare, smarter transport and thousands of well-paid jobs in the Liverpool City Region.

The event also heard from the City Region's new Chief AI Officer Tiffany St James, after taking up the position last autumn in a UK regional first.

Delivering the keynote speech, Oxford University AI Professor Mike Wooldridge praised the City Region's world class work in AI. The former University of Liverpool academic, who presented the televised Royal Institution Christmas Lectures in 2023, said Liverpool City Region punches well above its weight culturally and socially and was 'embracing AI opportunities with the positivity that characterises this region so well'.



Mayor Steve Rotheram speaking at the AI Summit

The Mayor told the Summit that the US tech giant Kyndryl's investment that will create up to 1,000 jobs in the City Region was 'proof that global companies see Liverpool as a place that's not just open for business - but open for innovation'. Kyndryl opened its new AI hub in the Royal Liver Building in May 2025.

And the Mayor pointed to the launch of the University of Liverpool's £100 million Artificial Intelligence Materials Hub for Innovation - AIM-HI - that will put the City Region at the forefront of the UK's next wave of AI and automation in materials science.

Mike Bracken CBE, who was the UK's first Government Chief Data Officer, and Dr Nicola Hodson, Chair of IBM UK and Ireland, were among other high-profile speakers.

Representatives from Europe, Australia and the US added an international feel to the Summit which featured a video message from Mayor Tim Kelly, of Chattanooga, Tennessee, which went from being America's dirtiest city to its fastest growing city through its early adoption of an ultra-fast municipal internet network.

Children and young people are our future, so a special Youth AI Summit was held days earlier and more than 200 students attended the main event.



Mike Bracken CBE, who was the UK's first Government Chief Data Officer

He told a capacity audience the City Region's quest to ensure technology 'helps people to live healthier, happier and more secure lives' was attracting global attention.

"We're focusing on the real-world benefits: faster diagnoses in hospitals, smarter public transport, more efficient use of energy, and the creation of thousands of new, high-quality jobs. Jobs that don't just pay well but do good. Jobs that contribute to society,"

AI Partnership with Hamburg

The inaugural AI Summit in 2024 featured a contribution from Alois Krttil, CEO and founder of Artificial Intelligence Centre Hamburg (ARIC).

Fast forward to May 2026, the Mayor signed a landmark agreement with ARIC during the City Region's visit to Hamburg as official partner of the German city's annual Port Festival.

The Memorandum of Understanding will see the two innovative, AI-focused regions combine forces to develop a trans-European AI supercluster. It also includes an intent to share best practice on the development and adoption of Quantum Technologies and to strengthen practical collaboration between the two regions.

Meanwhile, the City Region is recruiting an AI Taskforce to inform, shape and drive the future use and development of Artificial Intelligence across the Liverpool City Region.

A key part of delivering Mayor Steve Rotheram's AI ambitions, the expert advisory group will guide the City Region's Chief AI Officer in crafting a cohesive and achievable roadmap that puts the Liverpool City Region firmly at the forefront of AI for Good.



Liverpool City Region Mayor Steve Rotheram and ARIC CEO Alois Krttil at the signing of an MOU in Hamburg to develop a trans-European AI supercluster

AI in schools

Liverpool City Region is piloting the use of AI in primary schools with impressive results – so much so that the technology is set to be rolled out across secondary schools later this year.

Run by Century Tech, the primary pilot helps teachers tailor lessons for individual children and to mark their homework.

From January to April this year, 4,816 students and 421 teachers have been using the technology across 45 schools, with a 13% increase in pupil scores.

In September, the scheme will be tested in 18 City Region secondary schools - 10% of the total - focussing on English, Maths and Science.



Watch: [How AI is helping pupils improve at Croxteth Community Primary](#)



Pupils at Croxteth Community Primary school using Century Tech as part of a pilot funded by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

Office for Public Service Innovation and i-teams

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has positioned itself at the forefront of public sector innovation.

It's achieved this by combining its locally driven Office for Public Service Innovation (OPSI) with global collaboration through Bloomberg Philanthropies.

OPSI represents a systemic approach to reform, using data, technology and crosssector partnership to address



Cradle to Career was named Collaborative Initiative of the Year at the Institute of Economic Development Awards

long-standing challenges such as poverty, poor health and low educational attainment.

The award-winning Cradle to Career programme is a prime example of this in practice, using data, sustained partnership and place-based intervention to improve educational outcomes, reduce pressure on social services and make a tangible difference in some of the City Region's most neglected communities.

Starting in Wirral, it has scaled rapidly across the region and is now being discussed with Government as a model for national expansion.

More broadly, OPSI prioritises early intervention and prevention, developing 'test and learn' solutions that tackle problems before they escalate, while improving value for public services.

Current pilots in Knowsley, Halton and St Helens focus on children, including those in foster care, young people aged 16–17 not in training, and children with disabilities, supported by innovative technologies such as AI.

OPSI also convenes local authorities, the NHS, universities, businesses and community groups to co-design and scale place-based solutions.

Meanwhile, in August 2025 the Mayor announced the launch of a municipal innovation team (i-team), supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, to help build a cleaner, more connected Liverpool City Region.

It will focus on developing interventions aimed at reducing the 25% of City Region households that qualify for, but opt out of, free energy efficiency adaptations to their homes which would reduce energy bills and aid net zero progress.

With cars accounting for 76% of miles travelled in the City Region and transport making up 30% of emissions, the i-team will also help identify solutions to increase walking, cycling and public transport use.

It will bring expertise in data analysis, artificial intelligence, digitisation, insight development, rapid prototyping, and project management and delivery, while receiving technical assistance from regional and global specialists, and the benefit of learnings from peers across the world.

Digital Inclusion

The Combined Authority's work to increase digital inclusion across the region continued at pace over the last year.

In December 2025, the Combined Authority announced a new initiative to help a further 1,500 digitally excluded Liverpool City Region residents get online.

Backed by £325,000 from the Government's Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund, the 'Login LCR' scheme enabled the Combined Authority and 50 consortium partners to provide residents with a free digital device, six months of Vodafone Connectivity and in-person digital skills training.

The scheme ran between January and March 2026 and built on the success of the Combined Authority's previous public-private sector 'Digital Inclusion Initiative', that enabled more than 5,500 people to get online.



The Combined Authority's Digital inclusion programme has so far supported more than 7,500 people with devices, connectivity and training

A series of 'Login LCR Roadshow Events' were hosted from January to March in each of the Liverpool City Region's six local authority areas, allowing individuals to access drop-in digital support alongside other organisations such as financial institutions, the NHS, voluntary sector and local authority services.

And a comprehensive new guide has been created to help people across the Liverpool City Region build digital confidence, develop new skills and explore the internet.

Featuring a range of themes from device setup to digital healthcare, the free booklet is the latest initiative from the Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Network. It brings together, for the first time, all the current guidance and support in an accessible format.

With more than 12,000 copies distributed so far, the 84-page Helping You Online guide is available as a printed booklet in most libraries and community venues and is also free to download.

It helps new and existing users make the most of their digital devices and explains in simple terms how to get started online. There is also information on how to access healthcare, apply for jobs, manage money, avoid scams and understand misinformation.

The Combined Authority's Digital inclusion programme has so far supported more than 7,500 people with devices, connectivity and training and is on target to get 10,000 people online by 2028.



Watch: Helping You Online



Mobile mapping at Knowsley Safari

Mobile phone coverage

A major survey to measure mobile phone signals at every home and workplace was extended to some of the City Region's biggest visitor attractions in November.

The Streetwave project uses bin lorries and street sweepers to check connectivity from the three main providers down to street level and create a free, interactive map highlighting 'not-spots' where poor signal can prevent visitors and residents using their phones. The map enables people to check the most suitable mobile phone service provider for their area.

The survey was widened to more inaccessible areas, including attractions such as Knowsley Safari, the BrewDog Stadium in St Helens, Aintree racecourse, the Southport Flower Show and the River of Light visitor festival.



Watch: Park rangers use Streetwave to map mobile signals at Knowsley Safari

Halton: Project Violet Phase 2

Work is set to start on a major new high-grade office and lab development at Sci-Tech Daresbury, backed by Life Sciences Innovation Zone funding.

Two new hi-tech buildings will be constructed at the north of England's only national science and innovation campus in Halton as part of Project Violet Phase 2.

In November, £7.5m of Innovation Zone funding was approved for development of a new building containing nearly 23,000 sq ft of high-grade office and innovation space to support the needs of high-value science and technology businesses. Funding had already been granted for an adjacent 60,000 sq ft laboratory-enabled building. Together, the two buildings – known as V4 and V5 – will support around 250 jobs.

The development builds on the success of Violet Phase 1, completed in 2022 and which is now fully occupied.

Supported by £8.4m from the Combined Authority, Phase 1 delivered 43,000 sq ft of Grade A office space across three buildings – V1, V2 and V3 – with full occupancy achieved through a mixture of existing tenants scaling up, new arrivals to the site and international firms establishing a UK base.

Australian firm Blackmagic Design and China's Geek+ chose the development for their EMEA and UK headquarters respectively, with both companies attracted by the unique environment for innovation and business growth within Sci-Tech Daresbury and the wider Liverpool City Region.



Computer Generated Image
of Project Violet Phase 2

Knowsley: Shakespeare North Playhouse economic impact

Shakespeare North Playhouse is delivering millions of pounds of economic benefit, supporting new jobs, strengthening local businesses and acting as a major catalyst for the regeneration of Prescot and the wider City Region, according to the findings of an independent evaluation.

Backed by £11m from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and £18m from Knowsley Council, alongside other key funders including Arts Council England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Sir Ken Dodd Foundation, the landmark £38m cultural venue has rapidly become a cornerstone of the region's visitor economy since opening in July 2022. The Combined Authority also invested £8m to improve public transport in Prescot. The new evaluation, carried out by AMION Consulting, confirms the Playhouse is already making a transformative contribution to the Liverpool City Region's economy, cultural life and international profile.

The Playhouse now attracts an average of around 100,000 visitors a year, generating £12.4m in annual visitor expenditure across the City Region. This includes both onsite and offsite spending, helping to sustain local businesses and boost the wider visitor economy.

The evaluation also revealed the venue had delivered:

- 70 full-time equivalent (FTE) direct jobs, significantly exceeding the original target of 39.
- 60 off-site jobs supported across the City Region through visitor spending.
- A combined Gross Value Added (GVA) boost of £5.8m per year to the Liverpool City Region economy.



A full audience inside Shakespeare North Playhouse

Liverpool: North Docks regeneration

Liverpool's North Docks are the focus of the region's emerging Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC), opening a major opportunity for regeneration.

Backed by £15m from the Combined Authority, Everton's new waterfront venue, the Hill Dickinson Stadium, is a key catalyst to transform the former industrial dockland, helping to drive more than £650m of wider investment across nearby neighbourhoods.

The proposed MDC will accelerate the delivery of new homes and commercial development, with Liverpool City Council identifying capacity for more than 17,000 homes and 5 million sq ft of commercial space, over the next 15 years. Priority areas include Liverpool Waters, Ten Streets, Pall Mall, Pumpfields and the Kings development, supporting a stronger urban identity for the city's northern fringe.

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority is working to establish a locally led MDC with Liverpool City Council, using powers to assemble land, deliver infrastructure and apply flexible financial tools.

The programme will improve links between the Commercial District and the waterfront through enhanced public realm, cultural destinations and high-quality mixed-use development. Highlights include:

- Central Docks: 2,350 homes and a 2.1ha park (public-private investment £82m)
- £15m City Council funding to unlock Grade A offices at Pall Mall
- Kings skyscraper scheme by Beetham Davos
- Torus: 195 affordable homes at Hartley Locks
- Stanley Dock Warehouse restoration for 500+ apartments



A Computer Generated Image of how a regenerated Liverpool North Docks could look

Sefton: Bootle Town Centre

Ambitious plans to transform the Bootle Strand shopping centre are being unlocked with a £7m investment from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

As part of a broader regeneration, Sefton Council is aiming to breathe fresh life into the underused complex at the heart of Bootle town centre, which it bought in 2017.

The project is backed by £20m of government funding, alongside significant investment from the Combined Authority and Sefton Council. The partnership is already delivering visible results including the nearby Salt and Tar events venue, backed by £2.7m from the Combined Authority, which has attracted big-name acts such as Tom Jones and Status Quo, drawing thousands of visitors to the area.

Demolition is complete along the Palatine and space has been cleared for a new public square. To unlock the wider transformation, preparatory work secured the site with refurbished areas set to remain open during reconstruction.

Sefton Council has now submitted a bid for Bootle to become the UK Town of Culture 2028 which, if successful, would not only provide £3m for a cultural programme but also provide a boost for the ongoing town centre regeneration, of which the Strand transformation is the central element.



Bootle Town Centre

St Helens: Parkside Link Road

The £60m Parkside Link Road in Newton-le-Willows is a landmark infrastructure project designed to unlock the economic potential of the former Parkside Colliery site and land to the east of the M6 motorway.

Once a derelict coal mining site, the area will return to being one of the economic engines of the North - becoming a key logistics and advanced manufacturing hub bringing economic growth and regeneration to the region. The new 3.3km link road is expected to act as a catalyst for the development of the Parkside Freeport site, attracting global logistics firms and creating thousands of new jobs.

Delivered in partnership with St Helens Borough Council and supported by £39m from the Combined Authority, as well as additional funding from St Helens Borough Council and Parkside Regeneration, the road officially opened on May 30 last year - connecting the site directly to Junction 22 of the M6 and successfully bypassing local residential areas.

The scheme gives the nationally significant development site a high-capacity route for freight and commuter traffic. It includes a 3.3km single-carriageway road, new junctions and integrated pedestrian and cycling paths to ensure the site remains accessible to all.

By diverting heavy goods vehicles away from the A49, the link road significantly reduces congestion and improves air quality for communities in Winwick and Hermitage Green. It also provides vital access to land designated as a Strategic Rail-Freight Interchange, supporting the transformation of the freight industry, reducing the number of HGVs in residential areas and supporting the improvement of passenger rail services.



Watch: [St Helens just got a major upgrade - Parkside Link Road now open thanks to city region funding](#)



Parkside Link Road

Wirral: New Mersey Ferry

A £26m investment in the first new Mersey Ferry in over 60 years is set to bolster the Liverpool City Region's vital visitor economy and secure the long-term future of the iconic cross-river service.

Commissioned by the Combined Authority and built by the historic APCL Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead, the project represents a major commitment to the region's maritime heritage and has provided dozens of apprenticeships for local young people, bringing jobs, skills and opportunities to the City Region.

Reviving the historic Royal Daffodil name and painted in the traditional red, white and black livery, the new ferry features a highly efficient diesel-electric hybrid propulsion system designed to lower fuel consumption and significantly reduce carbon emissions.

Passengers will benefit from a modern, accessible design, improved seating, and enhanced digital facilities, providing a 21st-century experience on one of the world's most famous waterways.

Sea trials of the new vessel began in April 2026 with the first passenger services expected to set sail later in the year.

At nearby **Woodside Ferry terminal** a new landing stage and linkspan bridge were installed in December 2025 as part of a £9m transformation project.



Watch: New Era for Mersey Ferries: Royal Daffodil Hits the River for First Trials



New Mersey Ferry, the Royal Daffodil, takes to the water for the first time in November 2025

Cabinet Members

Steve Rotheram

Mayor of the Liverpool City Region

Cllr Mike Wharton

Deputy Mayor
Leader, Halton Council

Cllr Graham Morgan

Leader, Knowsley Council

Cllr Liam Robinson

Leader, Liverpool City Council

Cllr Marion Atkinson

Leader, Sefton Council

Cllr George Woodward

Leader, St Helens Council

Cllr Paula Basnett

Leader, Wirral Council

Cllr Anthony Burns served as Leader of St Helens Council and Cabinet Member for Net Zero during 2025/26.

Portfolio	Cabinet Member
Transport, Policy and Resources	Mayor Steve Rotheram
Economic Growth and Regeneration	Councillor Mike Wharton
Skills and Employment	Councillor Marion Atkinson
Housing and Strategic Planning	Councillor Graham Morgan
Public Service Innovation	Councillor Liam Robinson
Energy and Environment	Councillor Paula Basnett
Education	Councillor George Woodward



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